



# Big Leaf Farm Newsletter Week #10

August 2– August 8, 2009

## Farm News

The big news here on the farm is our new tractor. After using a small walk-behind tiller and hand tools for preparing ground for planting beds, we're finding our new tractor is a big step up. It is already proving its worth by saving us many hours in the preparation of beds for fall plantings. Our tractor will make other tasks possible that we were unable to undertake before, such as mowing our back field that is rapidly filling with weeds such as blackberries and thistles, and for



Our 'new' tractor, a 1976 British-made Leyland 154.

converting our old hay field into growing ground for crops next spring.

I've posted a few more pictures on-line from the month of July. You can find them at: <http://picasaweb.google.com/scattleberry/July200902#>

By the way, Michael Pollen, of 'Omnivore's Dilemma' fame recently published a very compelling article in the New York Times Magazine about food and cooking food. You can find the story online at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/02/magazine/02cooking-t.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/02/magazine/02cooking-t.html?_r=1) Anyone who eats and cooks food should find it interesting reading.

## Cast of characters

- **Summer squash:** You'll see yellow crookneck, yellow zucchini and/or pattypan type summer squash in your share this week. We have green zucchini plants that are only ankle high- they'll be

yielding in a couple of weeks. Check out the recipe section for squash ideas.

- **Sweet onions:** Still going!
- **Lettuce:** This week's lettuce is 'Buttercruch', a butter-head or bibb type. It has a nice blanched heart that is very crunchy when tossed in a salad. Chris particularly likes it very cold right out of the fridge. Sara thinks that the heart would be nice grilled. Cut it in half and grill unadorned until brown and a little wilted and serve with a sprinkling of vinegar, pepper, and sunflower seeds.
- **Carrots:** These are more of what you have been receiving in past weeks but they're getting a little larger. Still very tasty.
- **Eggplant :** The eggplants this week are the Asian type, perfect for stir fries. Eggplants can be hard to grow in our maritime climate. Therefore, most types commercially grown here are hybrids. This one is called 'Hansel' and it is *very* productive. Eggplant pairs well with squash, and can be added to many squash recipes.
- **Tomatoes:** We are solidly into main season tomato harvesting and have 5-6 varieties of heirlooms and 3 varieties of hybrid production tomatoes going out into shares, so everyone gets a mixed selection.
- **Cherry tomatoes:** More of the same- sun cherry and chocolate cherry.
- **Cucumbers**
- **Swiss chard (SE pdx) or beets (O.C.):** A switch from last week. We learned that we didn't grow enough chard for summer use this year. Fortunately we have upwards of 150 starts in the greenhouse ready to be put out soon for fall, winter, and next spring harvest.
- **Basil:** Our basil was inexplicably set back when we set it out, so its harvest is much delayed. Therefore, we only have a few sprigs for each person this week. Bunches in amounts suitable for pesto (along with garlic) should come in a few weeks. This is best stored in a glass of water or vase on the counter.
- **Sweet corn:** The first of our sweet corn is in! We've found it to be very sweet and tender. Please let us know if the ears you get are less than ideal – we're still learning the art of knowing when corn is ready.
- **Cauliflower:** Our cauliflower is finally yielding. Due to the past heat the outside of the curds are a tad tough, so cooking this is recommended. It's great in stir fry or steamed with a pat of butter.
- **Jalapeños:** We're finding that many of you are enjoying these spicy peppers, so we'll keep giving them out. Don't forget that you can freeze them whole for use (much) later if you don't need them right now.



*Chris prepares beds for plantings of winter and spring vegetables*

- **Radishes:** We sowed a row of radishes for a mid-summer test a few weeks ago, and thought we would let folks try them out. Due to the heat they are, well, hot! If you like spicy salad then these babies are perfect. If not, throw them in a stir fry or braise them with the greens.

## Recipes

*This week's recipe section is dedicated to the lovely squash, and it seems like you either don't have enough of them (when they are out of season) or you have too many (when they are in season). There's an old joke that goes "Why do Midwesterners lock their doors only in the summertime? To keep their neighbors from giving them summer squash". We pick squash every 2-3 days here at the farm and refrigerate them until pick-up day, but there are still a few that get away from us and balloon to monstrous size. So we feed them to chickens. But the chickens are growing weary of them, so soon we'll have to start feeding them to the compost pile. In celebration of summer squash, here are a few recipes.*

### **Creamy basil zucchini soup**

*You can treat this more as a concept than a recipe, by adding any number of summer vegetables.*

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 1.5 – 2 lbs zucchini or other summer squash, sliced ¼ inch thick.
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- ¼ to 1 cup packed basil leaves, washed and stemmed
- 2 Tbs sour cream or cream
- ¼ tsp chili powder, plus more for garnish.
- ½ - 1 ½ cup chopped fresh tomato (optional). If you use the tomatoes, you could get by with less basil.

Heat olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and cook until translucent, about 5 min. Add the zucchini and cook another 2 min., then add the broth and basil and tomatoes (if you are using them). Reduce heat to a simmer and cook 20 minutes.

Purée the soup in batches in a blender and pour into a bowl. Add the cream and chili powder and season with salt to taste.

### **Summer squash and herbs in parchment.**

*Cooking vegetables in parchment, foil, or in a covered casserole dish are great ways to hold in moisture and flavor while reducing the amount of fat you need to cook with. This is simpler in a covered casserole dish (with less waste), but using parchment or foil allows you to custom prepare individual servings. If preparing in a casserole dish, don't be afraid to scale up the recipe.*

- ½ - 1 small onion, thinly sliced.
- 2 sprigs fresh basil.
- 2-4 summer squash trimmed and sliced ¼ inch thick.
- 1 Tbs olive oil or a pat of butter.
- Salt and pepper.
- Lemon wedges.

Preheat the oven to 375. Cut 4 parchment paper or foil rectangles, and fold in half, then open again. Add the raw filling and drizzle with oil or add the butter, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Seal the packages by rolling together the open edges and place on a cookie sheet. Bake until tender, about 20 minutes (in a casserole dish it might take a little longer). Serve with a lemon wedge.



As with the previous recipe, you can use this as a starting point. Don't be afraid to add tomato, eggplant, or green beans. This recipe really highlights the true fresh flavor of vegetables right out of the garden.

*From 'How to cook everything vegetarian' by Mark Bittman*