

News from the Ridge

June 22, 2004

FIELD REPORT

CONFESSIONS OF A FARMER

- by Christine Qualls

Although it is shameful to admit, I have not planted summer squash, zucchini or cucumbers—yet! It has been too difficult to get into the garden during these frequent afternoon storms. Some of our farmer friends have managed to plant these finicky cucurbit seeds, but their seeds have rotted in the ground due to the excess ground moisture. We keep saying that we will plant as soon as the ground dries out enough, but then another afternoon storm blows through and the soil is too wet to work again. Any day now we will be able to get those seeds into the ground and they will thrive with these warm days.

We have managed to get some work done, though. We have all of the eggplant and peppers planted. We have even spotted some ripening tomatoes. We have taken out the earliest crops – peas, radishes, turnips, and some head lettuce – and replaced them with a summer cover crop of buckwheat. Buckwheat is a great, fast-growing cover crop. It suppresses weed growth, adds organic matter to the soil, and makes nutrients that are locked in the soil available to subsequent crops. And the bees love the pollen.

We are happy to announce the birth of a new CSA member. Jennifer and Clark have brought home Wilson, a beautiful, healthy baby boy. I know he will grow strong and soon will be eating lots of greens! Congratulations Jennifer and Clark!

Mountain View Farm Spring Greens Quiche

This is a crustless quiche that is simple to make and delicious served cold at a brunch or picnic. It calls for a lot of eggs, so thank goodness our eggs are pasture-raised and good for you!

1/4 pound butter
10 eggs
1/2 cup flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt 1 pound cottage cheese
1 pound jack cheese, shredded
1 bunch washed and chopped greens (chard, spinach, kale)

Melt the butter. Whip the eggs until fluffy and add the flour, baking powder, salt, cottage cheese, melted butter, chopped greens, and half the jack cheese.

Place the mixture in a greased 9- by 13-inch baking dish. Top with the remaining jack cheese. Bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes. Then reduce the temperature to 350, and continue to bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until the top is slightly browned. Cool, and cut into squares for serving.

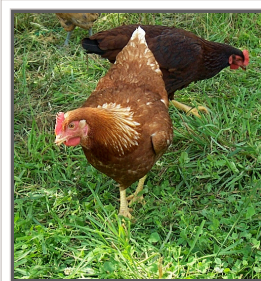
Optional: Add chopped spring onions, chopped herbs, or chopped fresh garlic.

Make Mine Scrambled

- by Sam Brown

Eggs are bad for you - too much cholesterol. No, eggs are actually good for you, but you should only eat one a week. Well, maybe you can eat more than one a week if you toss out the yolk. Deviled eggs? Forget it, they'll kill you.

Tell someone that you eat seven eggs a week and you'll get a reaction that's not much different than if you started up your Ford Escort and began sucking on the exhaust pipe. But the fact is, the American Heart Association has now said that adults can eat an egg or even two a day with no measurable increase in blood cholesterol levels.



two pasture-raised hens foraging

This should not surprise us. The egg has long been described as the perfect food. One egg contains almost all the nutrients necessary for life, lacking only vitamin C. Just before hatching, chicks draw the yolk into their abdomen and this yolk provides all that the baby needs to eat and drink for 3 days. Not only do they contain a multitude of vitamins and nutrients, eggs are also among the highest quality protein found in food – second only to mother's milk.

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Waikiki's Resurrection

- by Tim Parsons

There is a small island in Piney Run at the foot of a trail leading to the western portions of our land. It is an island with story—or a few stories—that residents who once lived nearby are eager to share. Tales of camping, horseshoes, jeeps stuck on trees, and other colorful reminders of the land's past will soon have to make room for more memories, though.

The island is Waikiki. Well, not the real thing. But the scenic shady spot along the creek so named by Clarence Gallahan and his brothers in the 1950s and '60s has its own charm, and is a favorite spot for visitors, volunteers, interns, and employees of the Blue Ridge Center. At times, getting there from the trail is almost impossible thanks to a thicket of all manner of vines, brambles, and irritating invasive plants. But Mr. Gallahan has an idea.

"My brothers and I used to spend a lot of time out on that island," he said. "We'd sit there and camp, talk about politics, and talk about life. And I thought it would be nice if visitors to the Center today could have the same experience."

And so, the resurrection of the Ridge's own Waikiki Island began in earnest. Serendipitously, that very week a boy scout seeking to finish his Eagle Scout requirements contacted us about possible projects. Brian Justice, the scout, thought that a landscaping project on the island sounded like a great idea.

In a month or so, a project will begin to remove invasive plant species from the island, place stone and log benches, construct a small pathway to a comfortable spot by Piney Run, clear a blocked channel, and construct a small bridge. We hope that Waikiki Island will become a spot on the land where visitors can come to reflect or rest along the Farmstead Loop.

There will be some great volunteer opportunities coming up related to Waikiki, and we'll keep everyone updated as they come along. For more information, feel free to call us or drop me an email!

Make Mine Scrambled, cont.

But are all eggs created equal? The answer is an increasingly loud and resounding, No. More and more research is finding a significant nutritional difference between eggs from hens that eat grass and those that are fed only grain. Eggs from pasture-raised chickens contain up to 30% more vitamin E, 50% more folic acid, 40% more Vitamin A, and 30% more vitamin B12 than factory eggs. Many diseases, including cancer, obesity, and diabetes, are linked to low levels of Omega 3 fatty acids, a fat found only in green plants. Eggs from pastured hens contain up to 10 times more Omega 3 than factory eggs. Worried about cholesterol? Eggs from pastured chickens contain up to 34% less cholesterol and less fat as well.

When farmers took animals off pasture and began producing eggs in factories, they upset the natural food chain and sabotaged the most direct means of obtaining the many health benefits of green grasses. None of us have time to forage for wild plants, but our chickens do it every day, and we can all reap the benefits.

Did I mention that the farm has an ample supply of eggs, each of them laid by a happy pasture-raised hen? There are still egg shares available at a prorated cost or you can buy them every week when you pick up your farm share.

BIOBLITZ 2004

- by Fiona Harrison

On June 4th and 5th, we hosted the first ever Blue Ridge Center BioBlitz—modeled after events sponsored by the University of Connecticut. The idea is for scientists, experts and naturalists to spend a full 24 hours identifying as many living things as possible on our land. We had teams for plants, fish, insects, mammals, birds, and amphibians and reptiles.

We had a few problems along the way which impeded progress, namely FIVE INCHES OF RAIN that started about dinner time Friday and ended right at about 2 pm Saturday. After a few hours of work on Friday, everyone wandered back to base camp for some hot chili and salad, and that's pretty much where everyone stayed—some until the end and others until they gave up and went home.

The only folks collecting on Saturday were two determined botanists who ended up getting stuck west of Piney Run because the water was so high. We had water like you've never seen rushing down the trails—a bridge washed out on Old Bridge Trail.



soggy groundhog!

The mammal team had traps wash away, and some folks spent the night in sodden, water-logged tents. We were about ready to start building an ark! We even have photos of one very wet and soggy groundhog in a tree, no doubt having been washed out of its home!

The total count of everything found is still undetermined, due to insects that have yet to be identified and a few errors to correct. But the ballpark figure is right around 200. This is a much lower figure than expected—due to the rain—but I'm counting it as a success. We made many new friends and new contacts, and it gave folks a chance to learn about the Blue Ridge Center. I look forward to a successful event next year. If nothing else, it won't be hard to break 200!



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