

# Erehwon Farm

Newsletter Week 12–August 22, 2010

## Farm Report

### Hello from Erehwon!

Dare we hope for cooler, less humid weather? It keeps showing up in the long range forecast but not materializing. Here at the farm the plants are loving the warm weather and so are the weeds. The workers—not so much. It's bound to cool down soon. At least the big tomatoes have started to ripen. By Friday of last week we had an overabundance of the guys and ended up donating a lot to the food pantries. (See below for special tomato offer.) The cucumbers seem to be slowing down a bit (aww-w-w--bet you're all disappointed not to be getting tons of cucumbers, right?) The summer squash seem to still be going gangbusters, though. No relief there.

This is the time of the year when we traditionally note the changing of the guard. Many of our summer workers leave, and we take on new help for the fall.

This year, the first to leave was Amanda. Amanda came to work for us early this spring as an intern and then became an employee. She put in a lot of effort organizing the seed starting. She also took our veggies to the Oak Park Wednesday market for several weeks and made a connection to the [Dill Pickle Food Coop](#) in Logan Square. A woman there has been buying a small fraction of our cucumbers to make pickles. Very soon we hope to be carrying them at the Farmer's Markets. Anyway,

Amanda has left for California where she is going to a culinary school that teaches cooking from a nutritional and holistic perspective. We can't wait to hear about her progress.

The next to leave was Joe. Joe is Jeff's older brother (more about Jeff later) and worked for us this summer while taking summer classes at Waubensee. Joe could fix anything with an engine and did some good repair work on our tractors. We hope nothing breaks down while he's away (fingers crossed). Joe left about a week ago to return to Southern Illinois where he is pursuing a degree in business. Go, Joe!

Friday was Claire's last day. Claire is our good friend Betsy's daughter and started helping Beth at the Batavia market several years ago. Last year she asked if she could work at the farm several days a

week and we took her on. Claire may be tiny (probably doesn't weight 100 pounds soaking wet), but she is a great worker and good at organizing things. She more than pulls her weight. She's headed back to high school where she will be a junior. She will continue to help Grandma Beth at the Batavia market through the end of the season, but we won't be seeing her again on the farm this year.

Josh and Jeff will be leaving us this week to return to high school. Josh lives across the street from us and mows our lawn in the summer and shovels the driveway in the winter. He had been doing this for a couple of years when Tim asked if he wanted to work on the farm a bit. He did and loved it. So the following year (last year) he brought his best friend Jeff over and asked if we had a job for him, too. These two boys do the work of men, and both love working on the farm. In fact, in their spare time you can often find them down at the John Deere dealer in Elburn checking out the tractors. They've already asked if they can work on the farm on weekends and school holidays. We'll be seeing more of these two, for sure.

So who does that leave on the farm? Well, there's Farmer Tim, Grandma Beth, Brian, and Eric. Now Grandma Beth and Farmer Tim don't do too much of the hard stuff any more, Brian works a couple of afternoons a week. Good luck Eric! The other day we overheard Farmer Tim asking him if

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he wanted to put up a cot under the trees. We think he was joking ... Actually, Eric's sister Wendy has agreed that when her kids go off to school she would be willing to work some on the farm to pick up the slack. If anybody else is feeling time hanging heavy on their hands with their kids off to school (Grandma Beth looks skeptical) you are always welcome to volunteer at the farm. The weather *should* be more conducive to working outside.

## At the Farm This Week

### This week's produce:

Lettuce, cherry tomatoes, peppers, chard, kale, beans, melons, potatoes, cucumbers, summer squash, and big tomatoes.

### Special this week:

**A very large bag of tomatoes for the asking. Delivery subscribers e-mail me by 9:00 am Tuesday morning. Farm subscribers—just pick them out when you come or pick them yourself.**

### Pick Your Own:

-Squash blossoms: H4-5 (look for the small wooden stakes with numbers on the east or south ends of beds and see the farm map at the pick up station for areas)

-S1: herbs

### Deals:

-Cherry tomatoes: You pick and give half to Farmer Tim.

