

Fresh from the Farm

One Step at a Time Gardens

Jan Libbey & Tim, Andrew, & Jess Landgraf

Week of October 20, 2008 – Post season #2

Well, we're off to a good start. I've had great fun getting a number of responses last week. Just fuels my desire to keep writing!

New with this issue! We'll be including some photos on our web-posted issues. With Andrew's help, both issues and the photos should be up by weekend.

Jan & Tim

Out in the Field

Finishing a wetland project

A project that seems to have taken quite a long time is complete. Monday and Tuesday, Tim seeded down our latest Conservation Reserve Program area. The area totals almost 14.5 acres and includes wetland and upland area. The upland seeding is a great mix of warm season prairie grasses and flowers. The flower seed was such a colorful mixture that we took some pictures to capture the beautiful range of earth tones – from whites to black with a rich variety in between. The wetland area has had its drainage altered and will hold back a pond attracting ducks, geese, herons, frogs, salamanders, dragon flies and more. The upland area will serve as habitat for songbirds, pheasants, deer, mice, a variety of insects, and more. This project joins the other 17 acres we have in wetland reserve.



The first Wetland Reserve piece we put in five years had been crop ground that our neighbor rented and struggled with during wet periods. After wrestling with tree roots that wanted to fill in drainage tile, we decided to let the tree roots have it and pull it out of crop production. This area now attracts aerial traffic from spring to fall. Ducks and geese as well as blackbirds and herons make regular tracks across the sky between East Twin Lake and our little marsh. The marsh sings loudly with spring frogs and the prairie grasses and flowers we seeded there brighten up the farm landscape starting in early July. Pheasants find shelter in the grasses and cattails all winter as do deer.

Interjecting a little fun

It's true; the farm is not all work. Although some of our crew might be a bit skeptical about this statement, we do sometimes play...really. Such was the case Monday. A number of watermelons too small for market remained at the end of the season. Several of our crew suggested a rotten tomato fight in September. We put them off on that one. But on Monday it was batters up with the melons! Our youngest crew members – Christa, Luke, and Levi – the ones who really wanted a tomato fight – took aim and we have the photos to prove it. After some practice batting with chunks of zucchini, they were ready. The rules were simple – find or make a bat from something on the farm, Jan gets to pitch, and we hit until we run out of supply. Everyone was a very good aim and soon discovered just how wet a smacked watermelon can get!



Photos to look for include several shots of our melon batters and the exploded watermelon.

What's Cooking?

Asian Corn Chowder – from Jeannie Latenser, DM member

Serves 4. Active time 20 minutes, total time 30 minutes. Doubles easily and freezes well.

1 T butter

1 T peeled, minced fresh ginger (or 1/2 tsp dried)

2-3 garlic cloves, minced or pressed

1 medium shallot, minced (optional, can just use more onion if you prefer)

1 medium onion (red or yellow), diced (1 1/2 onion if not using shallot)

1 1/2 tsp dried lemongrass or 1 12" stalk fresh lemongrass, lightly pounded and cut into 4" long pieces

2 cups water

2 cups chicken or veggie broth, or bouillon cubes and water to make 2 cups broth

4 cups corn cut from cob, can thaw if from frozen but not necessary

1/2 tsp sugar

1/2 cup half-and-half

chopped fresh cilantro leaves for garnish (optional)

1/4 tsp chili paste (optional)

1. Melt butter over medium heat.
2. Add ginger, garlic, shallots, if using, onion, lemongrass, and cook until golden, about 8 minutes.
3. Add water, chicken or veggie broth, corn, sugar, salt and heat to boiling over high heat.
4. Reduce heat to low, simmer 5 minutes.
5. Discard lemongrass stalk (if using).
6. Remove and reserve 1-cup soup.
7. In food processor or in a blender at low speed with center of cover removed to allow steam to escape, blend remaining soup in small batches until smooth. Pour soup into large bowl after each batch, returning blended soup and reserved soup to pot.
8. Stir in half-and-half and heat over med-low until hot, stirring occasionally.
9. Serve soup with cilantro and chili paste, if using.

Local Food in the News

Last week I received a copy of Michael Pollan's "Farmer in Chief" – a letter to the President-elect - printed in the New York Times's October 12, 2008, FOOD ISSUE. It is quite a long piece, but raises some intriguing ideas that you might want to check out. While it reiterates many facts available to highlight just how serious our food situation is in the U.S. today, Pollan concludes noting that, ..." the White House should appoint, in addition to a White House chef, a White House farmer. This new post would be charged with implementing what could turn out to be your most symbolically resonant step in building a new American food culture. And that is this: tear out five prime south-facing acres of the White House lawn and plant in their place an organic fruit and vegetable garden."

Scenes and Seasons around the Farm - *Look for the aerial photo of the farm on the website*

Andrew tracked down a fairly recent aerial photo of the farm and has labeled some areas for reference. You can clearly see the established wetland, our vegetable fields, the hoop house, a squiggly trail that wanders through some prairie grass area and ends with a loop on our "Big Hill", the houses, our windbreaks, the pasture, and our adjacency to East Twin Lake. I've asked Andrew to mark the approximate location of the new wetland/CRP area.