

BURR OAK GARDENS, LLC

To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves- Mohondas Gandhi

This Week on the Farm

Box news! The peas did yield better this week than they did last week, so we were able to increase the amount in everyone's box slightly. We still had to combine the snow peas and the sugar snap peas as an item. The sugar snap pea germination rate was very low, so there were not enough plants there to produce enough pods to be able to give everyone a usable amount. We have had this problem in the past and every year we try a new variety to see if we have better yields. The variety we tried this year seems to do slightly better than previous varieties and we think there may have been an issue with the cup size on our planter this spring where it did not put as many seeds per foot as is recommended. We discovered that one row on our the two row planter seeded at about two thirds the rate of the other row (which planted at the recommended rate). We were able to adjust that for our later plantings of beans and that should not be an issue for us next year. In the mean time, we just have to live with fewer pea plants that what we ideally wanted.

This is the first week of zucchini. The plants are looking great, and we cultivated them last week with the tractor and got between each plant with hoes as well. If the plants stay healthy, you may get sick of zucchini by the end of the year.

This is also the first week for collard greens. A lot of recipes using collard greens focus on southern style cuisine, but you can use collards in recipes that call for kale, chard, or other types of greens.



Photo by Matt Neff

Onto other farm news. We did get hit with some high winds this weekend. The fourth tree of the year went down. Thankfully none of the trees have come down near buildings. One went down in the strawberries and three of them went down over our back road. We will have a lot of nice wood to heat our house with this winter.

The deer have been a significant problem for us this season. First they started munching in our lettuce plantings. They seem to prefer green butter crunches and they literally ate the heart out of every single green

butter crunch transplant we put in the ground this spring (600 plants). They have also damaged the broccoli, eating both the upper leaves and the center stem where the broccoli floret forms. They are in our newly planted strawberry field where they have nibbled leaves on the majority of the plants.

Control is going to be difficult. We have tried electric fencing in the past, but that did not deter them and it is time consuming to maintain so that it actually works and isn't grounded by weed growth or fallen branches. Another option is to apply for Ag tags and open up the fields to hunters. Neither Tyler or I hunt and I am hesitant to open up our fields when they are fairly close to the house (the strawberry field in particular). Tyler wants to spend some time this week looking at all of the options

since we are seeing significant damage and it is starting to impact our bottom line.

We were able to get the fall planting of cabbage transplanted today. We also got our second planting of sweet corn transplanted. This was actually our third planting that we seeded in the greenhouse. The second round of sweet corn got too old in the trays before the ground dried out enough for us to get our transplanter in the field. Since it was too old, we just composted the plants. Every year we usually have one planting of something that gets composted because either the germination rate is poor, or we can't get it into the ground because of weather problems. We have one more round of sweet corn to go in the ground and it will probably be ready to plant late next week.

This Friday we are hoping to get our first round of fall seeding done. We have kale, collards, chard, broccoli, cauliflower, and lettuce to seed in the greenhouse. Much of this can be done with our homemade vacuum seeder that Tyler built a couple of years ago. Basically it is a wooden box that has holes drilled to correspond to the openings on the tray. For a 72 cell tray, there are 72 holes that are evenly spaced. For a 200 cell tray, there are 200 holes. The box is connected to a handheld vacuum that is turned on to provide the suction. The seed is spread evenly over the surface of the box and the seed is held in place over each hole because of suction. The box is then turned upside down and placed over the tray that has already been filled with media. Then the vacuum is released by removing a piece of duct tape. The seeds all drop into the tray and voila, 200 seeds of lettuce have been seeded in about a minute and a half.

Also this week, we are getting ready for our garlic harvest. We need to get the barn cleaned out so we have room to maneuver to be able to hang the lines of garlic. New this year is our undercutter. Tyler gave the specs to a local welder who fabricated the undercutter for us. We were able to get it made for about 3/4 of the cost of purchasing a ready made version. I don't have a photo at the moment, but I should have one later this week once we start harvesting.

The purpose of the undercutter is to "cut" underneath the plants and to lift them out of the ground slightly. It takes the place of using potato forks to loosen the soil. We are hoping that this will reduce the number of people that it takes to harvest all of our garlic. Loosening the garlic with the potato fork is the most physically taxing part of the whole process, so if we can get rid of that part of the process, that would be amazing. It theoretically could be used on other root crops, like carrots. Our first task for it will be to harvest our ridiculous amount of garlic.



I am keeping my fingers crossed for a few days of dry weather so we can get the garlic in the barn. We can't harvest it when it is wet out. That was a lesson we learned a few years ago!

Your Box This Week

Red Head Lettuce- Wash the lettuce and spin or pat dry with paper towel. Spread evenly on a paper towel and loosely roll the paper towel. Place rolled towel in a plastic bag and place in the fridge.

Green Head Lettuce- Same as head lettuce.

Collards- Same as head lettuce.

Scallions- Place in a jar with one inch of water on the bottom. Place in fridge.

Kohlrabi- Remove the tops. Store tops and bottoms in separate plastic bags in the fridge.

