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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

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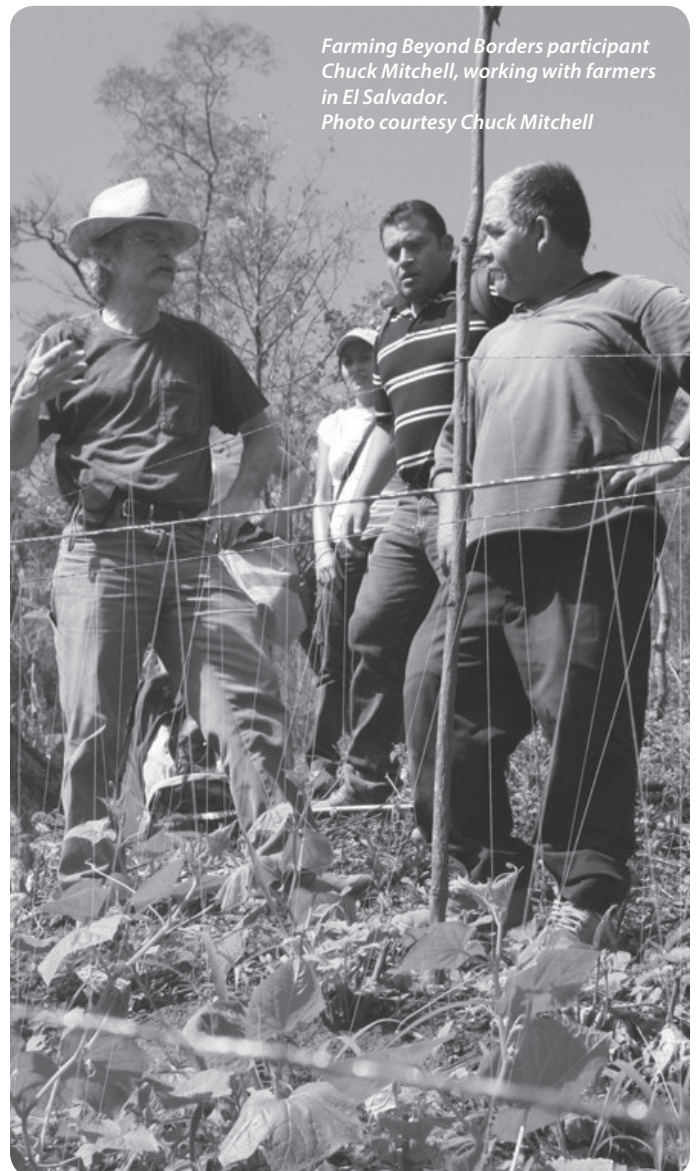
# Farmer Mentors Return from Farming Beyond Borders Trip to El Salvador

by Liza Elman, NOFA Vermont intern and Enid Wonnacott, NOFA Vermont Executive Director

In January, NOFA-VT partnered with two organizations, Winrock International and Fundesyram, on a farmer to farmer program providing training and technical assistance to help farmers in El Salvador learn about organic agriculture production and marketing. Chuck Mitchell, Patrick Sullivan, Howard Prussack, and Jim Ryan provided support in organic vegetable production this winter. Another group will travel in April, focusing on dairy and cheese production and small ruminant animal husbandry.

This trip marked the first project of NOFA-VT's Farming Beyond Borders Program, which was developed by NOFA board member and organic farmer Mimi Arnstein of Wellspring Farm. Its goal is to support farmer to farmer exchanges between Vermont organic farmers and farmers beyond Vermont's borders in order to increase production, improve environmental sustainability, and strengthen financial viability via mutually beneficial relationships and cross-cultural exchange. Winrock International is a non-profit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to increase economic opportunity, sustain natural resources, and protect the environment. Fundesyram is a nonprofit working for socioeconomic development and environmental restoration in El Salvador.

NOFA intern Liza Elman interviewed Chuck Mitchell to talk about his experience. Chuck was a NOFA board member prior to leaving Vermont for Ontario last year. He is now a part-time farmer growing certified organic sunflowers, soybeans, some grains, hay, and pasture, as well as four Boer goats



*Farming Beyond Borders participant Chuck Mitchell, working with farmers in El Salvador.  
Photo courtesy Chuck Mitchell*

Continued on page 3 »



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## Spring Thoughts from Enid

I always appreciate the opportunities in the winter to see friends and members at conferences and producer meetings, culminating in the winter conference. This winter, I so enjoyed the additional opportunity to connect with members through interviews we held as part of our strategic planning process. With the help of facilitator Peter Forbes, the board and staff have taken part in a year-long strategic planning process. Many of you attended one of our focus groups and on-farm NOFAvore socials last summer, or replied to our on-line survey. We were able to get more detailed information by conducting stakeholder interviews this winter, where board and staff members interviewed a diversity of members and non-members. I did not anticipate what a valuable process this could be and how much I would learn about how others value our work.

A principal theme that emerged is the need to clarify local vs. organic vs. certified organic. Whereas many members feel as if it is our unique responsibility to revalue certified organic in the marketplace and that “non-certified farms are riding the coattails of the organic movement and of certified organic farms,” others feel as if “third party regulation is not needed – in order to stay relative and competitive, we need to promote the need for a more authentic experience with food and farmers – regulation does not promote authenticity.” Even though there may be real and perceived tension between these marketing labels, one stakeholder reminds us that “we are all on the side of good.”

