

A Spring in our Step - Feb. 27, 2009

Springtime News from

One Step at a Time Gardens

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We're getting an early start on our regular communication with members through this new Springtime E-newsletter. Look for this every two weeks. Once the season gets underway, we'll transition to the Weekly Note with deliveries.

Out & About on the Farm

It all starts with a tiny Seed

While outside it's still frozen, the season's well underway here on the farm. The summer crew is lined up, seeds and other supplies have arrived, the planting plan is laid out, memberships are coming in, and...this week we start our first batch of plants!

Of the 25 flats we have on this week's schedule, most are broccoli and cauliflower along with a few eggplant. These plants are scheduled for an eight week journey from start to field transplant.

In just a short time - 7-10days - we'll stop and marvel as new plants sprout - breaking through the soil and unfolding their neatly packed leaves. It's always a delight and we cheer the young plants along.

This week launches us into our first phase planting. Hours will be spent dropping seed into small soil-filled flats, watering, and - with the help of heat mats - that magical germination. We'll have more soil to mix and more flats to start next week. This phase of our planting runs from late February to early April with a couple additional start sessions in May and June. By the time starts have slowed down, we'll have oodles of plants inside and outside in the greenhouse.



The return of the green is underway!

1871 was the last year Trumpeter Swans were recorded nesting in Iowa and the location was East Twin Lake - right across the road from the farm. Iowa's swan restoration project has reintroduced swans here and other locations in Iowa. Just last Sunday, amidst some early evening chores, two swans flew past and triggered this swan sonnet.

A Silent Sunday Sundown Sliced by the Sound of Swans Swinging by

Sign up now and Save! *Three easy tips to put your money where your mouth is!*



- ❖ Sign up for your 2009 membership by April 1 and save \$15!
- ❖ Sign up new members (friends, colleagues, church members, family, etc.) and receive credit toward your share! The more ambitious you are, the more you save.
- ❖ Sign up for the Cornucopia share – our new bundle of shares – and save!

Sign up using the Direct Deposit payment and you can spread your share cost over several months

We want you to join us for a great season of eating and encourage you to take advantage of these ways to help make this great food fit your budget .

One Step at a Time Gardens' 2009 Farm Membership forms are posted on our website, www.ostgardens.com , or request a copy, libland@peconet.net. *Sign up now and save!*

From the Kitchen – The story behind our Shepherd's Pie (All local in February!)

It is possible to eat local in February! Pulling from our winter stores, we cooked up a tasty dish of Shepherd's Pie just the other night. Before we could sample this savory dish, we had to gather together the ingredients. They were only as far away as our refrigerator and freezer.

The potatoes – we have most of our supply in an unheated room at the Little House (base of all our vegetable processing in the summer). Remember those subzero temperatures in January and February? Well, the room really is unheated...and we lost some of the crop. Gotta be a bit more vigilant there next year. During the winter, we sort out of this outlying supply and keep a box of potatoes in our basement refrigerator. I've been sorting out the biggest for dishes such as this Shepherd's Pie and leaving the smaller ones for roasts, etc. We plan for our stored supply will keep us through May.

The carrots –Over the years I've been disappointed at our refrigerator-stored carrots turning bitter. Finally putting two and two together and learning more about the importance of ethylene gas producing fruit, I've determined the blame goes to the apple neighbors. Ethylene gas producers, like apples, have to be kept separated from vegetables or they will, indeed, accelerate maturity and lend bitterness. We've become vigilant about segregating carrots from apples and it has been very successful.

The onions – These stored over in our outside cooler and again, we pull a good supply over here and store in our refrigerator. The supply is holding out fairly well. Some have become a bit soft and take some trimming, some have sprouted a bit, but all in all our onion supply is doing well.

The tomato sauce – I really love our roasted tomato recipe. I crow about it when tomatoes are on strong and we don't have time to process just canned tomatoes. Roasting them is extremely satisfying and efficient. So we have more roasted tomato sauce than canned tomatoes. WE just made some lasagna and had just enough sauce leftover to fill the needs of this recipe.

The green beans – well, OK, the ones I used were yellow beans. I know we have green somewhere in the freezer, but I was too impatient to dig too far.

The corn – I began this dish project with no recipe, but found myself at a loss for which direction to take the flavors I was after so I did open a book for guidance. And low and behold they suggested sweet corn. I'm an admitted recipe follower so off to the freezer again to dig out some summer sweet corn. Yum!

The beef – We had a neighbor promise to let us know when his cattle were ready for market; we had committed to a ¼ beef. But before that supply was ready, we had a hankering for some local beef (the only kind we use) and we bought some from Kelli Miller of Sugar Creek Farm near Osage in the late fall. I thawed and browned the beef. I couldn't even find the fat to drain it off!

The herbs – mostly dried herbs from the farm with a touch of cumin - just a hunch about the mix and it turned out quite nicely!

Shepherds' Pie (*recipe modified from Whole Foods for the Whole Family*)

6-8 Potatoes

2 Carrots

½ C. milk – *prepare as for mashed potatoes*

1 lb. ground beef

Brown the ground beef, add onion and other vegetables, tomato sauce and seasonings.

½ C. Onion, chopped

2 C. Roasted tomato sauce

1 C. Green beans

1 C. Sweet Corn

1 t. Salt

Dash pepper

Mixed herbs – sweet marjoram, thyme, cumin – *be creative to suit your taste. Mix together, pour into 3 Qt. Casserole, top with mashed potatoes, and sprinkle with*

1 C. grated cheese – Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes.



News & Opportunities

Jan has the following upcoming speaking engagements – check them out

March 12 – North Iowa Area Community College's Garden Seminar – her session is "Sustainable Gardening", is scheduled in the morning. *Registration fee.*

April 15 – North Iowa Area Community College's Lifelong Learning seminar on Local Food Developments, a noon discussion.

On **March 28** Tim is hosting the Practical Farmers of Iowa's District 2 Winter Gathering, **The Stories on Our Plates**, at the Dows Welcome Center just off I-35 at exit 159 - between Hwy 20 and Hwy 3. – starts 5:30 p.m., bring a dish to share, and your own table ware. Beverages will be provided.

Come for great food, good fellowship and a lively discussion about the stories we find in our foods—from the fields, farms, lakes, and woods, to our kitchens and our tables. Riki Saltzman, Folklife Coordinator with the Iowa Arts Council, will lead an exploration of the cultural stories we serve up each time we sit down to a meal.

By the time you're ready to go home your head and heart will be just as full as your belly !

Contact the farm regarding any of these events.

Invite Jan to come speak to your group about the farm.

Next edition of *A Spring in our Step*: March 9, 2009