Turnips- Same as kohlrabi.

Snow or Sugar Snap Peas- Store unwashed in plastic bag. Wash before using.

Zucchini- Wrap zucchini in a dry paper towel and place in a plastic bag in the fridge.

Zucchini Parmesan Crisps

Cooking spray

2 medium zucchini (about 1 pound total)

1 tablespoon olive oil

1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan (3/4-ounce)

1/4 cup plain dry bread crumbs

1/8 teaspoon salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. Coat a baking sheet with cooking spray.

Slice the zucchini into 1/4-inch thick rounds. In a medium bowl, toss the zucchini with the oil. In a small bowl, combine the Parmesan, bread crumbs, salt, and a few turns of pepper. Dip each round into the Parmesan mixture, coating it evenly on both sides, pressing the coating on to stick, and place in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet.

Bake the zucchini rounds until browned and crisp, 25 to 30 minutes. Remove with spatula. Serve immediately. (From foodnetwork.com)

Caramelized Turnips

3 Cups diced peeled turnips

1/4 Cup water

1 cube chicken bouillon

1 Tbls butter, or more as needed

2 Tbls white sugar

Place the turnips into a skillet with the water and chicken bouillon cube over medium heat, and simmer until the water has evaporated and the turnips are tender, about 15 minutes. Stir in the butter, let melt, and sprinkle on the sugar. Gently cook and stir the turnips until the butter and sugar cook into a brown, sticky coating on the turnips, about 10 minutes. Serve hot. (From: www.allrecipes.com)

Mashed Turnips & Sage

4 large turnips, peeled and cubed

1 large russet potato, peeled and cubed

3 tablespoons butter

2 shallots, chopped

2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage

1 cup milk

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

Add the turnips and potatoes to a large pot of cold salted water. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook until soft and tender, about 20 minutes.

In a small saucepan, add the butter over medium-high heat. Once melted and foamy, add the shallots and sage and sauté until the shallot is tender, the sage is fragrant and the butter begins to brown. Season with salt and pepper. Add the milk and bring to a simmer. (This will infuse the milk with the sage flavor.)

Drain the turnips and potatoes in a colander in the sink. Add the turnips and potatoes back to the pot they were cooked in. Add the hot milk and roughly mash the vegetables. If you prefer a smoother texture, use an immersion blender and puree until smooth and silky. Taste for seasoning, add salt and pepper. (From: www.foodnetwork.com)

Chicken Kabobs w/ Basil, Parsley, & Scallion Pesto

1 package of chicken breasts (roughly 1 1/2 pounds)

4 tablespoons olive or sunflower oil

1/4 teaspoon salt

fresh ground pepper to taste

For the Pesto

1 cup packed basil leaves

1 cup packed parsley leaves

1/2 cup sliced scallions

1/2 cup chopped walnuts (or your favorite nut)

1/4 cup olive or sunflower oil

1/2 tsp salt

fresh ground pepper to taste

a squeeze or two of lemon – optional, but recommended

for a creamier sauce, add 1/4 cup plain yogurt or your favorite mayo

Cut the chicken into large bite sized pieces – aiming for roughly the same size so they cook evenly. You may either pull off the skin or grill them with the skin on. Toss chicken pieces in a bowl with oil, salt and pepper. String onto metal or wooden bamboo skewers.

If using wooden/bamboo you may soak them for up to an hour if you're concerned they might ignite on the grill. Light grill (charcoal or gas) and heat until the grill is hot. Grill kabobs on medium-high for roughly 15 minutes – turning as necessary so that the pieces cook evenly and don't burn. If it seems as though they're overcooked (most people err on the side of overcooking their grilled chicken rather than undercooking) splash some oil onto the kabobs after they come off the grill. Dress the kabobs with the pesto or serve it on the side as a dipping sauce.

For the Pesto

In the bowl of a processor add the basil, parsley, scallions, walnuts and whiz together until the herbs and nuts are finely chopped. Add the oil in a stream as the processor is running and then season with salt, pepper and a or two of lemon to taste. Blend in the yogurt or mayo if desired. You will likely have more pesto than you need. Leftovers may be stirred into pasta, swirled into soup, whisked into a salad dressing, spread on bread for a sandwich, dolloped onto grilled fish or veg or just eaten by the spoonful (From:www.farmerstoyou.com)

Gnocchi w/ Summer Squash, Basil, & Feta

1 pound gnocchi, fresh or frozen

1/4 cup olive oil

3 yellow squash (~1 1/2 pounds), cut into 3/4-inch pieces

3 cloves garlic, chopped

kosher salt and black pepper

4 ounces Feta, crumbled (about 1 cup)

1/3 cup torn fresh basil leaves

Cook the gnocchi according to the package directions; drain and return it to the pot.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the squash, garlic, and 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Cook, tossing occasionally, until crisp-tender, 6 to 8 minutes.

Add the squash to the gnocchi and toss to combine. Serve sprinkled with the Feta and basil. Season with pepper. (From www.realsimple.com)