

The Newton Farmer

an e-newsletter from
Newton Community Farm



October 2009

Dear Farm Friends,

As I write, we are feeling a foretaste of winter as October laughed at us and did a quick impersonation of late November. Does cold weather kill growing vegetables on the farm? Not necessarily, as Greg explains. There are nifty tricks that work not only on the farm but also potentially in your home garden. Learn more below and in an upcoming class.

Your editor,
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Notes from Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager

We've had a few frosts at the farm, and you can definitely tell that fall has arrived. The view from the field south across Nahanton Street is beautiful with many of the trees turning red and orange. While the frosts haven't been hard enough to kill anything, a hard frost probably isn't too far off. Does that mean that things are over for the season? No. We'll keep right on growing through the fall and winter, and into next spring! How do we do this in New England? We'll be exploring this question in an upcoming education course on season extension, but I thought I'd give you all a sneak peak at how we're helping our plants beat the cold.

We use a number of techniques to prolong our harvest: selecting cold-hardy plants; protecting crops in the field with row covers; and growing in various structures. Many crops, for example, kale, collards, and brussels sprouts, love the cold weather. In fact, they're much better after they've been through some good frosts. Late-season greens are usually much sweeter, a natural side effect of the way these plants respond to frost. In addition to the many hardy greens you can grow late into winter, there are frost-hardy lettuces. And if leaves aren't enough for you, carrots, beets, scallions, and leeks are all perfectly happy in the field late in the year. In fact, there are varieties of scallions that can be planted in the late summer and overwintered for an early spring harvest. This technique also works well with spinach.



As the temperatures get colder we sometimes want to keep crops that are sensitive to frosts producing longer. An example would be eggplant or beans. In this case, we'll cover the crop with a spun polyester fabric (generically called row cover). The fabric is hydrophobic and, depending on the weight of the fabric, can give 1 to 5 degrees of protection to the plants beneath them. We use row cover extensively in the spring to protect crops from insects and to speed their growth (the row cover essentially creates a little greenhouse over the bed). In the fall, the row cover is almost exclusively used to keep sensitive crops alive (although we sometimes are also trying to speed a crop up a bit). As winter sets in, row cover can be left on overwintering crops for an early spring harvest. The row cover offers the plants some protection during the winter and warms the soil more quickly in the spring.

Some crops can have the row cover placed directly over them—called a floating row cover. But other crops would get burned by the cold wherever they were in contact with the fabric, so we use metal hoops to support the row cover over the beds. While we have yet to try it, many growers have “beefed up” this basic technique, making quick hoop houses that cover multiple beds. These “low tunnels” typically cover two beds side by side. They're made of PVC pipe or rebar with a sheet of old greenhouse plastic over them. They're “low” because you can't really stand up in them. They're a great way to overwinter a crop of carrots for extra early harvest, or simply to heat the beds up earlier in the spring to get a jump on planting season.

Here at NCF we use a “high tunnel” for winter growing. That's another name for an unheated greenhouse like ours (“greenhouse” usually refers to heated structures). If you visit the farm for the Harvest Festival you can go into the greenhouse and see a row of benches along the south side of the greenhouse in which we're growing various mesclun mixes, arugula, and spinach. Since our greenhouse is unheated, in order to keep these crops alive all winter we'll install a low tunnel over these beds to give them more protection. This double cover should be enough to keep all of these crops alive right through to spring (arugula is a bit more cold sensitive than the others, but we've selected a variety of arugula that is supposed to have very good cold tolerance).

Also at the Harvest Festival you'll be able to see the “cold frame” that Newton South student Sophie Duncan designed and built for the farm. It's been moved to a new location right along one of the main paths in the Learning Garden. We've planted it with chard, which again should be able to survive right through to spring in this very simple, low-cost, no-heat structure.

Why do we do all this? For starters, we want to keep the farm stand operating through Thanksgiving, and get it open again as soon as possible in the spring. Then there's the educational aspect of showing people how they can keep their own gardens growing longer. And finally, it's just really cool (no pun intended) to be able to harvest fresh vegetables while there's two feet of snow on the ground!

Want other ideas on ways to continue eating local produce during the winter months? Check out Shared Harvest, a multifarm winter CSA based out of Lexington. There are also winter CSAs in Dover, Waltham, Lincoln, and other places. Check our educational offerings, as we often teach courses on canning, bread baking, beer making, how to raise laying hens, pickle making, and much more. There are many, many ways to keep the bounty going as the days get short and cold. I hope you try some. As for me, I'll be enjoying real popcorn from farms right here in metro Boston as I plan for next spring.

