

FALL 2011

# SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

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



## Feature Articles

- Soap Bubbles to Insulate Greenhouses .....Page 5
- Boat to Fork Community Supported Fisheries ...Page 11
- Juneberries - They Go Where Blueberries Can't ..Page 13
- Managing a Buyers Club for Freezer Lambs ....Page 16



# SMALL FARM QUARTERLY - FALL 2011

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### SMALL FARM PROGRAM UPDATE

Cornell Small Farms Program Update ..... Page 3

### COMMUNITY AND WORLD

Boat-to-Fork Community Supported Fisheries Riding A Wave,  
by Martha Herbert Izzi ..... Page 11

### DAIRY

Whole Farm Nutrient Analysis: The Casey Farm, by Lisa Fields ..... Page 4

### FARM ENERGY

Sopa Bubbles to Insulate Greenhouses,  
by Bruce Parker & Margaret Skinner ..... Page 5

### FOREST, FIELD AND WOODLOT

Strategies to Control Undesirable and Interfering Vegetation in Your Forest,  
by Peter J. Smallidge ..... Page 8

### HOME & FAMILY

Switchel - A Time Tested Thirst Quenching Favorite, by Ron Mac Lean ..Page 3

### HORTICULTURE

Juneberries - They Go Where Blueberries Can't, by Jim Ochterski ..... Page 13  
Black Currents Bring Opportunity, by Christen Trewer ..... Page 17

### LOCAL FOODS & MARKETING

Building the C in CSA, by Elizabeth Lamb ..... Page 6  
New York Cheese Wrapped Up, by Patricia Brhel ..... Page 15

### NEW FARMERS

Farmer Driven Company Evolves, by Kathleen Harris ..... Page 12

Young Farmers Take Their Message to Washington,  
by Lindsey Lusher-Shute ..... Page 15

FarmStart: Continuing the Tradition of Agriculture in the Northeast  
by Kristie Schmitt ..... Page 20

### NON-DAIRY LIVESTOCK

Managing a Buying Club for Freezer Lambs, by Ulf Kintzel ..... Page 16

### NORTHEAST SARE SPOTLIGHT

For Disease-Resistant Apples, A Moment in the Sun,  
by Elisabeth Rosen ..... Page 9

### RESOURCE SPOTLIGHTS

The Art of Silvopasturing: A Regional Conference, by Nancy Glazier ..Page 17

### STEWARDSHIP & NATURE

Farmscapes for Birds, by Margaret Fowle ..... Page 19

### TECHNOLOGY ON THE FARM

The New Town Crier, by Michelle Podolec ..... Page 7

### WOMEN FARMERS

Beginning Women Farmer Program Provides Tools for Personal and  
Professional Growth, by Crystal Stewart ..... Page 14

### YOUTH PAGE

A "Fruitful" Adventure by Meredith Bell ..... Page 10

Not the Computer Job!, by Natalia Panzironi ..... Page 10

*Cover photo: Cod freshly caught and on its way to Cape Ann's Community Supported Fisheries customers. Photo by Steve Tousignant.*

## SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

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

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

#### OUR GOALS ARE TO:

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

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# Cornell Small Farms Program Update

## Help for Flooded Farms

There are many organizations and resources to offer you support. These resources are mainly focused on New York Farms. Contact your local Cooperative Extension, Farm Service Agency or Soil and Water Conservation office in your region for assistance.

- Farm Service Agency Assistance: <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Resources: <http://emergencypreparedness.cce.cornell.edu/disasters/Pages/Irene-Lee.aspx>
- Agricultural and Community Recovery Fund: To see if your farm is eligible and to learn more, visit <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AD/release.asp?ReleaseID=1976>
- New York Extension Disaster Education Network: <http://emergencypreparedness.cce.cornell.edu/AboutNYEDEN/Pages/default.aspx>

## Fall Online Courses for Beginning Farmers Open for Registration!

This Fall, we'll be offering 7 online courses - including 4 new topics - to help you continue your farming education. As always, our courses are taught by experienced Cooperative Extension educators, farmers, and other specialists. Courses are typically 6 weeks long, cost \$175, and include both real-time meetings (online webi-

nars) and on-your-own time reading and activities. We do not offer any academic credit, but those who successfully complete a course will receive a certificate and are also eligible for Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrower training credit, which can improve eligibility to receive a low-interest FSA loan. Courses fill up fast so check our calendar for details, times, dates and availability. More info at <http://nebeginningfarmers.org/online-courses/>

## Let the Sun Shine In: Farms Show Off Renewable Energy

This past September, over 100 attendees gathered at farms around New York to get plugged in to the possibilities of renewable energy at four small farms around New York. Tim and Jean McCumber at Dorpers Sheep Farm taught a do-it-yourself solar electric and solar thermal workshop. Jay and Polly Armour at Four Winds Farm described their professionally installed PV electric system and share other techniques to reduce fossil fuel use. Jan and Ron Bever, shared info on how to live off the grid on a maple sugar farm. And Dani Baker and David Belding at Cross Island Farms led a tour of their brand new 10KW wind turbine and a 7KW solar array. To see videos from the field days or to locate other energy resources, visit <http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu/pages/resources/production/energy.cfm>

## HOME & FAMILY

# Switchel - A Time Tested Thirst Quenching Favorite

By Ron Mac Lean

My Dad used to tell about working on his aunt and uncle's farm in the summer. Doing some rapid math, that may have been in the early 1930's. He didn't tell many farm stories but a brief one that stands out involved working during haying season. He emphasized the extremely hard work -- the heat, the sweat, the breathing, the hay mow -- all to impress upon me his good work ethics. Dad's farm story always ended with Aunt Minnie preparing and bringing out to the field or barn a very refreshing drink called switchel.

## Recipe for Switchel (or Haymaker Punch)

1 Cup	Cider Vinegar
1 Cup	Molasses
1 Tbs	Fresh Ginger (grated)
1 Quart	Water

Stir all ingredients together and serve on ice. Serves 4 to 6 people. If you have time, prepare 4 to 8 hours in advance, as it helps to mellow the ginger.

When asked what switchel was, my father said he really didn't know exactly but thought it had vinegar, water and honey in it. For years I thought it was an Aunt Minnie and Uncle Charley thing. However, over the last seventy-some years I have heard other references to switchel and I discovered some people called it haymakers punch. Others have referred to it as switzel, swizzle, ginger-water, and switchy.

One summer as a teenager, I helped a farmer family friend with his haying when he was short of manpower. My father was absolutely right, it was hard work. In the early 1950's, hay was baled and left on the field to be lifted and stacked onto the hay wagon for the trip back to the barn. After the baler dropped the bale, one of us would carry it with a hay hook and lift that heavy concentration of hay to the wagon, where one or two others would lift and stack them. The longer the day grew, the heavier the bales got. "Hay dust" was created every step of the way which made breathing difficult. A hay bale elevator moved the bales from the wagon to the hay mow door. The worst job of all was to be in the hay mow stacking bales where the heat and hay dust intensified. The chaff would stick to a sweating body and the air circulation was



An elderly farm couple hoists hay into the wagon in Schenectady County, New York, 1943.

Photo courtesy Library of Congress Archive

almost non-existent. All we got to quench our thirst was cold spring water. No switchel for us.

Switchel originated in the Caribbean and became a popular summer drink in the American Colonies in the late 17th century. By the 19th century, it was a traditional drink to serve to thirsty farmers at hay harvest time. Hence, the nickname haymakers punch. Switchel not only quenched the thirst of those farmers in the hay fields but it also replenished their electrolytes needed to keep them going in those hot, humid summer days.

Like many other recipes, all the "Aunt Minnie's" out there had their own version and called it whatever they wanted. Most recipes call for Cider Vinegar, Molasses, Ginger and very cold Water. However, many resources mention that honey, sugar, brown sugar or maple syrup could be substituted in place of molasses. Dad wasn't too far off in his description of Aunt Minnie's recipe. In Vermont, oatmeal and lemon juice were sometimes added. Once the drink was consumed, the switchel-soaked oatmeal became a snack to be eaten. A Vermont physician D.C. Jarvis, recommended a mixture of honey and cider vinegar which he called "honegar".

Even our literature contains references to this beverage for the thirsty. Herman Melville wrote in *I and My Chimney*, "I will give a traveler a cup of switchel, if he want it; but am I bound to supply him with a sweet taste?" Another author,

Laura Ingalls Wilder in *The Long Winter*, describes a switchel-like beverage that her mother had sent for Laura and her father to drink while haying: "Ma had sent them ginger-water. She had sweetened the cool well-water with sugar, flavored it with vinegar, and put in plenty of ginger to warm their stomachs so they could drink till they were not thirsty." It was another time but the same old beverage.

I have a neighbor who is about the same age as my father would be, if he were alive, and who was raised on a farm in our area. While having coffee one morning, I asked him if he ever heard of switchel on his farm. "I sure did" he said. "Did you drink it?" "Yes I did and it tasted good," he added. "Do you know what ingredients were in it?" I asked? "I have no idea," he confessed.

I'm guessing that times were tough even in the years leading up to the Depression. Folks cut corners any way they could and maybe it popularized switchel as a refreshing social drink as well as a necessity in the hay field.

In hopes that Switchel, the time tested, thirst quenching, refreshing beverage from the Caribbean may be enjoyed today, the following basic recipe is provided for all of you to try. You might even like it.

Ron Mac Lean grew up in a small village surrounded by farms in Central New York. He is now retired and lives in the Fingerlakes Region of the state.

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# Whole Farm Nutrient Analysis: The Casey Farm

By Lisa Fields

Bill and Joanne Casey of Apulia Station, NY own a 60 cow organic, grass based dairy farm. Management intensive grazing is essential to feeding the herd. Pastures, which are both grazed and mechanically harvested as baleage, only receive manure deposited by the cows. The Caseys also compost manure and spread it in the fall on hay ground. In 2009, the Caseys joined the three year Whole Farm Nutrient Analysis project (WFA), a Cornell Nutrient Management Spear Program (NMS) initiative. A WFA goal for the 11 participating farms was to identify opportunities for improved nutrient inputs or allocations to benefit the environment and farm profitability. Casey explained why he participated. "I thought it would be a good learning opportunity to gain a better handle on my management's impact on the soil resources. I spread compost in the fall to avoid manure residue in baleage, but haven't applied any other nutrients for 15 years. I hoped to learn about the effect over time."

Patty Ristow, NMS Extension Associate, outlined the WFA process. "Each farmer assembled a team of people. Initially, farmer concerns were identified and goals were set. After data analysis got underway, we held meetings to discuss the results and their application to the farmer's concerns. We then developed an action plan to address those issues." Casey identified a herd health concern. "I had a few fresh cows three years ago that didn't respond to normal milk fever treatments. Pumping the cows with phosphorus got them up and going but I wasn't fully aware of the cause. I questioned the risk of repeated problems and hoped the farm data would reveal answers to the team. Compounding the problem is that we're unable to separate dry cows from the milking herd so a dry cow ration isn't an option". The Casey's team included Ristow, John Conway, Cornell PRO-Dairy Extension Associate and Janice Degni, Cornell South Central NY Dairy Team Field Crop Specialist.

Ristow explained, "The first team step was gathering relevant data to analyze the farm's nutrient use efficiency. The next step was running the data through diagnostic tools generally used in stand-alone fashion. The tools applied on the Casey farm were five years of Nutrient Mass Balance (NMB) data, past and current soil tests, and manure and forage analyses. The integrated results provided a comprehensive view (of the nutrient status) of the farm."

The NMB approach calculates the annual net nutrients (N, P and K) that remain on a farm by subtracting nutrients exported from those imported, providing a picture of nutrient trends across the entire operation. Soil test reports in

conjunction with manure and forage analyses provide a more field specific view of these trends. Degni compiled the Caseys' NMB and noted, "This went smoothly as the Caseys' had excellent records. The NMB showed that compared to other NYS farms, potassium remaining on the farm was relatively high, phosphorus was moderately low and nitrogen was well-balanced."

Degni explained how the data fit together. "The NMB trend of high K balances along with moderate to high K forage analyses, high K manure nutrient ratios and somewhat high K soils were very useful in identifying potential dry cow issues." Conway remarked, "Having everyone at the table facilitated data interpretation. Bill faces the same challenge as non-



Group discussions facilitated data interpretation at Casey Dairy.

Photo by Quirine Ketterings

organic dairies in trying to provide some low K forage. The data are a point of awareness. If dry cow issues persist, Bill knows to consider their K intake from the forages." Casey noted, "The team discussions about potassium levels have proven useful, as I'm finding the cows rejecting high quality, very high K forages. I'm more keenly aware of how forage quality affects animal performance and the cows' view of the feed".

The diagnostic tools led the discussions from problem identification to solutions. Ristow explained, "The soil results were displayed graphically and, together with farm maps, clearly showed where nutrients were ultimately ending up. The soil tests also indicated mostly optimum-range phosphorus, with many fields at the low end of optimum. Along with the NMB trend, this illustrated that phosphorus could drop too low in certain fields. This identified the

opportunity to adjust P and K levels on individual fields by changing manure distribution."

Casey added evidence to the nutrient imbalance discussion, "Back when the cow health problems occurred, I had to purchase some forage that was organic-by-neglect. I believe low nutrient levels, especially P rather than high K, caused the problems. The severe milk fevers were resolved by returning to home-grown forages. In addition, I decreased milk fever occurrence by reducing the cows' dry period to 45 days.

The P and K data changed Casey's manure application management as well. He commented, "Before this program, I hadn't sat down and analyzed my farm's soil test data. I was spreading to obtain maximum yields with manure N. When I learned how high the potassium levels were in some fields, I changed where the manure compost gets spread. As an organic farm, I've maximized on-farm resources to avoid purchased inputs. By continuing to track soil tests I can determine if the changes I'm making in manure allocations

while as we're all learning. I view it as part of a process in developing effective tools to help farms be more efficient and profitable." Conway agreed, "It was really interesting to see how the diagnostic tools can fit together to provide useful information." Casey noted the project's impacts. "Farming in an environmentally sound manner is very important to me. Participation in the WFA project helped with my nutrient efficiency goals. It also had a positive impact on profitability by helping me increase forage quality, palatability and yields."

Lisa Fields is an independent consultant in Agronomy and Farm Management and resides in Worcester, NY. She may be reached at [lafIELDS@hughes.net](mailto:lafIELDS@hughes.net).

