



COMMON GROUND FARM

Spring Newsletter 2011

A little madness in the Spring
Is wholesome even for the King,
But God be with the Clown —
Who ponders this tremendous scene —
This whole Experiment of Green —
As if it were his own!

Emily Dickinson, from *Complete Poems* (1924).

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

It's been a long and frigid Winter...hard enough that even those among us buried deepest in hibernation are looking forward to Spring. The sap is running, the crocuses are popping out through the snow, and vegetable seeding begins in earnest next week at the farm! This off-season has been wonderful for me: my partner Sam has finally joined me here in Hughsonville and at the farm and we're ecstatic to be working together

in this wonderful farming community in 2011. Sam comes to us with a Horticulture degree from Michigan State University (my alma mater) and will be heading up the rest of our paid crew in the High Tunnel at Ober Creek and in many other capacities on the farm at Stonykill. Her expertise in season extension and other dynamic skills will be a great asset to the farm this year.

Sam and I spent the majority of January winnowing the pool of apprenticeship applicants for the upcoming season. We were enthralled to learn near the beginning of February that our three top candidates accepted seasonal positions with us! We will be hosting Mark, Elena, and Lindsey (all coming to us from Asheville, N.C.) for a summer full of experiential learning and hands-on training in sustainable agriculture. They are educated,

accomplished, and extremely capable...please join me in welcoming this extension of our family when they arrive in early May!

We've also spent the first part of every morning since January 1st in the barn at Stonykill. As some of you may know, Common Ground Farm took over the management of the animal herd at the farm beginning in January! We are now looking after cows, sheep, pigs, chickens and a turkey. Interacting with these animals on the daily has been a magical learning experience, and we're looking forward to lambing season which is right around the corner. Give me a call if you would like to be on a short list to witness the miracle of birth in the barn...we'll be keeping close watch near the end of March.

As previously mentioned, we will be seeding our first trays of vegetable-starts soon. Get in touch with me or come on out to the farm if you'd like to see what happens at this early stage. Soon enough our greenhouse will be overflowing again with the miniature plants that will become our summer harvest. The cycle of the seasons is amazing isn't it? In the middle of January, I couldn't even imagine what it felt like to be crouched down and covered in sweat in the water melon patch. Now, as if right on cue, I'm beginning to feel the annual urge to stick my hand into

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Our Farmer Tim in the high tunnel

photo: Dana Devine o'Malley

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soil, and give it another go. Sam and I are really excited to see you all...give a call if you'd like to come out and give us a hand in April!

Warmly, Tim

REPORT FROM THE BOARD

Hi Fellow Farm-folk!

This has been a year of much change and regrouping for your board at Common Ground Farm. Since I joined the Board of Directors in August of 2011, we've said goodbye to some most amazing people (listed in no particular order): Kris from the Farm Committee; Jill the Fair Food Committee Chair; Mei, Fair Food Committee member; Marla, Board President; and Brian, Development Committee member, and former Board Vice President.

As I'm sure we're all familiar, as one door closes, another opens, bringing in your newer members (also listed in no particular order):

--Penny, ad-hoc Bylaws subcommittee, and Fair Food Committee member

--Carol, Finance Committee member, and Board Development task team pioneer (this is still a working title)

--Andrew, ad-hoc Bylaws subcommittee member

--Beth, Development Committee Chair, Farm Committee member, and Vice President of the Board

--Sarah, who is finding the right committee fit

--and yours truly, Zoë, Farm Committee member and Board President.



Baby lettuces growing in the warmth of the high tunnel

photo: Dana Devine O'Malley

We are close to completing our grant-funded Board training with NYCON (New York Council of Nonprofits), and are looking for new board members to join us at the table once per month. If this is something you're considering, (Wink. Wink. Nudge. Nudge.) you might be happy to know that in addition to Board meetings, we also ask that each Director join a committee in order to maintain the infusion of our mission, but also to allow everyone to tap into their own volunteer passions. Outside of meetings and special events, most of our work for the farm is tele-commuted, and our schedules are accommodating to everyone. If your interest is piqued, please contact me, Zoë at membership@commongroundfarm.org to discuss further. Please be sure to put the nature of your interest in the subject line so that our Dear Nicole can quickly forward correspondence accordingly.

If you're not ready to take the full leap into Board service, we would also love to add to our committee membership. Available committees to general membership are:

- Farm Committee
- Development Committee
- Fair Food Committee

Through these committees we invite you to share your skills, and to tap into the ... root ... of what matters at CGF. For more info on these committees, please refer to the committee descriptions also in this newsletter.

And with that, I thank you for your time, and bid you adieu.

