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Cover photo: Close-up of an ornamental cabbage on a frosty morning at the Cornell University Cut Flower Research Farm. This variety, Crane Bicolor, has a stem 2 feet long, and is used in full bouquets. Photo by Chris Wien.
Starting a Vegetable Farm Online Course Debuts in January

Also Markets & Profits: Making Money Selling What You Grow

The Cornell Small Farms Program is adding yet another online course to its repertoire: Starting a Small-Scale Vegetable Farm. If you're in the planning stages of a diversified vegetable enterprise, this course will help you with site selection, enterprise budgets, cultivation, equipment, cover crops, and more. The course will run Jan. 5 - May 23, and incorporates optional face-to-face meetings at the Northeast Organic Farming Association conference on Jan 22-23 in Saratoga Springs, NY. In addition, the popular online course Markets & Profits: Making Money Selling What You Grow is back, starting Jan 20 and ending Mar 2. Explore market opportunities and profit potential for your product to take your planning to the next level. Join experienced CCE and farmer instructors and other farmers in a dynamic learning experience that incorporates both self-paced readings and real-time virtual meetings with discussion forums, homework activities, guest presenters, and developing a customized plan for your next steps in farming. COST is $150 per course. TO REGISTER, or for more details on both courses, please visit http://www.nybeginningfarmers.org/index.php?page=onlinecourse

Green Grass, Green Jobs Report Available!

The Cornell Small Farms Working Group's Grasslands Utilization is pleased to announce that a new report "Green Grass, Green Jobs: Increasing Livestock Production on Underutilized Grasslands in NYS" is now available. The report is the culmination of two years of statewide research by a team of interdisciplinary producers across New York state. The report focuses on recommended actions in research, education, extension, and policy to realize the potential of our grasslands as a farming resource that will spur rural economic development, grow the regional food supply, and enhance environmental outcomes for all citizens of NYS.

Among some of the topics included in the report are: why increased livestock utilization of NY's grasslands make sense; livestock production and marketing opportunities; barriers to increased livestock utilization of NYS grasslands; and recommendations and inventory of grassland management resources of NYS landowners & farmers.

"Green Grass, Green Jobs: Increasing Livestock Production on Underutilized Grasslands in NYS" is available as a free download load from the Cornell Small Farms website at www.smallfarms.cornell.edu.

Bulk Copies of Small Farm Quarterly: Order Now for 2011

Country Farmers and Agriculture Educators. Did you know that you can order Small Farm Quarterly in bulk for just 5 cents/issue? The magazine makes a great handout for conferences, farmers markets and farm stands. For order deadlines and to sign up, contact Tracy Course at 1-888-596-5329 or subscriptions@leepub.com.

Policy to go paperless? You can also read the Small Farms Quarterly online at: www.smallfarms.cornell.edu/pages/quarterly/

COMMUNITY/WORLD

Pasture to Plate: New York Gourmets Get Local

By Lindsay Debach

Chef Dennis Spinna remembers when he found a lamb carcass at the front door of his Brooklyn restaurant. "The legs were sticking straight up and everything!" He shares this over a cup of coffee on the patio of hip Williamsburg eatery, Rao's Italian Diner, where Dennis is a veteran of the whole carcass program, a sustainable alternative to buying boxed prime cuts. This budding trend in the New York culinary scene sees restaurants directly with the farmer as well as utilizing different systems in proximity to population dense areas. As always, we welcome your comments and feedback. Drop us a line at smallfarmsprogram@cornell.edu anytime. I hope you enjoy this issue and wish you a happy, ground year ahead!

Violet Stone, Managing Editor

How can I get Small Farm Quarterly?

Country Folks subscribers automatically receive SFQ four times a year at no extra cost. Country Folks is delivered weekly for $45 per year.

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Minimum order is 50. Orders must be placed at least 4 weeks before the publication date - Spring 2011 copies need to be ordered by March 4th.

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Pork shanks hanging in the walk-in cooler at Marlow's.

A pig head terrine on display in the Marlow and Daughter meat case.

Photos by Lindsay Debach

Tom at the Meat Hook and the folks at Roebling make regular trips to Lee's farm, seeing the same animals that they are selling at their establishments. Like others who are dedicated to such a complex system, Scott sees the larger picture. "Doing things like this helps me see what's up and how important it is and...just get a better sense of the grander scope of what we're doing."

Despite higher plate prices, transportation problems, and the constant menu tailoring that must take place to accommodate whole animals, buying from a carcase is a highly regarded system that's growing in popularity. "Because Lee must know months in advance how many beef he will send to the city, planning ahead is very important for the restaurants."

Both Marlow's and Roebling source much of their meat from Kinderhook farm, in the Northern Hudson Valley. Owner Lee Reigny's 350-400 head can support the 2-3 weekly beef demand for both the Meat Hook and Marlow's. Animals are butchered and sent in halves or quarters to the city via Regional Access, an Ithaca-based transport company. Because Lee must know months in advance how many beef he will send to the city, planning ahead is very important for the restaurants.

"[Farmers] need to know anywhere from 2 weeks to 2 months out when you're going to need another pig, an extra pig, a pig, an extra side of beef..." says Scott in describing how he and the folks at Roebling work with old-
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

What to Do With the Family Farm

By Anieta McCracken

What happens to the family farm when it's time to retire or to pass it on? The answers are as varied as the farmers who've made the transition. Nancy Syle's creativity and entrepreneurial spirit enabled her to keep her Broadway, Virginia, farm, Traftamadore Farms, until it passes to her son. The farm is home to llamas, sheep, goats, peacocks, guinea fowl and goats. Syle, a fiber artist who spins yarn and weaves wall hangings and other art work, uses peacock feathers, wool and hair from the animals in her artistic creations and for the classes she teaches.

Dale and Debbie Hooker of South Dayton, New York, however, opted not to buy his father's farming operation. For now the land is rented out, as no family member has expressed interest in farming the land.

"I still feel I've made the right decision for my family," Hooker said. "But you always have that sense of guilt that you couldn't keep it going. You get attached to the land. You know every wet spot, every puddle. [But] then you look at the dollars and cents." He still hopes that "someone down the line will take care of it."

The scenarios above illustrate some of the decisions farm families are making as farm land prices rise, profits decrease and farm owners reach retirement age. Making the right decision requires effective, honest communication among all involved party's personal goals.

Another hurdle to cross is figuring out how to meet the needs of both the retiring farm owner and the 'heirs' needs. A too-common scenario involves a husband and wife who own the farm together. He passes away first. Now "you're left with an elderly widow who will live as long as she can in the home she shared with her husband," Stanley said. Long-term care and retirement costs may prevent an heir from operating the farm without some form of outside income to cover living expenses. Options, such as land easements, buying development rights, and insurance plans exist that may make it possible to keep the farm in the family; but the issues need to be addressed long before an owner has critical health concerns.

Involved parties have to be realistic about the task they face. Balance sheets, cash flow, all farm resources and infrastructure, debt load, etc. all must be considered during the planning process. Once goals, values and immediate issues are addressed, it's time to start long term planning, including target dates for each strategic step toward the long term goal.

According to Ny Farmlink Communications Director Ed Staehr, "the New York Farm Link staff will help put together a financial package and wade through the regulations. We routinely work with over 1,000 families. Ninety percent of the families we work with stay in business."

Such planning includes how and when management decisions will be transferred to the heir. If the heir has been operating primarily as a production worker, has made few management decisions or lacked the knowledge to know how to negotiate a loan, or understand the market and when to sell, the heir will need to incrementally increase decision-making as knowledge and experience are gained.

Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. A farmer's state department of agriculture, state or county extension agent, or Farm Bureau may also be of help. Other resources may be unique for the state in which the farm is located, but available through the Internet by using "farm transition" as a key phrase in your favorite search engine.

But the planning and the research must be started now. A farmer can't spend all day planning for production and no time planning how to pass on the family farm.

Anieta McCracken is a retired farmer's daughter. A freelance author and adjunct paralegal professor, she can be contacted by readers at aniesta.mccracken@gmail.com.

Questions for Communicating and Goal Setting for Farm Transfer

Adapted from 12 Questions to Answer: www.iplantofarm.com

1. How do I approach my desired successor about transferring the farm?
2. What are my goals for the farm? My heir's goals?
3. What options exist besides selling off assets or land?
4. Is changing the operation or adding value to existing products an option?
5. What business structure best reflects the business ownership and operation?
6. Am I ready to change my management practices and/or farm ownership?
7. What disruptions can be anticipated during the transition process?
8. Is there a sound, written business plan?
9. Is there enough capital to support the farm during the transition process, to support both heirs and retired/retiring owners?
10. Who should be part of my succession planning team? (Experts say that, at a minimum, there should be an attorney and tax advisor who has specialized in farm transition. A mediator or pastor may also be desired.)
11. Are there special elections I can make to reduce estate & gift taxes? What other taxes might affect my plan?
Traditional Chinese Medicine in North America: Opportunities for Small Farms?

By Jean Giblette

Since 1970 when former President Nixon went to China, many Americans have become familiar with acupuncture and Oriental medicine, having either visited a practitioner or knowing someone who has. Especially since 1994, when our small mid-Hudson Valley farm was founded to grow Asian medicinal plants, the word-of-mouth popularity of this modality has increased considerably. High Falls Gardens’ experience suggests that traditional medicine holds promise as a means for small farms to improve their bottom line.

DOMESTIC PRODUCTION

Currently, most A&OM practitioners use herbs imported from China by trusted agents who carefully source and test the material and sell only to the profession. Most of the herbs by species are wild harvested or incorporated into mixed cropping systems by farmers in China. While the effects of pollution and environmental deterioration in Asia (as well as in our own country) are a matter of great concern, China’s advantage is that small-scale, traditional agriculture models are still very much alive. Environmentalists in China are working on “leap-frogging” their small farms over fossil-fuel-based systems to solar and biogas power (6).

