

Erehwon Farm

Week 13-August 30, 2009

Farmer Tim Reports

Hello from cool Erehwon!

Below average temperatures continue to slow tomato and pepper ripening but winter squash, pumpkin, and gourd vines are literally taking over our west field. Elsewhere, fall crops are mostly in the ground and are growing well: beets, carrots, cabbage, spinach, storage radishes, kohlrabi, to name a few.

The heavy rains have started eroding some of the farm roads so Farmer Tim is crafting a complex water management system to prevent runoff from the field and to put water where it can do some good. Recently we noticed an open book on permaculture on his messy desk and then we saw him in the west field with a puzzled look on his face muttering, "Contour plowing...water won't flow uphill...hose full of water with a measuring stick in each end...Roman aqueducts sloped six inches per mile – how'd dey do dat?..." Isn't there someone out there with a GPS-driven, laser surveying kit who could come and put him out of his misery?

Farmer Tim has been doing a creditable job in keeping the new, four-acre west field nearly weed free by yanking, kicking, clipping, chopping, mowing, and tilling under any weed that is showing any tendency to go to seed. However, on the home front, his lawn is one of the weediest on the block and Beth has been on him to do something about the problem and has gone so far as to bring home a bag of "Turf Builder", which is likely laced with synthetic fertilizer and chemical herbicides, in hopes of spurring him to weed removal action. The lazy man has been puzzling over this problem for many months and has been stalling by saying, "You know I weed at the farm

all day. How can you expect me to come home and weed here too?"

One morning recently he was gazing through the kitchen window at the cornfield across the street, traffic flowing by, some turning in to the Elburn train station, and an Elburn cop nearly hidden behind a large patch of giant ragweed in an unkempt field – watching and waiting. Suddenly he noticed something odd: a large area of healthy grass with virtually no weeds in his back yard. Suddenly, he had an epiphany! The dark green sod roughly outlined the area the Bucky the Farm Dog could roam when tethered with his cable. The big dog goes out several times a day, does his business (high nitrogen), likely in a random pattern, and has fertilized that circular part of the lawn, and the fast-growing fescue has choked out all of the weeds!

Mind and feet racing (well, feet trotting, racing for him), Farmer Tim sped through the living room, flung open the front door and stared out at the front lawn. Yes! The same pattern, much smaller, in the exact place that Bucky stops to relieve himself every morning before hopping into the car for the ride to the farm. Mind screaming ahead (full gas, no steering), a plan was germinating. "Stop using the indoor bathrooms? No, neighbors might object. Get Bucky a longer chain? No, it would just end up in a big tangle. Compost! That's the answer to every problem!"

Later that evening while the neighbors were all inside, Farmer Tim was barely visible and was spreading buckets of still-steaming, foul-looking compost on the grass, watering it in well, and filling more buckets with compost, dried molasses and water to make a microbe-rich compost tea that he

planned to spill the next evening. The following day he could be seen at the supermarket, cart speeding, scooping up household ammonia, apple cider vinegar (the solution to almost all of life's little problems), and molasses in preparation for the manufacture of a more potent nitrogenous brew. Now this will probably work over time but couldn't Farmer Tim just solve the problem like everyone else? (*I mean, seriously, people! Does he **always** have to try to invent a new way? Just once could we go with the flow?-Beth*) No. As usual, his iconoclasm winning out, Farmer T scurries off in some new direction.

In your boxes this week

Irish cobbler potatoes, summer squash, cucumbers, turnips, butterhead lettuce, spinach, radishes, Big Boy, Cherokee Purple, and Sun Gold tomatoes, green onions, arugula, and later in the week some baby greens mix and possibly some beans.

U_Forage: Check the two elderberry bushes for ripeness, lamb's quarters, purslane.

U-Pick: Herb garden (dill and cilantro look good), arugula, squash blossoms, cherry tomatoes, and late in the week snap beans (maybe), and weeds in the baby lettuce bed.

U-Catch: Cabbage moths. Note that the record of 15 set by Jeremy B. was recently eclipsed by an amazing 22 by Kris S. Put out an effort and pull up a potato plant or two!

U-Spot: Giant pumpkins just south of the C9 Sun Gold bed.

U-Volunteer: If you have 15 or 20 extra minutes when you come for your pick up and would like to help out at

the farm, we are designing small volunteer tasks. This week's project will be weeding the u-pick herb garden. Even 5 minutes of help will be appreciated.

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.**

Collapsing your CSA boxes

For those of you delivery subscribers who are still mystified as to how you collapse those CSA boxes (and even for those of you who aren't) Tim found the following video that might help. I should warn you, I laughed out loud at the end.

