
The Newton Farmer

an e-newsletter from
Newton Community Farm



November 2007

Dear Farm Friends,

Welcome to our last newsletter of the season. This issue features a review by Greg of this year on the farm, including a look at 2008. Read about this year's wonderful Fall Festival, and check out reports from the Education Committee and the Fruit Tree Orchard Team.

We wish everyone a joyous holiday season and a happy New Year. See you next spring!

Your editors,
Carol Rose and Gil Rosen

Year-end notes from Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager

As I write, the snow is falling and the field looks beautiful in its thin blanket of white. 2007 has been, all in all, a very successful year at Newton Community Farm. The weather was much more conducive to farming this year than last—no floods in the spring or frosts in September. It was a very dry summer—a drought in fact—but I'll take that over floods any day. Our well never faltered and we were able to keep everything happily moist.

I'd like to share with everyone a few of the highlights of the 2007 season, as well as some of the things to look forward to in 2008.

Food donations played a prominent role at the farm this year. We donated almost 3,000 lbs. of food to the Newton Food Pantry and hope to give more next year. We also talked quite a bit about the importance of making local, healthy produce available to everyone.

The farm hosted, in May, a meeting of local farmers to discuss food donation programs. Farmers shared logistical ideas (how do you get 3000 lbs. of vegetables from the farm to the food pantry?) and economic models (farming is one of the least profitable business you can possibly go into—how can farms that want to donate food afford to do so?)

During August three groups of in-coming freshman from Boston University came to the farm to do volunteer work and talk about social justice. Discussions ranged from the treatment of migrant farm workers to whether organic farming was economically viable to making sure local organic food isn't just for the wealthy.

The farm was visited in November by a group of young people from Keshet, the Newton Jewish Community After School Program. The theme of their visit was social justice. We discussed the idea of gleaning as presented in the Torah and how this commandment for social justice is reflected in the farm's commitment to supporting the Newton Food Pantry. It was truly wonderful to have so much interest and concern about this aspect of the farm's mission.

2007 was a year of incredible growth for the farm (no pun intended). We increased production to the entire field,

and produced almost 50% more vegetables than in 2006. In addition, we began planting the permaculture beds on the periphery of the field with fruit trees (pears, Asian pears, filberts, and paw paws) and berries (blueberries, blackberries, and strawberries). As these crops mature in the coming years we will have much more fruit to add to our offerings. Which is a good thing because this year the raspberries proved wildly popular, as did the watermelons. It seems there's a real craving for fresh organically-grown fruit.

As probably most of you know, we hired an Assistant Farmer this year. Tom Libby brings a lot of experience to the farm, and a passion for working with people. Tom was hired to work with CSA members and volunteers from the community, and under his guidance our volunteer program has blossomed. Tom's work allows volunteers to be more easily incorporated into the activities of the farm and provides them with more focused attention, making the experience more enjoyable and meaningful. One of the highlights of the volunteer program this year was the number of people who came to the farm as part of their journey towards having their own farm. In an era when farmers are few and far between, yet the need for them is great, it was encouraging to meet so many future growers. I hope that we were able to offer them something useful.

So what's ahead for 2008? As I already indicated, our permaculture beds will continue to come along. The trees and shrubs we've already planted will grow, and we'll add more to these areas as we endeavor not only to grow food for sale, but to model for people how they can utilize even small spaces to grow an amazing range of foods. (Did I mention that we're now growing kiwi fruit and figs?) In addition, we'll continue to increase our field production. As the farm develops and routines are formed, we'll be able to get more and more out of the space that we have. Our goal is to discover just how much produce can be grown on one acre!

Thanks to our neighbors in the Ledgebrook Condominiums, we have a little more space than we used to. Ledgebrook is allowing the farm to use a piece of its land to plant a research and teaching orchard. The orchard will be mostly apples, with a few cherries and peaches. A main goal of the orchard is to compare apples and learn which varieties grow best in our environment. We'll use what we learn in the orchard as the farm pursues its goal of getting Newton homeowners to plant fruit trees and shrubs in their yards.

2008 will also see the farm branching out from fruits and vegetables (again, no pun intended) into livestock. What's that grazing in the field? Cows? No, bees! We're having four bee hives put on the farm in the spring. As we all heard this summer, bee populations across the country are declining due to a new virus. Although we didn't seem to have any shortage of wild bees, we'll be installing our own hives to ensure good pollination (which will be very important as our fruit trees mature) and provide honey for the farm stand. The bees will also be an important educational tool, helping us teach about the interconnection and interdependence of life.

I'm sure there are more new things we'll be doing in 2008, but for now this seems like enough. Winter is an exciting time—a time to rest but also a time to dream and plan. I hope you all have a wonderfully restful winter and join us in the field (or greenhouse) in the spring as we once again begin the sacred act of planting seeds.

The Farm's Second Farm Harvest Festival

A perfect fall day greeted us as we arrived for our Harvest Festival. The straight green rows of the growing beds were freshly groomed by volunteers and staff, inviting visitors to come in for a closer view. Fifty bales of straw surrounded the newly-constructed packed-earth and granite stone stage, providing seating for the festival. "The Boston Front Porch" – eight musicians with banjos, fiddles and guitars, amplified by Avi Faban's professional sound system – opened the festivities with an hour of bluegrass tunes. Sam Fogel, the festival organizer, soon took the stage to welcome guests and introduce the other speakers – Mayor Cohen, Rebekah Smillie (President of the Farm Board of Directors), Greg Maslowe (Farm Manager), and Peter Lewenberg (Chair of the Farm Commission).

