

The Gannick* Weekly

Norwood CSA Newsletter

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* Gannick /GAN-nik/ - One who raises, eats or advocates organic foods and/or lifestyle.



Share for the Week

3 onions
1/4lb garlic scapes
1 pac choi
1 eggplant
1 lettuce
2 cucumbers
1/2lb greens

Say Hi to Nicole...

This is the third year for the Norwood Foods Co-op, but a lot of us still don't know our fellow members very well. This is the first installment of a new feature, in which we get to meet some of the members.

Name: Nicole Hanley

Occupation: Marketing Manager

Years in Co-op: 2

Favorite Vegetable: Garlic scapes

Best thing about the co-op: Supporting a local farmer who provides organic produce.

What folks should know about you: Nicole will be writing the Vegetable Spotlight feature in the Gannick!

...and to Johnetta!

Johnetta Miner will be taking over as the site coordinator for the first shift on Thursdays.

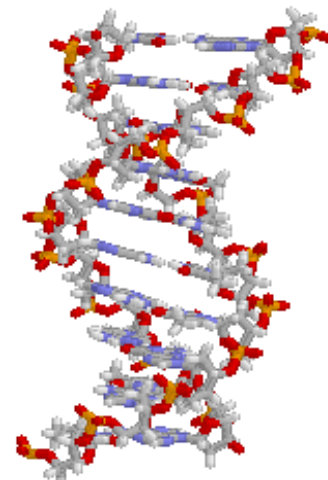
Thanks, Johnetta, for filling the position.

(Everyone else, feel free to drop by early and help her set up.)

GMOs:

Hope, Hype or Horror?

You've probably heard about genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Technically, they include any organism with genes that have been intentionally manipulated ("transgenic"). For purposes of the organic food movement, the term specifically refers to GM food crops (usually plants, though animals can be GM as well).



Many in the environmental and organic movements have a problem with GMOs. For some it's principle – they feel such things are *unnatural*. Others worry about the impact on existing species, through competition and crossbreeding. Some are simply concerned with possible nutritional defects. Regardless of individual motives, GMOs have generally been anathema to the "green" demographic.

Recently, however, some prominent environmentalists have done a turnaround in their view of GMOs.

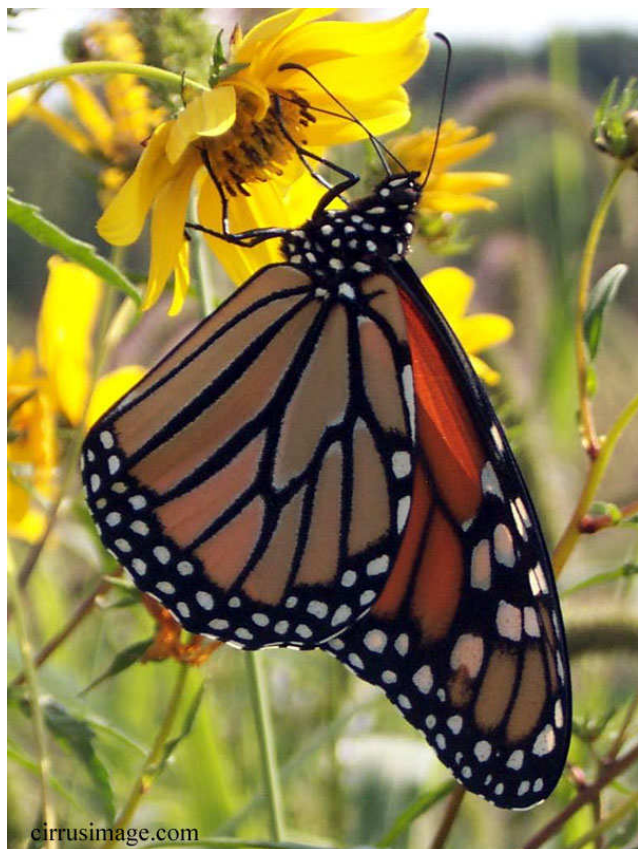
One of these is Stewart Brand, founder of the Whole Earth Catalog. In a recent article for MIT's *Technology Review*, he referred to genetic engineering as having "huge promise and some drawbacks." In the article, he predicts an eventual sea change in the way environmentalists as a group view the technology. He argues this based on the environmental benefits of raising more crops on less land, with less use of pesticides; he also envisions the use of genetically modified parasites tailored to curtail invasive species, currently a source of much ecological destruction.

Hype?

"Grey goo" has been popular in science fiction. It is a generic term for the scenario in which the world is conquered by a genetically engineered superorganism which consumes all other organic matter. A related fear is that of an engineered "superweed" supplanting native species. They share the assumption that something engineered in a lab will be more successful in the wild than those life forms already there, which tested by millions of years of inter- and intra-species competition. Historically, however, qualities that have made something better for domestication have made it much *less* fit for life in the wild. Higher fruit yield, for example, is, from the point of view of a wild plant, a waste of resources.

