

# Erehwon Farm

Week 4-June 28, 2009

## Farmer Tim Reports

### Hello from a hot and windy Erehwon!

Last week's extreme heat was tough on our cool weather crops that had been doing so well, but it gave a much needed boost to the hot weather crops that had been lagging weeks behind where expected. Lettuce bolted and turned bitter overnight, but tomato plants grew a foot or more and the pepper plants are very happy. This may mean a slightly smaller harvest this week, but is good news in the long run as other crops catch up.

During the past week we've continued our weekly planting and transplanting of vegetables. We also made progress in mowing pathways which contain weeds that are ready to go to seed. Canada thistle is particularly nettling to us, reducing crop yields and giving sharp incentive for shorts-wearing helpers and visitors to keep moving on down the rows.

This week our major objective will be to finish mowing the weeds where we can and lightly tilling the four acres of new land where the number of large stones on the surface and ridges from plowing make mowing a bit of a chore. It's also time to get the rest of our tomato cages placed before the plants get too large. In addition, we'll begin connecting our drip irrigation lines and mulching beds with dry leaves to retain moisture and control new weeds. The tips of our garlic plants are beginning to turn brown and we expect to harvest in two to three weeks.

### Erehwon Phenomenon

We have always felt that Erehwon is a special place but it may be more special than we thought. Over the past several years we have noticed that



gravity around the farm has been steadily increasing. Farmer Tim, who sometimes flattens himself next to the surface of a planting bed in order to better focus his eyes so he can determine whether, among the mass of weeds, there are any seedlings visible, has noticed that it's much more difficult to raise back to a standing position. Farmer T. can also be seen occasionally sitting alongside a planting bed on his wheeled "Garden Buddy", propelled in reverse by pushing with his feet, and inserting seedlings into the newly tilled soil by his "scoop, thrust, and pinch" method, with passers-by marveling at his quickness and accuracy. Sitting down is a "letting go" action which results in his hind end plopping down on the little cart, its frame creaking and groaning as he settles in. Going vertical is a major effort accomplished by a reverse rollover followed by a pushup from the seat of the cart. Bucky the Farm Dog, historically a great help with this process, now stands idly by, snickering at the farmer's intense efforts and puffing sounds.

The Farm Dog also seems affected by the gravity increase. Calls to "Pull me up!" or "Get my hat!" which the wind has blown away toward the cornfield, are usually met by a sour look that implies, "You're kidding, right?" The gravity increase may be even more pronounced at the bottom of large

holes dug to insert himself into the cool soil. His jowls, long ears, and eye bags droop down and he appears unable to rise from that position. As the farm watch dog, he is obligated to bark when he senses visitors, but not to get up to greet them. For some reason, the gravity effect seems a bit less when he lies down in his little wading pool. Be forewarned: visitors--with the possible exception of young children--are hereby notified to be aware of this phenomenon and to take precautions.

Thanks for your contributions to our compost pile at the farm. We are building a new hot pile and last Friday the temperature at the core was 141 degrees, just where we like it.

This week will bring more raspberries and strawberries, onions, kale, Swiss chard, herbs, new potatoes, garlic. Last Friday we were able to supplement our offerings with a couple of items from our friend Mike O'Leary's farm in Marengo and we'll try to do the same this week. Mike sells at the Geneva Green Market with us. To learn more about his farm, go to the GGM website:

<http://www.genevagreengreenmarket.org/education/introducing-oleary-farm/>

Farmer Tim

### In your boxes this week

This week we should have raspberries and strawberries, onions, kale, Swiss chard, herbs, new potatoes, garlic.

### Wish List

The list: Yard waste: Are you paying money to have bags of yard waste taken away? You can bring it to the farm when you pick up your veggies and contribute to our compost pile.

## Delivery Schedule

12:30-1:00—van leaves farm  
1:30-2:00—delivery at Lombard  
2:00-2:30—delivery at Wheaton  
2:30-3:00—delivery at Bartlett  
3:00-3:30—delivery at Elgin

All times are approximate and may vary.

## Pick your own!

The raspberries and strawberries are now ripening in full force. If you want more berries than you get in your share you are invited to contact Izabella Kowalski (who helps manage the berry patch at the farm) at [bellesberries@gmail.com](mailto:bellesberries@gmail.com) to reserve a time to come and pick your own! Strawberries are offered at \$2.50 per pound and raspberries at \$4.00 per pound. This is the perfect time to pick and freeze for the winter and to make all your summer berry recipes.

## A Peck of Pickles

Tuesday, July 21st

Be prepared for pickle production after attending this basic instruction class. Tammy will review the basics of pickling, while focusing on everyone's favorite bread and butter pickle. Each class participant will leave with a jar of pickles.