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**FARM ENERGY**

# Soap Bubbles to Insulate Greenhouses: A New Approach to Energy Conservation

By Bruce Parker and Margaret Skinner

Unfavorable weather is an unpredictable challenge for farmers often leading to financial instability. Growers are turning to greenhouse production to reduce their losses from poor weather and to increase the length of the growing season. Though plastic hoop houses are inexpensive to erect, they demand large amounts of energy to keep them warm, especially in northern climates. Scientists from the University of Vermont have teamed up with several engineers and Chris Conant, from Claussen's Greenhouses and Florist in Colchester, VT, to test two energy-saving devices in his traditional plastic covered greenhouses.

One greenhouse has been retrofitted with an energy/thermal curtain, which is available off-the-shelf (Fig. 1). This technology is in common use, particularly in large gutter-connected greenhouses. The curtain is closed in the afternoon to hold the heat close to the plants, and reduce the space that needs to be heated.



Figure 1. Thermal curtain in the gable-roof greenhouse before it was filled with plants (insert shows the open curtain).

In an adjacent greenhouse we installed a novel experimental system that injects soap bubbles into the air space between the two layers of plastic that cover the greenhouse (Fig. 2).

Greenhouses are commonly covered with two layers of plastic that are inflated with air, which provides a small level of insulation. The bubble insulation system is reported to increase the R-value for the standard inflated greenhouse from 1-2 to over 30.



Figure 2. Bubble system in operation, filling void with soap bubbles. Arrows indicate stream of bubbles generated at the peak of the greenhouse.

The R-value is a term used to rate the insulation potential of a material. The larger the R-value, the more insulation it provides. In 2001, a grower constructed one of the first hoop greenhouses with bubble insulation in Ontario where winter temperatures commonly reach 20 below zero ( $^{\circ}$ F). He reduced propane heating costs from \$1,137 to \$146 per year and extended greenhouse production from 6 to 10 mo. We are testing this system and will compare heating costs for the thermal curtain greenhouse with the bubble greenhouse and a standard greenhouse with no improvements.

The bubble insulation system is not new. Over 20 years ago researchers from the Univ. of New Hampshire tested it, but ran into many problems. The foam solution leaked out or froze up slicing holes in the plastic. The freezing problem has been solved with the development of a new foam solution and leakage can be minimized by carefully making sure the plastic coverings are secure at all contact points. More recently Sunarc, a Canadian company, developed a bubble system for gutter-connected greenhouses, but it is not fully operational nor commercially available. We were fortunate to be able to obtain a prototype of their system to retrofit for smaller hoop style greenhouses that are more common in the Northeast.



Figure 3. Piping system developed by Sunarc to inject soap bubbles between the two layers of plastic.

SunArc, a company located in Canada, expanded and improved upon the concept ([www.sunarc.ca/english/home.html](http://www.sunarc.ca/english/home.html)), and until recently marketed the technology in the US and Canada. Economic constraints linked with the recent financial crisis led to downsizing Sunarc, though rights to the system have been shared with a company in Israel, where it is being developed as a means of shading. While this technology is not currently available commercially, given the steadily increasing cost of fuel, we believe the work we are doing to test the system in hoop houses will revive interest and lead to its expanded commercial use by growers.



Figure 4. Installation of bubble system by consulting engineer and UVM personnel.

Photos by Margaret Skinner

The energy curtain was installed in October 2010, in time for testing during production of the fall poinsettia crop and Chris Conant was extremely pleased with the system. Over the entire cropping season (Oct. - Dec.), he used half as much natural gas in the greenhouse with the curtain than in the standard unimproved house.

Installation of the bubble system has taken time because a standard system suitable for a hoop house does not currently exist, and the equipment we obtained from Sunarc required major retrofitting (Fig. 4). Limited testing of the bubble system was done in mid-February (2011). Over the period of operation, gas use was 25% less in the house with the bubble system and 7% less in the house with the curtain than in the unimproved control house. Gas use was 20% less in the house with the bubble system than in the house with the curtain. In general, 3-7 ccf/day more natural gas was used in the control house than in the house with the bubble system. Savings would be even greater for greenhouses that heat with propane or oil, which are the more common fuels used by greenhouse growers in New England. These preliminary results clearly demonstrate the promise of the bubble system for conserving energy and saving growers money. Monitoring equipment has been installed to quantify the energy savings over time relative to ambient temperature. This will provide growers with tangible information on the energy conservation benefits and costs of construction and operation. While the chill of the approaching winter is in the air, the future potential of bubbles should give greenhouse growers hope for a future of lower energy costs in the future.

*Drs. Bruce L. Parker and Margaret Skinner are professors at the University of Vermont Entomology Research Laboratory in Burlington, VT. For more information they can be contacted by telephone at 802-656-5440 or by email at [bparker@uvm.edu](mailto:bparker@uvm.edu) or [mskinner@uvm.edu](mailto:mskinner@uvm.edu). Additional information about their research is available on their website at <http://www.uvm.edu/~entlab/>*

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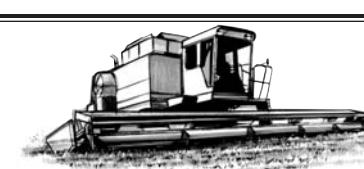
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**LOCAL FOODS AND MARKETING**

# Building the C in CSA: Websites, Newsletters and Blogs for Community Supported Agriculture Members

By Elizabeth Lamb

The first things that come to mind when starting a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farming operation probably relate more to the what, where, when, and who of growing crops than to planning your website and writing newsletters. But the C in CSA does stand for community and getting and keeping members is essential to your success.

**Newsletters**

A newsletter that is sent to existing members is probably the easiest place to start. Create a list-serve and e-mail members a weekly list of what is available. You can even print out a few copies for pickup with the produce for those members that prefer hardcopy. Add recipes for the ingredients in the share, particularly if they are somewhat unusual. You could even title it "What do I do with this?" and avoid your own set of emails with that question from members.

Risk is part of being in a CSA and a newsletter gives you the opportunity to explain that risk to your members. One of Full Plate Farm

Collectives' recent newsletters said "Nature throws something different our way every season, and one of the most important traits of a good farmer is a constantly learning, self-educating and experimenting mind. We're in safe hands with these guys!" (Katie Church, <http://www.freewebs.com/fullplatefarms/>) Then it becomes easier to break it to the members that no, there aren't any tomatoes, yet.

If you have a little more time, you can include announcements of special events or volunteer activities on the farm. You can also include community events that might appeal to your members, such as Field-to-Fork type events or crop mobs. And don't forget to include some out-of-season emails to remind members that farming is a year 'round occupation and to get them salivating for harvest - and signing up for next year!

Of course, finding the time to write something weekly in the thick of the season can be daunting. Perhaps you have a member who would be happy to write up and send out your newsletter - and might even have the time to get creative! But a newsletter is meant to be a brief reminder to your members so save some of that creativity for the next level . . . .

**Websites**

A website is a resource for your members, but also a way of attracting new members.

We are lucky in Tompkins County to have a CSA fair where potential members can meet growers and gather information before deciding which CSA is the best match. If you don't have that option, your website might be your primary tool for attracting new members. Most of us have used search engines to find what's available in an area, from ice cream stores to Farmers' Markets. Try googling CSA and your area to see what you find. Websites don't have to be fancy to be effective and it is getting easier and easier to create your own website (see the Resource Spotlight for some suggestions). You can also create a page on a national website. From the Ithaca area, High Point Farms, LLC, has a page on [www.eatwellguide.org](http://www.eatwellguide.org) and Kestrel Perch Berry CSA has a page on [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org).

Saturday, August 27, 2011

## Food Fight

Last night our little farm stand was vandalised. Someone decided to surprise us with a bag of excrement nestled amongst our melons, and a bottle rocket set off in the midst of the unsuspecting veggies.

I found myself wishing the perpetrators had left a note...so that I might know how to improve our roadside service...

Each week we shuttle our "extras" down to the curb after our CSA veggie pick-up day. It's a chance to share the wealth with our surrounding neighbors, and to sell what we don't need to or don't have the time to put up ourselves...very often we have lived week to week on what we make from our egg sales and our stand. After harvesting beans for 8 hours, and packing up the weekly vegetable shares, finding a bag of poo amongst our roadside melons seems very surreal. Vandalizing farmers seems to me like

**LITTLE FLOWER FARM**

The blog from Little Flower Farm in Michigan combines wonderful story telling on the daily activities of family farming with pragmatic information on CSA shares and pickup details.

You can find lists of questions to ask before joining a CSA at websites like <http://thelocalcook.com/2011/03/31/top-10-questions-to-ask-before-joining-a-csa/>, <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/questions-for-csa.jsp> and <http://www.yumsugar.com/CSA-Box-18062154>. Answering some of those questions in a clearly marked spot on your website will help make a perfect match of CSA and member. Other suggestions can come from lists of advantages and disadvantages of CSA's to members or even "tips for Potential Members" (<http://www.localharvest.org/csa/tips.jsp>)

As long as your website is up to date on information that might change (are you still accepting members?), it doesn't have to change constantly. However, a new picture or two or a recipe featuring a current share item help keep it interesting.

Be creative and have fun! The WE Cooperative and Catalan Family Farm website has a haiku contest for their members (<http://wecooperative.com/tag/community-supported-agriculture/>)!

**Blogs**

A blog, or weblog, is a series of regular entries, or posts, with commentary or descriptions of events and graphics, photo-

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graphs or video (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>). They may be interactive, with the potential for readers to leave comments. A blog does require more time, as the expectation is that new blog posts will be available fairly frequently. The blog from Little Flower Farm in Michigan is a good example. It combines wonderful story telling on the daily activities of family farming with pragmatic information on CSA shares and pickup information (<http://littleflowerfarmcsa.blogspot.com/>).

Blogs may be incorporated into websites, or be tied to social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter. In fact all your methods of communication can be linked together. Pete's Greens Good Eats CSA has information and discussion items on the farm Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=48147346697&v=info>) which links to the website where you can find their blog! Mano Farm has a Twitter feed for announcements, new photos and other items of interest to members (<http://twitter.com/#!/manofarm>). Check Michelle Podolec's article on social media in this edition of Small Farm Quarterly for more information.

So, start simple and see what works best for you and for your members. As you gather information and images and experience, you will continue to build the community in your Community Supported Agriculture enterprise!

*Elizabeth Lamb is a Senior Extension Associate with the NYS Integrated Pest Management Program at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. She may be contacted at 607 254-8800 or [eml38@cornell.edu](mailto:eml38@cornell.edu).*

## Resource Spotlight Communicating with Your CSA

There are several broad-based resources on starting a Community Supported Agriculture enterprise that have basics on reaching your customer base.

Rodale Institute - Starting a CSA (some links are dated and you may have to search a bit)  
[http://newfarm.rodaleinstitute.org/features/0403/csa\\_resource\\_list.shtml](http://newfarm.rodaleinstitute.org/features/0403/csa_resource_list.shtml)

Robyn Van En Center - a national resource center for CSAs  
<http://www.wilson.edu/about-wilson-college/fulton/robyn-van-en-center/robyns-resources/index.aspx>

USDA CSA Resources for Farmers  
<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csafarmer.shtml>

**Creating Websites and Blogs**

Local Harvest: [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org) - post your business, location, and product in this great national website. Has free and low cost options for individual websites for farmers, very good reputation and well known!

The Eat Well Guide: <http://www.eatwellguide.org> is a consumer oriented website where you can create a page with photos and link to your website, too.

Farmer Faces (Small Farms Central):  
[www.SmallFarmCentral.com](http://www.SmallFarmCentral.com) - a low cost webpage great for CSA's or markets that work as co-ops. Features a central page for your business with individual farmer 'pages' to highlight individual sellers.

Word Press: [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) - free blogs for individuals or businesses, with low-cost options for upgrades and more design capacity. Easy to learn with many helpful online tutorials.

Constant Contact: [www.constantcontact.com](http://www.constantcontact.com) - to manage their emails to customers, social media, and newsletters. They have great templates and helpful videos that will have you creating beautiful, custom emails with links and pictures in no time. Low cost, fee based service (Their website might overwhelm you but play around in it - perhaps start with the Email templates under Email Marketing)

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**TECHNOLOGY ON THE FARM**

# The New Town Crier: Demystifying Twitter and Other Social Media

By Michelle Podolec

You've heard all the hype: supposedly everyone is using social media these days. But as a small farmer, how can social media help you and your business? Creating an online presence using the free or low-cost online software applications provided by social media sites can help drive new customers to your business. This can be a wonderful low-cost way to advertise your business and expand your market.

Online social media tools like Twitter and Facebook allow users to keep in contact with lists of friends and connections, and send these contacts short updates. Social media sites are accessed through the internet. If you happen to have a smart phone or other internet connected mobile phone, these social media sites have downloadable 'apps' that place a shortcut to your profile on your device and make accessing your profile quick and easy. These applications can be used to enhance conversations between you and your customers, and can drive more views to your websites and blogs by allowing instant updates to online content.

Farmer and entrepreneur Gordon Sacks of 9 Miles East Farm in Northumberland, NY, has found success with an integrated social media outreach strategy that involves a website, Facebook, Twitter, Constant Contact email newsletters, and even a LinkedIn resume.

## Tips to make your social media a success:

- \* **Start slow.** Commit to one or two postings of new content each week, and see what kind of a response you get from your customers. Not every social media application will suit you and your business; don't be afraid to bail out if after a decent trial period, you are unsatisfied with customer response.

- \* **Begin small.** Social media relies on personal connections between individuals to be a success. Limit your early connections to good friends and customers who you know have an interest in your farm and activities, and grow a larger audience as you become more comfortable.

- \* **Separate business and personal life online.** Sites like Facebook offer different features in personal and business pages. Use a dedicated business profile for your social media and keep your topics on farm work, products, staff, and news about your farm and neighbors. General farm family news and updates can be fun to share occasionally, but keeping work and play separate helps you maintain a professional business image and ensures personal privacy.

- \* **Pick a topic.** Create a list of topics, activities or concerns that come up during your farm year, and use these to help guide your social media outreach. Think seasonally - summertime is great for conversations on crops, insect pests, hot weather, and grazing, while wintertime is more appropriate for conversations on seed selection, books you are reading, conference reviews, and cold weather animal care.

- \* **Keep it short, interesting, and fun.** Gordon Sacks gave us the following great advice... "People don't have time to read an opus on the woes of your wet spring and how it delayed planting, or the problems you're having with flea beetles. I'm not suggesting you romanticize what is clearly a very challenging business, but focus on what will be of interest to your audience."

- \* **Have conversations.** Ask questions of your friends and followers, and leave comments on other people's posts. This is a great opportunity to get feedback and talk about new ideas with your customers and friends. Share links to resources and articles that interest you and relate to your farm business.