After the interview process, the board and staff then retreated in the end of January to share what we all heard. In a day of short presentations in the vein of This I Believe, board and staff shared the wisdom of our members. We started the day with a panel of our 3 outgoing board members, Josh Brown, Regina Beidler and Helen Whybrow, presenting on “*What’s happening*

*in the field of sustainable agriculture in VT that should most inform our organization?*”

Josh Brown, Senior Communications Officer at UVM, expressed that “NOFA-VT lives in dynamic tension” and referenced the power of story telling. “Human beings are story tellers – we are *Homo narrativists* – with a need and a desire to tell stories. We need to tell our stories more often and better. Authentic marketing is good storytelling.”

Regina Beidler, dairy farmer and Organic Valley Farmer Ambassador, has been an important spokesperson “for the cows” throughout her tenure on the board. She stressed that “conventional and organic dairy farmers are more alike than they are different, and we need our community to continue to support that mutual understanding.” She specifically discussed the need to work together to understand the threats of genetic modification, specifically of alfalfa. “It is a valuable forage for organic dairy producers and there are fewer and fewer non-GMO varieties available.”

Helen Whybrow, from Knoll Farm, posed an important question for us all to sit with throughout the day: “As the food system moves forward with momentum from many players and diverse interests, how does NOFA continue to have a farmer’s face, and how do we remain inclusive and a farming resource to all while also stepping up to defend and promote what is at our founding core: organic land and organic food?”

We will now spend a second full day retreat in March to discuss all of these themes and challenges, and complete goals, objectives and activities towards our new five-year plan. Thank you all for your help in this process!

**NOFA Vermont is an organization of farmers, gardeners, & consumers working to promote an economically viable and ecologically sound Vermont food system for the benefit of current and future generations.**

**Winter Conference, continued from cover**

for meat. In addition, Chuck continues to work for NOFA-VT as an organic certification inspector.

Mitchell partnered with a Fundesyram employee, Nelson Valasque, who he traveled with the whole trip. Fundesyram has been working since 2009 in the production of organic vegetables in three areas of El Salvador. They work with a total of 650 mostly subsistence farmers, a third of whom are organic and the others in transition to organic production. All of the fertilizers, manures, pest and disease controls are made by the farmers themselves using local inputs. Most of the farmers are growing traditional crops of corn, beans and squash, but since El Salvador imports 80% of their vegetables, there is growing interest in vegetable production for local sales.

The first week in El Salvador, Chuck and Nelson visited a dozen farms to

identify problems and challenges. The second week they returned to the farms with a two-hour talk catered specifically to each farm's challenges and to discuss strategies to improve the overall system.

"The predominant problem the farmers were struggling with was soil fertility, one of the foundations of organic agriculture," noted Chuck. "Many farmers wanted help with problems rooted in soil fertility like insect and fungus management." Mitchell realized that the farmers he visited suffered from many of the same insects and fungi that Vermont farmers do, including late blight, striped cucumber beetle, tarnished plant bug, as well as the imported cabbage moth.

When asked how a farmer can best prepare for a trip such as this, Mitchell suggested, "Go with an open mind. The worst thing someone can do is go on a trip like this with a

predetermined idea of how they can help. It is impossible to create a plan for improvements and change until site visits have been made and the challenges have been assessed."

One of the next NOFA Vermont Farming Beyond Borders Program projects being developed is a farmer to farmer learning exchange with Équiterre, a non profit organization based in Montreal. Équiterre supports a Community Supported Agriculture Network with over 30,000 people per year partnering with over 100 farms in 13 regions of Quebec. Together with Équiterre, NOFA Vermont will create a joint learning community for CSA farmers in Vermont and CSA farmers in Quebec. ☘

*For more information:*

<http://nofavt.org/mentorship-TA/beyond-borders>

<http://winrock.org/>

<http://www.fundesyram.info/>



*Photo courtesy Chuck Mitchell*



# GMO Labeling Bill Passes House Ag Committee

By Dave Rogers, NOFA Vermont Policy Advisor

On March 1, after weeks of testimony, the Vermont House Agriculture Committee voted to approve H.112, *An act relating to the labeling of foods produced with genetic engineering*. H.112 requires, with several exceptions, that foods sold in Vermont made with GE ingredients bear a label to inform consumers of this fact.

The Committee's decision was applauded by the thousands of Vermonters and dozens of businesses and organizations who are participating in the Vermont Right To Know GMOs Coalition's campaign to enact labeling legislation. The Coalition is a collaborative project of NOFA-VT, Rural Vermont and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG).

The Committee's task was very challenging and focused on examination of diverse health, environmental and economic aspects of GE foods and crops. It heard testimony from scientists, legal experts, state and federal officials, Vermont food producers and organizations representing farmers, citizens, food manufacturers, and biotechnology companies, among others. It reviewed legal briefs, published scientific studies and federal regulations.

## The Committee's Conclusions

At the conclusion of its work the Committee found that, "... the State should require food produced with genetic engineering to be labeled as such in order to serve the interests of the State ...to prevent inadvertent consumer deception, prevent potential risks to human health, promote food safety, protect cultural and religious practices, protect the environment, and promote economic development."



H.112 includes a comprehensive set of findings developed by the Committee. Among them:

- Up to 80 percent of the processed foods sold in the United States are at least partially produced from genetic engineering.
- There have been no long-term or epidemiologic studies in the United States that examine the safety of human consumption of genetically engineered foods.
- The FDA does not independently test the safety of genetically engineered foods. Instead, manufacturers may submit safety research and studies, the majority of which the manufacturers finance or conduct.
- Independent studies in laboratory animals indicate that the ingestion of genetically engineered foods may lead to health problems such as gastrointestinal damage, liver and kidney damage, reproductive problems, immune system interference, and allergic responses

The full text of H.112 can be found on the Vermont Legislature's webpage. A similar labeling bill, S.89, has been introduced in the Vermont Senate but as of this writing has not been considered by the Senate Agriculture Committee.

