



FALL 2019

Grace's Thoughts.....	2
Honoring the Lazors.....	4
Soil Worskphs .....	5
Policy Update .....	7
Farmer Olympics .....	8
Fall Planting Tips .....	9
Share the Harvest .....	11

## The Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

# Q&A with Wonder Why Farm: 2019 Vermont Dairy of the Year

By Kyla Bedard, Vermont Organic Farmers Certification Specialist

Wonder Why Farm is a fourth generation organic dairy farm in Cabot owned by Morgan and Jennifer Churchill. They milk 124 cows with a robot and sell the milk to Stonyfield. They started with 15 animals in 2002 in collaboration with Morgan's father. In 2004, they moved the farm to Morgan's family farm, owned by his uncle, which they eventually purchased in 2012. They slowly grew the farm in their tie stall barn up to 90 cows where it finally reached the point, in 2014, when they decided to build a new freestall facility.

In addition to dairy, the Churchills began sugaring in 2012 to keep their employees busy year round. They have 2000 taps on tubing and 400 buckets. They are also growing 3 acres of hemp this year.

Kyla Bedard, Certification Specialist for Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF), had the opportunity to talk with Jennifer about life on their farm and winning the 2019 Vermont Dairy Farm of the Year award.

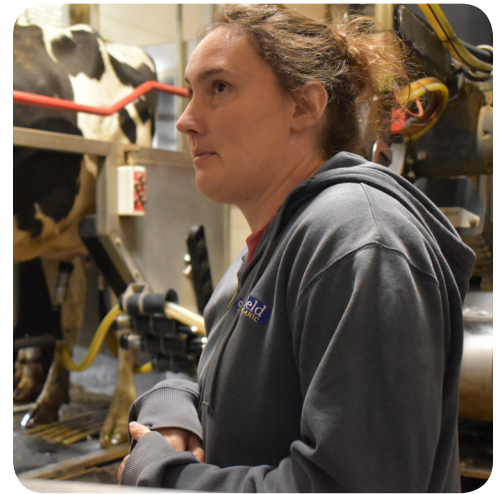
**What are some innovations you've made on your farm over the years?**

A new project is the biochar, which just got put in June. It is treating all the milk house waste water and any barnyard runoff. It's water that is not going into the manure pit

and therefore water that we do not have to truck off the farm. This means less diesel fuel, less time and money, and it is better for the environment. With this process, we're getting 98% of the phosphorus out right now. Every six months we have to replace the biochar (made through pyrolysis, the process of converting waste wood into charcoal) filter, that absorbs all the stuff that's going through. They're actually going to test the char to see if they can find any heavy metals or anything else. But that material can be used as fertilizer, so we did put some on our hemp plants.

We installed a robotic milker in our new facility in October 2015. The main goal was to be more flexible. We kept all of our hired help, but we now are able to go on vacation and to sports events and school functions that are all at 5-6 o'clock at night (when we would be milking cows). I mean, it is a computer, there are moments where you hate your computer but most days it's good.

Farming always has its ups and downs. The robot has added flexibility to our lives, which is good for the kids as they grow up. If we didn't ever do anything fun and show them life off the farm, they would hate farming before they even get old enough to do it on their own. I think it's good for the cows, too. We're up on production and our milk quality has improved as you can monitor better.



The cows are happy and healthy and intensively grazing. This has shown us how much more we could have gotten out the pastures in the past.

— Jennifer Churchill, Wonder Why Farm

Organic is all about prevention, and with the robots we can identify problems sooner and keep the cows healthy. I still have to go to barn twice a day to feed, scrape the barn, and feed calves. My son and I can do the chores alone now, so my husband and the other guys can stay out in the field to hay, and focus on feed.

*Wonder Why, continued on page 3*



## NOFA VERMONT

NOFA: 802-434-4122

VOF: 802-434-3821

info@nofavt.org | www.nofavt.org

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joe Bossen  
Cheryl Cesario  
Abbie Corse  
Brooke Dimmick  
Peter Forbes  
John Hayden  
Annette Higby  
Caitlin Jenness  
Andrew Knafel  
Eric Sorkin