- \* **Use pictures.** People are more likely to click, comment, and linger on your profile if you share photographs of you and your farm. Be cautious when using hosted sites, and make sure you read the Terms of Use completely for each hosting site, notes Ontario County extension specialist Jim Ochterski. "Anything shared that goes undeleted is open for Facebook's use. Be judicious: Facebook content gets passed along in directions you would not expect, and Facebook has the right to use anything you post, even if it is not consistent with your intent. Make sure that everything you share is truly meant to be public and openly sharable everywhere."

- \* **Promote your social media presence.** Now that you are comfortable with your social media activities, share your profile information on brochures, your website, and at your business.

- \* **Be consistent with updates.** Friends and clients can't have a conversation with you if you don't post updates to your social media. Assign yourself a regular and frequent dates or times to devote to creating your posts, and your friends and clients will learn when to watch for new information coming from you. People quickly lose interest in your site if content is old - keep it fresh!

## From Our Farm to Your Cube

September 2nd, 2011

### From our farm to your cube

Companies in the Capital District can now have "GO Bags" of fresh produce from our farm delivered to their offices each week.

GO Bags contain at least \$15 of prime produce and herbs, and sells for \$10. No signup or subscription is required. We will deliver to offices in the area that consistently have five or more people interested in purchasing GO Bags each week.

From a quality standpoint, GO Bags give you great produce at its freshest: We harvest the day before delivery, keep your GO Bag at optimal storage temperature, and bring it straight to your office in a closed bag. No hours in the sun on a hot farmers' market table. No sneezing guy in front of you squeezing the tomatoes.

GO Bags give you a manageable amount of great veg at a great value. Our commitment to you: No kohlrabi. Or other mystery vegetables. Depending on the season, bags contain great varieties of tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, onions,

**Farmer and entrepreneur Gordon Sacks of 9 Miles East Farm in Northumberland, NY, has found success with an integrated social media outreach strategy that involves a website, Facebook, Twitter, Constant Contact email newsletters**

people in this fundamental aspect of life: growing and preparing food. It sounds basic, but it still means something to know and trust your farmer."

Most online social media applications are free, and the most popular (and a great place to start) are Facebook and Twitter. Think of Facebook as a public square where groups of people chat and share information, and Twitter as the town crier shouting out headlines and hot topics. Other interesting options for small farmers include YouTube (post videos of your farm activities), and Foursquare (share your location as you travel about to markets and stores).

How can you use social media to make your business a success? Take advice from other experienced farmers. Gordon Sacks shares the following from his experiences with social media: "Make it interesting and fun for people. Share your expertise in a small specific way, with concrete detail... Social media is an intimidating term, but it's really pretty easy to use simple tools to reach out and share your enthusiasm for farming. Make the time every week and get your message out there. It doesn't have to be perfect."

Once you have explored the basics of social media and have developed a familiarity with the

applications, you may find you want more information about your followers and help managing your new activities online. Management sites like Hoot Suite help you schedule and organize your posts to social networks, and can assist you by automatically sending scheduled updates while you are away on vacation or facing a busy harvest season. Online analytical tools like Google Analytics can help you assess what topics excite your customers and what times of day your profile receives the most visits. You'll know you've really made it in the social media network when your Klout networking score rises, and shows your online reputation to be growing in leaps and bounds.

The internet offers small farmers many ways to access their customers in free or low-cost ways. Give social media a try and see if it fits into your plans for advertising and marketing your business!

*Michelle Podolec is the co-coordinator of the Northeast Beginning Farmer Project. She may be reached at (607) 255-9911 or mls266@cornell.edu.*

To learn more about 9 Miles East Farm, visit <http://www.9mileseast.com/>

## Social Media References

Facebook [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) A must-visit site for young folks, and rapidly growing in popularity with baby-boomers, this is the best place to start if you're considering online social media. Easy to learn with pages available for personal or business use. Share status updates, pictures, web links, GPS locations, and more. Free basic services for business use.

Twitter [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) Participate in fun, fast paced conversations with your 'followers' using this short message service. Best for those who like to share news clippings, snapshots, and stay on top of the hottest topics. A great site for networking with other farms and agricultural organizations. Free

YouTube [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) The best site for amateur videographers! Post videos of your farm and market activities, link your profile with other friends and businesses. Access thousands of people looking for fun, interesting, thought-provoking videos. Free

Foursquare [www.foursquare.com](http://www.foursquare.com) This mobile web application links your GPS enabled phone or device with Facebook and Twitter and enables you to share your real time travels via postings with linked map locations. Great for those who sell at multiple markets, make CSA deliveries, and sell their products at local restaurants. Free

Hoot Suite [www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com) Management of your social media campaigns is easier when you can schedule updates ahead of time. See all your social networking profiles in one place, and create updates in advance for weeks when you know you will be too busy to update regularly. Free basic services.

Klout [www.klout.com](http://www.klout.com) Klout uses an algorithm to measure your overall online influence. This interesting site categorizes how you communicate with your contacts and helps you develop a better understanding of the true reach of your reputation. Free basic services.

Google Analytics [www.google.com/analytics/](http://www.google.com/analytics/) This analytics tool help you gain insights into your website traffic and marketing effectiveness. Free basic services.

## 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](mailto:vws7@cornell.edu)

**FOREST, FIELD AND WOODLOT**

# Strategies to Control Undesirable and Interfering Vegetation in Your Forest

By Peter J. Smallidge

On most wooded properties, the owner will recognize the presence of at least a few undesired plant species. In some cases, these plants become sufficiently abundant and interfere with the owner's objectives. Interference might include the development of a beech or fern understory that impedes oak or pine regeneration; hardwoods that interfere with the establishment and growth of conifer forests; or invasive shrubs that reduce the diversity of native plant species. In situations of overabundance, the owner may need to control the interfering plant to more fully achieve his or her objectives.

Landowners should resist the temptation to grab a saw, brush loppers, a bottle of herbicide, etc. and head out to do battle against the undesirables. We all have limited time, experience, ability, equipment, and money to commit to "weed" control, so it is wise to plan ahead to make the most of our efforts! Each situation of interfering plant control is somewhat unique, so a set of guiding principles will help owners consider the range of management strategies.

**Strategic Goals**

Landowners should consider the following factors when planning for control of interfering plants:

- \* Efficient use of labor, energy and equipment
- \* Cost effective to minimize the consumption of tools, supplies and especially time
- \* Targeted control of the interfering plants with minimal damage to desired plants

Integrated vegetation management, or IVM, is the approach that incorporates these management goals in a framework that allows optimal control of interfering plants. IVM originated with plant management on power utility corridors, but its principles apply to private lands.

The foundation for effective IVM is a situation profile that includes knowledge of: plant biology, the extent of the plant problem, the desired level of control, and an estimate of the costs (equipment, supplies, and time). The owner and manager should consider these four elements of the profile before commencing any treatment of the vegetation. Not considering these elements may result in unnecessary cost, undesired damage to desired plants, excessive use of herbicides or wasted labor and supplies, and ultimate failure to control the target plant(s).

**IVM Situation Profile and Vegetation Treatments**

\* **Plant Biology** - Identify the plant, understand its life cycle, reproductive strategy, and any mechanism that the plant uses to store propagules or energy reserves. Give special attention to what allows the interfering plant to be successful.

\* **Extent of the Problem** - The geographic extent of the problem plant on the property being treated and within the landscape will influence the likelihood of reintroduction, the operational efficiency of potential treatments, the likelihood of treatments affecting viable non-target species, and the amount of disturbance and open space following the treatment.

\* **Desired Level of Control** - Complete annihilation of a species is a difficult task. In many cases, ownership objectives can be satisfied with less than 100% control of the target plant. However, any residual plants may allow for spread into the treated areas. Some objectives may be satisfied with spatial control (e.g., within rows for a plantation) or control for a period of time to allow other species to become established.

\* **Costs** - Costs include the actual financial cost of the materials and labor, the ecological costs associated with the treatment, the ecological costs of not controlling the undesirable plant, the cost for re-treatment if the initial effort fails, and the risk to the staff applying the treatment. Failure to plan to successful re-vegetation with desired species is an added future cost.

IVM treatments can be described by mode and method (Table 1). Mode is the specificity of the treatment to the target and is either broadcast or selective. Method is the mechanism that allows the treatment to limit the plant and includes mechanical, chemical and biological. Each treatment is a combination of mode and method, the choice depends on the profile of the target plant. Each method functions differently to control target plants. Mechanical methods remove the plant and thus future propagules. This removes the plant, depletes the root energy reserves as plants attempt to resprout, and limits the ability for on-site reintroduction. Chemical methods disrupt biochemical pathways by changing the plants' ability to, for example, regulate

growth hormones or form enzymes used in photosynthesis. Biological methods include a variety of host-specific insects, fungi, viruses and bacteria that limit the success of the target plant to grow and reproduce.

All the advantages (Table 2) and the disadvantages (Table 3) may not apply to each situation, but should be considered. The integration of ownership goals and IVM situation profile determine the combinations of methods and modes to consider. Use the treatment that is least intrusive and has the lowest environmental impact, but that gives an adequate level of effectiveness and efficiency. Managers should independently scrutinize each situation, assess the likelihood of potential advantages and disadvantages, and discuss treatment options with the owner (if not your land) to achieve management goals with minimal costs.

Method	Mode	
	Selective	Broadcast
Mechanical	Target specific, limited site disturbance	Some equipment commonly available to owners and managers
Chemical	Foliar – uses low amount of active ingredient Basal – stem # cut stump – stem and root control	Kills everything
Biological	May become self perpetuating	

Potential advantages of method-mode approaches to vegetation management

Method	Mode	
	Selective	Broadcast
Mechanical	Efficient with low abundance, not for plants that sprout, may be labor intensive	May be equipment or labor intensive; may extensively damage site
Chemical	Foliar – drift to non-target Basal – expensive for high stem density cut stump – handle material twice	Kills everything
Biological	Expensive to develop and potential risk of becoming another invasive	Same

Potential disadvantages of method-mode approaches to vegetation management

**Hypothetical Example**

Here is a hypothetical example of IVM in practice.

1. **Profile** - multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) has invaded a 60-year-old hardwood forest. Positive identification confirms it is not a desired species. The plants have an average height of over 5 feet. The shrub's abundance has reduced wildflower diversity and will restrict the future regeneration of desired hardwoods. The shrub has reduced access by the owner into this section of the woods. A moderate to large deer herd is likely helping to favor the multiflora rose (not heavily browsed) over desired species. The shrub dominates 15 acres of the property and has spotty but limited presence in other areas. The manager recommends at least 90% control, sustained for 10 to 12 years, to ensure successful hardwood natural regeneration. The desire to control the shrub is fairly high and the owner wants to avoid a prolonged treatment period.

2. **Response Selected** - The owner and manager want to minimize the use of herbicides, but recognize that some herbicide will be needed to kill the root system in an effort to minimize soil disturbance. They opt for a combination of selective mechanical and selective chemical treatments. The prescription involves cutting the shrub and applying an appropriate herbicide to the freshly cut surface of the stump (NOTE - check with your local office of Cooperative Extension for assistance in the selection and application of herbicides). The owner has the equipment and labor necessary to apply this type of treatment at a reasonable cost. The cut stems will be left clustered but not piled in an effort to impede the access of deer to the area and minimize their impact. Further, the owner works with hunters on his property and neighbors to increase the harvest of female deer. Initial IVM efforts will concentrate in the main area of infestation, but also expand to scattered shrubs. In future years, the owner will pull small shrubs as they are noticed or apply a selective foliar herbicide to areas having numerous small scattered multiflora rose shrubs. A forester has developed a prescrip-



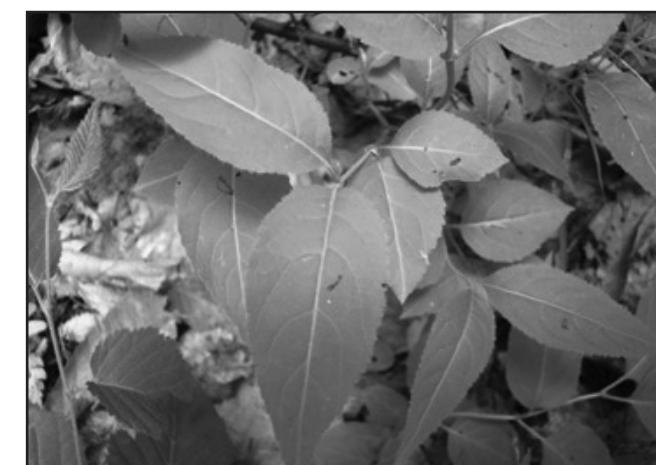
Land managers need to understand the biology of the species they hope to control. Biennial plants, such as the garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) pictured, or woody shrubs may have one or more years of vegetative growth before they produce fruit.



A productive hardwood forest, reverted from an abandoned agricultural field.



Flame weeding is an organic control option that provides control for some woody species such as autumn olive, bush honeysuckle, and barberry.



This native honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*) has no interfering qualities, although other species of honeysuckle can become problematic.

Photos by Peter J Smallidge

tion to open the forest canopy to increase sunlight and further aid in hardwood seedling regeneration.

3. **Why not other treatments** - Each situation is different and the treatments used by one owner might not work in the future or might not work for the neighbor's need. The owners and managers decided against selective foliar herbicide sprays because these would not have been as effective given the shrub's abundance and height. Repeated cutting would not sufficiently control the shrub and would have required repeated entry that the owner did not have time to complete. Grubbing and excavation was deemed too disruptive to the soil in this location. Controlled grazing with silvopasture principles would work, but the owner lacked access to livestock or funds for fencing.