## Next Steps

With the House Agriculture Committee's vote, H.112 has cleared a major legislative hurdle. But there is a challenging road ahead in the legislative process. At the time this is being written, it is expected that it will be referred to the House Judiciary Committee for its consideration. If approved at the committee level and by the full House, it will move to the Senate for committee hearings. Approval by both Houses will bring the bill to the Governor's desk for signing.

At every point along the way, H.112 will face strong and well-funded opposition from interest groups, including the biotechnology industry, who are working hard in the legislature and beyond to kill it. We anticipate that an industry-funded public media disinformation campaign about the bill may be launched by opponents as the bill moves forward.

The ultimate success of this legislation will require every Vermonter who cares about this issue to demonstrate support for labeling legislation in their communities and let their legislators know that they want and expect them to support H.112 and S.89.

If you have not done so already, please visit the GMO Action Center at the Vermont Right To Know GMO's website ([vtrighttoknow.org](http://vtrighttoknow.org)) to find out how you can get involved and sign the 2013 Right To Know petition so that you can stay abreast of developments and time-sensitive grassroots action. 🐾

For more information:

- Dave Rogers, NOFA Policy Advisor ([dave@nofavt.org](mailto:dave@nofavt.org))
- <http://www.vtrighttoknow.org>
- <http://leg.state.vt.us>



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# 21st Century Innovation, 19th Century Technology

By Maria Buteux Reade, NOFA Vermont member

*The barge floated down Lake Champlain, bound for the Hudson River. Even loaded with freight, the boat moved steadily at three to four knots in the fresh northwest breeze. The captain trimmed the canvas sails and checked the sparkling water before him. He had to pick up cargo – black beans, apples, and turnips – at Shoreham and then make his way down the Champlain Canal to Fort Edward in New York State. At this pace, the 300 mile trip to New Amsterdam Market in lower Manhattan would take about a week.*

Sound like the 1800s? If all goes accordingly, this scene will unfold in September 2013. The Vermont Sail Freight Project, a 19th century plan updated for the 21st century, was concocted by an innovative dreamer named Erik Andrus. A self-professed river rat, Andrus grew up on the Susquehanna River near Binghamton, New York. Shortly after graduating from high school, Erik canoed 130 miles along that river, an experience that informed his current dream. In recent years, he has harbored a fantasy of transporting grain and non-perishable farm goods to market in a raft or barge. He began floating this concept past various people who seemed captivated. In October 2012, Andrus met with Matt Schlein, Director of the Willowell Foundation in Monkton, and explained his proposal: to build a cargo barge and transport Vermont goods to markets along the lower Hudson River and into Manhattan.

Schlein liked the concept and offered Willowell's support. The 501(c)3 foundation connects community members with the environment through land-based programs and activities. For example, Willowell sponsors an alternative program for area high school seniors who seek an



Erik and a 1/12 scale model of the barge on the streets of New York City.

experiential education. Starting in early March, about twenty students will help construct a wooden barge, assisted by community members who have boat building experience. Construction should be completed by June and the boat will hit the water soon thereafter. “We are deliberately using common materials such as plywood and fiberglass. I want people to see that this is a relatively simple design that can be built without a naval yard or much experience.” Of course, Andrus himself possesses construction skills after ten years as a renovation contractor, and he has some basic boat drafting background. He will serve as lead coordinator of the building process, and Matthew Wright of Brattleboro has offered to serve as the project's sailmaker.

Andrus's design of this flat-bottomed wooden barge was inspired by a boat he found on the Internet. Dave Zeiger, a boat builder and blogger who lives in Alaska, built an ultra-low cost plywood boat called a “trilaboat.” Zeiger lives aboard this bare-bones cargo vessel. Andrus was captivated by its simplicity and functionality. “It may not be the prettiest thing on the water but it works.”

Essentially, the cargo boat is just a box with one curve on the bow and one on the stern. For his own design, Andrus added a few more curves. “Our barge is a hybrid of Dave's boat and others I have found through my research.”

Andrus will name this first barge “Ceres” to honor the Roman goddess of grain and agriculture. The boat will measure 36 feet long x 8 feet wide, will be sail-powered but have a small motor on board in case of emergency, and can hold up to 8 tons of cargo. The total budget for construction is around \$15,000, and money is being raised through grants and donations, including a crowdfunding campaign slated to begin in March. Andrus points out, “We are not using high quality marine wood or special fiberglass. This will be a working boat and should last about ten years. That's a good life expectancy for a working boat. And by that time, the boat should have paid for itself ten times over!”

Andrus sees this as a pragmatic, functional vessel – a tool, not a precious status symbol. There will be two crew on board, a captain and a

**Continued on page 7 »**



mate. The boat will run from April to November, based on the seasonal schedule for the nine locks along the water route between Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. The average speed will be three or four knots, approximately three miles per hour. Some days will be faster if the wind cooperates while others could be a dead standstill.

### **Setting Sail**

The first voyage is slated for September. If successful, Andrus and his crew hope to make one trip each month. Six per year is a reasonable goal. "Our last run each November could be Christmas trees and maple syrup for the holidays," said Andrus. Round trip from Burlington to Red Hook (Manhattan) should take approximately one month, including multiple stops and docking time. "That pace is a little faster than Henry Hudson travelled in Half Moon back in 1609, but at least we know our route and won't get lost!"