An oft-cited study damning GMOs was released by Cornell University in 1999. The results, echoed often in the news media, showed that pollen from genetically modified corn proved poisonous to Monarch butterfly caterpillars. This left many with the impression that there was something inherently toxic in genetically modified corn, as if it were a malicious side effect of simply tampering with DNA. What was not always mentioned is that the corn in question had been specifically modified to produce a chemical to control the European Corn Borer, a moth caterpillar.

(The threat to the Monarch caterpillars themselves, which was of some ecological concern, was discounted in a 2001 study by the scientific journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.)



Horror?

There remain, however, many legitimate concerns over GMOs. They are perhaps more serious for being less sensational.

First, the price paid for abundance must be accurately weighed. As even traditionally-bred agribusiness crops show, volume is often increased to the detriment of both nutrition and flavor. A plant that produces 25% more fruit may be producing more fiber, water and starch, but is not necessarily producing more vitamins, enzymes and minerals. Extra bulk can water down nutrition.

There is also the problem of cross-pollination. Many farmers and gardeners depend on seed saved from the previous year's crop. It is important for agriculture professionals to be able to keep their strains relatively pure so they can know what they are planting each year. There is a danger that genetically modified crops, even if not fit for survival in the wild, may breed with existing varieties, getting unwanted and hard-to-eliminate genes into the wider population.

One modification with the potential for extremely nasty ramifications is the "terminator seed." These seeds, are genetically programmed to produce only one viable generation; the plants grown from the terminator seeds cannot reproduce. While this seems like an airtight solution to the danger of GMOs going wild – and that is how seeds are billed – the danger in crossbreeding is now that they will render inviable a portion of seed a neighboring farmer has saved for replanting. If a farmer is used to reserving, say, 10% of his crop for replanting (essentially, profiting on only 90% of his crop), the need to suddenly double the portion of the crop he saves might prove his economic undoing.

Another danger of the terminator seed – and, to a lesser extent, of GMOs in general – is that of the proprietary crop. The lure of a highly productive GM crop at a reasonable price can trap a farmer – who had previously saved seed – into a cycle of dependence upon an agri-corporation.

Proprietary crops are a legal danger to those who *don't* buy GM seeds as well; since entire gene sequences are being patented, crops "infected" with pollen from neighboring GMOs may be held to infringe the patent. (This was so ruled in Canada in the case of *Monsanto Canada Inc. v. Schmeiser*.)

Hope

Right now, it is difficult to fully test the nutritional qualities of GMOs. Nutrition is still a very imperfect science; thousands of different compounds interact in unknown ways to enhance and block one another. Factor in the great variety in their nutritional needs of individuals and conflicting interests and ideologies

among researchers, and nutrition becomes a very complex subject. As diagnostic and analytic tools become more sophisticated, however, it may soon become easier to study and correct or avoid imbalances in engineered foods.

Cross-pollination may be partially addressed by engineering plant varieties that bloom at times different from existing varieties. Other possibilities include adding "gibberish" DNA that will interfere with a GMO's ability to breed with other strains.

Possible nutritional deficiencies of GMOs may be offset by the potential benefits; increased crop yields may be instrumental in overcoming the lower yield often suffered by organic farmers, thus enabling more of the world's food to be grown organically. Since many people are already eating suboptimal, factory-farmed crops, allowing more of it to be raised by farmers who make nutrition a priority might be a net nutritional gain.

The dangers of proprietary crops may be mitigated with the growth of "open source" genetic engineering. The nonprofit research group CAMBIA has launched its *BIOS Initiative* ("Biological Innovation for Open Society") to increase the access of independent engineers to patented biotech. Patterned on the open source software movement, it would in theory make a license for patented transgenic technologies available to anyone who agrees not to exclude others who make the same agreement (known as "copyleft"). This would simultaneously open a GMO to wider scientific scrutiny and expertise, and make research less dependent upon the sponsorship of big corporations.

Regardless of the ultimate fate of GMOs, the debate is now moving beyond the left-right dichotomy it has been in for two decades. Even for those who remain opposed to the technology, this can be seen as a good thing; As Brand says, "The best way for doubters to control a questionable new technology is to embrace it, lest it remain wholly in the hands of enthusiasts who think there is nothing questionable about it."

The preceding article is not intended as an endorsement of GMOs. Due to space restrictions, many counter-GMO arguments were left out on the basis that they are easily available, and in fact the reader may already know about them. Further reading on the debate is encouraged:

"Environmental Heresies"

(Stewart Brand's article for *Technology Review*)

http://www.technologyreview.com/read_article.aspx?id=14406

The Biotech Brigade (a public GM watchdog group)
<http://www.gmwatch.org/>

Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) has many related articles.

