

Report from the Field

I promise, last picture of tomato hornworms (this year). We just found this one in the last week. In addition to being covered with cocoons, we saw parasitic wasp larvae emerging! An adult parasitic wasp lays its eggs inside the tomato hornworm, the wasp larvae grow and feed inside the worm, then crawl out to cocoon and turn into adults. The tomato hornworm soon dies. The picture shows a wasp larva just emerging (circled in red); it will then spin its cocoon and remain attached to the tomato hornworm until the adult wasp is ready to emerge out of the cocoon and fly away.



As discussed a few weeks ago, now is the time for covercrops. Since mid-August we have been planting a covercrop as soon as a cash crop is finished. The picture shows our covercrop mix starting to thrive. Cover crops benefit the soil in multiple ways: field peas are grown to provide nitrogen in the fall; winter rye and annual ryegrass have deep root systems and bring up nutrients from the subsoil; clover and hairy vetch fix nitrogen in the soil in the spring. These covercrops are all grown together in a mutually symbiotic relationship.



All the potatoes were dug last week. To our delight, the cats have done their job very well. We suffered no rodent damage this year, whereas in past years we have lost up to 50% of the crop due to mice and voles. We are very happy to have potatoes in our diet again, bon appetit!



This year we've done a quite a bit of food preservation which will sustain us through the winter months: we've canned tomato sauce and pickles; dehydrated cherry tomatoes and apples; and froze strawberries, raspberries, peaches, beans, and red peppers. We also grew dried beans (in the photo) and grain corn for grinding into corn flour. The beautiful amaranth plants (photo) also yielded us a small amount of grain, a highly nutritious food our children like to have in their breakfast cereal. Now all we need is a cow!

