

The Newton Farmer

an e-newsletter from
Newton Community Farm



June 2010

Dear Farm Friends,

Now that farm produce is making its way into my kitchen, I'm busy looking up recipes and planning how to use this bounty. All these luscious vegetables spur my creativity and make me anticipate how they will taste. I wish you happy planning, successful cooking, and delicious eating.

Your editor,
Susan Tornheim
sftornheim@yahoo.com

Notes from Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager

The long days and short nights of June bring forth an explosion of growth on the farm. Peas swell with sweetness, lettuces grow to gargantuan size, and, of course, weeds weeds everywhere. As we race toward the summer solstice we're working hard to keep up with our planting schedule, finish our work in the greenhouse, begin harvesting for our markets, and make sure that we're growing more than purslane and pigweed (sorry to those intrepid souls out there who love their purslane).

The damp weather this month and heartbroken memories of last year are making people buzz about another outbreak of late blight in

the tomatoes. (For those of you who don't know, late blight is the disease that killed tomato and potato crops throughout the Northeast last year. It's also the disease that caused the Irish potato famine.) Alert levels from the University of Massachusetts are elevated, indicating an increased risk of infection, but so far I haven't heard of anyone in this area seeing the disease. Let's all hope for a nice, hot solstice. Late blight thrives in cool, damp weather but is shut down by heat.



On a more upbeat note, it's looking like 2010 is a great year for peas and honey. Our pea crops, which have struggled during the last two seasons, are looking great. We have English shelling peas bursting at their seams, as well as two varieties of sugar snap peas—one bush variety (meaning low-growing) and the other a climbing variety (reaching six feet or more!). There's really nothing like the sweet flavor of a just picked pea. We find we

have to force ourselves out of the pea beds or we'll just keep popping them in our mouths. And speaking of sweet, the report from our beekeeper is that this is looking to be a banner year for honey production. Last year's cool, damp weather limited nectar flows and made for one of the worst honey years in a long time. But this year things got going early, and just keep going. We should have over 100 pounds of honey in the next month or so. We've also added three more hives. If we can get these new hives to overwinter, we should have really awe-inspiring amounts of honey in future years.

If all this talk of sweetness and sunshine makes you want to jump on your bike and get over to the farm this weekend, well, then I've done my job. While June is a time of incredible work, it's also a time to celebrate life. I'd encourage you to take some time in the next couple of weeks to get up early and enjoy a peaceful, bird-song-filled morning walk; or a twilight canoe trip on the Charles (don't forget the bug spray); or anything else that gets you out and lets you take advantage of this season of light.

Sunday, June 20: Strawberry Solstice Family Event

Come celebrate Father's Day and the summer solstice with us! We'll have strawberry and sun-themed activities such as making your own sundial, planting sunflowers, bubble printing, creating your own musical instruments, and taking part in relay races. Enter to win a basket of strawberries or strawberry baked goods. Fresh strawberries for sale.

Sunday, June 20, 2010

1-3 p.m.

At Newton Community Farm

Ages: Preschool – 3rd grade, with adult

Fee: \$5 per family

[Click here for more about the event on June 20.](#)

Wednesday, July 14: Summer Benefit Dinner Outdoors at the Farm

Enjoy sunset and dining at the farm on Wednesday, July 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., while supporting our educational programs. Our wonderful caterer will prepare elegant dishes incorporating the farm's own produce. Beverages and farm tour start at 6:30 p.m., followed by buffet dinner at 7:00. Price is \$45 per person; a large portion will be tax-deductible. Mail reservation and payment with your name and address to: Newton Community Farm, c/o Lucy Stair, 46 Woodcliff Rd., Newton, MA 02461. Please direct questions to Lucy at stair@comcast.net.

Farm Stand and Farmers' Market

The CSA may be sold out, but you can still get produce from the farm. Our on-site farm stand is now open regular hours, and we'll be at the Newton Farmers' Market when it starts up in July. Here are the details.

On-Site Farm Stand

At the farm, on Winchester Street

Tues.-Fri., 2 p.m.–7 p.m.

Saturday, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Now open

Newton Farmers' Market (Friday location only)

Post 440 Parking Lot

295 California St.

Fridays: 1:30 p.m.–6 p.m.

Begins Friday, July 9, 2010

One change this year is that we have chosen to relinquish our spot at the Tuesday Farmers' Market at Cold Spring Park. This decision was not easy, but we believe that it will benefit both Newton Community Farm and the greater farming community of which we are a part. The Cold Spring market currently has a waiting list of farmers who would like space at the market. By leaving we will create space for another farmer for whom this market



could be an essential element in remaining financially viable. At the same time, leaving Cold Spring allows us to concentrate on two other markets that are seeing booming popularity: our on-site farm stand and our CSA program. We plan to redirect most of the produce from Cold Spring to our farm stand so we can make more produce available there on a more consistent basis. Some of the produce will also be going toward the shares we've added to the CSA this year.

If you've been a regular customer at our booth at Cold Spring, thank you for your support. We hope you'll continue buying produce from us at our farm stand, only three miles from Cold Spring, or at the Friday market. You can get more information at the City of Newton Farmers' Market Web site

at <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Parks/specialevents/FarmersMarket/FarmersMarket.htm>.

