

SUMMER 2010

SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

Good Living and Good Farming – Connecting People, Land, and Communities



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SMALL FARM QUARTERLY - SUMMER 2010

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Cover photo: Youth are given an opportunity to tend their own small farm plots at Gaining Ground
Community Farm in Concord, Massachusetts.

SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

Good Farming and Good Living —
Connecting People, Land, and Communities

Small Farm Quarterly is for farmers and farm families — including spouses and children - who value the quality of life that smaller farms provide.

OUR GOALS ARE TO:

- Celebrate the Northeast region's smaller farms;
- Inspire and inform farm families and their supporters;
- Help farmers share expertise and opinions with each other;
- Increase awareness of the benefits that small farms contribute to society and the environment.
- Share important research, extension, and other resources.

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Cornell Small Farms Program Update

Small Farms Program Welcomes New Staff

Small farms are a growing audience across the Northeast, and the Cornell Small Farms Program is pleased to announce we are greatly expanding our educational services and support to small and beginning farmers with the addition of two new staff.

Thanks to a recent grant award from the USDA, we are excited to welcome aboard Michelle Striney, to work with Erica Frenay on the Northeast Beginning Farmer Project. Michelle comes to us with a full and diverse background that includes a professional gardeners' degree from Longwood Gardens, farmers' market experience, landscape design and project management. She is finishing her thesis for a Masters Degree in Landscape Architecture at Cornell.

We are also thrilled to welcome Matthew Goldfarb, who comes to us from the Farm Institute in Massachusetts where he served as director for 5 years. He began his career in farm-based education and sustainable food production and distribution systems in 1994. Since then he has studied and worked within this field in a number of positions including:

the design and management of diversified farms, consulting work with farms and farm-education organizations, teaching high school biology and agriculture, academic work in Rural Sociology, and completing his MBA from Babson College with a focus on entrepreneurship and creativity. In his new position, Matthew will be focusing on small dairy and livestock issues and conducting much needed small farms research.

Facebook, Twitter for Beginning Farmers

The Northeast Beginning Farmer Project is proud to announce our introduction into the social networking realm! Please visit our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/pages/Northeast-Beginning-Farmer-Project/194847584903) and become a fan, subscribe to our blog at the NY Beginning Farmers website (www.nybeginningfarmers.org), or follow us on Twitter (www.twitter.com/BeginningFarms). These outlets will offer up news, informational resources, sources of support, and tips for the beginning and diversifying farmer, as well as for those who provide support to this audience. Check in frequently for updates on events, topical articles, new videos and much,

much more. If you are a service providers and would like us to feature a resource or event offered by your organization, please contact Erica at ejf5@cornell.edu or Michelle at mls266@cornell.edu

Announcing the Small Dairy Work Team

This summer we will kick off a new statewide work team focusing on small dairy issues in NY. According to the NY Agriculture Statistics Survey, 90% of New York's dairies contain 200 or less cows, and yet this size dairy also has seen the largest exodus from the industry. The new Small Dairy Work Team will help create, and will consist of a broad spectrum of stakeholders from the industry. Fay Benson, Small Dairy Support Specialist with the Cornell South Central NY Regional Dairy Team, and Matthew Goldfarb, Small Farms Program, will facilitate the Work Team. Support for the Team is also coming from Cornell Regional Teams and Cornell ProDairy. The first step this summer will be to establish a leadership team and conduct SWOT analysis of this segment of the industry. There will also be a booth at Empire Farm Days in the Cornell Building, to gather information and suggestions. Stay tuned to more information in the Fall Issue.

Help Us Prioritize Biggest Challenges for New Farmers After Start-up

Cornell's Beginning Farmer Education Enhancement team needs your help prioritizing the challenges and needs of new farmers

after their start-up. This effort is directed at the entire Northeast Region and is an attempt to capture as broad and diverse a beginning farmer sample as possible. Will you complete this survey, and/or share it with farmers you know? if so, please visit:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/BarrierID. The items in the survey were generated by farmers and Beginning Farmer service providers; getting more input from both audiences on prioritizing the items is absolutely critical.

Results from this survey will be used by economic, production and social researchers to guide their efforts toward solving the highest priority beginning farmer problems. USDA and other policy makers are also very interested in the results of this effort to help direct energy toward beginning farmers' most critical concerns.

Again, we greatly appreciate your willingness to help identify key issues and concerns of the Northeast's beginning farmer population. The survey can be accessed at www.surveymonkey.com/s/BarrierID and easily completed online.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Erica Frenay at 607-255-9911 or ejf5@cornell.edu; or Dave Grusenmeyer at 315-453-3823 or dgrusenmeyer@nyfvi.org. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

2010 SMALL ANIMAL & TACK AUCTION SCHEDULE

July	August cont'd.	October
04 Small Animal Auction	15 Small Animal Auction	01-10 Store Fall Sale
10 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	21 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	03 Small Animal & Fall Harvest Auction
17 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	28 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	17 Small Animal Auction
18 Small Animal Auction		
24 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	September	November
31 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	04 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	07 Small Animal Auction
	05 Small Animal Auction	21 Small Animal Auction
August	11 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	
01 Small Animal Auction	18 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	December
07 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	19 Small Animal Auction	05 Small Animal Auction & Holiday Decor
07 Horse & Tack Auction @ 6:00	25 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00	19 Small Animal Auction
14 Merchandise Auction @ 6:00		

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Small Farm Quarterly is Recruiting!

We are looking for several new members to join the Small Farm Quarterly Editorial Team, and we are always looking for new writers and photographers. We are especially looking for editors and writers from outside of New York State, so that we can improve our coverage of New England and Pennsylvania small farm issues and innovators. All SFQ editors and writers are volunteers. If you're interested, please contact Violet Stone at 607-255-9227 or vws7@cornell.edu

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COWS AND CROPS**Dairy Farm Pushes the Limits:
Grass and Genetics at Dharma lea farm**

By Paul Van Amburgh

Dairy farmers are suffering in the midst of dairy's worst financial crash ever. With the very existence of the family dairy farm in question, 2010 promises many foreclosures, for both conventional and organic farms.

As dairy farmers, my wife Phyllis and I understand that we do not control the greater economy or the price we are paid, but we can take charge of our cost of production. The key to doing so lies in mimicking grass-eating mammals in nature, a very different paradigm than industrial agriculture.

By following ecological and organic principles, we are finding a way to navigate the economic challenges of dairy farming. This path will enable us to produce milk that is far healthier than most milk available today. Here are some of the unconventional choices we have made.

Grazing and seasonal dairying

The very center of our production model is grass, aka pasture. Our 150 acres of pasture is divided into over 40 paddocks. The herd enters a new paddock every twelve hours during the grazing season, which starts around May 1 and finishes around Thanksgiving in our area of New York. As each paddock is grazed in turn over the season, the cattle fertilize it by distributing their own manure. We only need a tractor to mechanically spread the small amount of manure that accumulates in the milking barn. Eventually our team of Clydesdales will spread this manure with a horse-drawn spreader.

When we arrived at this new farm in 2007, we started by reseeded pastures. We quickly realized that the cattle preferred "older" areas, land where corn stubble had grown back to weeds and indigenous grass species, and an old hayfield that had been frost-seeded with clover. These fields had many diverse plants, including weeds whose long taproots bring minerals up to the surface. It seemed to us that seeds of the plants preferred by the cows were already in the soil, so reseeded

was a waste of money. This observation also fits with our belief that plant diversity is a key to herd health.

In imitation of natural systems (calving in nature takes place in May/June), the herd is spring seasonal -- all the cows calve in late April and May. We continue to milk through the end of December.

This schedule allows us to best utilize pasture, our most valuable asset, and minimize the amount of feed that must be harvested or purchased. Our cows get to graze on new pasture prior to calving. This is important for their body condition and overall health, as a herd that isn't fed any grain. We also like this timing economically, since we do not have to bridge the gap between March and adequate grass growth (by May 1) with high quality feed. In mid summer when hot weather causes a slump in grass growth, we can more easily supplement the pasture with good hay.



The right kind of cow for a grainless pasture based system is wide and deep.



All replacement calves are raised on their mothers.

Photos by Dietrich Gehring

Extending the grazing season deep into the fall very significantly increases the profitability of a grazing farm. To keep the pasture plants productive over such a long season requires close and intensive management. Paying attention to both the cows and the grass has taught us what we need to know.

Grain-less dairy leads to breeding decisions

Very few dairy farmers rely entirely on pasture and forages like hay for cow feed. We stopped feeding grain to our dairy herd in October 2008. It has taken a full year for the cows to adjust.

We believe that grain (i.e. corn and soy) and its subsidies are at the center of the disaster we call industrial agribusiness.

Feeding lots of grain to produce beef or milk is unsustainable. There was a time when grain was so dear that no one fed it to livestock. With looming issues such as peak fossil fuels, water depletion, and global climate change, we feel that intensive grain feeding of livestock will very soon be economically unviable once again.

When we quit feeding grain, we owed our grain supplier \$15,000. We hadn't been able to keep up with our payments because additional milk production due to feeding the grain was not covering the bill. When we quit feeding grain, we were able to pay off this debt in fairly short order. We knew then that we had made the right decision. Some of the bigger Holsteins did not fare well without having expensive concentrated feed (like grain) brought to them, and we had to sell them. Initially, we tried molasses as an energy supplement, but it was too expensive and not really necessary for most of the cows.

Dairy 14

Resource Spotlight**Planning for Effective Crop Rotation on Diversified Farms**

By Charles Mohler

Good crop rotation practices are desirable for any farm. Some of the advantages that can be obtained from a well planned crop rotation include suppression of soil borne diseases, better weed control, suppression of some insect pests, improvement of soil quality, increased nutrient availability and reduced nutrient losses.

Although many of the benefits of crop rotation are well understood scientifically and widely acknowledged by farmers, implementing a good crop rotation on a diversified vegetable farm is remarkably difficult. Many vegetable farms produce 30 or more crop species and the number of distinct varieties is usually even greater. Since acreage varies greatly from crop to crop, simply following crop A with crop B is rarely possible. Moreover many crops are planted at multiple dates during a typical growing season to achieve a more continuous harvest. These various plantings often require different preceding or following crops or cover crops. Finally, many farms consist of a mosaic of soil types and field conditions which restrict which crops can be profitably grown in a particular field.

To assist growers in planning crop rotations, the Northeast Organic Network (NEON) developed a book *Crop Rotation on Organic Farms: a Planning Manual*, edited by Charles L. Mohler and Sue Ellen Johnson which is available from the publisher NRAES (<http://www.nraes.org/>). To ensure practical recommendations, the book is solidly based on farmer practice. NEON consulted two groups of farmers about their rotation practices. First, we assembled a panel of 12 exemplary growers nominated by farming organizations throughout the Northeast. Farmers participated in a three day process designed to help them communicate exactly how they go about planning crop rotations. The second group consisted of 11 other farms. We did intensive case studies of their entire farming system, one aspect of which was crop rotation.

All of these growers rejected the textbook approach of Crop A follows Crop B follows Crop C. First, such an approach could not accommodate either the diversity of their crops or the complexity of their field conditions. Second, it was impractical due to unforeseeable effects of weather and changes in markets and labor availability. Instead, all growers focused on the ad hoc placement of particular crops in particular locations based on cropping history and field conditions. These exemplary growers knew the geography of their fields intimately. In addition, most kept careful records of what crops had been grown in each location during the past several years. They then chose the most suitable location for each crop. Although some crop locations might be suboptimal, overall, the farm would prosper. In addition to yields in the current year, they included aesthetic considerations, issues relating to ease of harvest, and constraints their choices placed on future cropping plans.

A relatively small subset of these growers did their ad hoc sequencing of crops within the context of a larger general rotation scheme. Some rotated vegetables with hay or with years with fallow and cover crops. A few rotated between broad categories of crops, with the particular crops within each category chosen on an ad hoc basis.

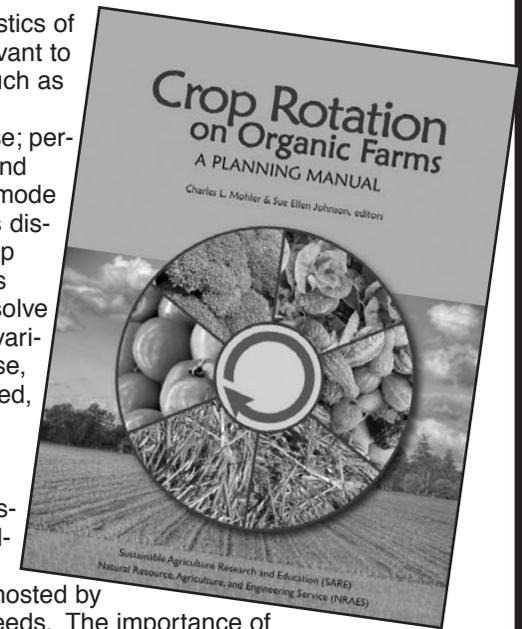
We took the strategies provided by these growers and developed a systematic procedure for assisting other growers (i) to develop generalized rotation plans and (ii) to allocate crops to field locations whether they use a generalized rotation plan or not. In addition, *Crop Rotation Planning on Organic Farms* contains information to help growers in making the necessary choices involved in rotation planning. This includes sections on use of rotation in the management of diseases, insects, weeds, soil health and mineral nutrition; extensive examples of crop rotations from real farms; the relation of intercropping to crop rotation; and crop rotation during transition to organic production. Roughly one third of the book contains reference tables that list

characteristics of crops relevant to rotation such as family and mineral use; persistence and dispersal mode for various diseases; crop sequences that help solve or create various disease, insect, weed, and soil problems; and weed characteristics, including crop

diseases hosted by various weeds. The importance of tracking crop locations on the farm from year to year is emphasized. Tools are provided to make the creation of detailed field maps easy.

