



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

14th Harvest Week

July 31st – August 6th, 2002

Season 7

What's in the box this week:

Strawberries
Basil
Chioggia beets
Carrots
Garlic
Green beans
Lettuce
Onions
Sugar snap peas
Purslane*
Blue and red potatoes
French breakfast radishes
Summer squash or cucumbers
Sungold cherry tomatoes

*see "Crop of the Week"

and if you have an extra-fruit share:

1 basket of strawberries, 1 of either blackberries or raspberries, and a mixed bag of apples and pears

Crop Update: Last week we picked the first lug of tomatoes, our early apple varieties (both Pink Pearl and Early Gold), and a new pear variety from Michigan which we planted 3 years ago called "Queen Delight". It turns out that this particular variety of pear shows strong signs of resistance to fireblight, a fungal disease which affects most pears here on the coast. With a little more heat we should be able to pack our first and long-awaited tomatoes in early August, and the fruit shares will have their first taste of our early "pome" fruit (apples, pears) this week. Later in August we'll have plenty of apples and pears for our regular shares as well. - Tom

Of Interest

Can we bring the Wild to the Farm? (I welcome your comments.) Every week our Wednesday deliveries take us through the Salinas, Gilroy and Pajaro Valley agricultural areas, and it is striking how far into the distance one can see only cultivated, perfectly straight rows of laser-leveled fields. The banks of the creeks and rivers are denuded, devoid of any natural habitat. Not a shrub or tree in sight poking out through the landscape. Farming has been in place in these areas for so long that we accept it as part of the landscape. We do not realize that these areas used to be covered by lush dense forests, wetlands, and grasslands. Today the Salinas and Pajaro Valleys are centers of industrialized farming practices. The Salinas Valley alone produces a billion dollars worth of lettuce exported all over the world every year. The intensity of these large-scale production systems has destroyed native habitats, displacing populations of native species and polluting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems with agricultural inputs and byproducts.

"We are still in transition from the notion of man as master of the earth to the notion of man as a part of it."
- Wallace Stegner

This is only our seventh season farming, and in the world of farming this means I am still a novice to this art form. With every season however, my faith in the wonderful workings of this land deepens and I realize that treading lightly on the earth gives more strength for nature to work and support the crops we grow. One thing I've noticed is that part of having a healthy farm is not only growing food organically, but also keeping some part of the farm protected as "wilderness" or native habitat. Among fellow small organic farmers in the area there is a sense that organic farms cannot exist within degraded landscapes, that every farm is a small ecosystem unto itself. To achieve a balance between wilderness and fields, to promote a more dynamic interaction between cultivated and native species (plants and animals), we must set aside areas to reestablish riparian corridors, woodlands, grasslands and wetlands.

It takes time to experience the importance of this balance between fields and wilderness, and often as farmers we are so caught up in the economics of food production that wilderness is often left out of the equation or worse -- purposefully removed. Here on the farm I consider our little oak woodland, the hedges surrounding the fields, and our ponds as sanctuaries which fortify the land with their diversity, beauty and wildness. These areas are the home of many birds, insects, frogs, and larger animals such as coyotes, deer, rabbits, snakes, as well as many native plants, perennial shrubs, grasses and flowering plants which will never fit into a financial equation. However, I know it feels nourishing and strengthening when we are surrounded by it, and we feel removed, starved, and cut off when it's lacking. I know these wilder areas play an important role in reducing pest and disease problems among the crops we grow, and one could theoretically measure that, to justify them economically. But shouldn't these areas exist anyway, since they were here before us, forming the basis of this rich and fertile environment that we now farm? To farm sustainably we need to learn to farm with the wild by including and conserving native landscapes among the crops we grow. Maybe one day food will not just be organically grown, but "wildly organically grown." 🌿

Crop of the Week

Ready for some "wild" vegetables? You may think, now Tom is really going over the edge, trying to turn us on to eating weeds. But believe it or not, many of the weeds growing in your garden are edible. In fact, there are over one hundred species of edible weeds in the United States. You can see what I am getting at. Live Earth Farm is turning into an edible weed farm (now there is a niche if I've ever heard one!). These "wild vegetables" (now he is already calling them vegetables) are among the most nutritious, rich in antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, fibers, and healthful fatty acids. Sure, try to tell that to my kids who won't even eat broccoli, you might say. But all of you baby lettuce fans have been eating these wild vegetables for a considerable time now.

