
The Newton Farmer

an e-newsletter from
Newton Community Farm



April 2008

Dear Farm Friends,

Welcome to the first issue of the Newton Farmer for 2008. Spring is here and we have a great new season in store. Highlights in this issue include:

- Exciting plans for this year including a description of our new volunteer program
- Farm activities including a vernal pool walk and a barn cleanout
- An introduction to our new beehives

It's spring, so get out your boots and work clothes and get ready for another busy year on the farm.

Your editors,
Carol Rose and Gil Rosen

Notes from Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager



Spring is in the air and the farm is stirring with life. The hoop house is starting to fill up with tomatoes, eggplants, spinach, beets, scallions, parsley, broccoli, and many varieties of flowers. We've already transplanted the onions and cauliflower out to the field, and have seeded arugula. I experimented with overwintering a number of crops—lettuce, cilantro, spinach, and scallions—and had good luck with most. I hope that what I learned will allow the farm stand to open by early- to mid-May next year. For this year, look for the farm stand to be opening early June. Before then, however, keep an eye on your email in-box for an announcement when our asparagus goes on sale. That's right, the asparagus is now mature enough that we should get 6 weeks of harvest out of it. The first few spears have already stuck their heads out of the ground, so I expect the harvest to begin in earnest by the end of April.

We have had many volunteers working already -- helping in the hoop house and with the Learning Garden. We still have a great need for people to come help us spread the composted manure (it's composted, so it doesn't smell) in the field to help ensure long-term fertility. Perhaps we can make this an annual event—the Newton Community Farm B.S.

Competition. Who can spread the most bull in the least amount of time?

Our new apple and cherry orchard is off to a good start. During a well-attended NewtonSERVES event on April 13, the first six trees (2 cherries and 4 apples) went into the ground. Thank you to everyone who has worked to

bring the orchard to fruition (sorry I couldn't resist the pun).

We are implementing a new volunteer program this year. Anyone who would like to volunteer in the field is welcome to join the farm staff for regularly scheduled work sessions. Our goal is to make your time at the farm meaningful and educational for you, and at the same time beneficial for the farm. Volunteer sessions will take place each week on Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 8:30 to 10:30, and Saturday mornings from 9:00 to 11:00. Each session will begin with an orientation to the day's work—what needs to be done, how to do it, and how it relates to the overall farm operation. We'll then proceed to the work. At the end of the session, we'll gather again to assess what we've done. In order to make this work, we need volunteers to come at the start of the sessions and stay for the full time. As I said, we want you to learn about how farms work—how to pick beans, but also what it takes to have a truly sustainable farm. Work sessions also represent an opportunity to build community, hence the group meetings at the beginning and end of each session. There will also be opportunities on Saturday afternoons for less formal activities. Please check our website in the coming weeks for more information on our volunteer programs, including what types of work you can expect on different days.

There is already a lot going on at the farm. Flowers are blooming, the songbirds have returned, and the farm staff is busy preparing for a great growing season. I hope you'll stop by soon to see all that's happening.

Coming Up....

April 28 (Monday)

At 7:00PM, at the Newton Free Library, Greg Maslowe (our Farm Manager) and Grey Lee (Executive Director of Land's Sake in Weston) will address the importance of community farms in our cities and towns. This talk is part of the Green Decade Environmental Speaker Series. For more information call the Newton Free Library at [617-796-1360](tel:617-796-1360).

May 10 (Saturday)

Vernal Pool Walk and Farm Fun -- please read below

May 30 and 31 (Friday and Saturday)

Barn Clean Out -- please read below

June 7 (Saturday)

Please join us for an afternoon of fun at the farm as we kick off our 2008 season. We will open our on-site Farm Stand, lead tours of the Farm, have activities for kids, and give you the opportunity to socialize with other interesting people in this community. Our website will have more information soon!

June (dates to be decided)

Two education classes are planned: Composting Your Yard Waste and Container Gardening with Edible Plants. Stay tuned for more information.

Vernal Pool Day -- Saturday, May 10th

Join Newton Community Farm & The Newton Conservators as we celebrate spring and Newton's vernal pools. Vernal pools are incredibly diverse ecosystems, supporting a wide array of amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates. Join us as we explore vernal pool life, and discuss conservation issues facing Newton Vernal Pools.

Schedule of Events:

10:00 - 12:00 -- Vernal Pool Walk. Meet at west end of Saw Mill Brook Parkway, at trailhead to Charles River Path. We will visit several vernal pools; for those of you who attended the walk last year, we will visit different pools. Flat terrain, fairly easy walk. Adults & children welcome.



12:00 - 1:00 -- Take a break, or picnic at the farm (please bring your own picnic).

1 - 4:00 -- Vernal Pool Extravaganza back at Newton Community Farm. Come and see vernal pool critters under the microscope, learn to identify frog & toad calls by ear, check out the turtle display, read maps of Newton's vernal pools, and more! Adults & children are welcome.

