



In the Bag

Green Beans, 1 bag
Sweet Onions, 1 bunch
Summer Squash, 4 pieces
Tomatoes, 1 bag
(Cherry, Roma, or Salad Tomatoes)
Kale or Chard, 1 bunch
Lettuce, 1 head
Garlic, 1 bulb
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch

I'm thinking of this as a "catch-up" week. The share is smaller today due to the heat, lack of rain, and the timing of some of our crops. So, you can use this week to catch up on some items that may still be waiting around from previous weeks!

The two new and exciting items today are the sweet onions and the tomatoes. The onions are our first harvest of the year and perhaps the best that we will see. While it has been a great brassica year, that has not been true of the onions. Most of them are still quite small even though they are drying down. These sweets look good through! Enjoy them raw on salads or sandwiches or use them as you would any onion.

The tomatoes are a bit of a tease. No one type has come on strongly enough to include for everyone so you get your choice of cherries (orange and sweet), romas (best for making sauce), or salads (best for sandwiches and salads). The tomato plants look great right now, so I have every reason to believe we will be flooded with these red gems soon enough.

I'm wondering if you are feeling a bit flooded with summer squash already! Make polenta pie! Layer polenta in a baking dish with sautéed vegetables (onions, garlic, tomatoes, summer squash, kale or chard, fresh herbs, etc), and cheese (I like garlic cheddar). Use two layers of each, polenta first, then vegetables, cheese on top. Bake for about 20 to 30 minutes at 350 degrees until cheese is melted and bubbly. It's a delicious way to use up a pile of veggies and the leftovers make an excellent lunch, hot or cold.

Claire's Comments

There are two apprentice beekeepers helping me with the hives this year. Nora and Sarah both wanted to learn more about beekeeping and decided the best way to learn would be hands on...

Days of Our Hives

- Nora Bedard and Sarah Shatz, budding beekeepers

Claire recently told us that folks have been inquiring about the bees. It's been an exiting spring for us apprentice beekeepers. Although the reading up and studying bee-books has been helpful, experiential learning has taught us the most. Our original vision was to have two healthy hives of bees producing honey and buzzing happily around as they pollinate the fields. Throughout the spring our weekly visits to the hives turned into dramatic episodes of what we like to call "Days of our Hives."

Ronetta was the only hive to survive the past winter. When we first visited her this spring, she appeared to be healthy with a laying queen, productive workers, etc. Our second hive was to come in the form of a "package" of bees ordered from an apiary in George and sent through the mail to us in Wisconsin. When the bees arrived a full 7 days after they had been shipped, Claire got a midnight (really, midnight) call from a nervous Postal Worker asking her to come in and pick them up as soon as possible. When she arrived in the early morning a few hours later, at least 75% of the bees in the box were dead. Usually the bees arrive 2 or 3 days after being shipped. This particular colony did not fair well on its unusually long 7-day journey.

We decided to install those of the bees that were still alive, order a new package, and install the new bees with the original package when they arrived. (Remember - experiential learning at it's finest!) All of this went quite well. With the two bee packages combined, the hive seemed to be doing well. We were ready to sit back and watch the bees do what they do best: buzz, gather pollen, reproduce, and build up their hive. We named this new hive Romona.

Shortly thereafter, Ronetta's queen died. We could tell she was gone because we didn't see any brood (baby bee larva) in the hive. Since the life span of a bee is only about six weeks, the hive would soon die out without a queen to lay eggs and replace the lost bees. One of the worker bees recognized the problem and decided to take matters into her own ovipositor. She began to lay eggs. We could tell she didn't know what she was doing because her eggs were scattered around the comb and there might be two or three in a cell when there should only be one. Nice try, but the eggs of a so-called 'laying worker' are never fertilized and thus only produce Drones (the male bees that hang around eating honey and waiting to mate with a possible new

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(continued from "Claire's Comments")

virgin queen). Only a queen bee who has mated with some drones and has a store of sperm in her spermatheca can lay the fertilized eggs that produce the female worker bees who do all of the work of the hive from making honey to feeding the brood to cleaning up.

It is particularly difficult problem when a laying worker takes over a hive because the colony thinks it has a queen, and will not accept a real queen while the laying worker lives. We spoke with Gene, the beekeeper at Gentle Breeze, and he told us that the only way to get rid of a laying worker is to take every frame of comb out of the hive and shake the bees off of it as least 50 feet away. All the bees will make their way back to the hive except the laying worker who will have gotten too fat to fly. We followed Gene's directions and installed a new queen. One week later, we found her dead. Our shake out did not work. Ronetta still thought she had a queen and promptly did away with the new one.

We needed to try something new. Ronetta was getting weaker and had no intention of accepting a new queen. Meanwhile, Romona was doing well. So, we decided to combine the two hives into one. We thought that Romona's queen would be strong enough to overtake the laying worker; and the extra bee population from Ronetta would help Romona grow stronger faster. We combined them by placing Ronetta over Ramona with a small barrier of newspaper between them. This method is common when combining two hives. It works because by the time the bees eat through the paper they have gotten used to each other and are happy to work together for the greater good. It worked for us! Now Ronetta and Romona are one happy hive. Our hope now is that the new, stronger Romona still has enough time to build up her supply of winter honey.

While Romona is making honey, we have had some time to reflect on lessons learned so far. Here are some key bee tips we have learned along the way: always wear protective gear (it doesn't feel good to get stung multiple times when shaking out frame after frame of bees), be as gentle with the bees as possible (we are indeed going into their home and poking around), and don't disrupt bees when it is raining (because they don't want to be out in the rain either). These are all important things to keep in mind as we stay tuned for future episodes of Days Of Our Hives!



Nora (left) and Sarah (right) combining Ronetta and Romona.

Savor the Summer

The Savor the Summer Festival is coming up in a few short weeks!

Please join us for:

- live music
- food and flower workshops
- hay rides
- kid's activities
- and much more

Saturday, 11 August 2007

From noon to 6:30 PM

At Troy Gardens

Recipe

Megan Cain is a worker share on the farm and submitted this recipe for green beans. Though you only have a half pound of beans in your share this week (the beans are starting to slow down), I'm thinking you might still have some of the pervious week's bounty in your fridge to make up the difference!

Mark's Favorite Green Bean Recipe

I always call this Mark's Favorite Green Bean Recipe. He found it on the internet a few summers ago, and since then it has actually become a favorite of mine, too.

- 1 lb. green beans
- 1 heaping T tahini
- 2 T crushed peanuts (or other nut)
- 2 T tamari
- 2 T red wine (or apple cider) vinegar
- 1 T brown sugar
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- few drops spicy oil (optional)
- pinch salt

Steam green beans and set aside. Whisk tahini until smooth. Mix in remaining ingredients. Mix in green beans. Optional: Add sautéed tofu to bulk up this dish.



Troy Community Farm

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