



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

May 27-28, 2016

## Spring Farm Update

By Farmer Richard

This has been a weird and unpredictable spring! It warmed up in late February and March. The snow melted, the maple sap started to run....perhaps a bit too early? The ramps came up in early April and by the second week of April we started harvesting them. All indications pointed towards an early, warm, dry spring! We planted our first salad greens, radishes, beets and carrots on April 14. Early? Yes, but we love it!

We had fairly dry weather early in April which allowed us to get the overwintered parsnips and sunchokes out of the cold winter ground. The overwintered spinach looked pretty good and by the end of April we started to see signs of the asparagus starting to come up. We were thinking "Yes! We're going to have nice early season boxes for our members!" ....and then our fortunes changed. Cold, damp weather going into the first of May slowed all growth to a crawl! Some crops did continue to grow, despite the cold temperatures. The garlic, rhubarb, and spring onions looked good, until we had an unsuspected and freakish hail/slush storm with strong north winds. It was quite a storm! It moved through quickly but managed to dump about two inches of hail and sleet balls on us in just about 15-20 minutes! Unfortunately the rhubarb and overwintered onions took a beating as the hail hit the tops of the onions and the rhubarb stalks. The wind was coming from the north, so one side of the plant looked pretty bad while the other side of the plant was virtually untouched! Whoa here, what happened to our early spring?!

After the storm, it was on the dry side so we continued to plant on schedule, even early sweet corn and green beans. The first 24 hours after a seed is planted are probably the most important. If we plant on a warm day and plant shallow, we can usually germinate the seed. Voila! Our first planting of beans germinated, pushed through the ground and were looking good. They were just coming up and then on May 15, our average last light frost date, we had a freeze! 27-28°F was our low temperature that set in for about 6-8 hours overnight and into the morning. The green bean sprouts that were still under the ground froze! The sweet corn froze too, but recovered with new shoots. Most of the beans, however, did not survive. Despite the fact that we had a cover over the strawberries, some of the blossoms were damaged. It looks like about 40% of

## This Week's Box

**GREEN GARLIC:** Thinly slice the green tops and add it to soup just before serving, or use as a taco topping.

**SPRING SCALLIONS:** The flower tops are edible too! Just pull the little flowers apart and toss them into a salad or use them as a garnish.

**ASPARAGUS:** See this week's newsletter recipes for ways to incorporate asparagus into this week's meals alongside some of the other box contents.

**HON TSAI TAI:** See this week's vegetable feature for more information and recipe ideas.

**WATERCRESS:** This peppery green may be eaten raw or lightly cooked. Consider making a tasty salad with watercress as the base. Toss the greens with a creamy buttermilk dressing and then top off the salad with sliced radishes, asparagus spears, hard-boiled egg and crumbled bacon.

**GREEN TOP FRENCH BREAKFAST RADISHES:** Don't forget that the tops are edible as well! Slice them thinly and lightly stir-fry in a hot skillet with oil, green garlic and scallions. Drizzle with a flavorful oil such as walnut oil and top with grated cheese. You could even toss this mixture with some leftover pasta or rice for a quick lunch.

**PEA VINE:** See this week's vegetable feature for more information and recipe ideas.

**SAUTE MIX:** Farmer Richard always says... "Eat Your Greens Every Day!" This blend of baby greens can be eaten raw as a salad or lightly sautéed or wilted.

**CHOICE--Herb Packs & Pollinator Packs:** Please read the banners on the checklist at your site for more important information about this week's choice items AND pay attention to the signs when picking up your choice item this week when selecting your plant pack(s). The herb packs contain a variety of edible culinary herbs. Please use the diagram below to identify the herbs in this pack. The Pollinator Packs contain wildflowers and grasses to attract pollinating creatures. Refer to last week's newsletter article for more information about the Pollinator Packs. Refer to the pictures on our blog if you need help identifying the plants.

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

the blossoms were damaged, but still a lot of smaller strawberries are ok and coming.

The zucchini and cucumbers were under a cover as well. While the zucchini toughed it out and had a pretty good survival rate, the cucumbers in the same field didn't fare so well. They had about an 1% survival rate. So sad. On a brighter note, the beets, carrots, chard, burdock, broccoli, fennel, cauliflower, cabbage, etc are all alive and just waiting for warm weather to grow!

We picked the asparagus hard before the frost on May 15, but some asparagus still froze off and we lost 5 days of production. That's why there was such a small bunch of asparagus in last week's box! We were very happy to see larger harvest numbers this week when the crew picked on Monday. No, the asparagus season is not over!

With some extra time on our hands, we turned our attention to that which we always turn to when we have a free moment during the growing season.... weed control! Can you believe it has been so cool that even the weeds haven't been growing!! While we've been waiting for the vegetables to grow, our crew has been busy trimming around fields, has done a lot of landscaping, painted our barn and the nursery greenhouse, cultivated and cleaned every small weed from the plantings.

Finally, this week the warm weather came and we have been busy transplanting some of our warm weather plants including eggplant, tomato, pepper, squash and melons. While it has been a challenge to manage things this spring and provide a nice box, the tide is turning. The crops... and the weeds will grow!

## Featured Vegetables of the Week: Pea Vine & Hon Tsai Tai

by Andrea Yoder

This week's box features two greens that we've specifically selected to fill our spring slots for interesting & unique vegetables that are ready to go early in the season, ahead of other crops that require more time to mature. They bridge the gap between overwintered and perennial greens and other spring planted vegetables.

