

Annie's Gardens and Greens

30975 Lincoln Road
Fort Atkinson, IA 52144

Phone: 800-644-7245

Fax: 563-534-7652

E-mail:

postmaster@anniesgardensandgreens.com

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We're on the web

www.anniesgardensandgreens.com

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It's not your ordinary greenhouse!

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Annie's Gardens and Greens Newsletter

Sugar Substitutes: Natural Sweeteners

January is notorious for dieting. The majority of the population will say how after the holidays they will begin that new diet.

Trying to loose weight doesn't always mean cutting out the sweets as much as it means watching what you eat and how much. Here are a few natural sweeteners you may want to watch for and possibly use in your diet.

Agave Nectar

Agave is a juice or syrup made from the sap of a succulent plant native to Mexico. The leaves of the plant produce a liquid call "honey water" which resembles honey, only sweeter, thinner and has a low glycemic index, pos-

sibly due to the presence of inulin, a natural soluble fiber.

When using agave in recipes, use 1/4 to 1/3 cup of agave syrup for each cup of sugar. In baking, reduce liquid to recipes by two tablespoons for each 1/4 cup of agave liquid used.

Date Sugar Crystals

This is made by drying dates and then grinding them into a powder. Dates are 60% sugar. The crystals contain the same nutrients as dates, and this includes the fiber, potassium, B vitamins, calcium, magnesium, phenols and the carotenoids lutein, zeaxanthin and beta-carotene. However, it is highly unlikely to use enough of it as a



"Dates are 60% sugar"

sweetener to actually get that much nutrition. Besides, it costs about \$15.00 a pound.

Date sugar crystals can be sprinkled on food or added to beverages. When baking, use two cups of crystals to replace one cup of sugar.

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Special points of interest:

- **New Hours for GreenGrocery!**
- **Check out February's issue on how the cold frame faired this winter.**
- **Greenhouse opens April 1st.**

Reflecting Upon the Past

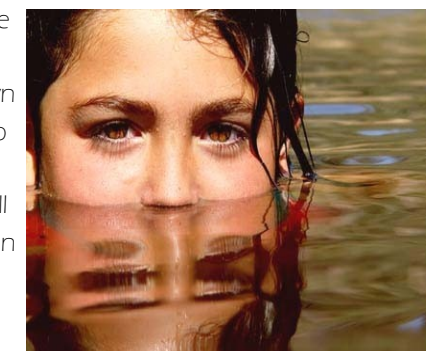
While cleaning out some really old files I was taken back in time and once again sat to reflect upon my life and how I have moved forward with it. It is funny how you can finger through old papers and still have a wide range of emotions or how so many memories come flooding back into your head. When I look back, I have to say that I am proud of myself for how far I have come over the course of 15 years in this business. It has been a trip, with many low valleys, some hills, along with meeting some wonderful individuals who have touched my life in many ways.

Fifteen years and here we are in 2010!

I started out with this awesome dream of creating a Community Shared Agriculture right in our own backyard, so I could stay at home with the kids and do what I love. Gardening! It took me thirteen years to

get the CSA off of the ground. Today, the children are all grown and we are now into our 2nd season of Winter CSA's and will begin our 2nd season of Summer CSA's in June. There are 2 greenhouses and 1 cold frame, a road side stand, and the store in Calmar, IA. Now if I could just have my own desk to sit at to keep all of this stuff organized! That would be an accomplishment.

2010 finds us in a planning mode as we begin this new growing season. In just a few weeks we will begin planting. And hopefully starting back up in the cold frame. It is my intentions to get one more greenhouse erected this year, so we have more selling space and use the small greenhouse to grow out of. We are looking forward to having children's workshops again, along with the tea and grilling workshops. The



"...once again sat to reflect upon my life and how I have moved forward with it."

shop in Calmar has so many potentials and we are just beginning to look into processing vegetables and how we can pass this on to the consumer.

The store is now open 3 days a week and we will continue this throughout the year. It will be a challenge to see how we juggle the store, the greenhouse, the road side stand, the workshops, CSA deliveries, and just the every day maintenance of the gardens once we are in full swing.

Looking forward to a great season! See you soon!

Ann

2010 HERB OF THE YEAR: DILL

Dill (*Anethum graveolens*) is an annual that grows in rich, well drained soils. It grows very well from seed and doesn't necessarily need to be transplanted. The plant will grow up to 2 to 2 1/2 foot tall and produces a fern like leaf that can be collected and used in many dishes. This is called dill weed. When the plant is allowed to grow to maturity, it will produce a flower head and eventually produce



Dill heads like this are used for making dill pickles.

seed. The flower heads when they are

just putting on seed and have not quite dried out are what many people use for making dill pickles. Otherwise, you can wait and allow the seeds to dry on the flower heads and then collect the seed. The seeds are also used in many dishes.

Watch for February's issue as we continue with more information on dill and some mouth watering recipes.

