



# WHAT'S FRESH

A NEWSLETTER TO CONNECT LOCAL GROWERS AND CONSUMERS

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## TOUR SHOWCASES

### SOLAR ENERGY OPTION

The Illinois Solar Tour will be participating in a national Solar Tour hosted by the American Solar Energy Society. On October 2 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. people all over the United States will be exploring and learning about renewable energy systems. Homeowners and businesses across the state will be welcoming visitors to explore how to use renewable energy systems to reduce utility bills while minimizing the environmental impact of their buildings. This is a self-guided tour. Guidebooks contain all the necessary information. Visit <http://tour.illinoisolar.org/> for more information.



### PROGRAM ANSWERS POULTRY QUESTIONS

On Sunday, September 12, CSC will offer a workshop on Chickenomics. They will examine several chicken operations, some for personal use, others for market. CSC's chicken cooperative will be hosted by Ed Homeier; the organic market operation of Mint Creek Farm will be hosted by Tucker Rogers; and the Dickmans' commercial grass-fed poultry operation will be shown by Joann Dickman. Participants will need to provide their own transportation to both the Dickmans' and to the Bed & Breakfast, or we can carpool; we'll be walking between the other two.

There will be an optional tour of Stelle at 10:30 a.m. for an additional \$10; a lunch, featuring locally grown and organic food, will also be available for \$10. Lunch will be served at noon, followed by the Chickenomics workshop at 1:00. Cost of the workshop is \$40. For more information or to sign up for the event go to <http://centerforsustainablecommunity.org/Events.html>



## HONEY GIRL HONEY

### Fulton, Illinois

Abby Koch was born into beekeeping. Her father, Steve Koch, has an operation of 500 hives in and around Toledo, Iowa. Abby, aka HoneyGirl, helped her father with his business for over 25 years. It was on a trip to California in 2007 to buy bees that Abby discovered her own passion and decided to break out and begin her own apiaries. Hives full of honey during the harvest can be quite heavy so Abby made modifications to what she'd learned helping her father and began using the eight frame equipment instead of the usual ten frame. This makes her hives lighter and differentiates her equipment from her father's. Abby also made the decision to use small cell foundation in her frames in an effort to control pests such as mites. Abby's fiancé has become her helper in this venture.

Abby's philosophy is to try to keep chemically free. She has a total of fifty hives spread out in five bee yards. The farmers that she works with are also conscious of the need to protect the bees from spraying, but there have been times when Abby has had what were strong colonies fail because of spraying in neighboring fields. Abby states that beekeeping is a balancing act between nature and man's actions. She sees her job as a beekeeper as giving a gift to the local ecosystem. Her farmers appreciate having bees on their land to help with pollination. Abby provides them with honey from her

first harvest as a bonus.

When not beekeeping Abby teaches high school math at Prince of Peace College Prep in Clinton, Iowa. Whenever possible, she incorporates lessons learned from her beekeeping experience into lesson plans. Abby's undergraduate degree is from Western Illinois University and her Master's was completed through Western's programming through The Quad Cities Graduate Center. Abby values education and has recently been able to teach younger children about bees at the Discovery Center in Clinton.

As a beekeeper, Abby is very busy during the growing season tending and harvesting her hives. She has also begun to raise her own queen bees. As the season wears down, she feeds bees and prepares her hives for winter. Wintering over is a challenge for all beekeepers as so much is dependent on the weather and the strength of the hive. Spare time during the winter is spent tending equipment, painting hives, and making

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**NEWS ARTICLES**

Do you have something that might be helpful to other growers or of interest to our consumers? Please submit your articles and ideas to Phil Crandall or Myra Roelens.

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**COOKING**

# Honey BBQ Marinade



- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/2 cup onion diced
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove diced
- pinch salt/pepper
- 2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 can tomato sauce (8oz)
- 1/4 tbsp black pepper
- 1/8 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp dry mustard
- 2 lbs chicken

Combine all ingredients except chicken in a skillet on stove. Bring to boil, turn down to simmer and add chicken. Cook 20 minutes or until done.

## Update from Rhonda's Garden

The blackberries have been wonderful this year. I wish I could say the same for the gourd production!

I hand pollinated all 6 female flowers that I found! The ratio of female to male flowers this year was about 1:99! Great odds for males, not so good for gourd production. I have included a picture of one of the fine female flowers that I did locate and hand pollinate. I will share a picture of the final gourd product in October!

Hope you have all had a productive summer and prolific garden. I cannot believe that it is the middle of August and time to begin to prepare some beds for winter, again! Happy gardening! **Rhonda**



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frames for the next year. Throughout the year, Abby is processing her harvest for sale. She has a solar melter that separates out the beeswax. She then pours the beeswax into block molds. The honey is processed by using a heated knife to uncap the wax that covers the foundation cells. The frames are then put into an extractor and spun until the honey is extracted from the frame. The next step is filtering, pouring the honey into the containers for sale and labeling. Abby's honey is available on line at [www.honeygirl-honey.com](http://www.honeygirl-honey.com), at the meat market in Fulton, at the Clinton health food store, Julie's Café in Albany, and at

the flea market between Fulton and Albany.

Abby states that her father has a wealth of information for her to rely on. He has been beekeeping since the '70s. She enjoys the personal relationship with nature and the crop she produces with her bees. There is a joy for her each spring seeing the queen busy laying eggs and the worker bees gathering pollen. Beekeeping is a continual learning experience and Abby's advice for anyone interested in starting out in beekeeping is that it is one thing to buy honey at the store and quite another to raise it. Beekeeping has changed her way of thinking and has brought her its own set of rewards.

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