Who: Tammy Caltagirone

Where: Inglenook Pantry, 11 North Fifth Street, Geneva, Illinois

When: Tuesday, June 23rd

Time: 6:30pm-8:30pm

Cost:

\$40 per person/member  
\$50 per person/non-member

Sign up by emailing [genevagreengreenmarket@gmail.com](mailto:genevagreengreenmarket@gmail.com) – give your name, email and phone number

## Ways with Herbs

Tuesday, July 28th

They smell so-o-o-o good and they have lots of health benefits, too, but what on earth do I do with them? Learn how to use fresh herbs in cooking and teas, how to dry herbs and store them, and how to infuse vinegars and honey. Sample mint tea and other herb-enhanced dishes and take home a jar of herbed vinegar.

Who: Beth Propst of Erewhon Farm

Where: Inglenook Pantry, 11 North Fifth Street, Geneva, Illinois

When: Tuesday, June 23rd

Time: 6:30pm-8:30pm

Cost: \$20 per person/member  
\$30 per person/non-members

Sign up by emailing [genevagreengreenmarket@gmail.com](mailto:genevagreengreenmarket@gmail.com) – give your name, email and phone number

## Pastoral Summer Picnic Dinner & Sunset Contra Dance

July 18

On Saturday, July 18 at 6 pm Garfield Farm Museum will hold a Pastoral Summer Picnic Dinner and Sunset Contra Dance to raise funds for the restoration of Garfield Farm Museum's oldest building, the 1842 hay and grain barn.

Held in the courtyard of the historic Atwell Burr House, the dinner and dance will be bathed in the rays of the setting summer sun, overlooking the rolling, green fields of Garfield Farm. The dance will be led by Donna Benkert of the Acorn Folklore Center in Warrenville, IL as she calls the steps to the sound of dulcimers, penny whistle, guitar and fiddle by the Scantlin' Reunion.

Contras are performed by two lines of dancers facing each other. Partners dance up and then down the lines just as partners travel around a square in

quadrille or square dances. These dances are easy to learn and before the evening is out, one will have danced with all the other dancers.

These were the traditional dances that everyone in America knew from the 18th to the early 20th century. Gentlemen and ladies might attend a dance alone but with proper introductions by the dance managers, they would partner for the evening yet dance every other 4 or 8 musical beats with their neighboring partner.

With dinner items made from scratch by Inglenook Pantry, chicken and pork, to homemade pies, the evening will recall simpler times. Good food, merriment and dance are just the spirit needed to help meet Garfield Farm's preservation responsibilities. Timothy Garfield felled and hewed the timbers to his barn in February of 1842. On April 13, 50 neighbors came to raise the framing and by June, siding and roofing of this classic 3 bay English barn were completed. Twenty two years later, Robert Garfield, heir to the farm, moved this barn to a hillside where a dug out cellar added space for a herd of dairy cows. In 1911, it was moved to its present location and adapted for use as a machine shed. An anticipated \$300,000 restoration of this rarity will be taken on in phases. A lightning strike in 2005 damaged the southern peak of the roof but before it can be restored, the south wall of the barn needs attention. A goal of \$40,000 to undertake this work has been set. The evening's dinner and dance will kick off this effort.

Tickets for the benefit are \$75 apiece with \$50 going to the barn's restoration. To reserve tickets call 630 584-8485 or e-mail [info@garfieldfarm.org](mailto:info@garfieldfarm.org). Sponsors for the evening are also welcome and should contact the museum.

## Swiss Chard

*from The World's Healthiest Foods*

Swiss chard, along with kale, mustard greens and collard greens, is one of several leafy green vegetables often referred to as "greens". It is a tall leafy green vegetable with a thick, crunchy stalk that comes in white, red or yellow with wide fan-like green leaves. Chard belongs to the same family as beets and spinach and shares a similar taste profile: it has the bitterness of beet greens and the slightly salty flavor of spinach leaves. Both the leaves and stalk of chard are edible, although the stems vary in texture with the white ones being the most tender.

Both the leaves and the roots of Swiss chard have been the subject of fascinating health studies. The combination of traditional nutrients, phytonutrients (particularly *anthocyanins*), plus fiber in this food seems particularly effective in preventing digestive tract cancers. Several research studies on chard focus specifically on colon cancer, where the incidence of precancerous lesions in animals has been found to be significantly reduced following dietary intake of Swiss chard extracts or fibers. Preliminary animal research also suggests that Swiss chard may confer a protective effect on the kidneys of those with diabetes through reducing serum urea and creatinine levels.

If vegetables got grades for traditional nutrients alone, Swiss chard would be one of the vegetable valedictorians. The vitamin and mineral profile of this leafy green vegetable contains enough "excellents" to ensure its place at the head of the vegetable Dean's List. Our rating system awards Swiss chard with excellent marks for its concentrations of vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C, magnesium, manganese, potassium, iron, vitamin E, and dietary fiber. Swiss chard also emerges as a very good or good source of copper, calcium, vitamin B2, vitamin B6, protein, phosphorus, vitamin B1, zinc, folate, biotin, niacin and pantothenic acid.