Impractical risk or noble experiment? Is the Vermont Sail Freight Project a feasible alternative or just a publicity stunt? Andrus listed the common criticisms: "People say we should focus on rail transport. Shipping by water makes the product more expensive. But we used to move goods around our region by boat, so..." Andrus wants to raise the dialogue about developing resilient regional food systems, including transportation of goods. "Part of my job as director of this initiative is to be an evangelist for post-petroleum transport." He questions why we need to ship non-perishable goods such as maple syrup or dried beans at 75 mph on a highway.

Vermont Sail Freight Project does not pose serious competition to standard road freight, but Andrus believes it does have the makings of

an economically viable model. This venture also has significant educational and demonstration value. Time and public response will determine whether it succeeds or fails. Andrus suggests that his project could stimulate a farmer-owned shipping and marketing cooperative where the farmers own the cargo vessels and sailors and captains will work for the farmers, transporting their goods.

At this point, a number of farmers and producers have committed to supplying non-perishable goods. Products must require no refrigeration and be shelf-stable for at least ten days. In the future, he may incorporate insulated sections of the cargo which could be cooled with dry ice. Reaction from farmers he has contacted has been positive, and people want to get their product on this vessel. Bill Suhr of Champlain Orchard has pledged six tons of apples, Spencer Blackwell of Elmer Farm in East Middlebury has committed black beans, Eugenie Doyle of Last Resort Farm in Monkton will provide root vegetables and winter squash, and Will Stevens of Shoreham's Golden Russet Farm has offered turnips. According to Andrus, "This venture reminded Will of a farm he considered buying years back. He had a similar vision of sailing his vegetables up to Burlington." The barge can make stops to pick up product at Shoreham, Ferrisburgh, Vergennes, and Essex, NY. In the future, the barge may travel to the Champlain Islands and Franklin county.

In terms of deliveries, Andrus has been making contacts with people in river towns including Albany, Troy, Hudson, Rhinebeck, Kingston, and Tarrytown. All he needs is a place to dock where the public can approach. If a town allows it, Andrus may offer an impromptu riverside market. The ultimate destination is

the bustling New Amsterdam Market in lower Manhattan. Most sales will be made in advance via the Internet. People will order like a CSA and pick up their goods when the boat arrives. In a perfect 21st century twist, customers can log on to the vessel's website and track the boat's progress via Google maps or perhaps a Twitter feed. A unique blend of old and new: simple wind-powered boat with the latest wireless technology for communication.

Andrus believes the barge's simplicity and story will catch people's attention and generate conversation. Severine Fleming, the filmmaker who produced *The Greenhorns*, a documentary about forward-thinking new farmers, is a proponent of the project, as is Robert LaValva, founder and president of the New Amsterdam Market in the South Street Seaport district. These people are helping to spread the word and make connections for the project to succeed. Especially after the destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy, resiliency is in New Yorkers' minds and more people are open to innovation.

Word of the project has travelled across the country. A company called Sail Transport Network based in California contacted Andrus. The group is working with a similar cargo operation in France which plans to sail a barge across the Atlantic. "Sail Transport Network may broker a deal with us: we load up eight tons of maple syrup and sail it down to Manhattan; the French vessel sails across the Atlantic with eight tons of wine. We exchange our Vermont syrup for their French wine..."

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More information:  
<http://vermontsailfreightproject.wordpress.com>  
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# Starting Medicinal Herbs from Seed

by Lisa Weiss, Clinical Herbalist Intern at Vermont Center for Integrative Herbalism

If you're already growing vegetables from seed, the jump from carrots to chamomile isn't so big! Most medicinal herbs are not as domesticated as vegetables, however, so there are some tricks to getting them started.

Start **German Chamomile** (*Matricaria recutita*) indoors 2-3 months before your frost-free date. Chamomile's tiny seeds need light to germinate, so sprinkle them on top of well-drained soil and pat them down gently. After about 10 days you'll have baby chamomile plants, and 2-3 weeks before the last frost you can harden them off and transplant them into your garden.

**Angelica** (*Angelica archangelica*) seeds need to be chilled for 3-6 weeks before planting—a process called stratification. One way to stratify

seeds is to refrigerate them in a plastic bag with a little bit of moist sand. After stratifying, press the seeds into moist soil and do not cover. Always buy fresh angelica seeds or keep them in an airtight container in the fridge over the winter—they lose their viability quickly!

**Calendula** (*Calendula officinalis*) seeds, which also lose their viability quickly, can be direct seeded into the garden 2-3 weeks before your frost-free date. Lightly cover the seeds with soil—I like to “rake” them in with my fingers—and they should germinate in 5-15 days.

**Lemon Balm** (*Melissa officinalis*) seeds do best if they are scarified, though scarification is not necessary. Scarification is the process of “nicking” the seed coat so that the

seed can absorb water more easily. A simple way to do this is to scratch the seeds with sandpaper or an emory board. Start lemon balm seeds indoors 2-3 months before the last frost in warm soil (70° F) and do not cover. Seedlings can be hardened off and transplanted into the garden 2-3 weeks before your frost-free date.

**Hyssop** (*Hyssopus officinalis*) is unique in its soil requirements. Because it is a Mediterranean plant like thyme and rosemary, add a little extra sand to your potting mix before starting hyssop indoors. Start seeds 2-3 months before the last frost and lightly cover with soil. Harden off and transplant a few weeks before your frost-free date. 🌿

More info: <http://www.vtherbcenter.org/>

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# Ask Cally

Dear Cally,

While filling out my application for organic certification this year, I noticed that the certification cost-share reimbursement program was described as having limited funds. I also heard from a neighboring farmer that although she submitted her paperwork on time, she was not able to receive reimbursement last year as the funds had run out. Can you please explain whether I can count on receiving reimbursement funding for my certification fees for the 2013 growing season?