This event will be canceled by heavy rain - to receive cancellation notice, or for additional information, email Jon Regosin at berkowitz.regosin@verizon.net.

[directions to Sawmill Brook Parkway from the farm](#)

Woodworking Class at the Farm

Tom Libby, our Assistant Farmer, is interested in starting a woodworking class on the Farm. Guided by his interest in community building and sustainability, Tom will offer a 2-session class this spring using old lumber from the barn and hand tools. The group's first project will be a large, round picnic table to be used on the farm as a gathering spot and as a workbench for future classes. Since no power tools will be used, kids are welcome to participate in this class with their parents. People should bring tools, gloves, their favorite liniment and be ready to have some fun.

The fee for the 2-session class is \$25 per person. The class will take place on two Saturdays in May or early June. If you are interested, please contact Tom Libby directly and let him know what Saturdays you are available. Tom would also like to hear from people who are interested in future woodworking classes.

Tom can be reached at tomlibb@gmail.com.

Barn cleanout work days May 30 and 31

On Friday and Saturday, May 30 and 31, we will need volunteers to clean out the barn to get ready for the barn renovation. Please show up any time between 8:30 and 5 pm either (or both) days. Wear sturdy clothing, bring work gloves, and rain gear if necessary (we will work rain or shine).

We have already identified the valuable and historic items that we want to keep. We have also removed the metals that can be sold or recycled.

Our plan for the two days is to clean the barn, the farmhouse basement, and the grounds, of the remaining stuff that accumulated over the years but has no use to us. We will have a dumpster in the driveway to take it all away after the weekend. Any questions, please call Peter Barrer [617-630-0923](tel:617-630-0923) or Greg at the farm ([617-916-9655](tel:617-916-9655)).

Honey...coming soon

Honey bees will be a new addition to the farm this spring. We hope to install four hives of Italian honeybees in the next few weeks. Italian honey bees are very gentle and are good honey producers! Honeybees are an integral part of our eco-system, providing the prime method for pollination on the planet and have a very intricate and interesting colony structure. The colony generally consists of a Queen bee, her attendants and workers (all women), and a smaller number of male bees used for mating purposes. The honeybee is a gentle bee and, unlike wasps and hornets, will not sting you unless you threaten them or the hive. They are not very interested in humans and are mainly focused on flowers and pollination; when you see a flying insect next to your hamburger or drink, don't blame the honey bee! Besides honey, honeybees also provide us with royal jelly, beeswax, and propolis. Increasingly, problems from pollution and global warming, and the effect they are having on some of the important building blocks of our ecology like the honeybee, have been in the news. We are hoping to do our part in combating these ill effects with our hives...and get some sweet rewards in return!

Thanks to all who worked on our Learning Garden!



The weekend of April 11-13 was a busy one at the farm. The year-long planning for the Learning Garden has become a reality. Karen Howard, of Howard Garden Design Inc. in West Newton designed this wonderful space, in concert with Greg and the members of the Ed Committee. The Education Committee scheduled two work parties to begin to actually layout the garden framework. In preparation for the volunteer work days, Ted Chapman, Jenny and Ed Craddock, Janet Springfield and Greg Maslowe laid out the main paths of the Learning Garden with string and contractors' paint and began laying the board edging. Jon Bransfield excavated the paths, and the excess soil was transferred to the orchard. On Friday, the volunteers arrived, eager to dig in, and we were underway. The excavated paths were leveled, and remeasured (measure

twice, dig once.....!) and more edging was added. On Saturday, Ted, Greg and Jenny spent much of the day finishing the rest of the edging and adding gravel. More than 320 board feet of recycled lumber were laid, bolted together, carefully aligned and backfilled. On Sunday, another group of volunteers arrived, many from Newton Serves. Our amazing volunteers shoveled and hauled more than fifteen tons of gravel and stone dust into the paths. Watch for big changes as the Learning Garden begins to develop this season. There will be raised beds, demonstration plots, blueberry bushes, planting done in workshops, as well as special tools and adaptive equipment enabling gardeners with disabilities to plant at the farm.

Farm Wish List

Gloves (preferably leather or with leather palms) in good condition
Rain gear--both jackets and pants
Shovels
Wheel barrows in good condition
3/4 ton or 1 ton pick up truck--long bed
Volunteers who can help with PR, graphic design, and fundraising

If you can help us with these, please contact Greg Maslowe at [617/916-9655](tel:6179169655) or newtoncommunityfarm@comcast.net.



Please contact us if you have any questions about this newsletter, ideas for future issues or if you want to be added to our mailing list. Just email Carol and Gil at carolgil@mac.com. For more information about the Farm, check out our web page at <http://www.newtoncommunityfarm.org/>.

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Newton Community Farm
303 Nahanton Street
Newton, Massachusetts 02459

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