### STAFF

Kyla Bedard  
*Certification Specialist*

Kirsten Bower  
*Finance Director*

Livy Bulger  
*Educational & Outreach Events Coordinator*

Erin Buckwalter  
*Market Development Director*

Megan Browning  
*Winter Conference Coordinator*

Nicole Dehne  
*Certification Director*

Bay Hammond  
*Materials Review Specialist & Staff Inspector*

Kim Norman Mercer  
*Communications Coordinator*

Jen Miller  
*Farmer Services Director*

Maddie Monty Kempner  
*Membership & Advocacy Coordinator*

Abbie Nelson  
*Food Systems Education Director*

Laura Nunziata  
*Quality Assurance Specialist*

Grace Oedel  
*Executive Director*

Jennie Porter  
*Community Food Security Coordinator*

Winston Rost  
*Certification Specialist*

Brian Shevrin  
*Certification Specialist*

Jaime Silverstein  
*Farm Business Advisor*

Alice Smolinsky  
*VOF Office & Database Manager*

Gregg Stevens  
*Certification Specialist*

Kayla Strom  
*Office Manager*

Becca Weiss  
*Share the Harvest Coord. & Office Assistant*

## Fall thoughts from Grace

My overwhelming feeling as I look back on my first two months (!) here at NOFA-VT is gratitude. Gratitude for the amazing NOFA-VT staff and board who have so fully welcomed me in, and to the wider community web of farmers, members, and community partners who have showed me around their farms, met with me over coffee, connected at a conference or sent me a handwritten welcome note. Thank you all for sharing your ideas, visions, and questions with me. If I haven't met you yet, I want to! Building relationship with the people who together weave the cloth of NOFA-VT helps me to understand our shared history, as well as to better chart the path forward. Please email me at grace@nofavt.org or give me a ring—let's share a meal, go for a walk, and explore together how to call forth an agricultural system that sustains farmers, nourishes people, and heals the earth.

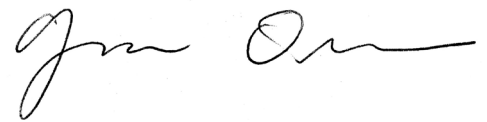
I also want to name my deep gratitude to Enid Wonnacott as I begin this work. I am sad to say that I didn't know Enid personally, but I feel a sense of her spirit through the stories that farmers, friends, and Vermonters share with me about her warmth, inclusion, sense of purpose, and skill building community through fun. I felt her spirit and joy bubble up through the laughter while farmers speed-ate cherry tomatoes at Farmer Olympics; I felt her meaningful support through stories shared by farmers about her wise counsel and tireless encouragement when they were just starting out in their career and I feel her profound impact through meetings with legislators who tell me NOFA-VT is the organization they turn to for counsel on writing laws to support organic farmers. Leaders like Enid are rare, and I am humbled and grateful to learn from her as I step into this role.

I've spent the last two months connecting with our farmers through on-farm socials, workshops, pasture walks, and one on one meetings. I've also been meeting with NOFA partners in coalition meetings. Together with multi-generational dairy farmers, small-scale veggie producers, sugar bush managers, meat and grass growers, school food professionals, farmers market managers, environmental groups, farm service providers, food access

advocates, federal and state legislators—the list goes on of varied food systems thinkers and stakeholders— we've been showing up at the table to explore how we can foster a stronger statewide network and help Vermont step forward as a national leader.

I've rooted myself in our mission statement to help ground us in this important shared work. NOFA-VT's mission is to "promote organic practices which support an economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just food system." I have been holding the nexus of these three parts: how to care for the earth, for farmers, and for all people equitably, as I represent the NOFA community with our partners. In the coming months we will be digging into the question of how to further the place where these three areas of focus overlap with even more impact, and how to lead the national conversation from this meeting point.

We are (re)committing our program efforts, policy pushes, and educational campaigns to furthering the nexus of social and environmental thriving. Organic farmers have already created solutions that our food system desperately needs—practices that heal land while serving people. We at NOFA-VT are using this moment of new chapter to do the strategic thinking, planning, and implementation to bring these solutions forward. Thank you for being part of the team and for welcoming me in. I'm so glad to be here.



Grace Oedel, NOFA-VT Executive Director



A Meet & Greet at Cate Farm. From left: Flint Wiswall, Richard Wiswall, Grace Oedel, and Douglas Becker.



The challenge with being organic and robots is pasturing. We couldn't go across the road for pasture any more (the cows need continuous access to the robot). Before, we were used to pasturing 100 acres, and crossing two or three roads to get there. We worked with Sarah Flack using technical assistance money from Stonyfield. She showed us how to intensively graze the acres we have on the barn side of the road and that has worked very well.

### Why organic?

Both Morgan and I grew up on conventional farms and saw that there were too many financial ups and downs. We were looking for a stable milk price. We really didn't realize how much organic has changed our views of farming. Starting with land that was lacking fertility was very challenging, with not enough manure to go around. Now that we have enough manure and the soil is healthier we are seeing how productive the land can be. The cows are happy and healthy and intensively grazing. This has shown us how much more we could have gotten out the pastures in the past.

With kids, we buy more local and organic products. We grow a lot of our own food in our garden and we raise our own meat. Knowing that our animals are raised happy and healthy justifies buying other products grown organically as well. Without organic we would not have had a stable pay price, we would not have been able to invest in ourselves, we wouldn't be where we are today.

### What do you love most about organic dairy farming?

I love seeing the cows outside, especially at night time when it's getting dark out and you can hear them out there munching away. I still get up at 4:30 and go to barn, it's my "quiet time." I get to watch the sunrise and I'm the only one in the barn. Knowing that we are building the soil health and taking care of the environment the best we can is reassuring. Our goal was to raise our children on a farm, if we ever had them, and we have been able to do that. They have a strong work ethic. They know that hard work has got us this far. That's something you can't tell somebody, you have to show them and farming is the best way to do that.