-Z-

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Greetings Members and Friends,

While there is still snow on the ground as I write this, signs of spring are here, including the ding, ding, ding of the sap dropping into the buckets around our house—the daily gathering of which reminds me that, even if we have not peeled off the layers of the scarves and hats we have needed all winter, change is happening. This is our first year to try sugaring as a family and it's such a great way to connect with the season and engage in some production. Even when the snow retreat is barely noticeable, when you see those full buckets you know that things are moving ahead. On March 19th the Randolph School will be hosting its 2nd Annual Maple Fest from 12:00 to 5:00. Last year Common Grounders plugged into this event by tapping trees on the New Hamburg property and contributing sap to the event which we got back as syrup to use for our Brunch in the Fields—if you are interested in getting involved with tree tapping or sap collection, contact me at membership@commongroundfarm.org.



photo: Dana Devine O'Malley

The high tunnel in action this winter!

I feel I write this every year, but once again, what some may consider the off-season for the farm, is in fact the opposite. Jen Clapp is running education programs, the seeds are going in the greenhouse, a slammin' intern crew is hired (welcome Sam Wildfong already!) and our committees are in gear (and welcoming members!). The website is being revamped, we are grant-seeking, board training and welcoming new board members (welcome Andrew, Penny, Carol and Sarah!). Farmer Tim and the Farm Committee are putting in place a number of changes in response to the surveys you completed. Thanks to all

who participated—your feedback is important to us. And we are signing up new members. This season we will be selling fewer shares in order to improve soil fertility, so if you have not rejoined—now is the time. A deposit of \$100 will hold you a spot.

This winter and spring we are also running a “Connecting Community” Series through a grant from IBM. This series is a way to connect the farm and its mission to the community and communities to each other. On February 24th we sponsored a film showing and discussion about the school lunch system with the film *Two Angry Moms* at the Randolph School. On April 9th we are so excited to host “Gather Round: A Community Potluck and Conversation about Fair Food”, in partnership with the First Presbyterian Church of Beacon and Pastor and member Ben Larson-Wolbrink. The event will focus on issues food security and access in the community and of course a lively potluck meal. This event is free and open to the public and we hope to see all who care about making healthy food accessible to all at the table! In May we will be working with teen groups who are involved with growing, gardening and making a difference—the Green Teen Community Gardening Program of Beacon and the Urban Farmer's League of Newburgh. Stay Tuned for more information on these events.

By the way, this grant was obtained by one of our board members who qualified to apply by logging volunteer hours for the farm. Over the past year we have had two workplace grants and some matched donations from other employers. Check out your employer's policy on matching donations or giving grants—we were fortunate to get the grants we did last year simply because the employees asked!

Lastly, I want to offer my sincere thanks to departing board members Marla Teyolia, Brian PJ Cronin, Mei Ying So, Jill Rubin and Kris Weidenheft, all of whom have worked so hard for the past several years helping to shape our organization to face challenges and grow. The Common

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Ground Farm Board of Directors is a volunteer board of dedicated members who help shape vision and policy and directly work on aspects of the farm that are not, frankly, covered by our budget. It is rewarding work and the board welcomes members who might be interested in serving—if this speaks to you—please contact Zoe Markwalter, our new board president at membership@commongroundfarm.org.

Wishing you mud underfoot and a warm and budding spring!

Lisa Jessup
Executive Director

EDUCATION AT COMMON GROUND FARM

Growing and Changing

Another growing season at the farm, about to begin. As winter oh-so-slowly makes its exit I find myself looking for any and all signs that spring is truly on its tail: a swelling bud, a squishy spot in the (finally visible) lawn, the faint pink glow in the limbs of still bare trees in the late afternoon. While waiting I have been dreaming up programming plans and imagining a new and perhaps permanent Children's Garden in our new acreage. This will be my last season as Education Director with the farm, as I will be starting full-time nursing school in the fall. It's been a sweet almost-4 years in this position, following many years working on the board and the Core Group (anyone remember that!). We will be making a more formal announcement regarding our search for a replacement soon, but in the meantime should you know of anyone interested in the position feel free to send them my way.



photo: Dana Devine O'Malley

From the Little House educational workshop series

Working and Teaching

Working members of the farm – those doing work hours in exchange for a lower share price – have you considered doing some of your hours teaching for the farm? We are always looking for new and interesting topics for our adult classes – why not offer to teach a workshop this season? Or if you enjoy working with children you could do some of your hours in the Children's Garden or helping teach a class. If you are interested in any of these options please let me know.

And thanks...

... to Jaya Srikrishnan for teaching another excellent workshop on how to bake sourdough bread.

