

# ROXBURY FARM

info@roxburyfarm.com

July 23, 2012 - pickup week # 7

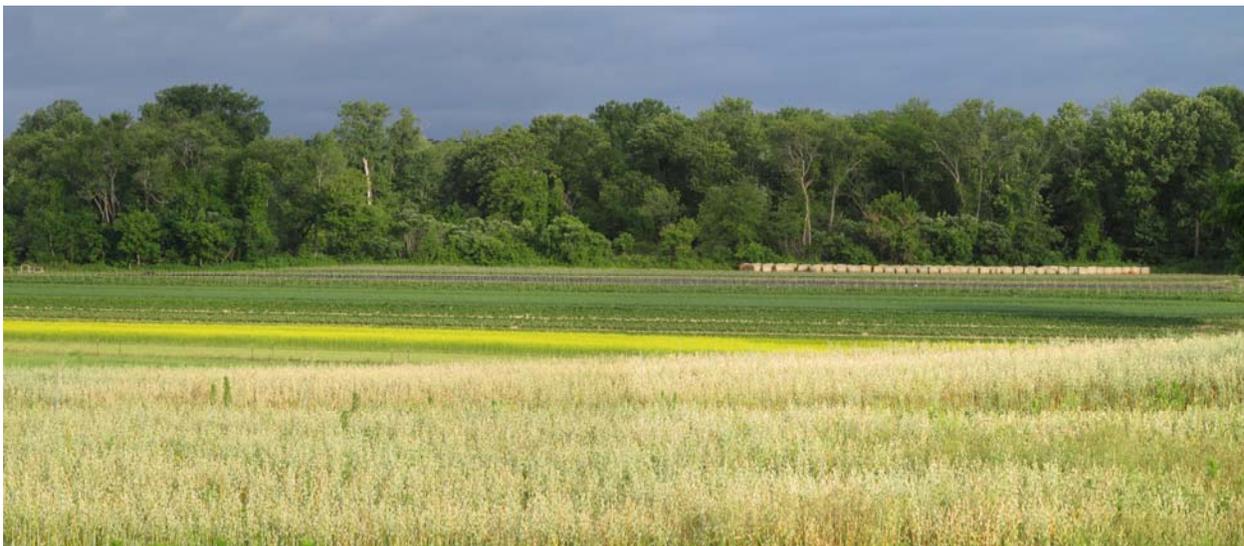
www.roxburyfarm.com

## *Letter from a farmer*

It is becoming tough not to write about the drought that is affecting most of Columbia County. Some areas received a nice amount of rain back on June 29th and others last Sunday on July 15. But not more than a few drops of water have fallen on the Roxbury Farm fields. We have been without any significant rainfall since June 13th. That is almost 40 days. Dry weather is good for vegetable farmers but it becomes a trial when it is accompanied by excessive heat. Our irrigation cannot keep up with the evaporation on days when it reaches 100° F and when the wind blows over 10mph. We are pumping water almost 18 hours a day and please don't ask what our fuel bill is like these days. So much for a farm that does not want to be dependent on fossil fuel... But we only irrigate the vegetable fields. The pastures are drying up and some cover crops that are not irrigated are turning brown as well. The sorghum/crotalaria mix we seeded down in our new field is shriveling up. Yes, we are praying for rain, not only for ourselves but also for our neighbors that do not have the capacity to irrigate their field crops. Their corn looks like pineapples and their soybeans are drying up. We share that we might not have a second cutting of hay as most hayfields have gone dormant. What we need right now is a real soaker and some milder temperatures to prevent the field crops from dying and to wake the grass back up again out of its deep summer sleep.

The weather is also hard on people and animals. After more than a month of hot weather the crew runs the risk of becoming prickly as the one thing that seems to be doing well in this weather is the weeds. Nevertheless they are doing remarkably well. We are getting all the fieldwork done and the fields look remarkably clean. The weeds have been overabundant as everything went to seed last year. Nothing like a rainy season followed by a drought. When we came to this farm we inherited a soil filled with weed seeds like purslane. Purslane seed stays viable for up to a 100 years so it will take a while before we will quit seeing that weed sprouting up from our fields. Despite the lack of control last year we have made tremendous progress in getting the weeds under control. The animals try to find a cool spot under the trees and they miss the lush pastures of a few months back. On the floodplains the clover is still green and they are finishing up the last patches of green there before we have to start feeding them hay.

