

Meanwhile Back at the Farm...February 1, 2001

Howdy Folks,

Sorry about no turnips in your box last week. I know some of you were disappointed. Ryan and I had picked them at sunset the night before but when we started washing them the next morning we realized that they weren't any good. I often write much of the newsletter the night before and I forgot to delete the turnips when I went to print the newsletter on harvest day.

But I just checked the next crop of new baby turnips at Matadero and they were about the size of tapioca pearls, soooo cute. Another two or three weeks and we can start to pick some of those. Next week we will probably have the last of the purple top turnips that have been growing all winter. So you turnip junkies won't have long to wait until we can satisfy that "Jones" you have.

The soil at the main farm has warmed up a lot. Much of the stuff we planted only a week ago has already germinated. The south-facing terraces are really great at heating up early. We have a 150-foot row of peppers that has not been frosted. The plants are about two feet tall. Normally we grow peppers as annuals here in California since our winters kill peppers. But with global warming we can grow them as perennials and the yield the second year can be quite early and astounding.

That pepper terrace is about 60 feet above the valley floor. The bottom thirty feet of the valley has frosted many times this winter but not up at the 60-foot level. Cold air flows to the bottom of the valley like water.

We have now covered the peppers with ag fabric in order to prevent any last big frost from catching them. They even have some cute little peppers on them. We will prune them soon, keep them covered with ag fabric and they should start putting out new growth and flowers within 6 weeks. We could even have peppers as early as May (Instead of Late July)!

This week we will start planting our tomato seeds for transplanting out around March 15th or so. This year we are going to do less varieties but really focus a lot of attention on them. We still plan on doing 8-9 main varieties and one or two sauce varieties but we plant to lavish attention on them. This will still be about 800 plants or so for about a projected 120-member season. We will do the same with the peppers and eggplants.

Back at the main farm we are making good use of the warm terrace FACES. Ryan planted a lot of broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage on the mulched terrace faces and even though its been windy, it's clear they like it there. They should grow quickly there. This week we will plant flowers

in between the broccoli etc. so the face will evolve to flower production in late spring.

This week Michael Moore has joined the farm crew. No not that Michael Moore. He will be doing the 12-week exchange for a permaculture class later in the year.

Party

Party

Party

This Saturday is my birthday. That's right your farmer is an Aquarius. Like a farmer, I will be working on my birthday giving a farm tour. That night however the Hope House ladies are throwing a party. If any of you have been wanting to meet the Hope House Ladies, and want to come to a good party in Redwood City with lots of dancing, then call me for directions 650-365-2993.

One of the members answered my question last week for a reference for a real estate person. I will be following up this week and start looking for land after I connect with her. It's exciting to be making the moves to go to another level with the farm and the Institute.

Why Herbicide Resistance is Not a Desirable Trait for Which to Genetically Engineer!

On the surface it would seem that engineering crops to resist Roundup or other herbicides wouldn't be such a ground-shaking event. The idea for doing it is that you can save lots of work weeding if you can just spray the crops from overhead with something that kills weeds but not your crop. After all weed killers just kill weeds right?

Lets take this in pieces. It is currently possible to weed major crops without using toxins. It can be done mechanically, i.e. by machines, which are drawn behind tractors. With many crops, heat from flame or steam can kill weeds without toxins. When you get to vegetable crops, people with hoes are pretty darn efficient. Currently the costs of these methods is a little higher than doing it with gene altered crops and herbicides. But how long will it stay cheaper when genetically altered seed is all that is available to the farmer. Once the seed companies corner the market there will be no reason to keep the prices low.

But I'm getting ahead of myself here. The fact that herbicides can be used in much higher quantities mean that they will be used in much higher quantities. This causes a dilemma for Monsanto since if you use a lot more herbicides it means that a lot more residue will be on the crop. Well, shortly before the genetically modified seed came on the market, Monsanto got approval to increase the allowable residue on crops by 4 TIMES. They submitted their own study that claims that it was

safe for animals and people. No critical analysis was done of their study and the increased rate became law. This has been part of the trend of letting corporations “regulate” themselves.

Without this increase there could have been no marketing of genetically altered corn, soy beans etc., since the food produced would have been considered poisoned. This fact has not been explored seriously by the opponents of Frankenfoods, because it all happened before they became involved in the fight and they didn't know the history. Besides everyone has been focusing on the toxicity etc. of the gene altered crop and forgetting the reason it was altered was to bathe it in herbicides. Of course these chemicals are concentrated when eaten by animals and then people eat the meat.

These chemicals of course are just as estrogen-like as the pesticides used on the crops. No one knows what the synergistic effects are caused by the combination of pesticides with the herbicides. While over a billion (that's right with a big B) pounds of pesticides are sprayed on the crops each year, 1.5 Billion pounds of herbicides are used. So totaling it up there's about 8 pounds per person sprayed each year and it only takes a few parts per Trillion in you bloodstream to cause breast, prostate, or colon cancer as well as wholesale disruption of most major glands which are included in the endocrine system. Parts per trillion means less than one tiny eyedropper drop per person per decade and parts per quadrillion can interfere with the proper development of a fetus.

So the opponents of gene altered crops are missing a big bet when they get too focused on the unknown (the genetic toxicity of the crop) and forget the evil reason for the alteration in the first place.

So far however, most of the engineering has been on what is usually considered animal food. But the attached article is to give you a heads up that a lot of vegetables are going to be approved in the near future for similar genetic alterations. All of a sudden its going to be our produce both in the markets and in the home gardens that will be genetically engineered. What happens if you are a seed saver and your neighbor grows the new Freedom II squash? How will you keep the pollen from contaminating your seed. Professional farmers who go through a lot of extra work, like we will have to do, can prevent some of the contamination but most home gardener's won't have a chance. How much weed killer are we going to let them feed us? We have to step up the opposition to these nightmares waiting to happen. We have to demand labeling of GMOs from our legislators and let them know it is THE issue you will judge them by next time they want your vote.

The Food

Lettuce Mix: Red Looseleaf –Remember to drain these heads when you get them home, roll up the leaves in a towel and put the towel roll in a plastic bag. The lettuce will last two weeks that way.

Tat-soi: Wonderful rosettes of sweet spoon-shaped mustard family leaves. Kind of like baby bok choy.

Potatoes: Reds

Carrots: From another organic farm. Ours won't be ready for another month or two. Wait until you taste ours. These are good but they are no comparison for ours.

Farmer's choice: We are cleaning out a lot of beds that don't have enough in them for everyone. So we will be randomly be distributing these amongst the boxes. Cabbage, Cauliflower, Broccoli, Purple broccoli, and Romanesco (psychedelic looking) broccoli.

Lemon thyme: It's a unique tasty herb.

Arugula: Super fresh arugula- This stuff is soo tasty, I can't get enough of it. And the symphyllans don't seem to touch it.

Calendula: More of this tasty flower for your salads. Just put the petals (the yellow or orange parts of the flowers) on you salad.

Sorry-No recipe this week due to technical computer difficulties.