



# My MN Farmer

Our Family Blessed  
To Feed Yours

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## GROWING PRACTICES

# Let's talk trellising!

**Editor's note:** In past years, My Minnesota Farmer has offered farm tours so members can see, up close and personal, their growing practices. As they need to limit visitors to the farm this year, we offer this periodic "Growing Practices" column to show our farmers at work. Our first installment explains how trellising works.

Trellising is one of the growing practices your farmers use to grow more produce in less space, keep the vines and fruit off the ground, decrease plant disease through increased air flow and drier leaves, and make the harvest easier to reach.

Plants we trellis at My Minnesota Farmer include tomatoes, cucumbers, tomatillos and peppers.

For determinate tomato plants (the "bush" varieties that grow only so big and then stop), your farmers use a Florida weave-style trellising. We put a 6-foot rebar in the ground every four feet and then wrap twine around it to make a tight "cage" for the tomatoes. This is how we trellis peppers and tomatillos, too.

For indeterminate tomato plants (the kind that will grow and grow taller and taller, seemingly never stopping) we hang a string on a roller and use small plastic clips to hold the plant to the string. We prune these tomatoes to a two-leader system, pruning off all but the two strongest branches. Then, as the plant grows, we lower the string so we can reach the tomatoes.

Cucumbers are trellised on cattle panels. The idea is that they should trellis themselves, but we find we spend a lot of time training them up the panels as we pick them.

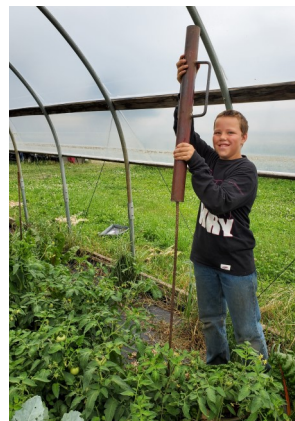
Produce grows just fine when not trellised, but for a higher yield of first-rate produce, trellising is key.



Farmer Abby (right) and her best friend Sarah, who volunteers at My Minnesota Farmer, trellis peppers using the Florida weaves technique.



Above, cucumbers are trained to climb up cattle panels.



At far left, indeterminate tomato plants are trellised using clips and string that can roll down as the plant grows. This allows the tomatoes to grow all the way to the top of the support, which allows for good air flow and easier harvesting.

At center is a close-up of a pepper plant trellised with the Florida weave system.

At right, Farmer Joshua pounds rebar into the ground to support Florida weave trellising.



# Farm News: First a drought, then rain, rain, rain!

**By Farmer Jean**

The strange thing about farming is your “job” can change while you are sleeping (or even wide awake) and there’s nothing you can do about it!

About two weeks ago, I was sure I was going to lose all of my crops because of the lack of rain. I priced out a new well because ours couldn’t keep up. It was an estimate of \$40,000. Yikes! We are farmers, not millionaires! We were unable to water the high tunnels and keep the field rows watered



enough to stay alive. I have pictures of some very dry, crisp lettuce and some very sad looking plants.

Now, just two weeks later, we looked at the sky and asked God to stop the torrential downpour. We got 5.6 inches of rain starting midnight on Monday until Monday morning! On Monday morning we had planned to harvest peas for your shares, but there was no way we could do it in the rain and mud. We are hoping we will still have peas for next week.

Sadly, as of this writing, more rain is in the forecast. We are hoping the meteorologists are wrong!

## In Your Share Box this Week

◆ **Red Kohlrabi** - Kohlrabi is a tasty treat when you’re looking for a yummy crunch! Cut off the outside and slice to eat fresh. Can also be grilled or added to salads.



◆ **Kale** - Kale is a powerhouse of nutrients. Cooked kale offers more iron per ounce than beef. Enjoy kale in salads, smoothies, or make kale chips.



◆ **Romaine Lettuce** - Fresh and crisp, Romaine is great in in taco salads, egg salad wraps, lettuce on a hamburger, a sandwich or a Caesar salad.



◆ **Cabbage** (half shares) - Cabbage is great for coleslaw or cabbage rolls. Or boil and add a bit of butter for a great side dish.



◆ **Cucumbers** (full shares) - Enjoy cucumbers in salads, on your relish tray or as refrigerator pickles. One member told us they use cucumbers on their sandwiches instead of tomatoes, making BLCs instead of BLTs.



◆ **Beets or Cabbage** (full shares) - Boil beets whole, slip the skins and eat them with butter and salt, or try a yummy beet cake.



Recipe: <http://mymnfarmer.com/recipes/beets>.

◆ **Summer Squash and Zucchini** - Summer Squash and Zucchini are excellent sliced and sautéed with onions as a side dish. Or either of these squash can be shredded to make a moist zucchini or squash bread.



◆ **Microgreens** - You may receive microgreens this week. Smaller than “baby greens” and harvested later than sprouts, microgreens offer a variety of leaf flavors such as sweet and spicy. Great for salads or garnishes.



◆ **Jalapeno peppers** (full shares) - Use jalapeno peppers to spice up your Mexican dishes or salsa.



◆ **Bok Choy** - You may receive Bok Choy in your box this week. Bok Choy can be eaten like celery or used as a substitute for celery in soups or stews. The greens can also be used as wraps or chopped up and sautéed. Some members use the leaves to make Bok Choy chips.



**NOTE: Please be assured we have packed into your box the value you’ve paid even if the items don’t exactly match the items we’ve listed in the newsletter. Thank you for your understanding!**



**We are happy to share this Quick Tip from CSA member Candy Kragthorpe (with credit to Mark Bittman).**

The leaves from kohlrabi are made more tender by stripping out the thick ribs and then salting them in a colander (up to one tablespoon per 6 cups of leaves), gently massaging the salt into the leaves like you might do with kale. Let sit up to 40 minutes or so, rinse well with cold water and then gently press the moisture out. If you do this close to cooking, then you can just roll up the leaves together in small handfuls and chiffonade them for stir fries, etc. I do the same with radish and beet tops, except for the salting part. This will help you use most of the plant parts and it is delicious!

Members are always invited to send along tips and recipes. Email recipes, tips and pictures of your cooking creations to [csa@mymnfarmer.com](mailto:csa@mymnfarmer.com).