

# The Newton Farmer

an e-newsletter from  
Newton Community Farm



May 2010

Dear Farm Friends,

I love looking at the farm, but I feel it's a shame that the farm is so small. Newton is a large community, and additional Newton residents might like to be more involved with the farm if it were possible. Every time I pass a golf course, I imagine that the rolling landscape has been flattened a little and that it has been planted with wonderful vegetables, fruit trees and bushes, and herbs. (You would be right to surmise that I do not play golf.)

There is an exciting proposal, however, to allow the farm to use a small piece of land in nearby Nahanton Park. The Newton Parks and Recreation Commission will discuss this proposal at its meeting on Monday, May 17. It would be a great help if farm supporters attend the meeting and speak about the benefits of this idea. See Peter Barrer's article below for more information.

Your editor,  
Susan Tornheim  
[sftornheim@yahoo.com](mailto:sftornheim@yahoo.com)

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## Notes from Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager



I always forget just how quickly things begin to happen in May. It almost feels like you can see the plants growing. The peas, which we had such problems with last year, are up and growing. We have three varieties this year: a bush sugar snap and a climbing sugar snap, as well as English shelling peas. Lettuce, spinach, arugula, radishes, kohlrabi, and cabbages are all growing in abundance, as are cilantro and basil. Our first planting of onions is well under way, and the garlic, planted last fall, looks beautiful.

We have a new farm intern this year, Megan Talley. Megan moved here from New York, where she worked at Hawthorne Valley, a biodynamic dairy (and veggie) farm.

Biodynamics, for those who do not know, is the agricultural philosophy developed by Rudolph Steiner (sort of the agricultural version of Waldorf education). Be sure to say hello to Megan when you come, and welcome her to the area.

Megan and I have been busy working with volunteers on projects all over the farm. We've been expanding the perennial herb plantings along the main path through the field, adding sorrel and tarragon to our offerings. We've also planted almost 300 new strawberry plants in the beds along Winchester Street. While they won't be

producing fruit this year for our Strawberry Solstice celebration (on Father's Day), we'll have lots of strawberries in years to come. And since we were at it, we decided to expand our rhubarb planting, putting in 25 new crowns. Perhaps next year we'll begin offering pies at the farm stand!

Our greenhouse is not only full, we've had to set up two temporary "low tunnels" (mini-greenhouses about 3 feet high, made of PVC hoops and a heavy-weight row cover) to house all the seedlings we're growing for our second annual seedling sale. We'll use the "low tunnels" again in the fall to protect crops from frost and see just how much we can extend our growing season.

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If you've been by the farm lately, you've probably noticed that there are quite a few row covers in the field. While for some crops (like our extra early basil) this is to protect the plants from cold temperatures, most of the row cover you see is in place to protect plants from insect damage. By covering the beds with a row cover, buried along all its edges, we can (we hope) physically exclude some of our most important spring pests—flea beetles (arugula, cabbage, Napa cabbage, and radishes) and leaf miners (spinach and chard). The row covers not only help us avoid using pesticides but they also have the added benefit of creating a beneficial microclimate that speeds the plants' growth.

The other thing you may have seen this spring are a number of beds in the middle of otherwise tilled sections of the field that have a tall green crop growing in them. This is winter rye, planted last fall as a cover crop to protect the soil. Rye is great in that it will germinate down to about 32 degrees, so we can plant it very late in the season and still get a good cover crop. The down side is that it survives the winter and in the spring can take quite an effort to kill so that we can begin planting. So we are trying an experiment this year with a few of our tomatoes. Rather than plowing down the rye growing in four of our tomato beds we're letting it grow until it flowers. Once in flower (which is actually right now, a bit early like everything else this spring) we'll cut it down. The theory is that if you cut a plant while it is flowering, it won't be able to grow back. The cut rye will be left lying on the ground to serve as the mulch for our tomatoes. This form of no-till organic agricultural practice is being explored by the Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania. If it works, it would have a number of positive impacts on the farm: 1) We would save about \$16 per tomato bed because we wouldn't have to buy (and truck in) straw for mulching; 2) we would save time and fuel by not having to till the beds three times in preparation for planting (we'll cut by hand with a scythe); 3) beds treated this way won't have to be tilled for 18 months, which will significantly improve the soil health; and 4) we'll be adding tons of organic matter to the soil in these beds because when rye is allowed to grow to maturity it produces a huge root system that will then rot while the tomatoes grow. Of course, things might not work as well as all this. But I'm hopeful, and it's important (and fun) to keep experimenting with new growing methods. We are, after all, an educational farm.

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## Seedling Sale This Sunday, May 16

12 noon – 4 pm

Over 10,000 vegetable and herb seedlings will be available at our Seedling Sale, twice as many as last year. We sprout and grow the seedlings on-site in our greenhouse, and they're ready to be transplanted to your garden. This year we'll also have flower plants for sale. Bring your own boxes for carrying. Cash or check only.

Come select some plants for your backyard, watch a gardening demonstration, or just enjoy an afternoon at the farm. Expert gardeners will be on hand to answer your questions. We will also have food that is available for purchase.



Friends of the Farm are invited to attend a Pre-Sale Event at 11 a.m.

Help publicize the event by printing the Seedling Sale flyer found on our Web site, posting it, and giving it to your friends.

