

FIELD *notes*

UCSC Farm
Community Supported Agriculture
Eighth Harvest: 8/3/10 & 8/6/10

What's in the box?

Lettuce,
Pac Choi,
Spinach,
Basil, *Aroma 2*
Carrots, *Nelson*
Beets, *Red Ace*
Green Beans
Yellow Wax Beans
Broccoli
Zucchini, *Raven* and *Dark Star*
Strawberries, *Seascape* or *Albion*
Blueberries, mixed varieties
Plums, *Satsuma*

Words from the Field

—Saskia Cornes, 1st year apprentice

For the past four weeks, I've been learning how to irrigate the fields here at the Farm and Garden. This is a responsibility we all take very seriously, not least because, in these days of summer, our crops need water to thrive, but also because we understand how water stewardship is an integral part of land stewardship.

Healthy soils with robust soil ecologies absorb and retain water much better than the compacted and inert soils often found on conventional farms, and in this sense, organic practices help save water. But while water is the lifeblood of the farm, there's unquestionably the potential for too much of a good thing. As organic farmers, we're working hard to build lively soil ecosystems to support our plants, ecosystems that can literally be drowned by overwatering. Water in the wrong places leads to more weeds and more work, and too much water can "melt" the soil, turning it from a steady anchorage for plant roots, to a goopy, shapeless mess. With hundreds of gallons of water flowing through the farm at any given time, we have to keep a watchful eye on our sprinklers, our timers, and our irrigation lines.

Water and energy are tightly intertwined—water is heavy, and in most places it has to be moved and lifted long distances to get to our taps, whether they're agricultural pipelines or kitchen sinks. This is a fuel intensive process, so saving water also means saving energy. And the water itself is precious; while fossil fuels may one day be outmoded, there won't ever be an alternative to water. Moving back to California after a fifteen year stint in the Northeast, surrounded by the dry hills of the Golden State, and with talk of local water shortages past and present, I'm reminded daily of how crucial water management is, in this place where I now work and live. Though I've always thought of myself as water conscious, what I've learned at CASFS has shown me that I've probably been overwatering plants for a decade or more!

In doing our best to keep conserving, it's just as important to know when not to irrigate, when to abstain, as it is to know when to turn the taps on. stress.

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"Words from the Field" (continued)

At the Farm and Garden, we don't water on a set schedule, but push our plants to drive their roots deeper, to soak up every drop of available moisture, and observe the plants carefully for indications of water. In doing our best to keep conserving, it's just as important to know when not to irrigate, when to abstain, as it is to know when to turn the taps on. At the Farm and Garden, we don't water on a set schedule, but push our plants to drive their roots deeper, to soak up every drop of available moisture, and observe the plants carefully for indications of water stress. For me, learning about irrigation here has underscored the importance of apprenticeship. Like learning a new language, I'm learning to read a new set of signs.

After a month of watching water muscle its way through miles of hoses and pipes, I'm starting to see the subtle shift in the color of a plant leaf, from green to blue-green, and to feel the slight softness that show a plant is thirsty. I'm learning to recognize the sheen and fullness that indicate things are going well. I'm learning to plan my next irrigation based on wind and weather, and the feel of the earth between my fingers, rather than a routine calendar date. These are things that would be almost impossible to understand through books or traditional classroom learning. Through the apprenticeship, I'm gaining an intimacy plants that could only be learned side-by-side with people who know this land well.

Fruit Tips and Info: Japanese Plums

Japanese plums actually originated in China but were brought to this country via Japan in the 1800s. They are not quite as sweet as European plums, though their flesh is much juicier. Two varieties that are excellent for fresh eating and canning are 'Satsuma', a large, dark red, sweet plum, and 'Santa Rosa', a large plum with crimson skin and purple flesh that turns yellow near the skin. Storage: Ripen at room temperature until the skin loses its shine. Once ripe, refrigerate for up to 4 or 5 days.

Recipe: Savory Summer Squash Quick Bread

From: *chow.com*

1/4 cup olive oil, plus more for coating the pan
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup finely ground yellow cornmeal
1 1/4 teaspoons dried oregano
2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 teaspoon fine salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Cooking time: 1 hr. 10 min., plus cooling time
Makes: 1 (9-inch) loaf

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 large eggs
3/4 cup buttermilk*
2 cups grated summer squash (ie. zucchini, pattypan, or crookneck)
2/3 cup finely crumbled feta cheese (about 3 ounces)

**To substitute for buttermilk: Add 1 Tablespoon of lemon juice or vinegar to milk. Let it stand 5 min. before using.*

- Heat the oven to 350°F and arrange a rack in the middle. Generously coat a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan with olive oil; set aside.
- Place flour, cornmeal, oregano, baking powder, salt, baking soda, and pepper in a large bowl and whisk until combined.
- Place eggs, buttermilk, and 1/4 cup olive oil in a separate large bowl and whisk until smooth. Using a rubber spatula, fold in squash and feta until evenly combined. Pour squash mixture into flour mixture and stir until flour is just incorporated, being careful not to overmix (a few streaks of flour are OK).

Scrape the batter into the prepared loaf pan, pushing it into the corners and smoothing the top. Bake until the bread is golden brown all over and a toothpick inserted into it comes out clean (test several spots, because you may hit a pocket of cheese), about 60 to 65 minutes. Place the pan on a wire rack to cool for 15 minutes, then turn the bread out onto the rack and cool for at least 15 minutes more before serving.

Recipe: Plum Sauce

An excellent sweet and sour condiment for egg rolls, pork and fish, plum sauce can be kept in freezer for up to one year.

2 pounds ripe plums*
1/4 cup honey
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
1 tablespoon water
1 tablespoon minced fresh garlic
1/2 teaspoon red chili paste, or more to taste
1/4 cup soy sauce

- Pit and chop the plums.
 - Place them in a medium-size saucepan along with the honey, ginger, water, garlic and chili paste. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer until the plums are soft, about 15 minutes.
 - Remove from the heat and stir in the soy sauce.
- Puree the mixture in a blender or food processor.
**Suggested quantity for a 4 cup batch for freezing. Adjust ingredients for a smaller, single-serving batch.*