

AMARANTH GREENS

Hands-on time: 15 minutes (nearly half for cleaning). Time to table: 15 minutes. Serves 4

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 C chicken broth
1 tbs garlic (from a jar, natch)
1 tbs fresh ginger (from a jar, of course)
1/2 pound amaranth greens, washed, rinsed and sliced into ribbons
4 green onions, white and green parts, chopped
Salt & pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

In a large skillet, heat the broth over MEDIUM HIGH. Add the garlic and ginger and cook for a minute. Add the greens, in batches if needed. Cook until soft, stirring often. Near the end, add the green onions. Season to taste and serve.

Source: <http://kitchen-parade-veggieventure.blogspot.com/2006/07/amaranth-greens.html>

Cut along dotted line for 3x5 recipe card



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UPCOMING EVENTS

(complete details at www.accokeek.org)

TROUBLE SHOOTING/PLANT CLINIC

Wednesday July 15, 2009, 6:30-9:00 p.m., \$30
Non-Members, \$25 Members, Rain or Shine

Bring your photographs and stories of the insects, plant diseases, etc. that you are facing in your garden. We'll assist you in identifying the cause of your woes and help you to strategize a solution.

COLONIAL FOODWAYS

Saturday, July 18, 2009, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Rain or Shine, \$2/Person, Members Free

Join us as costumed interpreters demonstrate preparation of fashionable foods favored by the tobacco-growing gentry in Prince George's County, Maryland on the eve of the American Revolution.

NATURE NUTS

Tuesday, July 21, 2009, 11:00 a.m. to Noon
Rain or Shine, \$6 Non-Members, \$5 Members

This fun-filled hour of exploration at the Museum Garden is the perfect setting to learn about the wonders of nature. Designed for children ages 3-5, the children will hear a story, create a craft project, and go on an outdoor adventure. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

For more information please call the office at 301.283.2113, or email us accofound@accokeek.org.

FIELD NOTES

Volume 14, Number 8 June 30, 2009

Amaranth

This week your summer green is Amaranth. Amaranth is used as both grain and vegetable – highly productive, highly nutritious, and if we could, we would grow much more of it. It's a bit of a challenge here. If any of you have tried growing Love-Lies-Bleeding you may have noticed its leaves torn to shreds by cucumber beetles. Skip Kauffman was involved in Amaranth breeding and production projects while at the Rodale

Institute, and we hope to apply some of this work there. This time of summer we harvest *Amaranthus retroflexus*. We also look forward to "Red Calaloo," (*A. tricolor*) as it's called in the Caribbean, later this season.

Amaranth is a plant of the Americas, and made its way from the tropics to North and South America and beyond. Now it is grown in as far away as India and Southeast Asia. It was an important part of the Aztec, Mayan, and Incan diet. It still is for their descendents: a friend in Peru tells me people in the Andes pop Amaranth seeds like popcorn to make a snack. Its wild relative in your garden is "pigweed", and many people eat this, too. It wants to be cultivated! Amaranths are an exceptional source of protein, especially amino acids not usually found in grains. When it's truly young and tender, you can add it raw to a salad. Otherwise, use it as you would spinach. I like it with sesame oil, and I put it in omelets as well. Try quiche or soufflé. Please let us know what you do with it and what you think of it.

THIS WEEK'S HARVEST

Amaranth

Basil

Beans

Beets

Carrots

Fennel (To Take)

New Garlic

Onions

Tomatoes

Pre-roasted Garlic

I sit here munching a freshly harvested clove of Music. Poetry, you think. Variety, I think: Music is one of our garlic varieties.

This week you will find a bulb of fresh harvested garlic. It is small. I generally tend to avoid debate of “size matters”, but given the garlic legacy of the Ecosystem Farm, this writer’s insecurities propel him to discuss the matter of this year’s diminutive bulbs. This Field Notes is my confession.

Late last October we planted over three thousand cloves of garlic. And we were excited – over twenty percent came from our own saved stock, three new varieties trialed, a new planting plan that looked to maximize our yields (read about it again here: http://www.accokeek.org/downloads/Field_Notes_Volume13_Number26_October_27_2008.pdf)
Garlic in the ground! Can’t wait to take it out!

Spring showed great emergence. We’d planted into ridges, which had proven successful the season before. Young, green garlic on a blonde straw mulch is a very pretty thing, and I honest to god salivated a little at the thought of eating the “Georgian Fire” come summer.

Until the Great Garlic Cook-Off Massacre of April 3, that is (think Alice’s Restaurant). Now, this is a hard story to tell, especially so to put it out on the WWW for all to read, as we do here (or does it only get as far as computers with a 283 or 292 dial-up code?). But there are a lot of good lessons in it, and the truth is you’re all used to big fat garlic and I must confess. In hopes of saving a little face I will say this: if any of you readers is a farmer, you should be ashamed of yourself for cruising the internet in mid-summer. There’s daylight out there – what are you doing websurfing? And if you’re online after dark and checking up on us here, get to bed. Really.

Late that Friday afternoon, during a flame-weeding demonstration, the wind picked up as we flamed a bed adjacent to our mulched garlic. A small patch of straw caught, and though we thought we’d put it out promptly, within moments we had problems. At first, the wind pushed the burn to the south and the near edge of the bed, where it was putting itself out. But just as we sighed relief, we got a gust from the south and

west as if Aeolus made a slider of Nortus. The garlic patch burned in a matter of minutes.

Now, flame weeding is an excellent tool for the organic farmer’s toolbox. It involves using one or more heat sources (we use propane) to heat the air around small plants. Flaming is not burning exactly, rather the heat of the flame boils water in the plant’s cells, causing them to burst. It is very effective in terms of cost, labor, and ecological benefits. In fact, it was growing in popularity until chemicals were adopted widely after World War II. The tool we have has five burners and covers a bed in one or two passes. It has wind shields on it. Flaming works best on very small weeds so there are small windows for flaming effectively. But as with all tools there are optimal conditions for its use. A windy afternoon does not count as “optimal conditions.”

And so what we have this year is pre-roasted garlic. The fascinating thing is that within weeks the garlic greened up and stood in contrast to now black mulch. That was a dang relief, I tell you honestly. But garlic stores photosynthetic energy in its bulb for spring emergence, and ours had used up much of this in its initial growth.

An interesting side note: with the mulch reduced to ash, weeds were a challenge this year, too. We ran a concurrent experiment in an old garlic patch where some stragglers from the 2008 harvest volunteered. We found that sheep will eat around garlic, which is a slightly inspiring observation, if a technique unacceptable for Organic certification. None of this garlic has been harvested and you will not find any in your box!

In the end, this is year’s garlic is petit but packs a punch. I just took a bite: smell my breath and you’ll believe. But it’s Music on my tongue.

Be Great,
Mike

ECOSYSTEM FARM VOLUNTEER DAY, Wednesday, July 15, 2009, 1-4 p.m., Every 3rd Wednesday, Free: A brief, dedicated tour will be given promptly at 1 p.m. Volunteers will help by tending to the fields, weeding, planting, and harvesting the farm’s produce. This is an excellent opportunity for individuals or groups with an interest in sustainable agriculture, organic farming, or environmental stewardship. Please wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes. Volunteers are also encouraged to bring work gloves, sunscreen, hats, snacks, and plenty of water.