

Erehwon Farm

Week 12-August 23, 2009

Farmer Tim Reports

Hello from sunny Erehwon!

Well, it looks like cooler temperatures are back, at least for a while. We're hoping that the warmer weather we had the last week and a half will be enough to get the warm weather crops producing.

Sunday, Farmer Tim was at the Heirloom Garden Show at Garfield Farm. Here people bring wonderful heirloom vegetables and flowers for people to admire. This year there were very few tomatoes on display, as the cooler weather has not allowed them to ripen on schedule. Farmer Tim had a number of the Cherokee Purples that you have been getting for the last week or so and sold quite a bit of them. Most of the sales were to people who were going to save the seeds for next year's planting. The seed savers buy tomatoes using different criteria than you or I might. They don't care if the tomatoes have been chewed by critters, eaten by bugs, are bruised or overripe. Farmer T. chortles every year as he pockets money for tomatoes that would otherwise be compost! While there, Farmer T. bought a new variety of seed garlic for next year. We will plant that with all our other mongrel garlic come October. He also took the opportunity to chat with some old friends and talk to many people about what Erehwon is doing on the Mongerson property and spread the word about CSAs'

Last Monday we had a bit of excitement on the farm. As it does at least once a year, the Goodyear blimp invaded the skies east of the farm, apparently reeking with hostile intentions towards our little plot of land. Not to worry, however. As always, Bucky the Farm Dog was on duty. Even though the years are taking their toll on the brown beast when it

comes to playing, chasing balls and sticks, and going for marathon walks, age has not diminished his sense of responsibility for protecting the farm. Long before any of the humans noticed the quiet shadow of the blimp hovering over downtown Geneva and making it sinister way westward toward Randall Road, every vigilant Bucky started from a deceptively deep sleep and raced toward the eastern perimeter of the farm, barking ferociously. When the field is planted in soybeans or lying fallow he will charge quite a distance into the field (something he never does under ordinary circumstances), but this year the field is planted in corn. He ran into the field a few rows and decided he could defend better out in the open. Retreating westward to where he had a clear view of the sky, he barked and growled, the hair on his back standing straight up, until he finally scared that evil blimp away. As it retreated once again toward the east, Bucky gave a few more warning barks. "And don't come back, you hear!" At last, his job done, he trotted back to Farmer Tim, tail wagging proudly. After humbly receiving praises from all he sank to the ground, exhausted, and resumed his nap.

In your boxes this week

This week we should have cucumbers, summer squash (although the cooler weather this weekend has slowed them down some), Cherokee purple and Big Boy tomatoes, and green onions for all, plus a large variety of items that are starting to get ripe, are finishing up in smaller quantities, or didn't do well and are producing smaller quantities. You will get a selection from these items, but not all of them, They include turnips, spinach, lettuce, eggplant, baby beets, maybe

radishes, potatoes, green peppers, kale, Swiss Chard, maybe beans by Friday. Delivery customers: We have the list of people who wanted extra squash and will fill requests as we can.

U-Forage: Lamb's quarters.

U-Pick: Sun Gold cherry tomatoes, arugula, herbs including dill and cilantro.

U-Catch: Net a white cabbage moth, or give a good effort,

U-Spy: Giant pumpkins near C-9

Delivery Schedule

12:30-1:00—van leaves farm
1:30-2:00—delivery at Lombard
2:00-2:30—delivery at Wheaton
2:30-3:00—delivery at Bartlett
3:00-3:30—delivery at Elgin

All times are approximate and may vary.

Pick your own!

Belles Berries (Jenny Gresko, Izabella Kowalski) will have pick you own berries throughout the season. If you are interested in picking your own berries to freeze/preserve or simply to snack on please contact them at BellesBerries@gmail.com or Izabella at 630.313.9632. Berries will also be available for purchase during CSA pick-up on Wednesday and Fridays. Erehwon CSA subscribers will get a discounted rate of \$3 for a 6oz. freshly picked clamshell. **You must contact them prior to coming to the farm.**

Slow Food Eat-in "Time for Lunch"

Wednesday, August 26

11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Daley Plaza (Washington between Clark and Dearborn) -- where the

Picasso statue is
Bring a bag lunch (or purchase one on site) and join 300 other people at one huge table

Thanks again to everyone who worked on this legislation for the last three years and who has been working for a local farm and food system far longer than that. With a new tool -- the Illinois Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council -- maybe we can build that system, and build it to last!