## Taylor's Kale Bacon

Recipe by Taylor Mendell, learned at Hidden Villa Farm

Submitted by Erin Buckwalter, NOFA-VT's Market Development Director

For the past several years, we've been CSA members at Footprint Farm in Starksboro, VT. Taylor and Jake Mendell are amazing young farmers and happen to be great cooks too. Each week in our CSA newsletter they share recipes, which often end up in regular rotation in our house. Every year they host a CSA party and often feature Taylor's famous KLTs! Her kale bacon recipe is below. Yummm!

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 bunch kale, especially red russian and especially if it's going floppy in the fridge
- 1/2 to 1 Tbsp. soy sauce/tamari
- 1/2 to 1 Tbs Olive oil

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Remove ribs from kale and tear leaves into roughly bite sized pieces, about 2" square-ish.
2. Heat a large cast iron or heavy bottomed pan over medium high heat and add oil.
3. When you can hear a drop of water sizzle on the pan, add kale and stir to coat in oil. (You may need to work in batches, depending on your pan size. Add enough so that you can't see the bottom of the pan, but the kale isn't heaping. If you add too much it's hard to get it to crisp.) Add tamari and stir to coat.
4. Let kale cook, stirring every minute or so, until it starts to get crispy bits. Taste to see if you need to add more tamari. It should be relatively salty, not mushy, and have a little crisp without being burnt and crunchy.

**Pile on a KLT with your favorite spreads, tomatoes, and breads and enjoy!**



## Week celebrates culinary traditions

By Abbie Nelson, Food Systems Education Director

With the Vermont Department of Libraries, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, join us for the 10th annual **Agricultural Literacy Week**, November 18-24, 2019. This year we are "Celebrating Our Culinary Traditions." The week-long celebration occurs across the state to inform and educate people about the economic and cultural importance of farms in Vermont communities. This year's theme focuses on the seasonal delight that our farms bring to the table. Four main events at libraries around the state will feature Vermont cookbook authors and a tasting of what is in season. The opening event will be held at the Vermont State Library in Barre on

Tuesday, November 19th from 5:00-7:00pm. Students from Barre Town Elementary School will prepare a Vermont Thanksgiving Sampler.

Libraries and community centers across VT will be joining in the celebration by hosting their own events, named "Simple Suppers." During these events, we will create a local meal with community members and guest farmers.

If you are interested in hosting a **Simple Supper** with your community during Agricultural Literacy Week, please contact Misse Axelrod by sending an email to [dmissie@hotmail.com](mailto:dmissie@hotmail.com), or calling (802) 279-1548.



## NOFA-VT Farm Beginnings®

Learn the skills needed to successfully grow your farm business. Applications now open! **Apply by September 27th:** [nofavt.org/farm-beginnings](http://nofavt.org/farm-beginnings)



# Jack & Anne Lazor honored for Lifetime Achievement

The Vermont Agricultural Hall of Fame, now in its 17th year, has inducted 80 Vermonters to date. Last year, NOFA-VT's beloved Enid Wonnacott was honored. And this year, Vermont organic farmers Jack and Anne Lazor, of Butterworks Farm in Westfield, have been recognized for their "Lifetime Achievement: 30+ Years of Outstanding Service to Vermont Agriculture."

Jack and Anne Lazor began farming in 1976. For more than forty years, they have built a reputation for producing outstanding organic yogurt, stewarding the land, and advocating for organic agriculture.

Their Butterworks Farm grass-fed yogurt is sold in nearly 80 groceries and coops across Vermont and in neighboring states. Together with a dedicated team, they produce some of the finest organic yogurt available.

Anne and Jack have been a steadfast team in farming, family, and life. Jack is a teacher and a member of the "Agrarian Elders," a group of twenty-four pioneers considered to be the founders of organic agriculture in the U.S. Over the years, both he and Anne have devoted themselves to teaching the next generation of farmers how to

raise animals, steward the land, and produce products ethically and sustainably.

Farming is a family affair for the Lazors, who raised their daughter, Christine, together at Butterworks. Today, the Lazors enjoy sharing their love of agriculture, and Butterworks Farm, with their grandchildren.

To reflect the evolving face of Vermont agriculture, beginning in 2018, the Vermont Ag Hall of Fame began honoring outstanding individuals in three categories: Emerging Leader, Ag Innovator, and Lifetime Achievement. Prior to 2018, the Hall primarily focused on Lifetime Achievement, exclusively.

The Lazors, along with the other inductees, were honored at a luncheon at noon on August 28th at the Champlain Valley Expo. The Ag Hall of Fame, located inside the Miller Building at the Champlain Valley Expo, can be viewed throughout the year. Nominations for next year's Hall of Fame class will be accepted beginning in January of 2020.



## Abbie Nelson is retiring at the end of December 2019

**All of us at NOFA will miss Abbie for her incredible can-do attitude and her unwavering commitment to the organization. She has made a profound and lasting contribution to the Vermont food system, and Vermont's school food programs. This is the message Abbie shared with staff, Board, and partners:**

"I wanted to let you know that I will be retiring and leaving NOFA-VT at the end of December 2019.

