



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

August 21-22, 2015

## Silent Spring #6- The Challenge

by Sarah Janes Ugoretz

Well, here we are folks—at the end of our Silent Spring series. As you look back and reflect on what we've done here—the topics we've explored and the questions we've asked—I hope that you feel two things: empowerment and motivation. Empowerment in the sense that, if we've done our jobs correctly, you are walking away with an arsenal of knowledge and understanding which you can further develop as you continue to engage with these issues. And motivation because if you're like me, you'll be thinking of ways in which you can actively use what you've learned as a means of bringing about positive change. With this in mind, I want to use this space to share examples of a few ways in which our fellow humans have reacted to the widespread use of harmful pesticides. I'll also suggest a number of things you and I can do in our own individual capacities in confronting these issues head-on.

Let's look first to Portland, Oregon. For those of you familiar with Portland's progressiveness (and perhaps the show *Portlandia*), it may not come as a surprise that in April 2015, the City Council voted unanimously to ban the use of neonic pesticides. In Portland—as remains the case in many hundreds of cities across the country—city parks, athletic fields, roadsides and other publicly shared green spaces were regularly treated with neonics, glyphosate and other pesticides. Just as residents were growing more and more concerned, the Oregon Department of Agriculture brought to the fore data they had been collecting over the past two years. Basically, they were able to directly link several large-scale bee death incidents to the application of neonics on public spaces. As such, when the ordinance banning neonics was put forward, it was categorized as a “public health issue requiring emergency action” (Anderson, 2015). Now, as the ban goes into effect, Portland's parks are working to develop a pest management plan—a step intended to demonstrate to the general public that “successful pest management is possible with practices that protect bees and other pollinators” (Reuters, 2015a; Anderson, 2015).

In passing this ordinance, Portland joins eight other U.S. cities, including Spokane, Washington and Shorewood, Minnesota, which enacted their own bans in years previous. Meanwhile, our neighbor to the north has set forth its

## This Week's Box

**RED RUSSIAN GARLIC:** Why not whip up your own extra tasty salad dressing? In a small bowl, combine ½ cup olive oil, 3 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice, 1 crushed garlic clove and salt & pepper.

**SWEET SPANISH ONIONS:** Check out Martha Stewart's spin on the always-classic Tortilla Española. Her Spanish Onion and Potato Torta is a savory combo that you'll likely want to have around for a while!

**CUCUMBERS OR ZUCCHINI OR FLYING SAUCER SUMMER SQUASH:** Dice your cucumbers and feature them in a Greek-style chopped kale salad. Include kalamata olives, grape tomatoes and feta cheese and toss with a mustard vinaigrette. For the zucchini, julienne along with carrots and toss with chopped cilantro. Mix together fresh lime juice, garlic, chile flakes, a dash of fish sauce, vegetable oil and brown sugar. Toss with vegetables, and top with coarsely chopped dry roasted peanuts.

**ORANGE CARROTS:** Slice your carrots into coins and combine with honey, butter and ½ cup of water. Over medium-high heat sauté for 10-15 minutes, until carrots are tender. Top with fresh mint.

**GREEN BELL OR ORANGE UKRAINE PEPPERS:** Slice these peppers and toss, along with cubed potatoes and chopped onions, in olive oil, salt and pepper. Grill or roast in the oven for a perfect side for steak or vegetable burgers.

**GREEN ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS:** These are the long skinny peppers in the box this week. They are classified as a sweet pepper. Halve your peppers and char them over high heat in your cast iron skillet. Top with Parmesan cheese and enjoy!

**RED OR YELLOW GRAPE TOMATOES OR SUNGOLD TOMATOES:** Did you know that tomatoes are good for your bones? Because they are high in calcium and vitamin K, they work to strengthen our bones and their tissues.

**VARIETY OF LARGE TOMATOES:** Halve and drizzle tomatoes with olive oil, top with thyme and garlic and slow roast at 250° F for several hours. Pack into mason jars and place them in the freezer, to be used during the winter months! Refrigeration will kill the flavor, so store your tomatoes on the countertop until ripe and ready to eat.

