



THE RED HILL ROOT



The Seasonal Weekly Newsletter for Members of the Red Hill Farm CSA, Aston, PA

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Farm & Member News



Invoices—

***Aby notes that *invoices and receipts have been sent out*, along with lots of information about the upcoming season. Please take the time to go through all of it and let us know if you have any questions.

****If you are sharing a share*: It is VERY IMPORTANT to let others who are sharing with you know what's going on! We can't stress this enough!

****If you are the main shareholder*, you are the only one who got off-farm product information and order forms in the mail.

****If you are not the main shareholder*—go find your main member. Hit them up for dinner and place all of your orders together.

Mark Your Calendars—

*****SPRING PICNIC AND PLANT SALE!** Please join us in welcoming new members and learn all about what's going on at the farm this season! Take some plants home and start your own vegetable garden!

- ❖ **Where:** Red Hill Farm
- ❖ **When:** Saturday May 16th, 2009
- ❖ **Time:** 1pm—4pm. Farmers will lead tours at 1pm and 3pm.

Make sure you attend one of these tours so you are oriented! Bring a picnic lunch and show off the farm to your friends and family. Refreshments will be provided.

Membership Renewal—Mira wants to point out that if you haven't renewed your 2009 membership, the deadline is past and you will have to compete with the waiting list of about 60 families. Should you still wish to join, please send your membership form and a check for full or partial payment to the farm immediately. (See address in footer, below.)



Red Hill Revelations

By Mira Kilpatrick



“Hello all. We’ve been slacking off a bit on our monthly farm updates. Forgive us.

We have just returned from four days in State College, at the *Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture conference*. (<http://pasafarming.org>) PASA is an excellent organization whose membership consists of both growers and consumers/advocates. PASA puts on an amazing conference every year, as well as workshops throughout the season.



We encourage all of you to consider becoming a PASA member, and maybe attending the conference next year. Their work in supporting farmers, preserving open spaces, and advocating healthy, local food systems is unparalleled in the state, perhaps even the east coast. They deserve our support.

The Worldwide Search for Food Sovereignty: Finding Your Food Shed: PASA's 2009 Theme (click on above image for the conference program)

Every year at the conference we see many familiar faces, including Nancy and Bob Bernhardt of Indian Orchards, and Emily, our 2008 Red Hill Farm alum. Rumor has it that Mimi Hall, one of our Core Group members, was also there, but the conference is becoming so popular we didn't see her all weekend!

Aby and I put in a full day at ‘weed school,’ learning about different weeds and their life cycles (annuals, biennials, perennials) and different ways to combat them. Many renowned farmers presented, and we also learned about an array of tractor implements and techniques to fight weeds.

Some of the other workshops that we went to focused on mulching, high tunnels, early crop harvest, attracting beneficial insects, herbs and cut flowers, reducing tillage and utilizing cover crops, soil analysis, etc. We covered anything and everything that dealt with sustainable



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agriculture! And we're excited to implement some of what we've learned.

Now we're back, overwhelmed as we start to shift gears. Aby is busily processing member renewals, as I start to chip away at our waitlist, trying to fill empty spots. We are also still in the midst of our hiring process for our second seasonal worker. We start seeding this week, first onions and leeks, then broccoli and cabbage. We have also been reading about groundhogs, and apparently they come out of hibernation in February/March. We want to catch them BEFORE they start reproducing this year. While we loved setting the bar at 15 or 20 groundhogs caught in 2008, we wouldn't mind just dealing with one generation and reducing that number! We are working on repairing the deer fence throughout the winter, and in a while will start pruning the blackberries and raspberries. Beginning of March, we'll increase our hours a bit.

And you all thought we were just twiddling our thumbs all this time, right??

Despite the increased workload (and stress) in these late winter/early spring months, we can't help but feel the momentum building!! These warm days in early February are a bit of a tease, but before we know it the greenhouse will be filled with transplants, and soon after we'll be out in the fields, snacking on greens and radishes.

Hope you're all well! Your farmers, Mira and Aby"

Tidbits

Looking to Nature's Farm Economy-- "We live off of what comes out of the soil, not what's in the bank. If we squander the ecological capital of the soil, the capital on paper won't much matter... For the past 50 or 60 years, we have followed industrialized agricultural policies that have increased the rate of destruction of productive farmland. For those 50 or 60 years, we have let ourselves believe the absurd notion that as long as we have money we will have food. If we continue our offenses against the land and the labor by which we are fed, the food supply will decline, and we will have a problem far more complex than the failure of our paper economy. Remember, if our agriculture is not sustainable then our food supply is not sustainable... Either we pay attention or we pay a huge price, not so far down the road. When we face the fact that civilizations have destroyed themselves by destroying their farmland, it's clear that we don't really have a choice." [\(source: quote from Wes Jackson on Alternet\)](#)

Building the Ecosystem with Insects—Bringing Nature Home—Scott Arboretum at Swarthmore College (see [here](#)) recently hosted a lecture by Dr. Doug Tallamy, Chair of the Entomology Department at the University of Delaware (see [here](#)). I (that is, Melinda, your friendly *Red Hill Root* editor) attended his absolutely ***riveting*** discussion about increasing nature's "carrying capacity" for insect populations and thus increasing biodiversity. Insects are the basis of many food chains or food webs, and they in turn require certain plants on which to feed.



