

In the Bag

Broccoli, 1 bundle
Bok Choy, 2 heads
Green Garlic, 1 bunch
Spinach, 1 bag
Radishes, 1 bunch
Romaine/Batavian Lettuce, 1 head
Salad Mix, 1 bag

Broccoli again?! Yes. And it is just as lovely as last week. Neither Jake nor I are sure what is happening with the broccoli, but not only has it not buttoned (meaning made tiny button sized heads, a common problem with the first broccoli harvest) it also just keeps getting bigger without going past. We've been feeling so proud of our broccoli, happy to take the credit for a great harvest when really it probably just liked all that rain last week.

I should say we were feeling proud until our farm intern Winston put us in our place a bit. He must have missed the part where we were oohing and aweing over the harvest. When he saw the full broccoli buckets, he said "but did you harvest it too soon? It is so small. In Nicaragua our broccoli gets much bigger." Winston is from Nicaragua and has been here at the UW with his family studying agronomy for the last two years. He will go back to his home and his farm there at the end of the summer and likely put us to shame with his broccoli crop. I hope he sends us pictures of what Jake and I have taken to calling his "enormous tropic rain forest broccoli"!

Broccoli is not the only "again" this week. This column could be full of "agains." Green garlic, bok choy, spinach, radishes, lettuce, all again. But before you take them for granted you should know this is the last of the green garlic. You will see one share of garlic scapes next week (and I will explain them at that time) and then no more

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Claire's Comments

Carolann started as an intern on the farm back in early May, when the potato beetles were still sleeping. They have since emerged and most everyone at the farm has had a chance to meet them. But I'll leave the details of that to Carolann...

Merciless Assassin

The Dark Side of Organic Pest Control

Carolann Puster, Intern

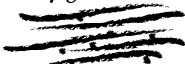
Serving as an intern at Troy Community Farm provides no shortage of hard work, dirt or discomfort. My first morning on the job left me with a brutally sun burned back and stiff hamstrings. The following days and weeks continued to promise sore muscles, blisters, rashes, and very filthy fingernails. And, I found every minute glorious. No amount of pain or fatigue or mud can displace the unspeakable peace and purpose I enjoy while toiling in the fields. I wish for everyone the opportunity to commune with the soil and sunlight, in the noble pursuit of growing food. Although the following may dissuade some readers from seeking that opportunity, I feel that this journal excerpt colorfully illustrates the lengths to which I've gone in the best interest of organic agriculture.

The Colorado Potato Beetle can ravage a potato crop in one brief breeding season. Two weeks ago, I became their assassin. Straddling the rows of fledgling plants, I quickly scanned for that telltale black-and-yellow stripe pattern. The beetles mate on the leaves and at the base of the plants. Adults must be killed - no mercy. Unfortunately for the squeamish interns and volunteers, this cannot be done with the boot sole or a rock. The beetles would simply burrow into the earth and continue to mate. The best method by which to destroy them is "thumb and forefinger until you hear a crunch." You can identify the females by the orange goo that squirts everywhere.

Which brings me to the second task at hand; eradicating egg clusters that have already been laid. These are bright orange and easily spotted on the underside of potato leaves with a quick flip of the stems. The eggs must be smashed as well, smeared away into the dirt to avoid creating the dreaded larvae. Killing these youth, I am told, is far worse a task than hunting adults and eggs combined. Bearing this in mind, I became an excellent assassin.

I killed 133 Potato Beetles that day, and destroyed roughly 300 egg clusters. I found beetles mating, beetles resting, and a few laying eggs. I even discovered a few plants beneath which several couples were all mating! Their meager defense was always the same:

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Recipes

Though my favorite way to eat broccoli is always just steamed, I was looking for something a little dressier last night. I tried this recipe and liked it, and thought you might like it too. My one caution is not to add extra cheese or yogurt. It is plenty cheesy!

Broccoli Gratin

- 1 pound broccoli (you have just over a pound in your share!)
- ½ cup plain yogurt
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1 teaspoon whole-grain mustard
- 2 tablespoons whole-wheat breadcrumbs
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Peel the skin from the stalks of the broccoli. Chop the stalks and the florets into edible bites. Steam the broccoli until the color brightens (about 3 minutes). Transfer the broccoli to a baking dish.
2. Mix together the yogurt, grated cheese, and mustard. Then season the mixture with salt and pepper and spoon over the broccoli.
3. Preheat the broiler to moderately hot. Sprinkle the breadcrumbs over the broccoli and broil until golden brown. Serve hot.

This recipe comes from Jenny Bonde and Rink DeVee at Shooting Star Farm. I remember when we started putting together the third edition of the A to Z cookbook, Jenny was so excited about this recipe I think it had to be the first submission to the book. I might try adding in the broccoli from the share also.

Sir-Fried Bok Choy with Cashew Sauce

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| ½ cup raw cashews | 1 tablespoon minced gingerroot |
| ¼ cup white wine vinegar | pinch of red pepper flakes |
| ¼ cup sugar | 1 ½ pound bok choy |
| ¼ cup soy sauce or tamari | ¼ cup peanut oil |

Toast cashews in a dry skillet, tossing frequently, until lightly brown and fragrant. Combine cashews, vinegar, sugar, soy sauce, ginger, red pepper flakes, and 2-4 tablespoons water in a blender or food processor; puree until smooth. Set aside. Wash bok choy stems and leaves well, making sure to rinse away dirt in the ribs. Separate the bok choy leaves from the stalks. Cut stalks into 1-inch pieces and roughly chop the leaves. Heat peanut oil in a large skillet over high heat until hot but not smoking. Add bok choy stems and cook, stirring often, until crisp-tender, 2-3 minutes. Add the leaves and cook until they wilt and turn bright green, another minute or so. Remove to a platter and cover with cashew sauce. Serve with rice or noodles. Makes 4 servings.

(continued from “Claire’s Comments”)
play possum. To no avail, little pests! Bearing in mind the alternative to this merciless pest control, I took a deep breath and plunged in. If the adults are permitted to mate and their eggs hatch, thousands of larvae would begin to feed upon the leaves of the potato plants, and there would be no way for the plant to change sunlight to food and to then store that food in the form of a potato tuber.

So, when you are enjoying your shares of potatoes later this season, remember to thank the farmers, interns and volunteers. We set aside squeamishness to take one for the team, all in the name of organic pest control.

(continued from “In the Bag”)

garlic until the bulb harvest in late July. You may have one more head of bok choy next week; it all depends on how the week goes. But then, no more bok choy until next spring. Same with spinach, one more share next week and then no more until fall. While there are certainly more lettuce and radishes in your future for this year, none can rival these spring crops for sweetness and flavor. These are the best salads of the whole year!

The salad mix is new this week. We harvested about 45 pounds of it on Tuesday, so you have a healthy serving of it in your share. Unfortunately the flea beetles ate down all the spicy components of the mix before we could get to them, so your mix is six different varieties of lettuce. You will have to spice it up with the radishes! I would suggest eating it sooner than later also. We don’t have the equipment to dry all the leaves before we pack them, so they will be a bit wet and won’t keep the whole week long.

The spinach share should be cleaner this week since we did not have to harvest it out of the mud. It also has bigger leaves with a fair number of holes. I really don’t know what it causing the holes. We had some last year, but never before that, and I still have not figured it out. I assure you however that the holes do not affect the flavor. I’m still eating that spinach, feta, klamata salad with sautéed scallions or onions and loving it!

We harvested our first handfuls of peas this week. I’m expecting that you will be seeing those in your shares next week, along with kohlrabi, more lettuce, the first basil, and possibly those leeks I’ve been talking about for a while now.