**SWEET CORN:** Jackpot week for corn! We are nearing the end of the season and there was just too much good corn to pass by. Check out this week's vegetable feature for more information and recipes. Enjoy!

**SUN JEWEL OR FRENCH ORANGE OR SWEET SARAH MELONS OR**

**JAPANESE GREEN CANTALOUPE:** Get yourself a melon baller! Scoop small balls of melon and freeze on a parchment-lined baking sheet for at least 4 hours. When you're ready to enjoy, drop 1 or 2 into a tall glass along with some sorbet and top off with seltzer or club soda.

**EDAMAME:** If you're new to edamame and are wondering what to do with it, reference last week's newsletter for more information and recipes. You can find it on our website in the Newsletter Archives.

**JALAPEÑOS:** These are the small, dark green peppers in your box...and they are hot! For your next dinner party, treat your guests to homemade jalapeño poppers or, if you're feeling really ambitious, bacon-wrapped jalapeño poppers.

**PURPLE OR CHEDDAR OR WHITE CAULIFLOWER:** Cauliflower and pappardelle are a natural pair. Broil cauliflower florets and combine with sautéed capers, shallots and garlic. Toss with mustard, butter, salt and pepper and top with chopped parsley and breadcrumbs.

**CHOICE ITEM: ITALIAN BASIL**—Please only take small handful of basil per household.

**See the third page for this week's feature about sweet corn and great corn recipes.**

own inspiring example. Three Canadian provinces—Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick—have banned the use of cosmetic pesticides on lawns, citing this law as a means of safeguarding humans, animal life and the environment from unnecessary exposures to harmful chemicals (David Suzuki Foundation, 2009). As the most commonly used insecticide in the world, neonics are not confined to agriculture. Rather, they are equally popular—and are applied at a much higher rate—in urban, non-agricultural settings (City of Boulder Colorado, 2015). Yards, trees, flowers and shrubs are often treated with neonics, some of which have a half-life as high as three years (Hunt & Krupke, 2012). Even the plants you purchase from nurseries and home improvement stores like Lowe’s and Home Depot are likely to have been grown from or treated with neonics (Keim, 2014). Primarily in response to public pressure, both of these stores have recently begun to explore the feasibility of removing neonics from their business operations (Reuters, 2015b).

Though all of the above actions are a step in the right direction, we don’t have to look too hard to see that politics and loopholes often go hand-in-hand. For instance, Portland’s ban allows for neonics to remain in use on a site-by-site basis, while Ontario’s ban continues to permit the use of glyphosate in certain circumstances. Lowe’s, although it has committed to eliminating neonics by 2019, has included the caveat that this will occur “as suitable alternatives become available” (Reuters, 2015b). Considering this and also referring back to last week’s conversation on the precautionary principle, we should acknowledge the very real possibility that our government is not going to act fast enough in addressing the growing use of and serious implications tied to these harmful pesticides. Therefore, it is people like you and I—in conjunction with conservation groups and other concerned actors—that are likely going to be the ones to accomplish real and lasting change.

As we consider what we can do in our day-to-day activities and throughout our communities, it is important to understand that we’re not alone in this. As trailblazing organizations like the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and the IPM Practitioner fight to protect pollinators and other beneficals, they’re also putting their time and energy into empowering us to serve as environmental stewards. In addition to their many opportunities for more formal involvement, the Xerces Society offers important reference

publications that you can access from the convenience of your kitchen table. For instance, their guide on pollinator plants outlines which are among the best suited to our specific region of the country. As members of the **Million Pollinator Garden Challenge**, which was started in response to the White House’s *National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators*, they also outline the value that you can contribute through something as simple as a window or patio planter. The IPM Practitioner, on the other hand, publishes a quarterly that discusses various ways in which to address a wide number of pests—ranging from mice and roaches to carpenter ants—in a chemical-free manner.

We must also consider the power that we have as consumers. “Voting with your dollar” is a phrase that has been around for a while, but it remains an action that carries great weight. Much as we support farms like Harmony Valley through our organic food purchases, we can do the same in our home and garden purchases. As you shop, be discerning—read labels, ask questions, and do your best to make sure your purchases align with your principles. Don’t be afraid to take a stand—whether that be through putting a “Pesticide Free” sign up in your yard or, as a group of women did in Stoughton, Wisconsin, publicly organizing and drawing attention to the way your city deals with weed management (Livick, 2013).

