



FALL 2015

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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Growing medicinal herbs organically: a visit with Jeff & Melanie at Zack Woods Herb Farm

Written by Johanna Setta, Staff Assistant, Vermont Organic Farmers

Jeff and Melanie Carpenter have a picturesque certified organic farm, Zack Woods Herb Farm, set on ten acres in Hyde Park, with eight of those acres currently in full production. As Jeff and I chat outside their drying rack filled greenhouses, Melanie pulls up in the farm truck with her work crew of three. It becomes quickly apparent that both Jeff and Melanie have found their farming “sweet spot.” Melanie says that having eight to ten of their acres in production still allows for them to do things like participate in most harvests and have full control over the quality of their product from start to finish. They share an excitement for maximizing production sustainably on this land that is contagious. The three employees assisting with harvest move a large amount of peppermint from the bed of the truck onto drying racks and head out for more harvesting. It will lie gently on these racks for four to five days, unlike some of the other herbs that only need forty-eight hours to dry. Jeff asks that

both doors be left open, the fan on, and the sides of the drying room partially rolled up. He explains that there is a technique to drying and that post-harvest

handling can make or break your product when it comes to medicinal herbs, a lesson they have learned the hard way through a lot of trial and error.

The day is warm and the smell of garlic drying on the racks behind us brings a sense of calm. I assume every day at Zack Woods Herb farm is filled with the warm, calm, positive energy that Jeff and Melanie bring to their production, even through the cold Vermont winters. The journey has not necessarily been easy, but filled with hard work and bright spots, highs and lows. They started marketing their herbs from the ground up at farmers markets and through word of mouth. They moved to retail and wholesale and learned that they needed to dehydrate and store herbs in a way that would allow them to maintain an income throughout the winter. They have put in the time and dedication to learn the nuances of growing medicinal herbs successfully and feel the obligation and desire to share this information with future growers. It took the Carpenters



Jeff, Melanie, and Lily Carpenter, in a field of echinacea at their farm.
Photo by Johanna Setta.

thirteen years to reach a production level that works financially but today they are both able to be on the farm full time without relying on off-farm income.

Melanie takes a moment to shift gears and acknowledge that in addition to their hard work, she has also benefited from growing up at Sage Mountain Retreat, an herbal retreat center and botanical sanctuary in central Vermont with her step-mother, Rosemary Gladstar. She and Jeff had the opportunity to start a small business, Sage Mountain Herb products, while living at Sage Mountain. Being business owners prior to becoming



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Fall Thoughts from Enid

As I get my body and brain back to full health after this year's treatments for breast cancer, I have found myself back at the beginning of what I did when I fell in love with NOFA-VT 28 years ago – travelling around the state and communing with organic farmers and food lovers.

I started my work at NOFA-VT as the organic certification director in 1987, and was wowed by the passion of the farmers I met and their commitment to their soil, plants and animals. Over the years, I have transitioned to more program development, fundraising and administration as the Executive Director, but still feel a deep connection to the vision of our work because of the relationships I developed with those pioneer organic farmers in the early days. This summer, I feel as if I have come full circle in a way, as I travel to many of those same farms, over many of those same roads, not as a farm inspector but as a roving pizza maker!

I was struck by this on my last road trip, and wanted to share the story of three different events as a glimpse into the opportunity I've had this summer to reconnect with old farmer friends and meet new ones.

On Thursday, September 10, I headed down to Lilac Ridge Farm in Brattleboro, a certified organic dairy farm and vegetable CSA managed by Ross and Amanda Thurber for one of our Celebrate Your Farmer Socials. We held socials at eight organic farms this year to share a farm-raised meal among NOFA members and friends. At Ross and Amanda's farm, we used their farm's tomatoes, peppers, fennel, onions and cabbage to make pizza and salad. At all of the socials, we asked the farmer hosts to talk about why they value membership in NOFA-VT and captured member testimonials. Ross and Amanda said they value their participation in NOFA-VT's organic certification program, Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF), and that certification "connects them to a critical part of the

movement, both nationally and internationally, to change the way food is produced in this country."