Further down the path towards Winchester Street, members of the Education Committee offered information about upcoming educational events as well as tastes of grape and red pepper jellies (made by Jenny Craddock from the farm's grapes and peppers). At a table in front of the barn, Lisa Cohen presented information about the process of canning (sterilizing) farm produce. And inside the barn, Ted Chapman set up a slide presentation on the history of the Angino Farm and its conversion to community-supported agriculture.

At nearby tables, children had their faces painted, made cards, and stamped fabric with onions, lemons, corn, and potatoes to make vegetable print flags. Kids decorated pumpkins with items from nature – hair made from dill



flowers and kale, eyes of radishes and cranberries, and smiles (or frowns) from green beans. A few feet closer to the barn, youngsters and their parents were captivated by Julia Priest, Director of Music Together, who enticed her audience of children and parents to dance in front of the stage.

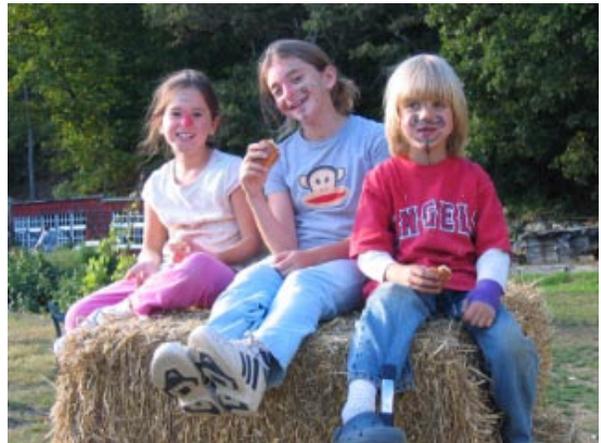
Meanwhile, Tom Libby, the assistant farmer, lead small groups through the planting beds, describing our intensive organic farming method including his favorite topic (making compost) and answering questions from gardeners and budding farmers. Bargains were found next to the farmhouse at our silent auction table. And hot cider, hot soup, and fresh-baked goods were sold around the corner where Jeff Fournier, Chef and Owner of the restaurant “51 Lincoln” in Newton Highlands, demonstrated how to make his delicious squash soup. (Check our website in a few weeks for the recipe!)

We would like to thank our local businesses – Whole Foods, Trader Joes, and Iggy’s Bread – for their donations to the festival, and especially all the individuals (farm volunteers, bakers, activity leaders, sign-makers, etc.) who helped make this day such a success.

Education Committee Report

Less than one year old, the work of the Education Committee is already beginning to bear fruit! Their projects this year included

- An interactive display on sustainable agriculture and information about the farm at the Brookline Climate Action Day in June.
- A course through Newton Community Schools on growing fruit trees.
- Farm work days for Newton Park and Recreation's summer program "Outdoor Adventure" and other high school community service groups.
- Two high school internships.
- Freshman orientation visits from Boston University and Eastern Nazarene College.
- A busy table at the Fall Harvest Festival that included demonstrations and information.
- A “make and take” workshop on composting kitchen scraps with worms and the role of composting in sustainable farming and gardening to replenish nutrients in soil.
- Presentations at local schools on sustainable farming and composting.



Another very exciting project created by the Education Committee is the Learning Garden. Karen Howard, a Newton architect and landscape designer, volunteered her services to design this garden on the farm as a place for all ages to learn. As a handicap accessible space, the garden will promote hands-on learning on topics such as water conservation, senses and color, composting, and small scale sustainable gardening.

As the Learning Garden becomes a reality, the services of volunteers to conduct our programs will be of continuing importance. The committee will continue to build its repertoire of offerings and to support the vision of the farm: preserving the cultural and historic landscape, producing organic food, modeling and teaching sustainable agriculture and renewable energy to all. For more information about the Education Committee or the Learning Garden, please contact Greg at newtoncommunityfarm@comcast.net or [617-916-9655](tel:617-916-9655).

Join The Fruit Tree Orchard Team and Participate in Planning our Orchard!

Learn about Newton Community Farm's plans for a mini demonstration fruit orchard. Our purpose is to demonstrate that small-sized fruit trees can be grown in urban gardens in a sustainable manner, taking advantage of new developments in disease resistance, tree size, and a wide selection of fruit varieties.

The mini-orchard will be located on the Ledgebrook Annex, adjoining the farm, and we will plant about 20 trees. As part of our team, you can learn about how to select trees, sizes, varieties, disease resistance, and where to buy them. We will also look at how to plant, prune, and fertilize trees; how to get fruit production to begin in two to four years; and how to control pests and protect fruit on the branch.

The team will meet during winter–spring 2008. Contact Sam Fogel at sam@fogel.com or [617-969-9039](tel:617-969-9039) for more information or to join the team.

Farm Wish List

The wish list includes:

- Small dump or flat bed truck
- Agricultural tires for Ford 2600 tractor
- Loader for Ford 2600 tractor
- Air compressor
- Shop lights
- Palm Pilot(s)
- Scale/balance (commercial grade, not for home use)
- Pole saw and loppers
- Tomato cages
- Chalk boards

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

Newton Community Farm is a 501c3 organization so your donations are tax-deductible. For more information about supporting the farm, please contact Jon Regosin at berkowitz.regosin@verizon.net or [617-244-0736](tel:617-244-0736). Thank you!



Please contact us if you have any questions about this newsletter 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 newtoncommunityfarm.org

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