

# Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 12, May 20

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Veggie Box

You have probably heard of the term 'food desert' but what about 'food swamp'? Although related, the two are different issues and have unique health, environmental, and policy implications. A food desert is an area that, simply put, doesn't have access to healthy foods. This is defined in a number of ways, but most commonly means an urban area more than one mile from a grocery store, or rural area more than 10 miles. Food swamps, however, may have access to healthy, fresh foods and may have grocery stores, but healthy foods are outnumbered by fast food and other unhealthy options by at least a 1:4 ratio. So, for every one grocery store or place to get healthy foods, there are at least four unhealthy options. Food swamps are cropping up more and more in low-income and urban areas, and disproportionately impact People of Color and low-income individuals. Recent studies have shown that food swamps, when compared to food deserts, have much stronger correlations with obesity and other diet-related health conditions. There are a multitude of reasons for this, but most simply put, food swamps create an environment where it's hard to escape the pull of junk food. Constantly seeing unhealthy food options means that the brain's reward center is being repeatedly stimulated, causing the body to crave the sweet, salty, fatty foods that it knows it can easily have. Making the choice to seek out and eat a healthier option requires mental energy, and often the folks stuck in food swamps face these decisions over and over. Being forced to make these choices repeatedly and use that mental energy each time can result in a phenomenon called 'decision fatigue', when someone has to make many hard decisions and their ability to reason and make good decisions becomes weaker and weaker. Eating unhealthy foods can also impact our decision making since foods rich in fats and sugars can lead to chronic inflammation and poor gut health, which research has indicated may have a negative impact on brain chemistry leading to mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and poor mood regulation, all of which make choosing healthy options even more difficult. What other impacts can this have on a community? What kinds of communities often are living in food swamps? What can we do to change this? Thank you for supporting local food!

## What's in the Box?

**Organic Violets**, CBI's Giving Tree Farm, Lansing  
**Turnip Greens**, Ten Hens Farm, Bath  
**Asparagus**, Felzke Farms, Dewitt  
**Antonet Lettuce**, Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing  
**Radishes**, Ten Hens Farm, Bath  
**Green Garlic**, Clear Street Farms, Lansing

## Add-Ons

**Bread**, Stone Circle Bakehouse, Holt  
**Meat Variety**, Heffron Farms, Belding

## Producer Spotlight

### Clear Street Farms

Clear Street Farms is a first year urban farm based in REO Town. In collaboration with Magnolia Avenue Farms, Clear Street Farms is dedicated to growing specialty vegetables, fruit, and herbs on reclaimed city lots; and to supporting and bolstering community resiliency efforts across the Great Lansing Area

## Crop Profile

### Violet/Viola

Did you know that the viola genus accounts for pansies and violets as well? This week we have the 'Helen Mount Viola', a cultivated variety of violet. The dainty blooms appear very early in the season and are fragrant. Plants reseed readily and are very much at home in the rock garden or wild garden. All violas are edible, just as wild violets are (another species of viola). They are a common and beautiful addition to salads, cookies, cakes, or as a garnish. They are also perfect for making candied flowers. Please note that African violets are not in the Viola genus, and are not edible. Violas also have some medicinal uses. They are high in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory, and may be helpful if used topically for skin conditions.

# Recipes and Tips!

## Violet Shortbread Cookies

1 1/4 cups flour  
1/4 cup sugar  
1/2 cup room temperature butter  
1/4 tsp vanilla  
1 TBS dried egg whites  
2TBS water  
Veggie Box violets/violas

**Put flour and sugar in a large bowl. Mix together. Using a pastry cutter, cut in butter and vanilla until mixture resembles fine crumbs and starts to cling together. Gather up crumbs into a ball and knead together until smooth. Roll out dough just scant of 1/4" thick. Cut with cookie cutter that is 2-2 1/2". Put cookies 2" apart on parchment lined baking sheet and bake for 30 minutes, until the bottom and sides are just starting to slightly brown and center of top is firm. Take out of oven and cool on baking sheet. Combine dried egg whites and water in small bowl. When cookies are cooled brush egg white mixture on one cookie at a time and top with violets. Use your fingers to press the violet down in the middle and smooth out all petals so they are firmly stuck to the cookie. Put a thin layer of egg white mixture on top of the flower and smooth. Sprinkle lightly with sugar. Return to parchment lined baking sheet. Bake at 325 degrees for 5 minutes. Remove from oven. With your finger smooth out any petals that have shriveled up. Set out on a cooling rack until the top of the cookie is completely dry.**



## Violet Ice Cubes

Dress up your spring lemonades and other beverages with pretty violet flower ice cubes.

To make:

1. Fill an ice tray about half way with water.
2. Place a fresh violet flower or two in each section of the tray.
3. Pop in the freezer and freeze until almost solid, then fill the rest of the tray with more water.
4. Freeze until completely solid.

## Lemon Roasted Asparagus

Veggie Box asparagus, trimmed  
2 tbsp olive oil  
Veggie Box green garlic, minced (white and light green parts)  
2 tbsp parmesan , grated  
1 lemon , thinly sliced  
2 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice (approx. 1 lemon)  
1/2 tsp sea salt  
1/4 tsp ground black pepper

**Preheat your oven to 400 degrees and line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Add the asparagus, lemon slices, olive oil, freshly squeezed lemon juice, sea salt, ground black pepper, minced garlic, and parmesan cheese to the baking sheet. Toss to evenly coat. Place in the oven and roast for 10-15 minutes or until the asparagus is crisp on the outside and tender in the center.**

