



News from the Farm



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Monroe, Wisconsin

Driftwatch Wisconsin

WHEN we purchased Grassroots Farm's 40 acre site in September 2007, we specifically were searching for, among other requirements, a property that could be isolated from pesticide applications, whether aerial or ground. No land is completely protected geographically, but some sites are more vulnerable than others. The farm property seemed to have some very good qualities in this regard. Property owners who share a boundary with us are, essentially, a "mixed bag." The mile of perimeter fence line breaks down approximately like this:

- 1320 feet of residential, without herbicide or pesticide use;
- 660 feet of residential, with minimal herbicide use;
- 1320 feet of roadside
- 800 feet of CRP acreage (no agricultural activity on property)
- 1180 feet mixed woods and meadow

Our only concern about drifting herbicides or pesticides might stem from

property on the opposite side of the 60 foot wide local road buffer, a conventionally farmed 80 acres, presently in a commodity crop rotation. So, while we were considering the purchase, I called the local Farm Service Agency office and asked about a way to let local applicators know that our property would be managed organically. I think they thought I had lost my mind. There was no system in Green County for this information. We were out of luck... on our own.

Then, through a casual mention in one of the many professional newsletters we read, we learned about Driftwatch™.

Driftwatch is coordinated and managed by Purdue University in Lafayette, IN, and was designed by the Office of the Indiana State Chemist and the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering. This registry is meant to help pesticide applicators, specialty crop growers, and stewards of at-risk habitats in Wisconsin and four other Upper Mid-

west states, communicate more effectively to protect pesticide-sensitive areas. Driftwatch is not intended to be a registry for homeowners or sites less than half an acre.

On the Driftwatch website is an easy-to-use Google Maps™ interface that clearly shows applicators the locations of registered areas so they can take the appropriate precautions before they spray.

Sensitive crop areas registered on this site include certified organic crops, grapes, fresh market fruits and vegetables, beehives, and more. The background layers of the map also include other important information for applicators such as the location of wind turbines, atrazine prohibition areas, and outstanding and exceptional water bodies.

We are registered and spreading the word about this vital communication tool to prevent accidental crop contamination by others.



Special points of interest:

- Driftwatch Wisconsin
- Red Peppers, Purple Tomatoes...
- Sandhill Cranes Passing Through
- Recipes using this week's produce
- Questions and Answers

What is in your share box this week?

Spicy Greens Mix

Green Beans

French Muskmelon *

Sorrel

Sweet onions

Cucumbers

Basil

Tomatoes

Arugula

Garlic

A few notes: Melons should not be refrigerated

until cut for best flavor.

Even then, take the chill off cut pieces before serving.

Please let your melon get ripe before cutting!

* Featured Produce this week



A young melon plant in the hoop house in May. Melons are long-season/warm temperature fruits.

Red Peppers, Purple Tomatoes, and Fall Leaves

A LITTLE like the Sesame Street song lyrics, “One of these things is not like the other...” you wouldn’t think that yellow peppers, purple tomatoes, and the beautiful sugar maple leaves in the newsletter header have something in common. Besides the obvious, all members of the plant family, the elements of this list of three all contain specialized plant pigments.

The green pigment Chlorophyll, along with several red and yellow pigments, help to capture as much light energy as possible. Other functions of pigments in plants include attracting insects to flowers to encourage

pollination.

As fall approaches, in response to the change in the length of days and nights and the cooling temperatures, green chlorophylls are suppressed and the alternate pigment colors of yellow and oranges become dominant on the surface of the fruit or leaf of the plant. If the plant is bearing a fruit, the color change is also accompanied by a ripening of the fruit in preparation for dropping it for seed.

In particular situations, the “normal” leaf pigment is other than green. Think about the Amethyst

Basil or red leaf lettuces in the market garden. For these plants, the genetic pattern suppresses the dominant green chlorophyll without the trigger of changing days and nights.

Plants with other than principally green coloration have the same nutritional values as their green counterparts. However, they sometimes do not have the same disease resistance or the same keeping qualities as other varieties that are green.

We are always trialing new crop varieties and you will see, from year to year, the best of our trials, including red peppers and purple tomatoes.

