

# The Newton Farmer

an e-newsletter from  
Newton Community Farm



July 2009

Dear Farm Friends,

Given the deluge of water, I am surprised each week at the amount and variety of the produce coming out of the farm. Of course, plants' needs vary, so some, like lettuce and other greens, prefer cool weather and moisture. But neither vegetables nor people like continual downpours, and everyone needs some sun at this time of year. We all are a lot more appreciative of any warmer, drier, sunnier days that we get. Maybe you feel like me, compelled to try to run outside whenever I see a ray of sun to soak it up. Let's all think sun.

Remember to check the farm Web site for details about classes, programs, recipes, and more at [newtoncommunityfarm.org](http://newtoncommunityfarm.org) (or click on our logo).

Your editor,

Susan Tornheim

[sftornheim@yahoo.com](mailto:sftornheim@yahoo.com)

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## Notes from Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager

Anyone else remember news reports of tomatoes with fish genes? They contained an "antifreeze" gene from Arctic flounder intended to confer cold resistance to tomatoes. While the experiment failed (despite continued "reporting" of this as a successful application of agricultural genetic engineering), I'm beginning to think that "fish-matoes" might not be such a bad idea. It seems like not only our tomatoes but many other crops, and even farmers, could use a set of gills to survive these days.

Yes, we've had a lot of rain, and farmers everywhere seem ready to pray for a good long dry spell (despite the old adage warning about getting what you ask for). National Public Radio ran a story recently reporting that many Massachusetts farms are experiencing crop losses of 30 percent or more due to the wet weather. While things certainly aren't that bad here, we also are feeling the effects of too much rain and too little sunshine.

I recently sent a few of our high school workers out to weed and mulch one of our watermelon plantings. They took two steps down the path and sank up to their calves in mud. The water table in the lower end of our field at this point is less than a foot below ground level!

But all is not gloomy. If anyone remembers the extremely wet spring we had in 2006, I'm happy to report that we are much better off this year than we were then. This is in part due to our soil management, but also due to the swale we dug along the eastern edge of the field. A swale, for those wondering, is like a ditch, but whereas ditches are deeper than they are wide and prone to erosion, a swale is wide and shallow and often planted. This allows it to move a lot of water without eroding the soil. We dug our swale two years ago to help control water from the barn roof, the farmhouse roof, and the extensive pavement surrounding the two—all of which flows into the field in one spot. This confluence of water seriously exacerbated flooding in the field. Now, thanks to the swale, the water is quickly moved along the edge of the field and out to the wetlands bordering the Charles River, which are designed by Nature to absorb storm waters. While the field is still wet, our drainage has significantly

improved, and we no longer have standing pools of water in the lower end of the field.

So all in all, things aren't as bad as they might be. Many of our crops, while not happy, are alive. They're just waiting for summer to come. And that, I think, is what all of us are doing.

Greg Maslowe  
Farm Manager  
[greg@newtoncommunityfarm.org](mailto:greg@newtoncommunityfarm.org)

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## **Food for Thought**

We are offering an enticing variety of classes this summer, and there is still time to sign up. For instance, Lunch and Learn from the Garden takes place on July 22 and August 13 from noon to 1:30 p.m. This is your chance to get new recipes to use produce from the farm and be inspired toward more healthy and creative cooking and eating. For information on other classes, click on the link below.

The first one-week session of the Farmer in Training program began on Monday, July 13. Separate weekly sessions continue through August 21. Students will learn about sustainable agriculture and current food systems while gaining hands-on exposure to farming. The young farmers in training will grow food for the Newton Food Pantry in the community garden plot in Nahanton Park and have discussions about the state of our agricultural and food production methods. Details are below.