As we draw our formal conversation to a close, I want to briefly return to Quarles, who has done incredibly important work around further demonstrating the importance of sustainable, chemical-free agriculture in the age of pesticides. Despite the rather serious dilemma in which we find ourselves, Quarles (2008, p.13) encourages us to regard this not as a cause for doom and despair, but as “an opportunity for change.” And so, with this in mind, Richard, Andrea and I—along with the rest of the Harmony Valley Farm family—want to pose to you a challenge. Throughout this next year, we’d like to ask you to share with us the ways in which you have joined us in this effort. Send your stories and share your photographs. Every action counts, no matter how small. In one year’s time, we’ll take a moment to share these wonderful actions as we reflect on what we’ve collectively accomplished as a Harmony Valley Farm community and as stewards of the earth.

All references may be found on our blog at [www.harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com](http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com)



### Join the Challenge... HVF Pollinator Packs!

We’d like to encourage you to consider joining the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge by planting your own pollinator garden at your home, workplace, school, etc. You can find more information about this challenge at: [www.millionpollinatorgardens.org](http://www.millionpollinatorgardens.org). We’d like to do our part to help you do your part in supporting the pollinator populations in our communities! Next spring we’re planning to put together **POLLINATOR PACKS** that we’ll have available to deliver to you in time to plant your gardens in the spring. This will be a garden pack similar to our Herb Packs and will contain several different plants that attract pollinators that reside in our region. We’ll source the seed, plant it in the greenhouse and grow the transplants. You just need to provide a place to plant and tend to them! Everything counts, from as small as a window box to something as large as a garden. Start planning your space and stay tuned for more information in the spring!

### Produce Plus

Produce Plus is a benefit of CSA membership, allowing you to buy some of your favorite items in bulk to put up (can, freeze, preserve) for later use.

#### Produce Plus Current Offers

**Roma Tomatoes, 25 pounds-\$38.00**  
**Sweet Spanish Onions, 10 pounds-\$24.00**  
**Tomatillos, 10 pounds-\$35.00**  
**Jalapeños, 5 pounds-\$18.00**  
**Edamame, 10 pounds-\$40.00**

#### Cross Plains, Mazo, Strathfield, Argyle & Local customers

-order by 5pm on Wednesday, August 26th for delivery to your pick-up site on **August 28-29th** Please mail your payment the same day as placing your order.

**Madison customers** -order by 5pm on Wednesday, August 26th for delivery to our farmers’ market stand on **August 29th**. Please pay for your order at the stand.

To order, please call 608-483-2143 x2 or email [csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com](mailto:csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com)

Please be sure to include your name, telephone number and pick-up location with your order!

**See the third page for this week’s feature about sweet corn and great corn recipes! Available on our blog at [www.harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com](http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com) or on our website.**

## Vegetable Feature: Sweet Corn

by Andrea Yoder

There are some crops we grow to make money and others we grow to make friends. Sweet corn is not a terribly profitable crop, but it is one that we fuss over quite a bit with the goal of growing corn that will make you stop and say "Man that's good corn!" Due to the cool, wet spring, we didn't get as many corn plantings done as in some years, but the ones we did get planted have proven to be Fantastic...Stellar....Awesome! These are fitting adjectives to describe this year's corn-eating experience, but they're also the names of several varieties of sweet corn we grew this year.

Variety selection is very important with sweet corn. There are hundreds of corn varieties to choose from, but the challenge is finding the ones that produce well in our growing conditions. First of all, we do not grow genetically modified sweet corn. The varieties we grow produce very sweet & flavorful corn that you'll find to be very tender with nicely filled out ears. The tenderness is because our varieties have a thin pericarp which is the "husk" that covers each kernel of corn. Unfortunately, there is a lot of "ok" corn available in the marketplace, and there's a lot of corn that really just doesn't taste very good at all. Over the years we continue to trial new varieties, but we keep turning back to the ones that give us the best quality product and best eating experience.