The vegetables on the floodplains are healthy and even the cover crops without irrigation continue to thrive there. It blows my mind that the cowpeas (which we grow as green manure) are still growing despite a 40 day drought accompanied by heat. It is ironic that the land that was inundated with water a year ago during a historic flooding is now the only place where crops not only survive but continue to grow. We are reminded that our strength is in the diversity of our farm. We need floodplains that hold moisture and we need upland to get through wet and cold periods. Our upland is like a race horse with the lower lying pieces serving us as a draft horse. The race horse gets us somewhere quickly but it has little stamina compared to the draft horse. It provides us with early spring veggies and gives us a backup plan in a wet year. The potatoes, winter squash, leeks, celeriac, fall broccoli (*continued on page 2*)



View of our newly baled straw and the tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, and onions.

and cauliflower, storage beets and carrots are all planted in the 100 year flood plains. Crops like lettuce and bunching beets and carrots that are still growing on the upland are rather poor looking now. We are ready to give up on the lettuce there as we can't keep it moist, and when it is ready for harvest the deer eat it anyway. We have been covering it up to prevent the deer from browsing, which looks rather silly as it gets even hotter under the row covers. The beets look sad as the storage beets in the lower fields are already twice their size while planted a month later. Crops like onions, eggplant, tomato, peppers, cukes, melons, etc. are planted on the upland but they are mulched and fed with water by means of drip irrigation. They are doing very well. The race horse of our soils can do well if it is supplied with constant moisture. Look at it as keeping the horse on an intravenous tube. Crops like salad mix, bunching beets or carrots cannot be grown in mulch and therefore it is not practical to water them with a drip line, otherwise all the upland would be irrigated that way.

The harvest and therefore the farm are a little ahead of its annual schedule or rhythm. Everything has an August feel to it. During the whole growing season, crops have been about 14 days ahead of schedule. That is of course with the exception of the crops we would like to harvest a little earlier like tomatoes and peppers. They are suffering from the heat as temperatures above 85°F stop them from growing and pollinating. We see a significant amount of blossom drop in the peppers and tomatoes and the number of bee visits to the squashes are down as bees don't fly in hot weather. The good news is that diseases only thrive in moist conditions and we have not seen too many problems with blight or mildew.

That is rather different for the insect world as they are all ravenously hungry and competing with us for the veggies. The potato leaf hopper, and other insects flock to our oasis of green as the clovers in the hayfields have already been decimated. Many wild animals are hungry as well. We lost a sheep to a pack of coyotes. We will need to keep a dog with our flock to protect them from future attacks. The deer graze in our head lettuce and we try to keep them off the sweet potato vines by spraying a concoction that smells foul to deer. I am not convinced it works but we try anything and it is OMRI approved. The birds are overabundant in the sweet corn and we installed a propane cannon and pie dishes hanging from on a piece of conduit, all to scare them away. We also top the corn to remove their perch and this appears to be quite effective. Yes, the challenges we deal with sound time consuming, but we are still feeding you with lots of vegetables. The one inconvenience you will have to deal with is an absence of salad mix (sorry, it croaked under the heat). The crew has to work a bit harder than usual to keep up with the challenges. Personally I get little sleep as the irrigation needs to be moved at night and early in the morning. These months I work about 100 hours a week so it is good I love my work. Please do not take any of this as a complaint but simply as a reality check on how food is grown and how much effort it takes. We figure that we get to rest again this winter.

It was uplifting to have had a few visitors coming through the farm in the past few weeks who all chipped in with the hard work. We want to say a warm thank you to Jelmer, Bob and Sarah, and also to Dick and Sonia who are regular visitors to the farm. Your labor is greatly appreciated but most of all we loved and love your company.

~Jean-Paul

**COMING NEXT WEEK:** slicing tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, corn, eggplant, green beans, head lettuce, onions, beets, basil, some cantaloupe, and parsley.

**FRUIT:** peaches or nectarines

**CHICKEN SHARES:** This week we are delivering the weekly and bi-weekly shares.

July 31—Aug 3: weekly shares

Aug 7— Aug 10: weekly and bi-weekly shares

Aug 14 — Aug 17: weekly and monthly shares

Aug 21— Aug 24: weekly and bi-weekly shares

Aug 28 — Aug 31: weekly shares

**LAMB SHARES:** The first lamb share delivery will be the week of July 31 to August 3. Look for a cooler labeled lamb shares and separate sign in sheet for the lamb shares. If you can't pick up your lamb that week please let us know.

**PORK AND BEEF SHARES:** These shares will start later this year because we have very little in stock from the winter. We will send you an email once we have the dates set. Thank you for your patience.



Tomatoes neatly trellised

## Whole Wheat Zucchini Bread

2 ½ C. whole wheat flour  
 ¼ tsp. baking powder  
 2 tsp. baking soda  
 ½ tsp. salt  
 4 tsp. ground cinnamon  
 3 eggs  
 ½ C. vegetable oil  
 ½ C. unsweetened applesauce  
 2 C. sugar  
 2 tsp. vanilla extract  
 2 C. grated zucchini

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. In a medium bowl, sift together first 5 ingredients (flour through cinnamon). Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine eggs, oil, applesauce, sugar and vanilla. Beat well with an electric mixer. Stir in zucchini. Add flour mixture in batches and stir until just combined (do not over mix).
3. Spray 2 regular size loaf pans or 4 mini loaf pans with nonstick spray (bottom and sides). Bake in the center of the oven for approximately 50 minutes for 4 mini loafs or 65-75 minutes for 2 regular loaves. Cool slightly, run a knife around the edge of the pan to release the bread from the sides, and remove from pan. Cool on wire rack or seal in plastic wrap to lock in moisture.

