

the
Canticle Farm
newsletter

HARVEST TIMES



Canticle Farm is a Certified Naturally Grown farm and is a ministry sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany (FSA). Its mission is to reverence, protect, and honor the sacredness of God's Creation. Canticle Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Farm, is committed to connect all peoples, to practice Earth-friendly habits, and to come to a realization of a Creation-centered spirituality.



week of September 7, 2009

week # 13 of 18

How's it GROWIN'?

with Mark Printz

by Ronni Gronemeier

Cash crops win the praise. But cover crops save the day doing everything from warding off weeds to giving the soil something to eat.

Did you ever take a walk in the woods or field and suddenly come across a giant patch of dirt where nothing was growing? A patch of soil, say, the size of a farmer's field? Pretty unlikely.

It's safe to say that something is going to grow in dirt. If left to chance that something is sure to be weeds. So when the soil beds aren't raising vegetables, doesn't it make sense to plant something useful?

Enter cover crops.

Once turned under, cover crops perform the important task of priming the soil for the next planting of cash crop. They add nitrogen, a primary macronutrient, to the soil. And incorporating their organic matter into the soil is like giving the ground a healthy meal to digest. Cover crops are soil builders. But they have other jobs too.

Canticle Farm uses a couple of cover crop duos and a stand-alone.

Weeds won't grow if winter rye and hairy vetch have anything to say. Planted together in the fall, they grow back in the spring. With a mowing and

plowing in May these plants enter the soil and make it hard for seeds to germinate. So a weed has a hard time starting, but a transplant takes root well. Many of the farm's vegetable seedlings start this way.

Another grain and legume cover crop combo is oats and field peas. The cold of winter kills these plants. The dead plants form a straw-like mat that can be plowed under in early spring, providing organic matter at-the-ready. This makes the best type of bed for early spring seeding and gives a germinating seed what it needs to get off to a good start.

Buckwheat is a cover crop that prefers to work alone. It's grown to flower-state, but is plowed under just before the plant's seeds set. Once plowed under buckwheat carries on the basic duty of all cover crops. But it's the buckwheat flowers that are so special. They are the calling card for bees and many beneficial insects that fill the fields.

If you walk the fields at the farm you won't see much open dirt. And if you see a bed without a cash crop, you're probably looking at a cover crop.

What's in the Label: Certified Naturally Grown?

*From the April 2009 edition
of Eating Well magazine.*

Farmers in New York's Mid-Hudson Valley developed the Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) label in 2002 as an alternative to the USDA's National Organic Program, the cost of which often is prohibitive to small-scale farmers. Foods that carry the label have been grown according to organic standards, and other farmers in the network do annual inspections to ensure that standards are being met. (At these visits, farmers also share tips about how to handle challenges, such as pests.) About 600 farms in 46 states belong to the CNG network: you'll likely find their food at farmers' markets and in CSA boxes, as most members distribute only to local markets.

*From the CNG Web site
www.naturallygrown.org.*

Certified Naturally Grown is a non-profit alternative certification program tailored for small-scale, direct-market farmers using natural methods.

When USDA's Organic program was imple-

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Recipe ROUNDUP

by Rhonda Berman

Howdy Partner!

As the hot days of summer evolve into the cool days of fall, my cooking style changes. Warm soups and casseroles replace cool salads. A warm bowl of soup is appealing as the nights get cooler.

Today I share with you my recipe for Split Pea Soup. This soup uses only veggies but I have at times added ham. The soup is good with or without the ham.

I have also substituted some of the veggies based on what I had on hand. One day I did not have any celery in the refrigerator. I did have a bunch of Swiss chard. I used the Swiss chard stems instead of the celery. Once the soup was cooked, you could not tell the difference!

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(Recipes, continued from page 1)

Split Pea Soup

1 1/2 cups dry, split green peas
3 carrots, sliced

4 stalks celery, chopped. You can substitute 1 large potato, chopped or 5 stalks of Swiss chard, chopped.

1 cup chopped onion. Substituting 1 cup grated zucchini/summer squash works well also.

1 teaspoon ground thyme

1 teaspoon marjoram

1 teaspoon ground rosemary

Salt/pepper to taste

3 tablespoon General Seasoning Mix (see recipe below)

8 cups water

Put all ingredients in a pot. Bring to a boil. Lower heat to a simmer for 1½ to 2 hours or until the peas break down. You can add more water if it is too thick at the end.

Optional: 1 cup of chopped ham can be added.

General Seasoning Mix

2 tablespoons paprika

2 tablespoons garlic powder

2 tablespoons onion powder

1 tablespoon black or white pepper

1 tablespoon dried oregano

1 tablespoon dried thyme

1 tablespoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

Mix ingredients together. Store in an airtight container. Use a small amount whenever you want to add more flavor.

For more recipes visit www.canticlefarm.org.

Until next week, eat well, live well!

Volunteer Opportunities This Week

Mark has an ongoing need for *Harvest Helpers* weekdays. Check boards at the barn on distribution day for volunteer opportunities for the week.

This week you could try your hand at:

- Onion and potato sorting.
- Bean picking. This is a late-morning, early-afternoon activity because it needs to be dry.
- Harvest helping.

To set up a time, catch up with Mark during your weekly stop or contact him by his cell phone.

Wish List

Reduce, Reuse & Recycle

If you have any of the following items, in good working condition and would like to see them put to use at the farm please feel free to bring them along on distribution day. We'll put them to work!

- Totes for storage and distribution.
- Heavy-duty garden scissors for trimming in the wash station.
- Pens for the sign-in sheet table.

(CNG, continued from page 1)

mented in 2002, many farms earning more than \$5,000 per year were forced to make a difficult choice: either pay high certification fees and complete mounds of paperwork to become Certified Organic, or else give up using the word "organic" to describe their produce and/or livestock.

Believing that neither choice was very attractive, some farmers created Certified Naturally Grown to provide an alternative way to assure their customers that they observed strict growing practices. CNG strives to strengthen the organic movement by removing financial barriers to certification that tend to exclude smaller direct-market farms, while preserving high standards for natural production methods.

CNG's certification standards are based on the highest principles and ideals of organic farming. CNG's program requirements are reasonable and affordable, and many farmers find the inspection process itself a valuable learning experience.

CNG's certification standards take as their starting point the USDA organic standards, but Certified Naturally Grown is an independent program not accredited by or in any way affiliated with USDA's National Organic Program.

A Special Request

Please don't bring tomatoes or tomato plants that have Late Blight to the farm for composting. We count on the winter cold to kill the disease. But a compost pile generates enough heat that if disease were to get in the compost pile it's possible that the disease could survive the winter.

THANK YOU!

- Thank you, to Phyllis Napier and Joan Haynes who make sure the bills are paid and keep the budget on track.
- Thank you, to Sister Eleanor Berret who keeps the farm supplied with cat litter buckets that make great compost containers.

Coming Events

- **September 19 & 20:** Canticle Farm at the Cuba Garlic Festival – Block Barn, Cuba, NY.
- **September 27:** Heavenly Harvest Celebration Day – Canticle Farm.

It's Heavenly Harvest Celebration Day

Sunday, September 27, 2009

from 1 to 4 p.m.

Join us at Canticle Farm for our major fundraiser for the year. This event is open to the public. Pre-sale tickets will be available at the farm in coming weeks.

Activities will include: luncheon, raffle, auction, entertainment for all ages, labyrinth walk, and a zucchini/summer squash casserole contest. More details to come.