



# Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

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## Summer '09 Week 4 of 13

Harvest list is online

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### Red Noodle Beans

Red noodle beans are native to Asia. Use them as you would use green beans. They don't need to be shelled. Cut them into 2" segments and deep fry, stir-fry, steam or add to soups. They are also great tossed briefly on the grill with a bit of olive oil, salt and pepper.



### Summer Squash

Many of you have not failed to notice that our summer squash are getting bigger and bigger (that's what squash does). Luckily, heirloom summer squash stay tender as they grow bigger. Try them baked or in calabacitas.



### Newsletter Editor

Philippe Waterinckx

## PURSLANE (VERDOLAGAS)

*"I learned that a man may use as simple a diet as the animals, and yet retain health and strength. I have made a satisfactory dinner off a dish of purslane which I gathered in my corn field,"* wrote Henry David Thoreau in Walden, *"yet men have come to such a pass that they frequently starve, not for want of necessities, but for want of luxuries."*

Although purslane is rarely seen on our own tables today, this pretty herb has a long and interesting history. English medieval cooks and gardeners loved purslane. The ancient Greeks made a bread flour from purslane seeds and pickled its fleshy stems; Greek cooks now serve purslane as a salad herb. On Mexican tables, the tangy bite of cooked purslane is enjoyed with eggs and pork.

The FDA lists purslane as a pervasive weed (the seventh worst, worldwide) but to those of us who love its earthy, slightly acidic flavor and crisp, succulent stems and leaves, the word 'weed' hardly seems fair.

Medieval herbalists describe purslane as 'cold,' meaning that it was considered a cure for a 'burning' (or malfunctioning) heart and liver. Greeks call it a 'blood-cleansing' herb. In Mexico, purslane is considered good for diabetics. Recent research has confirmed that purslane is one of the best vegetable sources of omega-3 fatty acids, as well as carotenes and vitamin C.

Purslane has succulent, fleshy leaves and stems with a delicate and tangy flavor. Both stems and leaves are consumed. Purslane is harvested when young, before the stems turn woody. It is used as an herb for seasoning, as fresh green to be served in salads (sprigs of purslane are perfect for salads or tucked into sandwiches or tacos). It can be chopped and folded into mayonnaise-based salads such as egg, tuna, or potato. Or simply sprinkle the leaves generously with coarse sea salt, lemon juice and olive oil and serve with fish, grills, or omelets.

Cooked purslane is delicious too. Sauté it with onions and garlic or add it to soups. Add handfuls of purslane sprigs to the juices in the roasting pan, once you have removed the roast for carving: after a few minutes of swishing, the greens wilt and the sauce acquires a sharper flavor and pleasantly gelatinous character (Rosemary Barron, *Flavors of Greece*).

## DRYING HERBS by Sallie Marston

The practice of drying herbs (and fruits) in order to preserve them for use later is an ancient one. Now as then, drying is not only the easiest and least expensive way to preserve fresh herbs, but a slow air drying process also maintains the oil content of the herbs at the same time that it sustains their fresh taste. This process works best with herbs that don't have a high moisture content, like Bay Leaf, Dill, Marjoram, Oregano, Rosemary, Summer Savory and Thyme. High moisture content herbs like Basil and Mint should be dried in a dehydrator. About.com: Gardening (<http://gardening.about.com/od/vegetablepatch/a/DryingHerbs.htm>) provides easy instructions on how to harvest, air dry and store your herbs in order to preserve them at their most flavorful. Another useful website that provides information on the use of dehydrators for preserving your herbs (and other foods) is the National Center for Home Food Preservation at the University of Georgia (<http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/how/dry/herbs.html>).

### **Tex-Mex Summer Squash Casserole**

Contributed by Lyn Hart, TCSA. Adapted from EatingWell.com

Preheat oven to 400°. Oil a 9 x 13 pan.

2 ¼ lbs summer squash, quartered lengthwise and thinly sliced crosswise (~ 10 cups)

2/3 cup finely chopped yellow onion

2-3 tomatillos, chopped

1 can drained and rinsed pinto beans

2 4oz cans chopped green chiles (mild or hot—if you like very spicy food, substitute one can of chopped jalapenos for one of the green chiles)

½ tsp salt, or to taste

2 ¼ cups grated extra sharp cheddar (~7 oz, divided)

1/3 cup flour

¾ cup salsa (heat index your preference)

4 scallions, thinly sliced for garnish

¼ cup finely chopped red onion for garnish

Sour cream or Greek yogurt for topping

Chopped avocado for topping

Combine squash, onion, tomatillos, beans, chiles, salt, and ¾ cup of the cheese in a large bowl.

Sprinkle with flour; toss to coat.

Spread mixture in oiled pan and cover with foil.

Bake casserole until it is bubbling and squash is tender, about 35 to 45 minutes.

Spoon salsa over casserole, sprinkle with remaining 1 ½ cups cheese.

Return to oven uncovered and bake until golden, 20-25 minutes.

Sprinkle with scallions and red onions, then serve.

Top individual portions with sour cream or yogurt and chopped avocado if desired.

### **Verdolagas Salad**

1 bunch verdolagas

Tomatoes, approx. 1 cup chopped

Cucumber, approx. 1 cup chopped

1 onion, chopped

Juice of a lemon, or 1-2 tablespoons vinegar

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Salt to taste

Make sure to rinse the verdolagas well in several changes of water.

Chop or tear the verdolagas in bite-size pieces.

Toss all the ingredients together in a salad bowl and serve.

### **Quick Honeydew Sorbet**

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

Peel, cut up and freeze your melon and you can have this easy sorbet any time you like.

4 cups frozen honeydew

1-2 cups apple juice

1 handful fresh mint (optional)

Sugar, as desired

Using the pulse button, mix melon and 1 cup apple juice in a food processor or blender. Add more liquid as needed to make a soft sorbet. Add sugar, if needed, and serve immediately.

### **Verdolagas and Walnut Pilaf**

Lorraine Glazar, Tucson CSA

1 small to medium onion, chopped

2 teaspoons oil

1 cup rice

2 cups water, stock or broth

1 share verdolagas, washed and chopped

1/2 cup toasted walnuts

Salt and pepper to taste

Sauté the chopped onion in the oil until golden.

Toss the rice in the pan until it is coated with oil. Add the liquid of choice and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and cook until all liquid is absorbed, 20 minutes to an hour (brown rice will take longer and may require a little more liquid).

When rice is tender, toss in verdolagas and walnuts, season to taste, and serve it forth!

Adapted from a recipe in Sunset Magazine, June 2008 issue.

### **Cucumber and Melon, Pico de Gallo Style**

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

This is a tasty Mexican treat that traditionally uses lots of tropical fruit. I usually just use melons. Cut everything into long strips, roughly the same size, for the best presentation.

1 cucumber, seeds and skin removed

1/2 medium size melon

Juice of 2 limes

Cayenne pepper to taste

Salt

Dress the cucumber and fruit with lime juice, cayenne and salt. Serve immediately.

Editor's note: throw in a handful of chopped purslane sprigs for added zest and crunch!

### **Melon or/and Cucumber Cooler**

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

Perfect as is, or use as a base for cocktails or frozen into popsicles.

1 melon or cucumber (or half of each), peeled, seeded and cut into large chunks

1/2 cup sugar, agave nectar, or honey

1/4 cup lime juice

Juice from one knob grated ginger (optional)

1 bottle sparkling mineral water

Puree all ingredients, except mineral water, in a blender or food processor. Put in a large pitcher with ice cubes and add mineral water. Stir gently and serve.



All recipes from our online recipe archive.