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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Excited about soil: gearing up for Winter Conference

By Enid Wonnacott, Executive Director

The NOFA Vermont Winter Conference is a highlight of the winter for Vermont's local food growers and eaters. We look forward to this annual opportunity to bring together farmers, gardeners, homesteaders and eating enthusiasts for three days of shared learning, inspiration, good food, and great conversation.

This year's conference theme, "Our Soil, Our Health" was developed in recognition of how the quality of our soil affects the quality of our food and its fundamental ability to nourish us. On the heels of the United Nation's 2015 International Year of Soils, we want to elevate the discussion of the linkage between soil health, plant health, ecosystem health and human health. This theme will be addressed throughout the conference – in our keynote addresses, workshops, and a featured film *The Symphony of the Soil*.

Our featured speakers are Heather Darby, who will address Saturday's focus on soils, and Guido Masé, who will address Sunday's focus on health. Heather is a

"Soil is the great connector of our lives, the source and destination of all. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life."

- Wendell Berry

certified organic farmer from Alburgh and an Agronomic and Soils Specialist at the University of Vermont. Guido Masé is a clinical herbalist, herbal educator at the Vermont Center for Integrative Herbalism in Montpelier, and garden steward specializing in holistic Western herbalism. We are proud to feature two Vermont keynote speakers at our conference this year!

With over 100 workshops, there is something for everyone! Are you a homesteader/gardener interested in growing figs or hops? A food enthusiast interested in the history and chemistry of gluten, or how to make crisper pickles? Are you a commercial grower interested in more energy efficient cold storage or producing sweet potatoes and ginger? Or are you interested in the business and marketing of farming? If a day-long intensive workshop appeals to you, you can choose workshop intensives on Elderberries, Bees, Agroforestry or Vegetable Growing. In addition, there are daily discussion groups and films.

With so many interesting attendees and exhibitors, one of the highlights of the



conference is the opportunity to network. You can catch up with people during our extended lunch time, during our evening social opportunities, at the seed swap, while working on a community art project with Bonnie Acker, or eating roasted roots from the NOFA-VT oven.

If you have attended the conference before, please bring a friend this year – our annual conference is a great opportunity to introduce new people to NOFA-VT, and build our network of people committed to nourishing soils through organic gardening or farming, choosing organic food when they make purchasing decisions, or being a strong, positive voice for organic. We look forward to seeing you soon! ✨



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Winter Thoughts from Enid

I have been thinking a lot about the concept of “care” and how it applies to everything from our decisions about the foods we choose to eat, to global climate change. I know those are two very different actions! I started noodling on this when I was on a fall hiking trip this year, pondering the idea of why individuals make the food purchasing decisions they make – I know there are the predominant factors of cost and convenience, of course, but on some important level, people have to care about those food decisions; that decision has to have meaning to them.

That concept of care was notably penned by Dr. Suess, when the Once-ler states, “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” If we agree with the Lorax, in his plea to the Once-ler, that the concept of care is important, then what is NOFA’s role in nurturing that?

In my annual appeal card, I wrote that two things are critical for Vermont organic agriculture to thrive - people need to have a connection with farmers, and farms need to be as strong as they can be. I think that connection with farmers is key to caring, and so many of our programs seek to reach consumers (both youth and adult) to make different food purchasing decisions because they care about the food they eat – for example, farmers markets and community supported agriculture are built on the principle of connection, as is our farmer correspondence program, where farmers statewide write letters to school children. Since farming can be an isolating industry, part of our mission has to be helping consumers deepen their connection with food producers.

That same pathway leads to me considering the concept of care in ameliorating global climate change. With the climate talks recently taking place in Paris, there have been a number of pivotal reports released that bring greater attention to soil health. Judith Schwartz, reporting on COP 21, noted the international framework that for the first time brings agricultural soils into climate negotiations. Called “4 per 1000,” this new proposal aims to

protect and increase carbon stocks in soil. Grist reported that, “A lot of farmers are way out in front of the curve. The same practices that you would use to sequester carbon in the soil also reduce run-off and improve water quality. Those same practices build the resiliency for farms to withstand droughts or floods.”

Although organic agriculture can play a critical role in pulling greenhouse gas emissions out of the atmosphere and storing them in the soil, challengers of this concept said it will only be impactful at scale – that millions of farmers must change their agricultural practices to make it happen. Millions of farmers have to care.

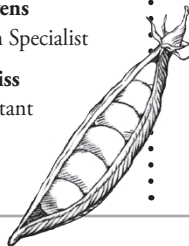
While so much of the historic discussion about global warming has been focused on curbing emissions of fossil fuels, versus the value of soils as carbon sinks, the NOFA Interstate Council is currently working together on a carbon restoration campaign to educate farmers, gardeners and consumers about meaningful action steps they can take to restore carbon to the soil.

Jack Kittredge from NOFA Massachusetts is leading this statewide effort and he will be leading a roundtable discussion at our upcoming Winter Conference entitled *Building Soil Carbon and Financial Sustainability*, detailing ways that northeastern organic farmers can adopt practices and tools which effectively restore carbon to soil like minimizing tillage, using cover crops, and rotations with animals and other crops. This is just one example of the over 100 workshops at the conference, many focused on soil health, and the linkage between plant health and human health.