Crop Rotation on Organic Farms can be used in a variety of ways. It provides extensive reference material on a wide variety of topics related to crop rotation. It includes topical essays written in accessible language that explain how to address particular issues in crop rotation and farm design. By reading about how other growers solve problems, it provides inspiration on better ways to farm. Finally, it provides a step-by-step planning procedure that will allow even a beginning farmer to sequence crops as effectively as a highly experienced grower.

Charles Mohler is a Senior Research Associate with Department of Crop and Soil Sciences at Cornell University. He can be reached at 607-255-0199 or clm11@cornell.edu.



FARM ENERGY

From Bats to Biodiesel, Hunt Country Vineyards Saves Energy & Dollars

By Adrienne Masler

Priorities and Strategies

As sixth-generation stewards of their Branchport, NY land, the Hunt family is invested in doing what it takes to care for their land. Their interest in stewardship and sustainability go hand-in-hand with their interest in saving money and energy. "We want to still operate when the power goes out," says Art Hunt. Many of their strategies result in net energy savings, even those that seemingly have little to do with energy. For example, encouraging bats to live on the farm helps to keep the insect population down, which means that the Hunts spend less money, time, and fuel on pesticide application. When they do spray, their tractors are powered with biodiesel, thanks to used cooking oil from local restaurants. The Hunts have paid close attention to energy conservation throughout their facilities expansion, especially insulation, and are considering the use of thermal pumps to heat and cool their buildings. Further reductions in electricity costs will be achieved with the use of renewable energy technologies: a vertical wind turbine was installed in the summer of 2009.

Wind Energy

Vertical wind turbines are designed to work at slower wind speeds than propeller turbines. The Hunts worked with Nevada company Mariah Power to install the turbine as a demonstrator. The turbine generates up to 1.2 kW of electricity - about 2000 kW hours per year - which is enough to meet one quarter of the annual energy needs of the average American home. The farm's electricity usage is about 15 kW per hour, so they aren't expecting a significant impact on their electric bill from the 1.2 kW turbine. However, if this turbine meets its rated capacity and productivity, it will be replaced with a higher-capacity turbine. The turbine will be connected to the farm's existing circuitry and the electricity will be used to offset the power purchased from the utility company. Hunt Country is undertaking this venture without an external source of funding because the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) has not yet approved Mariah Power turbines; the cost to purchase and install the turbine is \$6000. NYSERDA approval of Mariah Power's turbines is contingent on the company's submission of the results of government tests, which were favorable.

Opportunities for Improvement

Determining how much money the Hunts have saved through their efforts is difficult because their energy usage has changed dramatically over the years, but one example illustrates the dramatic difference that smart energy use can make. As the winery's facilities expanded, their tanks were moved outside, where they needed to be heated in the winter and cooled in the summer. The tanks got a new building in 2008, and simply creating a more controlled environment saved the Hunts about \$1000-\$2000 in heating costs over the winter - about 10% of their costs the previous winter. Those savings aren't enough to satisfy Art, who believes that they could save \$8000 with better planning. "We use way too much electricity and propane right now," he says, because wine tanks and buildings often require heating and cooling at different times. As part of the farm's energy strategy the Hunts are investigating the possibility of installing heat



Composting grape pomace recycles nutrients.

Photo by Hunt Country Vineyards

pumps, which transfer heat from the ground or the air to where it is needed (or vice versa) instead of generating more heat.

Even the types of grapes grown in the vineyards can affect Hunt Country's energy use. The Hunts are growing more hybrids, a strategy that helps to save energy and work because the hybrids are more dependable, cold hardy, and disease resistant. Growing hybrids also provides greater assurance of a successful harvest, because European varieties aren't as cold hardy. Composted pomace left over from pressing grapes is another tool the Hunts use to return nutrients and organic matter to their soil.

To learn more about Hunt Country Vineyards, visit <http://www.huntcountryvineyards.com/>. To learn more about Mariah Power, visit <http://www.mariahpower.com/> and <http://windspire.info/>.

Adrienne Masler was a student intern at the Cornell Small Farms Program in 2009. She graduated from Cornell with a degree in Agricultural Sciences and is currently an intern at Calypso Farm and Ecology Center in Ester, Alaska. She may be reached at amm428@cornell.edu.



The new turbine generates up to 1.2 kW of electricity which is enough to meet one quarter of the annual energy needs of the average American home.

Photo by Mariah Power



As sixth-generation stewards of their farm, the Hunt family is invested in sustaining the farm for the future.

Photo by Art Hunt

Resource Spotlight

USDA Rural Development Grant Makes Chautauque County Maple Producer More Energy Efficient

By Thomas Becker

Doug and Linda Fairbanks own and operate a maple production facility in Chautauque County, New York where they produce approximately 1,200 gallons of maple syrup annually. The equipment used in converting the raw sap to maple syrup was outdated and inefficient. They applied and were awarded a grant from USDA Rural Development via the Rural Energy for America Program to help purchase a new reverse osmosis machine and a new heat combustion chamber. These two items helped increase the efficiency of their operation and saved them money and time in the evaporation process. Also the new combustion chamber has an automatic fuel shut off safety mechanism in case the flame goes out. The new reverse osmosis machine is about twice as efficient as the old machine as the raw sap comes into the machine at 1.5-2% sugar and goes out at about 10% sugar versus the old machine at 6% sugar.



Fairbanks Maple Products, Sugar Shack, Chautauque County, NY
Photograph by Thomas Becker

USDA Rural Development's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) provides grants and loan guarantees to farmers and rural small businesses to purchase and install renewable energy systems or make energy efficiency improvements. Most rural projects that reduce energy usage in existing buildings and processes and result in savings for the agricultural producer or small business are eligible as energy efficiency projects. These include projects such as retrofitting lighting or insulation, or purchasing or replacing equipment with more efficient units. Eligible renewable energy projects include projects that produce energy from wind, solar, biomass, geothermal and hydrogen. Last year, 39 New York projects received more than \$1.4 million through the program.

For more information on USDA Rural Development programs, contact the New York State Office at (315) 477-6400 or visit Rural Development's website at www.rurdev.usda.gov/ny.

Thomas Becker is an Area Specialist with USDA Rural Development in Bath. He can be reached at 607-77-7398 ext. 4 or Thomas.Becker@ny.usda.gov.

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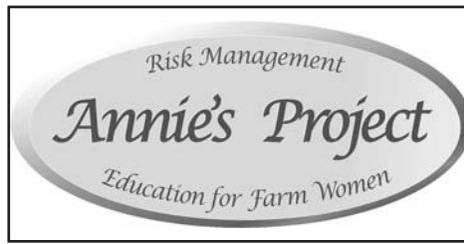
WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE**Annie's Legacy**

By Susan Neal

Farm and ranch women are hard-working, resourceful and intelligent. Many are quite outspoken. Some are very much ahead of their time. Annette Kohlhausen Fleck was one such woman. Working as a grade school teacher in the 1940's, she dreamed of one day marrying a farmer. In 1947 this dream came true when she married Frank Fleck, an Illinois farmer. For 50 years, Annette and Frank weathered good times and bad. They raised four children. They battled family pressures, government regulations, taxes, hard work, low profitability, weather challenges, and livestock complications. Through it all "Annie" kept the farm and the family going. She taught herself about record keeping, deadlines, marketing, taxes, and farm management. She encouraged her husband to take off-farm work while she managed their agricultural pursuits. She bore the criticism of those who disapproved of a woman seizing a management position in farming. She made mistakes and learned from them. She passed her work ethics on to her children. Annie died in 1997, a wealthy and successful woman.

Annie's daughter, Ruth Fleck Hambleton, learned first-hand about the educational and experiential needs of women farm owners and operators. But this did not deter her from also becoming the wife of a farmer. She served as a Farm Business Management and Marketing Educator for University of Illinois Extension for 30 years. Upon her retirement, Ruth founded Annie's Project in honor of her mother and to help fulfill the needs of women farm managers.

Annie's Project is an educational program and support network dedicated to strengthening the skills and roles of women in modern agriculture. According to Oklahoma State University, women who participate in Annie's



Project report growth in their confidence, business competence, and community prestige. Through the program, they foster friendships, discover answers to difficult questions, and build strengths in many areas. According to Madeline Schultz, Extension Educator at Iowa State University, "more than 7,000 women from 21 states have participated in Annie's Project courses, beginning with the initial class taught in Illinois in 2003." Classes are currently offered in 22 states (see sidebar) and interest continues to grow across the nation. Schultz reports that here in the Northeast, twelve courses have been taught in Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania since 2008. Other states in the region are beginning to report strong interest and, as the number of women farm operators continues to increase, it is likely that all states may someday offer Annie's Project courses.

Annie's Project is geared toward women who have an interest in business and in becoming more deeply involved in their farm's operation and management. In the agricultural community, women tend to be an underserved audience who, due to lack of farm experience or business education, present a number of unique learning needs. Some women are accomplished tractor operators, but do not know how to balance a checkbook. Others understand the importance of keeping detailed breeding records, but have never considered keeping detailed records of their expenses. Annie's

though results are likely to improve with increased skill and experience.

With that said, there are a number of ways that a woodland owner can jump ahead on the silvopasture learning curve:

- * Look for on-line resources. There are a number of temperate agroforestry sites with good articles and information on silvopasturing, though much of the information will need to be extrapolated to your own situation. The "Guide to Silvopasturing in New York" will be available by the end of the year through CCE's Agroforestry Center in Acra, NY (<http://www.agroforestrycenter.org>) which will provide detailed technical information for a variety of situations.

- * Develop woodlot management and animal husbandry skills independently, then gradually look for ways to symbiotically combine the two systems in a context appropriate for your own property

- * Seek out local examples of innovative "silvopasturers" to see what has worked well for them (and not so well).

- * Work with a forester who is willing to help you learn and experiment. Expect some resistance at first when you mention the word "silvopasturing", but foresters are trained to achieve landowner goals. They may be lacking on the livestock side of the equation, but their knowledge of vegetation management and forest stand dynamics will be invaluable.

Livestock can be used to organically manage undesirable vegetation in the woods that interferes with goals ranging from aesthetics to wildlife and everything in between. But simply turning animals into an area infested with problematic plants like buckthorn or beech brush and then expecting the problem to disappear is unrealistic. Carefully controlled grazing with the right kinds of livestock at the right time of the year is just part of a larger strategy to deal with nuisance plants. In severely over-grown areas, heavy-duty mowing may be necessary to reduce the height of the target vegetation. Animals then do the rest by browsing the coppice sprouts and other re-growth until weakened and eliminated. There are numerous other creative strategies for



Annette Kohlhausen Fleck, circa 1942.

Project classes offer women safe learning environments without prejudice or competition from their male counterparts in which they can learn how to create marketing plans, estimate retirement costs, examine annual insurance policies, or calculate breakeven prices for crops and livestock. Their mentors are nurturing, understanding, and experienced. A typical Annie's Project consists of six 3-hour sessions and topics often include: legal issues, budgets, financial statements, estate planning, family and business management, marketing of crops and livestock, insurance basics, computers and software, money management, interper-

reducing overgrown areas to a more manageable browsing height if you can't find a local mowing contractor. Likewise, there are a number of viable ways to grow-back desirable plants when the time is right, so creating a silvopasture doesn't exclude the future use of natural regeneration.

One economic benefit of silvopasturing is the generation of frequent, short-term revenues from the wooded portions of properties through the production of valuable goods ranging from breeding stock to quality foods and fibers. These same items can be used for personal benefit and self-sufficiency, which increase the overall enjoyment and utility of woodland. The sale of silvopasture products and the conversion of wooded areas into silvopastures can also contribute to Ag Assessment (NYS RP 305 Program) eligibility requirements, thereby allowing landowners to take advantage of an important tax abatement program on wooded pastures that may not otherwise qualify for the NYS 480-a Forest Tax Law.

Some other important points to consider before taking the plunge into silvopasturing are the time, investment and dedication required to succeed. Develop a written start-up plan for your project that outlines where, when, what, why, how and how much you can spend in terms of both time and money. If you have never raised livestock before, take time to speak with livestock specialists from Cooperative Extension and ask them to refer you to other producers who may share helpful advice. Start small because it will be better to make the inevitable mistakes on a smaller scale, but don't let the fear of initial failure prevent you from exploring the exciting opportunities of silvopasturing!

Brett Chedzoy, is a forester for the Cornell Cooperative Extension South Central New York Agriculture Team, and in his free time raises hork sheep, goats and black angus cattle on his family's farm near Watkins Glen, NY. Brett may be reached by email at: bjc226@cornell.edu

This article was adapted from a factsheet published by Cornell Cooperative Extension South-Central NY Agricultural Team.

sonal skills, taxes; and developing visions, goals, and missions.

To locate an Annie's Project course being offered near you log on to www.extension.iastate.edu/annie. Women may also contact Madeline Schultz directly as she is a member of the national leadership team currently seeking educators to expand Annie's Project. Her contact info is noted in the resource section. A general internet search under "Annie's Project" will provide a number of links to various universities that currently offer the program. The Oklahoma State University link (www.agecon.okstate.edu/annie) even features many handouts, forms, and presentations you can view or print.

Susan Neal is the owner of Wicaway Farm in Beaver Dams, NY. She can be reached at 607-279-0403 or wicawayfarm@aol.com.

