

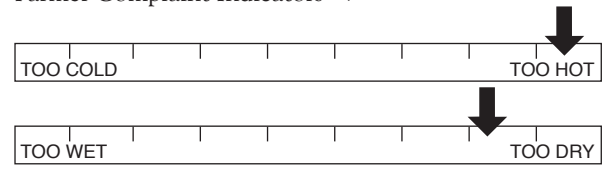


What's in the box and where does it go?

	Fridge?	Bag?	Notes & Varieties
Broccoli	Yes	Plastic	Nice.
Celery	Yes	Plastic	
Collards	Yes	Plastic	
Cucumbers	Yes	Plastic	
Garlic	No	No	Fresh!
Lettuce	Yes	Plastic	Last of it
Scallions	Yes	Plastic	
Peas	Yes	Plastic	Last of them
Tomatoes	No	No	First one!
Turnips	Yes	Plastic	Last of them
Zucchini	Yes	Plastic	Green and/or Gold

Farm Report 7/5/12

Rainfall0.28"
 High Temperature 99°
 Low Temperature 68°
 Farmer Complaint Indicators™:



but who would've known that would be the case. It also improves your odds to have a couple of hundred very healthy plants instead of some tired transplants from Menard's.

The first garlic of the year is in the box this week. This is our favorite garlic of the year. Fresh from the ground and full of moisture. We like to use it in thin slices or larger chunks since it has such great flavor now. The flavor intensifies as it dried down in the curing process. The garlic is maturing rapidly in the field with the heat wave and it looks like we'll be harvesting the first several rows of it next week.

The National Weather Service has issued an Excessive Broccoli Warning. Dangerously healthy broccoli combined with high temperatures has resulted in us harvesting over 500 heads of broccoli in the last seven days. We plant broccoli in successions for each week right now, but the heat is forcing it all to come at once. We'll have another big week of it next week, but after that who knows? These heads will be the nicest since the ones forming now during this heat will show some stress. Broccoli freezes well if you get behind, just blanch the florets in boiling water for 10-20 seconds and then into ice water to cool it quickly. Then let it drain and freeze in zip-locs.

There's a young head of celery in the boxes this week. We had a little experimental patch of it last year and I decided I liked it and would grow some this year. Well we've got a nice patch of it, and since there's enough for several weeks I thought we'd get started with it. Growing celery in Wisconsin is not the same as growing it in the Central Valley of California, our celery will be smaller and have a stronger celery flavor. Our kids love to munch on it, but I like it's stronger flavor for

Bragging rights

This is the earliest we've ever had a tomato in the boxes. Peas and tomatoes the same week? Crazy. Some are on the small side and some need to ripen up on the counter for a couple of days, but still, tomatoes in the boxes on July 5th! 16 days ahead of last year. There are some benefits to heat waves. Unfortunately the same heat wave that is bringing us early ripe tomatoes is also making it harder for the peppers, tomatoes and eggplant in the field to set fruit. Warm nights in the 70's can cause plants to abort their blossoms as the plant shuts down reproduction to focus on survival. The plants are smart, they know that a better time to reproduce is just around the corner, and right now it's just important to stay alive until the weather breaks. The practical side of this is that we'll take a little hit to our yields, and the first peppers will actually end up being later since they're setting their first fruit now. But there will be plenty of tomatoes and I think I'll take them now, in exchange for a couple less in August.

The first tomatoes have always been the coveted prize of the best gardeners. I still like to think of ourselves as gardeners but we do get to cheat a little bit. Having the early tomatoes in a high tunnel structure helps quite a bit. The high tunnel is an unheated greenhouse where the plants are grown directly in the soil. We transplanted them on April 30th this year, which is a little earlier than average. You could have gotten away with transplanting them outside that early this year,

things like chicken salad, tunafish, or potato salads. The leaves can also be used to flavor dishes, although they can be more bitter, best to taste them first. The celery is also having some of the same problems that we've been seeing in the lettuce fields all year. You may find an internal leaf or two that is brown, and maybe a friendly beetle, but the plant is so attractive that I didn't have the heart to strip all the stalks off.

Well I had given up the peas for dead after last week, but they had other ideas. Provided our poor walk-in cooler can manage to cool them down you should get the biggest bag of them of the year this week. This will be the end of them, but green beans don't look too far behind.

The cukes and zukes pick up the pace in the heat, although I have to say that the zucchini has been a bit of a disappointment. I'm surprised we didn't pick more this week considering the weather and how nice the plants look. I tried a new organic variety this year and it doesn't seem to yield quite as well. We also had some strong winds in a squall that went through early Tuesday morning and snapped off the growing point of 10 or 12 of the gold zucchini plants, which means there will be fewer of those around. Most of the cukes are still coming from the very hot high tunnel, but we're starting to get a few from the field.

The turnips this week are the last of them for the spring. Some are showing a little insect damage, and their flavor gets stronger in the heat, but I still prefer them raw.

This lettuce is also the last of it for the spring, our harvest day will really speed up now that we don't have to spend so much time looking for lettuce that is up to snuff. And lastly there's more nice collards and scallions in the box this week, they've both been very nice this year.

Farm News

2012 is shaping up to be a very warm year. Warm winter, warm spring, hot summer. It was an unpleasant week to be a farmer, but it is kind of fun to watch things growing like crazy. These hot days and very warm nights put the heat-loving crops into overdrive. Vine crops like squash and melons are growing 6 inches a day. Last week after we had cleaned up the melon field you could make two passes wide with the rototiller, so about 3 feet wide. 7 days later and they've almost completely closed that gap, you could still walk through there, but if you tried to take a tiller through you'd wreak havoc.

Our flour corn is tasseling and pollinating earlier than ever. As it tassels it shoots up in height, so that plants you walked by a couple days ago are suddenly a foot taller. Just for fun this year I also planted a couple hundred plants of popcorn and those plants are already over six feet tall. When I was a kid it was the benchmark to have your corn knee-high by the fourth of July. Speaking of corn, I haven't talked to Dan Sam about when we'll see some of his sweet corn, but it can't be long.

The crew has been taking the heat wave in stride. We tried to knock off a little early most of the days this week, but we still managed to get a lot of weeding done, and tried to keep things watered. They also were great about working yesterday in the heat. Harvest day is harvest day whether it's the 4th of July or not. We started at 6am and managed to be out of the field early in the afternoon.

The bigger problem with a very hot harvest day is getting the vegetables cooled down. Most everything goes into tanks of cold well water to remove the 'field heat', a vegetable picked when it's 90° outside is a 90° vegetable. The cold water is the best way to remove as much of that heat as we can. After a dunk in the cold water we have a large volume of 60° vegetables which then need to be cooled to 35° by our walk-in cooler. Well, the compressor for the cooler is somewhat sensitive to the heat, it has trouble running non-stop to cool things when it's 99° in its little alcove outside. Consequently it takes quite a while to get the veggies cooled down in a week like this. Hopefully they will cool adequately overnight, but it will be the same scenario when you get them home today. If they are warm, a quick dunk in cold water will make your refrigerator work less and keep the veggies in good shape.

Fresh Broccoli Salad

- 2 heads fresh broccoli
- 1 red onion
- 1/2 pound bacon
- 3/4 cup raisins
- 3/4 cup sliced almonds
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

Place bacon in a deep skillet and cook over medium high heat until evenly brown. Cool and crumble. Cut the broccoli into bite-size pieces and cut the onion into thin bite-size slices. Combine with the bacon, raisins, your favorite nuts and mix well. To prepare the dressing, mix the mayonnaise, sugar and vinegar together until smooth. Stir into the salad, let chill and serve.