I look forward to seeing many of you there and hearing your ideas about how we can broaden this concept of care. In the meantime, enjoy the return of the light!



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.



NOFA-VT Board of Directors Election

By Enid Wonnacott, Executive Director

We will be holding an election for two new board members at the Winter Conference this year. Since some members may not be aware of how the board nominations and elections work, I want to briefly outline the process.

Board prospects may self-nominate or be nominated by any current member. Those nominees are then reviewed by the Executive Committee, approved by the Board, and then a slate is forwarded to be voted on by the members. Our current by-laws require that “the election to choose the directors shall be held by the members of the Association at the annual meeting via a paper vote of the members present.” Until we make a by-laws change, we will not be able to hold an on-line vote or send all members a mail-in ballot, (which would provide all members greater access to vote), so we will again hold the Board election at our Winter Conference, the largest gathering our members.

There are currently two openings on the NOFA-VT Board. If elected, we will have a full complement of 12 Board of Directors; our by-laws allow a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 12 members. The NOFA-VT Executive Committee evaluates several factors when developing a slate of board candidates including: gaps in expertise/skills the board needs, geographic distribution, and gender balance. We are excited to consider the following two candidates this year:

ANNETTE HIGBY grew up on a family farm in Michigan. She has provided legal services to farm families or worked on federal farm policy for about 35 years. Her current Vermont law practice is focused on generational farm transfer, farm business formation and farmland leasing. Annette has worked on federal farm policy issues for the Center for Rural Affairs in Nebraska, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and the New England Farmers Union. Most of her career has been spent in a non-profit work place. She is also a weaver of cloth, a perpetual studier of Spanish and a gardener.



LYNN ELLEN SCHIMOLER currently works at City Market/Onion River Co-op in Burlington, VT as Assistant Director of Operations-Retail. She has extensive experience with product/service development, quality control, key financial indicators and employee training/development. She has a background in management of natural markets in New England and California, and collaborates with the National Cooperative Grocers (NCG) to assist new and existing food cooperatives. Schimoler’s board experience includes the YWCA VT chapter (board chair) and Mayor Miro Weinberger’s core team that advises on diversity and inclusion.



If you have any questions about this process, or any suggestions, please let me know. The Executive Committee will be reviewing the by-laws this winter to suggest changes that will make our elections more accessible to all members. If you are interested in nominating yourself or another member for the Board of Directors, please contact me at enid@nofavt.org or (802) 434-4122 ext. 17. Nominees for board openings are reviewed annually in November.

Members who attend the Winter Conference will be given a ballot when you register. Thank you for your participation!



Bulk Order

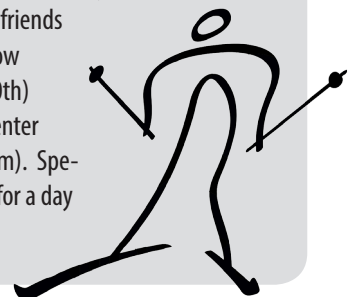
It's peak planning season for the farmers, gardeners and homesteaders of Vermont, which means it's time to get in your order for the NOFA-VT Bulk Order. Look for your catalog in the mail, or find it online at <http://nofavt.org/resources/bulk-order-2016>.

Postmark deadline: Feb. 5

Pickup date: March 5

1st annual NOFA X-C Ski Day!

Did you all know that there is an organic farm in Vermont that also hosts a nordic center with 30 km of groomed trails? That's right, you can cross-country ski on the cow lanes and meadows at Rockbottom Farm (home of Strafford Organic Creamery)! Join NOFA members and friends on February 18th (no snow back up date of March 10th) at the Strafford Nordic Center (straffordnordicskiing.com). Special member rate of \$10 for a day pass, rentals available.



Great Reasons to Attend the NOFA Vermont Children's Conference!

In order to make the Children's Conference more accessible this year, we have received a grant from the Johnson Family Foundation to be able to offer registration on a sliding scale of \$0-\$30/child. This is an exciting opportunity to introduce more kids (and their parents) to NOFA-VT and our annual Winter Conference. Part of the grant includes a challenge to expand the number of

children who attend. We are partnering with the YMCA of Greater Burlington and the Boys and Girls Club, among other local youth-based organizations, to increase our outreach to area 5-12 year olds.

The full Children's Conference schedule and workshop opportunities can be viewed on our Winter Conference web-page – they include looking at

predator/prey adaptations in animals teeth and skulls with the outdoor nature organization Exordium, making ice cream with Green Mountain Farm to School, and Honeybee Valentines with artist Bonnie Acker. Please sign your children up and spread the word to your youth friends and encourage them to attend the Children's Conference this year!



Above: Artist Bonnie Acker helps a child find the perfect spot for his creation on the 2015 community quilt. Right: making fresh pizza outside the Davis Center in the NOFA oven. Below & left: 2013 Children's Conference participants show off their creations.



Onions & Leeks - How to Grow from Seed

Contributed article by Sophia Bielenberg of High Mowing Organic Seeds



There are a lot of advantages to growing onion and leek plants from seed – you have more varieties to choose from, it's more economical than buying sets, and the onions you grow will store better. But it's also a pleasant diversion from the dark days of winter, when nothing satisfies like the scent of potting soil or the sight of something green sprouting.