Resources:

Annie's National Network Initiative for Educational Success
Iowa State University
1111 NSRIC
Ames, IA 50011
515-294-2136; annies@iastate.edu;
www.extension.iastate.edu/annie
Madeline Schultz: Schultz@iastate.edu; (515) 294-0588

States Currently Offering Annie's Project Courses:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| * Arkansas | * Missouri |
| * Delaware | * Montana |
| * Florida | * Nebraska |
| * Iowa | * New Mexico |
| * Illinois | * North Dakota |
| * Indiana | * Ohio |
| * Kansas | * Oklahoma |
| * Kentucky | * Pennsylvania |
| * Maryland | * South Dakota |
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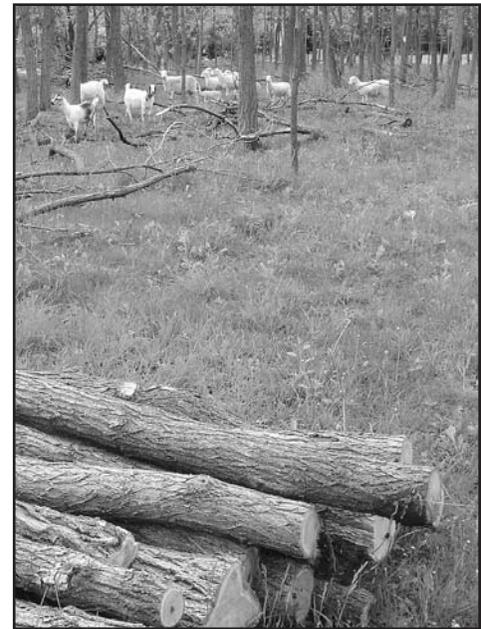
GRAZING**Silvopasturing**

By Brett Chedzoy

Grazing domestic livestock in wooded areas is a common practice in many parts of the world and other regions of the U.S., but became taboo in the northeast in the later half of the 20th century when foresters and conservationists began to educate farmers on the potential harmful impacts of allowing livestock in their woodlots. Damages included excessive soil compaction, debarking of trees, and trampling and browsing of regeneration.

But in the modern world of invasive plants, high land ownership costs, and other challenges to healthy and sustainable woodlands, it is worth taking another look at livestock grazing as an acceptable and valuable tool for the management of some woodlots. The purposeful and managed grazing of livestock in the woods, known as silvopasturing, differs from woodlot grazing of the past in that the frequency and intensity of the grazing is controlled to achieve the desired objectives. New fencing systems, a better understanding of animal behavior and the evolution of "management intensive grazing" have enabled us to gain the necessary level of control over livestock to achieve positive impacts from woodland grazing.

Silvopasturing isn't for every woodland owner nor every woodlot, as it requires a commitment to caring for animals and enclosing portions of the woods with a secure fence to keep your animals in and predators out. Wooded areas on poor growing sites, rough terrain, or with difficult access would obviously have fewer advantages for successful silvopasturing than the converse. But the most important key for success is skilled management of the system. This requires considerable knowledge of both silviculture and grazing. If grazing and silviculture are the "artful application of science", then combining the two systems is certainly a fine art! But this shouldn't discourage the novice from exploring the potential of silvopasturing on their property, even



A young black locust plantation was thinned using the "crop tree thinning" method to allow more sunlight to reach the ground.

Photos by Brett Chedzoy



Grazing animals have strong sensory feedback mechanisms that allow them to selectively combine browse and forage for an optimally-balanced diet.

HORTICULTURE

Incredible Innovations from Overseas: Introducing the Japanese Paper Pot Transplanter

By Erica Frenay

If I said you could put 264 transplants in the ground in less than a minute all by yourself, with no motorized equipment, and no stooping and bending, you'd probably tell me I was full of... bunk. Or something worse. But it's true, and the innovative equipment that makes it possible is finding its way onto farms in the Northeast.

The Paper Pot System

It starts with special paper pots, 264 per tray, which are held together with a water-based glue. They arrive flat and unfold to a honey-comb pattern. Farmers fill the paper pots with potting mix and seed them by hand or with a special seeding tray similar to a vacuum seeder but with no power source. The process, to this point, is quite similar to what many Northeast farmers already use to create flats of field-ready transplants.

When they're hardened off and ready to go in the ground, the labor-saving really begins. Bed preparation needs to be done just as it would be for hand- or water wheel transplanting. But in this case, the work of putting those little plants in the ground will be done by a lightweight transplanting machine that is pulled by hand. Farmers place a single tray of the paper pots in it, anchor the end pot into the soil, and then simply pull the machine along the row. No engine to fuel, few moving parts to maintain, and little soil compaction. The transplanter makes a furrow and packs the soil down over each plant. Because the paper pots are connected to each other in long paper chains, they simply feed themselves off the back of the transplanter and into the furrow. John Hendrickson, a farmer who brought this technology to the US, can put 264 onion plants in the ground in well under a minute. Seeing is believing: search "paper pot transplanter" on YouTube and you'll find some good visuals.

A Tool for Everyone?

Sound too good to be true? Well, it might be, depending on your situation. If your soil is too rocky, too heavy with clay, or just too wet, the transplanter won't perform well, although there is a model with a longer furrow shank that can improve results.



The paper pot transplanter, loaded up with a flat of greens. Few moving parts means less things that can break!

If your farm specializes in cabbage, broccoli, squash, tomatoes, or peppers-any plant requiring more than 6-in spacing-this system won't work, because the paper pots come with a maximum 6-in-long paper chain between them. Also, the cell size of the paper pots is too small to grow a large pepper or tomato transplant.

"It's a great system if you have the right soil and the right conditions - everything needs to be dialed in just right for it to work the way it's meant to," says Andy Fellenz of Fellenz Family Farm in Phelps, NY. "We have the best results with [the transplanter] in the hoophouse because it's been managed more intensively to improve soil texture and I can control moisture easily. Out in the field, we have to spend more time with bed prep, but it's still faster than hand-transplanting."

The paper pot transplanting system also works very well for many cut flower crops, including sunflowers, Amaranthus, Celosia, snapdragons and many kinds of grasses including sorghums, millets, canary grass, and pearl millet. It is of course ideal for ornamental alliums.

Financial Analysis

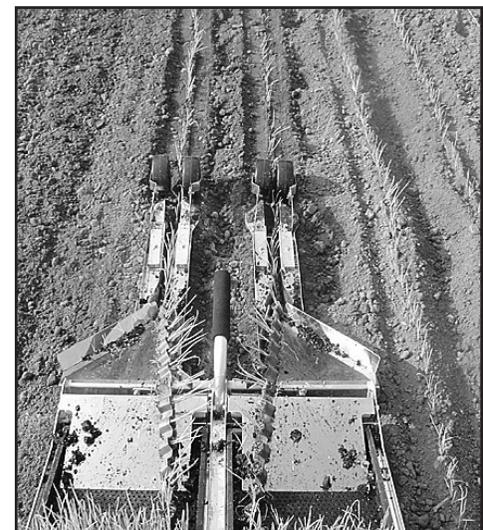
The complete transplanter system can cost less than \$2,000 to over 4,000 depending on your farm scale and which model and accessories you choose. Andy Fellenz, who uses it to plant onions, spinach, lettuce, multiple asian greens, beets, daikon radish, and hakurei turnips on 8 acres of vegetable crops, estimates that it will pay for itself in less than two seasons. He figures this based on labor savings, pointing out that for farms without hired labor, it may be harder to justify these savings. But he also uses the transplanter to get 2 additional cycles of greens from his hoophouses each year, which translates directly to extra money in his pocket.

John Hendrickson, whose farm is in WI, says a farmer he knows in his area reported putting 300 onion transplants in the ground per hour, using a water wheel transplanter and a crew of at least 3 people. Using his paper pot transplanter, John and one other person put in an average of 1400 an hour in a 5-hour day- an incredible savings when you consider that they had fewer workers and no need to pay to keep a tractor running all day. "And it's easier on your body, too," John adds, "because there's virtually no bending or crawling on your hands and knees with the paper pot transplanter."

"I'm not sure I'd plant many onions, shallots, leeks, and scallions on my farm if it weren't for the paper pot transplanter," John says, adding, "There is a two-row unit that plants things twice as fast."

Organic Certification

Both John and Andy are certified organic. Because John was the first person in the country to use the paper pot system, it took some work to get official approval from his certifier, Midwest Organic Services Association (MOSA). "It was difficult because the product



Plant 500 starts in a minute with the two-row transplanter - still lightweight, still pulled by hand

Photos by John Hendrickson, Stone Circle Farm



Tray of onions in long-chain paper pots, ready to go in the ground.

doesn't fall under any categories of the USDA National Organic Program. In the end, MOSA decided that it was allowable because paper mulches are OK. Now NOFA-VT, NOFA-NY, MOFGA, and Washington State certifiers have all approved this system."

There is another interesting product coming from Japan: larger non-chain paper pots. These could be used to start crops like tomatoes that require a bigger pot and a wider planting distance. They could also be used by growers who sell transplants and don't want to rely so heavily on plastic cell trays. But for now, these larger pots are not available without a fungicide impregnation, so they are not suitable for certified organic operations. John is hoping to convince the Japanese manufacturer to make them with the same technique they use for the smaller paper chain pots.

Learn More

John started a new company, Small Farm Works LLC, to import and distribute this transplanting system. Visit www.smallfarmworks.com to see demos, find out specific prices, and learn more about the system.

Erica Frenay co-manages the NE Beginning Farmer Project and is based at the Cornell Small Farms Program in Ithaca, NY. She may be reached at ejf5@cornell.edu or 607-255-9911.

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Non-Dairy Livestock**How to Get Started with Sheep**

By Ulf Kintzeli

Let's assume you have a parcel of land. You would like to get started but you don't know how. Here is an outline.

Pasture. If your parcel of land is a hayfield or has existing vegetation but there are lots of weeds, work with it. Don't plow it up unless you have some extra money to spend. The "native" grasses you have there came for free and you will get them anyhow, even if you plow your field up and re-seed it. Frost seeding, especially frost seeding legumes, is a very inexpensive and very effective way of improving your existing stand of hay.

If your parcel of land was used to grow crops and you have to re-seed the land you will be faced with the question of what pasture mix to use. Many pasture mixes will have components that are either short lived or not optimal for grazing and are not much of a benefit to you.

You can easily create your own pasture mix. I suggest a late heading orchard grass as the grass component and a long-lived legume like White Clover and your mix is actually ready.

Fencing. This will be one of the biggest, if not the single biggest expense. I suggest high-tensile woven wire as perimeter fence. It is the best physical barrier there is to keep sheep in and coyotes as well as stray dogs out. High tensile wire (unwoven) is a less expensive option. While this is less of a physical barrier and more of a mental barrier it is still quite effective. However, it doesn't keep predators out the way woven wire does.

Rotational grazing is a must if you want to graze your sheep in an economical way. That means you need interior fencing as well. For an interior fence you can choose between a portable electric fence and a permanent fence. A portable electric fence can be either posts and single strands of conductive twine or it can be electric netting. A portable fence will be less expensive and it will allow you to change the size and location of your grazing cells depending on the season.

If you are open to the idea, you can check with your local FSA or NRCS office if there are funds or grants available for a cost share program.

Barn/shelter. You will need a barn or shed for the sheep when the weather is severe and you will need a barn for lambing season. Keep in mind that the purpose of a barn for sheep is to protect it from the elements. It is not meant to provide warmth to the sheep. Thus, an old pole barn may suit the purpose just as long as the roof isn't leaking and the side walls are somewhat intact.

Water. Many bigger farms put out underground water lines to provide water for their sheep. That is a rather expensive way of getting water to a few sheep. In addition, it doesn't allow for many changes once the water lines are laid. Instead, I suggest converting a little trailer into a water-hauling trailer. Farm stores sell tanks of various sizes for that purpose. Choose low troughs for sheep; troughs designed for horses or cattle will not allow lambs to reach the water.

Hay. Hay is used for the winter when the grass doesn't grow anymore. For a small flock of sheep buying hay is far more

economical than making it. A decent first cutting hay is nutritious enough to maintain a flock of sheep. I prefer to buy my hay from a local producer. Hay auctions at your local livestock or produce auction may be an alternative. So is buying hay through a known hay exchange website. Round bales are less expensive than small square bales. However, if you use round bales you need the means to move them while small square bales can be handled by hand.

The amount of hay fed in the winter can be reduced by grazing stockpiled pasture. Stockpiling can start as early as August when the grass has stopped producing seed stems and remains vegetative for the rest of the growing season.

Miscellaneous. There are many items that you will need. So, miscellaneous items may add up to a rather large expense. Here is a list of them: Mandatory Scrapie ear tags and appli-



This ancient shed measures 900 square feet and would be suitable to raise up to 60 ewes with lambs
Photographs by Ulf Kintzel

cator (call the USDA veterinary office for "free" tags), hoof cutter, pocket knife, panels for pens and jugs (rough-cut one-by-three Hemlock boards are an ideal and cheap material for making them), buckets, hay feeders (can be easily self-made from livestock panels), a crook to catch sheep, a drench gun for de-worming, a syringe and needles for emergency treatment and for vaccination against Over-eating disease, minerals and a container to feed minerals, and various items for lambing. This list may not be complete but it gives you an outline.

Sheep. After you have your setup in place and the logistics worked out you want to buy your sheep. Nowadays hair sheep like Dorper sheep and Katahdins are very popular since they don't need shearing and are considered thrifty, easy-care sheep. If you choose a different breed I would advise looking for what is locally available rather than getting hooked on a breed first. Local sheep, sheep that are within a reasonable driving distance, are more likely to be adapted to your climate and environment. If economics are important to you, look at how productive the sheep are. You might want to stay away from exotic and rare sheep breeds, as they are exotic or rare for a reason.

Show sheep are likely to have a higher maintenance requirement than commercial sheep of the same breed. It is a good sign if the seller can provide economic records of his or her sheep such as lambs per ewe raised. Economic figures trump registration papers in my opinion. Registration with a breed organization doesn't produce you any more lambs but may possibly help you later selling breeding stock.



This converted trailer is my only means to get the water to my flock. It cost \$800 total and has already served me for more than 12 years

I saved the biggest question for last. How many sheep per acre should you raise? This is the question I am asked the most often and that is the most difficult to answer. Stocking rate depends on many factors such as how improved the pasture is, climate, soil type, rotation schedule, and so forth. I would suggest to start safely and stock fairly low, say no more than two ewes per acre. You can increase the number of sheep over time should your farm have the ability to carry more sheep. I also suggest to never maximize your carrying capacity or to base your carrying capacity on the time when the grass grows best in the spring. If you do that, you will run out of grass sooner than you wish. If you have excess grass instead, you can always graze it in the winter and save some of the money you would have spent on hay.