Read more about Swiss Chard at The World's Healthiest Foods web site:

<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=16>

### A Few Quick Serving Ideas:

Wrap Swiss chard leaves around your favorite vegetable and grain salad and roll into a neat little package. Bake in a medium-heat oven and enjoy this nutrient-superstar alternative to stuffed cabbage.

Toss penne pasta with olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, and cooked Swiss chard.

Add zest to omelets and fritatas by adding some steamed Swiss chard.

Use chard in place of or in addition to spinach when preparing vegetarian lasagna.

### They'll Never Say "No" to Chard Again

This is one of my favorite recipes. A market customer gave me the idea last year and then, with my usual inability to leave a recipe alone, I added to it. Farmer Tim says we can have chard every night if I cook it this way.

Swiss chard  
Onions  
Olive oil  
Garlic  
Raisins (or dried cranberries, cherries, or blueberries)  
Walnuts (or sliced almonds, pecans, or pine nuts)  
Crumbled blue cheese (or feta)

Chop onions and chard stems in olive oil. Cover and cook about ten minutes.

Slice chard leaves and add to skillet. Cover and cook about five more minutes.

Chop garlic and add. Stir and cover again for about five minutes.

Add raisins and nuts. Cover for about 3 more minutes.

Turn off and add cheese immediately. Stir and let sit for a few minutes until cheese begins to melt.

This would also be good with kale, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, pak choi, komatsuna, or broccoli. Or a mixture of the above.

### Swiss Chard with Onions

2 teaspoons olive oil  
2 cups thinly sliced onion  
8 cups torn Swiss chard (about 12 ounces)  
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion; saut\* 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Add chard; stir-fry 10 minutes or until wilted. Stir in Worcestershire, salt, and pepper.

## Drying Herbs

I get questions about herbs all the time, so I thought I'd start putting in a little information about herbs for the next few weeks. This week it will be about preserving herbs through drying.

Air drying herbs is not only the easiest and least expensive way to dry fresh herbs, but this slow drying process also doesn't deplete the herbs of their oils. This process works best with herbs that don't have a high moisture content, like Bay, Dill, Marjoram, Oregano, Rosemary, Summer Savory and Thyme. Moisture dense herbs, like Basil, Chives, Mint, Tarragon preserve better in a dehydrator, or try freezing them. Use a microwave or oven to dry herbs only as a last resort. These actually cook the herbs to a degree, diminishing the oil content and flavor.

### How to Air Dry Herbs

1. Cut healthy branches from your herb plants.
2. Remove any dry or diseased leaves
3. Shake gently to remove any insects.
4. If necessary, rinse with cool water and pat dry with paper towels. Wet herbs will mold and rot.
5. Remove the lower leaves along the bottom inch or so of the branch.
6. Bundle 4 - 6 branches together and tie as a bunch. You can use string or a rubber band. The bundles will shrink as they dry and the rubber band will loosen, so check periodically that the bundle is not slipping. Make small bundles if you are trying to dry herbs with high water content.
7. Punch or cut several holes in a paper bag. Label the bag with the name of the herb you are drying.
8. Place the herb bundle upside down into the bag. (This keeps the herbs from getting dusty.)
9. Gather the ends of the bag around the bundle and tie closed. Make sure the herbs are not crowded inside the bag.
10. Hang the bag upside down in a warm, airy room.
11. Check in about two weeks to see how things are progressing. Keep checking weekly until your herbs are dry and ready to store.

Dehydrator drying is a fast and easy way to dry high quality herbs because temperature and air circulation can be controlled. Pre-heat dehydrator with the thermostat set to 95°F to 115°F. In areas with higher humidity, temperatures as high as 125°F may be needed. After rinsing under cool, running water and shaking to remove excess moisture, place the herbs in a single layer on dehydrator trays. Drying times may vary from 1 to 4 hours.

Check periodically. Herbs are dry when they crumble, and stems break when bent. Check your dehydrator instruction booklet for specific details.

An ordinary gas or electric or microwave oven can be used for quicker drying of herbs. Care must be taken, for herbs can't be desiccated too quickly at too high a temperature or much of the flavor, oils, and color of the herbs would be lost. When drying with a conventional oven: place the leaves or stems on a cookie sheet or shallow pan and warm at no more than 180 F for 3 to 4 hours with the oven door open. Some people recommend not using the heating function at all, but rather turning the oven light on and closing the door. The heat from some oven lights is enough to dry the herbs. Check frequently.

Whatever method you use, when the leaves are crispy dry and crumble easily between the fingers, they are ready to be packaged and stored. Dried leaves may be left whole and crumpled as used, or coarsely crumpled before storage. Remove any stems. Husks can be removed from seeds by rubbing the seeds between the hands and blowing away the chaff. Place herbs in airtight containers and store in a cool, dry, dark area to protect color and fragrance.