The complexity of IVM rests primarily in understanding the biology of the plant and the relative merits of the different treatment options. Most owners will benefit from the advice of foresters or others trained and experienced in plant biology and vegetation management. Consult with your state's forestry agency and Cooperative Extension Service to help identify people who can help. A recorded web conference of IVM, including descriptions of several problem species, is provided at [www.ForestConnect.info](http://www.ForestConnect.info)

Peter J. Smallidge is a New York State Extension Forester with Cornell University Cooperative Extension. He may be reached at [pjs23@cornell.edu](mailto:pjs23@cornell.edu) or visit [www.ForestConnect.info](http://www.ForestConnect.info)



## Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

### Welcome to the

### Northeast SARE Spotlight!

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

## Upcoming SARE Grant Deadlines

### Sustainable Community Grants - Due October 19, 2011

Sustainable Community Grants - Due October 19, 2011  
Sustainable Community Grants are for projects that strengthen the position of sustainable agriculture as it affects community economic development. Communities and commercial farmers must benefit from these proposals, and the selection emphasis is on model projects that others can replicate. We also look for projects that are likely to bring about durable and positive institutional change and for projects that benefit more than one farm. Grants are capped at \$15,000. Learn more at: <http://nesare.org/get/sustainable-community>

### Partnership Grants - Due November 1, 2011

Partnership Grants are for agricultural service providers--extension staff, consultants, nonprofits, state departments of agriculture, and others working in the agricultural community--who want to conduct on-farm demonstrations, research, marketing, and other projects with farmers as cooperators. Partnership Grants allow agricultural service providers to explore topics in sustainable production and marketing in cooperation with client farmers. The goal is to build knowledge farmers can use, encourage the understanding and widespread use of sustainable techniques, and strengthen working partnerships between farmers and farm service providers. Projects must take place on farms or directly involve farm businesses. Reviewers look for well-designed inquiries into how agriculture can enhance the environment, improve the quality of life, or be made more profitable through good stewardship. Grants are capped at \$15,000. Learn more at: <http://nesare.org/get/partnership/>

### Farmers Grants - Due December 1, 2011

Farmer Grants are for commercial producers who have an innovative idea they want to test using a field trial, on-farm demonstration, or other technique. Farmer Grants let commercial producers explore new ideas in production or marketing; reviewers look for innovation, potential for improved sustainability and results that will be useful to other farmers. Projects should be technically sound and explore ways to boost profits, improve farm stewardship, or have a positive impact on the environment or the farm community. Grants are capped at \$15,000. Learn more at: <http://nesare.org/get/farmers/>

# For Disease-Resistant Apples, A Moment in the Sun

Lou Lego found the best apple varieties for each culinary use.

By Elisabeth Rosen

It was a winter morning in 2006, and Lou Lego was indignant. Leafing through Core Report, an apple industry magazine, he had discovered a startling claim: the new disease-resistant apple varieties which had produced beautiful fruit on his own farm did not have the "quality" to be grown in large commercial orchards. "This was certainly not our experience," Lou says, his voice as flavorful as the heritage apples he favors over more conventional fruits like Empire and Red Delicious.

Over 25 years, Lou has experimented with many apple varieties, growing newer disease-resistant strains alongside classic European and early American fruit with names rich in history: Northern Spy, Bramley's seedling. The most successful apples become fixtures on Elderberry Pond, the family's 100 acre certified organic farm in Auburn, NY. Visit the farm, and you can try them all in the tasting room or in the farm restaurant run by Lou's son Chris, a Culinary Institute of America graduate, where the prized heirloom apples are baked into seasonal desserts like a baked apple nest featuring Caville Blanc d'Hiver. Disease-resistant varieties have grown well at Elderberry Pond for several years, but Lou thinks that Core Report discouraged their use because grower's associations like the New York State Apple Association, which produces Core Report, receive much of their financial support from chemical companies. If they endorsed disease-resistant apples, which do not have to be treated with chemical sprays, the chemical companies would lose revenue and perhaps reduce their support to the grower's associations.

So Lou came up with the idea of carrying out a systematic evaluation. By comparing new disease-resistant apples to popular commercial and heritage varieties, he could show growers that these varieties really could work for them. Lou emphasizes that the stakes are high. Apples are number one on the Dirty Dozen (the annual list produced by the USDA EWG, which lists the 12 most pesticide-laden fruits and vegetables). For both organic and non-organic farmers, disease-resistant apples provide an easy way to reduce chemical exposure.

### The Proof is in the Pie

How do you prove that one apple is better than another? The answer seems simple: take a bite. But since many people cook apples as well as eating them raw, getting to the core of the matter required considerable effort. With help from a SARE grant, Lou and his co-workers harvested an exhaustive variety of apples and prepared them in several different ways. They squeezed the fruit into juice and cider, baked it into pie, sliced and dried it, and of course, set some aside for plain old munching. A panel of tasters decided which products tasted best.

"I think every farmer has questions that they would like to



Apples being dried for taste testing.

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](http://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](mailto:nesare@uvm.edu)



An old Pennsylvania Dutch apple called "Smokehouse"

Photos by Lou Lego

have answered," Lou says. "The farmer grant program is an opportunity to do evaluations to answer these questions for you and for other farmers." And even though writing the proposal can be onerous, he points out that putting your plans down on paper can help you organize your farm's future-even if you don't end up getting funding.

### An Apple in the Hand...

For straight-up eating, the top 10 list contains mostly familiar names- Gala, Golden Delicious, Honey Crisp-as well as a few more unusual varieties like Pink Pearl, a crisp, tart apple with signature bright pink skin, and Esopus Spitzenberg, a spicy heirloom rumored to be a favorite of Thomas Jefferson (it's also Lou's apple of choice.) But for juicing, there were some surprising results. Gala, which ranked high among the eating apples, produced a disappointingly bland juice. "You can't pick a great juicing or cider apple by tasting it out of hand," Lou says, explaining that when you bite into an apple, this produces "volatile flavor bursts" that disappear when the apple is crushed and juiced.

Another surprising finding: many sweet-tasting apples, like Pound Sweet, were low in soluble sugars-and vice versa. It's low acidity and not sugar content, Lou says, which provides the sweetness that we taste when we bite into a Honey Crisp.

Lou's favorite findings, of course, are those which confirm his support for disease-resistant fruit. Pristine, the farm's best-selling apple-a disease-resistant variety developed by the Purdue, Rutgers, Illinois (PRI) breeding program-was a favorite among taste testers. And several other disease-resistant apples also scored high (see sidebar for complete details).

### A Sustainable Future

Lou hopes that the project will encourage larger growers to plant some of the new disease-resistant varieties. It looks like he may have gained a following: after publicizing his results, Lou received scores of invitations to present at conferences and apple festivals throughout the Northeast. But although growers might be grateful for the findings, home cooks might be just as thrilled to finally know exactly which apples to use in that Thanksgiving pie.

This article discusses SARE grant FNE07-614. To view the final report, visit <http://mysare.sare.org/mySARE/ProjectReport.aspx?do=viewProj&pn=FNE07-614>. For more information, contact Lou Lego at [llego@baldcom.net](mailto:llego@baldcom.net).

Elisabeth Rosen was a summer intern with the Cornell Small Farms Program in 2011.

## Taste Test Results

<b>Best Eating</b>	Pristine (DR), Gala, Honeycrisp
<b>Best Pie Baking</b>	Duchess, Smokehouse, Northern Spy, Enterprise (DR)
<b>Best Juice:</b>	Esopus Spitzenberg, Enterprise (DR), Goldrush (DR)
<b>Best Drying:</b>	Esopus Spitzenberg, Pink Pearl (DR), Enterprise (DR)
<b>Best Fresh Slice:</b>	Enterprise (DR), Winesap, Cameo, Goldrush (DR)

(DR = Disease Resistant)

# Small Farm Quarterly

# Youth Page

## Is Farming Right for You?

4H teens learn about the hard work and creativity needed to run a successful small farm during Career Exploration Days on the Cornell University Campus.

### A "Fruitful" Adventure

By Meredith Bell

Through the 4-H program, I have been able to travel to Cornell University and choose a career class. I chose "A small Farm Dream!" Living on a farm with different things like cattle, sheep, crops, and horses, I thought that I knew almost everything about farming, how it works, and what jobs are available through farming. I can certainly tell you I was wrong. There is so much more to farming than I can imagine and "Small Farm Dream" helped me understand that.

Throughout the three day class, we visited many interesting places, both on campus and also off. Our first visit was to the MacDaniel's Nut Grove, which was located in a part of woods on campus. Mr. Ken Mudge showed us a few projects he and his graduate students are working on, and new experimental ways to make a profit. One of their main projects in mushroom production, and we even got to inoculate our own logs with mushroom spawn. We drilled holes about four inches apart in a straight line, and made four rows around the log. We filled these holes with a sawdust mixture that will start the growth of the mushrooms. Next we painted a thin coat of wax on each of the holes. This helps to keep the moisture in the

log to create the right environment for mushroom spawn. We all took a log home, and if we soak our logs, next summer we should get about two crops of mushrooms.

Our second day consisted of visits to Dilmun Hill Farm, Finger Lakes Farmstead Cheese and Black Diamond Orchard. Dilmun Hill was on campus, and run by different student managers. They showed us their organic produce farm, and the methods in which they grow their crops. We got to learn about the different vegetable families and how they have similar characteristics. We also learned how important it is to have your farm on a crop rotation, and the different ways to rotate your farm. If crop rotation is not done, your produce can be more susceptible to disease.

Our next visit was to Finger Lakes Farmstead Cheese. For many of us this was the most interesting, since it is not a common field trip for most people. Ms. Nancy Richards explained the process of making cheese and how crucial it is to keep harmful bacteria out of the processing rooms. She then took us into the Cheese cave, where all of the aging cheese is kept in a humid, chilled room. We ended the tour with a taste of the amazing cheese from the creamery.

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

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



One of 75 varieties of unique apples grown on Black Diamond Orchard.

Photo credit: Black Diamond Orchard

Our last stop was at Black Diamond Orchard, owned by Mr. & Mrs. Ian and Jackie Merwin. We met them in their cherry orchard picking ripe cherries, which were very delicious! They gave us a full tour of the entire farm; they grow many different types of fruit. We also got to see the different stages of fruit planted and the various growing methods that Ian uses to produce better quality. He also showed us many alternatives for keeping pests under control. One of my favorites was the Pheromone Trap, which is a trap that uses female scents to attract males. There

are animal pests, too. Ian says that "when it comes to fruit, the best pest repellent is fencing and netting." We then finished our day with helping Ian and Jackie pick cherries, which was rewarding in many different ways!

All three of the farms explained an aspect of farming which many people don't think about, the marketing. All three of the farms said that they sell most of their produce and cheese to local farm markets. Some also said that they sold through special orders or wholesale delivery. All in all, all three farms were an example of how small farms can be beneficial, rewarding, and career oriented in many ways.

The "Small Farms Dream" was a great experience for me and many others also. It showed the many different career options within farming, one's that never even knew existed! We got to meet new people, see the scenic Ithaca area, and get hands on experience with farming materials. Small farms can be dreams, hobbies, careers, and lifestyles for many people, and "small Farms Dream" helped me understand that!

Meredith Bell is from Wyoming County, NY and may be reached at [bellmk@frontier-net.net](mailto:bellmk@frontier-net.net).

### Not the Computer Job!

By Natalia Panzironi

Remember when you were a young kid and people asked you what you wanted to be when you grow up? I do! I always wanted to have an animal rescue farm! This summer a bunch of 4-h teens gathered together from all over New York to learn about careers. I learned that farming isn't just putting a seed in the ground and watering the seed till it grows. Farming is actually a lot of hard work and you have to have creativity.

The first place we went to was MacDaniel's Nut Grove. This farm is located on the Cornell campus. This was very interesting because I never heard of forest farming before. The people who worked there explained how to grow mushrooms and then let us take a log home so we can start our own mushroom growing. Growing mushrooms is simple but they take at least a year to harvest.

The next place we went to was Dilmun Hill Farm which is also located on the Cornell campus. The people who worked there were also students at Cornell University, so it was good to get a view point from a younger generation of people. It was exciting to see the expressions on their face when they were showing off part of their section of the farm. It showed that there are people out there who actually have pride in what they do; they are not just farming because they need a job. I think that is very important, you have to find a career that you love and you're not doing for the money.

The next place we visited was a cheese making farm. Nancy Richards has about 40 cows that her brother milks every day. Then she turns that milk into cheese. Hard cheese isn't a food that you can eat an hour after you make it. It must go into a cooling cave to age. Some of the cheese stays in the cooling cave for years, depending on the type of cheese and how big the cheese wheel is. It's not as simple as putting the cheese in the cooling cave and coming back in a few years so you can eat it. The cheese has to be flipped once in a while



Enthusiastic student Farm Managers at Dilmun Hill offered inspiration to the teen Career Explorers.

so the rind on the cheese can get hardened. Cheese produced in larger batches commercially always tastes different from the cheese you buy on a farm.

The last place we went to was an orchard. I found the orchard very interesting even though I live next to one at home. Ian

Merwin had over seventy five different types of apples. He also had cherries, apricots, blueberries, prunes, and grapes. We got to learn about how he takes care of his farm and what type of pests they have in their farm.

The past few days I learned that there is more to life than just sitting around at a computer working! There are jobs that allow you to go outside and get dirty! This experience opened my eyes and showed me that maybe animals aren't going to be the only farm pursuit in my life.

Natalia Panzironi is from Orange County, NY and may be reached at [natalia.panzironi@gmail.com](mailto:natalia.panzironi@gmail.com).

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**COMMUNITY AND WORLD**

# Boat-to-Fork Community Supported Fisheries Riding a Wave

**We are pleased to introduce the community supported fisheries model in this edition and to feature two of the producers and one distributor who are creating the roadmap for direct consumer access to fresh, healthy fish from local waters. In subsequent issues we will feature more 'boat to fork' stories. They are inspiring examples of innovation in a time of desperation that have the potential of turning the small-scale fishing industry around.**

By Martha Herbert Izzi

The Community Supported Agriculture model (CSA) - where the farmer provides fresh produce weekly to members who have bought shares at the beginning of the season - is now one of the most popular means of marketing for the small grower. The model has been adopted by farmers coast to coast and continues to find its way into new kitchens as more people realize the value of locally grown produce and the growers who provide it.

So, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that the diminishing small-scale fishing industry has started looking to the CSA model as a means of survival. Small-scale fishermen have struggled to compete for years with the behemoth industrial scale factory fleets operating in global markets. Today, there is hope for those small, mostly day-boat owners who have been rapidly disappearing. Thanks to an innovation that began in North Carolina and then spread to Port Clyde, Maine in 2007, the National Atlantic Marine Alliance estimates that there are approximately twenty other sites in the U.S. and Canada where Community Supported Fisheries (CSF) are operating, and the list is growing.

**Cape Ann Fresh Catch CSF**

Cape Ann Fresh Catch out of Gloucester, Massachusetts began in 2009 and is now the largest Community Supported Fishery, according to Operations Manager Steve Tousignant. The CSF purchases approximately 100,000 pounds of fish a year. It operates under the administrative and purchasing arm of the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives, a non-profit organization, who took action when they saw the cultural and social erosion of their venerable centuries-old fishing community. It is a spiraling problem that has spread rapidly in many coastal areas.

