



Shareholder Newsletter July 30, 2014 Vol. 15, No. 5

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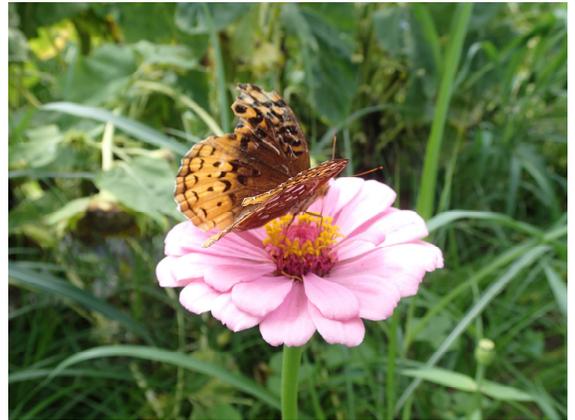
Website: www.waterpennyfarm.com

Farm notes:

- Melons are in their stride! We're very happy with our success growing them so far this year. The second variety, Ambrosia, is in most shares this week. It's ready to eat when there's a sunset orange color on most of the surface, and might still have some greenish patches when ripe. Ripe melons should be eaten or refrigerated, while unripe melons will continue to ripen on the counter.
- Tomatoes are progressing— we'll likely email in August when they're at their peak and available in bulk for canning or freezing.
- Sweet Bell Peppers are growing nicely and will be in the shares soon.



Flowers for Fun and Function



Our farm is full of blooms right now! We're bringing many of them with us to the farmers markets, and selling them on the farm as well. They create a beautiful backdrop for our work. The Old Rag Master Naturalists were on the farm last week counting butterflies, such as this Great Spangled Fritillary (above) and skipper (below) on our zinnias.

Flowers are an important part of our farm's ecosystem, and we have perennials interspersed throughout our farm, as well as annuals like zinnias. Having healthy butterfly, bee, and wasp populations is key to our success growing vegetables. Honeybees, squash bees, and other pollinators are kept content here with lots of extra blooms. Larger praying mantises are at work too, having hatched from eggs on the overwintered stems of many of the unmowed perennial flower areas we have throughout the farm.

Tiny insects like parasitic wasps are at work for us even now. We learned from an entomologist who visited the farm that these tiny wasps will not only control squash bugs, but he also found them stinging some stink bug eggs on our peppers! This bodes well for your later shares.



Bad Basil Blues

Unfortunately all of our basil now has basil downy mildew, and we probably won't have any in the shares for the rest of the year.

Basil downy mildew was first noticed in the US in 2007, when it was discovered in Florida. By 2008 it had spread to many other states, and is now quite common in many parts of the country. Once a planting becomes infected, there is little to do except destroy the planting to try to prevent the disease from spreading to other plantings.

Both of our basil plantings have downy mildew on every plant. We have a few plants in the greenhouse that look good (but not great), and we are trying to figure out a safe place to plant them. The one basil plant by our house does not have downy mildew, so we're wondering if we might find a place in our yard to grow basil safely.

Usually basil appears in most of the summer shares, as it goes so well with tomatoes and is usually very productive in the summer. We are disappointed that we're not able to include more basil this year, and we'll try to do more with some of our other herbs instead. We'll be looking for downy mildew resistant varieties of basil to plant in future years. The Lemon and Cinnamon basil we use in our flower bunches seem to be unaffected by downy mildew.

We're happy to have a new leafy green, Malabar spinach, to add to the shares for the first time this week. It's very nutritious, higher in vitamin C, A and beta carotene than regular spinach, and is great for digestion. It can be eaten raw or cooked (try it on your tomato sandwich!). I don't mind the smooth gel-like texture, but Eric doesn't like it raw. Cooked, its mild flavor is similar to regular spinach but doesn't cook down as much. It's nice to sauté with garlic and olive oil, and finish with a splash of balsamic vinegar.

Tomato-Malabar Spinach Quiche

From Red Ridge Farms

Ingredients

- 10-inch pie crust
- 4 very large tomatoes or the equivalent of plum tomatoes, sliced, gently squeezed and drained for 10 minutes
- 1/2 C chopped malabar spinach leaves
- 1/2 C chopped basil
- 1 small sweet onion, sliced; separate the rings
- 1-2 cloves garlic, minced
- salt & pepper
- 1 C milk or soy milk
- 6 large eggs, beaten
- 4 oz. shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 C diced pan friend potatoes (hash browns) – optional

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Pat crust into pie plate. Flute edges and chill while preparing the rest of the ingredients.

Mix eggs, milk and 1/2 cheddar cheese. Salt & pepper to taste.

Remove crust from the refrigerator. Place tomatoes in an even layer on the bottom of the crust. Sprinkle with salt & pepper to taste. Layer sliced onion rings on top of the tomatoes and evenly distribute the minced garlic. Top with spinach and 1/2 the basil. Layer potatoes evenly on top.

Pour egg mixture evenly over the vegetable layers. Layer with remaining basil and sprinkle the remaining cheddar cheese over the top.

Bake at 400 degrees for 40 minutes. Allow to cool 10-15 minutes until set.