Initially, I had planned for my transition to happen at the end of 2018, but delayed it due to Enid's retirement and passing. I decided to remain on the team through the transition to help hire and welcome NOFA's new ED and also in order to finish a strong new strategic plan. Now that we've done both those things, it's time for me to make my plans known. My

husband and I will be readying our house for sale, in the spring of 2020, and moving to the DC area for an adventure in urban living and, primarily, to be closer to our 3 grown kids.

My position over the last many years at NOFA has varied and grown over these almost 21 years. I started organizing an Ag Education conference in 1999, developed the Farm to Community Mentor program with Enid, did Ag Education workshops, and became the local purchasing and program director for our VT FEED partnership. We will be developing a job description to continue our food system work at NOFA, especially Farm to School!

I have loved working at NOFA, and with all of the organizations and partners over the 20 years, on all of the various and creative projects and will miss the work, but mostly



the people, and definitely VT. I look forward to remaining an adviser and friend to NOFA-VT from DC and am excited for the organization's next chapter."



*If you or someone you know is interested in learning about or applying to the open position, please visit [nofavt.org/jobs](https://nofavt.org/jobs).*





# Ask Callie

Dear Callie,

***I have been seeing a lot of press lately about dairy farms owned by corporations exploiting loopholes in the organic regulations to raise their young animals conventionally. How is this possible and how does it affect organic producers in Vermont?***

Sincerely,  
Debbie Dairee

Dear Debbie,

This issue originates from a section of the organic rule titled the Origin of Livestock. This section of the regulation describes how an animal must be raised in order to qualify as organic. For example, for an animal to qualify for organic beef, it must be raised organically from the last third of gestation. In other words, three months before birth the farmer has to start managing the animal organically - the animal's mother must be fed organic feed and pasture.

The loophole exists due to an exception to the "last third of gestation" rule that was created for conventional dairy farmers to transition their management over to organic production. The idea was that if you had a herd of conventional animals, you would manage

those animals organically for one full year. The animals would be fed organic feed, would not be able to be treated with antibiotics and hormones and would be required to be pastured. After the year was up, those animals would qualify to produce organic milk. They would however, never qualify as organic beef animals. This exemption for dairy animals allowed conventional producers a one-time opportunity to get into the organic market without losing the genetics and lineage of the animals they had been raising before they transitioned to organic.

Because the rule is written poorly, some certifiers have been allowing some dairy farms to continuously use this transition clause. This means that instead of using this exemption once to bring a conventional herd into organic production, some farms are using it repeatedly to raise all of their young animals conventionally and then transition them back to organic management. This means that young calves are being fed conventional milk replacer, treated with antibiotics if needed and fed conventional grain.

Now obviously, this is not the intent of the organic regulations. Consumers of course do not expect that young calves on dairy farms will be fed conventional milk replacer and be

treated with antibiotics. So why do it? As you might expect, it is cheaper to raise young calves conventionally. This allows large dairy farms owned by corporations who are exploiting this loophole to produce milk cheaply and to out compete small family dairy farms in Vermont.

This is a serious problem. Luckily, Senator Leahy agrees and is working to put pressure on the National Organic Program to close this loophole and clarify that once a farm is certified organic, all of their young animals must also be raised organically. To do otherwise is a mockery of the organic dairy farmers who started this movement because they believed managing animals organically was healthier and more humane. And of course, consumers can rest assured that organic dairy farmers certified by Vermont Organic Farmers are required to raise their young stock organically. No exceptions.

Sincerely,  
Callie



## Exploring Practices & Policies for Improving Soil Health

*Soil enthusiasts! Join us for one or both of the remaining sessions of our 3-part series focusing on soil health solutions for commercial farmers. Hosted at farms around the state this fall, each of our soil health workshops feature farmers innovating on soil health strategies, and discussions around how to expand these practices to farms around the state. Each event will include a farm tour and dinner from our mobile pizza oven!*

### Highgate Workshop

Thursday, September 26th, 2019, 3-6pm  
Choiniere Family Farm, 2465 Gore Road, Highgate Ctr.

Join Guy Choiniere of Choiniere Family Farm, a fourth generation, 100% grass-fed dairy farm in northwestern Vermont, as he shares lessons learned over the past 15 years about maximizing soil health while improving animal health and financial stability. We will tour the Choiniere's grazing operation as Guy discusses his approach to soil health, which is centered around the principles of keeping it simple, replacing what you harvest, and building soil resiliency.

### Middlebury Workshop

Tuesday, October 1, 2019, 3-6pm  
Elmer Farm, 855 Case St., Middlebury

Join Spencer & Jennifer Blackwell of Elmer Farm, a certified organic mixed vegetable and flower farm in Middlebury, as they share techniques they have used to improve the health and fertility of their soils, along with the results of those efforts. Some of the strategies discussed will include reduced tillage, installing a permanent bed system, increasing their use of multi-species cover crops, reduced amendments and the use of more targeted, live mulches.



