

Johnson's Backyard Garden  
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## Fire, Breaking Ground, New Water Tank, Freeze

We have been so busy for the past week! I actually typed this about a week ago but have not had time to send it out till today. I opted to take the afternoon off yesterday and go to the Slow Food potluck celebration at Boggy Creek with my son Drew. We had a lot of fun....meeting new people and talking to many local small scale farmers.



Brussels sprouts with a little frost...24 F

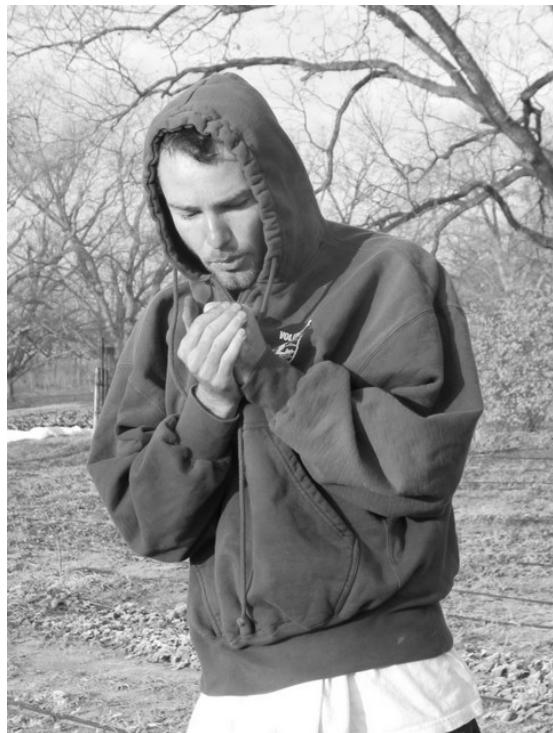
### Last Week Happenings....the Freeze & Fire!

We started Saturday morning on Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> with 24 degree cold. Luckily the weather warmed up nicely by mid-morning and we starting breaking ground with the new green walk-behind tiller just before lunch. Zak, a work share member, volunteered for the job and worked for a good hour when he told me that grass in the field was too high and needed to be mowed before we tilled. Thinking of grass cutting took me back to one of my first entrepreneurial endeavors. I had a yard business for about 7 years when I was in high school and for part of college. After cutting so many yards then, sometimes 10-15 in a day, I cannot stand to cut grass anymore. At our old house on Holly Street I got out of cutting grass by converting the whole yard to a garden.

Usually I try to take Sunday morning and write the newsletter but last Sunday instead I woke-up before dawn and got a helper to assist with breaking ground on the 3 acre pasture

behind the pecan orchard. We are tilling the field to make room for more vegetable crops, but taking out the grass made me think of the cows that were previously on the property. The old cows are no longer here but we plan to soon purchase a few cows and make use of the pastures on the back of the property.

We started back on the tilling that Zac started. Here I was cutting a three acre pasture with my little push lawnmower. About this time I was really wishing I had a tractor. Well we kept working and trading out with the mower job ahead of the tiller. With the grass root fibers being so tough and thick we had to go over the grass with the tiller about 3-4 times to get the soil loosened up very deep. About lunchtime I went inside to fix us both something to eat. My 6 year old daughter Lila was sitting at the kitchen table and looking out the window when she asked "what is that guy burning up out there!". I looked out the window and saw the pasture on fire. I ran as fast as I could, grabbed the tiller and was lucky enough to be able to till around the fire and make a fire ring fast enough to keep too much of the grass from burning. The push lawnmower was a loss though. I guess it got to hot cutting the grass and when Jorge went to refuel it caught on fire! We kept working for the rest of the day and almost got an acre tilled. Enough excitement for Sunday.



Zac a little cold first thing in the morning!

### **Back to Friday Now....the Tank**

Our farm is less than 1000 feet from the Colorado River and our well is very shallow only 33 feet deep. Although we have a good water supply the depth of water we pump from is only about 2 feet when we measured it in the middle of the drought last summer. We can pump a little over 20 gallons per minute but since the water depth is so small we have to use a special pump that is not normally used in water wells to get the water out of the well. The downside to using this pump is that our water pressure is low. The one way to increase the water pressure is to install a reservoir tank/cistern to pump into out



The new water storage reservoir....It needs a little decoration

of the well and then use a 2<sup>nd</sup> pump to pressurize the water from the tank. The higher water pressure will allow us to use spray nozzles in the greenhouse and in the fields to help germinate seedlings and also have higher water pressure in all the houses.