Any one of several factors, however, could disrupt the supply line from China. When our network presented colorful, fresh-dried samples of domestically-grown herbs, A&OM practitioners recognized an alternative means to assure future access and quality. While domestic production is a long-term goal requiring cooperation on the local and national level, interest in this possibility is increasing.

INCOME POTENTIAL FOR SMALL FARMS

Three characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine seem to present new opportunities for small farms. Historically, the herbs are valued as agricultural products rather than as manufactured goods. No hard line exists between food and medicine. The heart of Oriental medicine is dietary therapy and exercise. The products. All the quality advantages enjoyed by small farms that can attend to the craft values of food production, so valued by restaurant chefs, are being rewarded.

In addition to their agricultural quality, the herbs take on added value as a necessary ingredient in a traditional formula. Efficacy is considered to be the result of synthesis during decoction. Plants that ordinarily have little to no commercial value at present become potential crops. Examples include the cattail pollen (pú huáng) which is part of our landscape, or corrus fruit (C. officinalis, sh_n zh_yú), closely related to ornamental species. At current prices on LocalHerbs.org, each of these products could be sold direct for over $30 per pound, dry weight, if certified organic.

Finally, because the A&OM practitioners within a locality or region can calculate the number of herbal formulas dispensed and rank the most widely used formulas, the quantities of produce needed can be projected over time. A cooperative planning and development process seems key to developing this industry. Growers and practitioners are beginning to recognize this opportunity, but we need all the help we can get from the agricultural research system. Economic development expertise and funding would act as a powerful catalyst.

Jean Giblette is the owner of High Falls Gardens in Philmont, NY. She can reach her at info@highfallsgardens.net.

Asian Medicinal Plants: References and Additional Resources


(2) See resources listed at National Acupuncture Foundation website: http://www.nationalacupuncturefoundation.org/pages/resources.html

(3) The Zhong Hua Ben Cao published in 1999 took five hundred experts ten years to complete. The 30 volume set lists 7,807 plants,114 minerals and 1,051 animals and insects used as medicines.


(7) See http://www.chinesemedicinalherbfarm.com/.

The Pennsylvania Yankee Mercantile: A 100 mile market that is striving to connect consumers with local organic farmers

By Megan Fenton

In May of 2010 the Pennsylvania Yankee Mercantile found a home on Main Street in Penn Yan, a small town in the heart of the Finger Lakes in Upstate New York. The Pennsylvania Yankee Mercantile is a quaint country general store with a big mission. The Mercantile is a 100 mile market, meaning that all the products need are grown within 100 miles of the store. Exceptions have been made for luxury items like sugar and coffee; however, they are packaged or roasted by locals. The Mercantile offers a variety of foods and household basics that adhere to a strict standard of health, taste and locality. All of the edibl products are organically produced. They sell products such as meats, dairy, eggs, produce, fruits, grains, dry beans, canned goods, soaps, pottery, clothing, fabric, wooden utensils and dishes, hand-made wooden toys and much more. The core mission of the Mercantile is that they work directly with each and every farmer and craftsman. The owners Elizabeth and Daniel Hoover wanted to cut out the wholesalers so they could have a direct relationship with every producer that had a product on the shelf.

The Mercantile has a quaint country store feel. The quaint storefront is only the beginning. When you walk in to the store you are welcomed by a grand display table of breads, pastas and baked goods made from fresh ground local organic grains. The coolers and the freezers are stocked with seasonal produce, local organic grass-fed meats, dairy products and local organic ice cream that they churn with a hit and miss engine right on Main Street. The clap of the hit and miss engine draws the curious community towards this delicious treat. Elizabeth stated proudly that “the ice cream is 90% local and 100% organic.” Arguably the most striking feature inside the store is the row of wooden grain bins that house a diverse range of local organic whole grains and dry beans. The Hoovers also have a table top grain mill on site to produce fresh flour for customers. “The customers often say that they feel like they are stepping back in time and some of the more elderly customers actually recall when the local general store was common” explained Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth Hoover, co-owner with her husband Daniel, was asked how she came up with the idea of having a 100 mile market in downtown Penn Yan she chalked it all up to divine intervention. Elizabeth explained that she was at a community event when a local woman approached them and blatantly asked them to buy her storefront. Even though the example, regular customers to the Mercantile can pre-order the groceries they would like for the week ahead. The perishables that don’t make it to the consumer fast enough have been appreciated by the Hoovers pigs: “their last meal before butchering was some of our ice cream,” Elizabeth said with a smile. The Hoovers encourage farmers and craftsman that are within a 100 mile radius of Penn Yan, New York to contact them if they have organically produced items or crafts they would like to sell. In keeping with the old general store model the Hoovers are willing to work with producers to meet their needs and even take products in trade for groceries! The Pennsylvania Yankee Mercantile is located at 7 Main Street, Penn Yan, New York. For more information about the Pennsylvania Yankee Mercantile or to inquire about selling your products please call 315-536-8780 or visit their website at www.pymercantile.com.

Megan Fenton is the Sustainable Agriculture Educator at the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County.

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
Let the Sun Shine In: Farming Off-the-Grid

By Annie Bass

Seven years ago, Sara and Raymond Luhrman began farming on rented land, serving ten members in a Community Supported Agriculture model (CSA). Two years later, they were up to forty members and had outgrown their land. They had started farming as a hobby, and with such big operation, it had outgrown its place in their lives, too; they had to decide whether to scale back or go all-out. “So I quit my day job,” Raymond says.

Five years after the move, the Luhrmans serve 200 CSA members at Fox Creek Farm, and they do it without a connection to the national grid. When they bought the land, which adjoins their original rented site, they were faced with the decision of whether to spend the $40,000 to get electricity in, or to try to manage without the grid’s safety net.

They opted for self-sufficiency, installing a 1 kW photovoltaic solar array and 100-foot wind turbine. Along with installing the means of production, the Luhrmans paid attention to minimizing their energy needs, selecting a high-efficiency well pump and heavily insulated cooler for storing the vegetable harvest until delivery. They built their house, the first floor of which is a barn, according to the principles of passive solar design: south facing, super-insulated walls, and solar installations came to $20,000, half of the initial cost of connecting to the grid.

Without a connection to the grid, government subsidies and incentives disappear. Raymond and Sara had to finance their own energy entirely. To keep costs down, they installed the turbine and panels themselves. Raymond says some understanding of electrical installation work is needed, but neither Raymond nor Sara is trained in the area. They ordered catalogs from off-grid solar and wind suppliers to learn “what kind of questions to ask when you start to design the system,” Raymond says. Next they found manufacturers and suppliers (the Alternative Energy Store in Massachusetts and Backwoods Solar in Idaho), and asked them questions. Once they had ordered their supplies (Evergreen panels, Outback inverter and charge controller, and a Bergey turbine and tower), they made use of the components’ detailed installation instructions.

Site testing was as expensive as the actual installation, so the Luhrmans consulted online wind maps and found the sunniest spot near the barn to determine locations. They also visited off-grid family homes, to see full systems in operation. One of the challenges was sizing the system correctly. Using their budget as a guide, they made a guess, and in Spring, 2010, they added another .3 kW to their photovoltaic array. The total cost of both the wind and solar installations came to $20,000, half of the initial cost of connecting to the grid.

Without the grid to fall back on during cloudy, still days, the Luhrmans have to watch their energy consumption carefully. “It makes you very aware of how much energy you use,” Raymond said. “Not like an abstract number in your bill.”

“Not like an abstract number in your bill,” Raymond mused, “is if we were to get into a value-added operation like freezing, for example ... that would take another couple solar arrays. On the other hand, the size the farm is, we are living off the operation. It’s a good match.”

To learn more about Fox Creek Farm, visit www.foxcreekfarmcsa.com

Old Man Winter is here! Snow, wind, cold temps. What do you do to keep warm in your home? Are you nervous about your energy bill? What are some things you can do that don’t cost much money, but will help you stay toasty warm throughout the season?

If you haven’t done so already, check to see if there are any energy resource programs in your area. Find out about Weatherization Assistance Programs, HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) and check with your energy provider to see if there is a program you can use to have your home audited for energy efficiency. You may qualify to have this done at no cost to you.

You can also do your own informal audit. Check to see where air is coming into your home. Feel around doors and windows. Is air also coming in through outlets and light switches? You can caulk around windows and doors (don’t caulk the windows shut!) and use foam gaskets behind the switch plates on exterior walls.

Before you install any insulation or add to existing insulation to your attic, check for places that air might leak there. Are there holes that were drilled for plumbing or electrical needs? You may have to seal those openings with a spray foam sealant and then put insulation down. Insulation is not effective in keeping the air from moving through it, so get the most for your money by sealing those leaks first!

Despite what the commercials say, new windows are not the only way to keep energy costs down. There are other low cost methods to keep the jet stream from entering your home. Lock your windows to help them seal tightly. No locks? Rope caulk around the sashes. Use plastic sheeting and curtains to help keep cold air out.

Install energy efficient lighting (compact fluorescent bulbs use one fourth the energy costs down). There are other low cost methods to keep the jet stream from entering your home. Lock your windows to help them seal tightly. No locks? Rope caulk around the sashes. Use plastic sheeting and curtains to help keep cold air out.

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NON-DIARY LIVESTOCK

Dorset Sheep: Truths and Myths

By Ulf Kintzeli

After being in the business of raising wool sheep of various kinds for two decades, I decided in 2005 to start with hair sheep. I have a Texel flock of 100 breeding ewes at the time since it meant giving up on the customers who bought breeding stock from me, and since I also didn’t know how well my market lambs would sell. I had heard all the negatives about them such as “The lambs get too old to market”. “The pasture will be littered with wool as these sheep shed”, and “They get too cold in the winter.”

I had a Texel flock of 100 breeding ewes at the time when I bought my first White Dorper rams. My Texel sheep had served me well with their ability to finish on pasture, with their excellent meaty carcasses and with their lambing percentage of over 200 percent. However, Texels are a breed that thrives on a good, mild winter climate and have a different seasonal fleece pattern, are very heat sensitive, have at times problems lambing due to the broad head and shoulders, and they need shearing, I shear myself and since I wanted to increase the size of my flock I was not looking forward to shearing even more sheep.

