

Great-grandfather's barn at Spring Brook Farm, circa 1901

What's in the box and where do I keep it?

	Fridge?	Bag?	Notes & Varieties
Beets	Yes	Plastic	Red with tops
Broccoli	Yes	Plastic	
Cabbage	Yes	Plastic	Green
Cucumbers	Yes	Plastic	
Fennel	Yes	Plastic	
Scallions	Yes	Plastic	
Peas	Yes	Plastic	Sugar Snap
Zucchini	Yes	Plastic	

Fennel

The large bulb with fronds in your box is fennel. Technically this is Florence fennel or finocchio, which is grown primarily for the bulb, as opposed to sweet and bitter fennels which are grown as herbs and for their seeds. The bulb on Florence fennel is not truly a bulb but is just swollen ends of the leaf stems. It is a relative newcomer, having been developed in Italy in the 17th century. Fennel is closely related to dill, parsley, caraway and cilantro, but not anise.

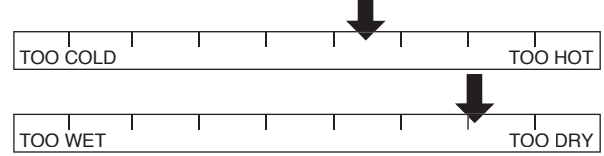
Fennel's taste is usually compared to licorice or anise but is milder than either. Personally I don't care for anise and licorice flavors but I enjoy fennel. Primary uses for fennel are shaved thin in salads or as a crudité. It is excellent on the grill, and the fronds can be eaten as well. It also goes well with fruit at the end of the meal with a little soft goat cheese. I put a couple of good fennel recipes in the Week 6 newsletter last year, you should be able to find the pdf on the website.

The first of the cucumbers and zucchini are in the box this week. Just a little taste to get July started. Don't fret that you only got one cuke, in a couple of weeks they'll be piling up in the crisper drawer. We love the first cucumbers of the year, they are one of my favorite snacks to eat right out of the field any time of day. Last

Farm Report

Rainfall0.10"
 High Temperature 88°
 Low Temperature 58°

Farmer Complaint Indicators™:



year we had terrible cucumber beetles and the harvest was slim. That doesn't look to be the case this year. I've only seen one cucumber beetle so far (a spotted cuke beetle instead of the more common striped). The plants have been loving all of this heat and are looking fabulous. Their production will increase rapidly now, on Monday there were 39 zucchini picked and on Wednesday we picked 260 more. They're forecasting 90's for this weekend so we'll be picking them every day.

First beets of the year are also in the box. This row was a weedy mess and we were lucky to get anything out of it at all. You may get a nice bunch of 3 medium-sized beets or a small bunch of baby beets. The tops can always be used like you would use chard.

We had a real nice early planting of green cabbage that we picked for today. These are nice, firm green cabbages which are great for everything from cole-slaw to stir-fries.

The broccoli this week is a little weary from all the hot, dry weather. Broccoli can handle some heat but by July it's starting to look unhappy. I'll keep the last row good and wet so that we get some for next week.

Scallions and peas round out the box. The peas are the last of the season. We'll have a couple of weeks without scallions, too.

Farm News

Well, the bad news is it's supposed to be 92° for our field day on Saturday, the good news is that we almost always have a breeze here on top of the hill. Please email us and let us know if you're coming. We'll have cold water and brats for the grill. If you come bring a side dish or desert to share. Since it's going to be so warm we probably won't do too much in the field, other than go for a tour. Maybe we'll weed carrots for a little while.

This week at the farm we've gotten caught up on some transplanting and weeding. Sometimes you just have to get down on your hands and knees and start yanking weeds out of the ground as fast as you can. So it was this week in the onions. They're starting to size up quite nicely now. It's time to start thinking about where I'm going to cure all of them. Last year I hung the shallots, which worked well but there are too many onions to hang.

Along with the onions we did a brief hand-weeding of the potatoes. It looks like we'll have a great year for potatoes. We also hand weeded all of the edges of the plastic mulch in the peppers, eggplant and watermelon. Transplanting was also on the list this week, with brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale and herbs all going in this week. The seeding in the greenhouse is done for the year and the transplanting is starting to wind down.

Another large project which got done this week was cutting the hay. A neighbor cut it for us because I really don't have much for hay equipment. This first cutting will be used to build my compost piles for the vegetable fields for the next couple years. It should be quite a pile, maybe 1200 to 1500 cubic yards of hay. This is an experiment I've been working on for a year or so now, which is moving away from purchased inputs and trying to make my own. I'm cautiously optimistic that the hay should make some excellent compost. I've got a different guy hired to chop and pile it this weekend.

Most farmers cut their first cutting of hay around Memorial Day. I waited with ours for a couple of reasons; first I wanted it to be nice and mature and have some woodiness to add carbon to the compost pile, second all the flowering hay makes great habitat for bees, and third all of the birds have fledged their first hatchlings by now. I have a nice population of bobolinks and I enjoy watching them on the electric fence and listening to their chattering, so I don't want to mow down their young. Being concerned for the welfare of songbirds factors into my decision-making process. We are not a vegetable factory, I'm just using an already existing ecosystem and I don't want to destroy it in the process.

Speaking of bees, it's been a quiet year around the flowering plants, with very little buzzing. It doesn't seem like I'm getting as good of pollination as I could in the cucumbers. I'm hoping that cutting all the hay will eliminate the vast majority of their food so that they'll move aggressively into the vegetables. I did see

a couple of honey bees today, the first I've seen this year. Our neighbor who has bees (and whose honey we sell) lost his bees this winter, so there just haven't been any up here. Don't even get me started on the whole colony collapse disorder thing.

One of my interns, Geoffrey, wrote a brief introduction for the newsletter and it's pasted below. We should hear from Martha (intern #2) in a week or two.

If I were a vegetable, I would be an onion. Since I'm human instead, I'm a farm intern, and I love it. It's a great privilege to wake up every morning knowing that in my small way, I'm helping to make someone's life yummier. It's also an enjoyable change of pace from my other life, as a student of Religion and Spanish at Warren Wilson College, near Asheville, North Carolina.

I've learned a lot in my first month living and working here—from how to run a pressure washer, to the best method of making potato salad, to the correct name for a baby turkey (it's "poult"). But this job is also a return to my roots, to work I've known for years. I grew up seventeen miles from here, working every summer in the large vegetable garden that fed my family. Although Hog's Back Farm is on a completely different scale from my mother's garden, many things are the same: the bugs, the never-quite-perfect weather, the weeds, the amazing flavor of a radish straight out of the ground.

Someday I hope to run a CSA of my own. (Then why am I majoring in Religious Studies, you ask? Good question. Beats me.) In the much nearer future, I hope to meet some of you at our farm field day this Saturday.

Until then, enjoy the vegetables.

Coming next week: Arugula, lettuce, cukes, zukes, basil, potatoes, dill, fennel and maybe carrots.

Feathery Fennel-Yogurt Sauce

- 1 1/4 cups fennel tops
- 1 large scallion, sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- White pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup whole-milk or low-fat yogurt

Drop fennel into boiling salted water. Return to a boil; drain. Combine fennel in a food processor or blender with scallion, salt, and pepper. Add the oil and one-third of the yogurt and process to chop fine. Pour into dish and whisk in remaining yogurt. Chill to serve. Serve over salmon, shrimp or steamed vegetables.