



June 27, 2008

Newsletter

Issue #24

# BloomingNow!

## Features Fresh from the Farm

Community

Supported

Agriculture

## From the field...

The potatoes are weeded, hooray! It's been a busy week as we moved through our long to-do list, checking a little bit more off each day. The list grows as fast as we can check the tasks off, but that will be the reality for the next few months! We've added a few part time workers to our crew for the summer. Sam returns from last season and is joined by Andy and Emily. We also have a few enthusiastic work shares who help us clean up the veggies on harvest mornings. Hard to believe that just two short years ago Tom and I, with the help of my Dad, did it all ourselves, though with a smaller CSA membership. We are very thankful to have the helping hands! This season we are trying something new- tomato grafting (see accompanying photo on website): a technique that has been practiced for thousands of years of vegetable

production in Japan. In our case it involves grafting the top of an heirloom tomato plant to the root stock of a tomato plant less susceptible to disease. We hope this will result in increased productivity and vigor in our limited greenhouse growing space. We'll keep you posted on how it works out with a late rotation of tomatoes.

The strawberry season was short lived this year- a combination of heat and rain seemed to bring the berries out all at once, then turn them quicker than we all could pick them. They were certainly sweet though! But we still have a few tricks up our sleeve with our late season day-neutral berries still to make an appearance, so you haven't seen the last of the strawberries! We hope everyone has been enjoying the early taste of garlic with those yummy garlic scapes. The

garlic scape is the flower top that stiff-neck garlic varieties send up. We snap them off to promote larger bulb growth, and to enjoy the delicacy that is the scape. Just put "garlic scape recipes" into a Google search and you'll get lots of ideas. Lightly oiled, we grilled them whole with thinly sliced summer squash and some chicken for a delicious late-night dinner. We have harvested the last of our "spring onions" and move into scallions, cipollinis and soon the delicious big white sweet onions, the "Walla Wallas". The pick-your-own flower patch is blooming wonderfully, a beautiful sight in the late evening as the sun sends a warm glow over the field- enjoy all the new flower varieties we are checking out, especially the fragrant sweet peas climbing the trellis next to the echinacea. Aaah, the colors, flavors and aromas of summer!- Tricia

### News and Notes:

- ♦ **Coming up new** in the share: *fennel and tomatoes, dill and cilantro!*
- ♦ **Pick-up** will be as normally scheduled on **Friday, July 4th, from 2-8pm.**
- ♦ **Mark your calendar: Wednesday, July 23, 6-8pm, hands-on Cheesemaking Class** at the farm. *More info on page 2 of the newsletter. We need a minimum of 8 people to make this class happen, so come on out!*
- ♦ **Carla Klimuk's ongoing Herbal Classes** at the farm. *Check the online calendar for dates and times. Come check out a class- we need your support to continue to offer these interesting, educational and fun opportunities! Next class Saturday July 12, 11-2, Natural Hair and Body Care, \$30 per person.*
- ♦ **Just a reminder to please try to put in your work commitment hours** at this time of the year, as opposed to waiting until the fall when we need the help less. *We have had very low, to no, turn-outs for our scheduled work opportunities. We can't tell you how much meeting the CSA members and feeling your added energy and appreciation can do for the morale of our work crew! Not to mention you will glean a whole new level of understanding of the process of bringing food to your plates. Thanks to those of you who pitched in the past few weeks and tackled some weeds and straw mulch! You can check the **online calendar** for dates and times of work opportunities. Thanks and we hope to see you in the fields soon!*

## Solar Panels take Blooming Glen farmhouse into 21st Century

Altadena Energy & Solar (AES) designed and implemented a combination solar water and space heating system for the Blooming Glen Farm farmhouse. The goal of the project was to explore the efficiency of solar for water and space heating in South-eastern PA. This type of system is seldom done in the US, but has become very popular in Germany.

The farmhouse at the Blooming Glen Farm was the house of the original settlers of the land, and dates to the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. The hallmarks

of these houses are the thick walls made of field stone in a very primitive mortar. The walls approach 3 ft thick at the base and provide thermal mass which retains the coolness of the springtime into June, and can retain the heat of the summer late into the Fall. The original farmhouse is split into two twins, one of which includes a newer addition which unfortunately does not have the same stone wall properties of insulation. The house enjoyed a complete renovation in the mid 1990's when the attic was insulated, windows and doors were re-

placed and the heating, water and electrical system were completely updated. The heating system was a conventional oil burner (circa 85% device efficiency) with fin tube baseboard throughout the house. The entire house uses approximately 1000 gallons of heating oil per year, the cost of which has risen from under \$2000 per year to over \$5000 per year. Based on the economics of heating and the desire to provide more energy efficiency and green heating, the owners of the

*Continued on page 2*

## Sweet-and-Sour Swiss Chard

1 cup vegetable, chicken or beef stock or water  
 1/2 pound chard, stems and ribs removed (save them for another recipe), leaves torn into bite-sized pieces.  
 4 scallions, thinly sliced (about 1/3 cup)  
 Salt  
 Freshly ground black pepper  
 2 tablespoons white vinegar  
 1 tablespoon light brown sugar  
 1 tablespoon finely chopped or grated fresh ginger  
 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1. Bring the stock or water to a boil in a large skillet or pot. Add the chard and cook, stirring, until it is wilted, about 1 minute.
2. Drain the chard, saving the cooking liquid. Transfer the chard to individual plates and garnish with the scallions. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
3. Pour the reserved cooking liquid back into the skillet or pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil it until it is reduced to 1/3 cup, about 8 min. Add the vinegar and brown sugar. Stir in the ginger and red pepper flakes. Boil for 30 seconds. Remove from heat and spoon the mixture over the chard. Serve immediately. Serves 4.