<http://www.redlandorganics.com/CSAboxes.htm>

Beth's Buzz

Robin, our friend and subscriber, posted my column last week to the Traditional Nutrition Group's Yahoo listserv and received the following response from Bill Scheffler. You may remember that Farmer Tim wrote about Bill several weeks ago when he came out to the farm and was testing the brix of the veggies and giving Tim ideas about improving the soil.

Thanks for posting this, Robin.

Insects, diseases and weeds are indicators of an underlying malnutrition.

Weeds only germinate under very specific soil conditions. Change (optimize) the mineral profile and we can change and eventually eliminate the weeds.

There is a book called 'Weeds and Why They Grow' by Jay McCamman which is basically 60 pages of spread sheet listing the different conditions that a particular weed will germinate in. It's an amazing work if we are into that kind of thing.

Weeds thrive in a low energy soil. By optimising the mineral profile the energy levels in the soil increase appreciably. Two important minerals to begin with are calcium and phosphorus. As the available levels of these two minerals come close to optimum, the weeds decline or become very weak.

Weeds are actually our perfect cover crop. The purpose of weeds is to adjust and remineralize the soil. Many weeds will test higher than alfalfa for available minerals.

I told Tim he should make a tea with his weeds and spray it on his plants and water his seedlings with it. It has tremendous amounts of available nutrients and phyto nutrients in available form and gentle quantities. Mix with molasses and he would have very few insects, especially cucumber beetles and aphids.

Robin, how is the new zucchini?? The flavor should be very good because it is nutrient dense. We can know this by testing the brix which is the measurement of sugars and minerals in the sap.

I tested the brix of different plants when I was there and his zucchini tested very good! It was 17 at 5 in the afternoon on a cloudy day and before a rain. In the middle of the day and in full sun it is probably over 20. Very nice!

The zucchini is growing in a bed mulched heavily with leaves which are high in phosphorus. The fastest way to raise brix is to apply phosphorus. I pointed this out to him and mentioned he should heavily mulch all his new beds with the leaves even if the leaves are not all decomposed. He is mulching his potatoes with leaves which will be excellent for them as well. (I didn't check the brix of the potatoes).

When I pulled on a weed in the zucchini bed (there weren't many) it lifted right out. When weeds lift right out, they don't really need to be there. They are just preventing erosion. If a weed is really cemented in the soil then it 'needs' to be there because it is doing some corrective work.

Erehwon has a fair amount of crab grass and fox tail grass which is an indicator for low available calcium and Tim said he had some gypsum (calcium sulfate) he could apply which would be a help. Our soils are high in calcium but the availability can be a problem.

The brix on his sun gold cherry tomatoes was '8' at 5pm on a cloudy day which is probably a 10 on a sunny day at noon. Pretty good for tomatoes.

Thanks for passing the note along!

Bill Scheffler

Free Screening of the Documentary "Fresh"

On Saturday, September 19, 2009, the Geneva Green Market will be hosting a free outdoor presentation of the documentary "Fresh" at River Park in Geneva. The GGM invites the public to come at 7:00 p.m. to get settled in with blankets. Desserts will be available for purchase by the Inglenook Pantry. Proceeds from the dessert sales will go to the Geneva Green Market, NFP.

This film focuses on the importance of eating healthier, locally grown food. It will be a lively and fun evening for all!

Turnips

from SixWise.com

Turnips have been enjoyed since ancient times, when they were cultivated nearly 4,000 years ago in the Near East. This round, apple-sized vegetable was prized by the Greeks and the Romans, and was even called one of the most important vegetables of the time by ancient author Pliny the Elder.

Throughout the centuries, turnips have been:

- Wrapped in wild onions and leaves, then roasted over a fire
- Mashed along with potatoes and served with butter
- Used instead of cabbage to make coleslaw and sauerkraut
- Used instead of pumpkins to make jack o' lanterns

The Cancer-Fighting, and Other Beneficial, Reasons to Eat Turnips

Turnips are a member of the cruciferous family of vegetables, along with broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, collard greens and more.

These veggies include a dozen or more health-promoting compounds that can fight cancer and other illnesses. Among them:

- Indole-3-carbinol: A glucosinolate that's formed when the vegetables are crushed or cooked. Research has found that it deactivates an estrogen metabolite that promotes tumor growth, particularly in breast cells. It's also been found to keep cancer cells from spreading to other parts of the body.
- Crambene: A phytonutrient.
- Sulforaphane: A type of isothiocyanate that's been found to increase the liver's ability to detoxify carcinogenic compounds and free radicals. This in turn protects against cell mutations, cancer and other harmful effects.

Turnips also contain more familiar nutrients such as fiber, vitamin C, vitamin B6, folate, calcium, potassium and copper.

