

My MN Farmer

Our Family Blessed
To Feed Yours

Volume 9, Issue 7

July 21-24, 2018

FSI: Weed Wars and Farm Scene Investigators

Growing organically (without herbicides and pesticides) yields the purest, most-healthy produce, but it is not without its challenges. Unlike the large, virtually weedless fields of soybeans and corn you see as you drive along Minnesota roads, our fields have a number a weeds that have sprouted up along with our desirable produce.

In an ideal year, when we have nice, even weather conditions, we can get our little cultivating tractor into the fields to reduce the weed crop. In a super-rainy year like this one, however, the fields become soaked to the point where we can't use our tractor. The option is to weed the old-fashioned way - by hand. But imagine hand-weeding 12 acres (approximately the size of 12 football fields) of muddy fields, and you can see the challenge.

Make no mistake, though. Those delicious, healthful veggies are out there, and we work hard to harvest through the jungle so we can prepare them for your table. In a year like this, our best bet is to harvest what we can and then plow the rows under before the weeds go to seed. Then we replant another fast-growing crop in that space in hopes that it will be ripe and ready for your boxes later in the season.



Unwelcome guests.
Potato bug (left) and
potato bug larva.

Another challenge of growing organically is pests. Without pesticides, we are constantly scouting for aphids or tomato stem borers in the tomato tunnels, potato bugs in the potato field, etc. How do we combat these pests when we discover them? Our family farmers and workers know that when potato bugs and larva are discovered they should be squished immediately. When evidence of a tomato stem borer is found, we stab the pest's point of entry hoping to kill it in place before it can damage the support structure of the plant. We've also purchased ladybugs (from Amazon, believe it or not!) and released them in the tomato tunnels to feast on the aphids that attack the tomato plants.

It's a lot of work, but it's worth the effort to provide herbicide- and pesticide-free food for your table.



Farmer Dean harvests radishes among the weeds.

Let's Talk Tomatoes! - We grow many types of tomatoes here at the farm. We grow several hybrid varieties that are round and red, but you may also discover in your box a bumpy, light-colored Heirloom Tomato. What's the difference? Some consider them the ugly duckling of the tomato world because of their bumpy shape, brown lines and light color, but Heirloom Tomatoes offer more of a "kick-in-the-pants" tomato taste, and their higher acidity offers the flavor that your grandmother may remember as how a *REAL* tomato is supposed to taste. All of our tomatoes are grown organically, and will be more tender and tastier than the hard, factory-farmed tomatoes you see in your grocery store, but the Heirloom is a special treat!



Two small hybrid
tomatoes and an
Heirloom Tomato.