Variety Selection

Onions are different from most other crops because they're sensitive to day length—some varieties need more light than others to form bulbs, so it's important to choose the right type for your growing region.

- **Long day** onions like New York Early, Cortland and Red Wing only make bulbs when the day length reaches 14-16 hours; they are ideal for Northern growers above 35°N latitude.
- **Intermediate day** or “day neutral” varieties like Walla Walla and Cabernet produce bulbs at a wide variety of latitudes as long as they receive 12-14 hours of daylight; they are ideal for Zones 5-6.
- **Short day** onions like Gabriella make bulbs when the day length reaches 10-12 hours, and are great for far southern locations like Texas, the Southwest and Gulf Coast states.

Short day onions tend to be sweeter, with shorter storage life than long day varieties. Growers in the North can often plant short day varieties under cover in fall, then wait for them to form hefty bulbs in spring when the day length reaches 12 hours. A few varieties, like

New York Early, are fast enough that they can be direct-sown, but they need early planting and consistently moist soil for this to work. So most northern growers begin their season by starting onion, leek and shallot seeds indoors in January or February, about 10-12 weeks before the transplant date. Delaying planting can result in undeveloped bulbs, so it's important to start on time.

How to Grow Onions & Leeks

- 1) Onions can be planted in open flats, cell trays or pots—open flats are the most economical in terms of space. Fill your containers with barely-moist potting soil to within 1/2” of the rim, tamping down lightly as you go.
- 2) Sow your onion or leek seeds on the surface of the soil, using 4-8 seeds per cell or square inch. The more space you give them, the bigger they'll get, ideally the size of a pencil by transplant day.
- 3) Sprinkle fine potting soil over the seeds and gently water in. Cover your tray with a propagation dome to hold in moisture, then place it on a seedling heat mat. Onions & leeks germinate best at 75-85°F.
- 4) Once the seeds have germinated, remove the dome and place the tray



under lights, raising the lights as the plants grow. When the seedlings are 5” tall, use scissors to trim them back to 2” as this will encourage them to grow thicker and stronger (and the onion trimmings are delicious!) About two weeks before transplanting, begin hardening off your onion starts by moving them outside for a little longer each day.

- 6) When it's time to plant (2-4 weeks before your last frost date), prepare a soft, smooth planting bed and make furrows 4” deep. Water the seedlings before removing them from their tray. Unlike leeks and shallots, onions can be planted in clumps of 2-4 plants without reducing yields—just increase the space between clumps to 12”. (This is also a good way to prevent sweet onions from growing too large.) Firm the soil around the plants so just a few inches of foliage are sticking out, then water in. Keep the beds weeded until the plants are about 8” tall, then mulch or undersow with white clover to discourage weeds and retain moisture. Leeks should be hilled regularly by hoeing soil up around their stems to maximize yields.
- 7) Dig leeks in the fall, then wash and store them near freezing for many months. For storage onions wait until after their tops flop over, then pull them up and dry in the field for 3-5 days, or cure in a warm, dry, well-ventilated place for 2 weeks before trimming their roots and tops. ✨

Join High Mowing Seeds staff at the annual Seed Swap Saturday 2/13, 5:15-7:30pm at the NOFA-VT Winter Conference. High Mowing will organize the swap and present a short educational session on seed saving and organic seeds. Bring your labeled seeds to share!



Beginning Farmers @ Winter Conference

Come Celebrate with the VT Young Farmers Coalition and Slow Food VT!

Along with many workshops and activities during the conference there is also ample time to get to know your fellow conference goers through evening socials and meet-ups. If you're looking to continue your conversations after the workshops have concluded, head downtown to August First Bakery on Saturday from 7:00pm-9:00pm for a cash bar and light snacks hosted by the Vermont Young Farmer Coalition (VYFC) and Slow Food VT. Both VYFC and Slow Food VT seek to create community within Vermont to celebrate and engage young farmers, food enthusiasts, homesteaders, and commercial farmers through good, clean and fair food. This event is open to everyone and there will be plenty of time to mingle after the conference and into the night! More information can be found on our website for this event and many more conference activities!

Beginning Farmer Coaching Sessions at the 2016 Winter Conference

If you are new to farming and are looking for help accessing land in Vermont or interested in enhancing your farm business plan, you can now sign up for a coaching session on these topics during the conference. Staff from the Intervale Center, UVM Extension Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the Rutland Area Farm and Food Link will be available for one-on-one coaching. There will be two coaching sessions available, one related to farmland access and another creating action plans to start your farm business. These two topics, farm access and business planning, are just a few of the biggest barriers to entry and success for new farmers. With the introduction of these sessions to the conference we hope to engage beginning farmers on these tough topics and work together to create a vibrant and successful farming population of all ages. Pre-registration is



required. For more information and to sign up for a session, head to our website, nofavt.org/conference. ✨

Winter Policy Update



By Maddie Monty, NOFA Vermont Office Manager and Policy Advisor

In the Fight for GMO Labels, "It Ain't Over Til It's Over" - As we neared the end of 2015, junk food and biotech companies were hard at work in D.C. trying desperately to stop Vermont's GMO labeling law from taking effect in July of this year. The Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) and its anti-labeling allies hoped to add a rider to a must-pass government spending bill to strike down Vermont's law. There was also talk of replacing on-package labeling with elitist and non-transparent QR codes, which can only be accessed by those with a smartphone. Thanks to the hard work of labeling advocates and innumerable calls from constituents to Congress, these efforts did not succeed. The anti-labeling "DARK Act" rider was not included in the omnibus bill, but a provision that requires FDA to halt the commercial

release of GMO salmon until they issue labeling guidance was included. As we all know by now, many such victories should be celebrated but considered temporary, as the junk food giants will undoubtedly return in this New Year with new attacks on your right to know. Stay tuned.

