



HARVEST HILL CSA NEWSLETTER

WEEK 6: JULY 21, 2016



THIS WEEK'S BOX:

- ✧ Lettuce
- ✧ Green cabbage
- ✧ Broccoli and/or cauliflower
- ✧ Zucchini and/or yellow squash
- ✧ Rainbow chard or kale
- ✧ Basil
- ✧ Sugar snap peas or shell peas **Peas will be labeled. For shell peas, open and remove peas. Eat snap peas whole.**

SPOTLIGHT: POLLINATION & POLLINATORS

Last week on the farm, we were so excited for one of the main rites of mid-summer: our first zucchini harvest. Much to our dismay, as we moved among the plants we discovered many misshapen and undersized zucchini fruit. Did a strange disease or faulty batch of seed stunt our squash's growth? In fact, it wasn't a fungus or virus or genetic defect, but rather a simple mechanical malfunction in the plants' reproductive system: squash plants, including zucchini, have male and female flowers, and in order for large, evenly cylindrical fruit to form, pollen from the male flowers has to be transferred consistently to female flowers, so that all the seeds get pollinated. The pollen is sticky, so it won't be carried between flowers by the wind. For many of our zucchini plants, that transfer process had stalled, leaving some seeds unpollinated and resulting in uneven growth. Why? Because the workers who spend their days busily transferring pollen between flowers hadn't shown up for the job! No, we don't mean that the interns had gone on strike (although hand pollination is a last-resort measure in cases like this). We mean that our squash field is short on bees! You may be surprised that our verdant, pesticide-free farm could possibly be lacking in bees—we certainly were. But many pollinating insects (bees, and also butterflies, moths, beetles, and wasps) have very specific habitat requirements, and their presence can't be taken for granted. This summer in the newsletter we'll periodically spotlight different species of these unsung heroes who provide a crucial service as they move pollen from flower to flower, and discuss ways to promote and protect them.



LEFT: POLLINATOR BOX, BUILT BY GAVIN IN 2015

Farm intern Gavin Tougher is very familiar with efforts to help promote pollinators: last summer, while working on a farm in Colorado, he took up the hobby of constructing beautiful pollinator boxes made from found or recycled wood. About 30% of wild bee species make nests in any kind of protected shelter they can find, such as abandoned beetle tunnels, fallen logs, or upright dead or dying trees. In open spaces—like farm fields, or home gardens—lacking potential nest sites, boxes like these provide a crucial habitat for these important pollinators. They're also gorgeous sculptures in their own right.

QUESTIONS? FEEDBACK?

If you will be on vacation and can't pick up your box, let us know and you will get extra produce in a different week.

Email us at: abigail.bok@gmail.com

BILL'S Funky MINUTE

This past Sunday was truly a day of rest for me. I didn't do any work at all on the farm, which usually doesn't happen. Ellen and I had a leisurely breakfast together, decided what we were going to do for the day, and then put our plans into motion. First, we took a walk to the lettuce field to see if my latest bear-deterrent measure—inflated balloons coated with peanut butter—had been effective. The balloons had popped, so hopefully the bear has been scared away, although it is hard to tell whether it has been back in the past few days since the romaine isn't very far along in its growth. We then went back to the house, and instead of sitting on my tractor to mow for an hour, I sat in my comfy chair, turned on my iPad, and watched some Pirates baseball. Growing up in Pittsburgh, my grandparents and parents were avid “Bucs” fans, and I am happy to say that I have continued that tradition. A slow and deliberate game with a lot of strategy and exciting plays, baseball allows me to enjoy doing “nothing”...other than eating a bag of chips. Sunday afternoon, we decided that any threat of rain was past, so we put the canoe in the truck and drove to Barnet to take a paddle on the Connecticut—the first we had done all summer. While a flat and almost current-less three-hour paddle would be pretty boring to many people, for us it was a chance to see an amazing amount of wildlife on and around the river. For me, the highlight was seeing my first bald eagle since I saw one in Alaska 28 years ago! It was the third day in a row that Ellen had seen one. Great blue herons, always amazing to watch take off, graced the sky, while numerous ducks and geese swam by with their babies. We probably saw at least 75 goslings in total. We also spotted woodpeckers and hawks, whose dexterity in catching wind currents during flight never ceases to amaze me, as well as a doe and her fawn eating along the edge of the river and a large beaver swimming near us. We returned home for a restful evening and fresh veggies for dinner, and the day was complete. What a great, relaxing day away from farm work. It felt a bit weird, but wonderful.

Be well and enjoy,
Bill

TWO WAYS TO COOK CABBAGE: GRILLED:

✧ Cut cabbage in half, top to bottom, slicing through the core. Cut each half into 1-inch slabs, leaving core intact. Brush both sides of slabs with olive oil and sprinkle generously with salt. Grill until the slabs are charred in spots and starting to wilt. Cut out and discard the core, then cut the grilled leaves into thin slices. Season with salt and pepper to taste. *Source: Eat Your Vegetables by Joe Yonan (2013)*

ROASTED:

✧ Preheat oven to 450°F. Cut cabbage into 8 wedges, core intact. Brush both sides of wedges with olive oil. Arrange on a baking sheet. Season with salt and pepper. Roast, flipping halfway through, until edges are brown and crisp, 25-30 min. Squeeze lemons over cabbage. *Source: Adapted from a recipe on www.marthastewart.com*

CINNAMON-SWIRL ZUCCHINI BREAD

INGREDIENTS:

- ✧ 1 ½ cup grated zucchini (1-2 small/medium zucchinis)
- ✧ ¾ cup sugar
- ✧ ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- ✧ 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ✧ 2 eggs
- ✧ 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ✧ 1 tsp baking soda
- ✧ ½ tsp cinnamon
- ✧ ¼ tsp salt
- ✧ ¼ tsp baking powder

For Cinnamon Swirl:

- ✧ ¼ cup sugar
- ✧ 1 tbsp cinnamon

Source: Adapted from a recipe on www.lacremedelacrumb.com

INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line an 8-inch bread pan with foil. Grease foil generously. Combine zucchini, sugar, oil, vanilla, and eggs in a large bowl and mix well. In a smaller bowl, combine flour, baking soda, cinnamon, salt, and baking powder and whisk to combine. Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients and mix until well-combined. In a small bowl, whisk together sugar and cinnamon for the swirl. Pour ⅓ of batter into pan. Sprinkle with ½ of swirl mixture. Pour another ⅓ of batter into pan, then the remaining cinnamon-sugar. Top with final ⅓ of batter. Bake 35-45 min, until a toothpick comes out clean.