



# High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## Production Notes and Flaming

### Pigweed, by Steve Pedersen

The lovely little oakleaf lettuces in your boxes this week are two varieties that are new to us this year. We are so pleased with them that we will probably put them in our regular lettuce rotation. Let us know what you think.

This week's fava beans (part of the mystery) are all from our Redman House field. It has been a while since I last grew favas, and I made the mistake of planting them too close together in the rows. The plants grew beautifully (a little too beautifully) but because they were spaced so closely together, the patch became a jungle-like thicket that is a real challenge to harvest. The beans are excellent, however, and because we are picking them on the early side, the skins are still tender. (So don't worry too much about removing the skins for cooking!)

For some the mystery will be our first pick of summer squash. We had expected to start picking this block several weeks ago but the storms at the end of March, and cool temperatures in April, slowed things down. We will be picking more and more over the coming weeks and we'll be sure to rotate packing days so that everyone gets some.

As those who have come to our farm tours have probably heard me say, organic growers are at more of a disadvantage (compared to their conventional counterparts) not in dealing with pests or diseases—but in controlling weeds. Our biggest operating expense on the farm is labor, and weed control is among our highest labor activities. In fields with well-endowed weed "seed-banks" (meaning having lots of viable weed seeds), the expense of hand weeding can make some crops a losing proposition. Conventional growers may use fumigation to kill off viable weed seeds in the soil, or band on pre-emergence herbicides at planting time, or even apply selective post-emergence herbicides after their crops have broken the surface—all options that are obviously not available or desirable to organic growers.

We do have some tricks up our sleeves, however, and amongst these my favorite is the use of a propane flamer to kill weeds. This implement attaches to the back of our tractors and has four burners that pass over the top of our vegetable beds. It can be used in a number of ways. One of my favorites is the "stale-seedbed" technique where we prepare our beds for planting as usual, but before actually planting we soak the field a couple of times and wait ten days to two weeks. This brings up most of the viable weeds that are in a position to germinate. We then pass over the field with the flamer to kill off the weeds that have emerged. We plant the next day into

### Spring Renewal Time!

If you are on our 9-week schedule, please send your renewal checks now for the 2<sup>nd</sup> session (May 18 to July 13). \$198 for veggies/fruits only; \$270 for veggies/fruits plus flowers. (Please make checks to High Ground and use the address along the bottom of this sheet. Thanks!)

a nice clean field. Another way to use the flamer is to make a pass over the field after planting a crop. This works really well with things that take a long time to germinate-- like carrots, parsnips, parsley and onions. Because most weed species emerge before these crops do, if our timing is right, we can kill most of these weeds, and the crop will emerge a day or two later with very little competition.

We can even use the flamer with some extra-hardy crops like garlic or corn after the crops have emerged. Although these crops may get a little singed around their edges, they can withstand direct contact with the flames whereas the weed seedlings that surround them mostly perish.

It is in this way that I used the flamer on our potato planting last week. We planted the potatoes this year on the back hill at our home farm. It is one of those "out of sight, out of mind" fields that unfortunately doesn't always get the attention it needs. As a result, it has a hefty weed-seedbank with a lot of pigweed (an amaranthus species) in it. A week after watering in the newly planted seed potatoes, the whole field had a distinct reddish glow from the millions of newly germinated pigweed seedlings that had emerged. I usually make a flaming pass after planting potatoes no matter what field they are in, but I knew that in this instance it would be particularly important. Timing is critical in a case like this, if you make the

flaming pass too early, a large number of weeds that haven't yet broken the surface will emerge unscathed. If you make the pass too late, you will do serious damage to your crop, and a higher number of weeds will survive because they are large enough to withstand the heat.

This year I think I hit it just right. Although some of the potato varieties had already begun to emerge, they were at an early enough stage so that the flame did them little harm. And most of the weed seeds that were in a position to germinate had already emerged. As the rest of the potato varieties emerge and the field begins to fill out, it is particularly gratifying to look out on a clean crop—with few weeds to compete with it. This is the farmer's version of spring cleaning!

By the way, we planted nearly six tons of seed potatoes (a lot for us!) of six different varieties. We should start digging the earliest varieties as "new" potatoes as early as June.

## This Week

Strawberries

Lettuces (Little Gem, Green Oak, Red Oak)

Italian Parsley

Swiss Chard (green, red, or golden)

Scallions

Mokum Carrots\*

Broccoli\*

Mystery

Flowers: Mixed Bouquet

## Notes/Recipes from Chef Andrew Cohen

The weather has me in a summer state of mind, and the contents of the box plays along with that. The oak leaf lettuces call for a lighter dressing to my mind, so I'll do a slightly sweet white balsamic dressing for those. The Little Gems, being sturdy, will probably get turned into an early panzanella. I like this rustic salad made of hearty lettuce and old bread, and although usually made with tomatoes, I am happy to forgo them when I am in the mood for this salad. I'll probably scatter the salad with minced parsley and maybe some slivered green onions. This same combination will go into a tabbouleh, only a lot more of it. When I first had tabbouleh, it was mostly bulghur with a few specks of green, but I have since been educated by friends from the Middle East, learning that tabbouleh has way more green stuff than usually found in the American version. When looking at a plate of tabbouleh, it should look more green than brown. Another option for using scallions is doing farro with green onions added, turning the dish green and aromatic. Both scallions and parsley are usually thought of as support players in the aromatic field, but used with the right ingredients they are key players in themselves and can have marvelous flavors.