Ulf Kintzel owns and manages White Clover Sheep Farm (www.whitecloversheepfarm.com) in Rushville, NY where he breeds grass-fed White Dorper sheep. He can be reached at 585-554-3313 or by e-mail at ulf@whitecloversheepfarm.com.

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These electric nettings are used as perimeter fence along a hedge row



Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

Welcome to the Northeast SARE Spotlight! SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) offers grants to farmers, educators, universities and communities that are working to make agriculture more sustainable - economically, environmentally, and socially. Learn about whether a SARE grant would be a good fit for you.

Upcoming SARE Grant Deadlines

Sustainable Community Grant - Due October 19, 2010

Sustainable Community Grants are for projects that strengthen the position of sustainable agriculture as it affects community economic development. Communities and commercial farmers must benefit from these proposals, and the selection emphasis is on model projects that others can replicate. We also look for projects that are likely to bring about durable and positive institutional change and for projects that benefit more than one farm. Grants are capped at \$15,000. Learn more at: <http://nesare.org/get/sustainable-community/>

Partnership Grants - Due November 16, 2010

The purpose of the Partnership Grant program is to support agricultural service providers who work directly with farmers to do on-farm demonstrations, research, marketing, and other projects that will add to our understanding of sustainable agriculture. Sustainable agriculture is understood to be agriculture that is profitable, environmentally sound, and beneficial to the community. The maximum award is \$15,000 and the average award is \$9,550. Learn more: <http://nesare.org/get/partnership/>

Farmer Grants - Due December 7, 2010

The goal of the Farmer Grant program is to develop, refine, and demonstrate new sustainable techniques and to explore innovative ideas developed by farmers across the region. Farmer grant projects should seek new knowledge that other farmers can use and should address questions that are directly linked to improved profits, better stewardship, and stronger rural communities. The maximum award is \$15,000 and the average award is around \$6,500. Learn more: <http://nesare.org/get/farmers/>

Learn more about the Northeast SARE program by visiting www.nesare.org or by contacting Northeast SARE 655 Spear Street University of Vermont, Burlington VT 05405 Phone (802) 656-0471 Fax (802) 656-0500 E-mail: nesare@uvm.edu

Producing Natural Meat for Local Consumers in Connecticut

By Jean King

Interest in natural, local meats is growing in Connecticut, thanks to education and outreach events funded through a professional development grant from Northeast SARE.

Dr. Temple Grandin, notable expert in the humane treatment of animals, made a four day visit to Southern New England on March 1-4, 2010. More than 800 consumers, farmers and students were riveted by her presentations that spoke both from her expertise in animal treatment and her personal experience with autism. Those personal experiences are central to her understanding of how animals think and how we can treat them humanely.

Farmers at her presentation at Old Sturbridge Village went home determined to make immediate changes in care of animals. Animal Science faculty, Agricultural Service Providers, and students at all three colleges flocked to hear her presentations and accompany her on tours of farms. Her knowledge is extensive and solidly research based and she presented a very simple approach to animal treatment based on that.

In another workshop, offered in August 2009, more than 70 farmers and agricultural educators walked the fields of Millstone Farm in Wilton, CT as part of a pasturing and grazing school. The hands-on presentation included demonstrations of the effects of various mowing or clipping heights on pasture regrowth, and information on how to identify different pasture species and about their values for livestock.

Introducing Local Meats to a Broad Audience

The common theme for these two presentations and others to come over the next 2 years is a professional development grant from Northeast SARE to increase engagement of Cooperative Extension Personnel in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, Departments of Agriculture, other state and local agencies, USDA agencies and NGOs, and farmers in the production, processing and marketing of natural locally grown meats and other products for consumers. The partnership project grows from concerns regarding food safety, farm preservation and farm viability that have stimulated renewed interest in the production of local food.

The project anticipates that consumers will benefit from the availability of locally grown natural meats and farmers will benefit from selling their meat directly to consumers. Livestock producers, especially those using pasture as part of diverse forage crop systems, seek basic information and advance research on increasing and improving pasture use and on better options for slaughter and marketing of local livestock meats. Increased sales for producers will enhance farm viability, support preservation of farm land in Southern New England and strengthen local economics.

ings on evenings and weekends instead of during regular business hours.

* Nine out of ten farmers surveyed believe their land will remain in farming, pasture or grazing beyond the next 10 years

* Only about half of those farmers have a plan in place to make sure that will happen.

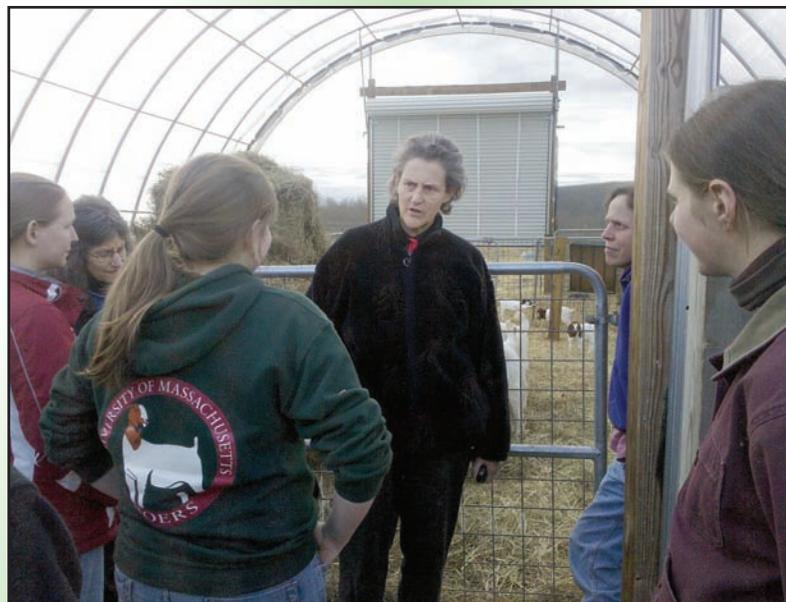
More than 60% of farmers surveyed said they would be interested in a farmer-owned cooperative business for inspected slaughter and processing and nearly 70% respondents expressed interest in a fully inspected mobile slaughter facility.

Most respondents were positive on the idea of participating in a local/regional farmer cooperative approach to marketing. Overall half of respondents indicated they thought their customers prefer local meat because "Local meat means you know your producer."

Future Activities

The project will sponsor a three state conference on cooperative approaches to animal protein production and marketing on February 12, 2011 at Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts. By summer 2010 the project will have an on-line networking presence that will let farmers, providers and educators communicate more fully among themselves on all of these issues.

This project will also sponsor future workshops on live animal stock handling that incorporate Temple Grandin's food animal handling principles, weighing and grading of live animals and carcass evaluation.



Dr. Temple Grandin with students at the UMASS farm on March 2, 2010
Photos by Jean King



Participants in a pasturing/grazing presentation at Millstone Farm in Wilton, CT August 2009

Survey Results

Direction for project activities comes from a survey of meat producers in the three states, an electronic survey designed by the project team and conducted during February and March 2009. The survey was sent to 285 farmers and a total of 117 responses were received. The SARE Project Team is using the information from the survey to design training and technical assistance activities for providers throughout the region.

Overall 75% of respondents were part-time farmers. There are significantly fewer part-time farmers in MA (53%) than in CT (87%) or RI (94%). The high incidence of part-time farmers has implications for how and when trainings are scheduled, e.g., holding meet-

DVD's of Grandin's presentation at Old Sturbridge Village are available at www.osv.org

Jean King is a food policy consultant in Connecticut. She may be reached at 860-916-7367 or jeancking@gmail.com. To learn more about the project, contact Michael T. Keilty, Sustainable Food Systems Coordinator, University of Connecticut, michael.keilty@uconn.edu

Need Info?

Visit the Cornell Small Farms Program online at www.smallfarms.cornell.edu

Small Farm Quarterly Youth Pages

The Youth Pages are written by and for young people. Many thanks to the 4-H Teens from Seneca County who contributed to this issue. We believe there's a bright future for young farmers in the Northeast. Whether you live on a farm or only wish you did, we'd love to hear from you!

More information about the Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development program can be found at: <http://nys4h.cce.cornell.edu>

The Training of Bella and Wetacchi

By **Dusty Ward and Kristen Faillace, Seneca County**

We are currently working on breaking our almost three year old horses. Bella is our mare and Wetacchi is our gelding. We have had them since they were one year olds.

Bella is half Paint and half Tennessee Walker. She is sneaky and likes to get into mischief. I can't tell you how many times she got under the fence (but not since my dad put electric fence around the yard). Wetacchi is a Paint, and he's just a little taller than Bella. He is very loveable - they both are.

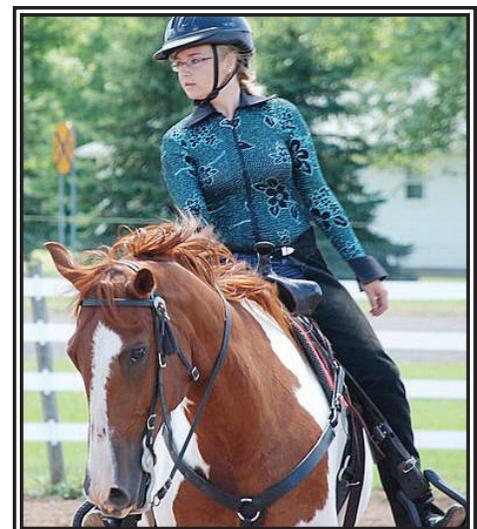
We have been doing all the ground work with them since we got them. Last summer until it got too cold we worked with Bella and

Wetacchi on Tuesdays and Thursdays after school and weekends with help from a friend. They both stand good when we pick up their feet. We have done the plastic bag trick all over their body, to get them used to strange sounds, so not to get spooked. They have been in and out of the trailer lots of times and conquered that fear. We have also been lunging them.

We have also ridden them - Dusty on Wetacchi and me on Bella - only at a walk, and we have practiced backing up. But even before we got on them, they had to get used to the bit and the weight of the saddle. This spring our mission is to have them trot and even lope. Next year we hope to bring Bella and Wetacchi to the county fair.



Kristen Faillace is excited to be riding at the annual Seneca County Fair.



Schooling her horse Choppy in English Riding, Senior Rider Dusty Ward gets the job done.

4-H Teaches

By **Nicole Ferrara, Seneca Saddle Club, Seneca County**

Hi, my name is Nicole Ferrara, I am in fifth grade.

I got involved in 4-H through a friend. The year I joined, a new club formed. We are the Seneca Saddle Club. Since some of us are from different towns we agreed on Seneca because it's our county. We are learning about caring for horses, grooming, feeding, hoof care, showmanship, and other things. We have gone on trips to different farms

and learned about different breeds of horses and different training techniques. My favorite breed is the Fjord (fee-ord). My favorite thing to do with horses is ride bareback. I also feel that when you groom your horse it is a bonding experience.

I also enjoy working with dogs. I show a dog named Bacardi, she is a Chessie (Chesapeake Bay Retriever). She is my friend's dog. I show and help train her in novice rally, and beginner obedience. I'm also showing in grooming & handling for the first time. I have a dog of my own, her

name is Dora. I don't show her but I have worked with her.

I have done two different public presentations as a 4-Her. The first was on Fjord Ponies and the other was about Chesapeake Bay Retriever dogs. This is an opportunity to get up and speak in front of many people, I like doing that!

Right - Nicole Ferrara of the Seneca Saddle Club and Seneca County 4-H Dog Program with trainer Harriet "Penny" Haynes is training Bacardi, a Chesapeake Bay Retriever to do agility weave poles.



Horse Sense

By **Jay Smith, Seneca County 4-H Alumnus**

I am a 21 year-old former 4-H'er and soon-to-be college graduate of SUNY Cobleskill; I am working towards a Bachelor of Technology in Animal Science, with an Equine concentration. While I did not always know I wanted a career in equine management, I have always had a passion for horses - from the Breyer model horses and stuffed animals, to the horsey books, to the pony rides, and the farm visits. When I was in high school I learned of and considered actually making a career out of equine science - and that is where 4-H came in.

When I was 14, I decided to join a local 4-H horse club in Ontario County. It was through the multitude of 4-H-sponsored activities - field trips, riding lessons, demos, lectures, fair booths, public presentations - that I became immersed in equine knowledge. I continued my 4-H experience as an independent member in Seneca County, where I joined the Horse Bowl and Hippology teams, which took me through county and state competitions. As I neared the end of my high school career, I had become much more aware of the potential that lay behind my interest in horses; my 4-H experience, albeit short, was compelling. Using the combined resources of my high school guidance office and of the local 4-H extension offices, I made the decision to attend the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources at SUNY Cobleskill, to major in Animal Science with an Equine concentration. During my three years at Cobleskill, I was taught the knowledge and skills to build a solid career upon my interest in horses. I am currently performing my internship on a Thoroughbred breeding and racing farm in Kentucky, upon completion of which I will receive my degree.

4-H afforded me the knowledge, experiences, and life skills that I use to this day. I'm grateful to have had the experiences to gain skills in leadership, teamwork, dedication, integrity, and compassion for animals and humans alike.



Jay Smith pictured holding one of the new arrivals at the Suny Cobleskill barn.

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Moooving to the Beat of the Cow

By Lexi & Kelly Thompson, Seneca County

We live on Canoga Spring Farm in Seneca Falls where we have a dairy farm with 350 milking Holstein cows and 350 heifers and calves. Having grown up on a farm, we have a love of all animals, especially cows and horses, and of course, dogs and cats. We especially like showing calves at our county fair through our 4-H program. We enjoy caring for the calves and during show season take extra care to brush, clip, wash, and teach them to lead. We have learned from past 4-H members, now adults, the

proper way to lead and show our calves for showmanship.

The 4-H program gives kids an opportunity to participate in many activities that they otherwise may not have had a chance to do. For example, kids who don't own any cattle can "borrow" a calf from our farm to show in the 4-H show.