Buckskin Tanning at Garfield Farm Museum

Come and learn one of the most durable and timeless methods of tanning at Garfield Farm Museum, Saturday, August 29, 2009. From 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., tanner Spring DeLeon will conduct a class and demonstration on buckskin tanning practices of the pioneers. Participants will make and take home their own buckskin.

When thinking of buckskin, most people visualize long-fringed native Americans on horseback or adventurous frontiersmen on a remote mountain hunt. Little is it known that buckskin was once as common as blue jeans, worn for its durability and softness. Buckskin breaks the wind but allows the skin to breath and stretches with body movement. Not only was buckskin worn because of its durability and softness, but because of such easy availability. Buckskin stood up to the rigors of frontier life as it wouldn't easily snag or tear.

All fabrics are composed of fibers and the leather cloth made from deer and other animals is no different. The difference between leather cloth and other clothes is that a person does not need to do any actual weaving of fibers in order to make the cloth. The resourceful pioneer just needs to condition what nature has already created by tanning the hides of the wild game. The object of tanning is to then unlock that intricately woven fabric and preserve it in a usable state. Buckskin is made with the aid of oils, emulsifiers, physical manipulation and wood smoke, leaving it a material

between a fabric and a leather, with some qualities all its own.

There is a \$40 donation for this class and reservations are required. The class size will be limited to only four individuals. Lunch will be provided on site. The class is subject to weather. If it rains the class will be canceled. For reservations or more information call the museum at (630) 584-8485, or email at info@garfieldfarm.org. Garfield Farm Museum is located 5 miles west of Geneva, IL off ILL Rt. 38 on Garfield Road. The 370-acre site is a historically intact former 1840s farm and teamster inn being restored as an 1840s working farm museum by volunteers and donors from around the country.

Beth's Buzz

Last week I was talking with long-time subscriber and friend Robin Migalla and I was telling her some of the interesting things I had observed in the portion of the farm that is devoted to flower growing. She suggested that they might be of interest to other subscribers. Maybe some of you have observed similar things and could write in and tell the rest of us.

It started with a discussion of Japanese beetles. There is a weed in the polygonum family called Smartweed. The Japanese beetle just love this plant. In my flower beds I do not pull that weed. Now I walk through the beds and see the smartweed is decimated-the leaves little more than lace, while the zinnias surrounding them are untouched. A few years ago I tried to grow a different variety of polygonum called Kiss Me Over the Garden Gate, an heirloom variety, as a cut flower. It also was consumed by Japanese beetles while other plants around it were untouched. These plants are in the buckwheat family, It would be interesting to find out if other plants in this family are also Japanese beetle magnets.

This led into a discussion of permaculture and the practice of companion planting. Sometimes companions are designed to replaced soil nutrients used by another plant.

Other times they are intended to deter or attract pests that would feed on their companions. Sometimes they are chosen because of different growth rates where tall plants will shade smaller ones until they are strong enough to withstand the sun or, conversely, one plant will grow and be harvested before the other is big enough to shade it out.

That, in a nutshell, is all I know about companion planting, and I've probably oversimplified the whole concept, but it led me to make a few more interesting observations. Robin was an interested audience, so I babbled on.

Weeds are a constant issue at the farm, but there are certain of my perennial plants that do not seem to be bothered by weeds. One of these is my gooseneck loosestrife (a lysimachia, not a lythrum, like the banned purple loosestrife). Another is my yellow flag iris. Obedient plant, helenium, and Joe Pye weed also seem to be free of weeds. Helianthus maximiliani, a native perennial sunflower, only is invaded by goldenrod, another native. Sun chokes, also known as Jerusalem artichokes, a cousin of the maximiliani, are similarly free from weed. My goldenrod stands, and most of the clumps growing wild on the farm, are also free from most weeds.

