

WSU ORGANIC FARM
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I hate to state the obvious but, “Wow, its hot out there!” Not so good for us folks out in the field, but the warm weather crops sure love it. We really need this warm weather to kick some of those plants into production. I expect we’ll see the pole beans grow another foot this week and the summer squash should really be happy.

With the hot weather comes lots of watering, and last week during that 100 degree Thursday we got a taste of what it might be like without water. After arriving at the farm and getting set up for class I went to turn on the main water valve. The big green valve box was completely full of water and had been gushing out of the box down to the field. Deb, the orchard manager, was quick to survey the damage and get the water line turned off so we could inspect the problem. A 4 inch PVC water line had developed a crack and when the water pressure came on it broke. Luckily we had some students on hand to help dig out the break and learn about the importance of good plumbing skills on a farm dependent on irrigation.

Most of our crops get watered twice a week and some only once. We use a drip irrigation system that delivers the water through a small plastic tube and drips directly next to the plants along each row. I like to give the plants less frequent, deeper watering to encourage a stronger root system that isn’t so dependent on shallow watering. It usually takes about 2 hours to water one section of the farm and there are about 15 different sections that get

watered separately. This way we can give individual crops the right amount of water at the right time of the week. For example, most of the greens get watered the day before harvest so they are full of water and not so prone to wilting after they get out of the field. Crops like potatoes and watermelons only get watered once a week, but we try to do all the watering during the work week so our weekend caretakers don’t have to worry about the field crops.

On the weekend the main task is keeping an eye on the hoopouses. These structures house the tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and sweet potatoes and need to manually be opened and closed each day. Each house has doors at either end as well as roll-up sides for extra ventilation on hot days. Our students have been taking turns with the weekend shift and get some valuable alone time to learn about some of the responsibilities of keeping a farm running.

The farm will be having its annual field day on Thursday July 26th from 9am-1pm. This year we will focus on what’s new at the farm, student projects and a tour of the place. There will also be a handful of sustainable agriculture advocates on hand to provide resources and info on what’s happening here on the Palouse. You are all welcome to attend—this event is open to the public but mostly attended by university folks.

-- Brad



This week’s featured student is Eric Wegner, a Palouse native who has an interesting family story. Eric grew up on his family farm which produced the usual crops of the area under conventional practices, but his mother ran the family kitchen garden all organic. So Eric has pursued many careers but most recently is continuing with agriculture as a new student in the Organic Major and employee with the USDA Western Wheat Quality Lab at WSU. The lab works to determine end-use quality for regional wheat growers as well as carrying out related research. Eric’s family includes his wife and two boys and they have been enjoying the farm’s produce with minimal preparation. When pressed for a recipe he looked in the fridge and spotted the potato salad! They used lots of garlic scapes and green onions, hard-boiled eggs, pickles, mustard, mayo, and salt/pepper to taste.

Balsamic Beets and Beet Greens

(from *Greens Glorious Greens!* by Johnna Albi and Catherine Walthers)

Here is a way to make use of both the beets and the beet greens that you receive in your box.

¼ cup walnuts
2 bunches beets with greens (about six medium beets)
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Sea salt or vegetable seasoning salt to taste
1 sweet white onion or red onion, sliced into thin half-moons

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Spread the walnuts in a baking dish and toast in the oven for 5 to 7 minutes. Watch to make sure they don't burn. Once they are cool, coarsely chop and set aside.
2. Cut the beet greens from the beets.
3. Boil or steam the beets until tender.
4. While the beets are cooking, cut the stems off the beet greens, wash the greens and chop them into strips 1/2 -inch wide.
5. When beets are cool, peel them by rubbing off their skin with your fingers. Cut the beets into quarters and then into ¼-inch thick slices. Toss the beet slices with lemon juice, balsamic vinegar, 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, and salt. Set aside.
6. In a large skillet, sauté the onions in 1 tablespoon of olive oil for 3 minutes. Add greens and cook, covered, for 5 to 7 minutes, until greens are wilted.
7. Just before serving, add the beets to the greens and heat through for 1 or 2 minutes. Garnish with toasted walnuts.

Fresh Fava Beans

Fava beans are traditionally used in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cooking. Fresh fava beans can be used like lima beans. Here are some cooking instructions from *Passionate Vegetarian* by Crescent Dragonwagon: boil them for 10 minutes in their pods, shell them, and remove the tough outer skin of each bean. Dragonwagon suggested gently sautéing the boiled, skinned beans in butter with garlic, parsley, lemon juice, salt and pepper.

Green Fava Beans with Cilantro

(from *Secrets of Healthy Middle Eastern Cuisine* by Sanaa Abourezk)

1 cup chopped onion
1 tablespoon olive oil
4 cups fresh green fava beans, shelled
1 cup chopped cilantro
3 cloves garlic, minced
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Sauté onion in oil until onion is lightly browned. Add beans and cook over low heat for 20 minutes. Add water if needed to prevent sticking.
2. Mix in remaining ingredients and cook for five more minutes.
3. Note: this recipe does not suggest removing the outer skin of each bean. I wonder: how important is this?
4. Note #2: if you don't have enough fava beans for this recipe, you can add frozen, defrosted lima beans or even green peas to make up the difference.