Sincerely,  
Pinched in Putney

Dear Pinched,

Since the implementation of the National Organic Program in 2002, organic producers have received financial assistance to help cover the costs of certification. Certified organic producers are eligible to be reimbursed up to 75% of their certification costs up to \$750 on an annual basis. In Vermont there are two almost identical programs that provide these reimbursement funds.

The National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) is authorized by the Farm Bill and was last reauthorized for 22 million dollars in 2008. In Vermont, this program reimburses processors and handlers. Unfortunately, this program has not been refunded in 2013; therefore, until further notice, there are no funds available through the NOCCSP. In Vermont, that means that processors and handlers do not have funding secured for the 2013 season to reimburse the cost of certification.

Vermont is one of 15 states that also receives cost share funding through an additional program, known as Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA). AMA differs from NOCCSP in that it is exclusively for farmers and can not include any funding for processors or handlers. This program **has** been refunded for 2013. However, for the first time in 2012, funding was not sufficient to reimburse all the farmers who applied.

Therefore it is important that producers submit their reimbursement paperwork to the VT Agency of Agriculture in a timely manner to optimize the chances of receiving funding. To verify that the paperwork has been received, producers may call Charlene Flinn, Administrative Assistant, at 802-828-3403 10 days

after sending the paperwork.

Efforts to strengthen cost-share programs and restore cost-share funding for processors and handlers are underway in Washington. If these programs are important to your business, please share your story with Senators Leahy and Sanders and Representative Welch.

Regards,  
Cally




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# Celebrating Innovation at the Winter Conference

By Olga Moriarty, Winter Conference Coordinator, and Vera Simon-Nobes, Assistant Winter Conference Coordinator

This year's conference took place February 15 -17 in Burlington, VT, and brought together over 1250 organic farmers, value-added producers, homesteaders, gardeners, agriculture policy makers, food distributors, and organic enthusiasts, from Vermont, New England and Canada. (Hooray for all those Canadian new-comers!) Together they seized an opportunity to make connections, network, and share ideas on important topics such as climate change, value-added markets, food distribution, food access, farm to institution, farm resiliency, school/community gardens, soil health, and agriculture and consumer policy.

The conference theme, Generations of Innovation, highlighted both the innovative work of our most beloved food producers and the younger farmers, gardeners, and homesteaders who continue the work of those who've plowed the way. Innovation was apparent in the workshops, the conversations taking place at breaks and lunch, and the companies and organizations in the Exhibitor's Hall. From Friday's full-day Intensive workshops to Sunday's Strafford Organic Creamery Ice Cream Social, we hope that you, too, felt the power in being surrounded by innovators young and old.

For those who missed the event, here are some highlights from the more than 80 workshops offered: Ben Falk of Whole Systems Design gave a talk on "The Resilient Farm and Homestead;" Bay Hammond of Doolittle Farm in Shoreham, VT, discussed predator challenges, disease, breed choices and answered all sorts of questions on broiler and layer production; veteran farmer Jack Manix of Walker Farm gave a popular workshop on producing "odd" crops



These conference-goers found their Badge Buddies! Photo by Nicole Dehne

(kiwi-berries, ginger root and sweet potatoes); Adam Montri, co-owner of Ten Hens Farm and Michigan State University's Hoophouse Outreach Specialist and Corie Pierce of Bread and Butter Farm delivered a double-session technical workshop on winter tunnel production, with special focus on economics.

Workshops are the meat of our conference, and we are very pleased to see such acclaim from our attendee evaluations for the depth and quality of the sessions. Unfortunately, not everyone was able to attend the workshops they had hoped for due to some inaccurate room capacity figures and record-high attendance. A couple sessions were uncomfortably full and even reached maxed-out status. Please know, we will continue to work to avoid over-crowded sessions and keep our conference feeling "just right" despite our growing numbers.

This year, we're pleased to offer a handful of recordings on our conference website ([www.nofavt.org/conference](http://www.nofavt.org/conference)). Currently, this includes presenter Ben Falk's talk on resiliency (mentioned above), our TED-inspired talks and Saturday's keynote by Clara Coleman. Some workshop handouts are also available.

Conference highlights beyond the workshops include the Community Art Project, facilitated by Burlington artist and activist, Bonnie Acker (see page 14 for more details); the 2nd Annual Seed Swap hosted by our friends at High Mowing Organic Seeds; an Exhibitor Fair & Saturday evening reception that hosted more than 70 local ag-based businesses and organizations, along with delicious appetizers prepared by Sugarsnap Catering of Burlington; and my personal favorite – the new Buddy Badge system where attendees had an opportunity to find one or two "buddies" via name badge identification, thus winning prizes (and making new friends).

As coordinator for the conference, another component that sometimes is shadowed by workshops, theme, keynote, etc. – a key ingredient to a NOFA event – is the FOOD! This was our fourth year working with host caterer, UVM Sodexo. We've engaged in a lengthy process helping develop Sodexo's ability to source local and organic food – and I'm very proud with our partnership.

Chef John and his team offer the conference a seasonally-appropriate

>> **Continued on page 17**

# Spring 2013 New Members

NOFA welcomes the following members who recently joined through the NOFA Winter Conference, Direct Marketing Conference, NOFA Bulk Order, website, VOF certification applications, and other events. Thank you!