... to Denise Schirmer and the folks at Stonykill Foundation for keeping the doors open at Stonykill when the DEC could no longer do so

... to Farmer Tim Heuer for stepping in to care for the barn animals, enabling them to stay and brighten our days at the farm!

See you in the garden!

Jen Clapp
education@commongroundfarm.org

PLEASE SEE THE CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR THE LATEST EDUCATION OFFERINGS!

NEWS FROM OUR APPRENTICES

Hello from Texas to our New York farm family!

Common Ground Farm, we sure miss you. But, Dan and I are excited to announce that we are embarking on our first voyage as farm managers... in Denton, Texas, my home town!

A bit of background: North Texas is unlike the Hudson Valley. There is not one CSA farm in our entire region. So, when the opportunity presented itself to grow good food for the Denton community, Dan and I felt that we were up for the challenge. Early this winter Dan loaded up and headed south to join me in Ponder, TX- a po-dunk, country town located outside of Denton. The oil rigs and long-horned steers had better move out and make way for the sustainable food movement, because we are knee-deep in the beginning of the first season on our farm! We have dubbed the farm Cardo's Farm Project (after the generous land owner).



Former apprentices Dan and Amanda on their farm in Texas

Cardo's Farm Project is a biodynamic, community farm. Looking to Common Ground Farm as a model, we have cultivated 1 and 1/2 acres and 2 small high tunnels. This week we will harvest spinach, radishes, arugula, purple peacock broccoli greens, cabbage, and chard from the high tunnels and salad mix from the outdoor beds. Baby plants are growing strong in the green house and will soon be transplanted in the black, heavy clay soil among the spinach, arugula, beets, carrots, radishes, and kohlrabi that flourished in the mid-70 degree, Texas February. Tomatoes go in April 1st! As a biodynamic farm, the veggies are a part of an integral system that includes 60 laying hens, 2 roosters, 2 Jersey dairy cows, a calf named Nutmeg, a flock of ducks, wheatgrass and sunflower sprouting, and a farm bunny named Otha.

For now, we sell the bulk of our produce and eggs to a local natural food store and a couple of restaurants. This spring and summer we look forward to actively taking part in the Denton Community Market. We also look forward to establishing workshops and children's ed. programming. Much to our excitement, folks around here are welcoming the farm with support and interest. Our first event of the season was in mid- February. Nearly 75 friendly faces visited the farm to welcome Dan from New York and to learn about our plan. A big thanks to all of CGF for being the strong farm community that has inspired all of this farm love down here in Texas :).

Warm farm wishes for the coming season!
Love, Dan and Amanda



Common Ground Farm's Harvest Auction held November 6th was tons of fun and a great fundraising success! Thanks to all who participated!

PAPER IN THE FIELDS

From Cathy Lebowitz

During the summer of 2010, I was the artist in residence at Common Ground Farm. I quickly realized after my first few visits that I wanted to spend my time in the fields, learning about the plants and the challenges of producing food. There was so much work that needed to be done, and this seemed to me most important. Art would have to emerge in the in-between moments.



Toward the end of July, the CG apprentice Amanda Austin and I started planning a collaborative project. She had graduated from art school the previous year and I had been an artist and art editor for over twenty years. The different perspectives proved to be fruitful. Paper was a key medium in Amanda's artwork. I was also interested in paper, in re-using paper from my office, where I work at a magazine. The company doesn't recycle and I collect mounds of gently used paper that I don't know what to do with.

Amanda and I exchanged emails during the week and talked on the weekends when I came to work on the farm. The project emerged slowly. We decided to have a one-day art installation in the middle of September. We both wanted to have the show on the farm, in the fields, rather than in a gallery or room.

We considered different ideas but the project came together when Amanda imagined sheets of recycled paper on the wire fence around the entire perimeter of the field. I could see it in my mind—the white paper flapping in the wind like a living white line. It reminded me of a rural version of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's Gates in Central Park. Amanda thinks big and the concept was good. However, the amount of paper, the effort to put them all up and take them all down, we both agreed was too much for our one-day installation. We adapted the idea.

On Saturday, September 18, we hung 365 pieces of paper down the electric fence closest to the gate. Each sheet had the date on it, from January to December 2010. We circled the dates when crops were planted in the field. To see the installation, people walked inside the length of the fence, drawing them deeper into the fields, and experiencing, in a compressed way, a year on the farm.



