



## What's up in the Ohlsen Family Food Garden?

by  
Grant E. M. Matheke

The Ohlsen Family Food Garden looked a lot different during the summer of 2011. Most of the plots were planted in annual ryegrass to act as a green manure to improve tilth and fertility. This change was necessitated by the loss of our greenhouse and funding cuts to the Garden. However, we did manage to sneak in a few trials and new plants that we could direct seed and thus required little, if any, greenhouse space.

We had a nice, warm May, and I was able to plant some sweet corn under IRT mulch on 8 May just before I left for my 50th high school reunion. Even with the seemingly endless rain this season, it was a pretty good year for corn. We had enough heat and sunshine between the raindrops plus the early seeding date to give us good, early yields. For the first time in the many years of trials, we had a full harvest of 'Seneca Horizon'. We have never had any ears mature before, and we were able to harvest (and enjoy) corn for most of August. As usual, the earliest cultivar to mature was 'Yukon Chief', bred locally by former Agricultural Experiment Station Horticulturist, Arvo Kallio, followed by 'Earlivee', 'Aladdin' and finally 'Seneca Horizon'.

We also tried something new in the planters built by UAF employee, Wanda Tangerman. Conventional wisdom has always been that summers were too short here to grow pole beans successfully outdoors in ground beds. If a gardener wants a good yield from pole beans, they need to be grown in a greenhouse. We ordered eight cultivars from Johnny's and Stokes Seeds (Table 1). We germinated the pole beans in a nice warm greenhouse (minimum night temperature 65°F, 1 week) and then transplanted them in the planter boxes after the danger of frost had passed on 1 June. We harvested beans from seven of the eight cultivars. Unfortunately, someone stole all the labels and we were not familiar enough with the cultivars, so we couldn't tell them apart. Next season we will map the location of all the cultivars and planter boxes. [We would love to have a surprise in the garden for the person who pulled our labels, but the University legal department would not like us very much]. The cultivar that didn't grow well was the Yard Long pole bean, 'Red Noodle'. It is an entirely different genus of tropical origin, and it shriveled and turned yellow after the first slightly chilly night.



Table 1. List of pole beans grown in containers. Because visitors helped themselves to the beans a little too much, we did not gather yield data but simply recorded the fact that they matured.

Common Name	Cultivar	Species	Source
Bean, Pole	Fortex	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Bean, Pole	Marvel of Venice	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Bean, Yard Long Pole	Red Noodle	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>	Johnny's Selected Seeds
Bean, Pole	Garden of Eden	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	Stokes Seeds
Bean, Pole	Kentucky Wonder Wax	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	Stokes Seeds
Bean, Pole	Blue Lake	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	Stokes Seeds
Bean, Pole	Kentucky Wonder Green	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	Stokes Seeds
Bean, Pole	Emerite	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	Stokes Seeds

Last year, we used a solar collector designed for warming swimming pools to warm our drip irrigation water. We found that the solar heater warmed the soil after irrigating but didn't improve the yield of tomatoes. Since we were growing them under IRT mulch we thought maybe the soil warming effect of the mulch masked the contribution of the solar collector. This past summer we used the solar heated water on 'Provider' snap beans without



any mulch, but we still didn't get any increase in yield. Plants grown with heated irrigation water yielded an average of 0.28 pounds per foot of row, while the yield of unheated control was 0.34 pounds per foot of row. I think this time it might have been because we had sufficient rain that we hardly ever irrigated the trial plots.

We conducted cultivar trials for Denali Seed Co. I have been extolling the qualities of 'Cube of Butter' Summer Squash or Zucchini (it is classified as both in different seed catalogs) but I could not recommend 'Solar Flare' (Table 2). Denali Seed is looking for new spinach cultivars since seed for 'Melody', the standard bolt resistant variety for the interior, is no longer being produced. 'Melody' and 'Early Hybrid #7' were the most bolt resistant and attractive looking of all four spinach cultivars tested. 'Crimson Forest' bunching onion did not do very well but it is a very attractive plant. If you have some extra space in your garden it might be worth a try. 'Goodman' and 'Igloo' both were nice mid-large cauliflowers.



Zucchini 'Cube of Butter' - photo courtesy of <http://www.dorsingseeds.com>

Table 2. Cultivar evaluations from Denali Seed Company

Type	Cultivar	Yield (lb per foot of row)
Yellow Zucchini	Cube of Butter	13.0
	Solar Flare	1.8
Spinach	Early Hybrid #7	1.22
	Renegade	1.01
	Melody	0.93
	Space	0.87
Bunching Onion	Crimson Forest	0.08
	Evergreen Bunching	0.23
	Parade	0.29
Cauliflower	Goodman	1.35
	Igloo	1.25

Originally published in Geogeson Botanical Garden  
Review Vol. 20, No. 2, 2011

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