

Much of the work this week has been spent transitioning plots away from early-season vegetables and seeding a warm-weather 'green manure'. Green manures are various plants (legumes and grains, mainly) that help revitalize soils by adding organic matter and nutrients that may have been depleted from a previous planting. I started using them at the end of last year, had relative success, and am now trying to make a greater point of incorporating their use into the farm's general operations. They make farming a little more complicated and a lot more interesting. And the role they play is so important to helping maintain overall soil health and fertility. It's reassuring to think of the land being rejuvenated and given a reprieve from such intensive cropping.

We've also been busy tending to tomato plants. We had a bit of a scare the other day when we noticed what looked to be symptoms of late blight affecting a couple rows of the tomatoes. (Late blight is a naturally-occurring fungus that can decimate tomato and potato plantings – it was responsible for the Irish potato famine. It is usually seen in the fall, but it can appear in the early summer if the environmental conditions are right – it needs moderate temperatures and wet conditions, just like what our weather has been the past few weeks.) Another farmer came by to check on the plants, and said that it looked pretty isolated and that the affected plants appeared salvageable. We've been doing extensive pruning on the plants since then, trying to encourage airflow and diminishing the humidity that was surrounding the plants. The plants seem to look healthier, and I am pretty confident that we'll be having tomatoes in the share in the next couple of weeks.

The pruning is long work that isn't particularly rewarding, but it has helped illuminate our limited role as caretakers of these plants. We do what we can to ensure that the soil is healthy and that the young plants we put in the ground are strong. We weed around those vegetables like mad and fret too much about how the plants look. And yet, when push comes to shove, there are times like this when our efforts and good intentions can be derailed completely. There's something a little terrifying about that, but also completely freeing, and I have yet to find a profession that demands and allows for comparable levels of dedication to preserving the status quo while also asking one to completely let go of whatever expectations might have been held.

So we prune and mulch the tomato plants, hoping for a delicious and long harvest. More importantly, though, we simply relish how beautiful the plants look at dusk, how their smell seeps into every pore of your body, and how exciting it is to find that first cherry tomato of the season. I know that I'll be incredibly disappointed if any of the plants die too early from this blight, but I like to think that I'll be able to roll with that occurrence and remember the plants when they looked lovely and begin planning anew for next year.

In this week's share:

FULL

Kale/chard, red cabbage, leeks, beets, fennel, carrots, summer squash, cucumbers, beans, basil

HALF

Kale/chard, leeks, beets, carrots, summer squash, cucumbers, beans

Carrot-Leek Soup

Ingredients

3 1/4 cups vegetable broth, divided

3 cups sliced carrots

1 cup sliced leek

3/4-1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger

1 dash red cayenne pepper

minced fresh parsley (optional)

Directions

Combine 1 1/2 cups broth, carrots, leeks, and ginger in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer about 20 minutes or until the carrots are tender.

Remove from heat; pour vegetable mixture into the container of an electric blender or food processor. Process until smooth.

Return pureed mixture to saucepan; add remaining 1 1/2 cups broth. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until thoroughly heated. Stir in red pepper.

To serve, ladle soup into serving bowls. Garnish with minced parsley, if desired.