Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

May 20-21, 2016

Pollinator Packs Coming Next Week! Time to Get Your Garden Ready!

by Andrea Yoder

Last summer we published a series of articles in our vegetable newsletters entitled "The Silent Spring Series." We were prompted by the White House's release of the *National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators*, a move that has been regarded by many as a ground breaking step towards acknowledging and mobilizing action around rapidly declining pollinator populations within North America. This document was created by the Pollinator Health Task Force which was formed in response to a Presidential Memorandum issued by President Obama to create a national strategy to address the issue of declining pollinator populations. Pollinators are an important part of what we do at Harmony Valley Farm and we rely on birds, bees, bats, butterflies and more to pollinate crops and help keep pest populations under control. We enjoy having these creatures on our farm and in our fields. Sadly, a very large part of the problem with declining pollinator populations is being caused by the extensive use of glyphosate, neonicotinoids and other pesticides across our nation.

At the end of our Silent Spring Series of articles, we found ourselves asking… "**But what can we do to help?"** Well, one of the things we've done on our farm is plant wildflowers and prairie grasses in the areas around our fields and roadsides to provide appropriate habitat to support pollinators. We've really enjoyed watching these areas grow and develop over the past few years and are in awe at the variety of pollinating creatures that are attracted to these plants. But is this enough? **NO!** Inspired by the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge, we decided we could take it one step further and encourage all of our members to participate in planting pollinator habitats as well!

The **Million Pollinator Garden Challenge** is a campaign to register a million public and private gardens and landscapes to support pollinators. Right now they have registered 187,842 gardens, but we need to do our part to help them reach their goal. So, here's what we've done. We have put together pollinator garden packs that contain a variety of wildflowers and prairie grasses. They are growing nicely and are ready to be delivered to your CSA sites starting next week on Friday/Saturday, May 27/28. We'll deliver any remaining packs the following week on Friday/Saturday, June 3/4. We wanted to give you a week or two to prepare your garden space so you are ready to plant your packs when you pick them up.

As you consider your garden space, keep in mind that anything counts. The plants contained in the pack are appropriate to plant in a space approximately 8' x 10'. All of the plants are perennial plants which means they will come back year after year. You might want to consider putting a marker next to each plant so you know where you planted it and can watch for its return next spring. If you don't have garden space at your home or apartment, consider planting them in a community garden space or perhaps there's a space at your workplace that you could use to establish a pollinator garden. You can also plant each plant in an individual pot or planter box and keep them in a patio space or even on your balcony. Once you've planted your garden space, don't forget to register your garden with the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge. (*millionpollinatorgardens.org*)

The bottom line is planting a pollinator pack is a simple act that can have a big impact. All of our simple acts can add up to be a great benefit in the end. As Farmer Richard always says…. "**I can't change the world, but I can change my little corner of the world."**

This Week's Box

RHUBARB: Rhubarb isn't just for sweet treats, it can be used in savory dishes as well. Rhubarb is a tasty addition to marinades, sauces or chutney to serve with roasted pork, grilled meats and other savory dishes.

GREEN GARLIC: Both the green tops and the white base are usable. Slice it thinly and add to salads or stir a big handful into steamed rice and sprinkle with sesame seeds & toasted sesame oil.

SCALLIONS: Use your scallions to make the Watercress and Spring Onion Raita recipe featured on *eatingwell.com* website. It makes a simple and tasty accompaniment to grilled chicken, lamb or falafel.

ASPARAGUS: Due to the cold weather we had over the weekend, our asparagus harvests this week have been pretty slim. We're hoping to see larger harvests as the weather warms up.

FRENCH BREAKFAST RADISH: Slice the radishes thinly and make your first radish sandwich of the year! Butter or cream cheese, good bread and a little salt are all you need.

WATERCRESS: This is a peppery spring green that can be pungent on its own, but pairs well with rich ingredients such as cream, cheese, roasted and smoked meats. Make a simple sandwich by spreading scallion cream cheese on crusty bread. Top it off with smoked trout and watercress.

BURDOCK: Please read the vegetable feature for more information. You can find a bonus page of recipes on page 3 of the newletter. There are also two recipes on the back of the bag the burdock is packed in.

CULINARY HERB PACKS: This week we're delivering our herb packs! There is one herb pack for every vegetable share, so please be sure to pick yours up. Sharing households….please only take one pack per vegetable share. If you would like a second pack for the other household, please leave a note in the notebook at your site and we'll send one for you the following week. Please refer to the diagram below to identify your plants.