-Potato harvesting: You dig and keep 1/4. Training required.

### Foraging:

-Purslane: a tasty and highly nutritious weed growing in many of our rows

**Note:** Delivery customers are welcome to come to the farm any

## Events

Every Thursday all summer long

[Geneva Green Market](#)

Every Saturday all summer long

[Community Farmer's Market at](#)

[Inglenook Pantry](#), 9:00-1:00

Saturdays starting June 26

[Batavia Farmer's Market](#)

time for the above activities. Call 630-485-9963 or 630-485-9964 to make sure someone will be there.

## Farm Pick-up Times

Wednesday 4:00-6:30

Friday 2:30-5:30

## Delivery Times (Tuesday)

1:00-1:30 Van leaves farm

1:45-2:15 Drop off at Wheaton

2:15-2:30 Drop off at Bartlett

2:30-2:45 Drop off at Elgin

## Potluck Dinner and Outdoor Movie Night

**Pushing the Envelope Farm - (Geneva, Illinois)**

Bring your family to our monthly Movie nights. Bring a local dish to share and dishes to eat from, and enjoy meeting new people and watching a food related movie projected on the side of our building. Movie will be appropriate for all ages, fourth Saturday of the month during the summer. ([More](#))

## Heirloom Garden Show

**Sunday August 29**

Knowledge of the past is proving critical to the future of the country and Garfield Farm Museum's 21st Annual Heirloom Garden Show on Sunday August 29 from 11 am to 4 pm is just such a wealth of accumulated knowledge. Yet sometimes it is just great to escape such concerns and enjoy a summer's day on the farm with welcoming and interesting people who love to garden.

For over 20 years Garfield Farm Museum has offered the Heirloom Garden show to the public to increase awareness in the loss of genetic diversity in the very plants that provide us food, fiber, medicine and enjoyment. What was a once or twice a year mention in the media has now become a mainstream topic. ([more](#))

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## Freezing Vegetables

### Selecting Freezer Containers

Before preparing vegetables for freezing, assemble the containers you will use. The selection of containers depends on the vegetable being frozen, personal preference and the types that are readily available. Containers should be moisture-vapor resistant, durable, easy to seal and should not become brittle at low temperatures.

Containers suitable for freezing vegetables include plastic freezer containers, flexible freezer bags and their protective cardboard cartons, or glass canning jars. Foods packed in wide-mouth jars are easier to remove than those packed in narrow-mouth jars. Some household containers are not recommended for freezing. The cardboard cartons that milk, ice cream or cottage cheese come in are not moisture-vapor resistant enough. Regular (not canning) jars break too easily at freezer temperatures.

### Preparing the Vegetables

Use vegetables at peak flavor and texture for freezing. Whenever possible, harvest in the cool part of the morning and freeze within a few hours. Wash vegetables thoroughly in cold water, lifting them out of the water as grit settles to the bottom of the washing container. Sort according to size for blanching and packing.

### Blanching

Blanching (scalding vegetables in boiling water or steam for a short period of time) is a must for almost all vegetables to be frozen. Blanching slows or stops the action of enzymes that can cause loss of flavor, color and texture. Blanching cleanses the surface of dirt and organisms, brightens the color and helps retard loss of vitamins. Blanching also wilts or softens vegetables and makes them easier to pack.

Blanching time is crucial and varies with the vegetable and its size. Under blanching stimulates the activity of enzymes and is worse than no

blanching. Over blanching causes loss of flavor, color, vitamins and minerals. See the directions for freezing each vegetable for the correct blanching times.

**Water Blanching** – For home freezing, the most satisfactory way to heat all vegetables is in boiling water. Use a blancher with a blanching basket and cover, or fit a wire basket into a large kettle with a lid. Use one gallon of water per pound of prepared vegetables. Put the vegetables in a blanching basket and lower into vigorously boiling water. Place a lid on the blancher and start counting blanching time as soon as the water returns to a boil. Keep heat high for the time given in the directions for the vegetables you are freezing.