[For directions to the on-site farm stand, click here.](#)

Proposal to Farm in Nahanton Park

Newton Community Farm is proposing to farm in two small parcels in Nahanton Park. The proposal has gotten publicity, as you may have seen in the Newton Tab and other places. Greg and the Board want to explore this possibility in order to expand education and volunteer opportunities and to allow crop rotation in this unique location across Winchester Street from the Angino Farm. Some birders who frequent the park have expressed opposition out of fear of losing attractive birding habitat. Newton Parks and Recreation, which has jurisdiction over the site, has formed a working group representing various interests to make a recommendation to the Parks and Recreation Commission. I am in the working group, and I believe that an agricultural and park management solution can be found that maintains or improves the bird habitat while permitting farming in limited areas. The issue may take many months to resolve. If you wish to become better informed or engaged with the issue, contact me and/or attend the working group meetings, which are open to the public. Information on upcoming meetings is available from the Newton Parks and Recreation Department.

Peter Barrer
NCF Board President
pbarrer@verizon.net

Teaching Teachers on the Farm



If you came by the farm on the drizzly afternoon of April 27, you'd have wondered at the number of parked cars and adults at the farm. The Education Committee offered a professional development program for 24 Boston metro-area preschool teachers with connections to Hebrew College. After an introduction to the farm, teachers engaged in "make and take" sessions on ways to "green" their curriculum. Highly qualified education volunteers at each area, certified in early-childhood education, offered a menu of opportunities. Offerings included connecting students with the natural world, growing sprouts for classroom consumption, creating "wild" spaces inside and out, growing a salad, and worm farming. Teachers participated in a minimum of three sessions and left the farm with sample products, plans, and the know-how to make the curriculum in their

classrooms a lot “greener.” Despite the drizzle, a good time was had by all!

Jenny Craddock

Upcoming Classes

An intriguing class is happening on Thursday, so if you’re interested, you have to move fast. At the end of the month you have a chance to learn about edible wild plants. Get more information by clicking on the link below.

Spring Farmers II – Middle School Early Release Afternoon

Thursday, June 17, 1-3 p.m.

at Newton Community Farm

Ages: 6th-8th grade

Find out what are the earliest crops being harvested in the spring and what lies ahead.

NEW DATE - Edible Wild Plants Walk

Wednesday, June 30, 6-8 p.m.

at Newton Community Farm

Learn about as many as 45 different species of edible wild plants. Students will get keys to the identification of each species, as well as information about edible portion(s), season(s) of availability, flavor and nutritive value, and some tips on preparation, if necessary. Students will also learn guidelines for safe and environmentally responsible foraging.

[For more about these classes, click here.](#)





Ready, Set, Grow!

Seven preschoolers and their moms met in the Learning Garden on May 27 for the first in a series of three sessions of “Ready, Set, Grow!,” a class designed to engage young children in the magic and the excitement of growing their own vegetables. The budding gardeners used small wooden plant labels to dig holes to plant sunflower seeds for a sunflower house. They learned about the parts of a plant and what a seed needs to grow. Using child-sized tools and small watering cans, they planted popcorn, climbing beans, and squash for a “Three Sisters” garden, in the manner of early Native Americans. The next job was planting tomatoes... big ones; little ones; yellow, red and green ones! We can't wait to see the results!

Finally, like good gardeners everywhere, they picked up their tools, rinsed their hands and feet with the hose (what fun!!), then posed for a group photo. Look for their garden when you come to the farm. The children are very proud of their endeavors—and eager to come back!

Janet Springfield

Fertilizers: What You Need to Know

Fertilizers are needed to grow food, as good agricultural soils are in short supply.

On a global basis, the cultivated area of land per person is 0.32 acres or 14,000 sq ft. For grain production, the cultivated area of land per person is only 0.25 acre or 11,000 sq ft. To meet our global food needs, we need to produce more food from less land! Thus both fertilizer and good-quality cropland are very important.

Nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K).

All fertilizers are described in terms of percentage of N, P, and K; for example, 5-10-5 means 5% N, 10% P, and 5% potassium. The remaining 80% is filler.

What do plants do with NPK?

N is important for top growth of plants and for making protein. P promotes root growth, the production and maturation of flowers and fruits, and it's needed to make DNA. K is necessary for new cell growth.

It takes a lot of energy to make commercial fertilizer.

Nitrogen from the atmosphere is made into fertilizer by reacting hydrogen gas with nitrogen gas to produce ammonia. This is a very energy-intensive process, requiring a catalyst at high temperatures (450 degrees C) and high pressures.

Manure and compost provide a sustainable form of N. P comes from potash, a mining product or from compost. K comes from salts or from compost.

How much N fertilizer is needed to grow crops?

We need 100 pounds of N per acre to grow a typical crop. Nitrogen can be supplied from:
Coffee grounds (2% N) require 5,000 lbs. dry grounds or 50,000 lbs. wet per acre.

Pig manure (4% N) requires 2,500 lbs. dry or 25,000 wet.
Yard waste is 2%, the same amount as coffee.
Blood meal is 12%, requires about 800 lbs.

Sam Fogel

Volunteers

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

Recipes

In June spinach is continuing to grow, and carrots may be ready for harvesting. Garbanzo Stew uses both carrots and spinach, is a hearty and tasty main dish, and is easy to make. Carrot Curry is a versatile recipe that can be a flavorful side dish or a main dish with the addition of any form of protein. Both these recipes are delicious over cooked grain like rice.

[Click here to see recipes.](#)

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. For more information about the farm, e-mail Greg Maslowe at greg@newtoncommunityfarm.org or check out our Web page at newtoncommunityfarm.org (or click on the image at the top of the page).