

It is raining. We have seen so little rain this whole spring/early summer that it draws my eyes to the west window where I have a view of the coming shower. When the woods behind the Amish metal business a mile or so to the southwest and Hardwood Hill straight west of us look gray, then white, we know that a shower is on the way. And, for the first time this season, it looks like we will have a substantial amount of moisture.

The small showers scattered here and there over our area the past couple of weeks have brought about a big change in the garden. Many of the vegetable seeds had not come up at all, and virtually none of the seedlings had emerged from the soil in the usual time. This morning, though, before the rain, we were working in the garden, and even the carrots I had nearly given up on were beginning to show themselves.

The garden is less than a quarter of an acre in size and yet, that small area is the most valuable land on the farm. Why? Because it feeds us and provides excess for the pigs and chickens.

This year, once again, we have suffered some losses due to other residents of Coe Creek Farm. The live trap has captured three woodchucks so far. Those resourceful animals had not bothered the garden this year until a few days ago when we saw that many cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower plants had been nipped off, some losing every leaf.

So, we borrowed a live trap again and baited it with fresh cabbage leaves. So far, today, we have not enticed a fourth animal to the trap. Last year, we caught five woodchucks and one raccoon in just a few days.

Colorado potato beetles and their eggs and larvae are about the only things we kill in the garden during the early summer. And that is done manually, usually between the thumb and middle finger, at least in the method I use. Later in the summer we eliminate tomato hornworms as well. But the woodchucks and raccoons are just forcibly moved to a location far from gardens.

We always like to try a crop or two new to us. The short bed of Kabouli garbanzo beans is just beginning to bloom. Tiny, purplish flowers that look like pea blooms are coming out. The foliage is frothy and delicate looking, but very hardy. If these black chickpeas have time in our climate to make a crop, it will be fun to try them out.

The early tomatoes have lots of fruits on them, and the peppers in the greenhouse are big enough to eat. I haven't picked many, because I am waiting for those that are colored other than green to show their ripe hues. Little purple aubergine fruits are hanging under the sheltering leaves of those plants, too.

Lettuce is plentiful, and it is crisp, fresh, and delicious. Beet greens are ready to use, and kale and chard are also big enough to eat now. The snap peas, too, though we don't have many, produce enough for a fresh snack when we are working in the garden.

So, we eat the offerings of each season, never growing tired to what we coax into production in our own garden. And, a little competition from woodchucks can be handled.