For a few months now I have been checking Craigslist for a reservoir/cistern to pump into from our well. I have also investigated constructing a ferro cement cistern. Finally last week I checked Craigslist and found just what I was looking for.... a 27,000 gallon fiberglass water tank that a farmer was selling. I tried calling all day on Thursday and then on Friday I got an email from the farmer saying that he just sold the tank! I was so bummed that I broke down and went to Triple S feed in Dripping Springs on Friday afternoon and bought a new 3000 gallon tank. Now I am working to the tank integrated into the irrigation system and water supply for the house and two house-on-wheels. So if you come out to the pot luck we are planning and see a big black tank in the front yard near the well house at least you will know what it is for.

### **Planted this Week**

Dino and Siberian Kale, small amount of broccoli, peas, potatoes, more carrots, more lettuce, tomatoes, pac choi...and other things I cannot remember.

### **BOX ADDITIONS AVAILABLE**

#### **FREE RANGE EGGS & ORGANIC COFFEE**

Let us know if you would like us to add eggs or coffee to your box. Just like last year *fresh free range eggs* are \$4.00 per

dozen or \$2.00 per half-dozen. We can include 1 lb of organic/fair trade coffee for \$10.50 ...choose whole bean or ground. For more info on why fair trade? Checkout link <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/coffee/>

### **In your share last week:**

Cauliflower	Broccoli
Radishes	Spinach
Lettuce	some tatsoi
Kale	Arugula
Purple Top Turnips	Red Swiss Chard
Beets	Cabbage
Beauregard Sweet Potatoes	Green Garlic
**coming soon Brussels sprouts	



Grit and I planted red and white potatoes the week before last

### **Recipes by Grit**

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Today's recipes are from our members to our members! A big thank you to y'all for sending them in and **keep sending them!** It is fun adding all those new recipes to my own library.... . If you won't find your recipe in this newsletter, don't be disappointed, you will find it in one of the next ones.

#### **Arugula, Beet and Goat Cheese Salad**

The title tells the ingredients! Also add radishes and red or yellow bell peppers. Make a simple dressing of lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper.

### **Cauliflower Salad Supreme**

(from Vegetarian Nights cookbook, author Bonnie Mandoe)

1 large cauliflower  
 4 tbl. capers, drained and minced  
 1/2 cup pitted and chopped Kalamata olives  
 1/2 cup fresh tomatoes, finely chopped  
 1/2 cup good olive oil  
 1/2 tsp. salt  
 Butterhead lettuce (optional)

Trim the cauliflower but don't remove the core. Cut it into 8 equal slices and steam them in a deep steamer until tender, about 20 minutes. Cool. Combine the capers, olives, tomato, oil, vinegar and salt. Arrange the cauliflower slices on a bed of torn lettuce. Spoon the tomato mixture over the slices. Serve at room temperature.

### **Chinese Radish Cucumber Salad**

(from Classic Cold Cuisine by Karen Green)

1 bunch radishes, coarsely chopped  
 1 cucumber, halved, peeled, seeded and chopped  
 Shredded cabbage

#### Asian Dressing:

1 tbl. rice vinegar  
 2 tsp. soy sauce  
 1/2 tsp. sugar  
 1 tsp. sesame oil

Toss the radishes and cucumber with the dressing and refrigerate. At service time, spoon the mix over a bed of shredded cabbage.

### **Smashed potatoes and turnips**

4 potatoes  
 2 turnips  
 1 tbsp horseradish  
 Salt and pepper to taste

Cut into pieces and boil until tender. Reserve around 1 c. cooking liquor. Mash turnips and potatoes together, adding cooking water back in until desired consistency is achieved. Stir in 1 tbsp horseradish. Salt and pepper to taste. (These are really good with deer roast or beef! No one complained about the lack of butter or milk.)

### **Beet Green Gratin**

1 tablespoon butter  
 12 ounces sliced mushrooms  
 2 cloves garlic, minced  
 1 pound beet greens, cleaned and picked  
 Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper  
 4 egg yolks, beaten  
 1 cup ricotta  
 1/2 cup grated Parmesan  
 1/2 teaspoon salt  
 3/4 cup crumbled crackers (recommended: Ritz crackers)

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Melt the butter in a saucépan. Add the mushrooms and garlic and let sweat. Add the beet greens and mix well. Remove pan from heat. Season with salt and pepper. In a separate bowl, combine the egg yolks, ricotta, Parmesan cheese, and salt. Combine everything and put into a lightly oiled 9 by 11-inch baking dish. Top with the crumbled crackers and bake for 30 minutes covered. Uncover and bake for an additional 15 minutes.

Beth and Brent already tried this one and loved it! Beth substituted tofu for the ricotta and used onions instead of mushrooms. I am going to try it out tonight!



The greenhouse is completely full.....we are planning on extending it this weekend by 8 feet on each end



I like the new tiller but for larger areas a tractor with a roto-tiller or spader would be a lot faster!