Book Review:

Old MacDonald Had an Apartment House

Author: Judi Barrett

Illustrator: Ron Barrett

This children's picture book is a whimsical look into urban agriculture that may make the building in the story were yours. In this incarnation, Old MacDonald is the Super of an apartment building. (The book doesn't say this is in New York City, but it certainly looks that way -- and the author says the building is similar to the one in Brooklyn where she grew up.)

What starts with an effort to let in a little light to save a waning tomato plant gradually grows as MacDonald adds carrots, peas, cows and chickens, until produce has displaced the tenants. Then the building's owner shows up looking for the rent, and it looks like the end.

MacDonald's incremental additions to his urban crops grow increasingly improbable with each page. The magic of Judi Barret's writing is that, even when events become utterly preposterous, they never seem quite ridiculous -- perhaps because one feels that Old MacDonald is doing exactly what one would want to do in his place.

Ron Barrett's illustrations -- which could almost tell the story without any words -- certainly help the reader identify with MacDonald's decisions. In the mainly black-and-white line drawings, only the vegetables have any color; it's easy to see why Old MacDonald would find them more important to than the tenants.

Organic chaos is gradually laid upon the straight, static lines that make up the building, until one is enmeshed in the other and it becomes impossible to tell which is out of place.

In the end, the answer proves to be "neither" as the building's owner comes up with an elegant solution to their dilemma. It turns out MacDonald, corn, cows and tomatoes can pay their rent just fine in an ending that doesn't need to say "happily ever after," because it's so obvious.

This one gets five out of five green-thumbs up. Anyone who's ever put a tomato plant on their fire escape or grown a pot of herbs in their kitchen will need to find room for a sixth.

KITCHEN AID

Vegetable Spotlight:

Cucumber



Cucumber has been cultivated for 3000 years. The fruit is commonly harvested while still green, though generally after the fruits outgrow their spines. They are eaten as a vegetable, either raw, cooked, or made into pickled cucumbers.

Although less nutritious than most fruit, the fresh cucumber is still a very good source of vitamin C, vitamin K, and potassium, and also provides some dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin B6, thiamin, folate, pantothenic acid, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, copper, and manganese.

Au Gratin Cabbage

(How many of you still have Napa in your fridge?)

Recipe courtesy of Nick Napolitano

- 2 cups cabbage (shredded)
- 1/2 cup carrots (shredded)
- 1/2 cup green onions (chopped)

Sauté until crisp-tender in frying pan coated with cooking spray.

Transfer to greased 1-quart baking dish.

- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 egg
- 3 tablespoons cheese (shredded)

Combine in a small bowl. Pour over vegetables. Garnish with 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley and 1 tablespoon grated parmesan cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes.

Cucumber Sandwiches

(from recipes.epicurean.com)

- 18 oz. pkg. cream cheese (you can use light)
- 1 pkg. Good Seasons Italian dressing mix
- dried dill weed
- 2 cucumbers (peeled and sliced thin)
- 45-50 bread rounds (rye or other)

Soak peeled, sliced cucumbers in salted ice water overnight (or at least a couple of hours). Use a cookie cutter a little larger than the cucumber to cut the bread rounds.

Mix together the cream cheese and dressing mix. Spread cream cheese mixture thinly over bread, place cucumber on top and sprinkle lightly with dried dill weed.

Yogurt & Cucumber Dip

An Iranian condiment (from recipes.epicurean.com)

- 16 oz. Good quality yogurt
- 1/2 European Cucumber (peeled & grated)
- 1/4 tsp. dried mint

Mix all together & enjoy. Amounts can be adjusted to individual tastes (more or less cucumber/mint, etc.)

Tzatziki

From: The All New Good Housekeeping Cookbook edited by Susan Westmoreland (Hearst Books)

- 1 container (16 ounces) plain yogurt
- 1/2 English (seedless) cucumber, not peeled, seeded and finely chopped plus a few thin slices
- 1/1-2 teaspoons salt
- 1 to 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint or dill plus additional sprigs
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

Spoon yogurt into sieve lined with cheesecloth or coffee filter set over bowl; cover and refrigerate overnight. Transfer drained yogurt to medium bowl and discard liquid.

Meanwhile, in colander set over bowl, toss chopped cucumber with 1 teaspoon salt. Let drain at least 1 hour at room temperature, or cover and refrigerate up to 8 hours. In batches, wrap chopped cucumber in kitchen towel and squeeze to remove as much liquid as possible. Pat dry with paper towels, then add to bowl with yogurt.

With flat side of chef's knife, mash garlic to a paste with remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Add garlic, chopped mint, oil, vinegar, and pepper to yogurt and stir to combine. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 or up to 4 hours. Serve chilled or at room temperature, topped with cucumber slices and mint sprigs.

Yield: about 1-1/2 cups