How about arugula, or dandelion? Some other ones you might have heard of in some fancy restaurant are "vegetable amaranth," purslane, lamb's quarter, curly dock or plantain. Many of our common vegetables used to be weeds at one time. They were simply improved with breeding to make them larger, more succulent, and more palatable. In this week's share I would like to introduce you to a "wild vegetable" which has been eaten for centuries in Europe called Purslane and which grows readily among our "other" vegetables. Purslane has been eaten in Europe as a treatment for arthritis and to promote general good health. Studies have shown that people who eat a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids have lower cholesterol levels and fewer heart problems. These acids are found in seeds, wheat germ, and vegetable oils. Among vegetables, purslane has more omega-3 acids than any other vegetable, and six times the vitamin E content of spinach. Purslane leaves have a mild nutty flavor and are a popular salad ingredient in Europe. They are eaten extensively in soups and salads throughout the Mediterranean. In Mexico and among our workers purslane is eaten in omelets, as a side dish, or in soups and stews. Enjoy and don't be shy to try!!! 🌱

Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Contact the newsletter editor.

Wow, a search online turns up all sorts of staunch purslane supporters in remarkably varied ethnic arenas – Turkish, Mexican, African, Chinese, Indian, Iranian, Israeli, Lebanese, Moroccan, Greek... whew! I've pulled a couple simple recipes to try, but this is by no means a new-age weed-as-food trend (except maybe in our country!). Looks like it has been around a long time elsewhere. If you want to see what I mean, enter the words "purslane recipe" in a search engine like Google. - Debbie

Mexican Purslane "Verdolagas"

2 tsp. olive oil
2 tsp. flour
1 C cooked* verdolagas, drained, chopped
2 tbsp. diced onion
4 oz. diced green chiles
2 fresh tomatoes, chopped
shredded jack cheese as garnish

In skillet, heat oil and brown flour. Add verdolagas and onion. Cook for one minute. Add green chiles and tomatoes. Blend well. Cover to simmer a few minutes. Serve with shredded jack cheese.

*how to 'cook' was not specified, but I'd speculate that it was boiled or steamed. Since it is supposed to be also a tender

salad green (the tips, anyway), I'm guessing it doesn't need to be steamed for long, maybe 5 minutes? – Debbie

Ham and Purslane on Rye (found online at "the Recipe Cottage")

2 slices rye bread toasted or plain (or whole wheat, pumpernickel, or sourdough)
a few slices good quality ham
handful of fresh purslane, stems included
mustard/horseradish mix

Instead of lettuce or pickles on this ham sandwich, you're using fresh purslane. It's quite flavorful. The slightly crunchy flavor of the crisp, succulent purslane stems helps to make this a satisfying sandwich.

Greek Potato Salad with Purslane and Crumbled Feta Makes 4-6 servings

6 med. potatoes, boiled, peeled and cut into thick slices or sixths
2 C of purslane, coarsely chopped
1 med. red onion, finely chopped
1/4 C finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
1/2 C Greek extra-virgin olive oil
Juice of 1 lemon
1/2 C strained Greek yogurt
2 tsp. coarse mustard
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
A dash of cayenne

Live Earth Farm Calendar

Fri - Sun Aug. 2 - 4	<u>Children's Mini Camp</u> 7pm Friday - noon Sunday (registration required)
Sat. Sep 21	<u>Fall Equinox Celebration</u> 3pm - 9pm
Sat. Oct 26	<u>Halloween Pumpkin U-Pick</u> all day
Nov. 20/23	(Weds/Sat) ***Last box !***

1/2 C crumbled Greek feta cheese

Combine potatoes, purslane, onions and parsley in a salad bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Whisk together olive oil, lemon juice, yogurt and mustard, pour over salad and toss gently. Garnish with crumbled feta and cayenne. Serve immediately.

Mediterranean Yogurt Salad with Purslane and Cucumbers

6 small organic cucumbers, peeled, seeded and shredded
3 C purslane, large stems removed, washed and drained well
2 tbsp. ea. chopped fresh mint, cilantro and flat-leaf parsley
4 C strained Greek sheep's milk yogurt (or any thick Mediterranean style yogurt)
1/4 C of extra-virgin Greek olive oil
3 garlic cloves, crushed with a knife blade
2 tsp. ground coriander seeds
Sea salt and ground black pepper

1. Wring the liquid from shredded cucumber by squeezing a small bunch of it at a time between the palms of your hands. Place the cucumber, purslane and herbs in a large bowl. 2. Whisk together the yogurt, olive oil, garlic and coriander. Season to taste with salt. Add the yogurt mixture to the vegetables and mix well. Season to taste with black pepper or additional salt. Serve cold.