



Sogn Valley Farm

CSA Newsletter June 20-21, 2017

www.sognvalleyfarm.com

Greetings,

It was a pretty decent week on the farm. After the rain we got during the storm ~10 days ago, we've had some sunshine, more moderate temperatures, and even a few more shots of rain to water in some recent direct-seeded plantings. I'm always amazed, though, at how "pent up" weed can explode with growth after a good rain following a long, dry stint. Sometimes it seems like they put on an inch of growth overnight...

I've been more thankful than ever to have made the investment in a cultivating tractor this year. Not only does it allow us to kill the weeds in between rows of vegetables, but the tool we have can even weed *within* the row on sturdy, established crops. The cultivating must be done when the weeds are tiny (which, by the time I got to them last week, they were not), but it has the potential to greatly reduce the amount of hand-hoeing we need to do on crops like broccoli, beans, and peppers.

We have also learned a lesson about the sturdiness of our new caterpillar tunnels, which were discussed in the first newsletter. We have found that the PVC hoops that form the "skeleton" of the tunnels just aren't strong and rigid enough for our windy farm. Over the past month, we have had 7-8 of these hoops snap on windy days. And we're not talking 50 MPH straight line winds during severe storms—these are just windy days with sustained, 20-25 MPH winds. Once a hoop snaps, it not only tends to cause a tear in the plastic where the jagged, broken pipe springs up, but the plastic that was previously held taught by this supportive arch now becomes a sail, causing adjacent hoops to bear even more wind.

Since most of our strong winds come out of the west, we thought we might be able to solve the problem by building our third and final caterpillar tunnel on the west side of the first two, and to build this one with 50% more hoops (4-ft spacing rather than 6-ft spacing). We did this. It didn't work. Three hoops snapped on the first windy day.

SO, what's a farmer to do in this situation? The safest option seemed to be replacing the PVC hoops with galvanized steel hoops. The problem is, not only would this mean a \$600~ investment

What's in the box?

European cucumber: It's our first year growing these long, thin-skinned, mostly seedless cucumbers. They're coming out of our high tunnel, leading to this earlier harvest. I doubt you'll have any trouble finding ways to eat this, but it would go well on a salad or dipped in Basil-Garlic Scape Pesto. Store in a plastic bag to prevent desiccation.

Red radishes: Slice these up for a slightly spicy addition to your salad. Also, don't toss the greens! They can be sautéed like many other cooking greens and have fairly mild flavor. If you're getting bored of radishes on salads, try cooking them. It tames their characteristic spiciness. This will likely be the last of the radishes for the spring.

Green leaf lettuce

Red leaf lettuce: A few of you will receive a second head of *green* leaf lettuce, rather than red leaf, as we came up a few short on red leaf lettuce.

Chives: Put them on your salad or stir them into scrambled eggs when the eggs are almost cooked.

Basil: In my view, here's the first taste of summer! While it's still a bit early to pair with a fresh, local tomato and mozzarella, there are plenty of ways to enjoy this aromatic herb, such as Basil-Garlic Scape Pesto. Basil is optimally stored around 50-55 °F. So the fridge is actually not the ideal place for it. Another option is to re-trim the ends of the bunch and place stems in a jar of water at room temperature.

Garlic scapes: A scape is the developing flower stalk of hardneck garlic plants, and is a versatile, easy-to-use form of garlic. Chop it up finely and use it in sautés, stir fries, or in any other dish where you would use garlic cloves. See the recipe for Basil-Garlic Scape Pesto on the next page.

Kohlrabi: Kohlrabi has slightly sweet, crispy flesh that can be eaten fresh, sliced thinly for a salad, or added to a stir-fry. Peel off the outer, darker green layer before eating, as it is fibrous. The greens can be sautéed and eaten, too!

Strawberries (rotational): The remaining members who haven't yet received strawberries are receiving them this week. These berries show some skin splitting, but not as much as last week.

Sugar snap peas (half shares only): This is the second, and, sadly, perhaps final, harvest of sugar snap peas. Sorry they weren't more bountiful in your shares this year.

On Deck

Each week, we'll give some hints about what new items may show up CSA shares in the next 1-2 weeks. Please note, this is not a guarantee, but our attempt to give you an idea of what's coming up.

Beets — Butterhead lettuce — Scallions — Parsley — Sun Gold tomatoes??

in steel hoops to upgrade only the westernmost tunnel, but also completely re-building the tunnel. With our already seemingly endless to-do list this time of year, taking apart and re-constructing the caterpillar tunnel just wasn't something I was willing to do.

I had already spent hours—no, days—on farmer discussion boards and blogs in which farmers outlined how they built their caterpillar tunnels. I'd seen no mention of what to do in my situation. So, what do I do if I can't make my tunnels strong enough to withstand strong wind? How about trying to reduce the amount of wind that hits the tunnels? We decided to construct a windbreak.

I felt fairly sheepish going into this. I hadn't ever heard of a farmer doing this. The only windbreak I could find information on (aside from a vegetative one, which would require years to grow) was one that used an expensive fabric mounted on a chain link fence, altogether too expensive and too permanent for our needs. So I took that basic idea, modified it to use mostly materials we already owned (T-posts, welded-wire fencing, and landscape fabric) and we set out to build the "wind fence," as we're calling it. Here's how it turned out:



So far, it 's working well and we're seeing a big reduction in wind impact on the tunnels in windy weather. But it hasn't yet been tested in severe weather with gale-force winds, so I'm not celebrating quite yet. But I'm sleeping just a little bit better at night knowing they're at least somewhat protected from wind.

Have a great week.

-Dana

Basil-Garlic Scape Pesto

I've been making basil pesto (and freezing it for the winter) for years. It is absolutely one of my favorite foods. I've never really used a recipe, but I made a batch last night and wrote down a rough recipe. I usually make this in LARGE batches—think a garbage bag full of basil—but this one is scaled more to what you're receiving in your box. I usually blanch the basil, as this makes it easier to process and prevents oxidation (browning of the surface when the pesto is stored), but you can use raw leaves, too. Serve this on pasta, as a spread on a sandwich, in a salad dressing, or as a dip.

Ingredients:

2 cups basil leaves, somewhat packed (you can include the petioles, the thin "stems" that connect leaves to the main stem)
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil (add more if you like a more liquidy pesto)
2-4 garlic scapes, roughly chopped (larger amount for garlic lovers)
1/3 cup almonds
1/3 cup grated parmesan or romano cheese
1/4 tsp salt
Black pepper, to taste

1. (Optional) Blanch basil by submerging in boiling water for a minute or so. Scoop out with a strainer and drain excess water.
2. In a food processor or wide-bottom blender, puree basil, oil, garlic scapes, and almonds.
3. Transfer to a bowl and stir in parmesan, salt, and pepper.
4. If storing for a few days and using unblanched basil, pour more oil across the surface of the pesto in the container to minimize browning.