FDA Requests Comments on "Natural" Labels - On December 24th, the FDA announced that it will extend its comment period regarding "natural" labels on foods through May 10th, 2016. In recent years, terms like "all natural" have proliferated rapidly on everything from peanut butter to cheese poofs. Unsurprisingly, research from Consumer Reports has shown that consumers are thoroughly confused about what this buzz-word really means. The truth? Almost nothing. ✨

Attention Vegetable Growers! Final FSMA Produce Safety Rule Released

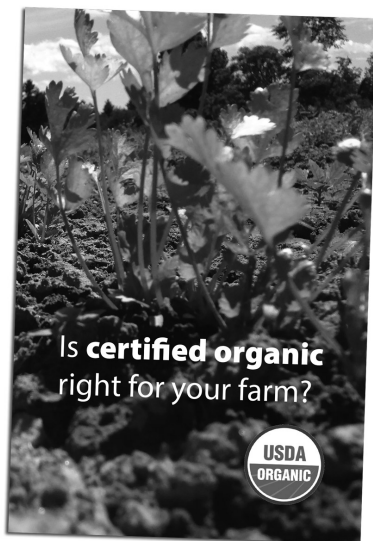
- On November 27th, FDA publicly released its final rule for Produce Safety under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). You can now read the full text of the rule and a summary of key requirements, including information about who is covered by the rule, on FDA's website: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/>

New videos answer the question, 'Why Organic?'

Vermont Organic Farmers releases videos and brochure to convey the benefits of buying organic, and growing organically

Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF), the certification program of NOFA Vermont, has developed a collection of outreach materials that explain and support the organic certification process, and promote organic products. The materials include a series of short videos for consumers that convey the benefits of buying organic products, a longer video that explains the certification process, and a beautifully designed brochure that addresses the reasons for farmers and processors to become certified. These materials can be used and shared by anyone interested in promoting organic agriculture.

The six videos were produced by Michael Sacca and Helen Whybrow in associa-



tion with Vermont Organic Farmers and NOFA-VT.

In response to requests from certified organic producers to help increase demand for organic products in the marketplace, Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF) developed five consumer-focused video clips,


designed for easy sharing online, to show the importance and value of organic production. Each video features one benefit, or value, of buying organic products: "No GMOs", "Taste", "Stewardship", "Community" and "Integrity". These values are articulated by organic growers in Vermont, and were filmed on-farm, providing an intimate glimpse into the world of sustainable agriculture.

"This is a chance for folks to hear directly from the farmers about why they feel it is important to farm organically." -Nicole Dehne

VOF has also produced a longer video that demystifies the organic certification process for farmers interested in pursuing organic certification. This film will be used as mentoring support and

motivation for producers who are interested in learning more about the process. Through various outreach efforts, the video will reach a broader consumer audience and build confidence among buyers that the certification process is meaningful. Viewers will hear directly from organic growers, why they certify their farm as organic and what that process means to them and to their markets. After watching the film, viewers will better understand the annual inspection process, the record keeping requirements, and the benefits of organic certification for their businesses.

As a companion to the videos, VOF has created a brochure for farmers interested in pursuing organic certification, which outlines five benefits of becoming certified organic and also addresses concerns, such as the burden of record keeping and the cost of certification.

The project was funded with support from the USDA National Organic Program's "Sound & Sensible Initiative," a campaign that aims to make organic certification more accessible, affordable and attainable. 



All the videos can be found on the NOFA-VT YouTube channel here: <https://goo.gl/IP20IO> or scan this QR code with your phone or tablet.



Save the Date: Jr. Iron Chef Vermont on March 19th

Statewide youth culinary competition will be at the Champlain Valley Expo in Essex Junction, VT


"This competition is a really fun and exciting way to get kids excited about food," says Jr. Iron Chef coordinator, Amy Gifford. "The tweens and teens who participate learn so much...not just about cooking, but about working together and tapping their own creativity!"

Organizers are gearing up for the 9th annual Jr Iron Chef Vermont, a culinary competition for Vermont middle and high school students who are looking to show off their skills in the kitchen. Jr Iron Chef Vermont challenges teams of students to create healthy and delicious dishes made from local ingredients, which will ultimately inspire the menus of school meal programs.

The Jr Iron Chef VT 2016 competition will be held on March 19, 2016 at the Champlain Valley Exposition in Essex

Junction. The contest guidelines are rigorous, intended to demonstrate the real-life challenges that food services face in creating healthy meals for schools. Two heats will be held the day of the competition, with 90 minutes of cooking time per heat. Winning teams receive prize packages, and have an opportunity to feature their recipes in the Vermont Statehouse Cafeteria.

