

Veggie Box Newsletter

Summer 2024 · Week 9 · Thursday, August 1st

Urban farming is growing or producing food in a heavily populated town or municipality. It often involves using small plots of land such as vacant lots, gardens or rooftops in the city, and can take many forms, from small “microfarms” to larger operations. This type of farming seeks to make healthy food both affordable and accessible to those who need it, addressing issues of urban food insecurity. While a home gardener typically grows to feed their household, an urban farmer works to feed their community.

Urban farms aren't always at the farmer's home. Consider the Eastside, where the floodplain goes through parts of the neighborhood, contributing to the degradation of the housing stock in these areas. Many of these lots have been converted into community garden plots. Now, Lansing's Eastside is known for its many urban farms and gardens, a silver lining to this land-use dilemma. (Check out the Greater Lansing Food Bank Garden Project and the Ingham County Land Bank Garden Program to learn more!)

While talking points for urban farming usually revolve around its environmental benefits, academically quantifying the sustainability of different types of agriculture can be challenging. You may have heard about a recent study which found the carbon footprint for urban grown crops can be six times that of conventionally grown produce. But this study included community gardens and backyard gardens along with urban market farms, and the start-up impacts of infrastructure for new farms counted against them. Urban farms with existing infrastructure meet or exceed the carbon footprint of conventional agriculture by most measurements.

Carbon footprint is only one way of measuring the benefits of urban farming, which are varied and significant! Urban farms build connection between the community and the land, help to mitigate the urban heat island effect, and support pollinators and wildlife. Investing in our local food system prevents potential scarcity--consider how drought in California, where over half of the nation's produce is grown, affects access to food. Take a moment to celebrate the Lansing urban farms who help make Veggie Box possible: Hunter Park GardenHouse, Magnolia Avenue Farms, and Highwater Farms!

Producer Spotlight *Magnolia Avenue Farms*

Magnolia Avenue Farms is a 1 acre urban farm growing vegetables, flowers and medicinal herbs using low/no-till and regenerative farming practices. We distribute our vegetables, flowers and herbal medicines on a sliding scale at the Eastside Lansing Food Co-op and ANC's Veggie Box program. We are taking the 2024 season off from the farmers market in order to focus on prioritizing two things--engaging more people in this work and planning for the long term future of the farm, both of which are connected. We are interested in different models of growing and distributing food to the community, ones where the time we spend without plants is less rushed and commodified and where working together with others is woven into the fabric of the farm. We have been exploring worker owned cooperative models and dreaming about a world of food sovereignty where we all work together to plant, grow, process and distribute the food we eat. We are also interested in making space for people to learn and practice their own growing skills, as these are the skills we will all need if we are going to build the society that we are fighting for. If you are interested in getting involved with this project please follow us on instagram or facebook for updates on weekly workdays, food distributions and events throughout the growing season. Please feel free to reach out to us through social media messages, email or phone if you would like to get to know us or learn more about the farm. We are happy to show people around the farm and discuss this work in greater depth in person.

Crop Profile *Banana Peppers*

Banana peppers, sometimes called yellow wax peppers, are a medium-sized chili pepper with a mild tangy flavor. This *Capsicum annuum* variety is not considered a hot pepper, usually measuring only 1-500 Scoville Heat Units (for reference, jalapenos are 4,000 to 8,500). Descendants of a native South American pepper, the banana pepper we know today are from Hungarian peppers that were introduced to the U.S. in 1932. To preserve the freshness of these sweet peppers, keep them in a paper bag in the vegetable crisper drawer of your refrigerator. They are most commonly pickled and eaten on sandwiches, pizza, and more!



What's in the Box?