**Cost: Farmers - free; Non-farmers - \$15 to cover cost of dinner.** Stick around after the technical portion of the workshop for pizza from NOFA-VT's mobile pizza oven and a discussion of how changes in policy and other tools can help to expand the use of good soil health practices on Vermont's farms.



## Living Potting Soil for Organic Growers

**"The Fort Light potting soil has been a mainstay on my farm for the last nine seasons. For healthy seedling production there is nothing better, more consistent, or dependable on the market."**

– Katrina Becker, Cattail Organics, Athens, WI



vermontcompost.com • 802-223-6049

# NOURSE

The Best Berry Plants Since 1932

## The Leading Small Fruit Nursery Today!

- Excellent Customer Service
- Wide Variety Selection
- Technical Support
- Complete Lab Facility for Tissue Culture & Virus Indexing

**Strawberry**  
**Raspberry**  
**Blackberry**  
**Blueberry**  
**Currant**  
**Gooseberry**  
**Elderberry**  
**Asparagus**  
**Rhubarb**

Nourse Farms  
 41 River Road  
 South Deerfield MA 01373  
 413.665.2658

[noursefarms.com](http://noursefarms.com)  
[info@noursefarms.com](mailto:info@noursefarms.com)

## NATURAL FERTILIZERS & SOIL AMENDMENTS

### ENVIRONMENTALLY COMPATIBLE PEST CONTROLS

**FRUIT & VEGETABLES**  
**LANDSCAPING**  
**NURSERIES**  
**ORCHARDS**  
**TREE & TURF CARE**  
**AND MUCH MORE...**

\* for a complete list of WSDA & OMRI listed products please see our website.

More info on  
**NORGANICS.COM**  
 or call for the location of your  
 nearest wholesale distributor

ph: 802-222-4277  
 email: [info@norganics.com](mailto:info@norganics.com)  
 fax: 802-222-9661



# Fall 2019 Policy Update

By Maddie Kempner, NOFA-VT Policy Advisor

## Soil Health Workshop Series

This fall, we're excited to be getting out on farms to talk soil health and policy in Brattleboro (9/17), Highgate Center (9/26), and Middlebury (10/1). Check out page 5 in this issue of NOFA Notes for the details of our 3-part series Exploring Practices & Policies Improving Soil Health. At these workshops, we'll be learning about practical techniques for improving soil health on a variety of farm types, as well as engaging in collaborative discussions with farmers, service providers, and other stakeholders about the most effective ways to expand healthy soils practices across all Vermont farms. We hope you can join us!

## NOFA Climate Walk-Out

On Friday, September 20th, the NOFA staff joined millions of others around the world who walked out of school and work as part of the Global Climate Strike. We spent the morning working on an organic farm: Burnt Rock Farm in Huntington, a certified organic farm specializing in greens and storage crops, and Jericho Settlers Farm in Jericho, growing

organic vegetables, flowers and herbs as well as pastured sheep, pigs and poultry. By building healthy soils that store carbon underground, rotating animals on pasture, and conserving biodiversity, organic farms are a critical part of the solution to climate change.

Several other food and farming organizations around the state, including Rural Vermont and Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund also participated in the Climate Strike by engaging in gleaning projects and organizing regenerative farm tours.

## Pollinator Protection

NOFA-VT is proud to be part of the "Pesticide-Free Vermont Coalition", that worked to pass H.205 (now Act 35) during the 2019 legislative session. Act 35 classifies neonicotinoid pesticides as "restricted use," meaning they can only be used by licensed applicators. Act 35 also increases registration fees for all pesticides, with the increased revenue going to support two new positions within the Vermont Agency of Agriculture to

assist in pesticide enforcement and pollinator protection, as well as to provide technical assistance and education to pesticide applicators, beekeepers and the general public. This fall, the coalition is back to work developing a campaign for stronger state action on pesticides in 2020.

## 2nd Annual "State House to the Farm House"

On Sunday, September 22, as part of the second annual "State House to the Farm House" event, legislators and farmers gathered on farms around the state to celebrate the innovation and dedication of Vermont farmers, and engage in thoughtful dialogue about their concerns and hopes for the future of agriculture. This year, twelve organizations partnered with fourteen host farms in order to facilitate connections and conversation between legislators and the farmers they represent. NOFA-VT is hosting an event for Lamoille County farmers and legislators at Long Winter Farm in Stowe, a diversified, organic farm owned by Annie and Andrew Paradee.



**Labels for Direct Marketing & Value-Added Products**

**Questions on labeling your products?  
We have solutions.**

We design and print labels for farm products including beverages, cheese, fruit, meat, pickles, salad greens, yogurt and vegetables.

Do you need a freezer label or one that is biodegradable? Are you looking for great value and responsive customer service?

To get started, fill out the Quote Request Form on our website today.

