



SUNSHINE IN A BOX



SOLAR FRESH

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CSA Week 2

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Chaos

Every moment spent away from the gardens leaves me wondering what new surprise I will come back to, for better or worse. This time of year when the day lengths are longest, growth is accelerated and it's an optimal time for my small nudges to have a big impact. Noticing more chaos in the world around you? It could be the long day lengths as we approach the summer solstice, or it could just be the laws of the universe at play.

Every year the garden evolves differently as the season progresses. As a gardener, if you just plant and then sit back to see what happens, you can witness chaos theory in action. As plants reach toward their natural inclinations the complex system at play can both help and hinder their performance. Abundant rains would help plants grow but weeds would soon choke them out. The weeds that do grow inform about soil nutrients and structure, creating a feedback loop. (cont. p. 2)

Farm Updates

The last week or more has been characterized by dry windy weather putting to the front of my mind the

elements of wind and water (in this case lack of water). The two elements, when combined have a powerful drying effect that is only remedied temporarily with well water irrigation. Despite my best efforts I am hoping for some soaking rain soon.

Veggies continue to grow and develop. More summer veggies like cucumbers and tomatoes are a ways off yet, however summer squash and basil are ramping up.

I am starting to plant fall veggie transplants and hope I will be able to get them in early this year after garlic harvest, which also looks like it might be a little early. Enjoy garlic scapes while they last- thankfully they do store for several weeks.



Week 2 Veggies

Radish: Remove tops for storage. Radish tops are loaded with minerals and can be lightly sautéed or roasted with radishes. Fresh radish roots can be thin sliced to top almost any dish.

Garlic Scapes: This flower stalk of the garlic plant is removed before blooming to encourage bulb growth. They are a nice way to add garlic flavor to a dish by finely mincing the scape. They can also be grilled or sautéed or preserved by pickling. Remove the flower stem and discard.

Mint: Store upright in a glass of water after removing rubber band, or in a ziplock with moist paper towel. This herb can be used in savory dishes as well as a flavoring for beverages. Makes a cooling and refreshing ice tea. Hot, dry weather is perfect for drying high moisture herbs like mint.

Romaine Lettuce: A perfect lettuce for hot weather. Crisp texture and slightly bitter flavor hold up to a creamy dressing or thinly chopped for tacos.

Spring Mix Lettuce: Triple washed lettuce is ready to go for a salad. You may want to place a dry paper towel in the bag with the lettuce to absorb extra moisture.

Zucchini (full shares): The first of the season!

Peas (full shares): More coming soon!

(Chaos from p 1) Dry conditions would keep weeds back but starve plants of the cosmic glue holding it all together. As a gardener, I can provide irrigation or carefully hoe around a small seedling to help that plant reach its goals. Even better if I could use rainwater or mulch collected from within the system to avoid the loss of energy and reduce the need for outside inputs. Even though I can't predict exactly what will happen, I can use patterns and feedback loops to decide my next move, trying to set off a ripple effect of desirable outcomes.

Sometimes what appears orderly is actually disordered. A system will always tend towards a sort of 'efficient randomness' and there is a fine line between too much and too little outside manipulation. An orderly system is one that produces more output than the energy used; a disorderly system uses more energy to maintain than what is put out. Some examples of this are a manicured lawn or monoculture row crops.

As the spring and summer unfold the outcomes of effort I made weeks and months ago are starting to materialize, and it is nice when the chaos and sometimes seemingly disorderly system starts producing surplus energy in the form of leaves, roots, pods and more. The spiraling fractal pattern of lettuce leaves is an easy way to visualize the patterns and outcomes set in motion when a tiny seed goes to the point of chaos, germinates, and grows. If I become complacent in this system, the maximum benefit is not achieved. Are there areas where you have become complacent and a little nudge can get the system back to producing at a surplus? Are there areas where you are spending too much time forcing a situation? Now is the time to harness the power of chaos to make your systems work for you.

Recipes

Mint Infusion Two Ways

Several sprigs of fresh mint
Quart Filtered water

Hot: Place mint sprigs in teapot with strainer or in a large mason jar. Heat water and pour over mint leaves. Cover and steep for about 10 minutes. Strain out mint leaves and enjoy with honey and lemon or just plain.

Cold: Place mint sprigs in large mason jar. Cover with water and place in fridge for several hours or overnight. Strain and enjoy cold with lemon.

Rice Salad

2 cups cooked rice, cooled
2 cups packed spring mix and chopped romaine lettuce
washed and dried well
1-2 sprigs fresh mint, leaves removed and finely chopped
1/4 cup olive oil

2-4 tablespoons of apple cider vinegar (to taste)
1 finely minced garlic scape (flower removed)
Salt and pepper to taste
1 teaspoon honey or sugar

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and toss to combine. Makes a cool and refreshing side dish. Serves 4.