



# Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

6th Harvest Week

May 7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Season 12

**What's in the box this week:** (content differences between Family and Small Shares are underlined and italicized; items with a "+" in Family Shares are more in quantity than in Small)

**Family Share:**

Red Ace beets

Cauliflower (Lakeside)

Chantenay carrots

Chard

Japanese cucumbers (Nagamini Farm)

Fava beans +

Garlic +

Lettuce +

Mizuna (bagged)

Red mustard greens (bagged)

Onions +

Spinach (Lakeside)

Strawberries (1 bskt)

**Small Share:**

Broccoli (LEF/Lakeside)

Chantenay carrots

Chard

Fava beans

Garlic

Lettuce

Mizuna (bagged)

Red mustard greens (bagged)

Onions

Strawberries (1 bskt)

**Extra Fruit Option:**

3 baskets of strawberries [Weds members get 4, for last week's mixup!]

Here at the farm we know how important pollination is. Every year in early Spring when our Warren Pear orchard starts blooming, a small swarm of human pollinators swing into action. Armed with long dust poles, they puff pollen dust on thousand of flowers several times over the entire orchard during the annual 10-14 day blooming period. For some still mysterious reason, this particular pear variety has poor fruit set when left to its own devices, so to ensure a reasonable harvest, every year we engage in this cumbersome courtship between us and the pears.

Like most crops we farm, pears typically rely on bees for pollination, and the most common and favorite bee among farmers for crop pollination is the honeybee. Everyone is troubled, however, by the recent collapse and disappearance of honeybee colonies (it is so significant it has been given a name: Colony Collapse Disorder or CCD). Although nobody knows what's causing it, the threat is being taken seriously since the losses are quite dramatic all across the United States and Canada, in Europe, and even as far south as Brazil. Here on the farm we have two beekeepers, and only one, Greg Muck, believes to have lost one hive to CCD this winter. Steve Demkowski from Willow Glen apparently didn't lose any of his approximately 10 hives. There is a lot of speculation about the causes of CCD; whether it is from parasites, fungal diseases, pesticides, poor nutrition, habitat loss, or microwaves emitted by cell phone towers, nobody knows for sure.

The honeybee is truly one of nature's workhorses. What makes them so popular, besides the honey they share with us, is that they are able to pollinate a large number of different plant types. Due to their social nature, they tend to recruit other bees to visit the same plant several times during their blooming period, increasing the chances of higher yields of fruit or seeds produced per plant. Avocados, kiwis, apples, berries, squashes, cucumbers and broccoli are just a few of the more than 90 fruits and vegetable that depend on bee pollination. Imagine what the content of our shares would look like if pollination disappears. If alternative pollinators don't pick up the slack (in pollination loss due to CCD), we might face a "slow food" diet of bread and water.

As we already know (or should know), too much of a good thing, all the time, will eventually get you into trouble. So relying solely on one kind of pollinator for the bulk of the crops in our current food supply is proving to be pretty risky. Just like it's wise to grow a large diversity of crops to achieve a more sustainable farming system, we also need to encourage a more diverse population of pollinators. One way to do this is by increasing the population of native bees. Supposedly there are more than 3500 species of solitary bees in North America. Although native bees only make small amounts of honey (which is not collectable), the sole purpose of attracting them would be for pollination. Native bees can be divided between soil dwellers and wood dwellers. Soil dwellers include the bumble and digger bees, and forest dwellers include the mason (or blue orchard), leafcutter and horned faced bees. The best way to encourage and maintain their presence is to preserve wild land (habitat), set aside un-

*"Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now."*

- Goethe

## Live Earth Farm 2007 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more info)

Fri. May 18	<u>Four Fridays Mataganza Garden Internship</u> (5/18, 5/25, 6/1, 6/8)
Sat. Jun 9	<u>"Outstanding in the Field" Dinner</u>
Sat. Jun 23	<u>Summer Solstice Celebration</u>
July 10-14	<u>Teen Adventure Camp</u>
Aug 24-26	<u>Children's Mini-Camp</u>
Sat. Oct 20	<u>Fall Harvest Celebration</u>

cultivated areas (undisturbed hedgerows and field borders) and grow suitable crops to attract and increase their numbers, making sure to provide sufficient flowering/pollen producing plants to 'feed' them year round, especially through the winter.

Thanks to Steve Demkowski we are starting to introduce native bees into the environment here at the farm. Steve set us up with nests of mason and leafcutter bees this spring. These nests seem pretty simple to make; Steve's design consists of paper drinking straws about 6" long, capped on the back end, then packed into an old coffee can which is attached to a post about 5 ft. above ground. The tubes need to face east, so they get a couple hours of morning sun, and also need some sort of roof to keep off the rain (and shade them so they don't get *too* much sun and cook!) During our summer solstice celebration in June, Steve has offered to give a tour of the farm, and introduce interested members to his hives and shed some light on the importance of both honeybees and native bees. Maybe we can get him to do a workshop on how to make (and maintain) your own native bee houses!