Sweet Corn, Felzke Farms, *Dewitt*
Green Bell Peppers, Felzke Farms, *Dewitt*
Banana Peppers, Felzke Farms, *Dewitt*
Organic Jalapenos, Owosso Organics, *Owosso*
Basil, Magnolia Avenue Farms, *Lansing*
Organic Beets, Monroe Family Organics, *Alma*
Garlic, Titus Farms, *Leslie*
Green Onions, Yoder Family Cooperative, *Leslie*
Organic Summer Squash, Lake Divide, *Stockbridge*
Tomatoes, Hillcrest Farms, *Eaton Rapids*

Add-ons

Eggs, Grazing Fields Cooperative, *Charlotte*
Bread, Stone Circle Bakehouse, *Holt*
Meat Variety: Short Ribs, Heffron Farms, *Belding*
Chicken: Ground, Heffron Farms, *Belding*
Beef: Beef Bacon, Heffron Farms, *Belding*
Pork: Bratwurst, Grazing Fields Cooperative, *Charlotte*
Organic Black Beans, Ferris Organic Farms, *Eaton Rapids*

Recipes and Tips!

Pan-Seared Summer Squash with Basil Whipped Feta

- Veggie Box summer squash, approx 1 lb*
- 8oz feta cheese
- Veggie Box basil, approx 1/2 cup
- ¼ cup ricotta or cottage cheese
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 clove Veggie Box garlic
- 5+ tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Slice stem off squash and cut in half lengthwise. Score cut side of squash with 5-6 deep diagonal cuts, being careful not to cut through. Season with salt and pepper. To a skillet on medium heat, add 3 tbsp olive oil. Cook squash cut side down for about 3 minutes, or until browned. Flip and cook for 3 min on the other side. Work in batches if necessary to maintain skillet temp.

Add feta, ricotta or cottage cheese, basil, lemon juice, and 2 tbsp olive oil to a blender or food processor and blend until smooth, adding more olive oil if needed. Spread whipped feta on a plate and top with zucchini to serve.

Suggested Garnish: Delicious with chopped pistachios, Veggie Box basil, and hot honey.

*this is written with long, zucchini-shaped summer squash in mind. However, this week's distribution includes an assortment of shapes. You may have to slice creatively! Any squash sliced approx 1 to 1.5 inch thick, scored on one side, should work.

Recipe adapted from SomethingNutritiousBlog.com

Tip: Freezing Corn Kernels

Enjoy the taste of summer all year long!



- Remove the corn from the cob
- Blanch it in salted, boiling water for two minutes, drain, and immediately shock in an ice bath to stop the cooking process. Let sit for two minutes in ice bath.
- Pat dry corn kernels completely with a towel. Place them on a baking sheet covered with wax paper. Freeze for several hours, then pour into a freezer bag. Enjoy your frozen corn for up to a year!



Fresh Veggie Salsa

- 1 Veggie Box tomato, diced
- 1/4 cup Veggie Box green onions, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp. last week's Veggie Box parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp. Veggie Box basil, chopped
- 1 Veggie Box jalapeno pepper, minced (remove seeds for less heat)
- 1 Veggie Box banana pepper, diced
- 1 clove Veggie Box garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons lime juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar

Combine all ingredients into a bowl. After that, mix them together well and let the combination sit for about ten minutes, so all the flavors meld together. Make sure the green onion, garlic and jalapeno pepper are truly chopped fine enough. There are some powerful flavors in those vegetables and the smaller you can make each piece, the better. Enjoy with tortilla chips or as a topping for tacos, omelets and more!

Cheesy Pink Pasta Sauce

- 2 medium Veggie Box beets, scrubbed clean
- 3 cloves last week's Veggie Box garlic
- 1 pound pasta, any type
- 3 tbsps olive oil
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- ⅔ cup grated parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 400F. Coat beets in ½ tbsp olive oil each, then wrap in aluminum foil and roast until fork tender, 45-60 mins. Let cool 15-20 mins. Cook pasta according to package instructions, reserving 1 cup of pasta water. While pasta cooks, heat a pan over medium low and add 2 tbsps olive oil. Slice garlic cloves thinly and add to pan, cooking until golden brown. Set aside.

To food processor, add cooked beets, cottage cheese, parmesan cheese, salt, pepper, ½ cup of pasta water. Add the toasted garlic and olive oil. Blend until smooth. Pour beet sauce over drained pasta and stir to coat. Enjoy!

Recipe adapted from TheNaturalNurturer.com