Curly Parsley	Winter Thyme	Winter Savory
Italian Parsley	Sage	Greek Oregano
Dill	Basil	Basil

Here are the descriptions of the different plants we included in the Pollinator Packs. All of the plants we selected are native species grown from seed we purchased from Prairie Moon Nursery. These are some of the varieties that have done the best for us on our farm and have been very attractive to birds, bees and butterflies. Each pack may vary a bit and may not include all of the plant varieties. Please visit our blog (*harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com*) where we have posted pictures of each plant to help you identify what you are planting!

- **ANISE HYSSOP** (Agastache foeniculum): Grows to an average height of 3' and produces long purple flowers from June through September. It self-seeds readily and will often bloom in the first year. You'll be amazed at how many critters are attracted to this plant! Best in areas with full sun or partially shaded.
- **WILD BERGAMOT** (Monarda fistulosa): Grows to an average height of 4' and produces purple blossoms from July through September. Best in areas with full sun or partially shaded.
- **LANCE-LEAF COREOPSIS** (Coreopsis lanceolate): Grows to an average height of 2' and produces bright yellow, daisy-like flowers from May-August. This flower is easy to grow and can form a large colony in a short period of time. Best in full sun.
- **PURPLE CONEFLOWER** (Echinacea purpurea): Grows to an average height of 4' and produces golden red to purple flowers July through September. Will attract bees and butterflies. Best in areas with full sun or partially shaded.
- **SWEET BLACK-EYED SUSAN** (Rudebeckia subtomentosa): Grows to an average height of 5' and produces profuse, anise-scented yellow flowers from August through October. Best in areas with full sun or partially shaded.
- **BUTTERFLY WEED** (Asclepias tuberosa): Grows to an average height of 2' and produces orange blossoms from June through August. Best in areas with full sun or partially shaded.
- **LITTLE BLUE STEM** (Schizachyrium scoparium): Grows to an average height of 3' and develops a blue hue in summer and coppery-pink color after the first frost. Does well in medium-dry gardens.
- **PUPRLE LOVE GRASS** (Eragrostis spectabilis): Grows to an average height of 2' and develops seedheads which bloom July through September in shades of light to bright purple. Does well in a dry location.

This is our first time offering pollinator packs to our members, so we could use a little help gauging member interest in this endeavor. We will be sending packs to all site locations, but it would be helpful to know approximately how many members would like a pack at each location. Please send us a quick email to let us know if you'd like a pack. Please include your name, site location and the date you prefer to pick up your pack (May 27 or 28 or June 3 or 4). If you don't include a date preference we'll plan to send it next week on May 27 or 28.

We hope you have fun with this project and enjoy the experience of planting and caring for these special plants. We'd like to do a follow-up story next year to report on all of the successful pollinator gardens you have created. Let us know how things are going and send your pictures our way!

Featured Vegetable of the Week: Burdock Root!

By Andrea Yoder

We are one of only a handful of burdock growers in the country and it is a very important crop for our farm from an economic perspective. Beyond its economic value, we also hold this vegetable in high regard for its nutritional value and the positive impacts it has on our own health. Despite the fact that we grow burdock root every year, we've only included it in our CSA boxes one time in the last seven years as, historically, it has been under appreciated by members. But something odd has been happening over the past year. We've been selling more burdock at our market stand last fall and this spring than I've ever seen before. Most of our market crew members have even become burdock eaters after realizing they had been talking about the vegetable but hadn't tried it themselves. When they did give it a try they found they really liked it! So this year we thought maybe we should reconsider where burdock fits into our CSA box plans and decided to give this modest vegetable another opportunity to shine. Please read on with an open mind and embrace this opportunity to try something different.

Burdock is the long, slender brown root vegetable that is packaged in a plastic bag with a red background. It has been used in traditional Chinese medicine for centuries where it is thought to have important health benefits as a blood and liver purifier in addition to use as a digestive aid and it's beneficial for treating skin disorders. It is found quite frequently as an ingredient in tonics used in non-traditional treatments for cancer among other health maladies.

The Japanese are thought to have been the first culture to include burdock in their diets as an edible plant in addition to its medicinal uses. You'll find burdock to have a subtle, unique, earthy flavor with a crisp carrot-like texture and a slight sweetness. Burdock pairs well with foods such as mushrooms, onions, garlic, beef, brown rice, barley and other root vegetables. It may be eaten raw, cooked or dried and used in teas. Before using, scrub the root with a vegetable brush. You may peel the root if you desire, however the skin is thin and can eaten as well. Burdock root stores well for months as long as it is stored in the refrigerator in a plastic bag.