Although Einstein has been quoted as saying "without bees, humans will only have 4 years to live," he probably referred to the popular honeybee and didn't think of the many native bees, some with pretty cool names such as Shaggy, Digger, Fuzzyfoot, and Hornface.

Do you ever get this feeling of complete insignificance in the face of all the news and information we are being bombarded with about the Earth's environment going to shambles? That the collapse of honeybee colonies are just another example of a "canary in a coal mine?" It is true that individually we may be insignificant, however the exciting thing is that everywhere you look a lot of 'insignificant' people are coming together, adding up to a real force of change, creativity, and hope for the future. I believe in that force and the opportunity it offers for our children. – Tom

## Crop Notes

Throughout May we will mostly be cruising through a lot of the same crops, so I thought I'd give you a picture of what's to come. We should have fava beans for another 3 weeks or so, but then they will be done for the season, so enjoy them while you can (or if you feel you are getting too many, see Debbie's prior newsletters for how to freeze them). The Chinese cabbage and fennel which I photographed two weeks ago (see Week 4 newsletter) are coming along nicely, and are probably going to be in your shares in another 2 weeks or so. Things start to ramp up in June, as the first new red potatoes will be coming in (followed by yukon gold and yellowfin later in the season); the radicchio should be ready to harvest sometime in June, maybe even some summer squash, and by the end of June we should see the first of our green beans. Sometime in July we should have leeks (I'm leaving them in the ground to get nice and fat). Lastly, for you 'Extra Fruit' members, many of you ask "when will it be anything other than strawberries?" That would be sometime in June, when the plums and blackberries start to ripen. And the 'Strawberry Bounty' option? Probably late May. 🍓

## About Family Shares

Sometimes members find extra goodies in their Family Share boxes which are not listed under "What's in the Box." This is an added bonus to being a Family Share member, as when we pack the boxes, we always pack the Family Shares last, so if there is anything we have extra of... you get it! You may recall there was broccoli in last week's boxes that wasn't on the list. This is an example! 🥦

## Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Contact me at [deb@writerguy.com](mailto:deb@writerguy.com) or 408.288.9469.

Check out my **recipe database** for a comprehensive list of recipes 'by key ingredient' (pictures too!). Go to our website and click on "recipes" (on the left).

### Mizuna and Mustard Greens

I'm going to sound like a broken record to longtime members because I usually give the same advice about both of these greens each year (if you want to see what they look like, see pictures on the recipe database page of the website; click on the camera icon to the left of each item's name). To prep both greens, dump into a sink of cold water and swish around, then transfer to a salad spinner, separating out and discarding any yellowed leaves, or the occasional grass or weed. Spin greens well to remove excess water, then spread out on a cotton dish towel to air dry. Place in a plastic bag, gently squeeze the air out and refrigerate. If you're in more of a hurry, after washing them just roll the greens up, towel and all, and store in the plastic bag. The towel will wick the water off the greens (you don't want to store wet greens in a bag; they rot more quickly that way). It sounds like a bit of work, but you'll be so happy you prepped them this way when, during the week, you can just open your

fridge and they're ready to go!

How do I use them? I never get beyond using them as a salad green. I love them this way! Mix them together with torn lettuce, and maybe some spinach, for a lovely simple green salad with your favorite dressing.

I welcome anyone's ideas and recipes for cooking either of these greens if that's how you like to use them. I expect they'd be good just simply sautéed in olive oil with a sprinkling of salt and used as a bed for fish or chicken. They would cook up much like spinach: quickly, and down to nothing in volume when cooked!

### Chantenay Carrots

We're getting a new type of carrot this week, an heirloom variety called Chantenay. They are typically shorter/squatter with broad shoulders, narrowing quickly to a blunt tip. Sweet, crunchy and carrot-y, you can use these any way you'd use regular carrots.

### Five Minute Beets

from 'Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone' and submitted by member Lauren Thompson, who says it is a little less cooking time intensive and a little more work in the prep department, but otherwise very flexible.

4 beets, about 1 lb.  
1 tbsp. butter  
salt and freshly milled pepper  
lemon juice or vinegar to taste  
2 tbsp. chopped parsley, tarragon, dill, or other herb

Grate the beets into coarse shreds. Melt the butter in a skillet, add the beets, and toss them with 1/2 tsp. salt and pepper to taste. Add 1/4 C water, then cover the pan and cook over medium heat until the beets are tender. Remove the lid and raise the heat to boil off any excess water. Taste for salt, season with a little lemon juice or vinegar-balsamic or red wine is good - and toss with the herb. If you don't mind the shocking color, you can stir in a tablespoon of yogurt or sour cream, always a good tasting addition to beets.