Essentially the Cape Ann model begins in Gloucester where the fish is landed and purchased by Ocean Crest Seafood, the region's official dealer. Tousignant says, "They get the freshest fish that comes in from a core group of about three dozen, mostly day-boats". The daily catch is then transferred to Turner Fisheries who process and package the fish, and within hours, the fish are loaded on to Cape Ann's refrigerated truck and taken to the scheduled delivery sites for member pick-up. Cape Ann runs on a five day delivery cycle and provides 700 summer members with their fish.

Tousignant says, "We pay the boats a higher price than they

would receive at auction, on average about 50% more." Fishermen are encouraged to diversify their catch according to the conditions of the ecosystem, which promotes sustainability. Cape Ann handles about seven to eight kinds of fish from the Gulf of Maine; haddock, cod, pollack, ocean perch, also known as red fish, monkfish and flat fish such as yellow tail.

The Cape Ann metric which makes the business 'economically viable' requires forty subscribers for bi-weekly deliveries of at least two pounds of fish and an additional eighty members for weekly drop-offs.

Meredith Lubking, Social Enterprise and Local Foods Initiative



Cod freshly caught and on its way to Cape Ann's CSF customers.  
Photo by Steve Tousignant

Manager for Community Servings, in Jamaica Plain, a part of Boston, is heavily involved with Cape Ann. She organizes one of the nineteen subscriber pick-up sites. This week she is distributing pollack for Cape Ann and at the same time, she is handling the extensive produce that is delivered by CSA farmers from outlying communities for their members, some of which overlap as Cape Ann subscribers. She calls Cape Ann, "absolutely consistent and reliable." She says that perhaps "three of four times a year the boats can't go out because of weather and they will call and cancel ahead of time". She smiles thinking of the emails she gets from subscribers asking for the "name of the boat the fish came in on."

Meredith distributes the fish which has come off the day-boat within the previous 24 hours, from 3-6 p.m. on Tuesdays at her site. If the subscriber does not arrive, that order is donated by Cape Ann to Community Servings which distributes 750 meals a day to the critically ill, their families and/or caregivers within a hundred mile radius. Steve Tousignant says that one week in early August, (a time when many people vacation) for example, twenty five pounds of their fish were donated to one of three food pantries.



Cape Cod CSF member, Susan Damm picks up her weekly fish share from CSF coordinator Meri Ratzel and weir fisherman Ernie Eldredge. Catch of the day; squid and scup.  
Photo by Shareen Davis



Kathy Cahill, Cape Ann Subscriber getting pollack from Meredith Lubking  
Photo by Martha Izzi

Cape Ann operates on a twelve week share-purchasing schedule. In addition to the various white fish, they also offer Gulf of Maine shrimp and mussels. Beginning with the winter cycle, Cape Ann will offer a Saturday pickup once a month at the Pawtucket RI farmers' market at which subscribers will be able to receive five pounds of peeled, uncooked Maine shrimp, which will be vacuum sealed and frozen in one pound bags. During the five-month subscription period, they will get 20 pounds of shrimp, and each share will be priced at \$150.

When questioned about Cape Ann's growth plan, Tousignant responded, "We'd love to bring fresh seafood to as many places as we can. We are in preliminary conversations with the western part of the state. But we are interested in controlled growth. Undoubtedly we can create more jobs, and strengthen the local economy".

**Cape Cod CSF**

Meri Rapzel is one of four proprietors involved in Cape Cod CSF, which differs from Cape Ann in that it's a for-profit model. She is a self-described "food activist" who once worked for Marine Fisheries. She comes from a CSA market garden background, on a farm in New Hampshire. "I am now working with the fishermen and local food groups trying to bring everyone together".

Meri speaks of Shannon Eldredge and her daughter who come from a historic fishing family in Chatham, one of the few remaining trap or weirs fisheries. Weir fishing is best described as a "whole empoundment set up on Nantucket Sound so that fish will swim right into nets and will continue to swim. When weir poles come down and nets are removed, those fish are back out." She is referring to fish, such as scup, mackerel, butterfish, and squid. Fishermen take a dory into the actual empoundment. They take what they need, within the quota regulated by the state. The fishermen have dedicated a portion of the catch to the CSF.

The fourth proprietor is Linda Kelley of George's Fish Market. She is the person "who lands all the fish" because she is a dealer and the fish are regulated through a dealer. Mary says, "The fishermen get a better price, usually \$1.00 over the auction price. Linda is landing 100 pounds a week."

In contrast to other CSF models, Meri says, "we have one location on the state harbor dock in Chatham. We are trying to preserve 'community fishing' which has existed on Cape Cod for hundreds of years. Ours is a large education piece for CSF subscribers. With a smaller subscriber number we are teaching people how to process the whole fish (we do not offer fillets) with information, videos, and demonstrations." An example that Meri uses is squid which "can be cooked for 60 seconds in a hot pan or thrown into Portuguese stew for two hours. We are teaching people about species, how to handle them in the kitchen and different options for cooking."

For summer season share holders who often don't understand that fish is "terribly seasonal" says Meri, Cape Cod CSF is offering White hake, pollock, haddock and some cod.

This is Cape Cod's second year as a CSF and the first year of three season shares. "We are picking up four members a week through word of mouth," says Meri. In terms of cost, Cape Cod provides only whole fish for \$150 per five-week cycle. There are two other available options. A subscriber can select two lobsters and a half pound of scallops. That combination is a \$150 for five weeks. Another option is a five-week combination of fin fish and scallops for \$175.

Meri signs off, saying "We are trying to be fish mongers reacquainting people with their food."

In conclusion, it is not surprising that community supported fisheries are new to so many of us given the relatively short time they have been in existence. Under the CSF umbrella the emphasis is on community, forming community and informing community. Most of us know precious little about fish and the people who go out year-round and face the climate and oceanic challenges to do what they love and to bring us fish that many of us love. To see people picking up their weekly catch along with their fruits and vegetables from other local CSA farmers at the Community Servings distribution center was a celebratory occasion. The sights, sounds and smells together with the smiles made this experience a 'ten.'

Martha Herbert Izzi is the owner of Bel Lana Farm in Chestnut, MA. She can be reached at 802-492-3346 or mhizzi@yahoo.com



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# Farmer Driven Company Evolves

By Kathleen Harris

The Northeast Livestock Processing Service (NELPSC) is a company that was started by 5 farmers with a notion to help their fellow farmers with livestock processing problems. Now in business for 6 years, NELPSC has evolved from a totally grant supported notion to a self supporting viable LLC owned by those same farmers who became partners. Starting with an untested business model, it now boasts 123 farmer members and working agreements with 11 processing plants. While it continues to assist small and large farmers alike with livestock processing, NELPSC also expanded their mission to assist farmers with their marketing. But how did it all get started? Where is it now? And where is it headed?

About 10 years ago, Seymour Vander Veen, a dairy farmer from Schenectady County was the sitting president of the Hudson Mohawk RC&D (Resource, Conservation and Development) Council, the organization that led the charge in gathering livestock farmers and processors together in order to solve a looming problem-insufficient and unreliable USDA livestock processing. Vander Veen was known to illustrate the severity of the problem by telling of his own experience in attempting to schedule slaughter of a veal calf. When his processor scheduled him 6 months out, his response was, "are you kidding, man--by then it won't even be veal anymore!" With new found determination, VanderVeen and 2 other RC&D Council members, Ed Armstrong and John Walston joined with 2 other prominent livestock farmers, Jim Hayes and Jim Sullivan to steer the project. Walston secured the initial funding from the David Rockefeller Foundation and that was matched by New York State Ag & Markets to do the feasibility study and business plan. Upon completion of the feasibility study, these 5 farmers formed the Northeast Livestock Processing Service Company, LLC (NELPSC) and became incorporated on June 1, 2005.

Soon after incorporation, they hired a Processing Coordinator, Kathleen Harris, a USDA trained livestock grader and long time meat marketer. She was charged by the Board of Directors to take the recommendations of the feasibility study and develop a livestock processing Service Company that would help farmers navigate the nuances of the USDA custom processing business. Initially selling the concept of the untested business model to farmers wasn't easy. Most had a "wait and see" attitude. However, by April of 2006 the first NELPSC farmer member was signed on and (8) USDA and New York State Custom processors had working agreements with NELPSC to provide processing for their members. NELPSC then positioned themselves between the farmers and processors to ease the development of the farmer/processor relationship and mitigate any problems that might occur there. This service is called Processing Facilitation and is performed on a fee-for-service basis.

Processing Facilitation includes 4 basic services: farmer/processor matching, scheduling, taking and conveying cutting instructions and in-plant oversight. First the NELPSC Processing Coordinator works one-on-one with the farmer member to determine a best-fit processor for them. This is determined by matching the farmer's location, service needs and price point with the closest, most affordable processor that has the capabilities to match. For instance, not all processors make beef patties. Some don't put weights on the packages. And those that slaughter hogs may not be able to scald them, leaving the skin on (a preference for many restaurants.)



Fox Hill Farm British White Cattle.

Photo by Larry Lampman.

After matching the farmer with a processor, NELPSC also will schedule for the farmers and assist with cutting instructions. Kathleen Harris, the Processing Coordinator says, "Most farmers new to direct marketing lack knowledge about the cuts of meat and are unfamiliar with the language of the processor. When I work with farmers to fill out a cut sheet I send them a copy of it for their records, in addition to sending it to the processor. After one or two times, and having the cut sheet as a reference, the farmers quickly learn how to take their own cutting instructions. Most farmers take over their scheduling and

cutting instructions after the first couple of times. Our goal is for our farmer members to achieve processing independence. We are here for as much or as little as they need us" NELPSC can also provide in-plant oversight on a half day or full day basis to further allay a farmers trepidation about dealing with a new plant.

Debbie and Lee Millington from Indian Ladder farm in Little Falls joined NELPSC in 2008 and had this to say about the processing facilitation services: "We were just getting started in the beef trade and to say we needed some direction would be an understatement. We had the basic concept-get the beef sold locally...but when it came to pricing and helping customers with cutting choices, we were groping in the dark. Your advice, information and help were well worth the money. Thanks for your patience in answering our many questions during our frequent phone calls and for calming our fears about the processor-your presence on processing day was invaluable...It certainly moved our marketing to a professional level."

After a year of offering processing assistance, it became apparent that many farmers also needed help with marketing. Although some NELPSC farmers were savvy marketers and able to retail their products through farmers markets, restaurants and farm stands, there still were those farmers who lacked the time, skill or desire to market face-to-face. The NELPSC Board of Directors recognized this and moved to assist those farmers by purchasing their grassfed and natural grainfed meats at a price that compensated them for their efforts to produce a sustainable product. Michael Brunn from Schoharie County said, "I've been a farmer for 36 years and for the first time I feel like I am finally getting an honest price for my product."

But before NELPSC could start buying the livestock, they had to develop the outlets for such products. Because NELPSC has a core value not to compete with their farmers in the same markets, they developed an outlet for those products by becoming an approved vendor with a major food service company that supplies colleges and institutions. The market entry requirements were onerous and expensive and more than any one



Eric Shelley, owner of Cowboy's Custom Cutting, cuts meat in his mobile processing unit.

farmer could do for themselves. And because the entire industry was geared to purchasing inexpensive boxed meats from the large packing plants of the midwest, it took 2 years to overcome the barriers before finally becoming an approved vendor.

Now as the orders come in, the livestock are sourced from NELPSC farmers. Kathleen Harris travels to the farms to select the livestock and gather the farmer affidavits. She then coordinates slaughter and processing with the USDA and 3rd party audited plants, performs in-plant oversight when necessary and arranges delivery with the NELPSC refrigerated truck and the receiving personnel. NELPSC meats are not branded. Instead the farm name and location is tracked with each order so that the purchasing institution knows exactly where their meat came from and where it was processed. NELPSC is presently preparing orders for 15 schools (k-12), colleges and universities amounting to 13,000 lbs of meat from 27 head of livestock from 10 different farmers. The NELPSC delivery truck signage captures it all...Local Foods from Local Farms.

The NELPSC mission and values are arguably altruistic for a for-profit company. Despite that, the company continues to grow steadily with increased farmer membership, increased processor agreements and increased sales each year. Grant support was integral to the development of NELPSC. The majority of those funds came from the New York Farm Viability Institute. They acknowledged that processing and marketing were problems for our livestock farmers and chose to invest in NELPSC and other projects that helped to alter the course of livestock processing events. That investment helped to bridge the gap for livestock farmers so they could get the processing they needed to keep their businesses sustained while the processing industry was gearing up to take on the local food movement.

Now, there are more USDA plants, at least in this eastern region of New York, and the future looks very bright for our livestock farmers. Over the years, support for NELPSC was also received



The NELPSC team. Left to right: Seymour Vander Veen, Jim Sullivan, Hal Hermance, Kathleen Harris, Ed Armstrong (recently retired NELPSC owner), Jim Hayes (not pictured)

from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rensselaer County Economic Development Office, the Hudson Mohawk RC&D Council and the New York State Senate Majority Leader's Office. The last grant funding was received in May of 2010. Since then the company has been self supporting.

To learn more about NELPSC visit [www.nelpsc.com](http://www.nelpsc.com) or contact Kathleen Harris at (518) 258-4823.

*Kathleen Harris is the Processing and Marketing Coordinator for the Northeast Livestock Processing Service Company and can be reached at (518) 258-4823*



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## HORTICULTURE

# Juneberries - They Go Where Blueberries Can't

By Jim Ochterski

Many small farm operators and fruit enthusiasts see blueberries as Plan A. We all know that blueberries are popular, tasty, and they practically market themselves. But if you do not have very well-drained, acidic soils, you have to go with Plan B. It would be great if there was a productive berry that very much looked and tasted like a blueberry, but was not so fickle about soils. That's where juneberries come in. And it turns out, juneberries have several advantages over blueberries.

The juneberry (known commonly elsewhere as a "saskatoon berry") is a dark-colored fruit that is grown on the Canadian prairies for wholesale processing, with some fresh market and you-pick sales. The species of commercial interest is Amelanchier alnifolia, a close cousin of our Eastern serviceberry (Amelanchier canadensis), which is found as a tall shrub in our local forests. Juneberries are currently considered an "uncommon" fruit with virtually no commercial cultivation in the Northeast US. In comparison, juneberries are grown on almost 900 farms covering more than 3,200 acres of production in Canada.

Juneberries are an early season fruit crop with self-pollinating, frost hardy flowers. Mature fruit is ready for harvest 45 to 60 days after the very early bloom; they ripen in mid-June to early July in most parts of New York State. This medium-sized shrub tolerates a wide range of soil pH conditions (4.8 - 8.0) and soil textures (coarse sand to silty clay). They will not tolerate soggy ground or standing water, but will tolerate many of the soil types unsuitable for blueberries.