These may all be interesting observations, as Robin says, but it would be even more interesting to know why. What is it about these plants that causes them to keep invasive weeds such as Queen Anne's Lace and Canada thistle at bay? Would knowing this help us to do better weed control at the farm, not just in the flower areas but in the vegetable beds as well? Would this information be helpful to home gardeners? Inquiring minds want to know.

Cucumber Salad

This is a recipe my mother used to make, and is a real summer cooler.

Slice cucumbers thinly—the thinner the better. In a small bowl mix two tablespoons each of sugar and apple cider vinegar. Add two heaping tablespoons of mayonnaise and mix thoroughly. Add to the cucumbers and let it sit a while. Mix before serving.

Sometimes my mother would make a jell-O dish from the cucumber salad. After it had sat a while she would strain the juice out and use it as the liquid when she made a package of lime jell-O. Use a little less liquid overall than the package calls for, as there will be quite a bit of liquid left in the cucumbers. Add the cucumbers to jell-O mixture and refrigerate until set. Note that the cucumbers will settle to the bottom. If you are going to unmold it, then the cucumbers will be visible at the top of the molded salad.. This can be very eye-catching. If you want your cucumbers mixed throughout the jell-O, you can add the cucumbers and jell-O in layers, letting each layer solidify before adding the next, or try adding the cucumbers after the jell-O has partially set. (I find this difficult to do because I usually forget about it and find that the jell-O has set completely and it is too late to add the cucumbers.)

Gazpacho

This wonderful dish, sort of a liquid salad, is the perfect summertime cooler, and no wonder. Gazpacho descends from an ancient Roman concoction based on a combination of stale bread, garlic, olive oil, salt, and vinegar. As Romans labored to build roads and aqueducts across Spain in the scorching heat, this creamy soup replenished them with the necessary salt and vitamins lost through physical exertion. Later, shepherds and farmers added vegetables to make it more hearty and satisfying. Because tomatoes and bell peppers were not indigenous to Spain, these ingredients were not added to the soup until after Spain's discovery of the New World. Since that time, gazpacho has remained relatively unchanged - an unpretentious soup designed to quench the thirst evoked by the unrelenting Spanish sun. It's combination of vegetables makes it an easy and delicious way to get your vegetable nutrients. Many studies show that combining vegetables, as in gazpacho, actually creates a synergistic effect in the health benefits.

How to Make Gazpacho

Fresh tomatoes
Tomato juice
Cucumber
Onion
Garlic
Olive oil
Hot pepper, Tabasco sauce, or black pepper

Puree the above in a blender or food processor. Add other seasonings such as lovage, cilantro, parsley, basil, cumin, or chili powder to taste. Then dice and add in any other vegetables you have on hand. These commonly include celery, sweet bell peppers, more tomatoes, more cucumbers, sweet corn, summer squash. Some people add vinegar or lemon juice. You could probably add radishes, broccoli, or cauliflower as well. This is a great way to use up those odds and ends of veggies in your fridge. If you don't like the chunkiness, puree more of the veggies; if you do, keep more of them diced.

Serve chilled.

Tomato Salsa

Chop up tomatoes, onions, garlic, cilantro, and hot peppers. Mix together. Add a little lime juice and salt and pepper to taste. For a little extra dimension add a chopped peach. Serve with tortilla chips.

Fried Green Tomatoes

Slice tomatoes into 1/4 - 1/2-inch slices. Salt and pepper them to taste. Dip in corn meal and fry in hot grease or oil about 3 minutes or until golden on bottom. Gently turn and fry the other side. Serve as a side dish - delicious with breakfast!

Oven Baked Green Tomatoes

Cut green tomatoes in 1/2 inch slices; arrange in a greased baking dish. Season with sea salt and pepper and spread each with about 1/2 tablespoon brown sugar. Cover sliced green tomatoes with buttery crumbs and dot with butter. Bake at 350/ until green tomatoes are tender but still firm, or about 25 to 35 minutes.

