

newton
community
farm  *The* **Newton
Farmer**
e-newsletter

This is the last farm newsletter this year, and I don't know how we got to the fall so fast. It seems that we were starting the farm season just a little while ago, and now we are turning off the outside spigots on our house and making sure all the storm windows are down. I wish you all a crisp fall and a winter full of cozy, seasonal delights.

Susan Tornheim, Newsletter Editor

From the Farmer

September marked the one-year anniversary of my family's return to living on the farm after our travels in the South Pacific. November marks the one-year anniversary of my being back working as the farm manager at NCF. Part of me can't believe it has already been a year; another part feels like I never went away. But I was away, and it's good to be back. I've enjoyed seeing the farm again as it progresses through a season, and it's been wonderful to reconnect with so many of you and share pieces of our year away.



The University of Massachusetts extension service named 2013 one of the worst farming years in recent history. Unseasonably warm weather in the early spring, followed by torrential rain and floods, followed by a very hot, humid early summer, followed by heavy rains, followed by more heat and humidity, then more rain, and finally a frost in the early part of October made this a year of extremes. It wasn't any one particular thing that made this a challenging season. It was the variability and unpredictability. It was trying to farm when nature never gave us a moment's rest that was difficult. It may very well have been a taste of what farming will be like from now on.

Yet somehow, despite the flooding and baking and drought and frost, we managed to have a good season. Only one of our three tomato plantings went in on time, and it was the only one that really produced much. But boy, did it produce! We had problems with carrots refusing to germinate, lettuce refusing to germinate (neither likes hot weather), weeds out-competing our mesclun, and on and on. But despite it all we had an incredible harvest. A visit to the farm this fall would reveal a field still surprisingly full. We should once again be able to keep the farm stand open through the Tuesday before Thanksgiving when we traditionally have an end-of-season blowout to help everyone get ready for the holidays.

It can be pretty humbling to have so much seeming to go wrong and yet have things work out so well. I know many farmers were not so fortunate, farmers more skilled than I. I'm not sure why we ended up faring so well, but we certainly had a lot of wonderful help this season. We had our largest cadre of high school interns yet and, of course, Signe, without whom very little would have gotten done this year.

I want to close the year out by saying thank you to Signe, who I am very sad will not be rejoining us next season. I'd like to wish her well as she plans to move to Oregon, and encourage all of you who've had the opportunity to meet and work with her this summer to do the same. I'd also like to thank all our high school interns, and all of you who contributed to the farm, whether in the field, working at an event, or through your financial support. The farm couldn't run without all of you. Thank you for chipping in. I look forward to seeing everyone again next spring. **Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager**

Photo credit: Henry Mauck, NCF's farm-stand attendant

Stretching the Growing Season

Watch Mark Geffen's [video](#) to learn how NCF extends the growing season.

2014 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Preview



If you are a fan of Newton Community Farm and enjoy eating delicious fresh produce, then consider signing up for our 2014 summer CSA program. At the beginning of each growing season, CSA participants purchase a “share” of the upcoming produce, which helps the farm cover a substantial portion of the costs of our agricultural operations. In return, NCF provides participants with a supply of sustainably grown, fresh vegetables and herbs each week throughout the farm season (June–October). We have the equivalent of 80 weekly shares available. Some of our participants enroll for alternate-week shares, which means they pick up produce every other week. Other participants enroll for a weekly share for their family or else they split the full share with another friend or family (or two!).



The three-phase enrollment process will start in mid-January and will run through late February. The first phase will be open to 2013 sharers and people with their names on the waiting list from last year. For phase 2, remaining shares will be distributed to Newton residents by lottery. If there are any shares available after phase 2, we will open up enrollment to the general public and sell shares on a first come, first served basis until all shares are sold.

For more information, check our Web site in late November for program details, prices, and enrollment dates and procedures. **Dede Vittori**

Recruiting Communications Board Member



Newton Community Farm is currently recruiting for a Board member to oversee communications and marketing for the farm's programs, events, and news. This portfolio includes the Web site, e-news, social media, print and Internet media, marketing materials and strategy, and outreach to other organizations in the community. The Board member will work closely with a communications team including volunteers and staff who serve in key roles and who perform ongoing tasks. Newton Community Farm is a registered nonprofit organization that manages farm operations, produce distribution, educational programs, and community events at the historic Angino farm in Newton, Massachusetts. For more information about the farm, go to www.newtoncommunityfarm.org. Contact admin@newtoncommunityfarm.org if you are interested in this position.

