



High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Week 7, April 26th and 27th, 2017

Hedgerows, by Jeanne Byrne

As an organic farm, we're always looking for natural ways to combat insect pests. In the 20 years or so that we've been farming we have rarely resorted to using any of the wide assortment of organically approved pesticides that are available. Rather than spraying a crop with something that will impede or kill a targeted pest, most of our pest control methods are more indirect. We rotate a diverse array of crops in small plantings through the different fields of our farm so that pests don't get to feast on large blocks of their favorite food over a long period of time in one place. We plant potato crops into fields with the dreaded symphylans in the soil because they produce a natural toxin against symphylans. We grow our own seedlings in our greenhouse and try to assure that our plants are well-tended and healthy so that they are more resistant to insect onslaughts. We use row covering to keep flea beetles off and cabbage maggots out of the soil by our susceptible root crops. And we depend on our native insectary hedgerows to provide habitat for beneficial insects that will keep the populations of pest insects in check.

We have a long hedgerow that runs most of the length of the farm along the border of the farmed portion and the part that is in conservation easement. Hedgerows can serve many useful purposes — this hedgerow provides excellent erosion control, in addition to the insectary habitat. It consists of ceanothus, quail bush, elderberry, sticky monkey flower, Pacific dogwood, coffee berry, giant buckwheat, hedge nettle, clematis, toyon, California sage, holly leaf cherry. We planted another hedgerow along the border between our farm and our neighbor's road that also helps keep dust away from our crops.

Our hedgerows consist of all native plants, so after the first couple years after planting, we don't have to water them anymore and they thrive without much tending. Our oldest hedgerow was planted in 2002 and the mature plants are beautiful as well as providing good habitat for predatory wasps, lacewings, spiders, and other beneficial critters.

Some years ago, a UCSC graduate student used our hedgerow for a research project. She was interested in finding out how well insectary hedgerows really work for providing pest control in a farm field. She wanted to know how far away

from the hedgerow its benefits might extend. To this end, she sprayed some innocuous fluorescent dye on some of our hedgerow plants. Then she set up insect traps at different distances into the farm field—50 ft., 100 ft, 200 ft., etc. She then looked at the insects she caught in each trap under UV light. If the insect had walked in the dye on the hedgerow plant it would glow and she would know that it had come from the hedgerow.

The results were as one might expect—the number of beneficial insects that went from the hedgerow to the farm field decreased the further from the hedgerow the trap was set.

The most interesting thing to me, though, was the sheer numbers of beneficial insects that are out there. For instance, there are hundreds of tiny species of wasps that prey on farm pests. The last we heard, she was still identifying subspecies of predatory wasps she had trapped years later.

As farmers it's good to train ourselves to look closely at small things we might otherwise easily pass over. It is often the things we can't easily see that tend to control whether our crops do well or poorly.

Veggie Notes, by Jason Johnson

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated.

Markets are an opportunity to interact in a very real way with people who, like you, appreciate small farms and who want to know where their food comes from. It's great to educate people while getting feedback on current food trends. There are also the other vendors--the sense of community that exists between vendors is second to none. Everyone involved is sleep-deprived, road-worn, and happy to see everyone else. As I interact with farmers, programmers, vegans, carnivores, and people from every corner of the planet, one topic persists. Dinner.

I tend to hear a lot of partial recipes and broad suggestions on Sundays, but one idea that really stuck with me this week is the value of raw food. While cooking vegetables softens cell walls and allows for nutrients to be more easily digested, it also diminishes the overall nutritional content.

Basic water solubility is to blame and minerals such as calcium, iron, and zinc can be hugely diminished while vitamins C and B can be lost all together. This is a big deal when you consider that as soon as a vegetable is harvested, it can no longer absorb nutrients from the soil, but is still alive. Over the course of the following days and weeks, the plant undergoes higher rates of respiration, trying to compensate for its lack of soil with carbon dioxide, but in doing so, it emits water, oxygen, and nutrients through its pores. The nutritional

In The Box

Romaine Lettuce

Red Butter Lettuce

Oregano

Green Onions

Lacinato OR Scotch Kale

Mei Quin Choi

Radishes

Baby Red Beets*

Baby Carrots*

Strawberries OR Fava Beans*

*All produce is certified organic.
Beets and carrots are from
Heirloom Organic Gardens. Fava
beans are from Coke Farm. All
other vegetables and fruit were
grown by High Ground Organics.
Note: last minute substitutions may
be made.*

value of a plant degrades the longer it's stored. You can think of it as a nutritional half-life and the process ultimately leads to full decomposition (i.e. that thing you have to scrape out of the crisper box).