## New & Renewing Business Members

- ADAK Systems, NY
- American Society of Dowers, Danville
- Arethusa Farm, Burlington
- Aurora Farms, Charlotte
- Birch Hill Farm, S. Woodstock
- Brattleboro Area Farmers' Market, Brattleboro
- Butternut Mountain Farm, Morrisville
- Cobb Hill Cheese, Hartland
- Consider Bardwell Farm, W. Pawlet
- Dale Aines Farm, Pawlet
- Davis Family Maple, Underhill
- Dwight Miller & Sons Orchards, E. Dummerston
- Eastview Farm, E. Hardwick
- Eden's Echo Forest Management, Eden Mills
- Farm & Wilderness Foundation, Inc, Plymouth
- Farmers to You, Calais
- Farming: The Journal of NE Agriculture, St. Johnsbury
- Farmstand at the Cobble, Monkton
- Foggy Meadow Farm, Benson
- Four Seasons Dermatology, Colchester
- Gagne Maple, Swanton
- Gaudette's Maple, Enosburg Falls
- GlenAlli & Sons, Inc., St. Johnsbury
- GotWeeds?, Royalton
- Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Waterbury
- Green Mountain Compost, Williston
- Green Mountain Distillers, LLC, Stowe
- Groton Growers Farmers' Market, Groton
- Guerrilla Grown Produce, Westminster Station
- Healthy Living Market & Café, S. Burlington
- Henderson's Tree & Garden Services, White River Jct
- Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home, Manchester
- Laraway Youth & Family Services, Johnson
- Layne's Garden Design, Montpelier
- Mad River Food Hub, Waitsfield
- Merck Forest & Farmland Center, Rupert
- Metta Earth Farm & Gardens, Lincoln
- Minor Family Maple, Jeffersonville
- Mountain Meadows Farm, Cornwall
- On Farm Focus, S. Royalton
- Open Heart Farm, Burlington
- Plainfield Coop, Plainfield
- Progressive Asset Management, Wells
- Purple Mountain Organics, MD
- Rock Dust Local, LLC, Bridport
- Salvation Farms, Morrisville
- Sauerkraut Vermont, NH
- Sugar Hill Sugarworks, E. Fairfield
- Sunnyside Dairy, Orleans
- The Corse Family Dairy, LLC, Whitingham
- The Farm at South Village, Shelburne
- Two Bad Cats, LLC, Rutland
- Valley View Farm, Shelburne
- Vermont Law School, S. Royalton
- Vermont's Local Banquet Magazine, Saxton's River
- VT Center for Independent Living, Montpelier
- Wheeled Hand Tool Systems, Woodstock
- Windstone Farm, Williston
- Winter Garden Project L3C, Burlington
- Wood's Edge Farm, Greensboro Bend

## New Members

- Kristyn Achilich, Winooski
- Danielle Allen, Burlington
- Lise Amarasekera, QC
- Kim Bean, GA
- Karin Bellemare, NY
- Darryl Benjamin, Hyde Park
- Richard Berkfield, Williamsville
- Sarah Bhimani, Burlington
- Black Bear Sugarworks, Brattleboro
- Archie Blankers, QC
- Joanne Bourbeau, Jacksonville
- Nathaniel Brooks, Guilford
- Tobin Brown, MA
- Patty Brushett, Richmond
- Sean Buchanan, Stowe
- Pam Bullock, Brattleboro
- Elizabeth Castle, Derby
- Ari Chapin, Montpelier
- Carolyn & Raymond Chauvin, Hyde Park
- Melissa Chestnut-Tangerman, Middletown Springs
- Gaelan Chutter-Ames, S. Hero
- Sandra Cooch, Braintree
- Patti Cook, S. Burlington
- Eileen Dague, Granville
- Sarah Damsell, Orleans
- Vincent DeSantis, NY
- Cheryl Dorschner, Williston
- Keith Drinkwine, Poultney
- Ethan Dufault, MA
- J.C. Earle, Jericho
- Caitlin Elberson, PA
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- Andrea Evey, Bennington
- Sandra Fairbank, MA
- Diana Ferguson, Essex Jct.
- Caleb Fisher, E. Hardwick
- Jacqueline Fontaine, Essex Jct.
- Kristin Freeman, Northfield
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- Matthew Gedeon, Fairfax
- Good Heart Homestead, Worcester
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- Joe Nelson, Bristol
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- Reed Olsen, Barton
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- Julian Post, Hardwick
- Pamela Purinton, North Hero
- Beth Quarles, Shelburne
- Cynthia & Giovanni Quilici, Randolph
- Raven Ridge/Flowers by Olga, Richford
- Luc Reid, Williston
- Brittany Retzlaff, UT
- Heidi Rich, Lowell
- Becca Rimmel, Williston
- Suzanne Rubotzky, RI
- Kristen Schmit, Middletown Springs
- Chris Schroth, Burlington
- Sigrun Schwarze, Montpelier
- Timmy Sheble-Hall, Burlington
- Sue & John Smart-Howard, Williston
- Carter Smith, Williston
- Eric Sorkin, Cambridge
- Pamela Stefanek, Benson
- Kelly Sweeney, Waltham
- Jeff Taylor, Cornwall
- Andrea Thorpe, Jericho
- Robin Tichnor, MA
- Ryan Torres, S. Burlington
- Jake Torrey, Bradford
- Katharina Ullmann, CA
- Kate Van Cantfort, KS
- Hannah Viens, Brattleboro
- Lyndon Virkler, Waitsfield
- Michael Warner, Burlington
- Brent & Sarah White, NY
- Donald Wood, Lunenburg
- Gwyn Worthington, Island Pond
- Sonia Zuk, NH

# Spring 2013 Program Supporters

Thank you to all the members and friends of NOFA for your generous year-end and annual appeal donations, which brought in over \$63,640.