Education

It really has been a beautiful fall with warm weather and gorgeous colors. It has been perfect for the Fall Farm Sprouts who for the past few weeks have enjoyed tasting different varieties of apples, learning how we prepare the farm for winter, and exploring the fields, identifying the vegetables that are still growing.

During October we also welcomed to the farm our preschool friends from the Meetinghouse Child Care Center as well as older students from Temple Emanuel of Newton. I have also been out and about working with children across Newton, squishing and squashing various vegetables to look for seeds with preschoolers at Explore and More Learning preschool, helping fourth graders at Mason-Rice with their composting efforts, and getting dirty with the fifth grade at Countryside Elementary School as they cleared and then replanted their raised beds. This past month also saw a small group of adults coming together one evening to participate in a cheese-making workshop, the last of its kind for the 2013 season.

So while our educational programming begins to wrap up for the year over the winter months, I will be keeping busy continuing our work in local schools and planning for the new year ahead. As this marks the final newsletter for 2013, I wanted to say a huge and heartfelt thank you to all the people who have helped and supported educational programming this year. There has been lots of fun, laughter, and learning, and really that is what it is all about, so again, thank you.

Best wishes for the coming months, and I look forward to seeing you in the spring, if not before.

Alison Wilson, Education Coordinator

Barn Renovation

The barn contractor, Barbato Construction, is moving quite fast, as you can see in the photos. Foundation work is nearly complete, the subfloor for the deck and the main floor are in place, and bathroom partition framing for the first floor is installed. Underfloor sewer piping is being placed prior to pouring the new concrete floor in the CSA area. The electrician has started working on outlet locations, and we can begin to get a sense of what it will look like.

Soon after this Community Preservation Act-funded work is complete in the spring of 2014, the Board will use privately raised funds to complete the demonstration kitchen so that the barn can be used in our education program.

Peter Barrer



Growing a Garden

As part of its Sustainable Agriculture Project (SAP), Newton South High School currently operates a community garden to provide food for its culinary arts program. Newton Community Farm board member Jon Orren is a Newton South culinary arts teacher who manages its community garden. He describes the culinary arts program as a department that offers a “wide variety of courses that aim to teach students basic kitchen literacy skills, fundamentals of nutrition and healthy lifestyles, and restaurant management skills.”

Orren founded the SAP in 2011 along with a group of Newton South students who approached him to express interest in establishing an organic garden on the high school’s campus. Now, Orren and a group of 15 to 20 students operate the garden each year from September until November, as well as during May and June. “Students all share the upkeep responsibilities, and the success of our harvests depends entirely on their ability to follow through on their commitments,” said Orren. “There have been many, many teachable moments, and the students are still learning what it means to be the stewards of a controlled ecosystem.”

Newton South’s organic garden contributes to the school community by providing resources for culinary arts courses, the department-run weekly restaurant called the Lions’ Den Bistro, and even Whitsons Culinary Group, the vendor that runs the school’s cafeteria. In addition, special-education classes, science courses, Newton South’s on-site preschool, and the PTSO have accessed the garden.

Considering the SAP’s overall success, Orren said that managing an organic garden at Newton South has helped him and his students appreciate the power of community farming. “Newton South is a large, sprawling school where it’s very easy to feel isolated both physically and emotionally as everyone focuses on their own work with tunnel vision,” he said. “Creating a physical space that brings people together and nourishes so many parts of the community has been the most gratifying outgrowth of the project to witness.” *Peter Diamond*

Apple Season



We have several neighbors with apple trees in their yards, and every fall I watch bushels of apples go to waste rotting on the ground. A few years ago, I decided to ask about coming over to pick apples for canning, even though I didn’t know the owners of the trees very well. Happily, I was given permission to harvest the apples, and I currently have three enormous bags of apples on my back porch waiting for processing. I immediately made a small batch of applesauce in my crock pot, an old-fashioned apple cake, and with the cores and peels, made homemade apple pectin as a base for spicy apple jelly. I’ll also be slicing and drying a bunch in my dehydrator.