Our corn field looks like a disco party waiting to happen! We have to protect the corn from all the critters that would like to help themselves to this tasty treat as well. First we put up a 6' tall fence all around the field. Next we run an electrical wire about 6 inches off the ground...to keep out small creatures such as raccoons. Now it's time for the party decorations including silver reflective streamers and colorful scare-eye balloons that deter birds. We also put out a few hawk decoys that, while they don't look very scary to a human, the blackbirds seem to respect.

After we go through all of this hullabaloo to produce a great tasting ear of corn, the final step is to KEEP IT COLD! The sugars in corn can quickly convert to starch if the corn is not handled properly. It's important to keep corn cold from the time it's picked until you're ready to eat it. We ice the corn immediately in the field, and then again when it comes into the packing shed. It's important that you do your part as well to store your corn in the refrigerator and eat it within a few days. Contrary to popular belief, the garage is not the best place to store sweet corn. If you have limited refrigerator space, you can remove the husk and put the ears of corn in a plastic bag to store in the refrigerator.

Corn can be enjoyed by eating it directly off the cob, or you can cook it on the cob and cut it off. Fresh corn cut off the cob can be used to make a lot of different dishes including salads, fritters, dips, fried rice, etc. Don't throw the cob away! Corn cobs actually have a lot of flavor on them. Add them to a pot of chicken or vegetable stock to add some great summer flavor. I like to do this to make stock that I then use to make a delicious corn chowder.

Corn season is always way too short, but we hope you've been enjoying the ears in your box this year. We are hoping for about one more week of corn, so savor your final bites of the season!

## Grilled Corn and Ricotta Dip

This recipe was adapted from the recent August/September 2015 edition of *Saveur* magazine.

This is an issue worth reading and is full of tasty recipes featuring summer vegetables.

Yield: 3 cups  
3 ears corn, shucked  
¾ cup heavy cream  
¾ cup ricotta  
1 Tbsp all-purpose flour  
1 Tbsp finely chopped thyme  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
¼ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese  
1 Tbsp unsalted butter, diced  
Finely chopped chives and scallions, to garnish

1. Heat the oven to 325°F. Heat a grill pan over high and cook the corn until charred on all sides, 25 minutes. Cut the kernels from the cob, and puree two-thirds of the kernels in a food processor with the cream, ricotta, flour, and thyme. Season with salt and pepper and stir in remaining kernels.
2. Scrape the dip into an 8-inch baking dish, sprinkle with Parmesan, and dot with butter; bake until bubbly, about 1 ½ hours. Garnish with chives and scallions to serve.

HVF Serving Suggestions: Serve with fresh wedges of sweet pepper or carrot sticks. You could also spread it on top of a slice of toasted French or Italian bread and top off with slices of fresh tomato, or keep it very simple and just scoop it up with tortilla chips or crackers.

## Corn Studded Corn Muffins with Mascarpone

This recipe was featured in the recent August 2015 issue of *Food & Wine* magazine. This issue includes some great recipes for all the summer vegetables we're enjoying right now. Pick up your own copy or check out the recipes on their website.

Yield: 12 muffins  
1 cup all-purpose flour  
1 cup finely ground cornmeal  
½ cup sugar  
1 Tbsp baking powder  
1 tsp plus one pinch Kosher salt  
2 large eggs  
1 cup buttermilk, at room temperature  
1 stick unsalted butter, melted  
1 cup fresh corn kernels (from about 1 ½ ears)  
½ cup mascarpone cheese  
1 ½ Tbsp honey

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F and line a 12-cup muffin tin with paper liners. In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder and 1 tsp of salt. In a large bowl, beat the eggs with the buttermilk and melted butter. Whisk in the dry ingredients, then fold in the corn kernels.
2. Spoon the batter into the prepared muffin cups. Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center of the muffins comes out clean. Let the corn muffins cool in the pan for 10 minutes before turning them out onto a wire rack to cool completely.
3. In a small bowl, whisk the mascarpone with the honey and a pinch of salt. Serve with the muffins.