It is a lot of work, but also fun and something we enjoy. We have learned much responsibility from working with and showing our calves.



Sisters Lexi and Kelly Thompson are seen outside the dairy show ring with their cows.

Hopping Down the Rabbit Trail

By Charles "Chaz" Hardin, Independent Member, Seneca County

I have loved rabbits all my life and for the past 11 years the 4-H has given me the opportunity to grow my goals in the project. I started out with just a rabbit for a pet, and then found out that you could actually show rabbits at shows just like dogs. This inspired me to not only get a few more rabbits, but actually show some of them at a local rabbit club show in Orleans County. After about 9 years, I am still going to that same show and enjoying my hobby and all my friends at the show. Without the guidance of my 4-H leaders in my county and from others my hobby wouldn't be possible.

After a few years just showing at 4-H shows, my interest in showing rabbits grew to where

I wanted to go to a rabbit show every weekend. To do this I would have to go into a new showing system. There was a ARBA (American Rabbit Breeders Association) rabbit show coming Seneca Falls that I really wanted to go to. I ended up bringing a few of my rabbits that did very well at the 4-H shows and I thought I would really do good at an ARBA show. But that wasn't the case. Instead my rabbits didn't do well. I was blown out of the water, but I got back up and started to talk to the rabbit breeders with the rabbits that beat mine. 4-H has taught me to learn from other people to better myself and in this case, my rabbits. I talked to a breeder that raised the breed that I had and asked them a few questions that I needed to know and ended up getting a few rabbits from them to start my foundation. After talking to the breeder, I learned many

things that were taught to them by their 4-H leaders. And pretty much all the people that I talked to that day started raising rabbits from 4-H and have learned just like I was doing.

From raising a few rabbits when I got started, my rabbitry now consists of about 200 holes - filled at any given time. I have shown my rabbits at many of the 4-H and ARBA shows in all corners of the state and have even traveled to other states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Vermont, Kentucky, and even San Diego, California. With the leadership and help from my county and other neighboring counties, I have grown into a very active member in the New York State Rabbit and Cavy Breeders Association, and the specific rabbit breed clubs. I have used my experiences and lead-

ership skills that I have learned being an active member of 4-H to teach and help others that need the guidance and knowledge that I have already received. I am the current Vice-President of the New York State Rabbit Breeders Association, and am running for Director of the Tan rabbit club for District 7. I have realized over the years that all the information that I learned through my 4-H experiences has only made me a better person to my love of the hobby and a better person in the county, state, country, and my world.

The following link is for the New York Rabbit and Cavy Breeders Association website: www.nyrcba.com. For any questions, you can contact anyone on the contact page, including me, Charles Hardin (Vice-President), and please feel free to contact me for any type of questions that you may have.

SMALL FARM SPOTLIGHT

Small is Beautiful: Making a Living with 12 Cows on Wake Robin Farm

By Adrienne Masler

FROM VEGETABLES TO DAIRY

After operating a vegetable CSA for six years at Wake Robin Farm in Jordan, NY, Meg and Bruce Schader agreed that they would rather milk cows. Meg and Bruce were inspired to keep their farm small when they heard about a friend's grandfather who sent his four children to college on his income from milking 12 cows. In order to make their new operation viable, they built a creamery and learned how to produce yogurt in 2006. "We had the idea that we could just transition like snapping our fingers," says Meg, but they quickly learned that it wouldn't be that easy. Despite challenges - the pasteurizer arrived six months late and Meg needed an appendectomy in 2006 - Wake Robin Farm is now making a name for itself and the Schaders have expanded their product line to include bottled milk and artisan cheeses.

STARTING OUT

Before embarking on the transition, the Schaders researched on-farm milk processing. They learned that yogurt was the best product for a start-up because it's easier to make than cheese and has more value than bottled milk. They created a business plan with assistance from NY FarmNet, which Meg says has helped them to focus their goals and secure funding. She adds that loans provided their working capital for the first few years. Their debt-to-income ratio was intimidating at first, but after three years and a lot of hard work, the numbers look better. The management of the dairy is much different from the CSA: all the income from CSA memberships was available by June of each year and the Schaders had a solid number to work with for the rest of the year.

When growing vegetables, they could also predict their input costs (e.g., seeds) with relative ease. Now they're learning how to juggle expenses for a variety of supplies such as yogurt cups, vanilla, maple syrup, and their delivery truck. Meg points out that a price difference of 1 or 2 cents per yogurt cup makes a big difference when she's ordering thousands of cups. Through it all, "the energy came from our vision - a vision can get you through anything if you really want it to," says Meg. Now they're milking 12 cows on 45 acres of hay and pasture. In the summer months, the cows are rotated to fresh pasture every 12 hours, and in the winter they are let out for exercise and are fed hay and about 5 to 10 pounds of organic grain per day; the grain helps to keep the milk components high.

FINDING THEIR NICHE

Though Meg points out that all farms will find their own niches, Wake Robin is unique for more than its size. All of the milk is processed on-farm and they don't buy in any additional milk. There's no bulk tank - instead, the Schaders milk into 10-gallon cans, which enables them to use milk from different cows for different products. They usually use milk with the highest butterfat content for the yogurt, which they make rich and creamy.

Meg credits family as the linchpin of Wake Robin's success. Bruce comes from a family of farmers; they own the land and some of the equipment. Meg's family helps to take care of 9-year-old Hugh and made a loan to the farm. "Banks often don't know how to look at farms," Meg says, but in 2008 they were able to get capital through Farm Credit's new Farm Start program.



The Schaders plan to increase on-farm sales

Meg and Bruce are committed to running the farm themselves and making it work with the land, animals, and equipment that they have. It flies in the face of traditional economic thinking, which emphasizes growth, to ask as Meg does, "How can we stay small forever?" Wake Robin is poised for a different sort of growth by expanding their product line and by increasing their retail sales. Currently the yogurt is wholesaled to local stores and the milk and cheese are sold on-farm and at the farmers market. Meg is inspired by the book, *Inquiries into the Nature of Slow Money: Investing as if Food, Farms, and Fertility Mattered*, which challenges individuals and businesses to grow in social ways, not just in terms of the economic bottom line.

To learn more about Wake Robin Farm, visit <http://www.wakerobinfarm.org/>.

Adrienne Masler was a student intern at the Cornell Small Farms Program in 2009. She graduated from Cornell with a degree in Agricultural Sciences and is currently an intern at Calypso Farm and Ecology Center in Ester, Alaska. She may be reached at amm428@cornell.edu.



Meg and Bruce Schader milk 12 Jerseys and process all the milk on their farm
Photos by Adrienne Masler



The cows are on pasture all summer



Wake Robin makes plain, vanilla, and maple yogurt

NEW FARMER

The Best Tool in the Beginning Small Farmer's Toolbox: Mentorship

By Melissa Madden

Starting my own farm has provided me with all of the expected opportunities to manage everything from soil fertility to accounting. It is also a time for personal growth- to acknowledge my ideals and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, to humble myself before the project at hand, and to form real ties with a vital community of small farmers. As a younger member of this community, I benefit from an upwelling of advice and support that is true mentorship. Scary decisions are simplified and realized under the guidance of experienced farmers- from horse farming to organic orcharding- and I can't think of any other single thing that has more to do with shaping my young farm.

Starting Out: Young Farmers, Big Ideals

My partner Garrett Miller and I met through farming, setting in motion the wheels that, in 2008, delivered us to our own farm. Since we both desired to farm using permaculture principles, we needed guidance about applying these tools to the farm scale. In early 2007 we moved to Wisconsin to join Mark Shepard on his large-scale (100 acres) permaculture farm (New Forest Farm). There, while growing wholesale vegetables between Mark's hazelnuts and chestnuts (alleycropping), we learned that 1) we COULD do it (farm by our ideals); 2) we SHOULD do it and 3) NOW is the time.



Melissa practices communicating with the team.

Photo by Garrett Miller

Three years later, Garrett and I are implementing the founding principles for our farm. Over the past winter we noticed a trend- each element in our plan also has one or more mentors to help guide us through our idealism. Looking at one of our big goals- "Energy Descent"- illustrates the impact of mentorship on our operation.

Horse Traction for Energy Descent

Our Energy Descent goal is to import less off-farm energy every year. Farm traction represents a significant portion of



Garrett drives Randy and Betsy on a practice run before heading for the more challenging stream crossing into the woods.

Photo by Melissa Madden

on-farm energy use in most systems, and our farm plan is no different. From the outset, we understood our traction needs but were reluctant to solve these by purchasing a tractor. We decided to close this farm energy loop by farming with draft horses. Garrett and I have a combination of 7 years of farming experience, but prior to 2009 only Garrett's yearlong stint on an animal-powered primitive farm had anything to do with horses.

Our draft power decision felt a little crazy, and without our friendship with horsefarmer Sara Brown (Earthly Mirth), we may not have gone that direction at all. After we purchased our land in 2008, I persuaded Sara to give us a series of draft power classes. For much of the following season, I borrowed tractors to do our fieldwork and we traveled to Sara's for training. By the time we bought our draft team, I was only beginning to understand horse work, but I also knew that we had the support of people we respected.

We purchased an Amish-trained team in fall 2009 in order to spend the winter getting ready for the spring work. This early start helped us be relaxed and curious without the pressure of imminent fieldwork. Over the winter Sara taught us techniques for leading, driving and working. This was a great opportunity to learn to interact safely and productively with our Belgians.

By actually bringing home Randy and Betsy (our team) we gained another set of mentors. Farrier friend Eric Kincaid spent hours teaching us all how to pick up front and back feet for hoof trimming. Avid horse farmer Donn Hewes (Northland Sheep Dairy) volunteered to help us with both dominance and foot training at the end of this winter. In one March Sunday,



Eric Kincaid shows Garrett how to help Randy keep his foot up for a trim.

Photo by Melissa Madden

Donn took my caution and turned it around to a greater appreciation for our horses. His teamster-honed skills made it possible for our horses to respect him rather immediately (something I struggled with for months), and gave me an opportunity to try on his attitude. I found that trying his lighthearted approach enhanced my own interaction with both horses, leading to safer and more fun training sessions to date. Thanks to this wealth of volunteered guidance, we are in the midst of an amazing first field season with Randy and Betsy, and we see our idealism going to work in reality.

Finding and Accepting Mentorship

Garrett and I came by our diverse set of mentors by accumulating them along our farming education path. For many start-up farms, an apprenticeship is time for the immersion and relationship building needed for long-term success. In 2005 I completed a season-long apprenticeship at Remembrance Farm, a 15-acre biodynamic vegetable farm, with Nathaniel Thompson. By staying in the area of my apprenticeship, I benefit from a community that knows me as an evolving farmer, opening floodgates of support.

Part of my joy in our rich community of supporters came after I acknowledged my need for guidance. When I left Remembrance Farm I wasn't clear on what I needed to do next or how to ask for help figuring it out. Once Garrett and I purchased our farm, a completely new set of mentors helped us sort out details. At first, we knew about our high tunnel mentors at Sweet Land Farm but were intimidated by their experience. We actually joined Sweet Land's CSA before we got to know the farmers, Paul and Evangeline. Once I overcame my self-consciousness, I realized that experienced farmers felt kinship with us that made offering mentorship natural. Since Evangeline invited me over for our first mid-winter farm planning session, I've found myself over there almost every week. I certainly didn't start with such ease in accepting advice, but came to it through a humbling recognition of my own ignorance.

As a beginning farmer, I benefit from advice in direct proportion to my awareness of the largess of my project and my willingness to ask for help. The more I humbly ask and immerse myself in available resources, the more I find help most everywhere I turn. I believe THAT is the sign of a vibrant agricultural community.

Melissa Madden is owner of The Good Life Farm in Interlaken, NY. She can be reached at 607-351-3313 or Melissa@thegoodlifefarm.org. To learn more about The Good Life Farm, visit <http://thegoodlifefarm.org/>

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COMMUNITY/WORLD

Community (Tax-Supported) Farms - A Massachusetts Sampler

By Martha Herbert Izzi

A net increase in farms? Nationwide? Who would have thought? But it's true. For so long we have been treated to the demise of farms and farming while the advent of the "fifteen hundred mile tomato" became the norm. The book *Farms of Tomorrow* written in 1990 and revisited in 1997, envisaged what surely was thought to be a utopian notion that communities would begin to buy up land, remove it permanently from the tax rolls and dedicate it to production of food for local consumption.

The authors advanced the theory that land should not be a commodity, that land "can no longer be used as a collateral for debt", that farmers need to farm and not pay mortgages on taxable land that competes with market prices. They did not neglect the problem of the farmer in old age in need of financial support and without land to sell. Those needs would have to be born by the larger community similarly to other public servants in the form of retirement benefits.



Children get their hands dirty at the 'Learning Garden' at Waltham Fields Community Farm.

Photo by Claire Kozower

Clearly times are changing, and since I have been living in the Boston, MA area for most of the past year, I have begun to investigate the growth and nature of some of the five dozen community farms and CSA operations. These operations are thriving and feeding thousands of urban dwellers -- many of whom are living in the inner city, far from well-stocked suburban markets. Massachusetts appears to be among the states in the forefront of this movement. Thus this story will showcase a small sample of farms in the Boston area with different operating models, but all of which have been in operation for at least several years. In all cases the land is town or state owned. They are small and not family operated, all have head farmers and/or executive directors and at least two are under the aegis of the local conservation commissions who have oversight responsibilities.

Codman Farm

Lincoln is a wealthy suburb close to the Boston area with a fierce reputation for land and resource conservation. Until the early fifties it was home to many dairy farms but as they began to dwindle and give way to suburban development the community sought to preserve its agricultural heritage and stem the tide towards houses, condos and business parks. To date the town conservation commission has preserved more than 1800 acres of agricultural and forest lands.

Dorothy Codman, a local dowager, died in 1969 and left a sixteen acre farm to the town. It quickly fell into disrepair looking more like a local junk yard filled with old tires, broken fences and police and highway equipment. Four years later the town

voted to restore the land to its agricultural origins over the choice of a recreational area.