To accompany the salads, I might use the chard in a frittata. If not, perhaps I'll stuff chicken with it. Carrots will get caramelized, or I might blanch them until just tender and pour a cold dressing over them and let them cool to use later. They can be heated up or served as is, and certainly save time. For the Mystery of the week, should I get favas I am thinking of a risotto, stewing the favas with plenty of olive oil and garlic. Artichokes will just get steamed and eaten, or maybe I'll do a sauté of artichokes and mushrooms and toss it with pasta. Summer Squash will get caramelized as a side. If I am playing on the grill, I might split and grill some strawberries, and drizzle them with aged balsamic vinegar. These go with ice cream, or would make an interesting salad with the Little Gem lettuces. Use a balsamic vinaigrette that has had half the vinegar cut with water to lighten it up.

### Tabbouleh, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

*I like my tabbouleh good and green. I use a lot of mint if I have it, or I just use flat leaf parsley if I don't. If tomatoes are in season, I use them as well. If not, well, I just don't use them, as there is nowhere for a lousy tomato to hide here. I find tabbouleh a great way to use up the lemons on my Meyer lemon tree when it goes into overdrive, and tabbouleh keeps for a couple days so it helps when I need something fast.*

1 cup bulghur (cracked wheat)	2 cups flat leaf parsley, chopped finely
½ -1 cup finely sliced green onions, entire thing	½ cup lemon juice (Meyer lemon works well)
1-2 cups mint, chopped finely	½ cup fragrant olive oil
salt and pepper to taste	

Place the bulghur in a large steel bowl and pour very hot water over it, enough to cover by an inch at least. Allow to soak until soft, around 15-20 minutes. If there is a lot of water still in the bowl, drain the bulghur in a colander. Sprinkle the herbs and onions over the wheat and mix to combine. Whisk the lemon juice and oil together and pour over the bulghur. Mix to combine evenly. Season with salt and pepper, toss again to combine everything evenly. Serve lightly chilled or at room temperature.

*Chef's Tips:* If you have good tomatoes, seed and dice a couple and mix in gently after dressing the salad. I also like to add lettuce such as Little Gems or Romaine. Stack the leaves and once down the length and then across into ¼ inch strips. I like to use cucumber also. Split it the length and scoop out the seeds, then cut into ¼ inch cubes.

### Green Onion Farro, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

½ bunch scallions, green parts and whites separated and sliced finely	2 cloves garlic, peeled and de-germed and minced
1 leaf of fresh sage, slivered finely	1 cup farro
¼ cup white wine	3 cups liquid (water, stock, a combination)
Salt and pepper to taste	2-3 tablespoons olive oil

Heat the 3 cups of liquid in a pan or on the microwave. Keep close to the stove. Heat a 2 quart chefs pan or sauté pan over medium heat. When hot, add enough oil to film the pan bottom and cook the white parts of the onions until soft and fragrant. Add the garlic and the sage to the pan and cook until softened. Add the white wine to the pan and cook until it is almost all evaporated. (80%) Add the farro and toss to coat and mix with the oil and alliums. Add the hot liquid to the pan, being careful as it might spatter. Bring the pot to the boil, then turn down the heat to a gentle simmer and cover the pot, leaving the lid slightly ajar. After 15 minutes, sprinkle the farro with the greens from the scallions and replace the top as before. After 10 minutes more, the farro should be done. Season with salt and pepper, drizzle with some more olive oil, and gently turn to mix all the ingredients. Serve warm.

### White Balsamic Vinaigrette, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

*The white balsamic version is lighter and subtler than regular balsamic vinegars, and makes a nice dressing or sauce for when you want to complement more delicate flavors.*

1 peeled clove garlic	1/8 <sup>th</sup> tsp. fresh thyme, minced
1 pinch each salt and fresh ground black pepper	1 small shallot, peeled and minced (½ teaspoon)
1 tsp. sweet-hot mustard (a.k.a. honey-mustard, Ingelhoff and Beaver both make excellent versions)	2 TBS white balsamic vinegar
6 TBS grapeseed oil or other neutral flavored oil	

Rub a non-reactive bowl with the garlic clove, smearing the inside with garlic oil. Add the salt, pepper, thyme and shallot to the bowl, then add the vinegar. Wait 5 minutes for flavors to meld. Add the mustard and whisk to mix thoroughly. Stream the oil slowly into the bowl, whisking vigorously all the while to incorporate the oil. You may not need all the oil as the mustard thickens the dressing also. Add the oil until the dressing is thickened or you run out of oil. Taste for balance. If the dressing is too sharp, add a little more oil. Keeps 1 week or more in refrigerator. Yield: ½ cup

Everything in your box and the flowers are certified organic. Everything is grown by High Ground Organics unless otherwise noted. Broccoli and carrots this week are from Lakeside Organics. Flowers are grown by the Thomas Farm.