### **Farmer in Training**

A farm summer program for middle school students (going into grades 6 through 9)

Weekly: Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

July 13–17

July 20–24

July 27–31

August 3–7

August 10–14

August 17–21

At Newton Community Farm and Nahanton Community Gardens

Weekly Fee: \$125 Members, \$140 Nonmembers

Maximum number of students per week: 6

Instructor: Yannick Perette, Farm Education Coordinator

Spend a week outdoors with your peers and staff from Newton Community Farm, learning to plant, maintain, and harvest a farm garden. Discover how food is produced and enjoy camaraderie with your fellow gardeners, farm staff, and volunteers. Students will work at the farm, maintain garden plots at Nahanton Park, and grow food for the Newton Food Pantry.

Students may sign up for one or more weekly sessions. Each session will include gardening, community lunches (bring your own, and share a dish made from fresh farm produce), and a different theme related to social justice and/or sustainable agriculture. Work hard, learn a lot, have fun!

To enroll please e-mail Yannick Perette at [education@newtoncommunityfarm.org](mailto:education@newtoncommunityfarm.org).

[For information on summer courses at the farm, click here.](#)

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Participants in the Get Growing! class met for the third of four sessions on June 30. The enthusiastic gardeners tied tomatoes, weeded and mulched the beds, thinned beets and basil, and best of all, they harvested peas, salad greens, onions, beet greens, and lemon basil. The kids visiting the class really got into the mulching!

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### **Third Annual Tour de Farms Bike Tour**

This year's Tour de Farms Bike Tour takes place on Saturday, August 1, and will feature two loops, a 15-mile route in Boston to visit urban farm and garden projects, and a 40-mile route to visit community farms, including Newton Community Farm, on the city's outskirts. Both loops start in the morning at Franklin Park, and the longer loop is an advanced ride for experienced riders only. Both rides will be led by experienced riders, and there will be technical support in case of flat tires.

Online preregistration is required; registration and insurance fee is \$10. To register online, click the link below. For more information about the Tour de Farms Bike Ride contact Jennifer Fahy at Farm Aid at [617-354-2922](tel:617-354-2922) or e-mail [jen@farmaid.org](mailto:jen@farmaid.org).

[To register online, click here.](#)

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### **Building a Library**

We are beginning to put together a library of books on farming, gardening, pests, weeds, foraging, preserving the harvest, and food issues in general—pretty much anything that deals with food production and consumption. The books will be used for teaching and will be available for use at the farm. If you have books that you would like to donate, please e-mail Greg at [greg@newtoncommunityfarm.org](mailto:greg@newtoncommunityfarm.org) with the title(s). We are trying to build a library that emphasizes sustainable approaches to food.

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### **Farm Stand**

Open Tuesday through Friday, 3–7 p.m.; Saturday, 10–2 p.m.

You may see cucumbers, beets, carrots, kale, and chard along with lettuce, onions, garlic, and scallions at the farm stand this month.

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### **Volunteering on the Farm**

Drop-in volunteer hours are Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 9 to 12:30. Wear work clothes and, if you like, bring a lunch so you can join the farm staff for their midday meal.

CSA members, when you come to do your work hours, be sure to check in with Tom Libby. We'll have a chart in the barn for you to record your hours each time you come. This allows us to keep track of how many hours you've worked.

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## Recipes

This month's recipes focus on beets, cucumbers, and carrots, which have starring roles in July. Chilled Beet and Buttermilk Soup is a cool and refreshing summer soup for a hot day (if we ever get one). Glazed Carrots with Ginger are a sweet and tangy side dish, and Scandinavian Cucumber Salad is full of crunch and acid tang, a great alternative to pickles.

[Click here for recipes.](#)

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## Farm Wish List

\* 1 or 2 picnic tables, preferably wood

If you can help us with any of these items, please contact Greg Maslowe at [617-916-9655](tel:617-916-9655) or at [greg@newtoncommunityfarm.org](mailto:greg@newtoncommunityfarm.org). We are a 501(c)3 organization. Your donations may be tax-deductible. Thank you for your support!

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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@yahoo.com](mailto:sftornheim@yahoo.com). For more information about the farm, e-mail Greg Maslowe at [greg@newtoncommunityfarm.org](mailto:greg@newtoncommunityfarm.org) or check out our Web site at [newtoncommunityfarm.org](http://newtoncommunityfarm.org) (or click on the image at the top of the page).