After the evening at the Thurbers, I headed to Bennington the next day for an event with the Kitchen Cupboard, a food pantry and educational center, to have a pizza party to celebrate the Cupboard gardens. Coordinator Sue Andrews has a big vision for food security in Bennington, and in the spring, she had reached out to certified organic farmer and NOFA-VT board member Andrew Knafel of Clearbrook Farm to get seedlings to start a garden at a site adjacent to the food pantry. Guests of the pantry are encouraged to help in the garden when they come in to get food, and many arrived early to help prep vegetables for the pizza party. Clearbrook Farm donated vegetables for the pizza party, Sue sautéed vegetables from the Cupboard garden to garnish a black bean soup she made, and limited income residents of Bennington County

arrived via all kinds of transportation modes to attend the Friday evening pizza party.

The next morning, I arrived in Dummerston, just as the mist was clearing at the Bunker Farm, to make lunch for participants at one of the Vermont Land Trust's Eyes on the Land events. As part of the project, thirteen Vermont artists have been connected with conserved properties around the state and each artist is creating a "visual essay" that explores their response to the land they were matched with. At the Bunker Farm, participants toured the farm, made photographs and cyanotype prints in the sun from plants and food grown on the farm with photographer John Willis, and enjoyed pizza and salad prepared with Bunker Farm products. Post events, I headed home, with a truck full of melons from Clearbrook

Farm, pork sausage from Bunker Farm, and great memories of the many conversations I had with NOFA-VT members and friends. Looking forward to continuing those in the months ahead!



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Enid Wonnacott

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.

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growers helped them gain a skill set they might have not otherwise had. Melanie recognizes the importance of her upbringing and her connections and admits openly that she has benefited from both. Likewise, Jeff notes his deep familial roots in the dairy community in Vermont. The unfortunate truth is that not everyone who becomes interested in farming has the same types of connections and this realization is what drove the two to initiate the start of the Vermont Herb Growers Co-op. They believe that anyone interested in growing medicinal herbs organically should have the opportunity to do so. They are also working diligently to ensure that Vermont's future generations preserve the goldenseal, black cohosh, ginseng, blood root, and many other herbs that inhabit our natural landscape. The Vermont Herb Grower's Co-op is being developed by a chosen board, including Pamela Hathaway. The co-op will strive to support its participating farmers by "developing reliable markets, providing technical assistance, and supporting innovation and adoption of tools and technology to enable members to capture a growing segment of herb sales." The Co-op has recently received funding and is moving forward with development. In addition to preserving and conserving medicinal herbs in Vermont, this Co-op may allow individuals to become successful medicinal herb growers who may not have had access to these resources otherwise.

Prior to heading over to the fields ready for harvest, I ask them what advice they would give motivated, novice medicinal herb growers. They shared the importance of new growers utilizing available programs like the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program. Richard Wiswall of Cate Farm mentored the Carpenters through a difficult decision making process on their farm. He pushed them to ask hard questions about the farm and create an official business plan. What are you growing and why? If you harvested everything from your fields in this very moment how much money would that generate? At what

point might it make sense to invest in equipment versus doing everything by hand? When is a crop not going to produce the quality yield you had hoped for and when is it time to disc it in? These types of questions were asked by Richard as he walked through their production with them step-by-step creating an insight they felt they could not have gained otherwise. In addition to resources like the Herb Growers Co-op and the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, Jeff and Melanie have produced a book published by Chelsea Green titled, *The Organic Medicinal Herb Farmer, The Ultimate Guide to Producing High-Quality Herbs on a Market Scale*. The book will prove to be a useful tool for all growers interested in market scale production. It gives away some of the secret tricks of the trade and may alleviate some of the headaches that Jeff and Melanie endured through their many years of on-farm testing. Most importantly, you have to be invested in what you are growing and understand that you are producing medicine for consumers to purchase. To Melanie, this means that you must have the utmost integrity and pride when growing, drying, and packaging these herbs. They are growing medicine; it is their responsibility to create the highest quality herb that provides maximum benefits.

As I immerse myself in the echinacea and burdock, I think about how Jeff describes growing medicinal herbs organically, "These plants are naturally resistant to insects and diseases; they are insectary plants. It only makes sense to manage them organically." They rarely struggle with a little fungus, maybe some powdery mildew. They do have

Colorado potato beetle sometimes, but nothing they can't handle organically, using a little raw neem oil. The final outcome of their product are artisanal, medicinal herbs. Many of these herbs don't gain the recognition they deserve and some are already growing on organic farms in Vermont. Plants like hawthorn berry, burdock, raspberry leaf, and red clover are ever present on Vermont landscapes, and if nurtured properly could become an additional source of income. What may once have seemed like a pesky weed, can now be viewed as a valuable crop.

