

# The Newton Farmer

an e-newsletter from  
Newton Community Farm



July 2010

Dear Farm Friends,

I'm thinking about pigeonholing—putting people, ideas, and things in categories—often very quickly without really looking carefully. For instance, if we see something as a weed, we might judge that the plant is fit only for the compost pile. Yet, as Greg talks about weeding below, I remember the purslane that was in our shares last week. I love the lemony crunch of purslane, and although it looks like a weed, it's delicious and very healthy. It's often wise to look two or three times before judging.

Your editor,

Susan Tornheim

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## Notes from Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager

It's that time again, time to write an article for the newsletter, and I've got nothing. It's not writer's block. At this time of year, every interesting thought has literally evaporated from my head, along with all the water from my body. After working all day my mind's pretty much a blank. Megan, the farm's intern, suggested that I write about having nothing to say. Unfortunately, I'm not nearly as funny as Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld.

I've been asked many times over the last few days how we (Megan and I, I suppose) are holding up in the heat. I'm happy to report that other than being utterly at a loss for creative thought by



the end of the day, we're faring quite well. And to keep things in perspective, I have my brother-in-law visiting from Sacramento where the farmers take a siesta from 1 to 5 in the afternoon because it's really hot there. Like our California-based comrades, we start early to beat the heat. Harvest starts at 6 a.m. We get most of the really heat-sensitive crops (lettuce and all the other leafy greens) done early. By 9 all our high-school workers are here.

These are great kids who I'm sure had no idea what they were getting themselves into when they asked if they could work at the farm. We all work to get the harvest finished by 11 or 12, then retreat under the oak trees for some shade and a well-deserved rest.

In the afternoon the fun begins. With the harvest over we can move on to weeding, planting, weeding, plowing, weeding, trellising, weeding, watering, weeding, hoeing (okay, that's just another form of weeding), setting up the farm stand, and CSA. Oh, and did I mention weeding? All in the glorious afternoon sun.

The high-school kids wrap up around 3. Megan and I keep at it until 5. I get to go inside; Megan gets to ride her bike home. Things close down for the night at 7, then it's back to harvesting the next morning at 6.

I had someone ask me today about how beans are picked on large farms. It was a good question as we stood out in the hot sun; we talk about this in our FiT (Farmer-in-Training) program for middle-school students. Much of the produce we consume is picked by hand by people who are being paid by the piece—that is, they get paid based on how much they harvest. The wages are low, and the conditions, as you might expect given that most of it comes from the Central Valley of California, are brutal. Long hours and scorching sun. From my perspective, as a farmer and as an ethicist, it's a great thing not only to talk about but to give people a chance to experience. What would it be like to be stooped over all day in the hot sun working for pennies a pound? No union. No insurance. Special dispensations from regular labor laws. This is what much of our food system is based on. Unless you buy local. Then it's based on high-school kids working for free (I wish I could have one of those e-mail smiley faces here—people often don't expect sarcasm from farmers).

Strangely enough, I really like all this (except for the part about exploiting low-wage workers). I like being outside all day. I like feeling exhausted at the end of the day. And I love early morning. Even in this heat, when you step outside at 6 it feels great. It's always a bit surprising to me that people choose to spend their free time coming to the farm and volunteering. I suppose it's because most people share that sense that there's something special about time spent outdoors, working hard to do something essential—to make food.

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### **Save the Date!**

Newton Community Farm's annual Harvest Festival will take place on September 26! Come to the farm to mark another great season. Celebrate the harvest with food, entertainment, and activities for the whole family!

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### **Sprouting Ideas**

Summer education for kids includes the weeklong sessions of the Farmer-in-Training program, designed for middle-school students, in which students learn to plant, maintain, and harvest a farm garden. Sessions run through August 27. Preschoolers can come to Farm Sprouts and enjoy a story hour, a song, or a tasty farm activity every Tuesday morning in July and August. Salsa Kids, on August 19, is a chance for budding cooks entering grades 3 to 5 to harvest ingredients and then make and taste several salsas.

In August adults can learn about gardening in raised beds and composting at home. Artistic inspiration will abound at the end of August with Art in the Garden, a chance to paint at the farm. Marcia Cooper will lead this two-hour painting workshop that is suitable for painters at all levels.

[For more information on classes, click here.](#)



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### **Introducing Farm Educator Kelly Lake**

Kelly Lake has recently joined the staff as our new Farm Educator. She will be coordinating our educational programs and teaching several courses, including the Farmer-in-Training program. Kelly became interested in farming, food, and education while finishing her studies at Boston College. Soon after earning a degree in human development from the Lynch School of Education at BC, she cofounded a successful culinary arts and health education program in Roxbury called Take Back the Kitchen. In addition to her work teaching parents and children from Roxbury and Dorchester about the importance of cooking healthful food from scratch and supporting sustainable local food economies, she has worked on several farms in Massachusetts including Haley House's Noonday Farm in Winchendon and Eva's Garden in South Dartmouth. Kelly is excited to be a part of all of the wonderful educational opportunities that already exist at NCF and is looking forward to expanding the farm's educational programming.

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### **Farming in Nahanton Park**

Newton Community Farm's proposal to farm in Nahanton Park has resulted in a decision by Newton Parks and Recreation to study the various current and proposed uses of the 55-acre park and to hire a consultant to suggest use options including management plans. Since the study will include wildlife analyses in several seasons, the study will not be complete for about a year. Parks and Recreation will then use the study to help make a decision about farming in the park.

The city will pay some of the cost of the study, but it's planned that most of the cost would be raised privately. Parks and Recreation established a Working Group, whose meetings are open to the public, to make a recommendation about farming in the park. Peter Barrer, president of the farm board, is a member of the Working Group and would welcome attendance at the meetings, or any comments from our farm community.

Peter Barrer

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### **Strawberry Solstice Family Event**

Here is a photo of the Morris dancers performing a traditional English Morris dance at the Strawberry Solstice Family Event in June.



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### **Our Plate Runneth Over**

The Summer Benefit Dinner on July 14 was a festive and delicious way to honor the achievements at the farm, focusing on edible bounty in mouthwatering ways. The event, a benefit for the farm's educational programming, was sold out; 85 people enjoyed the buffet, and more would have liked to take part. Kimberly Cox of Feast Creative Catering produced platter after platter of flavorful dishes that prominently featured vegetables, including delectable desserts. Rainy weather caused the dinner to be shifted partly into the barn, although sprinkles did not prevent a brief tour of the farm, and many participants ate outside at tables under the old apple trees. The rain cleared up later in the evening, and the sky was beautiful as we left the farm.

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### **Volunteers**



Every Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday, 9-12:30. Volunteers are welcome to bring a lunch and eat with the farm staff after the session.

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## Recipes

Now that the weather is really hot, it's time for cool meals. Cold soups hit the spot at this time of year. Cascadilla Soup is an easy recipe based on tomato juice, made creamy with some yogurt, that uses July's bounty of cucumbers, scallions, and herbs. Cool, creamy, crunchy—what's not to like?



When my children were young, no one in the family liked zucchini, but everyone loved pizza. I bet your family might agree. In my quest to discover vegetable-based dishes that my family would really like, I discovered Zucchini-Crusted Pizza, which was a big hit. It uses two zucchinis to make a flavorful, thick, soft crust that you can top with cheese and a variety of vegetables.

Susan Tornheim

[Click here for recipes.](#)

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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 page at [newtoncommunityfarm.org](http://newtoncommunityfarm.org) (or click on the image at the top of the page).