

THE TIPI TIMES

August 4, 2011, week 12 (green EOW)

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THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Red watermelon
(or a small watermelon
plus a small muskmelon)
Sweet corn, 9 or 10 ears
Carrots, 2 lb
Cherry tomatoes
Plum OR slicing tomatoes,
about 2 lb
Bell peppers, 2
Lettuce
Walla Walla onion
Basil
Romano beans, 0.6 lb OR
a few zucchini

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:*

Romano beans, melon,
tomatoes, peppers,
onions, basil and more

Is the sweet corn sweet? We've been thinking a lot about how hot weather affects our vegetable crops. Heat pushes many of our crops to grow more quickly. The effect is amazing on heat-loving crops. Our eggplant field has set an amazing number of fruits and we think it will be a banner year for eggplant. The tomato plants have exploded with lush growth. The watermelon, pumpkin and winter squash fields are more dense than we've ever seen. Vine growth has been so rapid that the tips are pushed into the air when vines from adjacent rows meet between the rows. It looks like a collision of two tectonic plates. The lush vine growth should result in great watermelons, because there are more leaves to support each melon.

We've found that the summer crops are full-flavored, but not quite as sweet as normal. Warm nights are the problem. Plants create sugars during daylight hours, then lose some of the sugars through respiration at night. The warmer the night, the more sugar that is used up. For example, we think this week's sweet corn is a little less sweet than it would have been. The ears are beautiful and the flavor is full and excellent, very 'corny.'

Those who receive Romano beans this week will notice that many pods are short. Temperatures were very high while the plants were blossoming, and not all pods pollinated fully. We think our pepper crop last year was compromised by hot weather. Apparently, pepper pollen dies when the temperatures are too high, so we had a poor crop last year. We're not sure yet about this year. Peppers set their fruits in flushes. If flowering was not at its peak during the recent heat wave, then pollination shouldn't be a problem. We will know soon enough.

Beth and Steve

Menu Ideas. I do not think you will have trouble figuring out what to do with this box of food. Two pounds of early tomatoes? Make a tomato salad with sweet onions, basil and peppers. Steam the corn. Snack on cherry tomatoes. Enjoy a fresh salad of lettuce, peppers and carrots. Have watermelon for dessert. We've been enjoying simple meals like quesadillas accompanied by fresh salads or sweet corn. Summer food like we've sent this week is easy to use up.

Veggie Notes. **Plum OR slicing tomatoes** - You should wash all your tomatoes to remove residues from organic sprays we apply to control diseases. Some plum tomatoes have a whitish film. This is residue from a clay suspension that we mist over the plum tomatoes to protect them from sunscald. A recent storm left the plants tilted over, exposing the ripening tomatoes to sunscald. A fine layer of clay protects them. We did not spray the slicing tomatoes. Their foliage is lush enough to cover the tomatoes. Just wash the clay off.

Bell peppers - Everyone will receive two bell peppers. One is green, the other is a new lime-green variety we're trying this year. It tastes just like a green bell pepper, but the color contrast is fun.

Walla Walla onion - Please refrigerate your Walla Walla onions. They are in good shape now, but the recent hot weather has shortened their storage life.

Basil - We have discovered that Japanese beetles love basil. They like other crops too but cluster most strongly on the basil. As the season progresses, we will have to tolerate some minor damage to the leaves. It will be the only way to continue to deliver basil.

Melons - A few members will receive a small watermelon and a small muskmelon. Many of the muskmelons have cracks. They are a particularly tasty variety, but susceptible to cracking. Please trim off the cracked areas and use the rest. It is worth the effort.

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