

# The Cover Crop

Volume III Issue 9

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## ***Welcome Back!***

It was a tearful goodbye to intern Shyam, but farmlife continued. There's still more planting, harvesting, and weeding to do! Some food for thought:

*"I always think of my sins when I weed. They grow apace in the same way and are harder still to get rid of."*

- Helena Rutherford Ely, *A Woman's Hardy Garden* (1903)

## ***This Week's Harvest***

**NOTE: Subject to change. Basil, Broccoli, Herbs, Leeks, Peppers, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes, Summer Squash, Zucchini**  
Maybe: Cucumber, Honeydew, Eggplant

## ***Student Stuff***

*Some Comments and Reminders...*

### **COMPOST!!!**

**We are STILL accepting compost donations!** In order for us to accept material for compost, you **MUST** follow some rules and **donate ONLY the following items:**

- Veggies and fruit scraps (NO stickers!)
- Egg shells
- Coffee grinds (also used/untreated filters)
- Breads
- CLEAN bones
- Fish (NO other meat)
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NO leaves, NO grass, etc.

We had two full baskets of "kosher" compost last week. Thank you for your cooperation!

## *This week's "story"*

Some shareholders didn't end up getting Cabbage last week. The reason for this ended up being out of our control. Unlike the other cultivars, which were coming up quite nicely, the Cabbage slated to be handed out last week was generally smaller than we would have liked. Due to a miscommunication, we had to nix the harvest. In its stead we offered a choice between the remainder of the Onions and a Cucumber. Eventually, we ran out of Cucumbers, a situation we would have preferred to avoid.

Unfortunately, Cucumbers are a finicky crop. Our plants are producing well and are quite tall, but only seem to be putting out about one Cucumber at a time. Since each of the plants produces at a different rate, we generally have a holdover of delicious Cucumbers in numbers that don't warrant a full share. We will do our best to accommodate what nature is giving us with the same hands we try to accommodate the shareholders. Thank you for all of your patience.

This week we added a significant amount of carbon and beneficial inorganic material to the compost pile by shoveling on a modest amount of soil from a recently tilled field and wood chips from a fallen on-site tree. Other activities included tilling under a failed row of beets and carrots (they just never came up and were crowded by pigweed) and immediately replanting, this time with trickle

tape for water and point of reference.

## ***Crop Of The Week:***

### **Jalapeño Pepper**

(*Capsicum annuum*)



The Jalapeño is a common chili belonging to the same species as

the ubiquitous Bell Pepper. A fruit of medium size, Jalapeño is renowned around the world for its spicy kick.

Jalapeños vary in spiciness from somewhat mild to considerably spicy. Spiciness depends on several factors, including soil, aging on plant, preparation, and the specific strain of pepper. Ours last week varied in spiciness, perhaps tending more toward the "mild" side.

Capsaicin is the compound responsible for the spiciness. An alkaloid in the capsaicinoid family, capsaicin acts as an irritant, meant to deter herbivores. It is a stroke of irony that this "bite" is a chief purpose for its widespread cultivation!

Jalapeños feature prominently in Latin American cuisine. The bulk of the spice concentrates in the coating of the seeds, and many Jalapeños, as ours do, have flesh that tastes just like a Bell Pepper's. One of our cultivars is called *Jalafuego*, a play on the word *fuego*, meaning *fire* in Spanish. There have been no confirmed sightings of anyone

consuming the pepper and emitting flames.

## **Funky Fungus of the Week**

### **Blossom End Rot**

(BER)



One can identify Blossom End Rot (BER) by a sunken rot, usually browning or blackened, at the bottom end of green or early ripening fruit. Chiefly, when we speak about BER at the farm, it concerns the Tomatoes, though it also afflicts Peppers and Eggplant.

Our Tomatoes in particular had a large swath of early fruits suffering from BER. Luckily, Blossom End Rot does not signal the arrival of a communicable “funky” fungus or other disease. In fact, the cause of BER lies in physiology: a dearth of calcium supplied to developing fruit.

As a plant grows taller, more H<sub>2</sub>O and higher concentrations of nutrients are required to adequately provide active transport for those nutrients to all parts of the plant—including fruit.

BER appears if any circumstance causes roots to fail to absorb enough water with adequate levels of dissolved calcium. Several things may do this, including but not limited to low levels of calcium in the soil (not our case), lack of water in later development, excessive

moisture saturation (preventing the uptake of O<sub>2</sub>), or mechanical damage to the roots. Planting too many tomatoes too closely together likely exacerbates the symptoms as well.

What is the cause of our BER? It’s quite difficult to say just precisely which of any of the aforementioned causes contributes the most; a combination of conditions, including ones we have yet to consider, likely make up our current outlook.

Take off BER-afflicted fruit at your leisure, as developing tomatoes will of course drain resources from the other fruit. That being said, eating the portion of the tomato unaffected by Blossom End Rot is completely safe- just slice it off!

## **Recipes of the Week:** **Vegan Basil Pesto**

From shareholder Christie A. THANK YOU for your submission!

“From Vegan World Fusion Cuisine by Blossoming Lotus restaurant (Hawai’i)

1 cup basil, tightly packed  
1/4 cup cashews  
1/4 to 1/2 cup olive oil  
2 Tbl lemon juice, fresh squeezed  
2 to 3 garlic cloves  
1/2 tsp Shoyu, or to taste (optional)  
1/2 tsp sea salt, or to taste  
pinch cayenne pepper  
black pepper, ground to taste

place all ingredients in a food processor and process until smooth.

**FREEZES WELL”**

Thanks again!

## **Word Scramble**

**Unscramble the words below:**

1. atmoot \_\_\_\_\_
2. paotto \_\_\_\_\_
3. iniacaps \_\_\_\_\_
4. ñeajpola \_\_\_\_\_
5. epperp \_\_\_\_\_
6. octpoms \_\_\_\_\_
7. basli \_\_\_\_\_
8. abbage \_\_\_\_\_
9. Imbosso \_\_\_\_\_
10. eslwteretn \_\_\_\_\_

Answers will be posted in a future e-mail or newsletter!

Some last Food for Thought:

It’s not easy to plan out the farm. We spend time figuring out crop rotation (we’re planting a fresh cover crop of clover, alfalfa, and other nitrogen-fixers this week), phase-by-phase crop readiness, appropriate irrigation levels, irrigation layouts, appropriate coplanting options, active pest observation and management, etc, etc, etc. Despite all that planning, things do not always go accordingly. It was Helmuth von Moltke the Elder who said, “no plan survives contact with the enemy.”

One can consider weeds and insects enemies, but nature as a whole (and therefore each of its individual parts) is not an enemy. Given the light of current political troubles, let us consider the words of a former president:

“Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you’re a thousand miles from the corn field.”

- Dwight D. Eisenhower