Sugar Substitutes: Natural Sweeteners

Honey

Honey comes in different colors depending upon where the bees were gathering nectar from. Light-colored Honey is usually mild flavor and dark-colored honeys are more robust and contain more antioxidants. It has been proven through research that honey can enhance the growth, activity and viability of the friendly bacteria found in fermented dairy products like yogurt. To use honey when baking, substitute it for up to half the sugar. Use 3/4 cup of honey for each cup of sugar.

Maple Syrup

It takes about 40 gallons of sap to pro-

duce one gallon of syrup. Real maple syrup contains minerals and phytonutrients like phenols and flavonoids with anticancer properties. To substitute in place of sugar, use 3/4 cup to 1 1/4 cup maple syrup for each cup of sugar. Molasses Once sugar cane or sugar beets have been processed into granulated sugar, the syrup that remains is known as molasses. This syrup is boiled three times to produce three types of molasses. The first produces light molasses for the mildest and sweetest flavor; the second produces dark molasses, which is less sweet with a more pronounced flavor and the

"Molasses, honey and maple syrup are better nutrition bets than white sugar and corn syrup, which provide no nutrients at all"

third produces blackstrap molasses. This is the darkest, least sweet and most pungent in flavor. It also is the only sweetener that provides respectable amounts of nutrients, including calcium, iron, potassium and the trace minerals magnesium, selenium and manganese. In baking, 3/4 cup molasses substitutes for one cup sugar. Give these natural sweeteners a try over granulated sugar or high-fructose corn syrup.

Annie's definition for "Growing Natural"

We all hear the term "Grown naturally", all of the time, but what does it mean?

At Annie's, when I tell you that our produce and herbs are grown naturally, it means that we do not use Miracle Grow or any other fertilizer to enhance the growth of our plants. We also do not use any chemicals or herbicides on our products.

Our edible plants are potted with organic soil mix and compost. The compost continues to be absorbed by the plant while the plant is in the pot and we do not have to feed it on a regular basis.

For those pests that may inhibit some of our plants, we have to pick them off by hand, remove the infected plants from the prem-

ises, or wash them with liquid dish soap and water.

We work very hard to build up the soil naturally and do companion planting to keep a natural eco system going on our farm.



New Year, New Hours

Annie's GreenGrocery saw quite a few people coming through the door for the month of December. It was fun to have Jessie Bushman with the Scentsy, Marianne Carolan with Fingers and Toes (Fox River products). The Cookie Buffet was a lot of work, but it was also fun to have everyone come in and "wow" at all of the variety of cookies, bars, and candies we had. This is some-

thing we will definitely do next year. Now that we have gotten settled in more, we will be extending our hours. Beginning in 2010 our new hours are as follows:

Thursdays— Noon to 6 pm

Fridays— 9 am to 6 pm

Saturdays— 9 am to 2 pm



Stop by Annie's GreenGrocery and check out our fresh produce from local growers.

Hashimoto's Thyroiditis... What?

Recently I went into the doctor to have some things checked out. This led to doing blood work. For the most part, I am in good health, except for something called Hashimoto's Thyroiditis. I would not be surprised if you have never heard of it. It is not a test that is ran all of the time, but it may be worth looking into.

Hashimoto's Thyroiditis is a disease that goes unnoticed for years and will cause chronic thyroid damage before you even realize that you have it. Your thyroid is a small gland located below your Adam's apple, located at the base of the neck. Your thyroid produces hormones that coordinate with many of your bodies activities. With this disease your immune system attacks your thyroid. Inflammation of the thyroid then leads to under activity of the gland.

Symptoms of the disease are:

- Fatigue and sluggishness
- Increase sensitivity to the cold
- Constipation

- Pale, dry skin
- Puffy face
- Hoarse voice
- Elevated cholesterol levels
- Unexplained weight gain— about 10 to 20 lbs, and usually in the form of retaining water
- Muscle tenderness and aching, mostly in the hips and shoulders
- Pain and stiffness in your joints, swelling in the knees, or small joints of your hands and feet
- Muscle weakness, especially in the lower extremities
- Excessive or prolonged menstrual bleeding
- Depression

Without treatment the thyroid will become larger and the symptoms more severe. In addition you become more

forgetful and your thought process is slower, or you may feel depressed.

It is unknown what actually causes the body to attack your thyroid. There are scientists who believe it is a virus or bacterium that triggers this flaw, while

"Hashimoto's Thyroiditis is a disease that goes unnoticed for years and will cause chronic thyroid damage before you even realize that you have it."

others believe it is genetic.

There are drugs one can take and that is something for you and your doctor to decide. At this time, I am having mine monitored by going in every three months for blood work. I also have some supplements that I am taking and monitoring to see if this helps with any of my symptoms. For now, I figure I have finally found out why I am so tired and feel run down, besides always being forgetful.