

Monroe Family Organics

CSA Newsletter

JULY 29, 2012

Farm Update

This week we have gotten a lot of rain, which has been good since it has helped a lot of our fall plantings along. It has also given some relief to the cool season plants that are currently being harvested. So far we have not seen disease show up in a large way, which is always a concern with wet weather. The only thing we have seen is a little downy mildew on some lettuce plantings that were already stressed from the heat, which makes them more susceptible. In the blueberry patch, we could not have asked for better from the weather as the rains have helped enlarge the berries. We are now picking more mid-season varieties, which are also naturally larger. This week the sweet corn has started to come in and will show up in a limited amount in the shares. We have had some challenges with it again this season, as far as the number of ears that we feel are large enough (and that deer have not taken a bite out of), but the sweet flavor is absolutely wonderful. The chickens have started laying a lot of eggs, so I hope you folks are ready for them (we get around 30 eggs per day). The pigs are really loving their wet pasture because it is easier for them to root around when the ground is not hard and dry. The meat chickens are going to be ready soon as well; they have an appointment with the Brennaman family to get butchered this week. Chickens will be offered on a first come



The first of the sweet corn is ready, and it will be appearing in some of the shares this week.

first served basis, so if you want a chicken this season you may want to let us know right away. Chickens will be \$3.75 per pound, and we expect them to average around five pounds each. Basil will be offered as part of the share this week but if you are looking for larger amounts to freeze for pesto we are selling it for \$10 per pound (minimum order is 1 pound). We will also have the blueberries again available in the pint containers for \$3. Also, it will be \$32 per 10 pounds if you want to order a large amount to freeze. We'll also be bringing eggs out to the drop-offs, which are \$4.00 per dozen and are raised only with organic grains on a grassy pasture where they have a wide area to roam.

Have questions or comments? Email us at mfororganics@yahoo.com or call Michele at

517-896-6884.

Weed Control on our Farm

We have gotten the question several times (especially when we were starting the farm) “How can you possibly control the weeds?” Whether the askers were dubious about the ability to control weeds without chemical herbicides, or just curious about how one would go about it, it is a topic in which people seemed pretty interested. Chemical herbicides, depending on the type, can stay in the ground for a long time and can kill or severely limit a lot of the soil life and other natural life around the field. In fields that have regular herbicide applications, I have never seen the same amount of diversity of insect and reptile life that I see on our farm. But how do we control weeds on our farm? I have been fortunate to have worked under some other farmers who were experts at how to keep weeds down, so I learned a lot from them. Part of our success keeping weeds under control is from keeping weeds from ever seeding. This makes it easier to keep weeds under control for the next decade as fewer actually sprout in the field over time. Also, we use plastic mulch, mostly on crops that are going to be in the ground for most of the season. This shades out all the weeds around the plant and just leaves exposed soil on the tracks where the tractor drives. We cultivate (which, contrary to what the word implies, is not a method of nurturing the weeds, but of killing them) this area with a cheap tractor-pulled cultivator Fred built that also can be used to cultivate our sweet corn, peas, and beans. For our open soil plantings where there is no plastic mulch, we use a push cultivator that works up soil between the rows and covers weed seedlings that are coming up close to the row. After these techniques are employed, if any other weeds are left we hoe them or pull them by hand.



This week, we will have a few bunches of flowers as a choice in the shares.



Also new in the shares this week are the first of the eggplants!



Try out this week's really easy recipe for Garlic Corn on the Cob!

thing we do to keep weeds down is how we water and work the ground. When we work the ground before a new seeding we leave the soil loose. Leaving it loose means that the surface of the weed seed has less contact with the soil, which is necessary for germination. Leaving the soil loose often reduces the weed germination by 50%. Using this technique means that we have to slightly increase our seeding rate on the crops we do want, as the contact with the soil affects the good seeds the same way, but is well worth the reduction in weeds. Finally, the way we water prevents a lot of weeds from ever germinating because all of our watering is targeted to the 3-4 inches surrounding the row of plants. With overhead irrigation, the weeds are getting watered as well as the crops. When we water our plants, we use drip line irrigation, which runs along the ground at the base of the plant. This makes sure the crop gets watered and the weeds don't. Drip irrigation is especially helpful in the summer when weeds have a really hard time germinating because of warm dry soil in between the rows. Basically, to control our weed populations takes a combination of a little more hand work and

mechanical cultivation, and a reliance on making the field environment as tough a place as possible for a weed to start and survive.



What to Expect in This Week's Share

- ❖ Head lettuce
- ❖ Green beans or potatoes
- ❖ Cherry tomatoes or sweet corn
- ❖ Carrots or beets
- ❖ Basil, Spinach, kale, or flowers
- ❖ Cucumbers or kohlrabi
- ❖ Broccoli, cabbage, or eggplant

Recipe: Garlic Corn on the Cob

This recipe came from allrecipes.com. It is super simple but very yummy!

Ingredients

- 4 ears corn, husked and cleaned
- 1/4 cup butter, divided
- 1 tablespoon and 1 teaspoon garlic powder

Directions

1. Preheat grill for medium heat, or preheat your oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
2. Place each ear of corn on a separate square of aluminum foil. Place 1 tablespoon of butter on each one, and sprinkle with garlic powder. Wrap ears tightly with the foil.
3. Place ears of corn on the grill or in the oven for 20 to 30 minutes, turning over occasionally.

If you have ideas for an article, or you would like to contribute a recipe to a future newsletter, please email mforganics@yahoo.com or call Michele at 517-896-6884.