I also wanted a less ephemeral result, and I asked the crew members to each make a map of the farm. The map could be anything they wanted. It did not have to represent the farm physically, although it could. Each map was a unique surprise. I hung them on the fence as well. Dan Moon's represented the entire cosmos in his, with plants at the center. Kim Myers picked a leaf from each crop down the side of one field and sewed it onto a piece of paper. Tim made a map of every season and attached them to light yellow tracing paper, which glowed when the sun hit it.



FARM COMMITTEE NEWS

Join the Farm Committee!

Our mission: The Farm Committee serves to support our farm workers through quality of life enhancements; our CSA members through communication and organization; and our greater community through outreach education.

We welcome any interested members who are curious about joining the Farm Committee to attend our next meeting on Monday, March 26th at 9am at Bank Square. It is a wonderful way to meet directly with Farmer Tim and understand how we, as members, can help make the lives of our farmers and interns the best it can be this upcoming season! On the agenda: an outdoor shower for the farmers, sprucing up the distribution room for the new season, and planning the new member orientation (May 21st) in the Spring.

FAIR FOOD COMMITTEE NEWS

Do you care about making sure that fresh local food is affordable for all members of our community? Do you want to find a rewarding way to do your work hours for the farm? The Fair Food Committee of Common Ground Farm is looking for members to serve this important aspect of our farm. The Fair Food committee is responsible for:

-Food donations to the food pantry

-Serving low income members of our community through a Fair Share program and Common Greens, our mobile market in Beacon.

This season we will be developing partnerships with churches and social service organizations to more effectively reach those in need. The committee will engage in decision making on our programs, fundraising, outreach to the community, and can also work directly serving the community through food pantry and mobile market work. If you have questions, would like to serve but cannot attend this first meeting, or would like to RSVP (welcome but not necessary) please write to Lisa at membership@commongroundfarm.org.

Please join us and find out more about making food accessible in our community!

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE NEWS

The Development Committee supports the work of the Farm through fund development activities, including but not limited to, writing grants, securing in-kind and individual donations, coordinating fundraising projects and outreach events, and organizing our fall auction fundraising event. Farm members who are interested in joining the development committee will be able to participate in a special training session to learn more about fund development activities. If you are interested, please contact Beth Pogue at bethpogue@gmail.com.



photo: Dana Devine O'Malley

Common Ground Farm's high tunnel on a gorgeous autumn day.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

To register for any of the education classes that follow, please send payment to Common Ground Farm, PO Box 148, Beacon, NY 12508, along with participant's name, class name, date and time, if applicable. Remember that Common Ground Farm members receive a 10% discount on all classes. Questions? Contact Education Director Jen Clapp: education@commongroundfarm.org.

MARCH

PRESCHOOL ON THE FARM – Children's Workshop
A monthly program for ages 2-4 year olds, with caregiver
Friday, March 18th, 10am - 11am or 1:30pm - 2:30pm (choose one)
Theme: Wild Animals on the Farm

Bring your preschooler to the farm each month and enjoy an hour of fun and learning, with songs, stories and visits with the barn animals. Indoor program, with time outside as weather permits.
Cost: \$7 per child, \$12 for 2 children in the same family
Location: Meet at the red livestock barns.

*If you are unable to attend due to your child's preschool schedule, speak to us about a field trip to the farm for your preschool!

RANDOLPH SCHOOL MAPLE FEST -- Community Event

Saturday March 19th Time: 12pm-5pm

Join our friends at the Randolph School for a special event featuring maple sugaring demonstrations, sap boiling, sing-a-longs, storytelling, hikes, contra dancing and pancake lunch!

Location: Randolph School, 2467 Route 9D, Wappingers Falls

PIONEER LIVING SERIES -- Children's Workshop

A monthly program for children ages 5 and up

Saturday, March 19th Time: 10am - 11:30am or (choose one)

Friday, March 25th Time: 12pm - 1:30pm

Theme: The Osage People of the Prairie

Based on the Little House books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, this series offers children a chance to step back in time and learn about the lives of children and families before the days of television, refrigeration, indoor plumbing and electricity! Each class involves hands-on activities, a visit to the barn animals, and includes a snack. Knowledge of the books is not required for participation. Children may attend just a few or all of the classes.

Location: Barn classroom

Cost per class: \$20 one child, \$35 two children, \$50 three children

FARM COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, March 26th Time: 9am-10am

Location: Bank Square Coffeehouse, 129 Main St., Beacon

CROP PLANNING FOR THE HOME GARDEN -- Adult Workshop

Sunday, March 27 Time: 11am - 12:30pm

Have you ever wondered how farmers manage to grow so much food on relatively little land? Careful planning of crop succession will help you get the most out of whatever space you have for gardening. Join farmer Tim Heuer for this excellent workshop for the home gardener. Learn about soil fertility, cover crops, extending your season, and more.