**Steam Blanching** – Heating in steam is recommended for a few vegetables. For broccoli, pumpkin, sweet potatoes and winter squash, both steaming and boiling are satisfactory methods. Steam blanching takes about 1 1/2 times longer than water blanching. To steam, use a kettle with a tight lid and a basket that holds the food at least three inches above the bottom of the kettle. Put an inch or two of water in the kettle and bring the water to a boil. Put the vegetables in the basket in a single layer so steam reaches all parts quickly. Cover the kettle and keep heat high. Start counting steaming time as soon as the lid is on. Steam blanch for the time recommended for each vegetable.

### Cooling

As soon as blanching is complete, cool vegetables quickly and thoroughly to stop the cooking process. To cool, plunge the basket of vegetables immediately into a large quantity of cold water, 60°F or below. Change water frequently or use cold running water or iced water. If ice is used, have about one pound of ice for each pound of vegetables. Cooling vegetables should take the same amount of time as blanching.

Drain vegetables thoroughly after cooling. Extra moisture can cause a loss of quality when vegetables are frozen.

### Types of Pack

Two basic packing methods are recommended for frozen vegetables—dry pack and tray pack.

**Dry Pack** – Place the blanched and drained vegetables into meal-size freezer bags or containers. Pack tightly to cut down on the amount of air in the package. Leave 1/2-inch head space at the top of rigid containers and close securely. For freezer bags, fill to within three inches of the top, twist and fold back top of bag; tie with a twist or rubber band about 1/2- to 3/4-inch from the food. This will allow space for the food to expand. Provision for head space is not necessary for foods such as broccoli, asparagus and Brussel sprouts that do not pack tightly in containers.

**Tray Pack** – Place chilled, well-drained vegetables in a single layer on shallow trays or pans. Place in freezer until firm, then remove and quickly fill bags or containers. Close and freeze immediately. Tray-packed foods do not freeze in a block, but remain loose, so the amount needed can be poured from the container and the package reclosed.

For more information, try these websites:

[Garden Guides](#)

[Colorado State University Extension](#)

[Ohio Statue University Extension](#)

## Gazpacho

This wonderful dish, sort of a liquid salad, is the perfect summertime cooler, and no wonder. Gazpacho descends from an ancient Roman concoction based on a combination of stale bread, garlic, olive oil, salt, and vinegar. As Romans labored to build roads and aqueducts across Spain in the scorching heat, this creamy soup replenished them with the necessary salt and vitamins lost through physical exertion. Later, shepherds and farmers added vegetables to make it more hearty and satisfying. Because tomatoes and bell peppers were not indigenous to Spain, these ingredients were not added to the soup until after Spain's discovery of the New World. Since that time, gazpacho has remained relatively unchanged - an unpretentious soup designed to quench the thirst evoked by the unrelenting Spanish sun. It's combination of vegetables makes it an easy and delicious way to get your vegetable nutrients. Many studies show that combining vegetables, as in gazpacho, actually creates a synergistic effect in the health benefits.

### How to Make Gazpacho

Fresh tomatoes  
Tomato juice (only if you don't have enough tomatoes)  
Cucumber  
Onion  
Garlic  
Olive oil  
Hot pepper, Tabasco sauce, or black pepper

Puree the above in a blender or food processor. Add other seasonings such as lovage, cilantro, parsley, basil, cumin, or chili powder to taste. Then dice and add in any other

vegetables you have on hand. These commonly include celery, sweet bell peppers, more tomatoes, more cucumbers, sweet corn, summer squash. Some people add vinegar or lemon juice. You could probably add radishes, broccoli, or cauliflower as well. This is a great way to use up those odds and ends of veggies in your fridge. If you don't like the chunkiness, puree more of the veggies; if you do, keep more of them diced.

Serve chilled.