Harvest Festival on Sunday, Oct. 18

Come to the farm on Sunday, October 18, from 1 to 4 p.m., to celebrate our fourth growing season with music, children's activities, food-growing and preparation demonstrations, food for purchase, farm tours, and more!

[For more information about the festival, click here.](#)

Fall Classes

October and November offer great learning experiences both on and off the farm. Here are our upcoming fall classes and special events.



Oct. 18, 1–4 p.m., Harvest Festival
Our annual fall event for the entire community with all sorts of activities and fun at the farm

Oct. 22, 12–1:30 p.m., Lunch and Learn From the Garden

A certified health counselor will use produce from the farm to show you how to make a wonderful lunch, even late in the season.

Oct. 22, 1:30–3 p.m., Seed Search

We will be doing a farm-wide seed search with elementary school students and will teach students about seed dispersal and how plants reproduce.

Oct. 22, 12–3 p.m., Fall Farmer in Training

On the same day, also an early-release day for

middle schools, we will do a follow-up of our Farmer in Training program for middle school students.

Oct. 24, 10:30–noon, Backyard Chickens

This class will teach you how to raise chickens: what it takes to get started, and how to keep your chickens happy and laying eggs.

Oct. 30, 3–5 p.m., Halloween on the Farm

What do you do on the eve of Halloween? Come join us at the farm for a spooky and fun time for an event for preschool to 3rd graders.

Nov. 4 & 11, 6:30–9:30 p.m., Beer Making for Everyone

For those interested in fermentation, beer making should be a fun activity. In this two-part class, it will become even more fun. Enjoy learning how to make beer and take home beer that you have made in class.

Nov. 7, 3–4:30 p.m., Extending the Growing Season

As the warm season winds down at the farm, it is possible to continue growing food into the cold season. Learn all about what to do in the "off" season to keep on growing fresh food well into January and February.

Nov. 12, 6:30–7:30 p.m., or Nov. 14, 10:30–11:30 a.m., All You Want to Know About Apples

Apple season is upon us in New England, so come learn all about them as well as tasting different delicious varieties.

Nov. 18 or Dec. 2, 7:30–9:30 p.m., Bread Making

Learn how to make a no-knead dough sponge that you can keep in your refrigerator for up to two weeks of fresh, crusty bread anytime. You can also use this dough for pizza crust, dinner rolls, cinnamon buns, and more. In this class you will mix your own sponge to take home as well as learn to handle the prepared dough sponge to shape different types of bread.

Unlike bears, the educational programming at the farm doesn't hibernate. We stay active with interesting class offerings all year around. If you have any ideas or thoughts about what you might want to learn during the off season, please let us know. The fall class schedule is available online as part of our great new redesigned Web site with a new registration form, and we're also working on a feedback form for classes, so you can let us know your thoughts. We're looking forward to seeing you at one or more of our 2009 or 2010 classes.

[Click here for fall classes.](#)

Grant Application to Complete Barn Renovation

The Newton Farm Commission, which oversees our work at the Angino Farm, is applying for Community Preservation Act funds to complete the barn rehabilitation. If the application is successful, the barn renovation will be completed in the next couple of years. We are pleased that the funds we raised for the first phase, used to preserve the barn's foundation and structure and restore the exterior appearance, are a wonderful "private match" to the funds being sought in the grant application.

Stay tuned! There may be a need for supporters of the farm to turn out in coming months for hearings on the application.



[To learn more about preservation at Newton Community Farm, click here.](#)

Recipes

I love lots of flavor, and the two recipes I've added to the farm wiki deliver it. Gingered Broccoli is a Chinese-inspired way to add depth and spice to lightly steamed broccoli. The second recipe, Herbed Cauliflower, is a family favorite of ours; it creates mildly pickled crunchy white florets.

[Click here for recipe list.](#)

Volunteering Opportunities

October is the last month for volunteer hours. Come join us on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 9 to noon until the end of the month.

Farm Stand

Hours: Tuesday through Friday, 1:30–dusk; Saturday, 10–2; Sunday & Monday closed

Available in October: apples, cabbage, arugula, spinach, carrots, beets, garlic, broccoli, broccoli rabe, cauliflower, kale

Farm Wish List

*outdoor umbrella stand (and umbrella if available)

*cardboard barrel

*2-3 large cardboard boxes (3 feet on a side)

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!