

Tomato Explosion

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Watering takes an hour at a whack and there's so much semi-wild arrugula that I can't pick it all.

The pumpkins have already smothered the foot tall corn planted three feet away and the beans seem to grow about six inches every day.

Just last week I was still in nurturing mode, carefully coddling the little plants in tidy rows and pulling up the little weeds underneath while crossing my fingers and hoping that nothing untoward like a freak hailstorm or some disease or pest outbreak would visit this year.

This week my tidy rows have been notably eroded, and I'm resigned to the fact that I just have to stand back and stay out of the way now.

My control is gone, and the plants and weeds will grow wherever they want. Everything seems to be crowding its neighbors and I had to rip up a bunch more of the precious red poppies to make room for the trombette squash. It's no longer possible to walk among the bean poles and the zucchini planted three feet apart have filled in the spaces.

This is the end of lettuce season though.

The last half dozen heads are huddled in a corner behind the cherry tomatoes and aren't getting any direct sun now, which is okay, because they'll remain crunchy slightly longer in the shade, but the long day lengths push them to seed, so their days are numbered anyhow.

The most noticeable change is definitely the tomatoes.

What seemed like nice well-behaved juveniles last week have turned into surly young adults who are throwing out thick new shoots all over the place and showing large quantities flowers and green fruit.

All twenty four staked tomatoes needed to be re-tied three times since last Saturday, and the dozen cascading Datterini plants are smothering the flowers growing on the wall below.

The photo this week is of one of the cascading datterini.

This is a Sicilian variety, like a cherry tomato, but with a pointed end. Sometimes people hang clusters of these fruits for a week or longer after harvesting to make them softer and more flavorful, which is better for cooking uses.

Sometimes in the markets, "aged" datterini are sold. At our house we don't always cook the datterini, and more frequently use them in salads.

There is a reason why tomatoes are by far the most frequently cultivated of all vegetables, and it isn't just that they are so tasty.

Fairly frequently, over the course of the years, the tomatoes in just about anyone's gardens explode with an exuberance of growth that is amazing. Ten feet tall plants are everyday events and every year somebody plants a tomato on a compost pile and stands back as the monster grows to thirty feet in length.

Even we mortals manage regularly to cultivate tomato plants that are quite emotionally satisfying. Being connected with such an impressive demonstration of the wonders of plant growth is good for our soul.

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