The flavor of the market lambs is in my opinion mostly influenced by the fact that these lambs are grass-fed. My Texel and Dorset lambs that I used to have in the past didn’t differ that much in flavor, although the WD lambs are indeed milder tasting. In lambs, grain feeding versus grass-fed has a greater influence on flavor than the differences in breeds. However, in older hairsheep the flavor is still impressive due to the genetic factor. I sell a lot of culled ewes as roasts, ground meat, stew meat and various sausages. The mild and yet rich flavor of these culled ewes is remarkable and does not at all remind anyone of mutton. In fact, when we have pot roast from a culled ewe I can still fool my wife into thinking we had lamb for dinner.

 judging eating. If my product would be poorly finished, I would not intend to grow your lambs beyond 100 lbs. – take it from me, you don’t have to worry about anyone getting too fat.

The shedding process may take some getting used to but will not litter your pasture with wool

PHOTOS BY ULF KINTZEL

The shedding ability of this breed varies greatly. There is the wool type and the hair type with the hair type being slightly less tasty but far better shedding. What is worse, however, is the wool type when you end up shearing them? If you consider the traits described in this article and choose to have a purebred flock. However, if I had feared just did not happen. The wool and hair comes mainly off in such small pieces that it is like a cow or a goat shedding - you don’t worry about their hair littering the pasture either.

There is no such thing as an ideal breed. You will always need to make compromises if you choose to have a purebred flock. However, if I consider the traits described in this article and add the easy lambing, good mothering and fertility as well as the calm disposition and eye appealing looks of these sheep to the mix, I have found a fair balance to the ideal breed at least for my farming system and my market. There are without a doubt breeds that surpass White Dorper sheep in one or the other trait. If you combine all traits I have not found a better breed for a farming system based on pasture and direct marketing.

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 Joanna Green, Cornell Small Farms Program, 15A Plant Science Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853 vws7@cornell.edu

We’re not looking for beautiful, interesting and/or funny small farm photos to print.

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Grubby Hands on Your Lettuce?

Efficient and Safe Food Handling for Small-Scale Vegetable Producers

By Annie Bass and Molly Shaw

Since the bout of food safety scandals over the past few years, many wholesale buyers have begun requiring food safety certification. This poses several problems to farmers, and to small farmers in particular. Questions about what certification means, and when farmers need it, can be confusing.

Molly Shaw, an extension fruit and vegetable specialist in the South Central NY Ag Team, is training farmers in safe food handling processes. The project addresses the first step, that is making sure farmers are using certifiable food handling systems. Some of the next steps for farmers in the application. For example, writing a food safety plan is a common hurdle. Many farmers don’t know that they have access to the resources needed. The USDA took the concern about fresh manure, for example, and extrapolated a necessity to keep wild animals out of the fields, a measure which is not feasible for field-grown produce. "We can’t control birds flying over the field," the farmers protest. The compromise for the certification process is that farmers must inspect their field for signs of wildlife before harvest, document the results, and take some measure to reduce wildlife damage during the growing season...a vague requirement, but one farmers can do.

Molly Shaw is a Cornell Cooperative Extension Fruit and Vegetable Specialist in the South Central NY Ag Team. She may be reached at meh39@cornell.edu.

Manager Eric Yetter and Matthew Glenn of Muddy Fingers Farm discuss strategies for a well-laid out and organized wash station

SARE offers sustainable agriculture grants, bulletins, books, an online events calendar and many other resources. 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

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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 a SARE grant would be a good fit for you.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Educator Molly Shaw is training farmers in safe food handling processes with the help of a NE SARE partnership grant.

The wash station at Muddy Fingers Farm was simple and inexpensive, but works well for the farm’s needs. The owners had added a barrel washer since this photo was taken.

This article discusses SARE grant ONE10-137. To view the final report, available in 2011, visit http://sare.org/MySare/ProjectReport.aspx?id=209310937

Annie Bass was a summer intern with the Cornell Small Farms Program in 2010. She may be reached at arb258@cornell.edu. Molly Shaw is a Cornell Cooperative Extension Fruit and Vegetable Specialist in the South Central NY Ag Team. She may be reached at meh39@cornell.edu.
Traveling Biodiesel Processor Boosts Self-Sufficiency of Organic Valley Farms

By Jake Wedeberg

Organic Valley is committed to utilizing responsible and renewable energy. They have worked within their business to implement solar and wind projects to provide clean energy to their headquarters. But they haven’t stopped at simply replacing electricity with a more responsible source of power; they are also working within the cooperative to further the use of biofuels - both at the business level and on their farms.

Beginning in 2002, Organic Valley started to use biodiesel in their fleet trucks as an alternative to petroleum diesel. In order to realize their goal of fueling with biodiesel, they needed to create relationships with local fueling stations. The success with biodiesel use at the business level coupled with the rising cost of both fuel and organic feed led the cooperative to research how biodiesel could be produced at the farm level.

The On-Farm Biofuels program began about two years ago and has garnered increasing interest from co-op members who wish to become more self-sufficient through using renewable fuels to power their operations. But it is not only independence that drives these farmers. Also playing a major role are the volatile oil prices that have left many farmers searching for petroleum alternatives, especially when we saw $5 per gallon diesel in 2008. But using biodiesel is easy; finding a fuel that is not connected to the volatile commodity market is more difficult. So in true farmer fashion, creating fuel on the farm has been the answer.

Some farmers will render waste vegetable oil when available, but many are choosing to simply grow their own fuel by planting oilseed crops like sunflowers, canola, or canola. Growing oilseed crops uses this year’s energy crops like sunflowers, camelina or canola. Farmers grow a variety of different oilseeds depending on the type of protein meal they want to feed their livestock and what equipment they already have on the farm for growing and harvesting crops. The cold extraction screw press itself is capable of crushing over 100 different oilseed varieties, which means if the seed contains oil and fits in the press, fuel can be made.

The mobile processing trailer hit the road in 2009 and went to six farms throughout Wisconsin. This year there are 18 farmers who have requested the use of the trailer. The biodiesel trailer has been used as a demonstration tool to get biodiesel into farmer’s hands, turning the seemingly impossible idea of producing fuel on the farm into a reality for many farmers who want to be more self-sufficient and sustainable on their farms. Our calculations indicate that if a farmer plants 10% of their tillable land base to an oilseed crop it will provide over 75% of farm’s fuel needs and over half the protein meal needs.

One aspect the program looks at is net energy return, or how much fuel it takes to grow the crop versus how much yielded in return. On one test plot of sunflowers in 2008, the fuel used was tracked for every pass of the tractor, and it was determined that 8.13 gallons of biodiesel per acre was used for organic production. In return, that acre yielded 76 gallons of biodiesel and 890 pounds of 31.4% protein meal. The press uses 38 kilowatt hours per day to operate, producing 100 gallons of oil. This is less than $.04 per gallon and $.30 per day to operate at $.10 per kwh.

The 466 International truck which pulls the trailer was retrofitted with a two-tank Elsbett kit in February of 2009. It has logged over 10,000 miles on waste vegetable oil as it tows the biofuel press trailer. It starts up on diesel or biodiesel, and once the engine has reached required temperatures, it starts to draw from the vegetable oil tank for operation on 100% vegetable oil. Then, ten minutes prior to shutting down, a switch is flipped to purge the fuel lines of vegetable oil for the next start-up.

Since the first pilot conversion in 2009, three more Organic Valley fleet trucks have been retrofitted with Elsbett kits to operate on waste vegetable oil and three farms have done the same with their high-fuel-use tractors. To fully utilize the conversion kit it is best to retrofit tractors that are in the field for hours at a time.

For more information on growing and processing oilseed crops on your farm or to learn more about how you can become more fuel and feed independent, contact Jake Wedeberg at 1-888-809-9297 or jake.wedeberg@organicvalley.com.
Serve Your Neighbors Food: Cropsey Community Farm

Cropsey Community Farm ushers in a new model of farming for suburban areas.

By Charlie Paolino

For the small farmer, one of the most basic tenets of our mission - to grow food for ourselves and our community - is becoming increasingly difficult due to one simple issue, the acquiring and maintaining of land. As property taxes have increased, shipping costs and gas have increased and unfortunately income derived from growing beautiful and organic food has remained stagnant. As Americans thirst for the “American Dream”, which for some is an oversized “McMansion” on an acre of land, our usable farm land continues to shrink as many farmers simply can not compete with the developer willing to spend big money to convert beautiful swaths of open pastures into mindless cookie-cutter developments. Fortunately, even in bustling areas such as Rockland County, New York, there is hope!

Thanks to the work of the Rockland Farm Alliance, here in Rockland County, the pendulum has begun to swing the other way. Started in 2007 by John McDowell and Alexandra Spadae-McDowell of Camp Hill Farm in Pomona, the Rockland Farm Alliance consists of farmers, community activists, county officials and local citizens who share a common goal: to facilitate local sustainable agriculture in Rockland County.

In what is a groundbreaking new model for preserving farmland, the members of the Rockland Farm Alliance and the Board of Directors of their current project: The Cropsey Community Farm, have set into motion a very exciting way to preserve these farms for the community. The Rockland Farm Alliance has obtained a four year lease from Rockland County and the Town of Clarkstown to develop a community farm on a five acre parcel of a retired farm owned previously by the Cropsey family. There are many aspects of the project which are unique, interesting and downright inspiring. This entire project has been entirely driven through volunteers who have selflessly donated their time, money and very often sweat to see this project blossom from an idea into reality. The project plans to have three basic components: growing food for the community in a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) model, an educational component for local students and a component for providing produce for a local school food program.