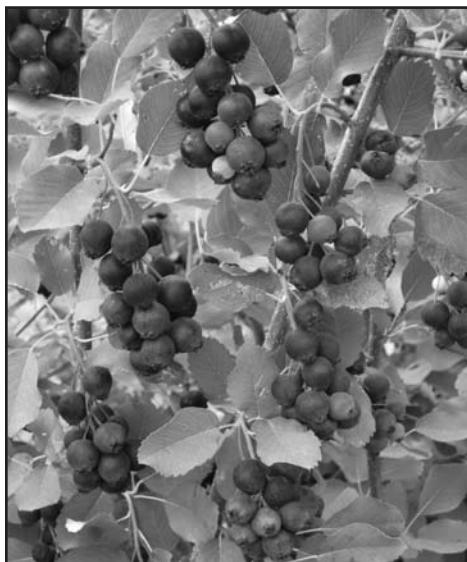
The juneberry is native to North America, more particularly to the upper Midwest and northern prairie region of Canada - a bitterly cold and dry climate with low-fertility soils. The Northeastern climate appears to be favorable for juneberry production, although high humidity can lead to problems with powdery mildew and fungal diseases on young plants.

The ripe juneberry fruit is dark purple, with several tiny soft seeds, and very closely resembles a highbush blueberry. The fruit is best eaten fresh, but even after prolonged freezing, it retains its firmness and overall shape without becoming mushy. Juneberries have a flavor reminiscent of dark cherries or raisins, and is generally milder than blueberries.

Nutritionally, juneberries seem to be naturally designed for athletes more than anything else:

- \* A typical juneberry is 18 percent sugar, and about 80 percent water. Juneberries have a lower moisture content than blueberries, so they have relatively higher amounts of calcium, natural fiber, proteins, carbohydrates and lipids in them.

\* Juneberries are an excellent source of iron



Commercial juneberries are very productive and appealing  
Photos by Jim Ochterski

- each serving provides about 23% RDA for iron (almost twice as much iron as blueberries). They contain high levels of phenolic compounds, particularly anthocyanins, and, they provide healthy amounts of potassium, magnesium and phosphorous.

- \* Juneberries have about as much vitamin C, thiamin, riboflavin, pantothenic acid, vitamin B-6, folate, vitamin A and vitamin E as blueberries, and also trace amounts of biotin.

The key to successful establishment of a juneberry orchard is thorough weed control. Having evolved in a fire-oriented ecosystem, juneberries need two or three years of zero competition from other plants while they become established. There are many ways to maintain this "barren soil" environment, and black fabric mulch appears to be best (you know - so it looks as though a prairie wildfire had swept through).

With all these great features, juneberries are primed to grow from a minor berry to a more common high-value fruit crop in the coming years. Consumers are ready for a new fruit, especially one with a familiar and appealing taste. During a juneberry tasting session, we received many positive responses from more than 1,500 samples.

If you want to get juneberries in the ground, start by developing your rows well in advance of ordering or delivery. Rows should be spaced 10 - 12 feet apart, planning for about 4 feet between bushes. The first crop will be ready three years after planting, and bushes will yield 4 - 6 pounds of berries annually.

Plant material for small-scale commercial plantings can be hard to find, since it is a new crop. Most plants are currently purchased from Canadian nurseries, but several Michigan-based operations are increasing their inventory of juneberry plants.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County is leading a detailed project to give small-scale fruit growers a realistic sense of the agronomic suitability of juneberries and how well this crop might or might not go over with consumers. The project has been made possible by the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (NESARE). Four farms signed on to provide testing grounds for more than 400 juneberry plants of four different varieties. We will post all new information at our website at [www.juneberries.org](http://www.juneberries.org).

Jim Ochterski is the project leader to introduce juneberries in the Northeast. He is based at the Cornell Cooperative Extension office in Canandaigua, NY (Ontario County) and has an ongoing interest in sustainable, native crops with significant commercial potential. Jim can be reached at 585-394-3977 x402 or [jao14@cornell.edu](mailto:jao14@cornell.edu).



Juneberries will be a good fit for you-pick fruit farms

**WOMEN FARMERS**

# Beginning Women Farmer Program Provides Tools for Personal and Professional Growth

By Crystal Stewart

It is rare to see a group of all women circled in a farm field, kicking at the dirt and talking about the weather. But across the northeast for the last two years, women have been getting together to do just that, and to gain all the benefits that come from having a group to talk farming with. A total of 180 of these women across the Northeast have come together through a program organized by Holistic Management International, an organization which advocates balancing the social, environmental and economic aspects of farming to increase quality of life. Funding was provided by a USDA/NIFA grant, which has allowed all participants to attend ten days of training free of charge.

The program launched in the Winter of 2010, when women gathered at farms and community centers in New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maine intent on learning to be better farmers. Some were fresh out of school or internships and were thinking of starting their own farm; some were looking to use their land for agriculture during retirement. Many had already begun farming, and were especially eager to learn how to do a better job of everything from marketing products to purchasing the right equipment. Among the eager faces in each room were two women farmer mentors, ready to meet with each beginning farmer individually over the course of the season and help with specific issues during on-farm meetings.

The ten week program began not with discussions of crop or animal specific issues, but with a bigger picture question: What is your whole farm plan? Who has a say in decisions on the farm, and what do those people want their lives to be like both now and in the future? How does the farm work to enhance that goal? All other decisions would be made with this whole farm plan in mind, from choosing enterprises to adjusting management practices.

After articulating a goal for the farm and its decision makers, weeks were spent hashing out the details. First, participants tackled finances. This was a tough couple of weeks for many people, particularly those who had not previously spent time determining if their enterprises or potential enterprises were profitable. Quite a few were not. Fortunately, everyone had time to carefully look at their expenses and their income. Groups helped each other brainstorm ways to cut maintenance costs while protecting wealth generating expenses and later helped each other develop better marketing plans to increase revenue. If an enterprise simply couldn't be profitable, groups brainstormed other enterprises that could be and still fit into the farmer's whole farm plan. In looking back on the class recently, Mary Beth Welsh, a farmer from the 2011 class said of the financial planning sessions, "[this] portion of the class made it very clear that to be successful, understanding the financial issues and catching errors early is essential to keep moving forward ..." When asked immediately after the sessions about attitude change, 95% of participants said they had gained confidence about writing a business plan. Five months after the course was finished, 43% of survey respondents indicated that they had actually developed a financial plan. One farmer survey respondent wrote the following about financial planning's effect five months later: "The budget planning that

we did at the beginning of the season set me and my husband on a solid path for our first season of farming: we exceeded our planned profit, in part thanks to the decision making and budgeting tools I learned from HMI."

As the weather warmed, sessions moved outdoors, and focused more on "nuts and bolts" aspects of farming including soil health, biological monitoring and management of animals to improve the land and increase productivity/profitability, and infrastructure planning. Many of these sessions took place on participants' farms, where the group was able to first assess the situation and then brainstorm improvements. Lunchtimes during these summer sessions were filled with talk of animal breeds, cultivation equipment, and countless tips and tricks. Tours of each farm were a highpoint for many participants, many of whom had not been able to spend so much time on another person's farm. The diversity of farms was seen as a positive, even if the enterprises were not exactly in line with what each participant was doing. Tricia Park, 2010 class participant, noted, "It was interesting to see the age differences and different types of farms- but we all had a common goal: Doing what we love and making it successful."

Another highpoint for some participants came during biological monitoring sessions, when lawn darts were used to take a detailed inventory of what was happening in pastures rather than making "windshield assessments." Participants quickly learned how to identify signs of biological activity, healthy nutrient and water cycling, and efficient energy flow, all of which contribute to the productivity of the land. They learned to be



Beginning Women Farmers and their mentors planning infrastructure at Hawthorne Valley Farm

thorough, and to look for positive change from year to year in a given field. Many participants have indicated in surveys that their productivity and animal health has improved after learning to better manage pastures.

The benefits of the last two years' programs will continue on based on the relationships formed by participants in the program. A listserve has been created for participants to keep in touch and ask questions, and some states have decided to keep meeting, often combining participants from years one and two. One of my favorite thoughts from my conversation with Mary Beth was on this very topic: "Being part of this group has opened up an entire network which also includes women from previous and future classes - women I haven't even met yet." This is a very true statement-the grant has one more year of funding, so another twenty women will be accepted from the pool of applicants in each state. Anyone with less than ten years of farming is welcome to apply.

*Crystal Stewart is the Regional Agriculture Specialist with the Capital District Vegetable and Small Fruit program. She taught financial planning, animal impact, soils and marketing for this program. She can be reached at (518) 775-0018 or [cls263@cornell.edu](mailto:cls263@cornell.edu). See the resource spotlight for more information on the Beginning Women Farmer program and contacts for your state.*



A Beginning Woman Farmer who worked at Hawthorne Valley showing other BWF's how to secure floating row cover

Photos by Crystal Stewart

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Hawthorne Valley Farm's Vegetable Farmer talking about their operation.

## Empowering Beginning Women Farmers Coordinators

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**LOCAL FOODS AND MARKETING**

# New York Cheese Wrapped Up

By Patricia Brhel

Cheese unexpectedly became controversial at farmers markets across New York State in the summer of 2011. One duty of the New York State Department of Agriculture is inspecting and enforcing New York state law regarding safe distribution of farm products. In late June, they stepped into New York City's Green Market and shut down several artisanal cheese vendors who had been cutting cheese on site and selling it to their customers. New York State Agriculture and Markets Law, Article 20C, states that anyone cutting cheese for sale must have a processing license and do so in an approved facility.

This means that farmers markets without electricity, running water or refrigeration on site can not allow an artisanal cheese producer to cut their product to order at the market. To sell at a market without modern amenities, cheese vendors can legally cut the cheese at their farm, in a room approved and licensed for that purpose, and pre-wrap it in plastic so that it is properly sealed. They can then use an ice chest to keep the product at the proper temperature, only displaying a small amount of product at a time.

Cheese producers and many of their customers, used to having their cheese custom cut while they waited, were not happy and let it be known. As a result, the law was temporarily rescinded on July 1. If the cheese is cut in a sanitary manner, it does not have to cut in a licensed processing facility. This temporary solution regarding enforcement of the law is good through September 28, 2011. During this period, the determination currently exempts anyone cutting cheese at a farmer's market



Cheese wheels

from the need to obtain a processing license.

"While the degree of enforcement has varied, the law has been in place for years and it's always required a processing license for the premises or pre-packaging of items like sandwiches and cheese that require sanitary conditions. It's not because we're trying to interfere with the farmers business, it makes sense from a health standpoint. Some people will willingly follow sanitary guidelines and some markets have a clean space. Others do not know the rules or are careless. Some markets, because of their location, have rodent or insect problems. Even though Article 20C has been temporarily rescinded, anyone cutting cheese at a

market still needs to follow basic sanitary guidelines. They need to keep the product cold, wear gloves and restrain their hair. They need to sanitize the cutting surface and the knife they use, or change the knife frequently to ensure that it's sanitary. Hand washing is very important. Soft cheeses should still be prepackaged, but hard cheeses such as cheddar and provolone can be cut on site. Retail rules also apply. "The type of cheese needs to be identified with a label, the price per pound prominently displayed and the cut pieces labeled with the identity of the wheel of cheese from which the slice was obtained," according to Michael Moran, press officer, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

"While we're doing OK, as we can precut our cheese and sell it at the Central New York Regional market in Syracuse, it's certainly cut into the profits of many of our vendors. We sell about 60 kinds of cheese at the Regional Market, so most of what we stock is precut anyhow, but we also sell wholesale to many of the farm markets in the area. Until this latest push on enforcement they had been able to buy a 10 lb. block of cheddar and other cheese each week and cut it to order for their customers. Now many of them can't do that. For instance, one of our customers buys about ten pounds of cheese a week. She used to buy a wheel and cut it to order for her customers. Now we must deliver the cheese pre-wrapped and she's not making as much of a profit, both because the pre-wrapped cheese is more expensive. In order to cut the cheese on site, she'd have to install a three bay sink and do other remodeling, but the difference in earnings wouldn't justify that," according to Molly Buchanan of Buttercup Cheese from Central Square, NY. "We've never had anyone get sick from our cheese, but I suppose not everyone is as careful about cleanliness as we are. Nowadays, too, there are a lot more people willing to sue, looking for an easy out, so it makes sense that Ag and Market is requiring this. It's just a shame that after all these years



Aaron Snow holding a piece of prewrapped cheese  
Photos by Patricia Brhel

in business -- we've been selling cheese since 1969 -- that we have to make these changes." The Governor's office is considering making the current determination, which rescinds the need for a processing license at the market location, permanent. The regulations can be found at <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/info/register/2011/jul20/pdfs/rules.pdf>. Text of the rules and analysis can be obtained from Stephen Stich, Director, Food Safety and Inspection. For information or to comment contact, [Stephen.stich@agmkt.state.ny.us](mailto:Stephen.stich@agmkt.state.ny.us), or call 518-457-4492. Check at the New York State register, <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/info/register.htm>, in October for the state's final decision.

*Pat Brhel is a community volunteer and freelance writer who lives in Caroline, N.Y. She can be reached at [lsparrow@hotmail.com](mailto:lsparrow@hotmail.com) or 607-539-9928.*

**NEW FARMERS**

## Young Farmers Take Their Message to Washington

By Lindsey Lusher-Shute

With farmers retiring faster than they're being replaced, a lot of people are worried about who will be feeding America in fifty years. There is growing interest among young people in farming careers, but they are experiencing significant barriers that are keeping them from realizing their potential in agriculture and preventing the nation from renewing its farming population. In June, eleven beginning farmers, representing ten key states, traveled to the nation's capital to talk to their elected officials about what they need to succeed and how the federal government can help. A diverse group, including the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Center for Rural Affairs, Land Stewardship Project, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Practical Farmers of Iowa, The Land Connection, California Farm Link and the National Young Farmers' Coalition, organized the trip.

The primary focus of the meetings was the "Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Opportunity Act of 2011". This soon-to-be-introduced bill, sponsored by Representative Waltz of Minnesota and Senator Harkin of Iowa, contains a set of provisions to fix, fund and add to existing USDA programs for young and beginning farmers in the US. The hope is that the bill will be rolled into the eventual Farm Bill legislation.

