

Version:1.0 StartHTML:0000000181 EndHTML:0000002922 StartFragment:0000002362
EndFragment:0000002886
SourceURL:file:///localhost/Users/computer/Desktop/obits/barefootfarmer.doc

There has been a lot of hoeing going on around here. Miles of rows have been planted, and the inevitable weeds are sprouting along with the crops. It is important to loosen up the earth next to the emerging seedlings so they can breathe.

Short chipping motions cut the soil up and a quick pull though the chipped soil shatters the small clumps. I like it a little moist so the penetration is easier, but it can't be wet because it will form clods rather than break apart.

Version:1.0 StartHTML:0000000181 EndHTML:0000004766 StartFragment:0000002366
EndFragment:0000004730
SourceURL:file:///localhost/Users/computer/Desktop/obits/barefootfarmer.doc

We want our crop to be able to send their roots wherever they want to go. That's why I love to plow deeply, sticking the shanks in as far as I can get them in. the chisel plow can till a foot deep but does not invert the soil like a mold board plow does. This keeps the subsoil down where it belongs, but opens it up for the roots to get in.

Hoeing is just a tickling of the soil surface, like a light massage. The first time though we pull the dirt away from the little plants. We have to get all of the green out; the small grass really wants to recover the newly bared earth. Nature abhors a vacuum and tries to hide her nakedness with a green dress. We will give her one, but it will be one of our own choice.

Crops like beets grow thickly in the row and we can only hoe the sides. But most of the crops like a bit of elbow room, so we stroke the hoe between them in the row. Leaving the soil surface uneven is helpful, because the hoe goes in easier than if it's perfectly flat. The undulations create more movement, as gravity rolls the dirt, so more weeds get disturbed. The tiny hills and valleys also allow more soil surface to have access to the air.

Air is composed of nitrogen, oxygen and small percentage of carbon dioxide and water vapor. Plants turn these into sugar, starches, carbohydrates and protein. We want the crops to have all the air they need. So after every rain, which seals and flattens the soil surface, we rough it up again.

Hoeing

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

I try to keep my back straight and shift my weight around, using both sides of my body. Alternating long and short strokes releases tension which can build up at the sky, and sitting down with the plants also break up the monotony of being a hoeing machine.

Stepping on hoed ground defeats the purpose. Every step plants weeds because it firms the soil, so then the weeds sprout, and also compacts it, hindering the air flows. Not walking in the garden is a hard lesson to learn. The word "garden" implies a place to walk, but that would be on a path in a more formal flower garden. Our gardens are actually cropland and once they are hoed and fluffed up we stay off. We're usually pretty tired by then anyway.