

2011 BEAN REPORT from HARRY MACCORMACK SUNBOW FARM, Corvallis, OR

CLIMATE: Do to climate change (our second long-cool-Spring-Summer) dry beans were planted about three weeks to one month later than they were at the beginning of the project five seasons ago. Beans planted the first week of May didn't emerge until a few days ahead of beans planted the third week of May. The early May beans struggled through out the season and did not produce as well as in the past. The exception was of course Fava's that thrived with heavy production in the cool, wet, weather. An experimental February planting of Garbanzo's also did three times better than our May planting.

CULTIVATION and FERTILIZATION: All beans were planted on 24 inch centers. (we used to plant on 18 inch centers) This allowed for two cultivations with a Honda FG110 cultivator tiller. The tines on this tiller allow us to remove weeds right next to the plant. This was an essential step in a damp season, especially on previous vegetable ground, but even on previous grain ground.

In the first week after emergence a foliar spray of compost tea with fish and kelp sped up growth. Ten days later a second application helped the plants catch-up to where they would be in a more "normal" seasonal pattern. Some of the beans received a third spray ten days later. I noticed very rapid plant/leaf growth and the plants were setting pods during this growth spurt, as if the pod setting was timed to shorter hours of sunlight even though plants hadn't reached their maximum stance. Some of the bigger plants put on very large beans. What amazed me was that all the beans seemed in a rush as early August came, setting beans, and beginning dry down within a few days. Dry down was very

rapid. The process was finished on all varieties before September first. Dry down was more even on some varieties than others. But it was usually the pod not the bean that was visually uneven.

I am convinced that as with grapes, compost tea speeds up the growth, fruiting, and drying processes in dry beans. We had one irrigated patch that took a day or two longer to dry than our dry land beans. I'm certain that compost tea with fish and kelp added after brewing is essential to timely production of dry beans in Western Oregon. After September first rains began, and mornings were heavy with dew.

HARVEST: All beans in this homestead scale operation were pulled by hand. Luckily we had a few helpers. Beans were placed on tarps in the field. The problem with this fairly fast process is that some soil sticks to the roots, even when you are careful to shake it off. This dried soil made it through our threshing and cleaning equipment as tiny aggregates. We don't have adequate screens to get all of it out.

This year we attempted to use our old John Deer 40 combine to thresh. According to the book we should be able to do it. We threshed A2R's garbanzos with some splitting. But, field peas, pintos and Indian woman showed about 30% splits.

At that point we stopped and threshed with our small, converted hammer-mill. This is a much slower process, but I was doing it alone, the weather was wet, so I couldn't do the "tarp dance" which we've done when we have a lot of people to help. Almost no splitting occurred using the hammer-mill. The splits were either incorporated into the cleaned beans or were separated for soup.

On a small commercial scale I would say that we need a tool that pulls bean plants and windrows them. We also need a small thresher that can move in the field for threshing without splitting. We're looking.

VARITIES AND YIELDS

FAVA (Windsor grown at Sunbow for over 25 yeas) 2/9/11, 10 rows each 80 ft. long. 175.25 lbs dry, (@2100 lbs. per acre) over 50 lbs harvested green for fresh sales, shattering at harvest leaving a very nice 2012 winter-over cover crop which will be green harvested, tilled in ahead of corn. I like the intense Fava flavor for humus and all kinds of dishes.

PINTO – 5/5/11, 1st planting experiment on a field that had Pintos in 2010, leaf mulch in fall 2010. Spaded May 3. Very fast emergence and large plants. 13 rows, 100 ft long; 63.25 lbs of beans plus 5.75 lbs splits. (@ 1200 lbs. per acre)Probably 2 lbs of splits lost in harvesting. And some field shattered beans on ground with harvest. Our Pintos are acclimated here since 2005. They always have a flavor much richer than Pintos in the market. A second Pinto planting was done 5/23/11 on a former grain/ leaves section. 3 rows, 100 ft. long, yielded 14.75 pounds. This planting resulted in slightly smaller beans.

ADINO RED – 5/23/11 from seed grown out here in 2010. 5 rows yielded 34 lbs. from 2.25 lbs of seed.(@ 714 lbs. per acre) Large plants. Pretty even dry-down compared to irregular last year. We really like the taste of these beans.

PER REGION (Oregon Heirloom) – 5/23/11. 5 rows from 1.25 lbs. seed grown here in 2010. Yield 19 lbs.(@ 664 lbs per acre) Better, more even dry down than last year. A white to grey bean with unique to each bean, very curious, black

scraggly type marks. Appears promiscuous: Evidence of crossing with many near by varieties. Not yet taste tested.

INDIAN WOMAN- 5/21/11, 2 rows front field irrigated; 5/23/11, 4 rows dry farmed backfield. Appeared little difference in stature, dry down or yield between two plantings. From seed grown here 2010: Large, heavily-loaded plants. 56.50 lbs. yield.(@ 990 lbs. per acre) Yellow color disappeared on cooking. Really good, somewhat unique bean flavor.

RED CHILE – 5/11/11, 10 rows in very wet soil. Poor emergence : Very small plants. From our seed saved for 5 seasons. Yield 25.50 lbs.(@267 lbs. per acre) Appears to require warmer soil for optimum size and yield. Still one of our best tasting beans.

BLACK-5/11/11–10 rows. Yield only 8.50 lbs.(@ 236 lbs. per acre) From our seed saved for 5 seasons. We've always had much better yields. It didn't like the season or the wet soil planting.

COCO BLACK- 5/23/11, 2 rows from 1.5 lbs of seed grown here last year. Yield 4.5 lbs. Very small plants, beans so large they do not fit through our normal bean screen. Split easily. Two years of trials is enough on this bean.

BUCKSKIN- 5/23/11, 2 rows from 1.5 lbs. of seed grown here. Looks like Indian Woman, a little tanner. Much smaller plants and half the yield. Also not one we will trial again.

BRIGHTSTONE – 5/23/11, 2 rows from 1.5 lbs. of seed grown here last year. Very pretty silver gray, kidney shape, with markings. 10 lbs. (@ 525 lbs. per acre) Not taste tested.

GOLDEN DRAGON CHICK PEAS – 5/11/11, 2 rows; 5/23/11, 2 rows. Emerged and grew faster in second planting. This pea came from India and is a favorite in their cooking. It is said to give one the power of the dragon. Nice sized plants loaded with pods and one to two peas per pod. At harvest we found mice and voles eating them while they were standing. They continued eating them, and no other bean or pea as they were on tarps. They ate all of them. So we now have mice/voles with the power of dragons.

WHISTLER PEAS- 11/10 , an overwintering edible pea. Giant plants when mature. We lost a lot of young ones to geese who ate them to the ground. Heavy yielder. There was some infestation of pea weevils that I haven't seen on this farm in 25 years. Yield on what was left: 17.5 lbs. splits, 10 lbs. whole, planted out as seed for 2012. Flavor is really good in soups and stir fries.

CONCLUSION: Growing beans for home cooking or limited small farm sales is fun, challenging, and time consuming in the Willamette Valley in a wet year. As one who eats beans about five days a week, I think it is worth it. Can we do it on a commercial scale? Perhaps. It would depend on equipment and special farmer attention to practices such as timely cultivation and fertilization. Varieties with unique flavors may be important for sales and in creation of a very local cuisine. They are certainly important to me.