According to Naomi Camilleri, assistant director of the Rockland Farm Alliance, “The Rockland Farm Alliance is devoted to supporting all of Rockland’s existing farms, as well as facilitating the birth of new sustainable farms in our county. With the cost of land here at hundreds of thousands an acre, the era of large family farms has come to a close, and it is time for suburban areas.

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The newly planted cover crop growing on the Cropsey Community Farm in New City, NY.

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Ballerina to Dairy Farmer

By Katelyn Walley, Independent 4-H Member

At age 8, I wanted to be a ballerina. At age 14, I wanted to be a musician. At age 17, I wanted to be a teacher. Now, at the age of 18, I’ve finally settled into a career path that I am happy with: Dairy Farmer.

My name is Katelyn Walley and I am the daughter of Bill and Kim Walley. I grew up on a dairy farm in Delaware County, where we milk 50 registered Ayrshires and own about 50 dairy cattle in Delaware County, where we milk 50 registered Ayrshires and own about 50 dairy cattle. My name is Katelyn Walley and I am the daughter of Bill and Kim Walley. I grew up on a dairy farm in Delaware County, where we milk 50 registered Ayrshires and own about 50 dairy cattle in Delaware County, where we milk 50 registered Ayrshires and own about 50 dairy cattle. My name is Katelyn Walley and I am the daughter of Bill and Kim Walley. I grew up on a dairy farm in Delaware County, where we milk 50 registered Ayrshires and own about 50 dairy cattle in Delaware County, where we milk 50 registered Ayrshires and own about 50 dairy cattle.

During my childhood years I never wanted to be a farmer. I loved living on our farm, don’t get me wrong, but I just didn’t think that it was for me. While other kids were going bowling, watching movies, hanging out, and doing things like that, I was in the barn full of horses whinnying at me when I got up in the morning to get ready for the All-American show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, writing speeches to support the dairy industry as the New York State Alternate Dairy Princess, milking cows while sick with the flu, and helping my family with day to day chores.

I used to think that farming wasn’t for me because I could be something so much better: a dancer; a writer; a teacher, maybe even an astronaut; however, now I realize just how wrong I was, because, for me, being a farmer is the greatest job in the whole world. You get to provide the world with wholesome nutritious products. You get a hands-on job that may not require a college education, but definitely require intelligence that can only be achieved beyond the classroom walls. You get to work with animals, people, and the land in ways that cannot be accessed from a cubicle. You get to work 25 hours a day, 6 days a week, 365 days a year for a salary that gets put right back into the farm. But most of all, you get to put blood, sweat, and tears into a dream that can be passed on for generations to come. My new goal is to have a farm of my own in which I can do all of these things. I wouldn’t trade my life as a daughter of a dairy farmer for anything, and now I hope that I can be the dairy farmer (rather than the daughter).

So, to all of those farm kids dreaming of something bigger and better—farming is the biggest and best job there is. Growing up on a farm is one of the greatest things a person could ask for. You learn patience, strength, common sense, perseverance, ethics, morals, and, most importantly, how to make your teachers feel bad for you when you have to milk cows instead of coming to school. Farming will always be a part of my life, as it will yours, and returning to those roots is my dream. It’s quite a step, ballerina to dairy farmer, but when chasing after dreams—it’s worth it.

For more information about the 4-H Horse programs, visit http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/4H/horses/index.html

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4-H Barnyardians

By Justine Bishop, Country Dumbelle 4-H Club

My name is Justine Bishop. I am sixteen years old, and my family has been farming for as long as I can remember. Although we are busy all year round, the busiest time is always summer. Not only is summer busy because it is hay season, but also because it is show season.

I started showing when I was ten years old. My Dad bought me a Holstein Spring Heifer calf called Ariel. Even today, I can still say that she was the most stubborn animal I have ever worked with. Halter breaking her was one of the most difficult things that I have ever done on the farm; even more strenuous than moving hay all day. I was bitterly disappointed when she got sick right before her first show at the Cooperstown Farmer’s Museum Junior Livestock Show. I showed her at the Delaware County Fair where she was consistently in the middle of her class. I showed Hilda again as a yearling heifer at Cooperstown, Walton, Afton, Norwich, and Cortland. Working with Hilda prepared me for every other situation I’ve had to show in, she gave me an iron will and a stronger determination to succeed than I’d ever had before. If not for Hilda, I may well have given up on my second calf project, Ariel. She was also a Spring Heifer Calf, and also a Holstein, I dreaded that she might be even worse than Hilda had been. The first time I had Ariel on a halter it took over an hour to walk the length of the barn and back, but Hilda had been worse, so I did not give up. I was so determined that by the end of the show season I had won my master showman class at the Delaware County Fair with Ariel. That year I went to the State Fair in Syracuse, and best job there is. Growing up on a farm is one of the greatest things a person could ask for. You learn patience, strength, common sense, perseverance, ethics, morals, and, most importantly, how to make your teachers feel bad for you when you have to milk cows instead of coming to school. Farming will always be a part of my life, as it will yours, and returning to those roots is my dream. It’s quite a step, ballerina to dairy farmer, but when chasing after dreams—it’s worth it.

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Stubborn Hilda & Angel Ariel

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Brussels Sprouts: the Tasty, Tiny Morsels on the Stalk

By Ron Mac Lean

There are two kinds of people: those who love Brussels sprouts and those who can’t stand them. If you are included in the latter, perhaps you’ve only had them overcooked or they’ve set in the store too long. My suggestion is to try them fresh off the stalk.

This vegetable looks and tastes like a miniature cabbage, leaves growing on top of leaves to form a nearly perfect ball shape. The size of each individual sprout depends on where on the stalk it is located. Those formed on the thickest part can be nearly the size of a half dollar coin but usually will be the toughest. Those at the very top can be as small as a pencil eraser. The most tender ones are those the size of a dime to a nickel.

Over forty years ago, my father-in-law who was a chef, found a farm in the country south of Utica in Upstate New York that sold these tasty little morsels-on-a-stalk at a roadside stand. He gave us one or two stalks to try, and told me how to harvest the sprouts. The stalks are about two feet tall when mature and may contain 30 to 40 sprouts. At that time, the farmers who raised them charged 50 cents per stalk: a real bargain even at 1960’s prices. We were OK with the taste of cabbage (a vegetable affordable to a young family’s pocketbook), so we quickly fell in love with the taste of these tender tiny cabbages that grow on “the stem of life.” The season for these luscious veggies begins after the first killing frost, usually in November and December.

So how do you harvest the Brussels sprouts? The method my father-in-law told me was to get a good grip towards the top of the stalk and start with the larger sprouts. Cut off each one with a sharp knife. Because each little morsel grows at random spots, you have to turn the stalk to have a good cutting angle. Recently I learned from someone who grows Brussels sprouts, that you can simply twist each sprout until it breaks off. This method may be less labor intensive and certainly less dangerous than using a knife.

Brussels Sprouts with Bacon

Ingredients:
1/2 lb. Prosciutto or bacon, diced
1 Tablespoon olive oil
1 Tablespoon butter
1 clove garlic, minced
1 small onion, minced
1/2 cup of Balsamic vinegar
2 cups of chicken stock
1 1/2 lbs. Brussels Sprouts
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:
Sauté onions, garlic and bacon in a large frying pan over medium heat. When onions are translucent and bacon is crisp, add sprouts. Stir gently and cook for about five minutes. Add 1/4 cup of chicken stock and let simmer. Repeat until liquid has been reduced by 1/3. Add Salt and pepper to taste.

Sautéed Brussels Sprouts in garlic

Ingredients:
1 - 1 1/2 lbs. of Brussels Sprouts, cleaned and cut into halves
2 - 4 tablespoons of olive oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed and minced
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:
In a large skillet, pour in 2 T. of olive oil and add Brussels Sprouts. Keep on a low to medium flame for five minutes. Add garlic and stir. Continue to sauté Brussels Sprouts and stir occasionally. Keep at a low enough temperature that your garlic does not burn but turns golden. Add additional olive oil as needed to prevent scorching and burning. Cook low and slow for another five to ten minutes; until sprouts are tender. Add salt and pepper to taste.

This tasty collection of tiny morsels is ready to be placed in a pot of fresh boiling water. Check every so often with a fork to see if they are tender; then drain. Spoon them into a complimentary colored serving dish, add butter and serve. Some folks like to add a touch of salt and pepper.

Brussels Sprouts with Bacon

Instructions:
1 1/2 lbs. Brussels Sprouts
2 cups of chicken stock
1/2 cup of Balsamic vinegar
1 small onion, minced
1 clove garlic, minced
1 Tablespoon butter
1 Tablespoon olive oil
1 1/2 lbs. Prosciutto or bacon, diced
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:
Fry bacon (or Prosciutto) in a large deep skillet over medium heat until evenly browned and almost crisp. Remove bacon. Drain off all but two tablespoons of bacon fat. Add oil, butter, garlic and onion to skillet and cook over a medium flame until the onions go glassy. Add the Balsamic vinegar and chicken stock to the skillet and let simmer until liquid has been reduced by 1/3rd. Add Brussels Sprouts and bring to a boil over high heat. Once they have reached a full boil, lower heat to medium and simmer until Brussels Sprouts are tender: about 10 minutes. Add bacon to the skillet and stir. Serve immediately. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Creamed Brussels Sprouts with Nutmeg

Ingredients:
1/4 cup butter
1/4 cup flour
1/4 tsp. salt
Dash of white pepper
2 cups milk

Instructions:
In a medium sized saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Whisk in the flour, salt and pepper until smooth. Slowly add the milk, a little at a time, whisking briskly. Bring to a boil; stir until it begins to thicken; about five minutes. Add Brussels Sprouts and nutmeg and stir. Simmer until the Brussels Sprouts are completely cooked and tender; about five minutes.
Local Foods and Marketing

Tips for Marketing Local Meat

By Matt LeRoux

Local foods are enjoying strong demand, however, until recently the buy local movement has been largely concentrated on fresh seasonal produce. Many livestock farmers are now aware that the “buy local” movement is strong and that there is demand for their products in local markets. However, tapping into those markets may be intimidating to farmers new to direct marketing. Who are local meats consumers and where do they shop? What products are they looking for and how do they set pricing? This article begins to answer such commonly asked questions.

