In the Share

- Green Beans, 1 bag
- Cucumbers, 5 pieces
- Salsa Basket, 1 bag
- Eggplant, 1 piece
- Scallions, 1 bunch
- Lettuce, 1 head
- Summer Squash, 8 pieces
- Basil, 1 bunch

Claire’s Comments

To Spray or Not to Spray, Part II

Late blight and copper spray have been constant topics of conversation at the farm since last Thursday. After the newsletter article last week, I heard from about 45 of you asking questions, contributing ideas, and also “voting” for spray or no spray. Meanwhile, we have been discussing the topic during many of our field chores, as well as on our recent intern field trip to Tipi Produce. Whatever comes of late blight and the tomato crop this season, I am grateful for the rich discussions this problem has inspired.

So what have we decided?! In short, we took first one path and now another. Early this week, I sprayed our tomato crop with organically approved copper hydroxide. Then on Tuesday afternoon, we decided as a crew of farm staff and interns that we will not spray them again. What happened?!

As soon as the newsletter went out last week, I started hearing back from you. I was fascinated as I collected your input. As soon as I received a message saying I should spray, another would come saying I should not. From the beginning and through to the end, your input was equally split. These are some of the general comments I received, compiled, condensed, and reworded:

- Anything you have to wear something akin to a HAZMAT suit to spray is not worth it. It is not worth risking the health of the workers.
- If it is organically approved, it should be okay.
- We wash all our food anyway; we will happily wash our tomatoes.
- We are comfortable eating sprayed tomatoes, but understand if you are not comfortable with the health effects of actually doing the spraying and working with the tomatoes afterward.
- We will buy tomatoes this year, one way or another, and now we know those tomatoes will likely be sprayed. We would rather get them from you, at least we know more about them this way.
- We are not comfortable with the copper accumulation in the soil and the long-term impacts of that accumulation.
- When we signed up we agreed to share the risk of farming with the farmers. We are willing to forego the tomato crop, especially knowing we get plenty of other good food from the farm.

No matter if the vote was to spray or not spray, many members also said that they trusted us as the farmers to make the best decision for the farm, which was very helpful and reassuring to hear.

So, on Friday morning with much of this input already at hand we talked it through as we picked the beans. Opinion was also split in the field, but the interns, especially Laurel our second year intern, added the point that it might be a good experiment for us to see for ourselves if the copper made any difference. We already saw what happened without copper last year, maybe this year we should try it. Another comment that rang loudly that morning was that many of our members will eat sprayed organic tomatoes this year whether they come from Troy or not. So, I decided to spray.

The process of actually doing the spraying was as I described last week (coveralls, gloves, goggles, etc.) with the added bonus of carrying 40 pounds of copper solution on my back in a hard plastic backpack sprayer. By the time I was done spraying half the field, I had a swollen lump on each shoulder and another in the middle of my back where the sprayer continuously rubbed while I pumped the nozzle for the four long hours it took. Though, as Jake said, I do
Recipes

Summer squash is still coming on strong! Both of these recipes can be frozen as a great way to preserve this persistent summer crop for the cold winter. CSA member Ann Marie Waterhouse contributed the soup. Though the recipe is modified and remembered, Ann Marie tested it again before sending it along this week. Farm intern Jenna Tulman contributed the bread. Though the recipe calls for the traditional zucchini, any summer squash works just as well!

Cream of Summer Squash Soup
from Ann Marie Waterhouse
adapted from Conscious Cuisine cookbook by Cary Neff and my memory...with apologies to the original recipe wherever you may be!

4-5 c. chopped summer squash
3-4 Tbs. coconut oil, or less or more (can use olive as well)
2 c. chopped yellow onion
1 c. chopped celery
Fresh or dried sage (fresh, use 10-12 leaves washed and chopped up; dried about 1-1/2 tsp.)
1-1/2 tsp nutmeg
1/2 tsp sea salt
1/2 tsp ground black pepper
4 c. milk (cow, soy, whatever you prefer)

Sauté all ingredients except the milk together in a large stockpot over medium-high heat for 25-30 minutes until everything is mushy. Stir frequently as you add the different ingredients to the pot.

Puree in 2-cup batches in a blender. It should be juicy enough, as is, without adding water. Can be frozen at this point in pint-sized plastic containers. When you thaw it out just add 1 c milk per pint of puree and heat slowly...don’t let it come to a boil. OR you can add the milk and eat right away, either way.

Zucchini Bread
from Jenna Tulman

3 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup oil (veggie or otherwise)
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
4 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/3 cup water
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 cups grated zucchini
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon lemon juice
3 cups sugar
1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. In a large bowl, combine flour, salt, nutmeg, baking soda, cinnamon and sugar. In a separate bowl, combine oil, eggs, water, zucchini and lemon juice. Mix wet ingredients into dry, add nuts and fold in. Bake in 2 standard loaf pans, sprayed with nonstick spray, for 1 hour, or until a tester comes out clean. Alternately, bake in 5 mini loaf pans for about 45 minutes.

(continued from “Claire’s Comments”) not back down easily, I could not physically finish the field that day. It took me another 3.5 hours to finish it on Tuesday morning.

On Tuesday afternoon, we took our annual intern field trip, this year to Tipi Produce. We talked extensively about late blight and copper on that trip. We saw Steve’s spray boom and heard him say that no one could spray a thousand tomato plants every week with a backpack sprayer. (We have 2000 tomato plants.) We saw the brush washer he will use to wash all his tomatoes and heard Beth say that after two washes (one at the farm and one at the member’s home) the copper is still present but should be reduced to very minimal levels. We also talked about protective gear for the tomato harvesters – gloves, long-sleeves, and long-pants all around.

On our return to Troy we talked it through as farm staff once more. We considered the health effects of the copper hydroxide, those known (eye and skin irritant) and unknown (DDT was once considered safe). We also considered how other crops would suffer if we spent 7 to 8 hours per week spraying our tomatoes. And since we do not have a brush washer or any other equipment to wash the tomatoes, what it would mean to get copper on our crates and other harvesting equipment even if you as CSA members are willing to double wash your tomatoes at home. Whatever else we might think of the copper, it seemed clear we would need additional equipment to use it well.

Then we voted. There were 11 interns present. Jake and I did not vote. First, we asked, “if we had the right equipment to spray and wash the tomatoes, should we do it? Are you willing to suit up and harvest them?” 6 yes, and 5 no. Then we asked, “are you willing to take a turn spraying with the backpack sprayer?” 2 yes, and 9 no. Finally, we asked, “on this farm with current staff and equipment, should we spray?” 11 no (though the 2 who were willing to spray did waver.)

I am glad that I sprayed the tomatoes this week. Without that experience I don’t think that the farm staff would have as much to go on in thinking this issue through. I’m also glad that we will not be spraying the tomatoes again. We really are not equipped to either do the spraying or wash off the residue before distributing the fruit. Copper must be sprayed weekly in order to be at all effective. It washes off in the rain and dew. It is raining as I write, and our one copper spray is washing off our plants.

Thank you all for your input and support. It has been very helpful not to have to make this decision alone.

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