From *Farmer John's Cookbook: The Real Dirt on Vegetables*

## Solar Panels at the Farmhouse, *continued from page 1*

farmhouse, Henry and Charlotte Rosenberger, decided to have a solar system integrated into the house to provide domestic hot water, and a portion of the space heating for the house.

The solar system was integrated completely into the house's hot water and space heating systems. The solar system is comprised of 640 square foot flat plate collectors mounted on a concrete ring foundation that faces slightly East of South. The array was tilted up to 50 degrees, so that it would generate more of its heat in the fall, winter and spring and less in the summer time. The system transfers the heat collected by the collectors and transfers it via the propylene glycol heat exchange fluid to a 360 gallon central heat storage tank array in the basement. This heat is used directly in the house's radiator system during the heating season. The heat is also used to instantaneously heat the domestic hot water on demand using a solar hot water module. This type of system architecture is becoming widespread in Germany for the hygienic properties of instant hot water production as well as well the architecture's ability to combine space and domestic water systems using solar.

The solar system was just turned on in the first weeks of June. We will be gaining operational experience with the system over the following year. The system performance was modeled ahead of time and was predicted to yield over 50,000 kbtu's of heat annually, which is equivalent to approximately 500 gallons of heating oil burned in

## Chilled Cucumber-Mint Soup

4 cucumbers, peeled and chopped (about 4 cups)  
 1 to 2 cups water  
 2 cups plain yogurt (or 1 cup plain yogurt combined with 1 cup sour cream)  
 1 clove garlic, peeled and smashed  
 Several fresh mint leaves  
 2 tablespoons fresh dill or 1 teaspoon dried dill  
 1 tablespoon honey  
 1 to 2 teaspoons salt  
 2 scallions or chives, finely chopped (about 1/3 cup)

1. Combine the chopped cucumber, 1 cup water, yogurt, mint, dill, honey and 1 teaspoon salt in a blender or food processor. Puree the ingredients, adding more of the water until the soup is a consistency you like. Season with more salt to taste.
2. Transfer the soup to a large bowl and chill for several hours. Garnish each serving with chopped scallions or chives and a little finely chopped dill.

Serves 4 to 6.

From *Farmer John's Cookbook: The Real Dirt on Vegetables*

## Let's Make Cheese!

*Cheesemaking Class by Susan Hess to be held at Blooming Glen Farm, Wednesday July 23 from 6-8pm. \$30 per person. We need a minimum of 8 people to hold this class- so please send Tricia an email at [info@bloomingglenfarm.com](mailto:info@bloomingglenfarm.com) to let us know you plan to attend. Thanks!*

It's so easy to make fresh soft cheese with cow or goat milk and culture. We will go through the simple processes of making a fresh cheese like Chevre or Fromage Blanc. Unlike cheese that needs to be aged and carefully tended for months, fresh cheeses are ready to eat within a day and can be easily incorporated into any kitchen routine using basic kitchen equipment. After the basics are discussed and demonstrated, we will get our hands pleasantly 'dirty' by rolling freshly made cheese into fresh chopped herbs. At the end of the class we will taste a variety of herbed cheeses!! Informational handouts and resource list included. Packets of culture and prepared cheeses will be available for purchase from the instructor.

*Susan Hess is a therapeutic herbalist and hobby cheesemaker who resides in Pottstown, PA. Since 1997 Susan has grown a fine line of handcrafted herbal products at the "Farm at Coventry". She also enjoys sharing her knowledge through educational workshops, weed walks, and teaching gardens at her 8 month "Homestead Herbalism" foundations course. For more information about Susan's products, classes and workshop, please visit [www.FarmatCoventry.com](http://www.FarmatCoventry.com)*

## White Bean and Garlic Scapes Dip

1/3 cup sliced garlic scapes (3 to 4)  
 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice, more to taste  
 1/2 teaspoon coarse sea salt, more to taste  
 Ground black pepper to taste  
 1 can (15 ounces) cannellini beans, rinsed and drained  
 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, more for drizzling

1. In a food processor, process garlic scapes with lemon juice, salt and pepper until finely chopped. Add cannellini beans and process to a rough puree.
  2. With motor running, slowly drizzle olive oil through feed tube and process until fairly smooth. Pulse in 2 or 3 tablespoons water, or more, until mixture is the consistency of a dip. Add more salt and/or lemon juice, if desired.
  3. Spread out dip on a plate, drizzle with olive oil, and sprinkle with more salt.
- Yield: 1 1/2 cups  
 From *The New York Times*, 6/18/08