Local meats buyers can be divided into three basic groups, each driven by “foodie” cause-driven “greenies” and price-driven traditional buyers. Each group is driven to local meat, and arguably local foods, by different desires and needs. Here is a basic profile on each group (and summarized in Table 1):

Foodies are food enthusiasts; they seek authentic eating experiences including gourmet and regional specialties. A foodie wants an excellent eating experience and to taste foods that have a story and a known source. They consider the factors of the household and family that it was prepared as bragging rights. As such, foodies are primarily interested in buying high-value cuts, such as steaks, but also other cuts. Of the three consumer groups, foodies are the least price sensitive. They primarily buy meat in small quantities and individual cuts, but may also be interested in buying in bulk or joining a meat CSA. Part of the experience they seek is shopping and talking to the farmer. Foodies like to shop at farmers’ markets or specialty stores when buying meat to prepare at home and also like to order locally raised meats at restaurants.

Green consumers are seeking local meat in the quest for a safe, sustainable, and healthy meal. This category broadly groups all consumers motivated by “social causes” including the environment, humane treatment of animals, supporting the local economy and farmers, as well as those seeking local meats for personal health reasons. Green consumers may also be recently converted vegetarians, or people who choose to not eat commodity meat. These consumers are motivated to purchase meat that they perceive to support any number of social causes and view a purchase as a way to support their beliefs. Such consumers will shop at natural food stores, locally-owned stores and restaurants, and will also like to buy direct from the farmer through farmers’ markets, meat CSA’s and in bulk. Green consumers want to learn more about the products they buy, such as how and where they were raised and while they will identify with claims such as “natural” and “pasture raised”, they will want to verify the validity of such claims.

The final group is the traditional local meat buyers. This group includes consumers that have purchased a quarter or side of beef or other meat for many years. In decades past, it was common to buy the household supply of meat through what is called the “freezer trade”. People, mostly rural residents, would buy a side from a neighbor and divide it into separate freezer in which to store it. Traditional buyers definitely appreciate the quality and range of cuts that they can purchase, but in bulk, are mostly motivated by the low price and high value. Traditional buyers are less likely to buy individual cuts or to shop for meat at farmers’ markets or specialty stores. Traditional buyers, once they have a good experience with a farm, remain loyal, returning to buy again and again.

Each group comes to the marketplace with different motivations and buying habits, but they all have one demand in common – quality. To be successful in the local meats marketplace, it is essential to deliver quality and honestly to customers. As the saying goes, “you can only sell a customer one bad steak.” Each of these consumer groups are potential customers for local meats producers.

For successful results in the local meats market, tailor farm marketing to one or more of these groups. The group or groups chosen will impact marketing choices including marketing channels, prices, cuts, claims and advertising. Once marketing materials are developed, keep some form of brochures, business card, or price sheets on-hand at all times. You never know when you will meet your new customer, and you need to be able to give them your contact information.

Direct marketing livestock producers often struggle with managing the inventory of low and high value cuts, and the proportions of each that come from one animal. Another key to success in local meats market is to be sure that the entire carcass is sold. There are a few strategies to accomplish this. One strategy is to price each cut in relation to its yield and desirability. Another is to balance the cut list to a limited selection of cuts that sell well, turning the rest into ground beef.

Additionally, you can sell packages of meat which include both low and high value cuts to balance the inventory.

Additional tips for marketing include:

- Donate or offer a discount to fundraisers and events, make sure your farm name is highly-visible and well-represented.
- Participate in agricultural events, especially those with tastings and samples of your product.
- Consider giving samples of ground beef to potential high volume buyers.
- Clearly and consistently communicate your claims and practices on all materials.
- Encourage customers to visit your farm to build trust and make a stronger connection to your product.

Matt LeRoux is an Agriculture Marketing Specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, NY. He may be reached at (607) 272-2292 ext 159 or mnl28@cornell.edu

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Tips for Marketing Local Meat

In summary, it is clear that consumers are demanding more local meats. Identifying target consumer types, communicating to their desires and needs, and finding where they shop are good tips for smart marketers. All customers want quality and honesty - all the time. Once a marketing plan and materials have been developed, always have some on hand, you never know when you will meet your next customer. Finally, don’t fall into the trap of selling steaks. To last in the meat business you must sell the whole carcass!

The “Foodies” consumer group primarily buy meat in small quantities and individual cuts. They want to taste foods that have a story and a known source.

Matt LeRoux

Agriculture Marketing Specialist
Cornell Cooperative Extension
Tompkins County, NY
Urban Farmer Backlash: Too Much of a Good Thing?

By Derek Denckla

Recently, urban agriculture seems to have achieved a milestone--being lauded upon. The blog Daily Candy featured "DIY Halloween Costumes" in which suggestion No. 4 was "Urban Farmer," recommending a three ingredient recipe: "1. Same [outfit] as Paul Bunyan but replace the ax with a shovel; 2. Carry a tote bag filled with fresh veggies; and 3. Talk about the importance of eating local. Extra Credit: Talk about the time you ate with Michael Pollan."

Overexposure or Underappreciated?

The reading public may be overexposed to urban agriculture, associating urban farming more with fad or fashion rather than the future of food.

In my opinion, copious media attention should be lavished on farmers (and farming in general) is long overdue. It strikes me as much more odd that farm work has been virtually hidden from public view. Farming has been systematically evicted from cities as smelly, dirty and dangerous to public health. The disconnection between eater and grower has led to children's confusion about the origin of sustenance.

Re-connection of producer and consumer is one of the chief benefits provided by resurgence of urban agriculture. Urban farmers may not be able to grow all the food that urbanites need to survive. Yet, urban farms give city dwellers an opportunity to appreciate the process of growing food at close range, getting to know the farmer as a neighbor.

Portraying urban farming as a "hip" profession may not be such a bad trend if it attracts more young people to buy farm-fresh produce or consider farming as a viable vocation. Fifty-seven is the average age of an American farmer.

Archetype or Stereotype?
The costumed characteristics might signify that "Urban Farmer" has achieved the widespread recognition as an archetype, like the average age of an American farmer. We might be given to assume that urban farmers are has achieved the widespread recognition as an archetype, like the average age of an American farmer. Yet, urban farms give city dwellers an opportunity to make from urban farms.

The soundbite stereotype may also gloss over significant personal risks taken by urban farmers: hard physical labor, uncertain income and seasonal unemployment. Farming is, by its very nature, a fragile enterprise subject to weather, temperature, insects, fungi, and other environmental factors. And then, there's the challenging economics of making a living from the land.

Uniformity? Other than Will Allen of Growing Power, few faces of color appear in press coverage on urban farmers. And, it's no secret that flannel is the personal covering of choice for mostly-white post-collegiate folks. Not surprisingly, Bunyon's white too.

Now, I am not playing the race card here: I think that there is room for all colors of urban farmers, producing food for all the needs of every neighborhood at every income level. Yet, the "flannel" gaggles worn by the press seem to focus repeated reporting on one type of farmer while ignoring another. When media ignorance breaks down along skin color or class of clientele, then it recaps an imbalance of power that is not so cool.

Quantity over Quality? Form over Substance?
The sheer volume of recent cultural output on urban farming is daunting and hard to follow, ironically, dwarving the produce from the actual urban farms.

The diversity of discourse is a sign of strong sincere interest--thinkers and writers can help create a new cultural context for urban farming that fosters product demand and mutual understanding. On the flip side, it seems a tad perverse that some interpreters of urban farming may be deriving more income from telling "the story of urban farming" than most farmers will ever make from urban farms.

I can well understand some public confusion about how to evaluate competing commitments, discerning the wheat from the chaff.

Whose personal account of urban homesteading should you trust? Should you read the gonzo journalism of My Empire of Night or listen to the personal memoir Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer by Novella Carpenter?

Who is the legitimate thought-leader of the urban farming movement? Should you follow the simple homey steps of UrbanFarming.org sponsored explicitly by Triskel or the empowering earth savvy of GrowingPower.org supported in part by GE Foundation?

To be fair, it is not merely the reportage on urban agriculture that carries the accolades and overtaking the scope of urban agriculture. The term "farm" has come to be used artfully to redefine any place where food is growing in the city--no matter how small. I am sympathetic to the appropriation of the terminology of "farm" and "farmer" to transform social consciousness around the possibilities for modest but meaningful contributions to changing the food system. And, interestingly, even the USDA uses a small threshold when defining a farmer as someone who "sells at least one thousand dollars of agricultural commodities." However, the stretching of common-sense definitions of "farm" and "farmer" may invite a bit of justifiable satirical send-up.

Resilience? Traditionally, a person, profession or idea becomes an object of ridicule when it is perceived as powerful enough to take a licking and keep on ticking. Maybe the "Urban Farmer" is now seen as a substantial social figure -- strong enough to withstand mockery and flattery alike -- like a politician, celebrity or sports hero. However, in the era of recession, the corporate bottom of the socio-economic totem pole. So, taking urban farmers "down a notch" would leave them lower than the bottom.

The greenest net

This sign honestly relays the reality that most urban farms are "in progres," posted at BK Farmyardz, High School for Public Service in Crown Heights section of Brooklyn.

Photo courtesy of Kate Glicksberg.

Whose vision should define the future of urban agriculture? Should you yearn for the dazzling towers of technopolis described in Vertical Farming by Dickson Despommier or organize the grassroots land reclamation outlined in Public Produce by Darrin Nordahl?

This explosive growth and wide span of opinion indicate the genuine excitement and growing importance of urban agriculture right now. However, it also makes it increasingly difficult to understand who is doing really good work and who is merely working it (for a buck).

Passing Fancy or Lasting Movement?