Location: Common Ground Farm, gather in the parking lot by the big red livestock barn

Cost: \$15 per person

GREENHOUSE MANAGEMENT (FOR ANY SIZE!) -- Adult Workshop

Saturday, April 2 Time: 10am - 11:30am

Learn all you need to know about growing plants from seed in a greenhouse in this hands-on workshop with farmer Tim Heuer. Get a head start on the season!

Location: Common Ground Farm, gather in the parking lot by the big red livestock barn

Cost: \$15 per person

SECOND SATURDAY WORK PARTY

Saturday, April 9th Time: 8am-12pm

Location: Common Ground Farm fields



**MAPLE
FEST**

AT RANDOLPH SCHOOL

MARCH 19

12-5 PM

RAIN DATE - MARCH 20

MAPLE SUGARING

SING-A-LONGS

FEATURING:

POWER OF SONG / JACOB & DAVID BERNZ

GINA SAMARDGE / JEN CLAPP

& THE RANDOLPH SCHOOL KIDS

STORYTELLING

WITH:

JONATHAN KRUK & ANITA MERANDO

HIKES • DANCING

PANCAKE LUNCH

FUNDRAISER

FRIENDS



EVERYONE
IS INVITED!



WWW.RANDOLPHSCHOOL.ORG
2467 ROUTE 9D - WAPPINGERS

APRIL

GATHER ROUND: A COMMUNITY POTLUCK AND CONVERSATION ABOUT FAIR FOOD

Saturday, April 9th

Time: 12pm - 2pm

In partnership with the First Presbyterian Church of Beacon and Pastor and member Ben Larson-Wolbrink, this event will focus on issues food security and access in the community and of course a lively potluck meal.

Location: First Presbyterian Church, 50 Liberty Street, Beacon

PRESCHOOL ON THE FARM – Children's Workshop

A monthly program for ages 2-4 year olds, with caregiver

Friday, April 29th, 10am - 11am or 1:30pm - 2:30pm (choose one): Spring into Spring!

Bring your preschooler to the farm each month and enjoy an hour of fun and learning, with songs, stories and visits with the barn animals. Indoor program, with time outside as weather permits.

Cost: \$7 per child, \$12 for 2 children in the same family

Location: Meet at the red livestock barns.

*If you are unable to attend due to your child's preschool schedule, speak to us about a field trip to the farm for your preschool!

PIONEER LIVING SERIES -- Children's Workshop

A monthly program for children ages 5 and up

Based on the Little House books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, this series offers children a chance to step back in time and learn about the lives of children and families before the days of television, refrigeration, indoor plumbing and electricity! Each class involves hands-on activities, a visit to the barn animals, and includes a snack. Knowledge of the books is not required for participation. Children may attend just a few or all of the classes.

Friday, April 15th

Time: 12pm - 1:30pm or (choose one)

Saturday, April 16th

Time: 10am - 11:30am

Theme: Johnnycakes & Homemade Butter

Location: Barn classroom at Stonykill Farm on Route 9D in Wappingers Falls, NY

Cost per class: \$20 one child, \$35 two children, \$50 three children

MAY

CGF OPEN HOUSE IN THE FIELDS

Saturday, May 7th

Time: 11am-3pm

Location: Common Ground Farm

Come visit us at the Farm as we are readying for the season ahead! Held on the same day and location as the Stonykill Earth Day so there is a full day of activities for everyone.

SECOND SATURDAY WORK PARTY

Saturday, May 14th

Time: 8am-12pm

Location: Common Ground Farm fields

DIG-INS with the GREEN TEENS -- Teen Event!

Saturday, May 21st

Stay tuned for more details and more dates (with the Urban Farmers League).

CGF NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

Saturday, May 21st

Time: 10am-11am

Location: Common Ground Farm

Come find out everything you need to know about getting the most out of your new CSA membership.

SUMMER

SUMMER FUN AT THE FARM! -- Program for Kids

Summer is a time for fun, sun and exploration! Digging in the garden, catching frogs in the pond, building a campfire and roasting marshmallows, exploring the woods, visiting the barn animals, arts & crafts, cooking projects... what a great way to spend a summer! This year we are offering 5 half days (instead of 4) with an option to extend the day until 2pm.

Three Sessions: July 11 - 15; July 25 - 29; August 8 - 12

Two Age Groups each Session: 4 - 6 year olds & 6 - 9 year olds

Hours & Cost: 9am - 12:30pm \$125 per week

9am - 2pm \$180 per week

Preregistration is required. Please contact Jen Clapp for more information and a registration form, education@commongroundfarm.org.