Thanks to Jeff and Melanie, the medicinal herb community is expanding and can find both inspiration and answers through the Carpenters' experiences. ✨

Drying racks at the Zach Woods Herb Farm.
Photo by Johanna Setta.



Organic Farmers: Weigh in on National Organic Survey

National policies, issues and institutions affect organic farmers, yet we lack a strong presence to ensure that the certified organic farmers' viewpoints, needs, and concerns are represented in the national arena. To address this situation, several organic farming organizations including NOFA Vermont have been discussing building a more effective and clear voice for certified organic farmers. We are proud of certified organic's growth and growing prominence in the marketplace, and believe now is the time that farmers, who are at the core of this success, establish a focused and strong voice.

To ensure we are going about this the right way, and to make certain this direction is desired by organic farmers and ranchers, we need YOUR feedback! Please complete this short 10 minute survey (<http://bit.ly/organicsurvey>) to tell us your thoughts about a national effort to organize organic farmers, and identify issues important to you. Please contact Kate Mendenhall of , kate.mendenhall@gmail.com, 585-944-2503 for more information and how to be part of the larger discussion. Paper surveys are available to those without access to the web. ✿



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Champlain Orchards, Shoreham

photo by J. Silverman

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Flour Tortillas

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The NOSB Annual Meeting is coming to Vermont, and we really want you to attend on October 27th!

By Nicole Dehne, VOF Certification Administrator

On October 27th, organic farmers, consumers, environmentalists, representatives from large organic corporations, and others will be coming to Vermont to discuss organic farming and production practices at the Stoweflake Conference Center in Stowe. They are coming to attend the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting and will come prepared to make public comment to the board and to witness the discussions regarding which materials should be allowed for use by organic farmers and processors.

The Organic Foods Production Act established the NOSB as an advisory committee for the National Organic Program (NOP) in 1990. Although there is disagreement in the industry as to how extensive the board's authority is to determine organic farming and production practices, what is clear is that the NOSB has authority over the National List of materials that are allowed to be used by farmers and processors when growing, raising, or producing organic products. Twice a year the NOSB has a public meeting in different towns across the United States. The meeting is intentionally moved around in order to give producers in the region where the meeting is being hosted the opportunity to participate in this important event.

Typically, NOSB meetings last 4 to 5 days and include presentations by NOP staff reporting on topics that include enforcement activities, new procedures, and work plan priorities. What attendees really come to hear is the 15-member board discussing agenda items and voting on recommendations and materials allowed for use on organic farms and in organic food. A large part of the meeting is comprised of comments from the public. Each individual signed up for public comment is given 5 minutes to address the board and the NOP staff also present at the meeting. In-person public comment is very effective in influencing the members of the committee and helping them understand the unique perspective of the speaker. There are many different opinions represented at this meeting. Often consumers and consumer groups are present asking the NOSB to keep the organic standards strict and meaningful. Experts are often called in to present on different materials and how they are used. Representatives from large corporations are there to present on why a material might be important for their organic processed product. One voice that is frequently missing is that of the small diversified farmer who may not have the means or time to attend the meeting. Therefore, his or her perspective is

often not being given a first-hand account. This year's meeting in Vermont provides a great opportunity to give voice to the concerns of small and diversified producers in our state.

Curious about some of the topics that the NOSB is working on and whether they might affect your business? There are 200 materials up for review at this fall meeting. That is an unusually large amount of materials for the board to review and vote on. The NOSB will discuss each of these materials and their importance to organic producers. If they hear from the public that a material is no longer needed or shouldn't be allowed in organic production, they may vote to remove it from the list of allowed materials. Whether you are a vegetable, livestock, dairy or food processor you are likely to find something in this list that you use on a regular basis. The following are examples of materials that will be voted on at this meeting: hydrogen peroxide, peracetic acid, newspaper without glossy or colored inks, plastic mulch, elemental sulfur, horticultural oils, pheromones, copper sulfate and fixed coppers, lime sulfur, soluble boron products, aspirin, atropine, butorphanol, chlorhexidine, electrolytes, fenbendazole, flunixin, ivermectin, moxidectin, oxytocin, vaccines, lidocaine, dairy cultures, diatomaceous earth, enzymes, flavors, kaolin, yeast, nutrient vitamins and minerals, casings, and more!