Urban agriculture is not new -- it is as old as the hanging gardens of Babylon or the floating farms of Tenochtitlan. And, urban farming is not new to US Cities -- Victory Gardens sprouted here during World War II and Community Gardens have grown food through small individual allotment plots since the 1970s.

Regardless, a majority of urban agriculture experiments gaining public attention are less than a few years old in Detroit, Philadelphia, New York and Chicago. What will happen when the urban farmer story evolves from the hook of "newness" to a more mature theme of "sustainability"?

There are some strong signs that urban agriculture is not disappearing with the next news cycle. In every city, myriad meetup groups have sprouted -- from Permaculture to Beekeeping. Many universities have revived their urban extension programs or enhanced existing programs with Food Studies. There are hundreds of urban agriculture weblogs and even an Urban Farm Magazine (by the publishers of Hobby Farms). In Fall 2010, Just Food, a New York City based non-profit, announced the opening of its Farm School NYC, specifically to train a new generation of urban farmers - the first of its kind in the US.

In conclusion, I am greatly encouraged that urban agriculture may be growing forceful advocates and knowledgeable farmers who may help shape the evolution of the movement, resisting identification as a mere costume of clichés.

Derek Denckla wears a lot of hats. He edits a blog, TheGreenest.Net, focused on urban agriculture and runs FarmCity.US, an action research project exploring ways to invest in sustainable growth of urban agriculture. He advises urban farms and community-based organizations about business development through his consultancy, PropellerGroup.Net. Also, Denckla has been active in developing green buildings in Brooklyn and producing public exhibitions using interdisciplinary arts to communicate complex social and environmental issues.

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Strategies for Managing Your Property for Wildlife

By Rich Taber

People vary greatly with regards to their preferences for "wildlife", usually based on their personal experience and interests. For some people, white-tailed deer personify their interest in wildlife. For others, the birds (sparrows, juncos, woodpeckers, and chickadees) they see at their feeders are the most endearing to them. Do we think of the beavers that may have dammed up a stream on our property? Do we think of the huge flocks of Canada Geese that have proliferated in recent years? It can be all of these and many more. NY State is home to a huge variety of wildlife species: 32 amphibians, 39 reptiles, 375 birds, 92 mammals, and 160 freshwater fish. So when we refer to wildlife we are usually referring to any wild creature that has a backbone, although of course insects too can easily be considered wildlife.

Generally wildlife are thriving across NY State and most of the northeastern US. But several species are not doing so well, and are in danger of becoming impaired. There are a host of reasons, such as loss of habitat, urbanization, climate change, pollution, and land use changes, or typically a combination of these factors. Of particular concern are species that need early succession habitat, such as open lands, grasslands, and shrub/shrubby habitat. Much of our landscape has grown into mature forests as a result of abandoned farmland. Most of our forests are now considered "mature" or consist of trees that are greater than 12 inches in diameter. Mature forests provide the habitat for certain species of wildlife and those species are typically thriving. But, older forests do not provide the dense understory of brush and other vegetation (often called "early succession" habitat) that are needed by many species.

The key to fostering populations of wildlife is to maintain proper habitat. Habitat provides the four basic components that all species of wildlife need to survive and thrive: food, water, shelter, and space. However, not every single acre of land nor every single species of plant or animal may have all four of these habitat requirements. It is often best to consider habitat management on a larger, landscape scale where a mix of woodlands, grasslands, shrub lands, wetlands and streams can provide a rich mosaic of habitats for different groups of wildlife.

Many studies of landowner attitudes and reasons for owning and managing rural properties have shown that the ability to see wildlife is a high priority. We find recreation, enjoyment, sustenance, and inspiration from seeing a variety of wildlife on our properties. The question often arises from landowners, “What can I do to encourage wildlife on my property?”

Management will involve adjusting tree species, ages, spacing, and mixes there of. It will take time, money, equipment and expertise to accomplish successfully.

Management for wildlife may best be done in conjunction with and complementary to other land management activities, such as timber harvesting, firewood cutting, and agriculturally oriented activities. This approach is often called “multiple use”, where several landowner objectives can be simultaneously achieved and more efficiently than focusing on just one objective at a time. Also, managing for “groups” or “guilds” of species that need a specific type of habitat, or maybe even a mix of habitats, rather than just focusing on a specific species, is easier to accomplish.

The following suggestions, in no particular order of importance, are some strategies that can be used to enhance wildlife habitat on a property:

1. Good forestry and woodland management can encourage wildlife. Many people believe that cutting trees is bad for wildlife. However, proper forestry, in the form of carefully planned silviculture, can be used to create early succession habitat, such as open lands, grasslands, and shrub/shrubby habitat. Much of our landscape has grown into mature forests as a result of abandoned farmland. Most of our forests are now considered “mature” or consist of trees that are greater than 12 inches in diameter. Mature forests provide the habitat for certain species of wildlife and those species are typically thriving. But, older forests do not provide the dense understory of brush and other vegetation (often called “early succession” habitat) that are needed by many species. This occurs when just the best or most valuable trees are cut, such as diameter limit and high grade cutting. This then leaves behind a mix of stands of various ages.

2. Encouraging early succession habitat can provide critical, but often short-lived habitat that so many species need for their survival. Brush hogging old fields at least every three years can keep an area open. Creating “feathered” edges, rather than “hard” edges will promote early succession species. A feathered edge occurs when an open area blends into a shrubby border which then blends into young trees, before moving into more mature forest. A hard edge is when a field abruptly meets a wooded edge. This effect can foster nest predation by cowbirds, which lay their eggs in other songbird nests. Plus, some wildlife species (such as turkeys and ruffed grouse) benefit from a mix of stands of various ages.

3. Protecting vernal pools and construction of new ones will provide habitat for many species of amphibians in the springtime. A vernal pool is a small, ephemeral body of water which may only be present in the forest in early spring through early summer. However, these pools are critical for the reproductive life cycle for many species of frogs, toads, and salamanders.

4. Protecting wetland and stream habitats is essential for wildlife. Encouraging vegetation to grow along the banks of these habitats and fencing out livestock will protect this crucial habitat component and improve water quality for aquatic species.

5. Den trees, standing dead trees, snags, down logs, and wildlife debris provides nesting, perching, denning and shelter for many species of wildlife. Nutrients are recycled and important ecological processes are maintained with this debris. Plus, tops left in the woods from harvesting trees will protect young seedlings from deer browsing.

6. Tending wild apple trees is good for wildlife. A little pruning, removing competing overhead trees and fertilizing of old apple trees can provide a spike in apple production which provides food for wildlife.

7. Maintaining appropriate populations of white-tailed deer is good for biodiversity. These magnificent animals grace our lives and landscapes, but too many of them in a given area can cause long term ecosystem impacts that can take years to overcome. Tree sapling regeneration and the diversity of plant communities can be negatively impacted when too many deer inhabit an area. Consequently, wildlife species that depend on this diversity of understory cover are negatively impacted. The key method of managing a deer population is through sport hunting where does are harvested in accordance with state wildlife agency regulations.

8. Participating in Woodland Owner Associations will put you in company with likeminded people. Numerous workshops, walks, seminars, newsletters and magazines can keep landowners in the information loop. Multiple educational publications and venues are available to interested forest owners. For example, the New York Forest Owner’s Association has ten regional chapters of woodland owners throughout the state.

Rich Taber is with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County, and is the Project Manager for the New York Forest Owner’s Association State Wildlife Grant, a collaborative effort with NYFIA, NVSDED, and Cornell University. He can be reached at rt44@cornell.edu or 607-334-5841 ext. 21.

Information about New York Forest Owner’s Association activities can be found at http://www.nyfoa.org.

Free publications on wildlife can be accessed by clicking on the “Wild About Wildlife” logo at that site.
On the Danger List: The Saga to Save the Randall Lineback Cattle Breed

By Martha Herbert Izzi

If passion on the part of a few dedicated champions is the key ingredient to saving a "critically endangered" heritage cattle breed then the Randall Lineback (aka Randall) has a future. This venerable landrace breed, once common in New England, dates back to the 1600s when it likely originated from an amalgam of English, French and Dutch cattle breeds.

"Landrace" refers to a specific locale where an animal or plant has developed traits that enable them to better withstand harsh conditions in that environment. Consequently people are looking back at what our ancestors knew and did and trying to get back to that way of functioning so that it was healthy for the land, the animal, the water, or the people.

The The Randall's most recent history began in 1912 when Samuel Randall with wife and son, Everett, were farming in Sunderland, Vermont. Though it is unclear how they were acquired, their animals carried the original landrace cattle breed traits and the breed was true to their original size and color, unlike those that had gradually been absorbed into the ubiquitous Holstein. For the next 75 years, the Randall's had a closed herd which became known as Randall Linebacks. When Everett died in 1985 the Linebacks' fortunes were bleak since many were abandoned and the herd thinned to a few that were perspired to well meaning but eventually disinterested people. For Cynthia Creech, now the president of the Randall Cattle Registry and Breed Association, and an associate of Connecticut organic farmer, Phillip Lang, she is largely credited with saving the remnants of the Randall herd because she bought the last of the Randall family's nine cows and six bulls. Herd and herd management is the key to rebuilding the breed. Since its existence at her farm in Tennessee. She says that "there were six distinct families in the original nine girls. My herd is the only herd in the country that has the full genetic components of the entire breed. We verified this through blood and DNA testing. We knew that

The statistics speak for themselves. According to the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy:

In the last fifteen years, we have lost 190 farm animal breeds worldwide. Moreover, 1500 other are at risk of extinction. "In five years 60 breeds of cattle, goats, pigs, horses and poultry have become extinct.

Five main breeds of cattle comprise almost all of the dairy herds in the United States. Holsteins comprise 83 percent of dairy cows.

Three main breeds comprise 75 percent of pigs in the US.

60 percent of beef cattle come from three main breeds. Angus, Herefords or Simmental (a breed of cattle originally native to Switzerland) breeds.

Four breeds comprise 60 percent of the sheep in the US.

