



The Farm at Miller's Crossing

Week of July 13th 2009

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This has been a season of weather extremes. That being said, it seems like every year has some sort of extreme to contend with. The uncharacteristically cool wet weather has been a constant topic for discussion among the growers we know.

After a great start to the season, early planting dates, dodging all of the hail, things looked pretty good for our early tomato crop. The labor input for the tomatoes is done, the plants are on black plastic, staked and trellised and represent an investment of **thousands of dollars**.

All that is left is picking and selling...until now.

You have probably heard about it by now, the ominous term "late blight". It is the same fungus that caused the Irish potato famine in the 1800's, and it continues to haunt farmers today. This spore thrives in cool wet conditions and moves fast and furious once it is established and in the right conditions.

The inoculant is not known, some are blaming big box retailers and the plants that they sold, and others are just accepting it as a result of the weather we have had thus far.

Regardless, it is here, on our farm, and it is not pretty. Right now the worst case scenario is that all of our tomatoes will perish before anything is ripe for harvest. Some plants are covered with the spores, and have already succumbed, while others right next to them seem fine.

Regardless, this is not good. We are now beginning to

reformulate our summer and fall harvest plans without tomatoes.

We will try our best to save what we have—First we will try to remove the infected plants to destroy the fungus hosts, then we will try to spray copper on the plants that are still looking good. Copper is a fungicide that organic growers are allowed to use in these situations, but only certain types of copper. We are desperately seeking some of the correct copper right now, and hope to begin the rouging, removal, and spraying by the end of the week.

The problem is we are flat out busy picking, planting, and weeding. The struggle becomes how much time do you dedicate to a problem like this, which may not have any remedy regardless of how much work is applied to the problem.

Our somewhat cooler temperatures along with the heavy dew and substantial amount of moisture all favor the proliferation of this problem, which can also spread into our potato crop.

All of this has been very difficult for Katie and I to accept, but it is the reality none the less. We will keep you all posted, and will do our best to save what we can. Enjoy the share, Chris