Sandhill Cranes Passing Through

As if this weekend wasn’t enough confirmation that fall is fast approaching, this weekend Sandhill Cranes were both in the air and on the ground at the farm. These very large birds, some as tall as 48” from head to foot, are beautifully graceful in flight and I never stop being in awe of the choreogra-

phy over head when their flock passes overhead.

Sandhills occasionally stop at the farm, awkwardly wading through the pasture grasses. This wary bird (males and females look alike) was wondering what that person was doing trying to snap a picture with a cell phone camera.



Questions and Answers

Q. I’m confused about green tomatoes. Are the tomatoes you are supposed to fry really the same tomatoes “Green Zebra” and “Green Everlasting” we are selecting for our share box?

A. I held a rather long-winded discussion with a market stand customer on this same question last Wednesday, too.

The confusion lies in the English language, actually. Green tomatoes for frying are actually unripe tomatoes. They HAPPEN, also, to be the color green, most of the time. However, in a past tirade about the miserable orbs passed off as tomatoes in the grocery, I have made some remarks about the cus-

tom of picking tomatoes green (unripe) and subjecting them to ethylene gas to turn their color to red. Ripe they are not... just red colored unripe (green) tomatoes.

Thus, just to add to the confusion, if you are forced to purchase grocery store tomatoes, feel free to try your “fried green tomatoes” recipe because those tomatoes are, indeed, unripe and that is what makes the best fried tomato.

Q. How much longer will tomato season last?

A. Our first frost is usually mid-September, after that its all down hill for tomatoes.

A Word About Handling Hot Peppers:

This week’s box has a jalapeno pepper! If you aren’t a “hot pepper” user, don’t be intimidated. The flavor is pleasantly hot if you remove all the seeds and white inner ribbing where the capsicum oils are most abundant. Be careful not to wipe your eyes while handling hot peppers; pour a 1/4 c. of milk over your fingers when done and then wash well with soap and water. The milk helps dissipate the pepper oils and the soap and water finish the job. Use a paper towel to wipe dry because any oils left on a regular towel can be wiped onto someone else.

Featured Produce— French Muskmelons

Also termed cantaloupe, muskmelons are in the same family as cucumbers. Their sweet taste places them in the dessert category. Our French muskmelon differs from cantaloupe in the color and shape of the melon. The flesh is the same orange color, however.

Cantaloupe melons are a good source of potassium, Vitamin A, and folate.

In general, melons are a long season crop and are started in

the greenhouse early in the spring in order to have fruit before frost.

Without a doubt you will find your locally-grown cantaloupe the best you have ever eaten because, like the tomato growers, melon grower pick the fruit unripe and, although some ripening goes on after harvest, the full flavor potential of a fruit picked unripe is never reached. Wash the surface of the melon before cutting for safe handling.



Melon Ice Dessert

A great “make ahead” for an easy dessert treat on a hot evening.

- 4 pounds cantaloupe, shredded (one medium melon)
- 1 (12 fluid ounce) can evaporated milk
- 2 qts. water
- 1 1/4 c. white sugar

Mix cantaloupe, evaporated milk, water, and sugar in a large pitcher, stirring until combined. Refrigerate

for 10 minutes. Divide shredded cantaloupe and liquid into molds and freeze until firm, about 6 hours.

Try ice cube trays, cup cake tins (slip a wooden popsicle stick in after about 3 hours, while still soft/frozen), or those old individual gelatin molds your mother gave you that you have never figured out what to do with.

For an easy dessert, unmold and

place into serving dish. Macerate raspberries with sugar. Sprinkle with whole fresh raspberries and pour over the maceration. Garnish with a mint leaf or two.

You may substitute honeydew or even watermelon in equal quantities for this recipe. If you try watermelon, you may reduce the water to 1 1/2 qts. for better flavor.

Makes lots!

Chilled Cantaloupe and Lime Soup

This refreshing soup may be served in a tall glass garnished with a lime wedge as a non-alcoholic alternative to a cocktail, too.

- 1 lg., ripe cantaloupe
- 1/2 t. cinnamon
- 2 T. lime juice
- Fresh mint sprigs
- 2 c. orange juice

Remove seeds from melon and cube

the pulp. Place pulp and cinnamon in the electric blender and puree.

Combine orange and lime juices and stir into the puree. Chill and serve in chilled soup bowls. Garnish with mint sprigs.



Melons starting to take over in the hoop house last month. They have filled the entire 30' x 70' space by now.
