Garden Oasis Farm LLC
Owner/Farmer: T.D. Holub
www.gofarmveggies.com
About the Farm: 2013-Present Day

- Est. in 2013 after graduating from University of Iowa.
- Farm’s first garden was about ½ acre
- To date: we produce pastured chickens and vegetables on approximately 10 acres and two high tunnels.
- Supplies a 100 member CSA, New Pioneer Food Coop, Local Restaurants, 2 Farmers Markets, & various small wholesale outlets.
1. Why do we grow Cauliflower?

- CSA & Farmers Markets- Members enjoy a diverse mix of crops
- Cauliflower is trending
  - Substitute for potatoes
  - Meat replacement in vegetarian style dishes
  - Diets
- Restaurants expressing interest in Special varieties (Romanesco, colored types)
2. Seed Selection

- Variety Selection
  - Self-wrapping/self blanching
  - Color
  - Heat Tolerance

- We grow:
  - Snow Crown-Spring, early summer, and fall
    - Turns purplish when stressed
  - Veronica (Romanesco) fall only
  - Graffiti (Purple type) fall only

- Have tried others with mixed results
  - Bishop
  - Denali
  - Amazing

- New “sprouting” variety- Johnny’s
3. Seeding & Transplant

Production

- Soil blocks vs. cell flats
  - 72 ct. Flats
  - Beautiful Land Products #11 and vermiculite
  - Seeded with vacuum seeder

- Start under light in March and April
  - Vigor can be influenced by cold temperatures

- Start in high tunnel most of summer or shop in extremely hot weather

- Hand water as needed, usually daily

- Grown for 3.5-5 weeks and then set out in field
4. Field Preparation

- Step 1. Mow if living cover crop or vegetation
  - Rye-Mow 2-4 weeks before disking
  - Favorite- Winter killed oats, peas with clover and vetch

- Step 2. Spread fertilizer (chicken crumbles)

- Step 3. Disk 1 or 2x

- Step 4. Cultivate with Perfecta

- Step 5. Stale bed for 4-5 weeks, sometimes longer if possible
  - Use Perfecta to shallow cultivate about once every 10-14 days

- Step 6. Prepare bed with one last pass of Perfecta
5. Setting Out

- Hardening off
- Planting too early
  - Poor growth
  - Cabbage Root Maggots
- Planted in field with Waterwheel Transplanter
- 30” between rows, 19” in row
- More space could help reduce disease
- Experimenting with breaking up field blocks to reduce disease and pest pressure
  - Leaving sections of cover crop
  - Planting other non-brassica crops
6. Maintenance

Pests
- Cabbage worms/loopers
  - Dipel
- Flea beetles

Disease
- Black Rot: 2016 season
- Crop Rotation: 3 year brassica rotation
- Plant for harvest during cooler months

Black Rot can destroy all brassica crops
- Thrives in high heat & moisture
- Easily spread from field to field
  - Be careful of the order you cultivate, harvest, etc.
  - when working in these fields and other non-diseased areas
- Clean up after harvest!
- Wash equipment
- Caution farm team
- Foliar applications may help
7. Maintenance Continued

- Cultivation
  - Stale bedding is best line of defense
  - Tine weed 1-2x if possible
  - Cultivate with S-tine cultivator 2-3x
  - Hand weed when needed
    - Collinear or stir-up hoes between plants

- Stale bedding is most difficult in early spring
  - To combat this, plant into a winter killed cover crop
  - Usually plant fall plantings into areas that were rye in the spring after several passes to destroy residue and weed flushes

- May experiment with using sweeps on Williams Tool System Cultivator in 2019
Field Pictures
8. Harvest

- 4” Mini Heads
  - When extreme hot or cold expected
  - 2018- Cauliflower was fine down to 25 degrees

- 5”-7” Full size
  - Achieved in fall

- Don’t allow heads to stay in field through extremely hot periods
  - Yellow or purple heads
  - Decreases taste quality
  - Can lead to “ricey” heads

- Harvest with knives
  - Leave wrapper leaves for protection during field harvest

- Wash as needed in large stock tanks
  - Peel off excess leaves
- Store in cooler for up to 3 weeks
9. After Harvest

- Destroy all harvested crops ASAP
  - Reduces disease and pest pressure

- Our process
  - 1. Mow old crops to reduce surface area
  - 2. Disk and let sit for about 2 weeks
  - 3. Plant a cover crop mix on the area
  - No brassicas here for 3 years

- Again, pay attention to the order you are destroying old crops vs. prepping new beds!
  - Will spread disease if done incorrectly
  - May need to wash equipment if destroying an infected crop
10. Things to Consider

- Keep good records on all crops
  - Planting dates
  - Spray intervals
  - Things out of the ordinary
- We use a large desk calendar and notebook for this!
- Weekly crop walks are critical!
- Sometimes it may be best to just terminate a crop
  - Can help to stop disease, pests
  - Too many weeds-promotes disease, pests
  - If most of crop is unmarketable
- Think about whole farm health, not just one crop
- Consider if your customers will even notice if this crop is missing from CSA or market
Questions?

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