Jen James is Codman Farm's newest executive director. She is charged with Codman's central purpose which is "to teach and advance farming practices and to maintain rural beauty in Lincoln." Codman welcomes visitors, like all the other farms featured in this article. Together with Peter, the head farmer, and several interns, they manage a small herd of Devon/cross beef cattle, pigs, chickens and goats, all of which are eventually direct-marketed at the Codman store and provide a partial source of income. The store is open seven days a week.

The farm is a non-profit membership organization which is financially independent from the town except for major purchases and repairs. Codman generates a sizeable income from haying 130 acres of the town land. Additionally, Codman offers firewood, compost and rototilling, bush-hogging and custom work services. The farm also relies on events, fundraising, CSA income and volunteers to stay afloat.

Waltham Fields Community Farms

Not far from Lincoln is the once gritty blue collar industrial city of Waltham which has since evolved into a culturally and economically diverse setting housing two major universities and several technological powerhouses including Microsoft and Oracle. It is also home to an eleven acre organic piece of state-owned land formerly a University of Massachusetts research station. Claire Kozower, executive director of the WFCF, carries out the farm's stated mission of "sustainable agriculture, education and hunger relief" for a voting membership organization. To that end the farm donates more than 150,000 pounds of organic produce to shelters and local food banks annually.



Seeding clover in the raspberry patch. Waltham Fields Community Farm has an active farmer training program in which apprentices spend one to two years learning all aspects of farming. Photo by Claire Kozower

The lucrative CSA charges \$550 a season that extends from May to October. In 2009 there were 350 CSA shares sold to passionate consumers of small fruits and vegetables mostly within a ten mile radius. For those unable to pay the market rate for a CSA share, WFCF has a new program called "The Outreach Market" which allows a low income person to pack all the veggies they want in a bag for \$5.

WFCF has an active farmer training program in which apprentices spend one to two years learning all aspects of farming including the planning and business side of farming. The goal is to show that farming can be self sustaining with a high production focus. It is currently under long term evaluation and eight graduates are now farming in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

WFCF has strong linkages with several farms and includes many different products produced by those farms for its CSA. Meat products come from several sources, apples from another. The farm also has incredible support from local officials



Youth are given an opportunity to tend their own small farm plots at Gaining Ground Community Farm in Concord, Massachusetts.

Photo by Gaining Ground Farm

who come to the farm events throughout the year. Kozower hopes to enlist their support as she looks to expanding the farm to the local Fernald School, depending on the quality of



Jen James, Executive Director of Codman Farm

Photo by Martha Izzi

the soil and the prospects of being financially viable.

Gaining Ground Organic Farm

Set on the Thoreau birthplace and at the Old Manse (Hawthorne's Home) in affluent Concord, yet another farm that relies heavily on the help and support of volunteers is the Gaining Ground Farm. Founded in 1994 the farm operates on seven acres of land that has been in continuous production for 350 years. The "farm doesn't sell anything" according to board president, Pam Goar whose enthusiasm for her job she calls "the most unbelievable privilege" led her to give a farm tour immediately following a "redeye" flight from California.

The farm is operated by hundreds of volunteers with few staff lead by head farmer, Verena Wieloch. Today she is leading a group of ten eighth graders in new program called, Grow Wild which gives young people a piece of land to cultivate independently in hopes that it will produce a new crop of farmers.

Gaining Ground subsists on the support of "generous donors, trustees and fund raising events." With the addition this year of a sugarhouse, one young customer said that "the air smells like fresh cakes." 7,000 hours of volunteers' time and energy in 2009 translated to help from five different local organizations including the "ladies in wheelchairs" who came once a week during the growing season and washed herbs at large tubs. At season's end, the farm had donated 23,000 lbs of produce to food pantries and meal programs in six different surrounding communities.

Thanks to a new contract with Massport and Concord Division of Natural Resources, Gaining Ground will farm an additional two acres to add more food to more organizations with the help of more volunteers.

Martha Herbert Izzi is the owner of Bel Lana Farm in Chestnut, MA. She can be reached at 802-236-3744 or mhizzi@yahoo.com .

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HORTICULTURE

Workbook Guides Grape Growers Toward Sustainability

By Kara Lynn Dunn

Grape growers are using a new action-planning tool - the New York Guide to Sustainable Viticulture Practices Grower Self-Assessment Workbook - to enhance economically-sound production with minimal environmental impacts.

The eight-section, 134-question workbook facilitates evaluation of soil and nutrient management; weed, disease, and insect control; and the vineyard business's economic needs. Getting the workbook into producers' hands is part of the Cornell University Sustainable Viticulture Extension outreach project, underwritten by funding from the New York Farm Viability Institute. Nearly 100 growers have participated in the project to date.

"The goal is to promote the adoption of the best management practices to increase the sustainability of grape production throughout New York State," says project leader and Cornell Viticulture Extension Specialist Timothy E. Martinson.

By late 2008, Fox Run Vineyards owner Scott Osborn had completed the workbook and an action plan with a year's worth of objectives for 2009 for his 50-acre vineyard on NY's Finger Lakes' Seneca Lake Wine Trail in Penn Yan.

Osborn's business includes a vineyard of 14 varieties of grapes, a winery, café, wine club, year-round events calendar and a product line of Chardonnays, Cabernets, Rieslings, Pinot Noirs, etc., garlic grapeseed oil, and gift bas-

kets sold direct and online to consumers and to retailers and restaurants.

"Using the workbook will be an ongoing process that takes us through the seasons and keeps us on track with the goals we have set to be sustainable," Osborn says.

He defines sustainability as "a business that is profitable and can sustain itself into the next growing season while treating the land respectfully to maintain it well year after year.

"I am always trying to make my business better, and as a steward of the land, I also want to leave it better than when I started. We try to grow 'organically' as much as possible. For times when a pest or disease infestation requires a stronger approach, we have planned for mechanical weed removal and to use sprays as minimally as possible."

Osborn says so many details make it challenging for vineyard managers, as small business owners, to focus on everything.

"The workbook provided an objective starting point on paper to evaluate what I need to do all year-long. It treats the vineyard as a whole package while categorizing different production aspects for specific attention. I can refer to the workbook to focus on needs I may forget and it helps me see where I am doing things just right," Osborn says.

Osborn expects to see the results of his vineyard modifications as production steadily improves and stabilizes with consistent yields

and high quality in spite of year-to-year climate variability.

"Using the workbook will help me track the impact of vineyard practices, soil enhancements, mulching and weather," Osborn says.

Sustainable Viticulture Extension Educator Jamie Hawk says minimizing soil erosion, adding organic matter, disease scouting, and improving agrichemical storage and mixing facilities are among changes producers are making.

Martinson adds, "The use of cover crops, mulching, diversion ditches and grassed filter strips are other actions growers are taking to prevent erosion and runoff to protect water quality."

"The growers' action plans serve as sustainable roadmaps for decision-making on every aspect of vineyard management to reduce costs, gain efficiencies and respond to marketplace interest in sustainably-produced products," Hawk says.

Osborn says his task list includes adding notice of his sustainability practices to his wine labels, "particularly for consumers who read labels looking for sustainably-produced products, and to educate buyers who do not yet know the value of Fox Run's philosophy and production practices."

Copies of the Sustainable Viticulture Workbook are available online for \$30. Learn more at www.vinebalance.com.

Kara Lynn Dunn is a freelance writer based in Mannsville, NY. She may be reached at 315-465-7578 or karalynn@gisco.net.

This article first appeared in *American Agriculturalist* and is reprinted with permission.



Scott Osborn reviews his New York Guide to Sustainable Viticulture Practices Grower Self-Assessment Workbook in the tasting room at Fox Run Vineyards.

Photo by Fox Run Vineyards

We Want To Hear From You

We welcome letters to the editor - Please write to us! Or send a question and we'll do our best to answer it. We're also looking for beautiful, interesting and/or funny small farm photos to print.

Write or email Violet Stone, Cornell Small Farms Program, 135C Plant Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853 vws7@cornell.edu

Dairy from 4

We started looking at the cows that thrived on just high quality hay and baleage. These were smaller cows with a wider rump. They used their feed more efficiently. What if we could build a herd of those cows?

Grass Genetics

As grain-less dairy grazers, we do not have a purebred gene pool that meets all of our needs. Some of the dual-purpose breeds fit better in our grain-less, grass-based approach than traditional dairy breeds. Dual-purpose (meat and dairy) breeds like Milking Shorthorns, Dutch Belts, and Milking Devons show promise. However, these breeds survive in such small numbers that a revival is difficult. We have also found that the New Zealand genetics, whether Holstein or Jersey, cross better with these dual-purpose breeds than the domestic Holstein or Jersey.

In our crossbred herd, we are selecting for a thousand-pound cow that is highly fertile, has good feet and udder, and a reasonable production of milk with high components (protein and butterfat). This cow must be able to produce a calf every year and 9,000 pounds of milk (about half the conventional dairy average), while maintaining herself without any grain.

It sounds simple, but understand, for the last 75 years high production has been the central concern in dairy breeding. The end result has been large cows, producing large volumes of milk while also requiring great volumes of high quality feed. As an old farmer once observed, "We have bred everything out of her

except the milk." This single trait selection approach has been tragic for both the cows and the farmers. The high-maintenance animals that we have ended up with are no longer economical to keep, and they do not return a profit to the farmer -- one reason dairy farming is in free fall.

Calves nurse their mothers

We raise our calves on mother cows, despite a steady flow of negative feedback about doing so. Our vet told us that a lot of studies show that a calf raised on its mother develops "too much" fat in her udder, which reduces her life-long milk production. The alternative would be raising our calves on a fixed ration of milk, or even worse, as on most dairy farms, on milk replacer.

On our farm, I can show you calves raised on their own mothers and calves raised on a nipple pail. The difference is dramatic. When people experienced in dairy comment, "She has a very dairy conformation," I've learned that the cow didn't receive enough milk when she was young. Starving, she developed with a thin neck, narrow shoulders, poor tail set, and angular pin and hook bones (hips).

The first thing we noticed when we started to let the calves nurse mother cows is that they didn't get that terribly thin neck and they become a little chubby. The quality of their coats and eyes is better and they're more alert. They also tolerate our cold winters better.

Since we made this change in 2008, our calves have had no significant sickness, if any. Our calves were usually healthy before, but this shift made them even healthier. It's too soon to predict potential health benefits for either the animals or the food they produce. What if we find that milk and butter from such cows -- that graze on a farm with healthy, fertile soils, and were raised on their mothers -- have curative benefits? We can only speculate.

Our approach involves experimentation. This does bring economic risks but we feel an urgency to change direction now. The farmer can no longer just hold out for a better price from the dairy coops. That time will never arrive. If the last 50 years hasn't taught us that lesson, then family farms are destined for extinction. We need to apply ecological knowledge to drive costs down and quality up.

As our system matures, the next phase will be to capture a premium for our superior grass-fed product. Right now though, we must stay focused on the development of our farm and refining our plan for the future.

Paul Van Amburgh is the owner of Dharma lea farm in Sharon Springs, NY. He can be reached at 518- 284-2546 or at dharmalea@gmail.com.

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"This article originally appeared in the Regional Farm and Food Project Spring Newsletter. The Regional Farm and Food Project is a member-supported organization linking producers, consumers, and advocates of local food in upstate New York. To learn more about the project or to become a member, visit <http://www.farmandfood.org/>"

About the Van Amburghs

Before he became a farmer, Paul was self-employed contractor who did skilled renovations. He gained his love of cows growing up in North Greenbush, where his family lived between the Ottman dairy and one of the last diversified livestock farms in the area. When he met his future wife Phyllis, she had a team of Clydesdales and was finishing her degree in Occupational Therapy. Drawn to raise their own food, Paul and Phyllis purchased their first farm in Montgomery County about ten years ago. They raised grass-fed beef and pastured hogs, and had a big vegetable garden. In 2007 they purchased their Sharon Springs farm and dairy herd, and have been milking 50 cows and raising grass-fed Devon beef and laying hens at dharma lea.



Sound Pasture management requires daily pasture walks.

GRAZING

Celebrating the Vitality of Grazing Farms with the Vermont Grass Farmers Association

By Jennifer Colby

The Vermont Grass Farmers Association is a farmer-driven organization dedicated to furthering the use of managed grazing for livestock to create healthier soils, stronger local economies, and happier farmers. Today, the organization thrives with several hundred members, a high quality annual educational conference, and excellent relationships with state and regional partners.

History

Domesticated ruminant animals have been grazing for centuries. The difference between older methods of continual grazing and the current "rotational" or "management-intensive" (MIG) grazing systems were built upon the work of Andre Voisin, a French farmer and biochemist. Voisin observed that smaller, intensively-rotated pastures were able to sustain the animals longer, with higher quality grass by containing the animals in smaller paddocks and moving them through the paddocks quickly. The animals ate the grass more evenly, and gave the plants a very important rest period.



Diversified dairy farmer John Clark of Applecheek Farm in Hyde Park, VT describes his pastured poultry management system. Photos by Jennifer Colby

A few key farmers brought the idea to Vermont from New Zealand, where Voisin's methods were widely adopted. By the early 1990's, Vermont farmers, recognizing the need for more MIG technical information and assistance, began to organize themselves in support of managing grass like other farmers raise corn or soy to feed their animals. Some testified to the State Agriculture Committee about the loss of farms in Vermont, the evolution toward larger farms, and the opportunities offered by grazing to address many economic, social, and environmental problems.

At the University of Vermont, Dr. Bill Murphy became a major contributor to managed grazing in Vermont and nationally, based on his experience using Voisin's techniques in South America. He wrote "Greener Pastures On Your Side of The Fence", a MIG primer, founded the Pasture Management Outreach Program (PMOP) at the University of Vermont, researched MIG techniques, and widely distributed grazing educational materials.

