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# BAYARD CUTTING ARBORETUM

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE FARM

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GROW    CONNECT    EDUCATE

**Happy Spring!**

By David Noriega



Deer fence is finally finished, greenhouses are filling up and if weather

permits planting begins first week of April! Peas, Fava Beans, Potatoes and Greens! These are exciting times at the farm. I'm aiming to start CSA harvesting mid-May but weather conditions could change that and we will keep you all in the loop. In this newsletter I would like to share some of the techniques and practices that I have been using for years in my own garden. I will be bringing these new ideas to the farm this year to grow the best vegetables possible without harming the land in the process. No till and Biodynamics mixed with some elements of Permaculture. Enjoy your spring everyone!

### **Staying on Top of Weeds**

I have a love/hate relationship with "weeds". Since most of these weeds are edible and have a ton of medicinal quality's like Purslane which is high in omega 3 fatty acids and packs the highest amount of vitamin A present in any other leafy green vegetable, Lamb's Quarters which is rich in beta carotene, vitamin B2, niacin, calcium, iron, and phosphorus and is also an excellent source of vitamin A or Wood Sorrel that is just loaded with vitamin C. Despite these amazing qualities of these plants they also take up a lot of water, light and nutrients leaving the cultivated crop with very little to grow into a healthy plant. One of the things I've done in my personal garden to eradicate this issue is to not turn over the soil. I have never tilled my Garden beds and I may have to only weed once or twice a year! I see farmers constantly weeding and wondering why they can never get ahead. Well... every time the soil is tilled weed seeds are brought to the surface where they now receive light and water to successfully germinate. Most weed seeds can lay dormant for more than a decade beneath the surface! Laying a thick layer of leaf mulch on some crops and not tilling the soil should do a great job of keeping weeds down for us. Also, another method I plan on implementing is called "Stale Seed Bed Preparation". About 2 weeks prior to direct seeding or transplanting into a bed we will prepare the bed as if we were going to plant that day. We will spread our soil amendments, lightly cultivate with a rake and then water the beds. In a couple days we will see little thread like weeds popping up all over the bed. Now is the time to do another light cultivation with a rake to expose their little roots to the sunlight so they burn up or we can flame weed them with a blow torch. Now we will have a nice clean bed to plant into that will have little to no weeds during the growing season!

### **Staying on Top of Pests**

Pests seem to be a huge problem at the farm and I am completely aware of what I am inheriting. This is what organic farming is... a dance with Nature. It's not a battle. I plan on using row covers on the farm this year to keep pests off certain crops but this isn't going to be the only solution. The key is to create an Ecosystem that will keep these pests in

balance. No matter what a farmer does whether they practice Organic or Conventional methods these pests will always be there. 5 billion pounds of pesticides are produced a year in the U.S. Pesticides are meant to kill insects and only 1% of these chemicals reach their intended target. The rest ends up in our atmosphere. Which is one reason why I am so dedicated to growing organically and is most likely the reason why you all are supporting a local organic farm. Even these so called "Organic Pesticides" aren't doing any good and if they are effective its only short term and should only be used if no other actions can be done to alleviate the issue. "Organic Pesticides" are nonselective. They are not only killing the pests we don't want on the farm they are also killing the beneficial insects and beneficial soil microbes that we DO want on the land creating an even more out of balance Ecosystem. I am very passionate about supplying high quality, beautiful, nutrient dense produce but there is a way to do this without disturbing the natural balance that is needed for a farm to succeed and remain in a good state of health. It takes time but I choose to remain optimistic about the year ahead and to look deeply into what the farm may be missing.

A lack of soil fertility? Possibly! If the soil isn't providing the plants enough nutrients the pests can easily sense a weak plant and attack! It's just like if your body's immune system is down a virus or a bacterium sees that, takes advantage and makes you sick! It's all relative!

Disturbance of the soils Mycelium networks? Over tillage is the culprit! If the soil is fertile but it doesn't have the necessary networks of Mycelium to help that communication between plant and soil you're in big trouble. Mycelium plays a huge role in water and nutrient uptake for all plants. As an Organic Farmer my goal is to emulate a forest. Trees are the greatest teachers when it comes to building up healthy soil. They drop their leaves year after year creating layer after layer of slow release fertilizer and a home for these networks of Mycelium to thrive that will help these trees sustain themselves for years to come. Point is tillage is unnecessary and is very damaging to all the life that is within the soil. Not only does it destroy the soils structure, it also releases tons of carbon into our atmosphere which is warming up our planet. I plan to bring no till practices to the farm this year and for years to come. Let's save the hard work for the Earthworms and build soil!

A lack of hedgerows or patches of Native plants on or near the farm? Definitely! We need to create an Ecosystem here on the farm that is not only pleasing to the eye but will also attract beneficial insects so they have a place to call home and not want to leave! Planting borders of Yarrow, Aster, Laceflower, Golden Rod, Comfrey and Milkweed to just name a few, will bring a plethora of beneficial insects and pollinators to the farm area. It sure is beautiful when everything is in bloom and it will bring new life here! These ideas mentioned above are what I plan on

bringing here. I have been growing Organically for 6 years and by using Nature as my ally I have yet to have a single pest issue in my Garden. I am excited to implement all of these practices here at the Bayard Cutting Arboretum! May the 2019 season be full of abundance for us all!

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