Jr Iron Chef VT is hosted by Vermont FEED, a collaborative Farm to School Project of NOFA-VT and Shelburne Farms. From the start, the event has been

committed to providing middle and high school students with a hands-on experience cooking nutritious, farm-fresh foods. When the event began in 2008, 35 teams participated. Last year, 260 students from every corner of the state competed on 61 teams. 



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Golden Russet Farm, Shoreham

photo by J.Silverman

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New Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) Could Change the Way We Farm

By Maddie Monty, NOFA Vermont Policy Advisor

Passed by the legislature and signed into law in June of 2015, Vermont's Clean Water Act (Act 64) is now carrying in its wake substantial updates to established practices on Vermont farms. The first round of changes as a result of Act 64 comes in the form of new Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs), which cover essentially all farms in the state to varying degrees. The first draft of the RAPs, released in October by the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (VAAFAM), includes new requirements for small farm certification, nutrient management planning and storage, livestock exclusion, buffer zones, cover cropping, and more.

I interviewed vegetable farmer and UVM Extension staffer Becky Maden to get her perspective on what these new rules may mean for Vermont's farmers.

MM: As a farmer who will presumably be impacted by the RAPs when they take effect, what are your impressions of the Agency's initial draft and what suggestions for changes or clarification do you have for the final rules?

BM: According to my understanding of the draft definitions of farms regulated by this law, my small farm will likely fall into the category of an uncertified farm operation, which means we will need to comply with the law but will not be inspected unless there is a complaint against our farm. My overall comment on the current draft RAPs is that the "one size fits all" approach may make it challenging for some farms to comply, specifically because it is hard to create rules that cover a broad diversity of farm operations. I am submitting comments to the Agency through both of my roles as farmer and extension employee with specific alterations to the draft RAPs, and encourage everyone to do the same.

MM: Considering the diversity we know exists among Vermont's farms, do you think the Agency will be able to develop RAPs that accomplish water quality goals while allowing sufficient flexibility?

BM: I am hopeful that the draft RAPs will be revised to allow more flexibility to support the variety of existing farms in the state. I think the Agency has been very receptive to public comment and has done a wonderful job of opening the RAPs up for revision.


MM: Are there parts of the new water quality regulations that you see as potential opportunities for farmers (to improve their businesses, relationships with their communities, etc.)?

BM: I think this law could push farmers to improve their nutrient management and ultimately improve their yields/efficiency as a result. The law will require farms to soil test regularly and to keep records of amendments applied to the soil (which organic farms already must do). Hopefully, this will encourage all of us to improve our soil stewardship and to amend only as needed. Although the draft regulations regarding compost and manure will challenge many farmers, many of our farms DO have excessive levels of phosphorus and need to be carefully managed. NOFA's fall soil workshop series was a great primer to help participants understand soil management, and hopefully this constructive conversation will continue among farmers.

MM: What do you see as the appropriate role for farmers in improving and protecting water quality in Vermont?

BM: Ultimately, farmers love land, soil, water, and our environment on a very visceral level. We already play a very positive role in protecting and improving Vermont's

Although the draft regulations regarding compost and manure will challenge many farmers, many of our farms DO have excessive levels of phosphorus and need to be carefully managed.

water quality. I believe that with support (both financial and educational) from the Agency and other state partners, we can become even better and more informed stewards of a precious resource. By participating in the comment process of this legislation, farmers are already demonstrating a commitment to improving water quality and reducing phosphorus contamination. 



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Roasted Carrots & Parsnips with Shallot & Herb Butter

A great side dish! Alternatively, substitute beets or even potatoes for carrots.

- 5 large carrots (about 1 lb.), peeled
- 4 large parsnips (about 1 lb.), peeled
- 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1-1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
- 2 Tbs. minced shallot
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped fresh chives
- 1-1/2 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary
- 1-1/2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
- 1 clove garlic, minced

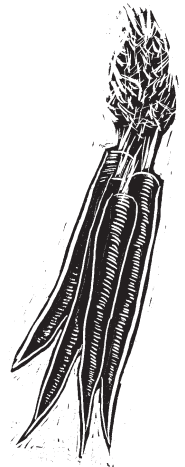
Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Cut the carrots and parsnips into 2 x 1/4-inch matchsticks. Put them in a large bowl; toss with the oil. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper and toss again. Transfer the vegetables to a 10x15-inch Pyrex dish and roast, stirring every 15 min., until the vegetables are nicely browned, 40 to 45 min.

Meanwhile, combine the butter, shallot, chives, rosemary, thyme, and garlic in a small bowl and stir well. Add the butter to the roasted vegetables and toss to coat. Serve immediately.

Thanks to Pete's Greens' Good Eats CSA for the recipe!

*It's almost spring
CSA sign up time!
You can find the CSA
and farmers markets
listings at www.nofavt.org/find-organic-local-food.*



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Urban Moonshine and the forgotten flavor of Bitters

By Johanna Setta, Certification Specialist Assistant, Vermont Organic Farmers

Jovial King, founder of Urban Moonshine, has re-introduced the world to a product and taste that has been missing from most current day societies for many years. She started Urban Moonshine, a local, organic apothecary, in her home in Burlington, VT, in 2006. With the help of Guido Masé, chief herbalist at Urban Moonshine, they have established a strong presence in Vermont through their downtown Burlington production. They have brought what Guido refers to as a “forgotten taste” back into people’s homes and communities. They have reminded us that the effects of bitters on our digestive system are real, that Bitters trigger the digestive system to produce the body’s endogenous digestive enzymes, secrete bile, and balance stomach acid levels.