Birth of an Organization

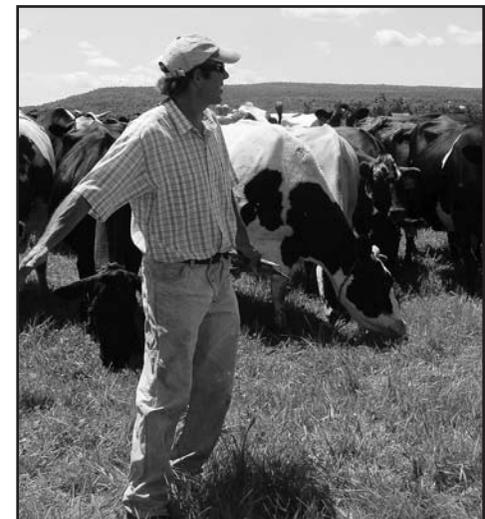
VGFA's excitement and energy came-as it does today-from a group of committed, passionate farmers. Nearly 65 farmers attended the first meeting of the VGFA, held at a farm in Brookfield, VT in the summer of 1996. By that fall, funding proposals and grants were written, and the first of many grazing activities were being planned.

The VGFA, the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture's Pasture Program, and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) have each played a cooperative role to support grazing in Vermont. USDA-NRCS GLCI has provided funding, as well as linking the partnership to additional state and federal staff. VGFA served as the state GLCI Steering Committee provided farmer-driven vision and direction. The UVM Center provided day-to-day staff, on-farm technical assistance, conference coordination, research, and outreach materials. Communication with regional and national comrades indicate that this farmer-directed arrangement is unique in the country.

Today's VGFA

Originally, the work of the Vermont Pasture Network partners focused on the formation of farmer discussion groups, an annual conference, informational newsletters, and a calendar of events. Many of those efforts continue today and have expanded to include new approaches as the need arises.

* The 14th Annual VT Grazing & Livestock Conference hosted about 400 attendees and included one day of pre-conference intensive workshops. The conference committee, which works closely with Center staff on the educational content, has expanded to include present and former VGFA board members, VT Sheep & Goat Association and VT Beef Producers Association partners. In 2010, VGFA was delighted to host the Northeast Pasture Research Consortium's annual meeting as part of the conference week's events.



Mark Russell of Swallowdale Farm in Orwell, VT hosting a pasture walk on grazing season extension.

* Lively farmer-to-farmer interaction is facilitated by staff through on farm pasture walks, discussion groups and topical workshops through the spring, summer and fall, advertised through the monthly Pasture Calendar publication and through VGFA's quarterly member newsletter The Solar Dollar.

* As the VT GLCI Steering Committee, VGFA participates in State Technical Committee work, bringing the voice of grazing farmers to state interpretations of federal natural resource policy.

* In 2008, VGFA established a mini grant program providing support to farm-level grazing innovators. The program has funded research on pasture forage species, composting trials, new animal shelters and more.

* Increasingly, VGFA is taking a more active leadership role to work closely with other organizations on issues of importance to grazing livestock farmers, such as water quality, raw milk issues, livestock slaughter and processing, dairy farmer education, and grazing research.

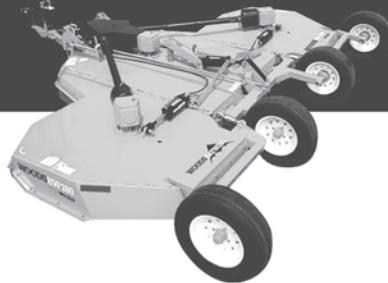
The Vermont Grass Farmers Association was born out of the need for farmers to ensure a leadership role in their own future success. As an organization there have been ups and downs, periods of intense energy, and significant challenges. With a strong Board, energetic Pasture staff, and the benefits of strong collaborative relationships with regional, state and federal partners, VGFA looks forward to a positive future.

For more information about the Vermont Grass Farmers Association and the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture's Pasture Program, contact Jennifer Colby at (802) 656-0858, jcolby@uvm.edu or www.uvm.edu/pasture.

Jennifer Colby is a Pasture Program Outreach Coordinator at UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Colchester, VT. She can be reached at 802-656-0858 or jcolby@uvm.edu.

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BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**New Kind of Old Fashioned Seed Company**

By Jill Swenson

The "buy local" and "grow your own" movements have gone mainstream. Yet, until now you couldn't find a single seed company within 150 miles of Ithaca, NY, that sold seeds labeled locally grown. It makes a difference in the yield and bounty when the seed is suited to the local climate, soils, pests, fungi, weeds, viruses, and bacteria.

That's why, as a seasoned seed-saver, I decided to sprout a new business on my farm, the On Warren Pond Farm & Seed Company. The new seed company specializes in local, hand-harvested, untreated seeds for the kitchen gardener and backyard farmer. In the last decade the number of seed companies have decreased significantly and yet the price of seed keeps going up. Where there were once many small seed crop farms here in upstate New York, now there is only a handful.

The seed industry experienced an economic transformation during the last 10 years that parallels many other industries; both horizontal and vertical integration into global conglomerates. Now Big Pharma dominates the seed industry. In 1998, the 10 largest seed companies controlled about 33% of the global seed market, and today 69% of all corn and 47% of all soybean seeds in the US were purchased from just four major companies. These seed companies typically sell only industrial varieties of plant seeds. Because they dominate national and international seed markets, it is increasingly difficult for small scale farmers and gardeners to buy non-industrial seed varieties.

But, for those who yearn for biodiversity and the old-fashioned flavors and textures of vegetables raised in our grandparents time, there is a growing movement for an alternative vision: seeds for sustainability. Starting any new business requires research first. Identifying a market niche is one thing but assessing what it will take to make the business successful is another thing. When I set out to start my small scale seed company, I began to build a team of advisors, including key people in the Small Farms Program and Cooperative Extension Service at Cornell University. Several years ago I had been fortunate to take a course at the Rural-Urban Center in Montour Falls sponsored by CCE on building a sustainable farm plan. Now I needed a refresher course and wanted to build this new business with virtually no start-up costs and no debt. Alternatives Federal Credit Union in Ithaca, NY, provided the structure and support with their "Getting Down to Business" programs to work up a new business plan. And they encouraged my efforts to find a better business model.

What makes my seed business better is the commitment to sell only locally grown seed from open-pollinated varieties. On Warren Pond Farm is dedicated to biodiversity and is a signatory to the Safe Seed Pledge:

"Agriculture and seeds provide the basis upon which our lives depend. We must protect this foundation as a safe and genetically stable source for future generations. For the benefit of all farmers, gardeners and consumers who want an alternative, we pledge that we do not knowingly buy or sell genetically engineered seeds or plants..."

There are some new seed companies on the horizon to fill this expanding market demand for an alternative to the monoculture. Hudson Valley Seed Exchange is a source of regionally-adapted seeds and by 2014 they aim to be 100% New York grown. Located in Accord, NY, Ken Greene and Doug Muller are young entrepreneurs who also sell their seeds in packaging designed by local artists. They offer an interesting business model which includes a seed library and partner gardeners. In



Old-timey yellow beans are a favorite summer treat in the Finger Lakes. After a decade of selling these tender filet beans at local farmers markets, to locally owned grocers, restaurants and caterers, On Warren Pond Farm & Seed Co. plans to sell their seeds for 2011.

2010 they offer 25 seed varieties of locally grown seed.

Southern Seed Exchange is another source of regionally adapted seeds for those gardeners south of the Mason-Dixon line. With a commitment to heirlooms and open pollinated seeds, this successful new business is another beacon for a new kind of old fashioned seed business.

On Warren Pond Farm & Seed Co. plans to go full-scale in operations for the 2011 season. After a successful test-market of dill and tobacco seeds in 2010, the fields are planted with almost 100 varieties of plants. Read more about how hand-harvesting of seed crops is accomplished by a "crop mob" in the next issue of Small Farms Quarterly. A large group of people plan to arrive on August 15th to accomplish a small miracle for the price of a day on the farm, a swim in the pond, and a good meal with organically grown sweet corn roasted on an open fire.



For more than a decade sunflower seeds have been hand-harvested On Warren Pond Farm. Heirloom hollyhocks, bachelor buttons, zinnias and calendula are other flowers whose seeds will be part of the 2011 product line besides these beautiful sunflowers.

Plans are underway to develop a "Seed CSA 2011" whereby members receive packets of seeds in the mail each month starting in January; some for eating (red cayenne, coriander, dill, nasturtium, pumpkin), some for sprouting (alfalfa, clover, bean, pea, radish) and some for planting in season (lettuces, chard, beets, sunflowers, hollyhocks, calendula, etc.).

On Warren Pond Farm & Seed Co. is a logical extension of what the love of my life, Sam Warren, began more than 20 years ago on this land his father once farmed for buckwheat, oats, corn, clover and winter wheat for a local seed company. Sam died unexpectedly September 15, 2009, and I honor his legacy by making my own way down on the farm, off-the-grid, in a new kind of old-fashioned way.

"Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in a seed... Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders." Henry David Thoreau.

Jill Swenson is the owner of On Warren Pond Farm & Seed Co., based in Trumansburg, NY. You can learn more about On Warren Pond Farm at www.onwarrenpondfarm.com.



Heirloom shell peas flower throughout the summer for multiple pickings. Like the peas your grandmother planted, these peas are sweet as candy.

Photos by Jill Swenson



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LOCAL FOODS AND MARKETING

Where's the Meat? Ask Northeast Livestock Processing Service

By Kara Lynn Dunn

The Northeast Livestock Processing Service Company (NELPSC) connects producers and processors for made-to-order meat products -- and increased sales for both.

Livestock farmers formed NELPSC in 2006 to address the challenge of obtaining quality processing for livestock and poultry. Today, the farmer-owned company works with 95 livestock farmers and 8 processors and those numbers are growing.

Dan Gibson of Grazin' Angus Acres says, "Working with the right processor helps me sell my products and is essential for profitability."

Gibson grazes 250 head of Registered Black Angus beef cattle on 450 acres in Ghent, NY, 25 miles southeast of Albany.

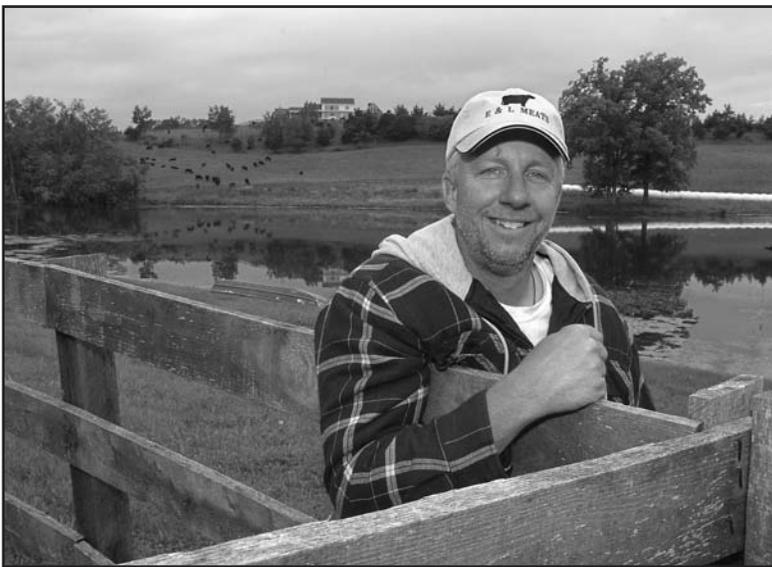
"My cattle are 100 percent grass-fed, grass-finished and I grow them to 1,300 to 1,500 pounds before processing," Gibson says.

Fifteen hundred pounds of beef on the hoof, however, is price-less without proper processing.

When Gibson's young herd had grown large enough for year-round sales, "I did not have a steady processor and that is critical to having a consistent product supply."

NELPSC Processing and Marketing Coordinator Kathleen Harris introduced Gibson to Ernie Ward at E&L Meats in Richfield Springs, NY.

"Ernie is the best knife I've come across and that has a real impact on my business," Gibson says. "NELPSC linked me with a processor small enough that I matter to him, but sophisticated enough to grow with me."



Dan Gibson at Grazin' Angus Acres Farm in Ghent, NY, says, "Working with the right processor is essential for profitability." Photo by Robert Ragaini

Ward established his business three years ago after working for other processors. He processes everything from tongue to T-bone. Gibson is happy to sell a full array of products at farmers' markets in Ghent, Albany, Kinderhook; at New York City Greenmarkets; and to restaurants.

"As Dan's business grows, so does mine," Ward says. "Kathleen is very good at establishing good communication with a new client. I need to know what kind of processing producers want to be able to sell their products and they need to understand how I do what I do. Kathleen's help saved me time and energy."

Gibson drives 2 1/2 hours to reach E&L. He wanted Ward to process only 4-5 animals the day they are delivered to the

USDA-certified plant. Ward can process seven animals per day. Together, Ward and Gibson, who has a background in finance, analyzed the hours involved in processing only Gibson's cattle and Ward adjusted his charges accordingly.

"We were able to meet halfway with each making changes to how we do things," Ward says.

"I need Ernie to be profitable as much as he needs me to sell my products profitably and keep coming back for more processing," Gibson says. "Ernie does a fantastic job of packaging. Good-looking, properly-labeled products help me garner premium pricing."

Gibson sells everything from \$3/lb. suet to \$31/lb. filet mignon. He expects to increase his processing with Ward by 50 percent to 150 animals in 2010.

Harris says, "Gibson and Ward are a perfect example of how NELPSC matches producers with processors based on proximity, price, product and packaging needs, and processing capability."

NELPSC was founded with support from the New York Farm Viability Institute, the Hudson Mohawk Resource Conservation and Development Council, and New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets. The company assists producers and processors with scheduling, in-plant oversight, technical and marketing assistance, and issue resolution. NELPSC connects farmer-members with prospective buyers, and buys livestock for college and other wholesale meat accounts.

