

Community Supported Garden at La Vista

NEWSLETTER

Volume 6, Issue 13 – August 10, 2008

BRINGING BACK BALANCE

Squash bugs and cucumber beetles are two pests that make me ornery. This time of year they're everywhere in our squash-family crops. They stink. They reproduce exponentially. They eat what we want to eat.



When you farm organically and naturally, you approach pest and disease problems more as an opportunity to learn and engage the land in a better way than as a distinct "problem" to eradicate. The idea is that pest outbreaks indicate an imbalance in the ecosystem. Solving the "problem" is a matter of bringing the system back into balance, not a matter of marching off to war to annihilate your enemy, which only creates newer and bigger problems down the road.



Meeting pest challenges naturally (versus hiring a chemical agent to wipe out the life you don't like) takes time, patience, humility and vigilance. The first priority is learning as much as you can about the problem. You need to know the exact cause of a wilting plant. You need to see the bugs in action, memorize their life cycles and environmental indicators, and find out what they really want out of your farm. Then you begin the long process of bringing balance back to the land.

Squash bugs and cucumber beetles have thrived the last few years, increasing their populations and making it difficult to get a full squash and cucumber crop for the entire growing season. They kill our squash-family plants by eating or spreading bacterial disease.

The goal this year has been to slow down the explosion of these pests by confusing them first and then harassing and irritating them, while also increasing the diversity of insects of across the board to perhaps compete with them. I placed the different plantings in all parts of the field and interplanted lots of flowers to bring in bees and induce aromatic confusion. We've covered them with row-cover until bloom to prevent early pest build-up. We've watched for hatching larvae every harvest and sprayed a natural plant-based irritant called pyrethrin to interrupt their life cycle. We've observed closely to identify more resistant squash varieties.

So, how have we done? What are the results? So far we've harvested more squash (but not as many cucumbers) than we ever have at this point of the season. But the real test is yet to come. It's August and pest populations are at their peak. Squash pests are tearing through our current planting, but the next rotation is coming on soon. If you see squash and cucumbers

WHAT'S IN YOUR SHARE?



- Eggplant
- Cucumbers
- Beets
- Basil
- Tomatoes
- Scallions
- Summer Squash
- Cilantro or Dill
- Potatoes
- Onions
- Carrots
-

and U-Pick:

Cherry Tomatoes, Green Beans, Cut Flowers and Herbs

WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

Basil Pesto

(from the *Farm Market Cookbook*)

Use on pasta, baked potatoes, bread, in spaghetti, in chili, as a rub for meat, as a spread for sandwiches, and lots more.



- 1 ½ cups fresh basil leaves
- 2 cloves garlic
- ¼ cup pine nuts
- ¾ cup parmesan cheese
- ¾ cup olive oil

Put basil, garlic and nuts in blender and chop or pulverize until mixture forms a thick puree. Add cheese and mix until really thick. Slowly add oil. Thoroughly mix. Pour into pint jars, put slight film of oil on top and refrigerate or freeze. Can also freeze in ice cube tray. When frozen pull out and place in freezer bag. Just put as many ice cubes of pesto out as needed!

WASHING EGGPLANT



LOOKING AHEAD

Peppers, celery and leeks are around the corner. We've also recently sown salad mix and spinach. Let's hope

increasing in the shareroom then you can know we're making progress. If not, then you know we're learning more for the future. Either way, we win because we're taking care of the land and finding the balance that agriculture desperately needs.

cooler temperatures prevail so we can enjoy these wonderful greens ASAP.

UPCOMING EVENTS

– Next Farm Work Day Saturday, August 16 at 8:00 AM

Community Supported Garden at La Vista

4350 Levis Lane
Godfrey, IL 62035
618-467-2104
www.lavistaCSA.org

Visit our sister site at www.lavistaELC.org for the *La Vista Ecological Learning Center*