Crock-Pot Applesauce

Wash, core, peel, and quarter apples (reserve bruised sections, cores, and peels for jelly). Sprinkle with lemon juice to keep apples from browning. Toss them in a crock pot with a few ounces of water or cider (to keep them from scorching). Turn crock pot on low heat and let cook overnight or until apples are soft enough to mash. Mash to desired texture, adding sugar, cinnamon, etc., to taste. Applesauce freezes very well, or use a waterbath canner to can it.

If you prefer apple butter, let the applesauce cook down to your desired thickness with the crock-pot lid propped open to let steam escape. It may take a full 24 hours.

“Compost” Jelly Wonderful with crackers and cheese!

Simmer bruised sections, cores, and peels with water to cover on low for 2–3 hours. Strain out solids in cheesecloth or a colander (do not press or it will be cloudy), and measure how many cups of liquid result. (It will taste like very bland, watery apple juice.) Bring juice to a simmer, adding sliced hot peppers, and cook covered, tasting frequently until the juice is as spicy as you want it. (The resultant jelly will be moderated in heat by the sugar.)

Add sugar, starting with 1/2 to 3/4 cup per cup of juice. Add lemon to taste (optional: cider vinegar or balsamic vinegar to taste). Cook on high until mixture comes to a rapid boil. Stir frequently. Skim foam (for aesthetics only). It has reached the gelling point when you scoop a spoonful of liquid and let it fall off the metal spoon and 2 drops hang on the edge, merge, and “sheet” off the spoon. Strain out solids, ladle into sterilized canning jars, wipe rims, and seal. Process in water bath for 10 minutes for half pints or 4 oz. jelly jars. Instead of canning, another option is to freeze jelly, and it will last in the fridge for several weeks/months. *Lisa Cohen*

Recipes

Here are two great cold-weather soups. [Three P Soup](#) uses sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and peanuts. You'll find it on the farm's list of recipes, which is well worth exploring. You can get to the recipe list through the farm's Web site, <http://newtoncommunityfarm.org/>. The second recipe, Curried Squash Soup, below, elicited compliments from my husband, who is not a fan of squash.

Curried Squash Soup (from Jane Brody's *Good Food Gourmet*)

2 lbs. winter squash
1 Tb. butter
1½ cups chopped onion
½ cup chopped celery
1 large sweet apple (preferably McIntosh), peeled, cored, and chopped
Salt to taste (opt.)
Black pepper to taste
1 Tb. curry powder, or to taste
4 cups chicken broth (or vegetable)
1 bay leaf
1 cup buttermilk
2 tsp. lemon juice

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Cut the squash in half, scoop out the seeds, and bake the squash for 30 minutes or till tender. (You can separate the seeds from the pulp and roast the seeds with a little salt in the oven, stirring at intervals till they are crisp.)
2. While the squash is baking, melt the butter in a medium-size saucepan and add the onion, celery, apple, salt, and pepper. Cover the pan and cook the mixture for 5 minutes over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally.
3. Add the curry powder and stir for 1 minute. Then add the broth and bay leaf, raise the heat, and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover the pan, and simmer for 30 minutes. Discard the bay leaf.
4. When the squash is cool enough to handle, scoop out the flesh, and cut it into chunks.
5. Puree the broth mixture and the squash together in a blender or a food processor. Return the soup to the saucepan and add the buttermilk and lemon juice. Adjust the seasonings, and heat the soup gently till hot. Do not let it boil.

Susan Tornheim

Farm Stand and Farmers' Market

Farm-stand hours for November: Wednesdays, 2–dusk; Saturdays, 10–2.

Final farm-stand day for 2013 will be Tuesday, November 26, for our preholiday blowout from 2 p.m. to dusk.

You can find out what's for sale by checking NCF's [Web site](#) or our [Facebook](#) page, or by following us on Twitter (@NCFtweets).

The Friday Newton Farmers' Market is closed for the season.

Volunteers

Volunteer hours are now concluded for the 2013 season. If you're interested in working in the field, please check our Web site in the late spring for information about when volunteer hours will be resuming.

Please contact us if you have any questions about this newsletter or ideas for future issues, or if you want to be added to our mailing list. Just e-mail Susan Tornheim at sftornheim@gmail.com. For more information about the farm, e-mail our farm manager, Greg, at newtoncommunityfarm@gmail.com or check out our Web page at newtoncommunityfarm.org (or click on the image at the top of the page).



updates on class listings, events, NCF news, and more!