In addition, there are topics worth mentioning to the committee despite the fact that they will not be on this meeting's agenda. For example, it will be important for the committee to hear about whether organic vegetable farmers should be able to use biodegradable mulch, or why organic poultry producers should be required to give meaningful outdoor access year round, or why hydroponic production should not be allowed in organic certification.

Approximately four weeks before each NOSB meeting, members of the public may submit written comments or sign up to deliver oral comments in person. Check the NOFA website for more information about how to sign up for comments or about the meeting in general. If you only have time to attend one day, a half day, or even just a few hours, it is worth attending to participate or to just witness this important process. In addition, for those producers or consumers willing to address the board, this is your opportunity to get your voice heard about topics important to the organic community.

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We hope to see you there! ✨



Open Farm Week 2015

The Open Farm Week, held in August, was a great success! Over 80 farms and farmers markets participated and people were able to get a behind-the-scenes look at Vermont's vibrant working agricultural landscape. Each event was unique to the farm or market but at all the events, you could meet the farmers, plants and animals that bring your favorite, high-quality Vermont products to your plate! We're looking forward to planning Open Farm Week 2016 - please be in touch if you have ideas or questions!

NOFA-VT and the Vermont Farmers Market Association tabling at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture's inaugural Buy Local Market on the Statehouse Lawn, as part of Open Farm Week 2015.



"We were able to focus on recovering from the flood, thanks to Vermont Farm Fund's simple application and speedy approval process."

—Aaron Locker,
Kingsbury Market
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Efficiency Vermont

Farmer workshops focus on soil science and trades skills

by Mimi Arnstein, NOFA-VT Board Member & Technical Advisor

NOFA-VT is excited to partner with Vermont Tech to offer a special fall workshop series for farmers featuring soil science and trades skills. These two topics are widely different, yet both are critical foundations for successful production. As organic growers, we know that soil is the basis of everything we produce. And as commercial farmers, we also know that we spend a heck of a lot of time fixing, adjusting, installing and jerry-rigging equipment. Both soil building and mechanical know-how require ongoing education coupled with experience learned with the sweat of one's brow through trial and error. You provide the latter, NOFA-VT will provide the former.

Farmer input helped guide the creation of this series. The recent Vermont state water quality initiatives, as well as flooding in recent years, has brought our attention to the negative impact on watersheds caused by farms of all sizes. A spring survey of commercial growers on soil fertility practices, conducted by the University of Vermont and the Vermont Vegetable & Berry Growers Association, was motivated by the collective need to reduce watershed pollution from nitrogen and phosphorus. The survey results illuminated an overall lack of satisfaction among growers with their soil fertility

management, an interest in using more cover crops for nitrogen, a desire to work towards long term soil health through on-farm fertility production (like composting and cover cropping), and a need to save money on fertilizers while maximizing yields and balancing soil health.

Our two-part soils series will provide information to help make economical and environmentally sound decisions regarding fertilizer choices, application methods, increasing soil biological diversity, and more.

We are equally excited about our four workshops to improve your trades skills. Some farmers love spending time under the body of tractors or the hood of farm vehicles, others not as much. It takes time, inquisitiveness, patience, and perseverance to learn how machines work and to discover the right tool for the job. There's of course no shame in hiring someone to do all the fixing and installing, but regardless it is critical to have a familiarity with engines, electrical



systems, mechanical parts and such.

The trades skills workshops feature a hands-on component where you can practice what you are learning, for example in our "Tricks for Taking Apart & Fixing Rusted Stuff," get experience using heat, saws, leverage and key tools you'll want to run out to buy. Do you know what's a bearing puller, torch crayon, nut splitter or Woodruff key? Come find out. And for those of you who already have loads of experience, you know as well as anyone that it takes a lifetime of learning, and the opportunity to improve your knowledge with an expert is worth every minute invested. ✨



FALL WORKSHOP SERIES FOR FARMERS SCHEDULE:

Quick & Dirty: Practical Soil Science Series for Farmers

Successful production starts with feeding the soil. Learn how to work with natural processes taking place in the universe below our feet while keeping an eye on financial returns to improve ecological production.