We wanted to provide you with some recipe ideas, but we're nearly out of room! We've created a third bonus page for the newsletter this week which will include a variety of recipes utilizing burdock root. Please be sure to pick up a recipe page at your CSA site or refer to the newsletter link in your "What's In The Box Email" to access the Burdock Recipe page as a third page of our newsletter. There are also two more recipes printed on the back of the burdock bag including one for Kinpira, a traditional Japanese preparation for burdock. I hope you will approach this vegetable with an open mind and give it a try. It has a lot to offer and you'll reap the health benefits even if consumed in small quantities….as you're learning to like it.

Don't forget to pick up the bonus page of Burdock Recipes at your CSA Site or Refer to the third page of the newsletter in the "What's In The Box Email."

Burdock and Mushroom Risotto

Serves 4
5 to 6 cups vegetable broth
1 Tbsp olive oil
3 Tbsp butter, divided
½ cup finely chopped scallions or onions
2 Tbsps garlic or green garlic, minced
1 cup burdock, chopped (peeling is optional)
1 lb assorted mushrooms of your choice, wiped clean and thinly sliced
2 cups arborio rice
1 tsp fresh thyme, minced
1 cup dry white wine
½ tsp salt
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 tsp fresh parsley, minced

1. In a medium saucepan, bring the stock to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat to very low to keep the stock warm while you are making the risotto.
2. In a large, heavy bottom saucepan, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of butter and heat until melted. Add the onions and garlic and saute, stirring until fragrant and soft, about 3 minutes. Add the mushrooms and burdock. Continue to saute for about 4 to 5 minutes or until the mushrooms are softened and most of their liquid has evaporated. Remove the vegetable mixture from the pan and set aside.
3. Return the pan to the stovetop and add the remaining tablespoon of butter to the pan. Once the butter is melted, add the rice and stir to coat with the butter. Toast the rice until the grains are opaque, about 1 minute. Add the wine and thyme. Stir to combine and then simmer until nearly all the liquid has evaporated. Add ½-¾ cup of stock along with the salt, black pepper, and burdock mixture. Continue to simmer the rice, stirring periodically. When nearly all the liquid has evaporated, add another ½ cup of stock. Continue to add more stock in ½ cup increments as needed until the rice is tender and the risotto is creamy. Stir in ½ cup of Parmesan cheese and the parsley. Stir well to combine. Serve immediately, topping each portion with a sprinkling of the remaining cheese.

This recipe was shared with us by Kyle Lindemer, a Madison CSA member and one of our market crew members. Thanks Kyle!

Shoe String Burdock Fries

By Chef Andrea Yoder

Serves 4-6 as a garnish

4 oz burdock root (2 medium size pieces, 10-12" in length)
3-4 cups sunflower or vegetable oil (appropriate for high heat cooking)
Fine sea salt

1. Pour oil into a 3-4 quart pot. You want the oil to be about 1 ½" deep. You need to make sure the pan has tall sides as the oil will expand when you fry the burdock. Make sure there is an additional 3 inches of clearance between the top of the oil and the top of the pan.
2. Heat the oil on the stovetop over medium-high heat. While the oil is warming up, prepare the burdock.
3. Scrub the surface of the burdock with a vegetable brush, then blot the surface with a towel to remove excess moisture. Using a vegetable peeler, shave thin pieces of burdock by running the vegetable peeler down half of the root. Rotate the root slightly after each shaving to try and keep the shavings thin. Once you are down to a skinny piece in the middle, turn the root around and repeat on the other end. You should have about 3 cups of shavings when you are done.
4. Test the oil temperature by dropping one piece of burdock into the oil. It should sizzle and bubble immediately and rise to the top of the oil surface. If it does not sizzle and/or drops to the bottom of the pan, the oil is not hot enough. If the oil is bubbling and or smoking before you add the burdock to the pan, it is too hot and you should carefully remove it from the heat source immediately.
5. When the oil is ready, start frying the burdock in small batches. Do not put more than a small handful of burdock shavings into the pan at one time. If you put too much burdock into the oil at one time, you risk boiling over. Using tongs, gently stir the burdock in the oil to separate the strands. Fry until the strands are lightly browned. Use the tongs to gather the burdock together and lift it from the oil. Place the burdock on a plate lined with paper towels. Use the tongs to gather the pieces into a ittle pile like a haystack. Sprinkle the pile lightly with fine sea salt while still hot.
6. Now you can repeat the process with the next handful of burdock.
7. Once all the burdock is fried, remove the oil from the heat and set aside in a safe location to cool.
8. It is best to serve the burdock fries the same day you fry them. Use them as a garnish for soups, grilled steak, chicken, pork or fish dishes. You can also add the fries to a burger or other sandwich for a little added crunch. And finally, you can just eat them as is because they are that delicious!

This is a preparation I made several years ago for a benefit dinner I cooked for in the spring. The guests at the dinner couldn't believe they were eating burdock and loved it!