We are still welcoming volunteers to help with the sale (qualifies for CSA work hours). Contact Karen Doherty at [karendoherty2010@gmail.com](mailto:karendoherty2010@gmail.com), the volunteer organizer for the event, to let us know your interest and available time.

Peter Barrer

[For the Seedling Sale flyer, click here.](#)

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## Flowers at the Farm



When the Angino family lived and worked this land, they not only sold corn and tomatoes but also dahlias and other cut flowers. The remnants of these flower beds remain between the farmhouse and the field. Over the last month we renovated and expanded these beds, creating a perennial cutting garden for the farm. Board member Ted Chapman, a landscape designer, and volunteer Sue LeClair, who has a container gardening business, cleaned out the existing beds and re-dug, mulched, and expanded the total planting area to about 280 feet of three-foot-wide beds.

The beds were replanted with new perennial plugs. The varieties added to the existing peonies include *Achillea millefolium* (yarrow), *Aster oblongifolius* (New England Aster), *Helenium* sp. (sneezeweed), *Gaillardia aristata* (Blanket Flower), *Scabiosa caucasica* (Pincushion Flower), *Eupatorium purpureum* (Joe Pye Weed), *Chasmanthium latifolium* (Northern Sea Oats), *Leucanthemum x superbum* (Ox-Eye Daisy), *Liatrix spicata* (Gayfeather), *Phlox paniculata* (Garden Phlox), *Rudbeckia lancinata* (Black-Eyed Susan), *Salvia numerosa* (Flowering Sage), *Solidago rugosa* (goldenrod), and *Veronica spicata* (speedwell). These flowers

should provide beautiful cut flowers for the entire CSA season.

We purchased the plants in flats of 72 to 32 plants, and we had a lot of extra plants that we repotted into 3.5-inch pots and grew out for three to four weeks. These will be sold at the upcoming Seedling Sale on May 16. We hope that this sale will pay for the costs of establishing the new perennial cutting garden that we will all enjoy at the farm for years to come. We hope the community will take home flowers for their own gardens. Ted and Sue will be on hand at the Seedling Sale to advise which varieties are right for your conditions. If you do not have your own garden, then come to the farm and cut flowers for your home all summer long!

Ted Chapman

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## **Farming in Nahanton Park**

Public comments May 17

The farm has proposed to Newton Parks and Recreation that a small parcel of land in Nahanton Park be set aside for farming. We would use the land to provide for additional educational activities and allow for crop rotation. The land is within walking distance of the farm, which makes it particularly attractive, although the soil needs preparation for farming.

The Newton Parks and Recreation Commission is asking for comments at its Monday, May 17, meeting, and we would welcome having farm supporters attending and/or speaking. Contact Peter Barrer at [pbarrer@verizon.net](mailto:pbarrer@verizon.net) if you are able to attend.

Parks and Recreation Commission meeting  
Monday, 5/17  
7 p.m.  
Newton City Hall  
Room 209

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## **May Classes**

As the monsoon season winds down in New England, we hope that the sun will shine for our May classes. Sheryl Boris-Schacter will be leading two great classes on creating gardens, one for beginners and one for intermediates. There will be a fun and portable Plots in Pots class taught by Jenny Craddock for those interested in container gardening. And after all that, you'll probably be hungry for Laurie Brownstein's Spring Cooking class about what and how to cook spring vegetables from the farm. When you are considering planting potatoes, consider how much easier they are to plant and harvest when they are in a wooden box container with straw. And come find out how great it is to garden with your grandparent or grandchild, a multigenerational class, "Gardening with Grandpa or Nana," taught by Janet Springfield. Register early for all classes and come enjoy hands-on learning at the farm!

May 18 So, You Want to Plant a Garden?  
(Beginner)  
May 19 Plots in Pots  
May 20 Spring Cooking  
May 21 Potato in a Box  
May 26 So, You Want to Plant a Garden?  
(Intermediate)  
May 28 Gardening with Grandpa or Nana

[Click here for the farm's course catalog.](#)

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## **Chipotle Fundraiser a Success**



Thanks to everyone who turned out for our Burrito Dinner fundraiser at Chipotle in April. The event was a big success, raising nearly \$1500 for our education and outreach programs. We saw many new faces, as well as many familiar ones, and we had a great time talking with all of you. We hope you enjoyed the food, and thank you for coming to support the farm!

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## Volunteers

Volunteer hours: Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday, 9-12:30. If you'd like to come to one of our volunteer sessions, you don't need to call ahead, but please try to arrive by 9:00 a.m. so that we don't have to stop in the middle of whatever we're doing and get someone else oriented to the day's tasks. Volunteers are welcome to bring a lunch and eat with the farm staff after the morning session.



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## Recipes

In May we should be seeing salad-worthy vegetables appear—asparagus, lettuce, arugula, onion greens, peas, and radishes—as well as rhubarb, sorrel, and chard. Those peas would make a light and tasty milk-based Green Pea Soup, fast and easy to make. The salad vegetables are complemented by dressing, but there's no need to buy salt-laden dressings when it's so easy to make your own. Creamy Vinaigrette and Tomato-Herb Dressing are low in fat and salt and call for simple ingredients. All the recipes are on the farm's recipe list.

Susan Tornheim

[Click here for recipe list.](#)

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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).