When it comes to turnips, most people focus on the root, but the greens of this plant are also incredibly healthy (and have a pleasant, slightly bitter flavor). Turnip greens help:

- Provide relief from rheumatoid arthritis
- Promote colon health (including lowering the risk of colon cancer) Fight against atherosclerosis
- Promote lung health
- Fight against declines in mental function

How to Enjoy Turnips

Turnips have been unfairly singled out as an unpleasant vegetable, when in reality their taste is similar to radishes

when raw, and very mild once cooked.

You can use turnip roots anytime you would use a potato, and then some. Try them mashed, baked, boiled, in stews, soups and stir-fries, or lightly steamed with some butter, salt or lemon juice for flavor.

You will often find turnips sold with their greens attached, so take advantage of them! Turnip greens are delicious sautéed or steamed as a side dish with garlic, onion, olive oil and lemon, or as an addition to soups, stews and pasta.

If you're looking for a slightly more creative way to try out turnips, try out the hearty, warming casserole side-dish below.

Crunchy Turnip Crumble

1 large or 2 medium turnips
3 tablespoons
1 tablespoon spoon brown sugar
2 medium eggs
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon white pepper
pinch of freshly grated nutmeg

For the topping:

8 tablespoons of breadcrumbs
2 tablespoons melted butter

Cook and mash cubed turnip with 2 tablespoons of butter.

Add mixed dry ingredients to mashed turnip, along with 2 eggs, well beaten.

Put turnip mixture into casserole dish. Sprinkle with topping and bake for 25 minutes in a medium oven or until light brown on top.

Summer Squash au Gratin

3 1/2 cup sliced summer squash (about 2 1/2 medium size squash)
3/4 cup toasted whole wheat bread crumbs
1 1/4 cup grated Swiss cheese
sea salt
pepper

Arrange a layer of squash slices in the bottom of an 8-by-8-by-2-inch oven proof baking dish.

Sprinkle a third of the breadcrumbs, cheese, salt and pepper over the squash.

Repeat the layering process 2 more times, ending with a layer of the cheese.

Bake in oven at 350 for 40-50 minutes until the cheese is bubbly and the squash tender.

Allow to stand for 3 minutes before serving.

Summer Squash, Tomato and Basil Gratin

2 medium summer squash
1lb tomatoes
6 large fresh basil leaves
1 garlic clove, halved
3 teaspoons of extra virgin olive oil
salt and pepper to taste
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 350 F.

Trim the ends of the summer squash. Cut into slices 1/4 inch thick. Cut the tomatoes into 1/4 inch thick slices also.

Stack the basil leaves and cut into strips 1/4 inch wide. Set aside.

Rub the garlic clove over the bottom of a shallow 10-inch-square glass or ceramic baking dish. Grease with 1 teaspoon of the oil. Arrange the summer squash and tomato slices in a single layer in the dish., overlapping them tightly. Season well with salt and pepper. Scatter the basil strips evenly over the top, then drizzle with the remaining 2 teaspoons of olive oil.

Finally, sprinkle the Parmesan over the top.

Bake in the oven for 20 minutes, or until the summer squash is tender. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Garlic Butter Potatoes

New potatoes
Butter
Garlic; minced
Olive oil
Grated lemon peel
Chopped fresh parsley
Flour
Sea salt and pepper to taste
Juice of 1 lemon

Boil potatoes in skins just until tender. Melt butter and saute garlic; add olive oil and lemon peel. Remove from heat, stir in parsley, flour, salt and pepper. Peel potatoes and cut in quarters or eights, depending on size, toss in butter mixture and heat. Toss with lemon juice and correct seasonings.

Sweet Cucumber and Radish Salad

1 large cucumber (1 pound)
1 bunch radishes
1/4 cup cider vinegar
1 1/2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Peel cucumber, then halve lengthwise and slice crosswise 1/4 inch thick. Cut each radish lengthwise into 8 wedges.

Bring vinegar, sugar, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/8 teaspoon pepper to a boil in a small saucepan, stirring until sugar has dissolved, then stir in oil.

Pour hot dressing over cucumbers and radishes in a bowl and stir, then let stand 10 minutes. Stir and season with salt before serving.

Radish Top Soup

Don't throw out your radish greens. Believe it or not, those fuzzy leaves can be transformed into a smooth green soup, with a hint of watercress flavor.

6 Tb butter
1 cup chopped onions or leeks
8 cups loosely packed radish leaves
2 cups diced peeled potatoes
6 cups liquid (water, chicken stock)
Salt
1/2 cup cream (optional)
Freshly ground pepper

Melt 4 tablespoons butter in a large saucepan, add onions or leeks, and cook until golden, approximately 5 minutes. Stir in radish tops, cover pan, and cook over low heat until wilted, 8-10 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook potatoes until soft in liquid along with 1 teaspoon salt. Combine with radish tops and broth, and cook, covered, for 5 minutes to mingle flavors. Puree finely in a food processor. Add cream if desired. Season to taste with butter, salt and pepper.