The Farm Bill first recognized beginning farmers in 1990, defining farmers of any age in their first ten years. The 2008 bill went further by expanding programs and adding new grant money for training. The Opportunity Act seeks to build on the 2008 bill.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), overseen by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), is one of the programs that would go further to help beginners. This program shares in the cost of conservation-minded farm improvements, such as cover crop planting and hoop houses. One of the current challenges with EQIP is that farmers must pay for these projects up front and then be reimbursed by USDA, which can pose a significant challenge for limited resource beginners. The existing program allows beginning farmers a 30% advance on the cost of the project, and the Act would up that advance payment to 50% of the project cost. The resulting payment from the USDA would be the same, but beginners would need to come up with less cash to get their projects started. The program would also give additional preference to beginning farmers, at least 10% of program funds.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan rules would also be revamped under the Opportunity Act. FSA's direct farm ownership loans, an important tool for farmers looking to buy land, are now capped at \$300,000--which doesn't go far in the many real estate markets. The Opportunity Act would give FSA the discretionary authority to adjust the current loan limit upwards in regions with exceptionally high real estate prices, making these loans more applicable in the Northeast.

The Opportunity Act would also help more beginners qualify for FSA farm ownership loans by reducing the requirement for farm managerial experience. At present, growers must have three years of farm ownership or managerial experience to qualify for a loan. The Opportunity Act reduces that requirement to two years and directs FSA to consider a broader range of farm experience, including apprenticeships, on-farm employment and mentorships as relevant experience in meeting the requirement.

Access to capital being one of the most significant barriers to getting a farm business started, one of the most exciting elements of the Opportunity Act is a newly proposed microloan program. The Act would enable FSA to serve young growers more effectively by creating a new category of microloans loans. As written, the microloan program offers growers ages 20-35 up to \$35,000 in assistance. The loans would be marketed to young people, with simplified paperwork and loan requirements.

Another way to get capital into the hands of beginners is through Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) or a matched savings account. This model, now employed by non-profit organizations in California, Iowa and Michigan, helps growers save money in their first years by matching up to a specific amount of money for farm investments. During the saving period, program participants are typically required to attend business development classes and they may be matched with a mentor. A pilot IDA program was authorized for 15 states in the 2008 Farm Bill, but despite advocacy efforts, it yet to receive funding from Congress. The Opportunity Act proposes that IDAs receive mandatory funding.

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), a competitive grant program that supports universities and non-profits in the training of beginning farmers, would also be reauthorized and given more funding in the Opportunity Act. Two recipients in New York State include Cornell University and



Young farmers take their message to Washington DC  
Photo by: National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

the NY Organic Farming Association. Cornell's funds were used to start a Beginning Farmer Learning Network among hundreds of service providers in the Northeast, as well as an educational website and video series. With help from BFRDP, NOFA-NY hired a beginning farmer specialist and offered new classes targeted at new and aspiring growers.

There is much more to the Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Opportunity Act, and help is needed to win bill sponsors and local support. To read the full set of proposals and engage your local member of Congress on the issue of beginning farmers, visit the National Young Farmers' Coalition at [youngfarmers.org](http://youngfarmers.org).

*For more information on the National Young Farmer Coalition or beginning farmer issues pertaining to the upcoming Farm Bill, contact Lindsey Lusher-Shute at [Lindsey@youngfarmers.org](mailto:Lindsey@youngfarmers.org) or 917.318.1488.*

**NON-DAIRY LIVESTOCK**

# Managing a Buying Club for Freezer Lambs

By Ulf Kintzel

If you are raising animals and are looking for an additional option to sell your product, consider selling it through a buying club. I do. While this method is the most involved and also the most nerve-wracking, it is also one of the least vulnerable options of all my sales, only second to my direct sales off the farm. Half way through reading this article you might start thinking that the local sales barn is not such a bad option after all, and I agree. Running a buying club is anything but easy. Yet, in the end it is rewarding and I don't want to be without mine. So, here it goes:

When I left New Jersey and moved to upstate New York, one customer from near "the city" (in New Jersey that refers to New York City) asked me to deliver her lamb order to her. I asked her to get me nine additional orders to make it worth my while and she did. Fast forward, it is 4 years later and the lamb sales have grown from ten lambs once a year to a total of 50 lambs split into two annual deliveries of frozen, custom-harvested whole and half lamb orders. Each time I plan a delivery, I have to set a maximum number of orders, dictated by what I can load in my car in the summer and in my truck in the fall, and I always sell out within two days of announcing the delivery. The economic downturn put absolutely no dent into these sales. The customer base is extremely broad and represents a complete cross section of the population (although it all more or less started with a chapter group of the Weston A. Price foundation that passed the info around). My competition in that region is "Whole Foods", also referred to as "Whole Paycheck" due to its extremely high prices. My prices are lower and my lamb is better.

My initial e-mail to all potential customers lays out the terms and conditions - as far as pickup location and time is concerned. It stresses that I will be at that location for the hour specified. It also offers cutting instructions to choose from. It gives a price list for whole and half lamb orders. The prices are the same as the ones picked up at the farm and I charge a \$20 delivery fee per order no matter what the size of the order is. It encourages people to put in larger orders. Half lamb orders are the most work but cost the same delivery fee. The delivery fee covers the travelling cost well, even at high gas prices. Does it also pay for my time? No, it does not. However, the drop-off location is near Clifton, NJ which is basically Polish. So is my wife which means we use the trip to go shopping in an authentic Polish store and eat lunch at a real Polish restaurant. The kids are always with us. Yet another example of making farming a lifestyle, don't you think?

I do all communication by e-mail and I save all correspondence. My initial e-mail states that all correspondence will be by e-mail and that one should not order if he or she does not check e-mail frequently enough...just don't be surprised if you get a call or two anyway from folks wanting to order by phone. I do everything by e-mail for my own sake, so that I am able to



The entire freezer lamb fits snug in a 12 by 12 by 12 box, 18 of those fit into our SUV's cargo space.  
Photo by Ulf Kintzel

keep track. If I discuss things over the phone I will have forgotten half of what was said by the time I have hung up. Having everything in e-mails helps me to remember. Secondly, I do so to avoid arguments. A customer might say, "I had no ground meat in my order. Where is my ground meat?". I can go back in my e-mails, re-send their cutting instructions and simply say "Sorry, you didn't order any, you ordered stew meat instead. Do you want ground meat with your next order?". That stops an argument before it begins and the customer won't get mad. Here and there I do indeed make a mistake. The volume of information is at times too big to process. The best way of dealing with it is admitting it without excuses and offering something to make up for it. In one instance the mistake was big enough that I waived the delivery fee. The customer is still ordering, so it must have worked.

As far as the customers are concerned, buying clubs are not for everyone. In a society where people are used to getting whatever they want whenever they want it, it is not easy to convey the message that they have to be at a certain hour at a certain location and that the product cannot be left at the location. They MUST be there to pick it up. Most get it. Some do not. Some also just do not have the organizational skills to plan ahead, leave early enough from home, and be on time. These few make it at times difficult and nerve-wracking, even aggravating at times. What to do with those few? I am sorry to say but you just drop them as customers. The whole buying club will not work otherwise and will suffer because of a few.

Initially, I had read about buying clubs in an article by Joel Salatin. He stressed how rigorous he is about pre-payment and pickup time. I agree that without such rigid rules it won't work. Some people do get upset with you over this. Some also get upset that the lamb needs to be paid for well in advance,

even well before harvest. I believe the great majority understands and is grateful to get lamb delivered that would otherwise not be accessible to them or only accessible at far greater effort and cost. And the orders and the feedback of these folks reflect just that. The orders come in like clockwork and the feedback is always great.

New customers need to be educated a lot. It is entirely possible that there is an e-mail exchange of 10 e-mails going back and forth just to agree on how the lamb should be cut. That is understandable since most of these folks initially know absolutely nothing. Here is one example: "I want all four legs cut in half and boneless". Sorry, there are only two legs. The front legs are the shoulders and aren't called leg of lamb. Once educated, the e-mail exchange is reduced by ninety percent. So, take the time and educate. The better of a job you do, the fewer questions there will be later on.

The harvesting process has its own challenges. I don't control what the butcher is doing and it is in the nature of his business that cuts are at times not as ordered or that my instructions weren't as precise as I had thought. My butcher works with me and at times we try to accommodate unusual wishes but at the end of the day mistakes happen, unforeseen things happen. What the customer had in mind and what we understood is not always one and the same. That's why I have a nice disclaimer in my e-mail to customers that cutting mistakes may happen, that I have no control or leverage over it, and that I shall not be held liable.

Four years into it, I hope to have worked out most of the kinks. The buying club remains one of the most involved ways of marketing my lambs. And yes, it is at times the most aggravating but what I say to the computer stays in the office and helps to blow off steam. The profit margin is as high as direct sales and I don't depend on distributors to sell them. The sales account for about 20 percent of my total market lamb sales and are just as high as my off-farm sales. When the economy went sour in 2008 the buying club kept working like the recession never happened. You also meet a number of interesting people with various backgrounds. And you can feel a little good about yourself, restoring some connection between city-dwellers and farmer by educating them throughout the year with a farm newsletter via e-mail. Needless to say, I don't want to be without this buying club as an option of selling my market lambs. If you can bear it, it's a win-win situation for everyone.

*Ulf Kintzel owns and manages White Clover Sheep Farm ([www.whitecloversheepfarm.com](http://www.whitecloversheepfarm.com)) in Rushville, NY where he breeds grass-fed White Dorper sheep. He offers breeding stock and freezer lambs. He can be reached at 585-554-3313 or by e-mail at [ulf@whitecloversheepfarm.com](mailto:ulf@whitecloversheepfarm.com).*

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## We Want To Hear From You

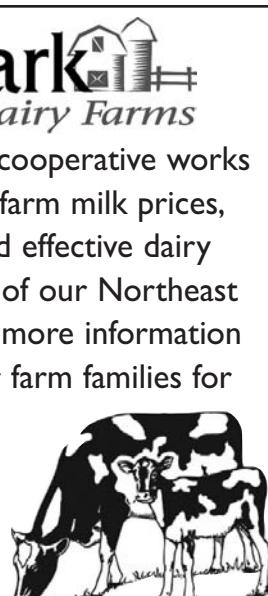
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## Agri-Mark Family Dairy Farms

The Agri-Mark dairy cooperative works year-round for higher farm milk prices, better markets and effective dairy legislation on behalf of our Northeast dairy farm families. For more information on working with other farm families for higher on-farm milk prices, contact our Membership Department toll-free at

**I-800-225-0532.**



## Need Info?

Subscribe to the Cornell Small Farms Update, a monthly newsletter with announcements, upcoming events, resources, funding and farming opportunities and more. Visit the Cornell Small Farms Program online at [www.small-farms.cornell.edu](http://www.small-farms.cornell.edu).

**HORTICULTURE**

# Black Currents Bring Opportunity

By Christen Trewer

*"Change brings opportunity. ~ Nido Qubein"*

This can be said for the transition made by R H Rhodes & Son Inc, of Penn Yan, NY, when they stopped farming vegetable cash crops in 2003 and explored the venture of becoming black currant producers. Most people are not familiar with the small black berry that is so popular in Europe and in the culinary world. Many European countries utilize the berries as a substitute for the nutrient rich citrus fruits that are at times hard to obtain. Black currants were once widely grown in the United States until the early 1900s when they were banned as a vector of white pine blister rust. In the late 1960s, the federal government transferred the jurisdiction of the ban to the state governments and in 2003, New York lifted the ban. Decades after the plant was banned, the average person would find little use for the obscure, sharp tasting berry.

Black currants grow on a bush similar to a blueberry bush. Once they are planted it takes 2-3 years to produce fruit. The shrubs are hardy in harsh climates and drought resistant. The weather in the Finger Lakes Region of New York can be a gamble when growing crops, making the black currant a lower risk wager. The nutritional benefits of the black currant are most likely as little known as the berry itself. It is extremely high in Vitamin C, containing 3 times the daily value of the vitamin. It is high in minerals, vitamins, antioxidants and also contains unsaturated fatty acids, making it somewhat of a "super fruit".

In 2003, Curt Rhodes of R H Rhodes & Son Inc, a family farming corporation, read an article about black currants and the idea piqued the family's interest. Switching from a labor intensive vegetable farm to such a unique commodity would take a large investment of family participation and everyone rose to the challenge. According to Carolyn Sullivan, Curt's sister, one of the most important steps in the decision was to take a good look at what their farm had to offer. The area offers optimum soils, the family has a deep well of farming knowledge and some of the equipment necessary was already part of the farming operation, including a cold storage building. With the ability and the interest present, the next step would be to see if there was a market for the little known crop. Cathy Fritz, another Rhodes family sister, sent out a survey to gauge the interest in black currant use in wine as the farm is located in the heart of the Finger Lakes wine region. The response from the wineries was that the product had a market. The Rhodes family now had the opportunity to make a successful transition to a new crop. The first acre was planted that year based on the availability of plants; today, the farm has a total of 25 acres dedicated to currants.

In the summer of 2007, the Rhodes family complete with brothers, sisters, in-law, sons, daughters, nieces and nephews, harvested the first acre by hand. Carolyn credits the Cornell University Geneva Experimental Research



Black Currants grown @ R.H. Rhodes & Son, Inc.  
Photos by Christen Trewer

Station as a valuable resource for crop and market information. Two of the first customers that made the difference for the farm were Montezuma Winery and Bellwether Hard Cider. After some extensive research and number crunching, the corporation made the decision to purchase a mechanical harvester from Oregon. This would make the long hot harvesting days a bit easier on the family as well as making it feasible for them to farm a full 25 acres of black currant bushes. Over the years



The black currant harvester hard at work in the field

R H Rhodes & Son Inc. has expanded their juice market to include other wineries and cider mills. Wineries as far away as South Dakota are interested in what the Rhodes family currants have to offer their wines. With the help of an off-farm co-packer, jams and jellies are made and sold at local farm markets. R H Rhodes & Son Inc. saw the opportunity in producing black currants and seized it. Harvest time is the first few weeks in July. They are currently producing an average of 1 1/2 tons of berries per acre and have their entire harvest



Watching the currants travel along the harvester

sold almost before it is grown. This is much different than the vegetable crops that were grown on the farm before. Approximately 25% of the sales are from jams and jellies with the rest of the harvest being sold as juice. Challenges facing the operation are similar to any farmer producing a crop; they cannot control the weather. Overall, Carolyn feels the cooperation, dedication and knowledge base of the family has kept the farm successful since the transition. The best recognition is that their customers keep coming back year after year.

Looking ahead, the Rhodes' plan to plant 3 more acres of currants and perhaps invest in a large cold storage unit. At the end of the day, the satisfaction of taking a unique transitioning opportunity and making it a successful venture is the best reward.

