



August 29, 2012 —

Nobody is more aware of the importance of healthy soils than us farmers – we have the dirt of our gardens and farms to thank for all of this pretty produce. Most of us growers know the basics by heart: The soil is alive. Compost is good. Build organic matter. Rotate crops to avoid depleting certain nutrients. And so forth and so on.

However, it is humbling and exciting to realize that there are *volumes* to learn about the soil, much more than the basic tenants of chemical-free soil care. Just a simple soil test will send you delving into an exploration of cation-exchange capacity, pH levels and a host of minerals, each with an interconnected relationship to other aspects of the soil. And that's not even touching on the living stuff.

I listened to an Interview recently from a fellow named Doug Weatherbee – aka the Soil Doctor - who



Digging through microbes at Grassfed Gardens

completely blew my mind. He is a Soil Foodweb Advisor whose work focuses on microbial life in the soil, and how all of those *thousands* of species of microbes are responsible for healthy soils and the vitality of crops. The microbes build organic matter (yes, miniature manure), sequester carbon in their bodies, and give plants the nutrients they need, exactly when they need them. He says that in order to build healthy soil, you feed the microbes first.

The Soil Doctor recommends using a combination of no- or low-till farming methods, carefully constructed compost (no smelly anaerobic piles!) and compost tea for starters. All of these practices support robust, diverse populations of microbes and fungi in the soil, who are ready and waiting to provide crops with the food *they* need in order to produce *our* food. I dig the amount of eating that goes on in these systems.

I also love how this deeper understanding changes the way I think about soil as I work in it. Last week as I was digging potatoes at Grassfed Gardens, I was envisioning the thousands of soil critters that I was pawing through—like a sea of invisible life. One teaspoon of productive soil contains between 100 million and 1 billion bacteria (wow!), all invisible to my eyes, and each playing a role in the growth of our food.

I have to confess, I have a little bit of a geeky crush on the Soil Doctor. If you'll excuse me, I have a batch of compost tea to brew and a fan letter to write...

### Full Share:

- Asian Pears
- Slicer Tomatoes
- Potatoes
- Summer Squash
- Beets
- Sunflower Sprouts
- Arugula
- Spring Mix
- Mesclun Mix
- Green Peppers

### Half Share:

- Asian Pears
- Blackberries
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Jalapenos
- Cucumber
- Carrots
- Basil

### What Grows Where:

#### DAWN GARDENS

basil, summer squash, cherry tomatoes, blackberries, green peppers, slicer tomatoes, beets

#### GRASSFED GARDENS

sunflower sprouts, beets, mesclun mix

#### SIERRA VALLEY FARMS

spring mix, arugula

#### HANSEN FARM

carrots

#### GREEN CEDAR FARM

Asian pears

#### HARMONY ACRES

potatoes

#### GREENVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

green peppers, jalapenos, cucumbers

### Bread Share Flavor:

Fruity nut

**It's Survey Time!** Here's your chance to give us feedback on the season so far. You should have received an e-mail this week with the following link to our online survey:  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3BZCDDT>

# Arugula, Watermelon & Feta Salad

Watermelon + Arugula = Crazy Good. Enough said.

## SALAD INGREDIENTS:

6 cups baby arugula  
12 ounces feta cheese, diced  
1 cup fresh mint leaves, julienned  
1/8th seedless watermelon, cut into cubes

## FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice  
1/4 cup minced shallots  
1/2 cup olive oil

1/4 cup freshly squeezed orange juice  
1 tablespoon honey  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper

## DIRECTIONS

Whisk together the orange juice, lemon juice, shallots, honey, salt, and pepper. Slowly pour in the olive oil, whisking constantly, to form an emulsion. If not using within an hour, store the vinaigrette covered in the refrigerator. Place the arugula, watermelon, feta, and mint in a large bowl. Drizzle with enough vinaigrette to coat the greens lightly and toss well. Taste for seasonings and serve immediately.

Source: [www.foodnetwork.com/recipes](http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes)

## CROP Updates

**Asian Pears** — These beauties are coming from Frank and Sally and Green Cedar Farm, just a few miles outside of the Plumas County line. Asian pears are meant to be eaten when they're crisp and crunchy, kind of like an apple. Yum. This week we're expecting to get a couple different varieties.

**Mesclun Mix** — The baby greens mix of mizuna, kale, pac choy and tat soi (among other greens) in this week's Full Shares is coming from Grassfed Gardens. Add it to spring mix or use it straight up in a hearty salad. This mix can also be used as a cooking green. Try it *lightly* sautéed with toasted sesame oil & parmesan cheese.

**Tomatoes** — As is typical for our mountain region, August is rounding the bend into September, and it's finally tomato season! Our tomatoes

are coming from the Dawn Gardens this week

**Arugula** — The peppery baby green from Sierra Valley Farms in this week's Full Shares is arugula. Normally this is a springtime crop, but Sierra Valley's 5,000 feet of elevation make it possible to grow cool season crops year round. Arugula is great in a salad with fruit (like our Asian pears!), as a pesto, in salad or wilted into pasta with cheese or sauce. Yum!

## EASY Summer Squash Soup

This squash soup is ridiculously easy, and can be served hot or cold. And it's tremendously tasty. There are lots of variations on this dish, but we're going to give you the intuitive no-measuring-required recipe here.

### INGREDIENTS

A bunch of summer squash, diced up  
1 onion, diced  
Spices (cumin seed works well)  
Broth or bouillon cube  
Garlic, minced  
Oil, olive or coconut  
Half & Half or Heavy Whipping Cream (optional)

Heat oil in a soup pan, add onions, garlic and spices. Sauté until translucent. Add summer squash and cook for a 5 to 10 minutes, then add broth (or water and bouillon) and cook until squash is soft. Cool slightly, then blend in blender until smooth. If you're into dairy, add Half & Half or whipping cream to taste. Serve cold, or hot with cheese and croutons sprinkled on top. Yum!

Check out the HAH Facebook page to see:

**How to make Compost Tea (for the soil!)**

[facebook.com/HighAltitudeHarvest](https://www.facebook.com/HighAltitudeHarvest)

## Sautéed Cherry Tomatoes w/ Basil & Garlic

Heat 1/2 Tbsp olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until it just starts to smoke. Add 1 pint cherry tomatoes, and season with salt and pepper. Sauté, shaking pan frequently, until tomatoes soften and skins just begin to wrinkle, about 2 minutes. Stir in 1 clove minced garlic and continue to shake the pan until garlic is fragrant. Off heat, stir in the 1 Tbsp chopped basil and another 1/2 Tbsp olive oil. Serve over pasta or as a colorful side.