Tomatillos

Botanical name: *Physalis philadelphica*. A relative of the tomato and member of the nightshade (*Solanaceae*) family tomatillos provide that tart flavor in a host of Mexican green sauces. In Mexico the fruit is called tomatos verdes, tomatoes de cascara as well as fresadillas.

The fruits average about 1 -2" wide and have a papery outer skin. The tomatillo is actually used when it is still

green. Tomatillos have a very tart flavor, not at all like a tomato.

Tomatillo Sauce with Cream

1 pound fresh tomatillos, husks removed (about 12 large tomatillos), or one 15-ounce can tomatillos, drained
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1 commercial corn tortilla
1 small onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, chopped
2 fresh serrano or jalapeno chiles, stems and tops removed (more can be used to taste)
1 cup cilantro leaves (1 large bunch cilantro, leaves stripped)
1 teaspoon sugar
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 cup heavy cream
Salt to taste

Place fresh tomatillos in a medium saucepan and add water to cover (about 3 cups). Bring to a boil and cook uncovered on high heat until tomatillos have changed color, about 5 minutes. Drain, reserving 1/2 cup of the cooking liquid. If using canned tomatillos, omit this step.

In small heavy skillet, heat the oil until almost sizzling and fry the tortilla until crisp and golden. Drain it on paper towels and when cool enough to handle, break into pieces.

Place the cooked tomatillos with the reserved liquid in container of blender. (If using canned tomatillos, no extra liquid is necessary.) Add the chopped onion, garlic, chiles, cilantro, broken tortilla pieces, and sugar. Process for about 1 minute, or until smoothly pureed.

In a medium saucepan, heat the butter over high heat until hot and bubbling. Add the tomatillo mixture and heavy cream. Season with salt to taste. Bring to a boil over high heat; reduce heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes or until somewhat thickened.

Can be kept up to a week tightly covered in refrigerator. It may break down and look curdled but will smooth out when reheated.

Chicken in Green Sauce

The sweet-and-sour combination of the acidic tomatillos and the piloncillo (light molasses) in the sauce is unusual in Mexican cooking—and delicious.

1/2 cup vegetable oil
1 whole chicken, cut into serving pieces
1 onion, sliced
1 1/2 lb tomatillos
5 jalapeno chiles
2 1/2 oz piloncillo, shredded, or light molasses
3 plantains or bananas, sliced and fried, for garnish

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and cook the chicken until lightly browned. Add the onion and cook until translucent, stirring constantly.

Roast the tomatillos and chiles on a comal or cast-iron griddle, then puree them in a blender with a little water. Add the tomatillo mixture and piloncillo to the pan and simmer until the piloncillo melts. Add salt and pepper to taste and simmer for 30 minutes.

Turnip Greens with Salt Pork

(this is a large recipe—I would suggest halving it)

4 to 4 1/2 pounds turnip greens
1 pound salt pork, rinsed and diced (you can substitute bacon or ham)
1 1/2 cups water
1 cup finely chopped onion
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon sugar, optional
a dash of crushed red pepper, optional

Cut off and discard tough stems and discolored leaves from greens. Wash greens thoroughly and drain well. Cook salt pork in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat until crisp and brown. Add the turnip greens, water, onion, sugar, pepper, and crushed red pepper; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer 40 to 45 minutes or until greens are tender. Taste and adjust seasonings. Serve with vinegar or pepper sauce and cornbread

Turnip Puff

2 cups cooked, mashed turnips, cooled
1 cup bread crumbs
1/2 cup melted butter or margarine
1 teaspoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
2 eggs, separated

Combine turnips, bread crumbs, margarine, sugar, salt, pepper, and beaten egg yolks. Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form; fold into turnip mixture. Spoon turnip mixture into a buttered 1-quart casserole. Bake turnip puff at 350° for 40 minutes.

Turnips au Gratin

Substitute turnips for potatoes in your favorite Potato au Gratin recipe. Baking time should be about the same as for potatoes.