

Journey School Food Community CSA Newsletter

Week Eighteen: May 19, 2007

The middle of May! It's hard to believe – I think because the Winter sloshed into us in November and then never let up until May Day. Phew. This week, we've planted broccoli, red cabbage, chard, kale, collard green, and lots of onion starts. The hoop house stands ready for the transplanting of 88 tomato toddlers and the new plastic is enroute for two new hoopouses. One of these will hold peppers and basil, the other will be filled with melons. Last year's melon success totally went to my head! Please feel welcome to stroll through the rows with or without a tour guide and see how your garden grows.

We experienced a high germination rate for the Peacevine tomatos and would like to pass on to you our excess. Peacevine Tomato yields up to 18 red fruit per cluster. Packed with vitamin C and high in gamma-amino butyric acid – a natural nervous system sedative. Peacevine is an indeterminate and will need trellising. Put the two together and you get the name Peacevine. These will do well in a pot on the patio or near the house so you can grab some coming or going – the perfect fast food!

Finally, we had our first “summer meal” this past week and I've included one of our all time favorite flexible recipes – pasta and mustard green salad. I look forward to talking with you all soon, Lisa

Mustard Green Pasta Salad

This can't be any easier or more delicious unless you customize it yourself! Simply prepare your favorite small pasta shapes, rinse and cool in cold water. Cut mustard greens into julienne strips. Add mustard greens and a handful or two of sunflower seeds. Pour salad dressing over the top – start with about ½ cup and add more to taste. Stir gently for an incredible, nutritious, no-hassle Spring side dish. Add extra ingredients such as feta cheese and smoke salmon to make it a great meal.

Watering those Plants or not.....

by Jeff Mathias

It's been drier than normal lately and your plants need a drink. So you put on the sprinkler. As conventional as that sounds it isn't quite right in the organic world. Yes, plant mass is mostly water, but the organic purpose of irrigation is to "maintain the ratio of water to air in the soil to facilitate microorganism activity and provide catalysts or physical agents to transport materials." Lisa and I grew up with conventional wisdom that fertilizer was purchased in the bag according to the N-P-K value, placed in the soil with seeds and the water dissolves the chemicals so the plants could uptake the nutrients and grow.

In the organic farming world we tend not to stress the growing of plants, rather, the emphasis is on growing the soil. Instead of fertilizer we use soil amendments. The amendments don't necessarily feed the plants; they feed the microorganisms that breakdown the soil components into constituents that then "feed" the plants. Irrigation works to benefit the plants, but it is much more critical that the water be provided for the microorganisms. Thought about in this way, organic farming gains more dimension or wholeness. To have a truly rich soil the farmer must farm the microorganisms in the soil and develop a rich and diverse population in order to provide complete nutrient components to the plants. Cultivating those populations is not quick or easy and many farmers wanting to convert from conventional farming to organic can't because the costs associated with conversion. That conversion is the period of time it takes to cultivate the soil food web that we are talking about. Like wise, seeds grown organically and selected for quality under the soil food web grow much differently than seeds grown for quality on conventional farms. Organic seed is better at growing a plant based on the soil food web rather than conventional seed that tends to need an I.V. of nutrients to grow well.

So how do those soil bugs like their water? Organic irrigation theory tends to prefer small amounts of water more frequently to avoid the stress of the water saturation/dehydration cycle. Drip irrigation and other micro systems play well into the soil food web strategy. While billed as a conservation method, drip irrigation can play a vital role in the health of the soil food web giving precise doses of water to the correct spots allowing other places to dry. This subsequently creates a dust mulch preventing weed seeds from germinating.

Tainted feed raises questions about trade policy

by Angela Eckhardt

First in pet food, then hog and chicken feed, the realization that poisons could have entered our farm and household food supplies has given many people pause to reconsider U.S. trade policies.

It's natural for American farmers to be bitter in the knowledge that they can't compete with the influx of low-priced goods, often of inferior quality and produced under substandard labor and environmental conditions. New questions of health safety sparked by tainted feed discoveries may inadvertently boost demand for local food, but that's not really how free trade is supposed to work out.

The gospel of globalization tells us that open markets improve lives everywhere. U.S. workers are supposed to transition to intellectual- and capital-intensive production and enjoy a lower cost of living, while the money that pours into developing nations is supposed to improve their living conditions.

Perhaps the hardest part to swallow is the idea that economic freedom necessarily leads to political freedom. Globalization detractors suggest instead that what's called free trade rests on a bed of oppression, and the wealth generated serves to shore up that unfree foundation.

Seen in this light, open markets may represent the unhealthy kind of co-dependency that addiction counselors warn of. Americans rely on the labor of

impoverished and unfree people abroad to make ends meet here in the land of the free. And in China, human rights abuses go unabated while privileged oligarchies gain more power.

China's problem with land confiscation is a case in point. The U.S. Congressional Research Service's May 2006 report "Social Unrest in China" explains, "In the past few years, a new kind of protest has appeared, caused by anger over local development projects and resulting land confiscation and environmental degradation." See www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33416.pdf for a disturbing catalog of how these protests are ruthlessly quashed.

The China Daily newspaper reported that 34 percent of construction projects in recent years have involved land taken illegally, and "Figures suggest that from October 2004 to May 2005, 50 percent of land used for construction has been illegally acquired."

In addition to increasingly frequent and violent protests related to land thefts, the resulting loss of farmland has become a particular concern. From 1996-2005, China's arable land was reduced from 321 million to 301 million acres, China Daily reported.

Despite vows from the Chinese government to curb the loss of farmland, an additional 758,290 acres of arable land was lost to development in the first 10 months of 2006 according to BBC.

Certainly, landownership - and the ability to grow one's own food - is a more direct path to freedom than what little wealth trickles down to the people from foreign capital. The introduction of property rights in China is

nothing to celebrate when it comes after land has been taken illegally for development.

I've often heard that economic freedom is a necessary part of political freedom, and that seems to hold true. But why isn't political freedom considered a prerequisite for economic freedom? How can an economy ever be described as free when the people are not?

Where American investors and Chinese oligarchies have forged a lucrative partnership under the auspices of free trade, the American farmer might see through their bitterness to discover a sense of solidarity with the Chinese farmer. Neither one seems to be winning in this arrangement.

It's bad enough that America's small farmers can't compete in the global market or even here at home in the face of what appears to be product dumping, with goods produced on stolen land and under near-slave labor conditions.

But Chinese farmers aren't even gaining a piece of the pie that we've lost. Instead, farmers in both countries are losing their land, and with it, their chance at independence.

Now we have to worry about our pets, farm animals and even our fellow Americans eating poison, possibly introduced intentionally to boost the apparent protein content. Without a foundation of human rights, corruption seems to be the biggest commodity traded in modern globalization.

Angela Black writes on farming and freedom issues from her home in Lostine, Ore. She may be reached at angela@freedomolutionsnw.org. The ideas expressed in this column are the author's own.

We had last minute, unexpected openings in our

Summer and Fall CSA

If you know anyone who is interested, please pass on our information to them quickly as the 20 week season starts

**June 9th
to October 20th, 2007**

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