- 10/8 • Practical Soil Science | **Part 1: Soil Nutrient Management**
- 10/28 • Practical Soil Science | **Part 2: Supporting Biologically Active Soils**

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- 10/14 • **Part 1: Getting Intimate with Diesel Engines**
- 11/5 • **Part 2: Gas Fueled Machines: Tractors, Pumps & Friends**
- 11/12 • **Part 3: Dealing with Electrical Problems**
- 11/19 • **Part 4: Tricks for Taking Apart & Fixing Rusted Parts**

Find out more, and register online, at www.nofavt.org/fallworkshops

Kids and gardens: a perfect combination!



Gretchen's Daycare, of Richmond, VT, visits the NOFA garden every week during the summertime for planting, harvesting, eating, and other garden-based activities. This is part of our summer intern program, and these photos were taken by Ann Cromley, one of the fabulous NOFA interns.



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Highlighting an On-Farm Workshop: Fall Greens for Homesteaders & Gardeners, with Charlie Nardozi

By Barbara Richardson, NOFA-VT member

We know local farmers keep bringing fresh, tender greens to market right into winter. What would it take for a gardener to extend the season in their backyard plot? Horticulturist and VPR “In the Garden” host Charlie Nardozi led the NOFA-VT workshop Fall Greens for Homesteaders & Gardeners at Bella Farm in Monkton, offering guidance on planning for harvests through snowfall and beyond. (Charlie doesn’t even think about eating kale until a cold snap has visited his garden. He says, “It’s at its best then, so why eat it in summer?”)



The first task is to plan, of course. What do you look forward to eating in the fall? How much do you want to harvest, and at what stage of growth (tender little greens or mature plants)? Charlie suggests growing varieties that will withstand the frosty times ahead such as thicker-leaved greens that can weather a cold snap, including savoy-leaved types of kale, chard, and spinach; mâche (also known as corn

Advice from Charlie: as the season progresses, the conditions that lead to bolting and bitterness disappear, leaving you with delicious, sweet harvests.

salad); claytonia; and good old arugula. And though this workshop was focused on greens, Charlie gave tips on growing legumes and root crops as well.

For baby greens, Charlie recommends direct sowing every two weeks from June through mid-August, and when daylength begins to shorten noticeably, switch to weekly sowings into October. As he puts it, “In spring a window is opening, and daylight and temperatures are both increasing. In fall, this window is closing, as heat and light diminish.” You can find information about seed spacing for baby greens and mature plants on most seed packets. “Most greens tolerate the ‘cut and come again’ approach,” Charlie says. “Harvest

like a bunny and cut off the tops of the leaves, leaving 2 to 3 inches of leaf and the growth point in the center intact.” And keep supplying nutrients in the form of liquid seaweed, fish emulsion, or compost tea. As the season progresses, the conditions that lead to bolting and bitterness disappear, leaving you with delicious, sweet harvests.

You can also easily start seeds in flats for transplant into the garden once they’re sturdy. “In summer, you don’t need a greenhouse or even indoor grow lights to start seeds this way – just keep the flats on a sunny porch or doorstep,” says Charlie. “Plus it’s just plain easier to plant, feed, and thin seedlings in flats up on a table or bench as opposed to out in the garden.”

The other part of planning is thinking about what spent crops you’ll be pulling out to make room for the succession of newcomers: bolting spring greens and radishes; bush beans, peas, and broccoli, that have yielded all they can, and early carrot and beet harvests. Even where nitrogen-fixing legumes have grown, Charlie always amends soil with a generous amount of compost, especially if you’re going to interplant among established plants, because, he says, “Their roots are spread all through the soil and will be competing for resources.” Plus, by the end of June, pests are abundant, and a well-nourished plant will be less attractive to pests and withstand more pest pressure than a weak one. Weekly

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RECIPE: Kale Pesto

Scaled down from the Vermont FEED New School Cuisine Cookbook. (The book can be viewed or downloaded from <http://www.vtfeed.org/materials/new-school-cuisine-cookbook>.)

