

# THE RHETORICAL ROOT

A monthly farm newsletter



## IT'S SALAD MONTH!

CSA to begin in early June, but rain, cool temps have slowed growth & added stress

New Tools Aid Weed Management Strategy

Special Visitors Tour the Farm!

## Many Farmers Despair as Ground Saturation Carries into June



The extremely wet spring has taken a toll on many people throughout the Midwest. It's been mentally and emotionally exhausting. The stress has been especially high for farmers trying care for animals and get into fields, but the ripple effect is felt throughout our small town. Often the gravel roads have not even been passable for mail carriers. The warm sunny spells seemed to last almost long enough for a bit of drying. But then the rain would come. Again, it's been so frequent that I can't keep track!

We are fortunate here at Prairie Roots. We don't rely on large equipment, so there is still plenty of work to do when the soil is not tillable, like hand weeding or transplanting. We also have some crops under cover. Far too much time has been spent thinning beets simply because it was easy and comfortable work that could be done inside the tunnel. The blessing (and curse) of having sandy soil has worked in our favor this year!

Although we feel that many of our crops are behind schedule, one unexpected blessing of these cool days has been an outstanding spinach and radish crop. Last year, we couldn't grow more than a leaf or two of spinach due to a rapid transition from winter to summer. We hope you appreciate these spring delicacies as much as we have!

And the best news of all? A 10-day forecast that shows nothing but big yellow circles!





## GREENS HIT THE STORES

Last month, we mentioned a budding partnership with Prairie to Plate enterprises as they launch their locally-minded restaurant, The Chislic House. This month we are mentioning another piece of our marketing strategy--getting into local grocery stores. Even without receiving top price for our produce, selling to a grocery store has many benefits. The consistency of income we can rely on and the convenience of dropping produce off in town on a weekly bases have both been attractive aspects of selling our produce through a retail setting. Plus, it's a great way to get your name out into the broader community. You can find mixed greens and radish at Jamboree and Freeman Shopping Center. New items are coming soon!



## LEANING UP WEED MANAGEMENT

Ever since Adam & Eve's banishment from the Garden of Eden, we've had to toil in the field. Weeds can become a major time sink for the market gardener. The vast amount of moisture this springtime has really encouraged the weeds to grow unchecked. Last season, we the weeds got ahead of us and it probably affected our harvest potential. This season we want to keep the garden a bit cleaner.

But without the right tools, we will end up spending endless hours on our hands and knees pulling and cutting weeds. That's why we purchased two big tools to aid us in our efforts.



Our first new weeding tool is the tine weeder from Two Bad Cats, LLC. This tool is meant to be dragged over the bed of greens early on to scratch the soil surface and pull out any of the tender weed shoots appearing. This tool is key in attacking the weed problem before they become large and time consuming.

Our second new tool is the two-wheeled hoe and "sweeps" attachment from Hoss Tools. This is a simple yet versatile push hoe that is easier on your back than what a regular hoe would be. Its versatility comes with the adjustments of the blades for what kind of operation you are using it for. It can straddle rows of small beans or be used to cut under the soil between crops without actually disturbing the soil layers. It is perfect for cleaning out old plantings and maintaining pathways







## GRADUATION VISITORS!

*Before moving out to grandma's farm, we were the dorm parents at Freeman Academy for two years. We were responsible for looking after a group of 10 international students boarding on campus. This month, 6 of those international students walked across the stage and received their diplomas and many of their parents traveled to witness it. Of the 6 students, 5 come from China and one from Rwanda. We were happy to give some of the parents a tour of the farm (even though it was cold and windy). We are so grateful for the cross-cultural friendships we've made!*

*One of our 5 plots is devoted to brassicas: broccoli, kale, cabbage, etc. It is wonderful to be able to grow these crops, but they come with their unique challenges. Truth be told, they are my least favorite things to grow! The "cabbage white butterfly" can cause untold damage if left unchecked. They lay eggs on the leaves, and the green caterpillars munch through leaves and lodge themselves in broccoli florets. Our two-pronged organic solution is to spray Bt (a natural bacteria) and to cover everything with floating row cover so that the butterflies can't land on them.*



## EAT (REAL) FOOD. NOT TOO MUCH. MOSTLY PLANTS

*This famous advice by Michael Pollan gets right to the heart of food philosophy, but now there is finally science to back up this intuitive ubiquitous mantra, and it come from researchers at the National Institutes of Health. Researchers conducted a controlled randomized trial to assess the effects of processed food on people's health as compared to whole foods. Participants were randomly assigned a diet for a two-week period. One group was given a diet composed of ultra-processed food, while the other group ate unprocessed or minimally processed food. When the two-week period ended, the groups switched to the opposite diet. When people were on the ultra-processed diet, they ate an average of 508 calories more per day and gained an average of 2 pounds over the two-week period, providing evidence that there may be something about processed food that drives people to overeat and gain weight (info from NPR). Taking the time to make a wholesome meal can be hard to fit into our busy lives. That's why we hope that our convenient CSA boxes and quality veggies can make the right choice an easy choice.*