Dr. Tallamy insists that the only way we can enhance necessary insect populations (think honey bees) in our local food shed is by ***replacing imported plants (many from Asia) with native plants, not just native to the U. S., but to our specific region.*** This is because plants give off



very particular odors detectable by insects and also contain specific toxins, to which insects in regions where such plants originate have developed a tolerance. Hence if you plant a Colorado Spruce in PA, it may

support only a few insects, while an Oak (*Quercus*), which is native to the Delaware Valley, can support over 400 types of insects. The insects in turn support birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, etc., who carry seeds and spread the native plants, thus also increasing the carbon-carrying capacity of our region & improving our air quality. ***For an excellent essay summarizing his ideas, see [here](#).***



Dr. Tallamy has authored a book, ***Bringing Nature Home***, telling you how to enhance your own yard with native plants (see [here](#)). For a chart of the top twenty trees, shrubs, & perennials native to our region, see [here](#).

Marcy Magness at Heifer International!



Donkeysme!

Egg Tortilla Soup (*Sopa de Tortilla de Huevos*)

- ❖ Vegetable oil
- ❖ ½ cup small, dry tubular or shell-shaped pasta
- ❖ 4 scallions, thinly sliced
- ❖ ½ tsp salt, or to taste
- ❖ 1 tsp adobo powder
- ❖ 2 large, all-purpose potatoes, peeled & cut in ½" dice
- ❖ one 2-oz piece of *queso blanco* cheese, grated (available at large supermarkets or ethnic shops; or substitute aged mozzarella)
- ❖ 1 large Anaheim pepper, stemmed, seeded, & cut in 1" dice
- ❖ 4 large eggs, lightly beaten
- ❖ ¼ cup whole milk, or as needed
- ❖ 1/3 cup cooked white rice, optional

Put ½" oil in small saucepan on medium-low heat. When oil is hot, add pasta & fry till lightly browned. Remove immediately & drain on toweling. Set aside pan w/ oil. Put a medium soup pot on medium-low heat, add 1 tbsp vegetable oil. Add scallions & sauté till softened, ~30 sec. Add salt, adobo, potatoes, cheese, & fried pasta. Add enough water to cover. Cover pot & simmer till potatoes & pasta are tender, ~15 min. While soup is cooking, put small skillet on medium heat, adding 1 tbsp oil. Add Anaheim pepper & sauté till softened, 2-3 min. Add eggs & cook till firm, ~1-2 min. Remove omelet from pan & cut in 1"-wide slices. When potatoes are tender, add milk, omelet slices & rice to pot. Simmer gently till reheated & serve hot. Serves 4. (source: *NYT*, 11 Feb 2009)

Onion Jam

- ❖ 4 tbsp olive oil
- ❖ 3 lbs onions, sliced ~¼" thick
- ❖ 2 tsp fresh, chopped oregano
- ❖ salt & pepper
- ❖ 1 cup white wine
- ❖ dash of vinegar or lemon juice

In big frying pan, heat oil on medium. Add onions & oregano, stir a bit, then cover. Cook ~5 min, then turn heat to low & add ~1 tsp salt. Cook covered ~20-25 min, then add wine, toss, & cover. Stir ~every 20 min. After ~1 hr, or when you hear hiss & sizzle, stir more often. When they've browned up quite a bit, add a dash of vinegar or lemon juice & season to taste. Add to tomato sauce, or use on pizza, burritos, or quesadillas (even as a cheese replacement). ([source](#))



Hungarian Lentil Stew

- ❖ one 1-lb bag brown lentils
- ❖ 1½ tbsp vegetable oil
- ❖ 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- ❖ 6 cloves garlic, minced
- ❖ 2 tbsp sweet Hungarian paprika
- ❖ 3 bay leaves
- ❖ 2 cups whole-fat sour cream
- ❖ 3½ tbsp all-purpose flour
- ❖ 2 tbsp milk
- ❖ ½ tsp salt, or as needed
- ❖ 1 tbsp light brown sugar
- ❖ 2 tbsp brown mustard, or as needed
- ❖ 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice, or to taste

If desired, soak lentils overnight in water to cover (not necessary, but makes lentils more digestible). Put large saucepan on medium-low heat, add oil & onion. Sauté till tender, ~1-2 min. Add garlic & paprika & sauté till garlic is fragrant, 1 min. more. Add lentils, 8 cups water, & bay leaves. Increase heat to bring to boil, then reduce heat to low. Cover & simmer, stirring occasionally, till lentils are tender, ~50 min [or less?]; add water as needed if mix seems too thick. When lentils are tender, in small bowl mix sour cream, flour, & milk. Add to lentils & simmer 2-3 min. Add salt, brown sugar, mustard, & lemon juice, adjusting seasoning as needed. Do not eat bay leaves. Serve hot. 6-8 servings. (source: *NYT*, 11 Feb 2009)



Manhattan Fish Chowder

- ❖ 4 slices bacon, cut crosswise in ½" pieces
- ❖ 1 large onion, finely chopped
- ❖ 2 medium carrots, halved lengthwise & thinly sliced crosswise
- ❖ 1 can (28 oz) plum tomatoes in juice
- ❖ 2 bottles clam juice
- ❖ 2 medium baking potatoes, peeled & cut in 2" chunks
- ❖ ½ tsp dried thyme
- ❖ 1 lb skinless tilapia fillets, cut in 2" chunks

In large saucepan, cook bacon on medium-low till crisp & browned. Discard all but 1 tbsp fat. Add onions & carrots; cook, stirring a bit, till softened, ~10 min. Add tomatoes & juice (breaking up tomatoes w/ spoon), clam juice, & 1½ cups water; bring to boil. Add potatoes & thyme; reduce to simmer. Cook till potatoes are tender, ~15-20 min. Add fish; cover & cook till opaque & flaky, ~3 min. Season w/ salt & pepper. Spoon solids & liquid into 6 bowls & serve. (source: *Everyday Food*, Jan-Feb 2006)