You, dear member, are in a unique situation. The vegetables you receive from High Ground are hand harvested roughly 18 to 36 hours before we load it all up and deliver it to your neighborhood. Those veggies are alive and beautiful and have full nutritional potential. Every single one of them this week can be eaten raw, and salads are a great way to do it. I would pair the **romaine** with shredded **beets**, **green onion**, and a creamy dressing to cut any bitterness. With the **butter lettuce**, I would add **baby carrots**, chopped **mei quin choy**, and **radishes** to add some crunch. Dress this one with a simple mustard vinaigrette. Another option is to make a slaw by adding olive oil, salt, and pepper to shredded **beets**, **carrots**, and thinly sliced **choi**. For a lunch that's both filling and easy to make ahead of time, you can make a salad of **kale**, **oregano**, and quinoa. Just massage the **kale** with a little oil and salt, then add chopped **oregano**, minced garlic, and quinoa (let cool completely before adding – running under cold water in a colander can speed this up). This salad would be best topped with a lemon vinaigrette. I usually just use the juice of one lemon (more depending on size), a small squirt of mustard, and a bit more olive oil, then season to taste. If you find yourself with **favas** this week, you can remove those from their pods, peel off the layer of skin from each bean, and add them in for a boost of folate, iron, and dietary fiber.

Don't get me wrong, I still love firing up the ol' skillet. I will eat these tasty slaws and salads next to some hot cornbread and deliciously roasted food-stuffs, but thinking critically about where food comes from doesn't stop with how it is grown. The full picture includes your kitchen.

Chef's Notes, by Andrew Cohen

One of the things my trip to the UK left me with was a hankering for big California style salads. Several meals came with a "salad" on the plate, but these universally were about 1 scant cup of soft mixed lettuces with some grated carrots and no dressing, or maybe a little mayonnaise mixed in.

When it comes to salads, I think some of the best I've ever had have come from ingredients from High Ground. Hands down, some of the best lettuces I've seen come from here (and I interned at Chez Panisse, so I know salad ingredients pretty well!). This week the box will allow me to treat myself to a big salad with lots of vegetables in it, and the recipe is included along with a Creamy **Oregano** Dressing to match it. There is also a recipe for a grilled steak, which is done up with maître d'hôtel butter on top and sautéed spinach below. The compound butter is an easy fix for busy nights. It packs a lot of flavor, and all you need to do once it has been made and frozen is to slice it and put it on something hot.

While in the UK I often got "mushy" peas as a side with fish and chips. In one rendition, which was quite good, the peas were cooked quite soft and then 90% were mashed, with a little butter and vinegar added in with the remaining peas intact folded in. This would be a nice treatment for favas. Just cook them until tender, then mash a bunch of them and use lemon juice and olive oil, some salt and pepper, and a little minced oregano. Use as a side or top something with this.

Salad of Grilled Romaine, Shaved Beets, Carrots, and Radishes with Creamy Oregano Dressing, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

1 head romaine lettuce, whole, thinner ends trimmed away and halved lengthwise, washed and drained	1 cup radishes, thinly sliced on a mandolin
1 cup carrots, thinly sliced on a mandolin	1 cup baby beets, shaved really thinly on a mandolin
Oil as needed	½ cup white balsamic vinegar
¼ cup sugar	¼ cup water
Large flake salt and pepper to taste	1 cup Creamy Oregano Dressing (See recipe)
½ cup roasted sunflower seeds	

Salt the beet slices lightly and allow to rest 15-20 minutes, or until flexible but not floppy. Rinse well until the no longer taste salty. While the beets are resting in their salt bath, blend the vinegar, sugar, and water until sugar goes into suspension. Once the beets are ready, put into the quickling solution and put into the refrigerator. They are ready when they are crisp-tender and are lightly pickled.

Put carrots and radishes into separate bowls of ice water for 15-20 minutes. Get the grill really hot. Rub the lettuce halves lightly with oil, season with a little salt, and put the cut side down on the grill first. Cook for 3-5 minutes until the lettuce has good grill marks and a little charring. Flip and cook other side. You want 50% to be fresh and crunchy, the other 50% to be charred and marked and to have a grilled flavor.

Remove from the grill and allow to cool. Remove the vegetable garnishes from the refrigerator and drain well. Chop the lettuce into 1-inch strips or squares.

Toss the lettuce with some dressing; enough to lightly coat it. Transfer to 4 plates or a salad bowl or platter. Scatter with the rest of the vegetables, drizzle with a little dressing, and then scatter the sunflower seeds over the salads, the hit with salt and pepper. Serve it up. Serves: 4

Creamy Oregano Dressing, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

1 tsp. minced shallot	½ tsp. sugar or agave syrup
Salt and pepper to taste	¼ cup white balsamic vinegar
¼ cup light flavored olive oil or grapeseed oil	½ cup plain yogurt (not Greek style)
1½ TBS oregano, sliced finely once through	

In a non-reactive bowl, combine the shallot, sweetener of your choice, salt and pepper, a small pinch of the oregano, and the vinegar. Allow to macerate 15 minutes.

In a thin steady stream, whisk in the oil until it is all in and emulsified. Adding small amounts of the yogurt at a time, whisk it in until emulsified, then add more until all the yogurt is in. Add the remaining oregano and gently whisk in.

Taste the dressing for balance and texture. If the dressing is really runny, add a little more yogurt to thicken it. If the dressing is too stiff, thin with a little water. The texture should be creamy but thin enough to pour onto salad leaves without drowning them.

Refrigerate until ready to use. Dressing should keep a week or a little more before the flavors fall off. Yield: 1 cup