

The Newton Farmer

an e-newsletter from
Newton Community Farm



November 2009
Dear Farm Friends,

This is the last farm newsletter of the 2009 growing season. Like the newsletter, everything else seems to be winding down—the sunlight, the temperature (very slowly), the farm activity. So here are some reports and summaries to help end the season and point us toward the next. I hope you spend some time this winter thinking, dreaming, and planning so you can create new growth in the spring.

Your editor,
Susan Tornheim
sftornheim@yahoo.com

Notes from Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager

As the 2009 season winds to an end this month, people often comment to me that they're surprised at how much is still growing in the field. Some of that is crops that will be harvested for the farm stand, which continues to operate through Thanksgiving. Much, however, is crops like kale and chard that have been growing all season and will continue to grow right into winter. There's no reason to plow these crops under in the fall to make way for a cover crop—they will serve that purpose, holding the soil and protecting it against the ravages of winter. The soil enrichment that cover crops can provide will also be accomplished by leaving these crops in place. During the growing season, as the kale and chard matured, we planted clover beneath them. The clover helped suppress weeds but will also add nitrogen to the soil for next year's crops (clovers are a legume, a family of plants that can "fix" atmospheric nitrogen in their roots). The other benefit of leaving the kale and chard in place is that we can continue to harvest them well past the end of the regular growing season. While chard will probably succumb to the cold in December, kale is quite cold hardy and, especially if we have good snow cover, can be harvested right through the winter.



So what does a farmer do during the winter months? This is another question I hear frequently at this time of year. While my days certainly slow down, there are still many jobs to do during the short days of winter. As the year winds down we're busy making plans for next year—budgets and a business plan; year-end reports; seed orders; bulk orders. All of this is the behind-the-scenes work that will make next season possible. Then there are also the projects that we just don't have time to get to during the growing season: truck and tractor maintenance; cleaning up perennial plantings and working on trellising; building bridges across the swale; greenhouse

improvements; and painting and maintenance in the farmhouse. This is a list that truly goes on and on. And then there's just sleeping in a little later; spending a little more time in the kitchen and with my kids; and catching up on reading, both personal and professional. While there is still a fair bit of work each day, winter is a time to replenish and rejuvenate the body, mind, and soul.

2009 was a year of challenges, but none of them killed us, so as Nietzsche would say, they just made us stronger. Late blight wiped out our tomatoes, but we were still able to meet our budget for farm income through some creativity, innovation, and determination. And we were able to “rest” a significant portion of our field, growing a regenerative cover of oats and field peas. That kind of fallow period is something that most organic farms take for granted but that we, with our small space, get only by finding a silver lining in a devastating loss.

Some of this year's challenges were self-imposed and led to wonderful results. This summer we began our Farmer in Training (FiT) program for middle-school students. The program was, I think, a great success, and we're looking forward to further refining the program next year and working with a whole new batch of young farmers (and, we hope, some returning farmers). We also worked with a couple of groups to establish organic gardens off the farm site at Oak Hill Middle School and at Hamilton Park by the Lower Falls Community Center. We'll continue to be involved with these gardens in 2010.

As activity at the farm slows, and the farmers as well as the plants get ready for winter, the seeds for next season are already being sown. Part of what is so rejuvenating about winter is dreaming about the coming spring. A clean slate, new things to try, and seemingly endless possibilities are what await us. For now, it's time to cozy up and let our imaginations roam, our excitement growing until it bursts forth next spring.

Greg Maslowe
Farm Manager
greg@newtoncommunityfarm.org

A Good Time at the Harvest Festival

We held our annual Harvest Festival on Sunday, October 18. Despite the bad weather (snow in October?!), we had a strong turnout from all over Newton and beyond. The barn sure was lively! Everyone warmed themselves up with hot soup, cider, and yummy baked goods, and by dancing to bluegrass and children's songs. The kids (and some adults!) had a blast with face painting, pumpkin decorating, and other fun activities.

Thanks to all who came out to visit us on such a cold day. And special thanks go to all our wonderful volunteers. We couldn't have done this without you!



Classes

We have only one class left in 2009. In January we begin our 2010 class offerings. When you sign up for a class, please remember to print the PDF registration form from the farm's Web site. In addition, either call the farm ([617-916-9655](tel:617-916-9655)) or e-mail education@newtoncommunityfarm.org in advance to confirm that you are registered.

Please let us know about any special interests or topics that you might want to see offered as a class, or suggest a class that you might want to teach yourself or help teach. Your input is very valuable for our educational programming, and we thank you in advance.

Yannick Perrette
Farm Educator

Bread Making

Session B: Wednesday, 12/2, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

[Click here for more class information.](#)

The Learning Garden

The Learning Garden at Newton Community Farm benefited from two grants received this year. The first, for \$5000 from the Pomroy Foundation of Newton, has been instrumental in allowing us to hire an education coordinator this year and to plan and implement the Farmer in Training (FiT) program. FiT engaged a total of nearly 40 kids entering grades 6 to 10 in week-long sessions during July and August, learning to plant, maintain, and harvest a farm garden. They discovered how food is produced and enjoyed the camaraderie of fellow gardeners, farm staff, and volunteers. Sessions included community lunches and themes related to social justice and/or sustainable agriculture.

The second grant, from the Mayor's Committee for People With Disabilities, for approximately \$2500 has allowed us to take the next step in designing gardening programs for community members of all ages who have physical disabilities. Watch for the construction of raised beds in the Learning Garden in the next couple of weeks. City workers recently patched the driveway so the grounds are accessible to wheelchairs and walkers so that handicapped parking spaces can be used. These parking spaces will be clearly marked in the near future.

We're grateful to the members of the Education Committee, Peter Barrer, and city officials whose hard work helped us to receive these grants.

Janet Springfield
Cochair
Education Committee

Farm Stand

The final days for the 2009 farm stand are Saturday and Sunday, November 22 and 23, from 10 to 2. The farm stand will reopen in May 2010.

Volunteering on the Farm

Volunteer hours are over for 2009. They will resume in the spring.

Recipes

Our fall broccoli fits perfectly into Broccoli Sauce for Pasta, a flavorful sauce that includes tomatoes and olives. Tomatoes are also an essential ingredient in Carolina Kale, a recipe that works with any green. You might enjoy browsing in the farm's list of shared recipes if you haven't looked before. The cold days of winter are the perfect time to return to old favorite recipes, try new ones, and learn new cooking skills. Happy cooking!

[Click here for recipes.](#)

Farm Wish List

- * Digital camera
- * Bookcase in good condition, preferably wood
- * Large wooden desk in good condition

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. We are a 501(c)3 organization. Your donations may be tax-deductible.
Thank you for your support!