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PRAIRIE SUN FARM

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A Swarm of Swallows

On Sunday we were sitting on the porch taking a break from the heat when we noticed dozens of barn swallows swooping over the prairie in front of us. With their acrobatic flight they dove and twisted occasionally flying near us as we watched in amazement. We assumed they were going after bugs coming out of the prairie as the sun heated things up. The swallow generally eats most of its diet while flying and has been long admired by humans because of its ability to eat lots of insects and to coexist with us (according to Wikipedia). We don't always appreciate them though because they sometimes make their mud nests on barns and other structures creating a mess. But we do like that they eat lots of insects including aphids and flies. We also saw a bald eagle fly overhead as the swallows were swarming. Its graceful flight with wings outstretched had us wondering if it was looking for a swallow for lunch. But it appeared just to be riding a thermal up draft. It climbed higher and higher without ever flapping its wings. We do appreciate all the avian visitors we have this time of year, the gold finches sitting on the fences, the doves browsing the freshly planted buckwheat (there's seed to spare), the family of pheasants that scurried out of the field when we were mowing. They all add to a healthy habitat. Even the deer, rabbits and other rodents add to the mix. Maybe that's what the eagle was looking for. Coyotes too perform a necessary predator role to keep things in balance even though they occasionally disrupt a farm. The important thing is balance. We generally don't want an over abundance of any one animal type but we do like the occasional swarm of swallows on a Sunday. Eat up!

WEEK 5 BOX CONTENTS

Sun Gold Tomatoes!: The super sweet cherry tomatoes are just starting to produce. They are ripe and ready to eat.

Beets: They are sweet and delicious. Cut off edible leaves and stem before storing in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Steam or bake in the oven for about 45 minutes until tender.

Zucchini and/or Yellow Summer Squash: Summer squash is mostly water, very low in calories and a great source of vitamins A and C, potassium and calcium.

Cabbage: Cut cabbage head first into quarters, then diagonally across the wedge. Cut into thin slices for tossing raw into salads, or cut into thicker slices for steaming or boiling.

Baby Carrots: Mixed colors. Carrots are packed with vitamins and minerals and they taste delicious.

Onions: Milder than regular onions but zippier than green onions or scallions. Store in the refrigerator.

Broccoli: Fresh broccoli can be eaten raw, chopped into green salads or paired with a dip.

Cucumbers: Cucumbers are 95 percent water. A light cooling vegetable helps us replenish the fluids and minerals lost in our perspiration, leaving us "cool as a cucumber"

Parsley: Chop and add to any summer salad or cooked dish.

Lettuce Salad Mix: Blend of red and green lettuce varieties.

Farm News

The heat last week made it difficult to work in the afternoons and the weeds took advantage of it. Our squash and melons are in desperate need of weeding as their vines grow more each day but small pumpkins, squash, watermelon and cantaloupe are still forming. We did get all the garlic picked and stacked ready for curing. We also got the sweet corn weeded. It's looking fantastic. Many other plants got taken care of too but it was a minimilast week, only do what has to be done. This week is starting off much better. We did get a couple small rains last week providing us almost an inch of moisture. We needed it. The buckwheat cover crop that got planted last week is already turning that part of the field green again. We did have to mow a lot this past week. We also had our annual organic certification review. All went well. We continue to use hard work, proper tools, organic methods and tender care for all that we do in the garden. We occasionally get time to sit and enjoy the prairie too. It is at its peak right now with color. Come by for a visit and take a look around if you're interested. Always lots going on at the farm.

From the Kitchen

Broccoli Bacon Salad

by Shilo Urban

Ingredients

(Salad)

1 head of broccoli

½ large red or white onion

8 ounces bacon

½ cup raisins

(Dressing)

1 cup organic mayonnaise (or make your own!)

1/3 cup sugar

1 tablespoon white vinegar

+ salt and pepper to taste.

Directions

1. Fry the bacon until crisp, drain and crumble, Set aside.

2. Chop the broccoli head into small florets. Discard the stems, save for another recipe or cook and feed to your dog.

3. Chop the red onion.

4. In a large mixing bowl, combine the broccoli, onion, bacon and raisins.

5. In a separate bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, sugar and white vinegar. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, then add your dressing to the big bowl of broccoli.

6. Mix everything together well, and chill a few hours before serving. Broccoli bacon salad is delicious on its own, perfect on a picnic or as a side dish at the family barbeque