MAKES 8 tablespoons

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 lb kale
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 Tablespoon parmesan
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Ground pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Remove thick stems from kale and tear into 2-inch pieces.
2. Fit a food processor with a steel blade. Make pesto by filling the food processor with kale. Add a drizzle of oil. Process until smooth, adding a little more oil as needed. Transfer to a bowl, add cheese, lemon juice, garlic, salt and pepper. Add to the bowl and stir well to blend flavors.



(Continued from page 9)


applications of fish emulsion or seaweed fertilizer will also allow plants to take full advantage of the height of the growing season.

On the subject of pests... flea beetles, cabbage butterflies, bunnies, and woodchucks are enjoying the bounty of the summer feast while your young plants are getting their footing, so protect them with floating row covers and/or organic pesticides. A bonus to having crops mature in fall is that the insect pests become less abundant and active, but cooler weather favors snails and slugs, so make sure your garden shed is supplied with iron sulfate baits, beer traps or copper foil barriers to keep them under control. Cool weather also signals mice to start looking for winter homes with a nearby food supply. If part of your plan is to use straw as insulation over root crops "stored" in place in the soil, or over a patch of greens you want to keep overwinter to get a jump on spring growing, wait until mid- to late-November, as most mice will have bedded down by then.

Charlie cautions that at some point, the light and temperatures of deepening autumn can no longer support plant growth, and "your garden becomes like an outdoor refrigerator." You can keep harvesting, but don't expect to see the "cut and come again" rebound you did in summer.

To really stretch your season, row covers

are a key tool. These fabrics come in a variety of weights, from super light ones that fend off summer pests without overheating plants, to thick, fleecy ones that keep plants cozy down to 25F. Bella Farm spreads fabrics right over their fall plantings of lettuce, arugula, kale, and radishes without support, anchoring the edges with soil, leaving enough slack in the fabric that the growing plants will push it up as they grow, but you can purchase metal hoops to suspend the fabric over your rows. If your ambition is to keep greens alive and available for harvest all winter, plant a raised bed and run two courses of fabric-covered hoops, one over the other, creating a 6-12 inch insulating air space between the layers of fabric. This should keep the soil from freezing, and trap the earth's radiant heat. This is like moving your garden an entire growing zone southward!

For those of us who miss the chance this year to overwinter greens, there's always nature's way, says Charlie. "Next March, just scatter some lettuce seeds on the snow in your garden – they'll germinate and you'll get that early salad you wanted!" 

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FALL POLICY UPDATE

By Maddie Monty, NOFA Vermont Office Manager and Policy Advisor

Keeping the Soil in Certified Organic: A Conversation with Dave Chapman of Long Wind Farm



Dave Chapman (picture above) is the owner of Long Wind Farm in East Thetford, where he grows certified organic greenhouse tomatoes. For several years, Dave has been speaking out strongly against USDA's decision to allow hydroponically produced vegetables in organic certification. Although USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) has allowed some hydroponic operations to be certified organic, Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF) does not certify hydroponically grown produce.

With this year's National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting in Stowe approaching, I asked Dave to share some of his thoughts on why hydroponics should not be allowed in organic certification and the implications of this issue for organic producers and consumers.

MM: Why should consumers care about hydroponics being allowed in organic? What can people do to voice their thoughts or concerns on this issue?

DC: That is the big question. Why should people care about real organic? That isn't a five word answer. Organic farming is based on enhancing and cultivating the wonderful balance of the biological systems in the soil. It isn't just about replacing chemical fertilizers with "natural" fertilizers. What I care

about is learning to work with these infinitely complex biological systems. I think there is such a beauty and grace to organic farming. After 35 years as an organic farmer, I still know very little. I have been to many organic farms, and to many hydroponic farms. I greatly prefer the organic farms. That is what I want to support. This is where I want to work. This is who I want to live next to. This is who I want to buy food from.

The organic I am interested in includes healthy soils, healthy food, healthy eaters, and healthy farmers. One of the great questions is: can we move towards greater health in these systems and still have the farmers make a living? The truth is that I don't think organic food is more expensive, if we factored in things like health costs, which we all pay for. But the truth also is that health costs are not included at the supermarket cash register. Nor are government subsidies. Nor are many other hidden costs of industrial farming. So organic food costs more.

