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Newsletter

Issue #23

BloomingNow!

Features Fresh from the Farm

Community

Supported

Agriculture

From the field...

Summer Solstice in a week— and with it another crazy Pennsylvania Spring draws to a close. The heat wave took us all by surprise, wilting plants and workers alike! The national tomato scare had a few of you asking for tomatoes this week, but really it is only mid-June, and despite the heat, still a little early for those ruby pearls! We finish out the Spring crops, (at least those that didn't bolt in the 100 degree temperatures), with pick-your-own sweet sugar snap peas. We will be

moving into beets and carrots soon, and the hardier summer lettuces. Our winter squash made it into the field this week along with a little later than usual melon planting. If you are walking around the farm you may notice that we decided to paint the plants white! Have no fear! The farmers are not crazy— well maybe a little. The white coating is a kaolin clay that functions as an insect repellent. The squash beetles get the clay on themselves, get annoyed, and hopefully decide to

seek a cleaner dining area. Friends of ours swear by it. Stay tuned for updates. Our potatoes are up and growing well— you can see them across Moyer Road, outside the fence. Some of the varieties are beginning to flower. Deer don't seem to have an appetite for potatoes, a member of the nightshade family. The garlic is about ready to throw up their garlic scapes— if you've never enjoyed this early taste of garlic, you're in for a treat. —Farmer Tom and Tricia

The Blight of the Honey Bee

This tiny creature is responsible for at least one-third of your diet. Fortunately, there are tens of thousands of them at Blooming Glen Farm.

Beekeeper

Martin Billingsley has taken care of the honey bee hive at the farm for the past two years. You can see the white hive boxes at the very back of the fields the next time you are at the farm. The hive is one of 40,000 in Pennsylvania whose inhabitants perform a service that determines the quantity and size of the produce you take home in your share. Along with the farm crew's hard work, some 70,000 honey bees will help to produce your share of strawberries, melons, squashes, cucumbers and more.

Honey bee populations have been slowly declining for more than two decades, but now they may be in serious peril. In just the past two years alone as many as 30% of the

honey bee colonies in the US have mysteriously disappeared or died.

"The farm's bees have not been affected at all," Martin said recently. He believes that the reason other colonies collapsed is that "newer pesticides are causing the bees to become disoriented and unable to return to their hives". Because they are pollinating in fields farmed without pesticides or herbicides, Blooming Glen Farm's bees have very little exposure to chemicals.

Researchers suspect that a virus, Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus, may be partly responsible for the mass die-offs. Others blame mites, single crop farming, chemicals, nutrition and even genetically modified corn as the prime culprit. All agree that the reduction in non-weeded habitat has reduced the diversity and length of time that high quality pollen is available. Martin treats the bees after the honey flow with formic acid, a naturally occurring substance, to prevent varroa mites and tracheal viruses. Pennsylvania's Department of Agriculture credits the state's beekeepers for controlling varroa mites and nosema and

other threats to bees that might suppress their immune systems for Pennsylvania's slightly lower incidence than the national average of colony collapse.

Virginia settlers brought the first honey bees to America 400 years ago continuing a practice that goes back to at least 900 BC. Keeping bees not only pollinated fields but provided an easy way to harvest honey. Of course, there were thousands of varieties of wild or feral bees here already, but none were as efficient pollinators as the domesticated European honey bee. Today, many bee colonies are transported over hundreds of miles to service crops. Each February and March, hundreds of thousands of colonies are trucked into California to pollinate the almond crop which is entirely dependent upon honey bees.

While exact figures are not available, wild native bee and wild honey bee populations along with most other pollinators like butterflies and moths are down considerably as well. Most entomologists recommend that community planners help

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News and Notes:

- **Coming up** new in the share: escarole, peas, garlic scapes and beets!
- We are looking for some caretakers for the **children's garden**. Adopt the color wheel, teepees, the sunflower stroll, or the herb patch. What does this mean? Get a quick lesson on what plants are flowers and what to weed, and come at your leisure.
- Pick-ups are **Tuesday and Fridays from 2-8pm**. Please pick-up on your regularly scheduled day. If you need to switch pick-up days because of vacations or other reasons, prior notice is required. Check the **CSA Rough Guide** for detailed information on how to do this and for other CSA logistics.
- Remember to **bring bags** to the farm to get your veggies.
- We get the occasional email after a pick-up where people have forgotten the names of the veggies they received. **"What's that crinkly green-leaved thing-a-mabob I brought home?"** Might we suggest you make the following site one of your Favorites. A CSA member has been chronicling her farm pick-ups every week for the past 3 seasons on her **Flickr** site. You can see a beautiful photo of the Tuesday share (it might not always be exactly the same as Fridays, but similar), and by moving your mouse over the photo you can see the names of the veggies. Check it out, it's pretty awesome!
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikaelamartin/sets/72157594469496310/>

Basil Oil and Puree

Makes 1 1/4 Cups Basil Oil and 1 1/2 Cups puree. Use oil to flavor salads or add a few drops to soup; a spoonful of puree perks up mashed potatoes and pasta dishes.

2 pounds very fresh basil

2 garlic cloves, sliced

2 Cups extra virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon kosher salt

Remove leaves from stems. You will need about 1 pound. Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Blanch the basil for just *1 second* then drain and plunge into a bowl of iced water to keep the color bright green. Drain and squeeze out excess water.

Combine garlic and 2 tablespoons oil in a small glass bowl and microwave on high 1 minute or cook in small saucepan over medium heat for 1-2 minutes until the garlic is softened. Place the garlic oil and the basil in a food processor or blender and with the

motor running slowly add the remaining oil. Add salt and process to mix.

