The Weekly Note

One Step at a Time Gardens

Jan Libbey & Tim, Andrew, & Jess Landgraf

Week of July 14, 2008 – Box #7

In This week's Box: Green onions, Lettuce, Broccoli or Cauliflower, Snow &/or Snap Peas, Green &/or Yellow Wax Beans

News – No show for our Weed & Eat Party last Saturday. But remember, you are always welcome to come visit the farm and experience the work too ☺. Our list of "To Do's" is longer than our days. This week garlic harvest has been added to the list of harvest and weeding.

Veggie Notes – Cauliflower – Keep refrigerated in plastic bag, but don't wait too long. It's best eaten while it's fresh as its flavor grows stronger with storage. Cauliflower is a good source of vegetable protein, vitamin A, B-complex, C & E.

A tour around the farm revels a number of items yet to come:

Continuing: Green onions, broccoli/cauliflower, Green/Yellow Beans

New in several weeks: Cabbage, Carrots & Sweet corn.

Longer, but coming - Squashes are coming along, loving the heat even if we aren't. No blossoms yet, but gaining good leaf cover.

Leaving the scene: Peas are winding down as the heat is ratcheting up tomato crop is green, but looking great in the hoophouse.

Connections – Anne Munaretto arrived on our farm with the flooding at the beginning of June. Born and raised in a suburb of Chicago, she had no gardening experience prior to her arrival, but has been an avid learner since. She has worked to expand her gardening knowledge as well as her cooking repertoire and has managed to fill the interns' house with smoke from her culinary experiments twice during her past month on the farm. In the Fall, she will return to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to begin her Junior year as an Accounting Major with minors in French and Environmental Studies. She applies her number skills well by answering spontaneous mental math questions in order to calculate the number of broccoli heads left to harvest, etc. She loves the outdoor work the farm offers, Lion the dog, Sass the horse, the silly hens, and Iowa sunsets.

From the Ground Up: The Farm Bill, Part I of IV

(We've asked one of our interns, Ariane, to share a series on the Farm Bill from her experience with the Sustainable Ag Coalition in Washington, D.C.). This past May, Congress reauthorized the little-known piece of legislation called the Farm Bill and updated the laws that govern the production and consumption of food. The majority (about 73%) of the spending in the farm bill supports the food stamp program. About 16-17% pays for government subsidies to farmers, and the remainder covers the costs of everything from conservation programs to rural development. Under the guise of providing cheap and abundant food, the farm bill supports an out-dated farming system that encourages over-production, degrades natural resources, and provides us with unhealthy food. Farmers are paid to grow only a handful of crops (corn and soybeans among them). The more a farmer produces, the more s/he receives in government payments. Producing high-yielding crops requires the use of many inputs, including fertilizers, pesticides, and fossil fuels, all of which pollute our ecosystems and waterways. All of the crops that are produced are either fed to livestock or are turned into a variety of mysterious substances (e.g., high fructose corn syrup) that top the list of ingredients in processed foods and that contribute significantly to diseases such as diabetes.

Farmers' Footnote

This past weekend we began testing the new bed lifter (see photo on website) for the anticipated garlic harvest. After several trials and adjustments, Monday we got a system to work. Previously potato forks were the tool of choice. It was a slow, labor-intensive process and occasionally yielded damaged garlic heads. The bed lifter offers to both reduce labor and improve quality of the heads harvested. The lifter consists of a blade, mounted to follow directly behind the tractor. The blade is lowered, and slices through the soil just below the garlic root level, lifting the garlic for easy pull and removal from the bed. Tim could "lift" a bed in 2 min. and our crew could remove, brush clean, and stack the heads in 20 min.s. This is at least a three to four fold improvement in time and wear on our bodies. A quick note of appreciation: We have received so many notes of support over the past weeks as we focused on responding to the June weather. You may not realize how much these comments mean. Thank you, thank you! Having farm member support has been very helpful.

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