*Recipe by Roxbury Farm CSA Member Ilana Eck, from The Hip Hostess Blog, [www.hiphostessblog.com](http://www.hiphostessblog.com)*

## Basil Infused Olive Oil

1 cup tightly packed fresh basil leaves  
 ¼ cup olive oil

Bring 4 cups of salted water to a boil and blanch basil for 5 seconds. Drain and plunge basil into ice water. Pat leave dry with paper towel. Puree basil with olive oil in a food processor. Season with salt and pepper. Strain the basil oil through a fine mesh strainer and discard basil remnants. Pour oil into a jar, cover and refrigerate until ready to use. Basil oil will keep in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

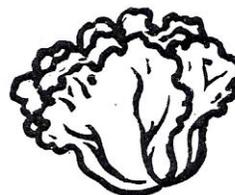
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### VOLUNTEERING AT YOUR SITES:

Thank you for being so willing to volunteer at your pick up sites. Your efforts make sure the sites run smoothly and create a pleasurable experience for all members. Your time also makes sure the site hosts and site coordinators are not left with a lot of extra work each week. **If you have to cancel or change your volunteer shift please contact your site coordinator** and not the farm. You can find your site coordinator's contact info on the website at [www.roxburyfarm.com](http://www.roxburyfarm.com) click on *CSA Membership* and then on your community.

**COOLERS AND BAGS:** Please return the coolers and insulated bags that the meat orders and shares come in to your CSA site. We use them every week so please make sure to return them. Thank you!

**WHERE IS THE LETTUCE?** We seed salad mix and plant head lettuce every week to make sure we have at least one if not both of them in the share. Unfortunately hot weather is a problem for both kinds of lettuce. We get poor germination of the salad mix in the heat and the head lettuce goes to seed before it is a head. We are now planting the lettuce down in the lower fields that hold their moisture longer and the forecast is for upper 80's instead of upper 90's so hopefully we will have lettuce again soon.



## Polenta Stuffed Bell Peppers

4 tablespoons butter  
 1 onion, finely chopped  
 1 1/2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary (or 3/4 teaspoon dried rosemary, crumbled)  
 Coarse salt and ground pepper  
 1/2 cup yellow cornmeal  
 2 or 3 ears of sweet corn  
 1 cup shredded sharp white cheddar cheese  
 4 bell peppers, halved lengthwise through stem, ribs and seeds removed

In a medium saucepan, melt 1 tablespoon butter over medium-high. Cook onion, stirring often, until lightly browned, 5 minutes. Add 3 cups water, rosemary, 2 teaspoons salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper; bring to a boil. Whisking constantly, gradually add cornmeal, whisking until incorporated before adding more. Reduce to a simmer; cook, whisking frequently, until thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in corn, remaining 3 tablespoons butter, and half the cheese until melted.

Place peppers in a large baking dish; fill with polenta mixture. Cool to room temperature. Cover tightly with foil; refrigerate until ready to use, up to 2 days.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Pour 1/2 cup water in bottom of baking dish. Cover with foil; bake 30 minutes. Remove foil; sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Return to oven; bake, uncovered, until cheese is golden and peppers are very tender, about 30 minutes more. Serve immediately.

from [www.marthastewart.com](http://www.marthastewart.com)

## Bell Pepper Egg-in-a-Hole

2 teaspoons olive oil  
 1 bell pepper (any color), cut into four 1/2-inch-thick rings  
 4 large eggs  
 Coarse salt and ground pepper  
 2 teaspoons grated Parmesan  
 4 slices multigrain bread, toasted  
 8 cups mixed salad greens

In a large cast-iron or nonstick skillet, heat 1 teaspoon oil over medium-high. Add bell pepper, then crack 1 egg into the middle of each pepper ring. Season with salt and pepper and cook until egg whites are mostly set but yolks are still runny, 2 to 3 minutes. Gently flip and cook 1 minute more for over easy. Sprinkle with Parmesan and place each egg on a slice of toast. Toss salad greens with 1 teaspoon oil and season with salt and pepper; serve alongside eggs.



**Jean-Paul timing the irrigation reel to see how long it will take to irrigate the new broccoli plants. He calibrates it to put on one inch of water. The hose is 850 feet long and it takes about 8 hours for the irrigation gun to reel itself back in.**