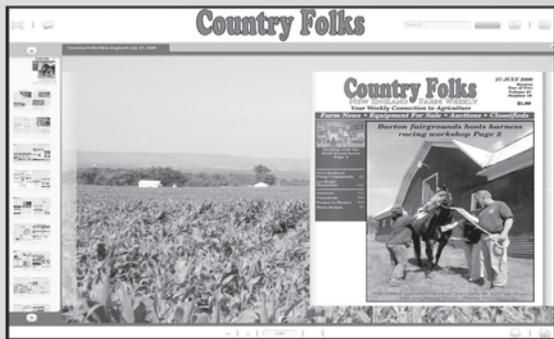
The New York Farm Viability Institute has awarded grant funds to help NELPSC establish a USDA-inspected slaughter and processing plant.

Producers pay NELPSC a \$50 start-up fee and per head facilitation fee. For more information, contact Harris at 518-673-5193, nelpsc@frontiernet.net .

Kara Lynn Dunn is a freelance writer based in Mannsville, NY. She may be reached at 315-465-7578 or karalynn@gisco.net .

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Resource Spotlight Online Marketing - a Review of Local Harvest

By Michelle Striney

Are you looking to increase your local marketing power? Marketing your CSA, local and organic produce can quickly get expensive and time consuming. A simple online tool to add to your marketing arsenal is the website http://www.localharvest.org . Software engineer Guillermo Payet founded Local Harvest in 1998. The Santa Cruz, California based project grew out of his desire '... to generate positive social change through the internet'. Local Harvest supports family farming, organic and local food networks, and sustainable agriculture. Their website encourages visitors to connect with farms in their area and learn about markets, restaurants, and products available locally.

The Local Harvest website offers a collection of valuable marketing and network tools. A searchable map allows visitors to search for farms, CSA's, farmers markets, restaurants, grocery/co-ops, or products that are local to them. An online store offers farmers and businesses an affordable and easy alternative to starting their own commercial website to sell their products. Farms and businesses register with Local Harvest, and receive a page where they can share pictures and discuss products, philosophy, hours, and refer clients to their home page. Registered users may also choose to sell in the online store. The store website is clean, neatly labeled, and very easy to navigate. Farmers and businesses wanting to sell pay a flat fee per order to Local Harvest, and send out customer orders by mail. The online store currently offers nearly 8,000 unique products including CSA shares, groceries, pet needs, flowers, gift baskets, and much more. Products are listed with a photograph, price, and farm name. Additional site resources include an events calendar, discussion forums, newsletter, and links to interesting agriculture related blogs.

Local Harvest is a popular site with up to 4.5 million visitors a year and an average of 20 new users per day. Try it out, and you just might find that Local Harvest becomes a favorite website to visit, and a tool to promote your own farm!

Michelle Striney is the co-coordinator of the NE Beginning Farmer Project and is based at the Cornell Small Farms Program in Ithaca, NY. She may be reached at mls266@cornell.edu or 607-255-9911.



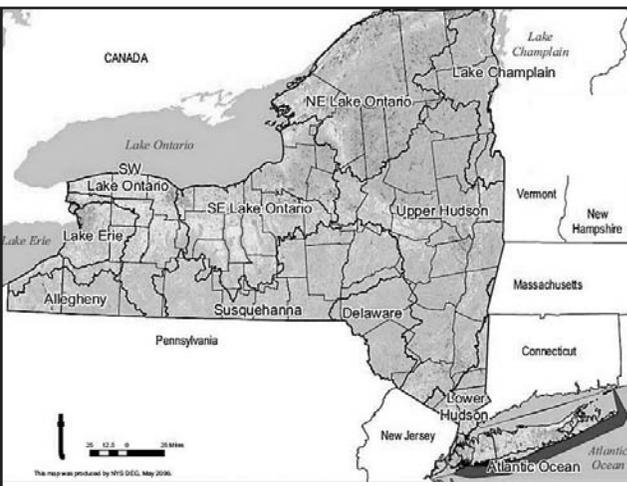
This Kentucky based farm sells locally grown organic cornmeal in Local Harvests online store. Photo courtesy of localharvest.org

FOREST AND WOODLOT

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies Developed for Landowners

By Rich Tabor

NY State and Pennsylvania are home to hundreds of species of birds, animals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates. Many populations of these species are flourishing, such as whitetail deer, raccoons, and Canada geese. Many other species are not as fortunate and are declining in numbers due to a host of influences such as; exotic invasive animals, insects and plants; climate change; development; land use changes; and pollution. The overwhelming percentage of all wildlife species live on privately owned lands in these two states, as is the case throughout the Northeast. Our woodlands, farmlands, wetlands and other habitats provide the necessary food, water, shelter, and space for our rich assemblage of wildlife species.



The information in the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) for NY is organized by the major watershed basins of the state. The watershed basin boundaries were compiled by USGS for every state and provide a seamless map layer across the country that will facilitate regional and national collaboration in implementing all the state CWCSs over the next decade.

To combat this decline in wildlife, biodiversity, and ecosystem stability, in 2002 Congress began funding the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) program, for all of the US. The intent is to maintain the biodiversity of wildlife in this country and prevent new listings of endangered species. This federal grant program was the first large scale funding program for wildlife since the Pittman-Robertson Act in 1937 and Dingell Johnson Act of 1959 (Federal Aid in Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Act, respectively). States receiving SWG funding are required to prepare a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy that must identify and focus on the "species in greatest need of conservation," yet address the "full array of wildlife" and wildlife-related issues.

The following website <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30483.html> contains additional key elements specifically described and laid out including maps and lists of species of greatest conservation need in NY State for each of the 11 major watersheds.

HORTICULTURE

Flower Farm Cultivates Community and Imagination through Hands-on Classes

By Violet Stone

Over her 20+ years selling flowers at farmers markets in the Saratoga Springs, NY region, Barbara Jefts of Native Farm Flowers has seen many bright eyed customers admiring her wild and earthy arrangements. "I'd love to learn how to do that!" customers exclaimed as they peered closely at her unique creations. But although Barbara welcomed her customers out to the farm, its distant location from her urban markets made hosting formal workshops impractical.

That all changed in 2008 when Barbara relocated to a unique property under conservation easement just a few miles from downtown Saratoga Springs. With her new proximity to a large population center, Barbara began brainstorming creative ways to bring the community out to the farm.

The result is a colorful schedule of classes and workshops, designed with flexibility to serve adults and youth alike. For customers interested in recreating the beautiful bouquets they pick up at market, Barbara offers a crash course in "Fresh Flower Design". The class is an introduction to the seasonal varieties of cut flowers, proper harvesting methods and conditioning, and prin-



The American martin is a member of the same family as skunks and weasels. It inhabits primarily coniferous forests, found across northern parts of NY, VT, NH, and ME.



The black-billed cuckoo is a designated "species of greatest conservation need" with populations decreasing throughout most of NY State. These birds forage in shrubs or trees. They mainly eat insects, especially tent caterpillars, but also some snails, and eggs of other birds and berries. The call is a rapid, repetitive Coo-coo-coo.

The administering agency for the State Wildlife Grant in NY State is the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation, (DEC). A promising example of a SWG activity is a contract that the DEC has in place with the NY Forest Owner's Association, (NYFOA). NYFOA is helping to spread

principals of design and arrangement.

Other workshops focus on unique natural crafts. Attendees can explore the farm's woodlands gathering materials for a Terrarium and take a bit of the forest home with them to watch grow. Ever heard of a "Hypertufa" Creation? Hypertufa is a type of manmade rock made from various aggregates bonded together using Portland cement. Yet another class offers the opportunity to experiment with hypertufa through creating a garden planter, birdbath or decorative accent.

For Barbara, who has been growing cut flowers for over 24 years, welcoming customers on to the farm for classes is simply an extension of her approach to farming. She has founded her business on maintaining friendly, personal relationships with her clientele. The flowers are sold directly to customers at the Saratoga, Troy and Schenectady Farmers Markets, and at the farm by appointment or chance throughout the year. Customers are always welcome to drop by the farm and check out growing methods or lend a hand. Barbara avoids the fees and paperwork required for the "Certified Organic" label, but grows in accordance with sustainable farming methods and strives to improve the health and ecological productivity of the land.



The blue-spotted salamander occurs across most of NY State. It is mid-sized, broad-headed, with bluish-black skin color with blue-silver spotting and flecking on the back, legs, tail and sides. They depend on temporary ponds (vernal pools), seasonally flooded in early spring for reproduction.

the word about the state's efforts to aid fish and wildlife species in greatest need of conservation. This non-profit organization of forest landowners is taking steps such as distributing information about the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy to landowners in the state. Private forest landowners, who own about 72% of NY's 18 million acres of woodlands have an exciting opportunity to upgrade wildlife habitat on their lands in partnership with NYFOA. Information about the SWG in New York can be found by going to <http://nyfoa.org/swg/index.php> and <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/9404.html>.

In Pennsylvania, the administering agency for the State Wildlife Grant is the Pennsylvania Game commission, and information can be found by cutting and pasting the following url into your internet browser: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=622722&mode=2>

Rich Tabor is a Natural Resources Communication Specialist at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County in Norwich, NY. He can be reached at 607-334-5841 or rbt44@cornell.edu

Landowners in other New England States can learn more about their specific state's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy by visiting the following websites: New England State's Wildlife Conservation Strategy Plans (SWG) Plan Contacts

1. Connecticut: http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&q=325886&deNav_GID=1719
2. Rhode Island: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/swgindex.htm>
3. Massachusetts: http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/habitat/cwcs/cwcs_home.htm
4. Maine: http://www.maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/groups_programs/comprehensive_strategy/
5. New Hampshire: http://www.wildnh.com/Wildlife/wildlife_plan.htm
6. Vermont: <http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org/vermont.html>



Gourds are one of many natural materials Barbara uses to create functional and inspirational art. One of her classes teaches how to make a gourd birdhouse.

Photo by Barbara Jefts

In uncertain economic times, Native Farm Flowers schedule of classes appears to be an ideal approach. The classes should help to diversify the farm's customer base while enriching participant's lives through cultivating community and imagination.

To learn more about Native Farm Flowers or to see the full schedule of 2010 workshops, visit www.nativefarmflowers.com

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STEWARDSHIP & NATURE

Summer Solstice, 1992

The following excerpt, "Summer Solstice, 1992" is the first in what will be a series of essays written by Bill Duesing and edited by Suzanne Duesing from the book *Living on the Earth. Eclectic Essays for a Sustainable and Joyful Future*. Each issue will feature a piece relating to the season. It is hoped that these writings will give us pause for how we are living our lives in relation to the natural world around us. Enjoy!

By Bill Duesing

It's June, coming up on the Summer Solstice. The peonies are popping open in glorious reds, white and many-petaled pinks. We had our first 'Sugar Snap' peas last night in a stir-fry. Sturdy, breathtaking catawbiense album rhododendrons and fragrant Rugosa roses line the way to pick rhubarb for pie. Suzanne combines its red stalks and just ripe strawberries with delicious results.

Pale blue and deep purple irises and dark blue lupine blossoms float above verdant spring growth. The tiny flowers on the native raspberries are fertilized and swelling.

Crisp, frilly lettuce in reds and greens grows faster than we can pick it; spinach, arugula, dill cilantro and oregano are flavorfully abundant.

The sun's altitude is slowly nearing its highest of the year. This is the time of the midnight sun above the Arctic Circle, which for us produces the long twilights which make our cool mornings and fecund evenings so wonderful.

At our home, an overhang on the large south-facing windows keeps the sun out of the house now. These are the same windows which let the low sun shine all the way to the back of the house in the winter. When I told the insurance agent

that our house had solar heat, he asked how many panels we had, wrongly believing that if we had solar heat, we must have panels. I told him about the windows, but he still didn't believe me.

Trees to the east and west of our house leafed out quickly in late May. Now they provide cool shade from the hot morning and afternoon sun. Trees are beautiful, quiet, chlorofluorcarbon-free, solar-powered air conditioners. They don't need a nuclear power station or a large dam to work, and they remove carbon dioxide from the air.

The solar clothes dryer we use in the winter is on the protected south side of our house. That is now in shade, so we've moved the clothesline to the sunny north side where the garden is. The high angle and long path of the sun make the area north of the house sunny from the spring to the fall equinoxes. This period, from March 20 to September 22 (in 1992) is the primary growing season.

I've just described, and have used for decades, The Big Four Low-Cost, Ready-to-Use Solar Collectors, Designed for a Better Tomorrow - the garden for food, trees for cooling, south-facing glass for warmth, and a clothesline. They are inexpensive, dependable and widely-available. Like strawberries, rhubarb and the perennial flowers, these solar solutions are long-lasting, pleasant to care for and live with, and easily maintained. They can work as well on a small lot in the city as they do in rural areas, and provide nearly unlimited possibilities for satisfying, productive work.

In contrast, a new, Sunwood development home nearby, given a "Good-Cents" rating by the local electric utility, has only one small window on the south side and no trees to shade the east and west windows from the summer sun.

Building codes require electrical outlets every so many feet along each wall of a house. Although this is supposed to be for the public good, it probably is of more benefit to the banks, insurance companies and appliance manufacturers. The building code contains no requirements for planting shade trees or for orientation to the sun.

The pleasures of the garden and other solar solutions provide strength and inspiration for the educating and healing we must do. This solstice, let's start creating in our local environments the kind of world we can enjoy living in all over the Earth.

Reprint Permission:

Living on the Earth: Eclectic Essays for a Sustainable and Joyful Future includes essays from the first three of the ten years that Living on the Earth essays were aired weekly on public radio from Fairfield, CT. The essays were written by Bill Duesing and edited by Suzanne Duesing. Bill and Suzanne operate Old Solar Farm in Oxford, CT where they produce organic vegetables, fruits and poultry. The book is available for \$10 plus \$3 S&H from Solar Farm Education, Box 135, Stevenson, CT 06491.



Peonies and poppies signal the start of summer.



Deep purple irises float above verdant spring growth.

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