CATALOG ONLINE  
[www.growersdiscountlabels.com](http://www.growersdiscountlabels.com)  
1-800-693-1572  
[info@growersdiscountlabels.com](mailto:info@growersdiscountlabels.com)



## Welcome New Staff!

*Bay Hammond, Material Review Specialist and Farm Inspector*

Bay joined the NOFA-VT team in July of 2019 as a Material Review Specialist and Farm Inspector. Bay grew up on a family farm, worked in the world of nutrition and holistic health and in 1993 founded and managed Doolittle Farm in Shoreham, which is a diverse organic farm. Bay has worked as a volunteer for various educational boards, farmers market boards and community action groups. In 2013, Bay's farm wound down and she accepted a position as Manager of the Green Mountain College Farm where she enjoyed her daily interaction with students interested in farming and agriculture. Bay is excited to be working with and supporting Vermont organic farmers. In her spare time she enjoys her quiet farm, gardens (sort of), spends time with her family and of course enjoys her five grandchildren.





# Farmer Olympics

Thank you to everyone who participated in our 5th annual Farmer Olympics! On Tuesday, August 6th 2019, 54 farmers came together at the Intervale Community Farm in Burlington, Vermont, to compete for the gold at this mid-season extravaganza. Individual farm teams showed off their finely-honed agricultural skills in events ranging from physical to cerebral to plain ridiculous. This event is a chance to unwind, celebrate the season, and kick back before that heavy fall workload begins.

## Winning Teams:

- Team Spirit Award: The Romaine Empire from Riverberry Farm, Fairfax
- 1st Place: Tomato Hornwarriors from Philo Ridge Farm, Charlotte
- 2nd Place: Moon Crew from Full Moon Farm, Hinesburg
- 3rd Place: The Lone Grazers (Choiniere Family Farm, Howmars Farm, Grass Cattle Co.)



(Clockwise, beginning with photo above left): 1) Erin Buckwalter, NOFA-VT's Market Development Director, takes notes as the judge assigned to the Middlebury College team as they try to determine the soil amendments in their hand (blindfolded). 2) Livy Bulger, NOFA-VT's Events Coordinator, gets the cherry tomatoes ready for the eating competition. 3) The winning team! 4) Competitors prep for the Pantyhose Beach Ball Race. 5) NOFA-VT's new executive director, Grace Oedel, climbs on a table to get farmers' attention (during an intense summer thunderstorm) to begin the games! 6) All the contestants for the 5th Annual NOFA-VT Farmer Olympics. 7) PIZZA! (Photos by Kim Mercer.)





# Healthy Soil, Healthy Plants, Healthy People

By Nicko Rubin, owner of East Hill Tree Farm & NOFA-VT member

Growing fruit trees, berry plants, and perennials gives us a special opportunity to care for our soil and develop relationships with our surrounding ecologies, from bacteria and fungi to insects, birds, and maybe even bears.

On our farm we experiment with growing a wide range of fruit trees, nuts, and berry plants, as well as herbaceous perennials and the occasional annual. Growing trees, shrubs, and perennials makes it easier to let the soil be. Once planted we can often get by with little to no further disturbance of the soil. This allows the plants themselves in relation to the biology in the soil to create the conditions for their success. At planting, we do go to some lengths to prepare the soil. We have seen plants grow and thrive from the day of transplanting, but we have also seen plants limp along for years. We have seen plants devastated by insect damage and plants in the same field (though not in the same soil) entirely unbothered. The difference is in the soil.

Healthy plants feed the soil with their dead decaying bodies, and also more primarily with sugars produced via photosynthesis released directly through the roots to feed abundant populations of bacteria, fungi, and micro-organisms in the root-zone. Flourishing life in the soil facilitates transfer of nutrients, increases long term nutrient holding, and improves drought tolerance as well as pest

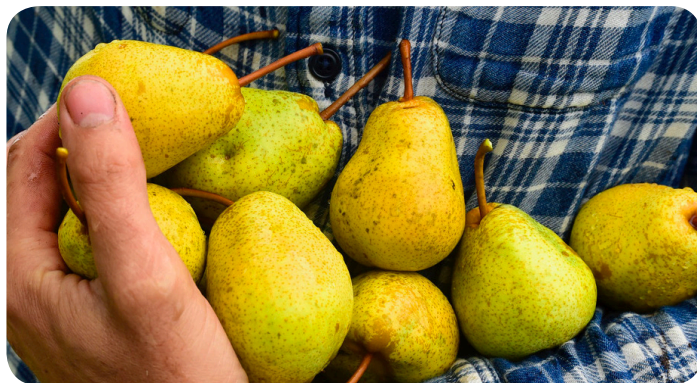
and disease resistance.

Plants will create this positive feedback loop given time. They will create it faster and more robustly, when we give them the conditions to flourish. This means up front improvement of the soil via aeration, additions of organic matter in cases where it is low, and application of mineral nutrients to meet the plant's basic needs. In very poor or disturbed soils actually adding the biological communities may be necessary, via mature composts or other inoculants. A covering on the soil surface, whether it is live plants or mulch, goes a long way to stabilize moisture and temperature in the soil so the biology can flourish (Yes. Flourish, flourish, flourish. That's what it's all about).