We also thank you for your contributions to the NOFA Winter Conference scholarship, which raised \$600 and supported 12 conference attendees.

## Thanks to our recent donors:

- The Franklin Conklin Foundation, \$8,000 grant for general support.
- King Arthur Flour Company, Inc, \$500 for general support.
- The Hall Fund at Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program, \$500 grant for general operating expenses.
- Lawrence and Linda Hamilton, \$1,000 to support the NOFA Farm Share Program.
- Morel Family Fund, \$5,000 grant for annual giving.
- Truckenbrod Mill & Bakery, \$200, from bread sales to support technical assistance to farmers impacted by Hurricane Irene.

## Program Grants:

- Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Employee Community grant, \$25,000 for Food Access Programs.
- The High Meadows Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, \$16,000 for NOFA Vermont's Farm to Institution Phase 2 Pilot Program Implementation and \$5,000 to support the 2013 Winter Conference & workshop on farming for resiliency in a changing climate.
- Hills and Hollows Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, \$2,500 for the Farm to Community Mentor Program.
- Johnson Family Foundation of the Vermont Community Foundation, \$2,500 to support educational programs for children.
- Organic Consumer's Association, \$10,000 to support GMO advocacy work in Vermont.
- Stonyfield Farm, \$5,000 sponsorship of the VOF directory of certified farmers and processors, summer workshops, and the winter conference, and general support.
- USDA RMA Crop Insurance Grant, \$20,000 subrecipient award, grant administered through UVM for technical assistance to organic dairy and livestock producers and workshop on soil management, cropping, and animal husbandry.
- Vermont Vegetable & Berry Grower's Association, \$1,300 to help support the High Tunnel Conference.
- The Wurster Family Foundation, \$2,500 for the NOFA Farm Share Program.

# Special Thanks to our Winter Conference Sponsors!

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<b>BENEFACTORS</b>	 <p>City Market Onion River Co-op</p>	 <p>JFF JOHNSON FAMILY FOUNDATION</p>	 <p>ORGANIC VALLEY Family of Farms</p>	 <p>People's United Bank</p>
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**Contributors:** Co-op Insurance Company, Efficiency Vermont, M.S. in Sustainable Food Systems at Green Mountain College, Horizon Organic Dairy, Hunger Mountain Co-op, Johnny's Selected Seeds, New England Center for Risk Management Education, New Chapter, USDA National Institute of Food & Agriculture, Vermont Community Garden Network

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# Stories in Color: Art at the Winter Conference

by Bonnie Acker, artist, activist, and local food ally

“There’s the last one!” Bobby laughed as he glued one more frolicking pink pig into place.

Nine-year-old Juni and four-year-old Jasper stopped cutting out hot peppers, intently curious. “Can anyone find the smallest critter?” I asked. “In the house doorway?” offered another child leaning in. “Yup!” I chuckled. “But if you think it’s a house, what could we do to make it look like a barn?” “A weather vane!” exclaimed another child who went right to work shaping a pole with a look-out rooster on top.

The first of the six panels was then complete, a bright and lively scene with a farmer, a summer watermelon with seeds, tomatoes and apples, raspberries and strawberries, and a river of a hundred dancing heritage beans.

Over the span of two days, this call-and-response NOFA art-adventure flourished. Everyone had a place – for moments or for hours on end – at the table of populist creativity. From table-top-height children to folks with a lifetime of farming in their hands, people of all ages shared



the mountains of colored paper and scissors and glue – and in the process, helped give shape to some wonderful Vermont agricultural art.

“Did someone say there’s music in the clouds?” someone asked. “Well, there might well be,” I agreed. “But someone who was here earlier was suggesting a radio with notes coming out, in a barn.” Someone then laughed, “But I think there’s music in everything here!”

Skies and birds, farm-fields and

farmers, chickens and cows, bees and beans, seasonal stories came into life through shoulder-to-shoulder visiting, talking and spontaneity. Three ten-year olds found expansive favorite themes: Jess took on the suns and clouds, Noelani fashioned chickens and cows, Tovin shaped a teamster, a draft horse and a sap-sled. Nina’s purple cabbage, Sarah’s blackberries, Gaelan’s cows, Olga and Enid’s heritage-beans, the paper-shape art from so many other people, all was indeed a musical endeavor.



Photos by Enid Wonnacott; art by Bonnie Acker and conference attendees



“Every time I’ve come back here it’s felt like home,” reflected a mom who returned over and over again. Her contributions and those of everyone else just fell together with such happiness. The panels will always show what can be done when everyone’s story – and everyone’s favorite colors – are celebrated. ✨

*NOTE: We plan to reproduce these collages so that everyone can see them. Abundant appreciation to everyone who helped create them.*