Place a coffee filter in a fine sieve, set it over a deep bowl and pour in the basil mixture. Allow the oil to slowly drip through the filter then press down on the residue with a spoon until you have extracted most of the oil.

Pour oil into a glass jar or bottle and refrigerate. The oil keeps for one month. Spoon the solids into small covered containers (3 or more) and freeze. The puree can also be frozen in ice cube trays until solid and then individually wrapped and stored in a freezer tray. The frozen puree will keep up to one year.

**Blooming Glen Farm Tip for storing your bunch of basil: Do not refrigerate. Put in a glass of water like a flower bouquet, on your counter, in a cool spot. Change water daily. Pluck leaves as needed.*

Quick Kohlrabi Pickles

2-4 small kohlrabi bulbs, trimmed, peeled, and cut into 1/2" cubes
olive oil (optional)

Rice vinegar (not sweetened, available in Asian grocery stores and some well-stocked supermarkets. If you don't have rice vinegar, you could substitute something rather mellow - white wine or sherry vinegar, or even white vinegar with just a pinch of sugar added)

Kosher Salt

Fresh Black Pepper

Place the kohlrabi chunks in the bowl of a lidded, airtight container. Drizzle with a touch of olive oil, a good splash of vinegar, and sprinkle liberally with salt and pepper. Replace the lid and shake well. Taste and adjust seasoning. Place in fridge, shaking occasionally. They are best after they have marinated for a few hours, and will last about a week, becoming more intensely flavored but still largely retaining their lovely texture.

1 cup (135 grams) of kohlrabi contains a mere 36 calories, 5 grams of fiber, 2 grams of protein, 19% of your daily potassium intake, 10% of B6, and 139% of your daily vitamin C intake.

Excerpted from:

<http://www.elise.com/recipes/archives/007202kohlrabi.php>

Peru, the birthplace of the potato, returns to its roots

The cost of wheat has increased 35% in one year, affecting the price of bread. The constant increase in prices has had significant consequences for Peru, a country which does not produce its own wheat but has to import it.

As a reaction to the soaring prices of flour, Peruvian soldiers have begun to eat bread made from potatoes.

Since January *papapan* (potato bread) has also been served in prisons and some school canteens. The government wishes to save—and also promote—the cultivation of potatoes (a traditional product of the Andean region) to boost domestic agriculture, particularly in the poorest rural areas.

At the beginning of March, Plaza Veja, one of the main Peruvian supermarket chains, started selling *papapan* at a price of 5.10 soles (about 1.15 euros). The state-owned company making the bread bakes a range of loaves and pastries of various sizes every day.

Excerpted from the *Terra Madre* 04/2008, newsletter of Slow Food International.

The Blight of the Honey Bee, continued from page 1

by providing a rich and diverse habitat of forests, meadows and buffers around streams that would benefit all pollinators.

Penn State University and University of California Davis are the leading research institutions examining the problems facing honey bees. The bee blight can be devastating to Pennsylvania's apple growers who grow the 4th largest crop in the US as they are 90% dependent upon bees for pollination. Other PA crops like peaches, melons, soybeans, pears, pumpkins, cucumbers, cherries, and berries are somewhat dependent on honey bees. The number of bee visits to the flowers of crops like watermelons and peppers has a direct correlation to the size and quality of the fruit. Eight visits to the female watermelon flower results in a larger, more symmetrically formed melon than fruit set after only four visits.

Bees and other pollinators are vital to our existence and the survival of our habitat. Fruits and seeds produced by pollinators not only help to feed us but feed 25% of the bird population and as much as 70% of the world's cultivated and native plants require pollination.

What can we do to help?

Support your local beekeeper. Martin has recently installed a second hive at the farm and he is hoping to be able to make some of the honey available to CSA members in July or August. Pennsylvania beekeepers produce 700 tons of honey annually.

Provide nesting areas. Honey bees like hollows in trees and other cavities. Or provide some untreated wood in a warm, sunny spot for nesting materials for leafcutter bees and bumblebees. Provide a shallow dish of water for bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

They are all good pollinators in your home garden (the bumblebees are doing a great job right now with my raspberry bushes) and some research studies show that a diversity of pollinators can spark competition among them increasing the efficiency of all types.

Avoid use of pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, etc. around the home. If bees come in contact with them, it might kill them, or worse, they will bring it back to the hive. If you must spray, try to find one that won't harm bees. Do not spray anything in bloom and do it at dusk when bees are unable to navigate and are safe in their hives. Think twice before killing "pest" bees like carpenter bees; even they are pollinating your garden.

Plant a bee garden. Flowers that bloom for a long time are good choices: Sages (Salvia), Trumpet Vine, Sunflowers, Cosmos, Cone Flowers, Lavender, Jasmine, Rosemary, Coreopsis, Violets, Thyme and Wisteria. They seem to like most blue flowers. Most plants that attract butterflies or hummingbirds will also attract bees. Leave some weeds in your garden; bees don't discriminate.

Eat ice cream! Many of the ingredients in ice cream are dependent upon honey bees from the alfalfa grown to feed cows to nuts and berries. Haagen-Dazs has actually developed an ice cream called "Vanilla Honey Bee" that benefits honey bee programs. Haagen-Dazs ice cream has already donated \$150,000 to Penn State for honey bee studies and \$100,000 to University of California Davis for pollinator research. Kids, teachers and everyone should check out their website for more honey bee information at <http://www.helpthehoneybees.com>.

Written by Mary Kremser, CSA member since 2006.