The Urban Moonshine team is passionate about bitters and all of the benefits they bring to the table and are sharing this knowledge across the country through their products and education.

Guido speaks to the fact that traditional cultures consumed bitters through greens and roots like dandelion, gentian, and burdock as part of their regular diet and we have lost touch with this important taste over the years. Bitter has been supporting the body’s ability to digest food and absorb nutrients from the beginning of time. Jovial and her team have created a selection of Vermont Organic Farmers certified organic bitters to choose from that are easily accessible in both urban and rural environments that consist of original, citrus, maple, and chamomile. I choose the original for that full bitters flavor that sends a quick signal to my digestive system just when I need it.

Bitters can help with regulating appetite, minimizing your cravings for sugar, relieving an upset stomach or bloating, increasing absorption of nutrients, supporting healthy liver function, balancing blood sugar, and may relieve the occasional heartburn. If

taking advantage of the wild plants that may provide some of these health benefits excites you, come listen to Guido Masé discuss this and so much more at our 2016 NOFA-VT Winter Conference from February 13th-15th. ✨

Guido Masé will be our Sunday keynote speaker at this year’s Winter Conference.



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FAQs: Labor Regulations for Farmers

Kenneth Miller is a lawyer, formerly at Law for Food, LLC. His area of expertise includes contract drafting, business and estate planning, and regulatory compliance. Please send any of your burning labor and management questions to rachel@nofavt.org and we will do our best to answer some of your common concerns. Below is a smattering of some of the questions we have already received from our friends and neighbors around the state on human resource issues.

I know that discrimination based on a disability is illegal. May I require that employees be able to lift 50 lbs and are not color blind, for instance? Can I ask about health issues in interviews?

You cannot ask about health issues in interviews, at least not directly. You can, however, ask if there is any reason why the applicant would not be able to lift a certain weight with ease or stand throughout the day. You can also ask them to rate their physical condition, or ask about allergies. You can also explain the tasks required to complete the job, and then ask if there is any reason they may not be able to perform physically demanding work, standing for long periods of time during the day in all kinds of weather conditions, good and bad.

Can I have volunteers like wwoofers, school groups or even full time volunteers work on the farm?

A volunteer is one who donates time and labor to a public organization or a government entity. A for-profit farm cannot host a volunteer because it is not, by federal definition, a public organization or government agency. A farm can, however, have a volunteer-like employee working on the farm if Farm is exempt from the state and federal minimum wage requirements.


Is a break legally required for farm workers?

Neither Vermont law nor federal law requires this. What Vermont law does require is giving employees a reasonable opportunity to eat or go to the bathroom.

There is no set-in-stone time requirement for rest periods or lunch breaks. In these kinds of cases, the law gives the impression of an expectation that the employer act reasonably. A 15-minute break may work for some facilities. Others may require more time. For example, for a larger farm where an employee must walk several minutes to get food and then walk back, 15 minutes may not suffice. A best practice is for an employer to ensure the employee has enough time to eat or use the restroom comfortably. Breaks are on the clock, unless they are 30 minutes or more. ✿

One-on-one assistance on labor management issues is available from NOFA Vermont staff and consultants to qualifying farmers. Contact sam@nofavt.org for more information.


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A summary of the fall NOSB meeting (in our backyard)

By Nicole Dehne, Certification Administrator

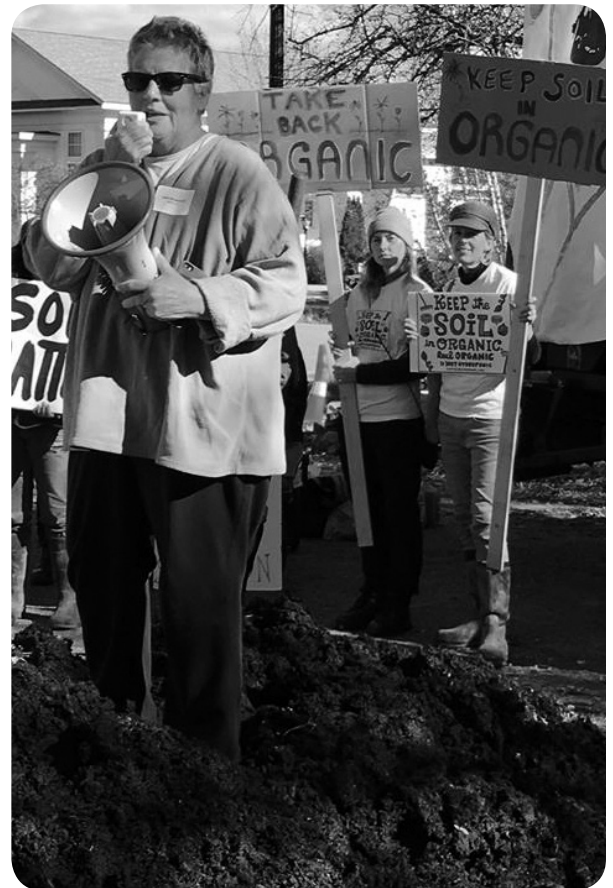
The National Organic Standards Board met in Stowe, Vermont in October for four days, where attendees from all over the country came to discuss topics that impact producers and consumers of organic food. Topics ranged in diversity from strategies to prevent GMO contamination to whether ethylene gas should be allowed to ripen organic pineapples.