Additions of soluble nitrogen and phosphate, while they may support plant growth, can cause plants to forgo the relationships with bacteria and fungi, upsetting this positive feedback loop. This may result in plants being more likely to suffer insect and disease damage given the less complete nutrition. Additionally, once soluble nutrients are no longer present growth slows as the biological component has been starved due to lack of root exudates.

A diversity of plants growing together support a wide range of microbial allies. In most cases more is more. Different plants partner with bacteria and fungi, utilizing the zones within the soil, and releasing nutrients at different times, thus creating a more stable, productive system as far as the soil is concerned. Remember: plant performance, from apples to zucchini, is all about the soil.

Above ground benefits from plant diversity emerge as well. For one, we enjoy access to the broad range of foods and medicines. Additionally, plants can provide a range of ecosystem services that effect everything. Plants flowering at varied times support a wide range of pollinators, plants with



tiny flowers support parasitoid wasps and a host of other beneficial insects, live and dead leaves and stalks provide food and habitat for additional insect friends, birds may utilize seed and fiber, and the list goes on and on.

I for one will be putting lots of trees and shrubs into the ground this fall. Fall transplanting of deciduous trees and shrubs works well, particularly late fall (mid October into November), once the plant has already begun to go dormant. The tree is no longer actively growing and typically experiences very little transplant shock. Stock that has been in a pot for a season may have roots beginning to wrap the side of the pot. These can be pulled apart with little fear of damaging the plant once it has gone dormant.

When planting, I dig a wide but shallow hole, thoroughly loosening the soil in the hole and often beyond. I may add minerals based on a soil test or what I know about the soil and site. I'll place the plant in the hole, spreading any wrapping roots and aiming to have the crown of the plant slightly above the surrounding grade. I will backfill and water thoroughly to ensure the soil settles in around the roots. Finally, I'll cover the hole with a layer of compost and woodchip mulch to protect the disturbed soil over winter and to help stabilize soil moisture and temperature. If necessary, I will install fencing to protect from deer and rodent damage. Surrounding plants may encroach next growing season but unless they are likely to compete for sunlight, I am happy to have them.



*Nicko Rubin owns and operates East Hill Tree Farm, demonstration farm and nursery for fruit trees, nuts, and berry plants in Plainfield, VT. He provides edible landscape consultation, design, and planting.*



# NOFA-VT Members: thank you for supporting organic agriculture!

We welcome the following members who joined us or renewed their membership in the third quarter of 2019:

## NEW MEMBERS

William Aldrighetti, Bethel, VT  
Peter Antos-Ketcham, Starksboro, VT  
Woody Brooks & Nancy Felix, Hoosick Falls, NY  
Jennifer Daniels, Meristem Farms LLC, Waterbury, VT  
Robert Decker, 102 Bleu, Guildhall, VT  
Michael Dodge, Fairfield, VT  
Jeffrey Horbar, Charlotte, VT  
Tia Judd, T's Hilltop Haven Farm, Newport Center, VT

Joyce Lanpher, Lanpher Family Farm, Waterville, VT  
Jesse Lukas, GMG Farms, Charlotte, VT  
Alexander Mackiewicz  
Michael Mignone, Sterling Mountain Organics, Johnson, VT  
Lisa Montgomery, Old Town, ME  
Thomas Murphy, Wilmington, VT  
Jean Palmer, Essex Jct, VT

Stephen Pratt  
Paul Rainville, Highgate Center, VT  
Justin Sauerwein, Chelsea, VT  
Margaret Solon, Ascutney, VT  
Edgar Stewart, Carlisle, MA  
Erik Waring, Erik's Sugarbush, Kirby, VT  
Ashley & Robert Yeager, St. Albans, VT

## NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS

All Souls Tortilleria, Burlington, VT  
Banner Greenhouses  
Bravo Botanicals LLC, Brattleboro, VT  
Butterfield Hemp Co., Brownington, VT  
Cattis LLC, Hardwick, VT  
Center for An Agricultural Economy, Hardwick, VT  
Depot Farm Supply, Whiting, VT  
Farm Connex, Newport, VT

Green Mountain Spinnery, Putney, VT  
King Arthur Flour, White River Junction, VT  
MG Coffee Roasting Enterprises, LLC, White River Junction, VT  
Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, Middlebury, VT  
Myers Produce, Craftsbury, VT  
NEK Roots, Manchester Center, VT  
Nitty Gritty Grains of Vermont, Charlotte, VT

O Bread Bakery, Shelburne, VT  
Pennsylvania Certified Organic, Spring Mills, PA  
Restorative Formulations, Montpelier, VT  
Sun Hill Farm, Putney, VT  
Thomas Hirschak Co., Morrisville, VT  
True North Granola, Brattleboro, VT  
Vermont Bread Co., Colchester, VT

## NEW VOF CERTIFICATIONS

Vermont Organic Farmers welcomes the following new producers who have recently obtained organic certification (certified between 3/1/19-6/1/19) for all or a portion of their operation, joining the more than 700 organic farmers & processors throughout the state.

