

## **Farmstand Update #1**

### **Completed expansion projects for the 2024 season.**

Starting back in February I started a pretty big project (with some help) that could result in more plants, and subsequently produce, in the same amount of space. This project would also enable me to keep airflow between plants better, and better airflow means less disease pressure. If you haven't already guessed, 15+ trellises got put in this year! Each of these trellises are about 13 feet long, and 4-6 feet tall. We also were able to intercrop yellow squash, zucchini, and okra in-between the trellises. As fall comes I am planting Chinese cabbage, radish, lettuce, celery, endive, and more in between those same trellises as the squash that grew there fizzles out. Don't worry, it looks like I will have more squash from a different planting any day now. From May-early July I planted primarily tomatoes on the trellises, with 6 (out of 19 in total) planted out with cucumbers. As the cucumbers start to die back I have planted peas, and a later planting of pole beans on these same trellises to see what happens. So far so good! The amount of diversity the trellises offer is amazing.

As well as expanding how many trellises we grow on, I also expanded the land we grow on. We had some grassy patches doing nothing that I have been trying to plant stuff on for years now, and this year not only did those patches get planted out, but the weeds didn't take them back over! I hope to have even more produce next year as I improve the soil in these new beds. I have not forgotten about native habitat, and am trying to help the native insects in the garden and surrounding woods. One of the ways I am starting to do this is by planting plants to help native bugs, that also are very beneficial to the garden. I don't like the concept of releasing bugs into the garden, even if they are beneficial. The problem with just releasing beneficial bugs into the garden is that they might not be native, or have the proper habitat for your area. The USDA releasing Asian lady beetles as aphid control has caused them to become very invasive. Even though they were trying to use them as natural pest control, it is still negatively affecting not only our homes but also native bugs and habitats. Instead of releasing bugs, I am trying to build up habitats for native beneficial insects such as green lacewings, parasitic wasps, assassin bugs, and more. Along with those, the simple act of creating a biodiverse garden helps control by creating a lot of checks and balances.



Here is a tomato hornworm with parasitic wasp eggs already laid on it. Although gruesome in the sense the baby wasp will eat the hornworm from the inside out, this is an example of creating good habitat for a native species for ecological protection, and pest control.

As well as a bigger garden, we also have a bigger stand! Me and my grandfather built a bigger, and better, stand on an old trailer. It is subsequently very mobile. This new stand has 5 compartments for selling produce, 2 extra shelves for plants and more produce (as well as a little cooler for fragile produce), and a very nice roof to protect the produce. Even with how big we made the compartments, I still have to overflow tomatoes a lot! So if you see tomatoes in the bean section that is why.

### **Fall Garden**

Starting back in mid July I also started planting out a fall garden, and it looks promising so far! In this garden I am hoping I can harvest radishes, carrots, lettuce, kale, Chinese cabbage, and more! As frost comes and kills off the summer plants, these plants will hopefully be ready for harvest. A good reason to get excited about greens grown in fall/winter is that they get sweeter with each frost! This is because as it freezes the plant releases more sugar into the leaves, this sugar acts as an antifreeze. If you want to see this in action try freezing corn syrup, it will take much longer than regular water for it to freeze! With any luck I will harvest fall plants until December! I will also begin harvesting ornamental gourds soon, along with a few pumpkins and winter squash!

Thankyou to everyone who has purchased anything from our stand, it means a lot. In case you could not tell I am very passionate about this stand and love seeing it successful. If you liked this farm update please let me know, I might make more!

By: Mason Cain

### **Farm Fresh Recipes, p. 53 Okra**

(Available through a Growing For Market magazine subscription. Permission to use.)

#### **Okra and corn with tomatoes**

Makes 6 servings

1/4 c olive oil

1 large onion, thinly sliced

2 bay leaves

1/2 tsp each dried thyme, red pepper flakes  
and basil

1 green pepper, diced

3 large ripe tomatoes, seeded and chopped

2 c small (2-inch) okra pods, whole or sliced

1/2 c water

3/4 tsp salt

1/4 tsp black pepper

Kernels from 4 ears corn (about 2 c)

1. In heavy skillet over  
medium-high, heat oil and  
add onions, bay leaves,  
thyme, red pepper flakes,  
and basil. Cook and stir  
until onions are limp.

2. Add green pepper; cook until onions are translucent. Add tomatoes, okra, water, salt and pepper. Reduce heat, and simmer uncovered 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Add corn and cook 5 minutes. Serve hot.

### **Okra and green beans**

Makes 6 servings

3/4 lb fresh whole okra

3/4 lb fresh green beans

1 c water plus 2 Tbsp

1 (6-oz) can tomato paste

4 Tbsp olive oil

1 medium onion, diced

2 large garlic cloves,  
minced

Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Wash okra pods, trim stems, do not remove caps.
2. Wash beans and cut into 3-inch lengths.
3. Combine water, tomato paste, olive oil, onion, garlic, salt and pepper in a saucepan. Bring to boil, stirring often.
4. Add okra and beans and additional water if necessary to almost cover vegetables. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until vegetables are crisp-tender, 20-30 minutes. Serve hot or cold.