2015 marks twenty-five years since Congress passed the Organic Food Production Act. To commemorate this accomplishment, NOFA-VT organized an evening program during the meeting with local music and organic food and drinks from VOF certified producers.

Major decisions that impact organic farmers and organic food are made at these biannual meetings. Hosting the meeting in Vermont was an opportunity for NOFA to get the voices of Vermont growers and processors heard through public comments made directly to the board. VOF producers stepped up to the plate with eighteen members giving

public comment to the board on a wide range of topics including:

- support for the use of lime sulfur and copper fungicides to treat plant diseases,
- the emergency use of Moxidectin and Fenbendazole to treat organic livestock with parasites,
- the use of biodegradable biobased mulch to control weeds,
- how organic maple standards need to be addressed specifically in the federal regulations, and
- how hydroponic production should not be allowed to use the organic label.



In addition to making public comments, Vermont producers organized a demonstration in the parking lot of the Stoweflake Mountain Resort to protest the organic certification of hydroponics. Speakers, who stood on a pile of compost, included many VOF certified farmers and NOFA's own Executive Director, Enid Wonnacott. Everyone spoke eloquently about the importance of soil in an organic system. Many NOSB members and meeting attendees came out to listen to the speeches and witness the protest and parade of tractors. It was an effective tool to bring attention to a critical issue. I think it is fair to say that the NOP and NOSB got the message that soil

is important to Vermont farmers!

I want to thank the producers that took time out of their busy schedules to give public comment and to

attend the meeting. It is vitally important that certified producers get involved in these national conversations defining the meaning of organic in order to keep the standards strong.

The next NOSB meeting will be in Washington, D.C in April. Interested producers should contact NOFA about attending, as funds to support farmer attendance may be available. And for those who cannot attend, submitting written comment is also extremely valuable. Check the NOFA website for more information about NOSB meetings and how to stay involved. ✨

Enid Wonnacott, executive director of NOFA-VT, speaks out in opposition of organic certification of hydroponically grown produce at the NOSB annual meeting in Stowe.

"I took a loan from the Vermont Farm Fund to keep the funds I pay back revolving around our great VT farm community."

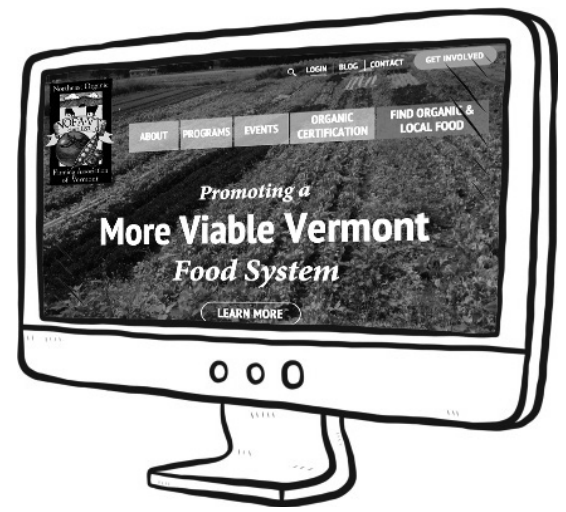
—Bob Lesnikoski
a.k.a "Cranberry Bob"
Vermont Cranberry Company

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Check out our new website!

Have you seen our new and improved website? It has all the features it had before, with an updated structure and a sleeker, responsive layout. We are still working on adding resources and in-depth information about our programs and events. But we'd love for you to take a look and let us know what you think. Thanks to Pete and the crew at Tamarack Media for the redesign! Visit the new site at <http://www.nofavt.org>, and send your comments and suggestions to kim@nofavt.org. Thanks!



NOFA-VT Welcomes Two New Farm to Community Mentors

Sarah Vecci (right) will be serving Lamoille and Western Orleans counties and Sharon Irwin (left) will be working in Windham and Windsor counties. NOFA Vermont has nine Farm to Community Mentors statewide who work to expand agricultural awareness by developing a community understanding of agriculture and to develop on-going relationships between communities, schools and their local farms. Farm to Community Mentors are farmers and educators who facilitate links between other farmers, gardeners, educators, children, and community in order to reconnect communities to their local agriculture. For a full list of NOFA-VT's Farm to Community Mentors and contact information, please visit the mentor page on our website.



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New NOFA-VT Members

NOFA welcomes the following members who recently joined us, as well as the following businesses for their ongoing support. Thank you for supporting Vermont organic agriculture!