**102 Bleu**  
**Alpenglow Farm**  
**Andy Carr**  
**Barry Hill Farm LLC**  
**Bordertown Farm**  
**Butterfly Bakery of Vermont**  
**Cattis LLC**  
**Cream Hill Stock Farm**  
**Good Body Products**  
**Hillside Lane Hemp**  
**Humble Roots Horticulture**  
**Joyce Lanpher**  
**Lily Hill CBD LLC**  
**Luce Farm LLC**  
**McCracken Livestock**  
**Meadowhawk**  
**Medicinals**

**Montkush LLC**  
**Old School Farm Vermont**  
**Paul Rainville**  
**Pura Vida Hemp LLC**  
**Quintessential LLC**  
**Royal Oak Farm LLC**  
**Sandiwood Farm LLC**  
**Sawdog Coffee Roasters**  
**Sunsoil**  
**The Maple Standard, LLC**  
**Trillium Hill Farm LLC**  
**Two Sisters Farm LLC**  
**Veg Shed LLC**  
**Wilson Herb Farm LTD CO**



Learn more about the benefits of certified organic, locally grown at [www.nofavt.org/why-organic](http://www.nofavt.org/why-organic)

## SAVE THE DATE!

The 13th Annual **Junior Iron Chef VT** culinary competition is Saturday March 14th, 2020 at the Champlain Valley Expo in Essex Junction, VT. Registration opens November 15th, 2019. To learn more visit <https://vtfeed.org/jrironchefvt>.



## Winter Conference RFP

Each year, the NOFA-VT Winter Conference provides a valuable opportunity for farmers, homesteaders, gardeners, land managers, educators, producers, activists, and others involved in the food system to participate in our vibrant organic community by sharing ideas, resources, and skills and celebrate all we are making happen together. We are currently accepting proposals for the 2020 Winter Conference (2/15-2/17/20). If you have any questions about the Winter Conference or the proposal process, please contact: Livy Bulger at [livy@nofavt.org](mailto:livy@nofavt.org) or call (802) 434-4122, x. 21. **Submissions are due by Tuesday, October 1st!**



# Share the Harvest

**A fundraiser for limited-income Vermonters • Thursday October 3rd, 2019**

We invite you to participate in the 25th annual Share the Harvest event to be held October 3, 2019. Up to 15% of sales and donations from this day at participating restaurants, co-ops, breweries, and stores are donated to NOFA-VT's Farm Share Program, which assists limited-income Vermonters in obtaining farm fresh fruits and vegetables through subsidized CSA shares.

In 2018, there were over 1,400 individuals receiving CSA shares

from the Vermont Farm Share Program and a waiting list of others hoping to participate. Help us meet our fundraising goal of \$20,000 by dining out at a participating restaurant or purchasing products at any participating store. Thank you for making a difference in helping to fight hunger, improve nutrition, and support Vermont's sustainable family farms!

**For more information and the most up-to-date list of participating businesses, visit our website at [www.nofavt.org/STH](http://www.nofavt.org/STH) or call us at (802) 434-4122. Please support these businesses that participate in Share the Harvest!**

**Brattleboro Food Co-op, Brattleboro • Cedar Circle Farmstand, E. Thetford • City Market, Onion River Coop, Burlington • Courtyard Marriott Middlebury Bistro, Middlebury • Fire and Ice, Middlebury • The Friendly Toast (participating on October 2), Burlington • Green Peppers Restaurant, Middlebury • Hunger Mountain Co-op, Montpelier • The Inn at Shelburne Farms, Shelburne • Juniper Bar and Restaurant at Hotel Vermont, Burlington • Laughing Moon Chocolates, Stowe • The Local Buzz Cafe, Bradford • Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, Middlebury • Mule Bar, Winooski • Penny Cluse Cafe, Burlington • Plainfield Co-op, Plainfield • Putney Co-op, Putney • Rail City Market, St Albans • Red Mill Restaurant at Basin Harbor, Vergennes • Sonny's Blue Benn Diner, Bennington • Springfield Food Coop, Springfield • Switchback Brewing Company, Burlington • Upper Valley Food Co-op, White River Junction • The Waybury Inn, Middlebury • Wood Meadow Market, Enosburg Falls**

**Can't dine out or shop on October 3rd? Use the coupon below or visit [www.nofavt.org/sth](http://www.nofavt.org/sth) to make a donation.**



Unfortunately I will be unable to dine out on October 3rd, but I would like to support NOFA-VT's efforts on behalf of limited-income Vermonters. Enclosed, please find my tax-deductible donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: **NOFA-VT Farm Share Program, PO Box 697, Richmond, VT 05477**





**NOFA VERMONT**  
**PO BOX 697**  
**RICHMOND, VT 05477**  
*Return Service Requested*

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 37  
Richmond, VT

*Special thanks to our  
foundational sponsors of  
the NOFA-VT Farm Hop!*



# THE 38<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NOFA-VT **WINTER CONFERENCE** BURLINGTON, VT • FEBRUARY 15-17, 2020

**SPONSORSHIP, ADVERTISING, & EXHIBITING**

Information  
online at  
[nofavt.org/  
conference](http://nofavt.org/conference)