I see that people ARE willing to pay more for food that tastes good, that is grown safely for fair pay, and that will help them to stay healthy. We make these choices in our lives. We decide what is important to us. Most people now choose to pay a large monthly fee to be connected to the internet. No one imagined that 30


years ago.

People are making choices to buy local, organic food. They are voting with their wallets. The challenge is making that as easy as possible, WITHOUT compromising on what organic means. People don't want to just buy a label as a placebo. They want to support a system. They want to find connection to that system, and the people involved in growing food in that way.

I don't know if we can save the word "organic". But we can try. Sign the petition. Write to Miles MacEvoy and tell him you care. If enough people write letters to the USDA, they will have to respond. Write to your Senators and Representative. Tell your friends. Ask your produce managers where the "organic" food comes from, and how was it grown. Write the newspaper. Blog about it.

In two years we have created much greater awareness. Let's keep going. Only we can do it. No one else is going to fix this.

If you believe soil is essential to organic systems, email Miles McEvoy, Deputy Administrator of the National Organic

Program (NOP) at mcevoy@ams.usda.gov and let him know. You can also sign the petition to Keep the Soil in Organic at www.keepingthesoilinorganic.org. 

Read the rest of the interview with Dave Chapman on our blog: <https://nofavt.wordpress.com/2015/09/08/keeping-the-soil/>



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1st annual Farmer Olympics delivered feisty fun!

Photos by Lucy Mercer

The first Farmer Olympics were held at the Maple Wind Farms' fields in Bolton, Vermont on August 12, 2015. There were 12 teams and more than 70 participants competing for the gold. The event was a fundraiser for NOFA-VT's Farming Beyond Borders Program to provide farmer-to-farmer educational exchanges.



Above — Bruce Hennessey, co-owner of Maple Wind Farm, which hosted the inaugural NOFA-VT Farmer Olympics, leads the farmer participants in a rousing opening chant to spark creativity and competition.

Below — A classic "sack race" was one leg of the relay race.



Above — Working together as quickly as possible, farm teams passed filled buckets to empty a trough of water.



Above — A classic "wheelbarrow race" was one leg of the relay race.

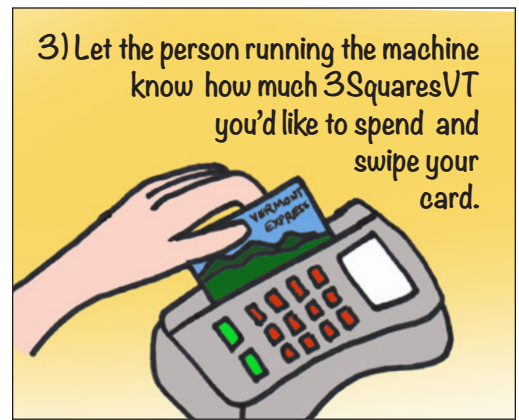
Below — One of the events involved farmer participants racing to assemble and deliver produce boxes.



Below — Participants holding hands in a circle at the the first annual Farmer Olympics, organized by the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont at Maple Wind Farm in Bolton, try for a world record in hula hoop-passing.



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WE SPEAK ORGANIC

New NOFA-VT Members

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

New & Renewing Business Members

- Back Roads Food, LLC, Brattleboro, VT
- Bailey Farm, Craftsbury, VT
- Capitol Grounds, Montpelier, VT
- Efficiency Vermont, Burlington, VT
- Fat Rooster Farm, South Royalton, VT
- Giroux's Poultry Farm, Inc., Chazy, NY
- Green Mountain Inn, Stowe, VT
- Green Root Farm, Weathersfield, VT
- High Meadows Farm, Putney, VT
- Kinnell Farm, Sheffield, VT
- Lazy Lady Farm, Westfield, VT
- Leaning Ladder Farm, Chester, VT
- Miedema Farm/Tandom Farm, Waltham, VT
- Mike's Farm, Addison, VT
- Moksha Farm, Roxbury, VT
- Nourse Farms, Inc., South Deerfield, MA
- Nuissl Farm, Berlin, VT
- Old Friends Farm, Amherst, MA
- Pigasus Meats, Enosburg Falls, VT
- Pine Island Community Farm, Colchester, VT
- Putney Farmers Market, Putney, VT
- Rhino Foods, Burlington, VT
- Robert Fuller Farm, Bristol, VT
- Sarah Flack Consulting, Enosburg Falls, VT
- Smith Hill Farm, Barnard, VT
- Sonny's Blue Benn Diner, Bennington, VT
- Spotted Dog Family Farm, Brandon, VT
- The Fertrell Company, Bainbridge, PA
- Vermont Whey Fed Pigs, Randolph, VT