Grazing Health Benefits of Grazing Dairy Heifers

By A. Fay Benson

I recently completed a comparison of grazing pregnant dairy heifers in Confined vs. Management Intensive Grazing (MIG). This study showed the animals raised in MIG had far fewer post partum problems than those that were housed and managed in confinement. It was set up to complement prior studies conducted by the University of Minnesota from 2000 through 2002. Those studies showed the same advantages in health but were completed on the universities' farm, unlike this study that was conducted with animals from two separate commercial herds in New York.

The goal of the project was conceived during a pasture walk on a farm in Schuyler County, NY in the summer of 2003. The group was viewing a grazing system being used by a retired military man who contract-grazed replacements for a neighboring dairy. Some of the participants had similar operations and all participants agreed that grazing dairy replacements produced a healthier and stronger animal than comparable animals raised in confinement. The conversation affirmed there was significant opportunity to graze more replacements, especially with the dairies of more than 400 milking animals.

Research was needed since there was only anecdotal evidence when proposing the health advantages of grazing to dairy producers that were raising their replacements in confinement. I was asked by this group to find information that would help them increase their opportunity to

One study showed similar results as the Minnesota study this information would aid other large dairies to see the benefit of raising heifers on pasture. Increasing the number of animals grazing in NY would have many advantages:

1. Decreasing the amount of manure that feeds into a large farm's CAFO plan.
2. Creating opportunities for contract graziers.
3. And finally, raising replacements that are healthier and require less medical interventions at the beginning of their first lactation.

The study used 100 heifers on two different dairy farms. The animals were taken from two large commercial farms which had a sufficient number of animals bred in the window required for the study. Each group of heifers came back to be housed and managed together on the home farm. In April 2005 the animals were selected from two farms: Farm 1 of Schuyler County and Farm 2 of Cayuga County. The animals in each farm were weighed and sent to their sire for two days of each other. The grazing season was a challenging one in 2005 due to the shortening of the grazing period so that the animals from the two regimes spent more time together under the confinement regime there would be less of a difference between these. This was not the case. After collecting the data on

Health Benefits

Cows and Crops

Daisy in the foreground and her daughter Dolly in pasture at Kinship Farm in South Kirby, Vermont.

Though David Randall milks 140 Holsteins and Jerseys daily his passion for the Linebacks is palpable. "I would have a hundred of them. They are a perfect homestead cow, they are excellent grazers and their milk is excellent. Makes good butter and cheese. I feel like I'm milking my great-grandfather's cow." He says "they weren't bred for milk, more for meat and they put on weight fast." Joe Henderson, who slaughters them at eight months, sells the Lineback beef at high prices to the "finest restaurants in the Washington metro D.C. where the chefs have consistently rated Lineback meats as the finest beef out of heritage breeds."

After an intensive two-year effort with the help of local representatives, David Randall realized his dream to have the Lineback named as "A State Heritage Breed of Livestock." Governor Jim Douglas signed the bill into law on March 9, 2006, the only heritage breed designation in his eight years as governor and to Randall's knowledge it is the only state to name a heritage breed of cattle.

So why all the fuss? Why have these people and charities struggled so long to save this heritage breed of cattle? Clearly it is more than just a rebellion against the rise of industrial agriculture, but according to the Randall Lineback Breed Association. Starting with 25 of Creech's herd and a few others, Henderson and his board these are the "tools for the survival of the breed." This issue apparently is one that divides the two factions; there are two different breed associations led by two divided factions; there are more than 200 Randalls. Despite its near extinction there is the Randall Lineback breed originated.

This venerable landrace breed, once common in New England, has developed traits that enable them to better withstand harsh conditions in that environment. Consequently people are looking back at what our ancestors knew and did and trying to get back to that way of functioning so that it was healthy for the land, the animal, the water, or the people.

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"Landrace" refers to a specific locale where an animal or plant has developed traits that enable them to better withstand harsh conditions in that environment. Consequently people are looking back at what our ancestors knew and did and trying to get back to that way of functioning so that it was healthy for the land, the animal, the water, or the people.

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The original Randall Farm in Sunderland, Vermont was the Randall Lineback breed originated.

To that end, Randall says, "when we started our breed association we all agreed artificial insemination and embryo transplant programs would be anathema to this breed. Joe has a huge semen bank and he is absolutely scrupulous about record keeping. Every breeding is taken to a science. He is keeping cows families separate and trying to get as much genetic diversity as possible." For Henderson and his board these are the "tools for the survival of the breed." This issue apparently is one that divides the two breed associations.

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The Tale of the Taste the Region Gift Box

By Alison Clarke

In an effort to help farmers and other small scale processors market their value-added products, "Taste the Regions", a specialty food gift box was launched in 2009. In these especially difficult days of financial support for food-for-profit organizations, it was also thought to be a small step towards raising funds for two major projects: The NY Farm and Food Services Association's (NYFAS) broad-based food system education group, and the NY Small Scale Food Processors' Association (NYSSFPA) Marketing Committee to develop these gift boxes for 5 of the 11 tourism regions of the state: Adirondacks, Finger Lakes, Catskill, Hudson and Central Leatherstocking. In 2008, when the grant expired, the project was not quite ready for marketing, so NYSSFPA took the box. There was no funding, but plenty of enthusiasm.

Though a beautiful, glossy brochure had been developed, it didn't fulfill the need for a "mini catalog". Our first goal was to revamp the brochure into one that listed all of the producer's information so that consumers could reorder their favorite gift box products. We also wanted to include a form for gift recipients to fill out along with information about the products so that all regional dealers had been established, some changes had occurred, another reason the original brochure was designed so that all of the glossy brochures produced with grant funds had to be "recycled".

NYSSFPA tackled one issue at a time, aware that the producers were patiently waiting to be able to begin shipping (The Leatherstocking region's box was still in progress). We set the retail price of the box at $45 each. We reached that figure after allocating $25 for wholesale cost of product, $5 to the shipper, $5 for packaging, $5 for marketing, $5 profit. We have memos of understanding with the shippers and the producers. On average there are 6 to 8 regional items per box.

We began marketing outreach by sending let- ted letters to NYS Congresspersons in those regions, as well as to state legislators, especially those who had connections to agriculture and tourism. By the end of the summer of 2009 we began to plan for a "grand opening" to attract publicity. In discussions with the NY Wine and Culinary Center in Canandaigua NY, part of the Finger Lakes Region for which we had a gift box, we allowed use of their dining room to showcase and sell the first boxes in November of 2009. We were also encouraged to have a booth at both of the NYS Agriculture shows in the fall of 2009. NY Harvest shows in Syracuse and Albany.

We now had three large promotional events looming with the prospect of holiday sales, and we felt we needed more boxes in hand. We asked each of the regional shippers to prepare and transport 50 boxes to the grand opening in Canandaigua. The "ribbon cutting" at the grand opening was very successful. A good number of visitors occurred, but the Harvest Fest sales were done against a natural crowd. Over the next few months we made many calls to retailers in the four active regions. Fortunately, in two regions we reached the Board of Realtors for their major conferences, and in one region the director was so excited she offered a drawing of a 12 lb. box.

Searching for a reasonable niche market, we decided that the "realtor gifts to homebuyers" seemed a natural out. Over the next few months we made many calls to realtors in the four active regions. Fortunately, in two regions we reached the Board of Realtors for their major conferences, and in one region the director was so excited she offered a drawing of a gift box at her conference. We now had a new glossy flyer with logos of the regions, information about the project and purchasing options through our new Pay Pal account. We wrapped the regional catalogs around each of the flyers and sent them to the realtor conferences and to other agencies. Simultaneously, our fifth region, the NYLS, had no potential dealer and so the gift box was launched in 2010. We also encouraged to have a booth at both of the NYS Agriculture shows in the fall of 2010. We are now in the midst of NY Harvest shows in Syracuse and Albany.

Responsibilities to be defined in a Contract Helper Raising Agreement

Items which must be spelled out in writing include:

* Milk order requests and purchase terms.
* Feed order requests and purchase terms.
* Pre–arrangement of treatment or conditioning (perhaps a minimum health standard to protect other livestock at the facility, dehorned before arrival).
* Health and vaccination records.
* Transportation in and out, who arranges, who pays.
* Insemination, what age or size at first service (Holstein example, breed first heat after 13 months, donor breeds may vary in this period by age and size at breeding.)
* Heat detection, what systems are used and what is success rate, is there a plan for problem heifers.
* Growth rate expected, how defined, how monitored, penalty if not achieved.
* Transportation in and out, who arranges, who pays.
* Death losses, who pays (common suggestion is if owner loses calf, feeder refunds all raising costs in addition to feed, bedding, utilities, labor and housing are included.
* Parasite control program, what, when, who does the work, who pays.
* Vaccinations, what, when, who does the work, who pays.
* Insemination, what age or size at first service (Holstein example, breed first heat after 13 months, 131 cm and 380 Kg), who does, who pays, who is reimbursed if lost.
* Hoof trimming, what, when, how is need determined, who does it, who pays.
* Non–routine health care for sick animals, who does what, who pays.
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* Parasite control program, what, when, who does the work, who pays.
* Vaccinations, what, when, who does the work, who pays.

We have offered these gifts to the children of our clients. In this case, we have offered the gift boxes because they have moved to a new location and want to send a gift from NYS.

* How and when can rates be adjusted or renegotiated (notice given, new rates for new animals)

We set up a Facebook page, titled "Taste the Regions" http://www.facebook.com/?t=58&ap=1#pages/The-Girls-of-Summer/2646605773?r=2

A. Fay Benson is a Small Dairy Support Specialist with in Cornell University Cooperative Extension's South Central NY Regional Team in Canandaigua. She can be reached at 585-753-213, or by email at ab3@cornell.edu.

For more information please visit our web site at www.nysppa.com and click on the "Taste the Regions” especially project box. We wel- come your ideas and comments.