**Pea Vine** is an immature pea plant that is harvested before the vine starts to develop blossoms. It has a mild, sweet pea flavor and reminds us that sugar snap and snow peas are just around the corner! Pea vine can be eaten raw in salads or can be lightly sautéed, wilted into soups and sauces or stir-fried. While the tendrils and leaves are tender, the main stem can sometimes get tough depending on how mature the plant is at harvest. One way to handle this vegetable is to pick the tender leaves and tendrils off the main stem, but the problem with this is that there is a lot of flavor and value in the main stem! I must admit that I don't like to spend a lot of time sorting through a bunch of pea vine and I prefer to use as much of the bunch as I can. Thus, I like to use pea vine in ways that allow me to blend it in a blender or food processor to make things such as pea vine pesto or pea vine cream cheese (both recipes may be found in the searchable recipe database on our website). The other way I like to use pea vine is in sauces, soups or broth. I generally chop the pea vine into smaller pieces and add it to hot broth or a sauce base. Let the pea vine simmer briefly, you don't want to overcook this vegetable or you'll lose the bright pea flavor. Once you've infused the flavor of the pea vine into the sauce or broth, you can strain it out to remove it. If you'd like to extract just a little more flavor, blend the mixture before straining it.

**Hon Tsai Tai** is a Chinese green. It is related to bok choy and is in a group of plants often called the "flowering brassicas." Hon Tsai Tai has purple stems and green leaves. We intentionally wait to harvest this vegetable until it starts to produce a flower stalk with tender yellow flowers. The stems, flowers and green leaves are all edible. Sometimes the lower portion of the stem can be a little tough. Just discard the lower portion of the bunch—usually no more than an inch or so, and use the remainder.

Hon Tsai Tai has a mild mustard flavor and can be eaten raw or cooked. It is delicious in stir-fries or lightly steamed, but also makes a stunning addition to raw salads. The greens are very tender, so they only need to be cooked briefly, for no more than a couple of minutes at most. A common preparation in Chinese cuisine is to quickly stir fry Hon Tsai Tai with garlic, onions and ginger, then add oyster sauce. Store Hon Tsai Tai loosely wrapped in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator until ready for use.

### Hon Tsai Tai Salad "To Go" with Miso Honey Dressing

**Yield:** 2 large salads or 4 small salads

**Dressing:**

1 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil plus an additional ½ cup  
1 clove garlic, minced  
2-3 Tbsp honey  
2 Tbsp white miso  
4 Tbsp brown rice vinegar  
½ cup water

\*\*Dressing recipe borrowed from Heidi Swanson's on-line store website, [quitokeeto.com](http://quitokeeto.com).\*\*

**Salad:**

3-4 cups thinly sliced hon tsai tai, stems and leaves  
½ to ¾ cup French breakfast or red radishes, small diced  
¾ to 1 cup thinly sliced scallions  
½ cup thinly sliced asparagus  
1 cup "protein" of your choice (chickpeas, diced cooked chicken or salmon, thinly sliced grilled steak, etc)  
4 to 6 Tbsp seeds of your choice (pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, etc)  
2 quart sized canning jars or 4 pint sized canning jars, with lids

1. First, prepare the dressing. In a small saucepan, heat 1 Tbsp of oil over medium heat. Stir in the garlic and gently sauté for a minute or so. Whisk in the honey, miso and vinegar. Simmer for a minute or two, and remove from heat. Whisk in the sesame oil and then the water, gradually, to taste. Let cool a bit, and then put the dressing in a small jar. Refrigerate until you are ready to eat the salad.
2. Once all of the vegetables are prepared, assemble the salad in the jars (instructions to follow are for filling 2 quart jars). Start by putting a handful of hon tsai tai in the bottom of each jar. Next add about a quarter of the radishes and scallions to each jar. Add a quarter of the "protein" of your choosing and then top it off with half of the asparagus in each jar. Repeat the layers to bring the contents of the jar to the top. Put a lid on the jar and refrigerate until you are ready to eat the salad.
3. When you are ready to eat the salad, add a few tablespoons of dressing to each jar. Put the lid back on the jar and shake the salad to distribute the dressing throughout the jar. Empty the salad into a bowl and garnish with seeds.

*This is an easy way to make a salad in advance and conveniently package it for transport. Take it to work with you for lunch, pack it for a picnic, or just make it in advance and keep it in the refrigerator so it's ready for you to enjoy for dinner on a busy evening.*

### Spring Noodle Bowl with Pea Vine Broth

by Chef Andrea Yoder

**Yield:** 2 servings

1 quart chicken broth  
4 oz pea vine (1 bunch)  
4 oz cooked pasta, at room temperature  
(choose something that is long such as soba noodles, angel hair pasta, fettucine, etc)

1 cup green onion tops, thinly sliced  
¼ cup green garlic, minced  
½ cup asparagus, sliced very thinly  
Salt & Black Pepper, to taste  
Parmesan cheese, to garnish  
Fresh lemon juice, to taste

1. Put the chicken broth in a saucepot and heat it to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Roughly chop the pea vine. When the broth is at a gentle simmer, add the pea vine and simmer for 2-3 minutes.
2. After 2-3 minutes, remove the pan from the heat and let rest for a few minutes. Carefully transfer the broth with the pea vine to a blender. You may need to blend the broth in two batches if you have a small blender container. Blend the broth until the pea vine is blended into very small pieces. Strain the broth to remove the solids and put the broth back in the saucepot. Return the broth to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Season to taste with salt and black pepper.
3. When the broth is ready, prepare two medium soup bowls for serving. Divide the pasta evenly between the two bowls. Top each bowl of pasta with the green onions, green garlic and asparagus, dividing each ingredient evenly between the two bowls. Sprinkle a pinch of salt on top of each bowl.
4. Ladle about 12 ounces of hot broth over each bowl of noodles. Garnish as desired with freshly grated Parmesan cheese and a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.