*Christen Trewer is a loan officer trainee with the USDA-Farm Service Agency in Bath, NY. She can be reached at Christen.Trewer@ny.usda.gov or (607) 776-7378.*

## Resource Spotlight

### The Art of Silvopasturing: A Regional Conference

by Nancy Glazier

The practice of Silvopasturing is causing quite a buzz these days. It was a fairly new concept to me until a year and a half ago, a concept that brings together forestry management and grazing management into one single system of sustainable woodland grazing. It can diversify income by tapping into products of trees, tree products, forage, and livestock. Trees can be introduced to the pasture or pasture introduced to the trees. Management is the key to reduce the likelihood of soil compaction, debarking of trees, and trampling and browsing of regeneration.



Photo by Brett Chedzoy

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

Silvopasturing isn't for every woodland owner or every woodlot as it requires a commitment to caring for animals and enclosing portions of the woods with a secure fence to keep your animals in and predators out. Wooded areas on poor growing sites, rough terrain, or with difficult access would obviously have fewer advantages for successful silvopasturing than the converse. But the most important key for success is skilled management of the system. This requires considerable knowledge of both silviculture and grazing. If grazing and silviculture are the "artful application of science", then combining the two systems in certainly a fine art! But this shouldn't discourage the novice from exploring the potential of silvopasturing on their property, even though results are likely to improve with increased skill and experience.

Cornell Cooperative Extension is looking to assist in providing an educational opportunity to learn more about the art of silvopasturing. The 2-day conference will be November 7 and 8, 2011 at the Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel, 16 North Franklin Street, Watkins Glen, Schuyler County. The goals of the conference are to broaden a collective understanding of silvopasturing and its applications in the Northeastern US across multiple professions and stakeholders, identify opportunities and challenges to its implementation, and develop networks for collaborative research, learning and promotion of silvopasturing activities. It is open to the public, with land use and conservation professionals, foresters, graziers, woodland owners and members of the academic community are especially encouraged to attend.

The multistate list of presenters represents areas of in the East where the practice is in place. Highlights, though not all the speakers include John Hopkins, Consulting Forester from Bloomsburg, PA will discuss restoration and revitalization of an Appalachian farm. Charles Feldrake with USDA Agricultural Research Service's Appalachian Farming Systems Research Center in Beaver, West Virginia, will talk about their applied research there. Mike Jacobson with Penn State University will cover great opportunities and challenges in the Northeast. Three of our speakers are coming from University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry. Dusty Walters, Larry Godsey, and Gene Garrett will at length focus on silvopasture design, implementation and impacts. Doug Wallace is the NRCS Lead Agroforester at the USDA National Agroforestry Center in Lincoln, Nebraska will provide an overview of current resources and assistance available for practitioners and researchers. Brett Chedzoy, CCE, is a forester and practitioner of the silvopasturing. He and his wife, Maria, will host the field tour/discussion portion and conclusion of the conference. We will see first-hand their system in place. This is by no means a complete overview of the conference!

Every attempt is being made to keep the cost of the conference as reasonable as possible with support coming from National Agroforestry Center, Upper Susquehanna Coalition, Cornell's Department of Natural Resources, as well as others in the works. An agenda and registration for the event can be found online at <http://nesilvopasture.eventbrite.com>. A block of rooms are reserved at the hotel; contact them on the web at [www.watkinsglenharborhotel.com](http://www.watkinsglenharborhotel.com) or 607-535-6116.

For more information on the event, contact Brett at 607-742-3657 or [bjc226@cornell.edu](mailto:bjc226@cornell.edu).

Nancy Glazier is Small Farms Support Specialist for the Northwest New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team of Cornell Cooperative Extension/PRO-DAIRY. You can reach her at 585-315-7746 or [nig3@cornell.edu](mailto:nig3@cornell.edu).

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**STEWARDSHIP & NATURE**

# Farmscapes for Birds

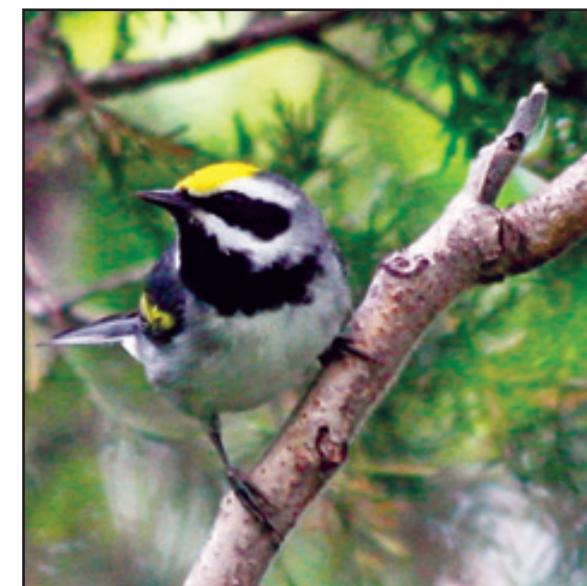
By Margaret Fowle

*This article is the first in a two-part series. In the winter article I will highlight some real-life success stories of working with landowners in partnership with NRCS and Audubon Vermont.*

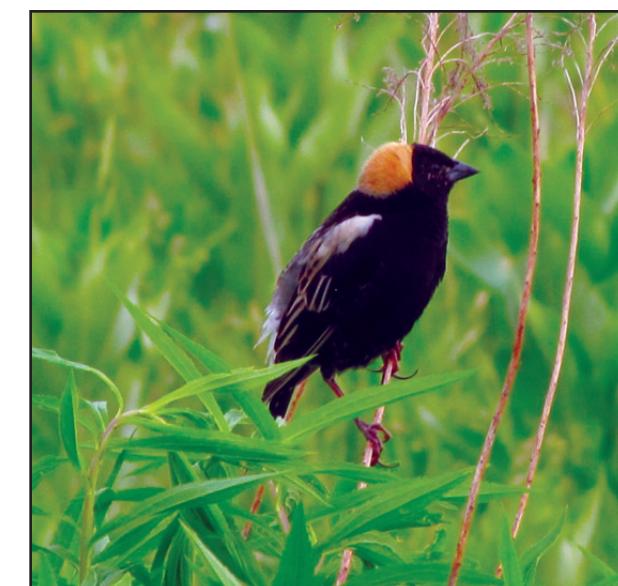
Audubon Vermont is working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) on two exciting programs, called the Forest Bird Initiative (FBI) and Champlain Valley Bird Initiative (CVBI). Both programs engage landowners in managing their land to protect a number of priority bird species in the region. Through these programs, forest, shrubland, and grass landowners are given the tools they need to make decisions about land management that benefit both the land and nesting birds.

Breeding bird surveys have shown that the forests and early successional grasslands and shrublands of Vermont and Northern New England are a globally important resource for birds throughout the hemisphere. However, many relatively common birds in Vermont are still declining throughout their range. Rather than waiting for species such as the Canada Warbler, Eastern Towhee, or Bobolink to become vulnerable and end up on a threatened or endangered species list, it is important to take action to proactively conserve birds in the core of their range. The advantage to this approach is that low-cost management activities, education, and monitoring can help maintain or increase the populations of these birds.

Audubon Vermont's programs provide technical assistance to individual forest and early successional habitat (grassland and shrubland) landowners at no charge. The key to both initiatives is providing landowners with the information they need to make positive conservation decisions and then working with them to make those decisions happen on the ground. Audubon works in partnership with NRCS and informs and helps



The Golden Winged Warbler is losing habitat, in part because of reforestation. Photo by John Hannan



The Bobolink is a distinctive bird of open grasslands. Photo by Allan Strong

landowners enroll in cost-sharing programs that maintain and enhance bird habitat on their land.

Some of the management recommendations that Audubon VT biologists recommend to landowners are: altering hayland cutting schedules to accommodate nesting birds, maintaining and enhancing shrubland habitat, and creating small openings in forests that enhance the overall diversity and vertical structure of the forest. NRCS will share the costs of many of these practices through its Wildlife Habitat and Environmental Quality Incentive Programs.

*This article is the first in a two-part series. Stay tuned to the winter issue for some real-life success stories of working with landowners in partnership with NRCS and Audubon Vermont. Margaret Fowle is a Conservation Biologist for Audubon Vermont. She can be reached at [mfowle@audubon.org](mailto:mfowle@audubon.org)*

More information on protecting and creating bird habitat can be found at:  
<http://www.audubon.org>, or you can find the chapter for your area by going to:  
<http://www.audubon.org/search-by-zip>

For more on the NRCS Wildlife Habitat and Environmental Quality Incentive Programs please visit:  
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**NEW FARMERS**

# FarmStart: Continuing the Tradition of Agriculture in the Northeast

By Kristie Schmitt

Starting a new business in any industry comes with challenges, but new businesses in agriculture are presented with an additional slate of obstacles. Many startup farms don't have the capital needed for upfront expenses, such as land, equipment, seed, etc. New farms often lack the credit history, repayment ability and/or collateral, so investors and lending institutions are often hesitant to invest in their startup business. Furthermore, any new business lacks sufficient business knowledge, time management skills, confidence and marketing resources to efficiently launch and run a new business.

Farm Credit has a long-term commitment of helping young individuals get started in farming. As a result, five years ago, Farm Credit East initiated a program to support talented, hardworking individuals entering agriculture. This program is today known as FarmStart, LLP. Now celebrating its fifth year, FarmStart has invested more than \$3 million to 75 participants, some of whom have graduated and moved on to traditional Farm Credit loans.

The first initiative of its kind in the United States, FarmStart helps to fulfill Farm Credit East's vision of a vibrant, entrepreneurial agricultural community by giving strong, new entrants a healthy start. Through FarmStart, LLP, Farm Credit East recognizes the need to invest in the future of farming and agriculture in the Northeast.

"Our farm is in an area where we will probably never be able to own the land we farm, so we have no land for collateral," explains Ian Calder-Piedmonte of Balsam Farms, LLC in Amagansett, N.Y. "Without collateral, we couldn't obtain the financing we needed to build our business. That's where

FarmStart came in and helped us as new growers." FarmStart invests working capital in northeast agriculture ventures that show promise of success. This investment functions the same as an operating line of credit. It is intended to provide the critical last dollar of funding to overcome the timing mismatch that makes it difficult for true startup farming operations to generate working capital.

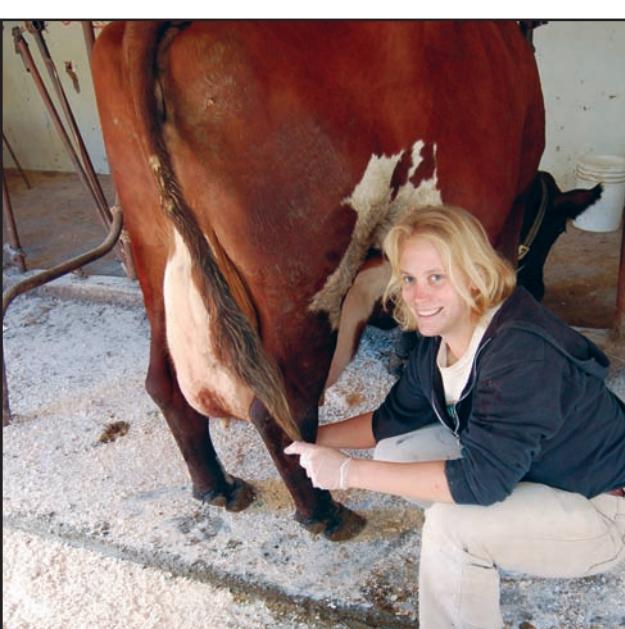
"When I got started with FarmStart, I was already a year into my business," says Terri Lawton of Oake Knoll Ayrshires (OKA) in Foxboro, Mass. "My business was expanding due to demand, but I needed money to buy hay for the winter. I didn't have enough of the quality hay I needed in order to expand the business, so I called Farm Credit." FarmStart funds allowed Terri to increase her herd to 20 milk cows and purchase quality western hay and glass milk bottles.

FarmStart's working capital investment is limited to \$50,000 with a minimum interest only for five years and principal due in full in five years. This investment helps recipients learn the discipline and skills of effective cash flow management as they develop a successful track record of credit use.

A FarmStart advisor works with each recipient. This advisor provides substantial consulting and financial planning to help young farmers stay on track toward achieving their business objectives and establishing a positive business and credit history.

"Working with someone who understands my business and my financials were important to me; and that's just the quality service FarmStart provided" says Zachary Heiken of Heiken Farms in Perkintown, N.J. "FarmStart provided the additional money I needed to allow my business to grow during the early years."

The final component of FarmStart is the required business plan. All FarmStart applicants are required to submit a business plan along with their application. This plan will help organize the new entrepreneur's mission and business goals as well as define how to distribute their FarmStart funds. The business plan will serve as a roadmap for the first few years of their startup business.



Terri Lawton, Oake Knoll Ayrshires, Foxboro, Mass.  
Photo by Custis Drown

"FarmStart allowed us the financial flexibility to learn about cash flow and sales fluxes during our first few years in business. Thanks to FarmStart we are now in a better position to project expenses and balance our budget" Bruce Schader of Wake Robin Farms in Jordan, NY explains of the required business plan.

Any beginning farmer, fisherman, forestry producer, farm related business owners and/or cooperative with great promise for success, but a minimal track record to date and limited financial resources is eligible to apply to FarmStart. Candidates are either transitioning into agriculture from another occupation or pursuing nontraditional agricultural businesses, many with a creative agricultural idea or niche. Candidates have at least two years of relevant experience and are in the early startup phase of operation or making major changes in the first several years. The applicant must be an independent enterprise and cannot be affiliated with an established operation.

FarmStart allows new producers to get their business off the ground. "Knowing there are funds available through the FarmStart program has helped me to stay calm in financial situations" proclaims FarmStart participant Marcy O'Connell of Holland Farm,



Zachary Heiken, Heiken Farms, Perkintown, N

Photo by Craig Muhlbauer, Farm Credit East

LLC in Milford, NH. "The staff at Farm Credit East are extremely knowledgeable in farming, and knowing they are just a phone call away has allowed me to stay focused on my true passion, farming."

To apply to FarmStart, an applicant must submit a FarmStart application, current balance sheet, income statement, monthly cash flow budget and a business plan, along with two personal references. For more information on the program and how to apply, please visit [FarmCreditEast.com](http://FarmCreditEast.com).

*Kristie Schmitt is Knowledge Exchange & Communications Specialist at Farm Credit East, ACA in Enfield, CT. She can be reached at [Kristie.Schmitt@FarmCreditEast.com](mailto:Kristie.Schmitt@FarmCreditEast.com) or (800) 562-2235.*



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