New Members

- K. Sandra Anderson & Reeve Williams, Norwich, VT
- Sheridan Bishop, Woodstock, VT
- Brian Blaine, Naples, FL
- Thomas Cronin, Medfield, MA
- Amy Darley & Avram Pratt, Worcester, VT
- Patty Eisenhaur, South Londonderry, VT
- JoAnna Farrer, Elizabeth, NJ
- Eric Hacker, Beverly, MA
- Karen & Jim Hormel, Putney, VT
- Elissa Johnson, Burlington, VT
- Margaret Kane, Burlington, VT
- Christine Kucipeck, Burlington, VT
- Genevieve Miller, South Woodstock, VT
- Jonah Mossberg, Brattleboro, VT
- Gary Muehlemann, Centerport, NY
- Amanda Paradis, Derby, VT
- Emily Peyton, Putney, VT
- Larry Phillips, Essex Junction, VT
- Sean Shanny, Shaftsbury, VT
- Henry Webb, Bristol, VT
- Richard Witting, Burlington, VT

New & Renewing Business Members

- Applecheek Farm, HydePark, VT
- Aqua Vitea, Middlebury, VT
- Big Picture Farm, Townshend, VT
- Brigham Family Farm, Cuttingsville, VT
- Cellars at Jasper Hill, Greensboro Bend, VT
- Center for an Agricultural Economy, Hardwick
- Citizen Cider, Burlington, VT
- Courtyard Marriot, Middlebury, VT
- Deberville Dairy, Washington, VT
- Doeling Dairy, Newbury, VT
- Drew's, LLC, Chester, VT
- Franklin Foods Inc., Enosburg Falls, VT
- Golden Heart Farm, West Brookfield, VT
- Green Mountain Spinnery, Putney, VT
- Harvest Market, Stowe, VT
- Head Waters Farm, S. Ryegate, VT
- Heartbeat Lifesharing, Hardwick, VT
- Highland Sugarworks. Inc., Websterville, VT
- Hudak Farm, Swanton, VT
- Ismael Imports, Burlington, VT
- Jamieson Insurance, Richmond, VT
- Lindstrom Farm, West Danville, VT
- Main Street Landing, Burlington, VT
- Newhall Farm, Reading, VT
- Nitty Gritty Grain Co. of Vermont, Charlotte, VT
- OpenFieldFarm, Petaluma, CA
- Philo Ridge Farm and Livestock, LLC, Charlotte
- Pleasant Valley Farm, Argyle, NY
- Red Hen Baking, Middlesex, VT
- Rhapsody Natural Foods, Cabot, VT
- Rutland Area Food Co-op, Rutland, VT
- Stone Acres Farm, Wallingford, VT
- Stray Cat Flower Farm, Burlington, VT
- Surfing Veggie Farm, E. Hardwick, VT
- Swallow Hill Garden, Hardwick, VT
- Swallowdale Farm, Orwell, VT
- Third Branch Flower, LLC, Roxbury, VT
- Treleven, Vergennes, VT
- Two Bad Cats, LLC, N Clarendon, VT
- Vermont Bread Company, Brattleboro, VT
- Vermont Fresh Foods, Proctorsville, VT
- Vermont Soap, Middlebury, VT
- Vermont Soy, Hardwick, VT
- W. L. Chidsey Farms, Newport, VT
- Waybury Inn, Middlebury, VT

Thank you to our recent supporters:

Program Grants:

- Cost Offset CSA Project, \$45,062, as part of an AFRI grant awarded to UVM and Cornell
- State of Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program, \$45,005
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Building the Demand for Fruits and Vegetables in Vermont Schools, SCBG, \$35,499
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, \$1,000 for Farmers Market Sponsorship
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Working Lands Grant: Growing New Farmers in Vermont, WLEB, \$38,361
- Wholesome Wave subaward, Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grants Program, Ladder for Growth: A National Network to Build Capacity and Test Innovative Strategies for Health Food Initiatives, \$65,000

Farm Share Fundraising Update:

Thank you to all the participating restaurants, co-ops, farm stands, and stores that participated in the 2015 Share the Harvest Fundraiser. We were able to raise over \$16,000 to support farm shares for individuals and families in need. And by the close of Giving Tuesday (12/1/15), the Share the Harvest Challenge raised \$3,445 in donations. After a **1:1 match from the Newman's Own Foundation**, that's \$6,890 in funding that will support the efforts of NOFA-VT and partnering farms across Vermont to provide subsidized CSA shares to limited income Vermonters.

These dollars will have a significant impact by allowing the NOFA-VT Farm Share Program to support a CSA share for (at least) an additional 65 Vermont families. This means that the food security of an estimated 200 Vermonters will be improved by consistent access to a season's worth of farm fresh foods. Thank you for the generosity of NOFA-VT Farm Share supporters who believe in the idea that everybody in Vermont who wants to participate in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) should be able to.



New VOF Certifications

Vermont Organic Farmers would like to welcome the following new producers who have recently obtained organic certification for all or a portion of their operation, joining the nearly 600 organic farmers and processors throughout the state.

- MacLaren Farm, Plainfield
- Maple Flower Farm, Bethel
- Full Sun Company, Middlebury
- Marquis Farm, Newport Ctr.
- Keep It Real Organics, Jamaica
- Northwoods Apiaries, Westfield
- Robert Fuller Farm, Bristol
- Blodgett Farm, Fairfax
- C & K Foods, Rockingham

Learn more about the benefits of certified organic, locally grown at www.nofavt.org/why-organic.

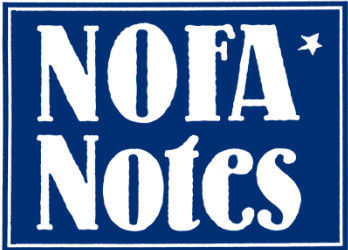
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