New Members

- Andy Yoken, New Bedford, MA
- Beth Smith, Milton, VT
- Betsy C. Philbrick, Reading, VT
- Brian & Rima Carlson, Montpelier, VT
- C. Francis Hill, Grand Isle, VT
- Chris Anson, Wilmington, VT
- Elizabeth Downey, Plainfield, VT
- Emily Brewer, Burlington, VT
- Isabella Strong, Atlanta, GA
- Jamie & Laura Rivers, Newport, VT
- Jessica Metcalf, St. George, VT
- Joe & Doreen Merrill, Montpelier, VT
- Julia Davenport, Essex Junction, VT
- Kimball Butler, Bristol, VT
- Kristen Hughes, Enosburg, VT
- Larkspur Morton, Belfast, ME
- Leah Eide, Charlotte, VT
- Letitia Allyson Wulff, Burlington, VT
- Patrick Coppinger, Burlington, VT
- Sharon Wilson, Barnet, VT
- Linda Ward, Waterville, VT

Thank you to our recent supporters:

Individual Donations:

- Balance Yoga LLC \$171 for general support
- Christina Castegren \$500 for general support
- Michael Vercillo \$30 for the Farmer Emergency Fund
- Vivian Woodland \$45 for general support
- West Hill Energy & Computing \$1,000 for the Farm Share Program
- Sue Carlson, who donated to NOFA in memory of Peter Watson

Program Grants:

- **Farm Credit Northeast AgEnhancement**, \$2,500 to support the Farm to Community Mentor Program
- **Newman's Own Foundation**, \$45,000 grant to support our food access programs
- **UNFI Foundation**, \$2,500 to support our Beginning Farmer Program
- **Vermont Community Foundation Vermont Local Foods and Farms Fund**, \$75,000 for our Farm to School program, supported by the following funds and advisors: Honey Pot Fund, Barbara P Lande Bronfman; Ira and Anne Kaplan Fund, Robert Cane and Alison Nowak; Lyman Orton Fund, Lyman Orton
- **Vermont Department of Children & Families**, \$3,000 to support the Crop Cash Program
- **Wholesome Wave Foundation**, \$4,844 Naked Juice Award to support the Crop Cash Program
- **Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative** \$250 to support the Farm to Community Mentor Farmer Correspondence Program



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.

- Chambers Farm, North Clarendon, VT
- Foster Hill Farm, East Calais, VT
- Hurdland Farm, Newport Ctr., VT
- Kirby Farm, Shoreham, VT
- Lanzer's Fruit Farm, East Hardwick, VT
- Martin Churchill, Cabot, VT
- O'Connell Farm, Corinth, VT
- Pangea Farm LLC, Shoreham, VT
- The Perry Farm, Brownington, VT
- Understory Farm, Sudbury, VT
- Vermont Hard Cider Company, LLC, Middlebury, VT
- Vermont Poultry Farms LLC, Bennington, VT
- Wendy Buhner, Wells River, VT
- Willow Brook Farm, West Danville, VT

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



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FALL 2015



Upcoming NOFA-VT Events

October 8 – November 19 • Fall Workshops for Farmers

Randolph, VT - NOFA-VT is partnering with Vermont Technical College this Fall to offer two exciting new workshop series designed specifically for commercial farmers. (See page 7 or visit nofavt.org/fallworkshops for details.)

October 27 • NOSB Annual Meeting

Stowe, VT - For Organic farmers and processors, this is a great opportunity to have your voice heard and to witness first-hand how this process works. NOFA-VT is hosting a celebration that features the tradition and bounty of Vermont organic products. The event is free and open to the public and we want you there! (See story on page 6 for more information.)

Save the Date!

February 14-16, 2015 • Winter Conference

University of Vermont, Burlington

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