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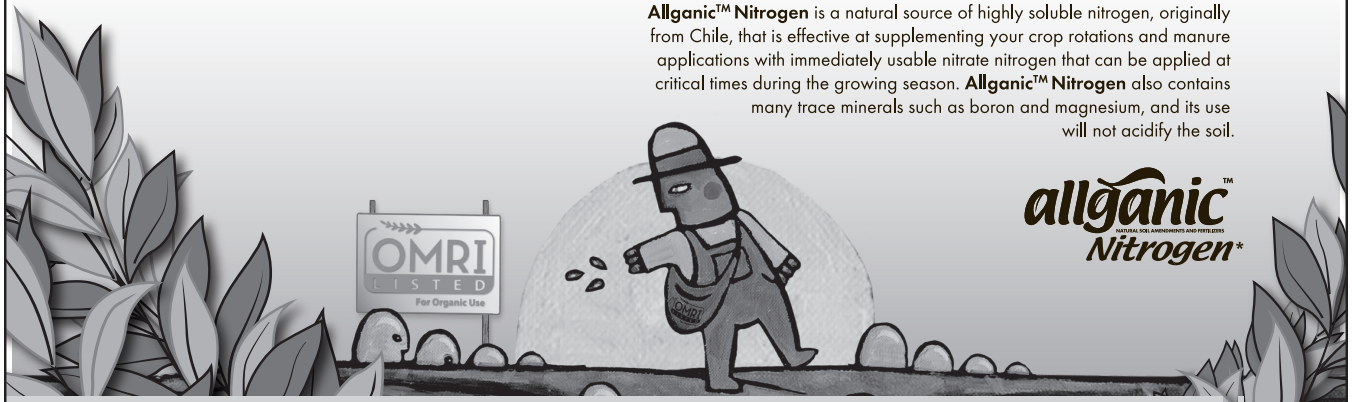
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# Spring Sting: Nettles

by Lynda Prim, NOFA Vermont Fruit & Vegetable Technical Assistance Coordinator

Stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) is the name given to common nettle, garden nettle, and hybrids of these two plants. The herb originally came from the colder regions of northern Europe and Asia and has since become widespread across the world. Stinging nettle grows well in nitrogen-rich soil, blooming between June and September, and usually reaching a height of 2 - 4 feet. The plant's stems are upright and rigid with slightly heart-shaped, finely toothed leaves that taper at the ends, and tiny yellow or pink flowers. The entire plant is covered with tiny stiff hairs, mostly on the underside of the leaves and stem, that release stinging chemicals when touched.

There is hardly a farm that doesn't have a nettle patch somewhere and nettles can be cultivated as an early spring green and grown to maturity for tea or as a medicinal herb. The plant grows well from seed or from transplants. Nettles can provide some diversity to fill out early farmers' market offerings, but it may require some marketing to educate consumers about how to use them.

If you are "stung" by nettles, the antidote is the dock plant or jewel weed which often grow conveniently in and around nettles. Aloe vera or clay mud applied to the skin also alleviate the sting of nettles. 🌿



## Cooking with Nettles

To many people, nettles are an annoying weed because of their sting. When cooked or dried, however, nettles lose their sting and become a highly nutritious green. Nettles produce a vibrant green broth or tea that is rich in vitamins and minerals. Nettles are traditionally a spring tonic and eaten as a green. When we eat them in the spring, they provide the kind of energy that animals who graze in the wild feel when they eat the first green growth of plants that emerge after the winter thaw. Early spring, April and May, when the nettle tops are tender, is the best time to eat nettles as a fresh green. At this time of year, their sting is at a minimum, but you will still need to harvest them with gloves and scissors. Cut them directly into a basket or bag to bring to the kitchen and then rinse them in a colander under cold water. Nettles can simply be steamed like any green. To add to a frittata, pasta, or topping on a pizza, blanch the nettles and quickly saute in olive oil.

### Spring Restorative Tea

- 1 tablespoon alfalfa leaf or seed
- 2 tablespoons nettle leaf
- 2 tablespoons dried oatstraw
- 1 tablespoon dried licorice

Combine the herbs in a warmed ceramic or glass teapot. Add the boiling water, cover, and let steep for 10-15 minutes. Strain, then drink throughout the day. Makes 2 cups.

### Nettle Ravioli

Puree the nettle tips and add to the pasta dough. Combine with early season spinach and ricotta for a spinach and herb filling for the ravioli.



menu chock-full of local product, and meet our budget criteria year after year. A quote from Chef John I'm particularly fond of: "Wow, this rice from Boundbrook Farm is incredible. I never thought you could grow such high quality rice in Vermont. I'm sold." Aha, another successful relationship forged at the NOFA Winter Conference. Now it's up to Sodexo and the farmer to continue the work.

Our conference provides the space to strengthen relationships and develop new ones. It offers an interpersonal learning opportunity that leaves one feeling energized and motivated to take on the next steps of our collective work.

On behalf of the staff and board at NOFA-VT, we would like to extend a huge thank you to the presenters,

sponsors, food donors, exhibitors, volunteers, special guests, and of course, the attendees who make the weekend possible. You endured some crowded rooms, you drove many hours to reach us, and you brought your warm and creative spirits to the Winter Conference. Thank you for cultivating this piece of the organic agriculture story with us. 🌱

Quilt by Bonnie Acker



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## FarmPlate.com Profiles: New Benefit for Members

*By Caitlin Gildrien, Outreach Coordinator*

FarmPlate.com is one of a few new websites that connect farmers and consumers. FarmPlate combines some of the benefits of social networking with more traditional website design to help illustrate connections in local food systems as well as assist consumers looking to purchase local food.

We are pleased to be partnering with FarmPlate to offer free upgraded profiles to NOFA Vermont members. These profiles allow farms and food businesses to include detailed information about their products and their partners. With a value of \$195/year, this is a great benefit!

For consumers, FarmPlate.com is one good place to look for local food online. Other options include DigInVT.com, which focuses on farm and food experiences, such as “trails” of related food producers to visit (think cheese, beer, or berries). Localharvest.com is a long-standing national database of farms and markets.

And of course, the NOFA Vermont website also has listings of certified organic farms, CSAs, and farmers’ markets at [www.nofavt.org](http://www.nofavt.org)! 🌱

*For more information on the FarmPlate member benefit:*  
[www.nofavt.org/join/farmplate](http://www.nofavt.org/join/farmplate)

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