Alison Clarke is the Secretary to the Board of the NY Small Scale Food Processors’ Association and the Coordinator of the Taste the Regions project. She can be reached by email at accornell.edu.

www.grazeny.com. Posted are fact sheets on setting up a gift box. NY may be reached for advice on producing gift boxes for owners and graziers, tips on grazing replace- ment, as well as this report and others. Also, I set up a Facebook page, titled "The Girls of Summer" http://www.facebook.com/?t=58&ap=1#pages/The-Girls-of-Summer/2646605773?r=2

* Who else has heifers in facility and on what terms are new clients added.
* How and when can rates be adjusted or renegotiated (notice given, new rates for new animals)
* Death losses, who pays (common suggestion is if owner loses calf, feeder refunds all raising costs in addition to feed, bedding, utilities, labor and housing are included.
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**The Solstice**


By Bill Duesing

During these short days of winter, enjoy the rays of sun beaming into the south windows of your house, fix your hot cup of coffee, tea or hot chocolate and enjoy Bill's thoughts.

Next Monday is the Winter Solstice, the shortest day in the Northern Hemisphere and the beginning of the increase in sunlight which will bring us to the Summer Solstice in just 6 months.

On December 21, at 9:43 a.m., the sun will be directly overhead at the Tropics of Capricorn, 23 degrees below the equator in the Southern Hemisphere. The rotation of the Earth around the sun and the relatively fixed orientation of the Earth's axis bring the Tropic of Capricorn closest to the sun on the Winter Solstice. At the time of the Summer Solstice, the Tropic of Cancer (23 degrees north of the equator) is closest, and at the equinoxes, the equator is nearest the sun.

The solstice, meaning the sun halts or stands still, is similar to what happens to a ball thrown into the air. The ball slows down as it reaches its highest point, stops briefly and then begins its downward acceleration. The rate of change in day-length and in the altitude of the sun is very slow around a solstice. These changes pick up speed until the equinox, when the rate of change of change is the greatest. The rapidly-lengthening days in March are mirrored by the quick-ly-shortening days of September.

Our distant ancestors were well aware of the time of least light, and of the solstice as the beginning of the road which leads to summer. They celebrated the coming of the light. The Jewish Festival of Lights at this time of year probably evolved from ancient solstice celebrations, and the date of Christmas was placed near the solstice celebrations. Our seasonal decorations of trees, greens and lights have their roots in ancient festivals which connected people closely with their environment. The radiant, light-sustaining sun provides a metaphor for many religions.

On the Winter Solstice at our latitude (just above 41 degrees north), the sun rises about 60 degrees above the horizon, at its sunniest time of year. At noon, the sun is at an altitude of 26 degrees at noon, and then sets 60 degrees west of south. This means that the sun spends most of the day shining on the south wall of our buildings. When we put windows on the south side, the sun radiates into our homes.

Practical people will say that it makes sense to have south-facing windows to save energy and cut down on heating and lighting bills. Spiritual people might say we should let the sun into our houses to create a mystical and symbolic connection to the sun as the energy source for life on our planet. Whatever your reason, for the next several months, south-facing windows provide the great sensual pleasure of being in a space filled with the light and warmth of the sun. Given that simple pleasure and the fact that many houses in this area built in colonial times have most of their windows on the south side, it is somewhere between stupid and criminally recently built, very expensive houses which have few, if any windows on the south side.

These houses are expressions of the outdated belief that we can live disconnected from the environment. Regardless of individual religious beliefs, we all need to get back in touch with the Earth in a way more like that of our distant ancestors.

We can now include in our thoughts the image of this beautiful blue and white sphere bathed in sunlight and covered with a fantastic variety of living things working together to make life on Earth possible.

Many early houses were built with windows facing a southern exposure to maximize passive solar warmth in the winter. Photo by Violet Stone

**Horticulture**

Your first line of defense for greenhouse pest control? Keep it clean

By Elizabeth Lamb

Much of using greenhouse sanitation for managing disease, insect and weed pests is common sense. Finding a way to fit it into your production system is sometimes the hard part - making it such a part of how you grow plants that you don't even have to think about it. As Dr. P. Allen Hammer said in his November '99 Grower Talks article, sanitation begins with attitude - if clean is encouraged, clean becomes the norm. So, start with the basics and add a few new procedures at a time until they become habit.

Think about what you are trying to control - large populations of insects, big lesions on plant leaves, or weeds sticking up through the benches are horrifying but easy to spot. But you need to consider the less obvious stages of the pests as well. Disease spores are dust sized, weed seeds can be small, and some insect stages live in places where you can't see them. Most pests also form stages or structures that are meant to survive harsh conditions or long periods of time. Pests can move with soil, with plants, and with pots, or find ways of hiding in structures and equipment.

Avoid points of contamination

It's easy to pick up and spread something you haven't tried yet and can't see. Hose ends that hit the floor can pick up diseases and spread them to the next pot watered. Tools used in making cuttings or cutting back plants have direct contact with a plant wound so must be dipped in alcohol or a disinfectant frequently. Reused pots, sometimes even ones you have washed, can have disease spores on them ready to infect new plants. Your hands and feet go with you everywhere and you can move virus particles or weed seeds from place to place without ever noticing it.

Clean up as you go

In the busy season, it is easy to feel that you just don't have time for sanitation. However, in the long run, keeping things clean may save you time in later pest management. Put any crop debris - dropped leaves, trimmings, sick plants - into a covered bin or a bag that can be closed. Cover the container as you carry it out of the greenhouse so insect or disease hitch-hikers don't jump out. Be meticulous about getting rid of sick or infested plants and disposing of them to make sure what they have hasn't spread. Assume that anything that hits the floor needs to be tossed or disinfected. Remove weeds in the greenhouse as soon as possible. Keep the area outside the greenhouse mowed or mulched 30-35 feet from the house to prevent weed seeds from coming inside.

Keep your storage area clean

Almost all greenhouses have that area where things get stuck - too big or bulky to store easily, or you don't need them that often, etc. It's easy for these areas to be ignored when you are thinking about sanitation. However, dust-carried disease organisms, weed seeds, and flying insects can make it into those spaces, too. If there is light, water and soil, weeds can grow and harbor a population of insects or disease. Cover your pallets of media with a tarp to keep fungus gnats from finding a home through holes in the bags. Make sure pots and flats are stored in their boxes or covered so disease spores don't contaminate them before you use them. And keep clean pots and media away from used pots and media.

Find time for the bigger jobs

For some sanitation jobs, you really need an empty greenhouse. Disinfecting benches, floors and the greenhouse structure is more efficient and less likely to spread pests if there are no plants in the way. Most chemical weed control products require that no plants are present. Perhaps you can empty one house at a time and clean it, then move plants back in to create another empty house. If you have a down season, do your cleaning earlier than later. It is tempting to wait until it is time to fill the house again - and you definitely deserve a vacation. However, weeds will have produced more seed, diseases and insects may have wound weed hosts and spread, and those survival structures that are harder to kill may have formed. Clean your floors first as dust can fly up onto the benches. Consider redoing benches in wire or a non-porous material if you have any wood benches. Fix any drainage issues to prevent puddles from forming. Add, or clean accumulated soil off of, weed fabric on soil or gravel floors to reduce weed problems.

We must share the Earth, home to all the life we know. Only by learning to live in peace with each other and with the environment, can we continue to live on the Earth well into the future.

Happy Solstice.

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 organ-ic vegetables, fruits and poultry. The book is available for $10 plus $3 S&H from Solar Farm Education, Box 136, Stevenson, CT 06491.

For more information on greenhouse sanita-
tion, contact Elizabeth Lamb at 607 254-8800 or eml38@cornell.edu.

Elizabeth Lamb is a Senior Extension Associate with the NYS Integrated Pest Management Program at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY.
Top Ten iPhone Applications

Welcome to the new "Technology on the Farm" column! We at the Cornell Small Farms Program thought it was about time that we start sharing the latest technology farmers are using, be it newest innovations in farm equipment, record keeping software, social networking and communication tools such as cell phone and twitter. Have your own favorite farm technology to share? Let us know! Write to us at smallfarmsprogram@cornell.edu.

By Michelle Striney.

A farmer's work is never done - between doing chores, checking crops, and spending time with your family there's hardly a minute to spare for your family! Here is a list of the top ten.

AgSquared - specifically designed for small farmers by two Cornell alums, this record keeping software will allow you to create a farm plan, manage tasks, organize your employees, and keep accurate records. As you move through the season and input data, the program becomes customized to your needs. Expected launch in January, 2011. http://agsquared.com/ FREE

Pandora Radio - Out in the greenhouse and humming the same old song all day long? Not anymore! With Pandora's free radio application you can enter a favorite song or style and download streaming music right to your smartphone. Some clients even listen to music to unwind after a day's work! $3.99. 

Locavore - One of a host of applications designed to help consumers find out what's in season in their area, and where they can buy it. Farmers input their market locations, and share produce, frequent product sprays. http://www.tankmix.com/ FREE

The Weather Channel - Don't let Mother Nature catch you unprepared. Get up-to-date weather forecasting delivered to your pocket with the Weather Channel app. Incredibly accurate weather maps, temperatures, and forecasts. http://www.weather.com/ FREE, or try Pro (no ads) for $3.99.

SoilWeb - GPS based soil search application that access USDA-NCRS soil categories based on your present location. Information about soil chemical and physical properties, suitability for various uses and crops, delivered right to your phone or iPod right while you are looking at your field and that persistent problem spot. http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm FREE

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Adams County Nursery
Advancing Ecos-Ag
AgBioTech, Inc
Agricultural Data Systems, Inc
Agrinetic, LLC
American Tiki, Inc
Arctic Refrigeration
BSF-The Chemical Company
Bayer CropScience
Bolton Sales
Beaver Plastics Ltd
Bejo Seeds, Inc
Bella Terra Medica
BioZyme Western, Inc
Burgess Baskets
Carval
CARAS Pack Corporation
Certi USA
Clifton Seed Co
Community Markets
Compack Sorting Equipment
Cornell Farmworker Program

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