



NEWSLETTER

*For man, autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together.
For nature, it is a time of sowing, of scattering abroad.* - Edwin Teale

local food for everyone

240 Beaver Street • Waltham, MA 02452 • 781-899-2403 • www.communityfarms.org

GROWING SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

Chilly autumn weather usually brings relief from the hot days of summer, but that is not the case this year. With record rainfall and lots of cool evenings, farmers all over New England struggled to compete with high disease and weed pressure this growing season, leading to delayed ripening, decreased yields and complete crop failure for some. Luckily, we didn't have any crop failures at Waltham Fields Community Farm, but we did have to contend with delayed ripening and crops giving out sooner than usual. In years like this, we are especially thankful for soils with good drainage. Managing our fields using organic practices helps to further build these soils to be productive both in periods of rain and drought. Growing a diverse mix of crops and several varieties of each crop is also critical for withstanding adversities and maintaining food security. Each year, we evaluate our crop mix and look to increase production of vegetables or particular varieties that are desired by our shareholders and food assistance recipients. Some of this year's keepers include Okra, Lemon Cucumbers and Radiator Charlie's Mortgage Lifter Tomato (an heirloom variety developed in 1940 by an auto mechanic from West Virginia).

EXPANDING FOOD ACCESS

The Martha Creedon Outreach Market launched in July 2008 in the parking lot of WATCH (Waltham Alliance to Create Housing) in south Waltham. The Market was initiated in partnership with WATCH, the Joseph Smith Community Health Center, the Power Program, and the Waltham Family School, in order to overcome the barriers of geography, cost and logistics that currently prevent low-income families from accessing fresh food through mainstream distribution channels. The Market was named after Martha Creedon, former President of Waltham Fields Community Farm's Board of Directors, as a way to honor her for her longstanding commitment to increasing food security and improving the quality of life for Waltham residents. The aim is to

provide low-income residents and recent immigrants the chance to purchase fresh, sustainably-grown produce at highly subsidized prices. Judging by the popularity of the market in its first year of operation, the initiative has been a huge success. We look forward to improving the market next year by partnering with groups like Healthy Waltham to offer more nutrition education connections.

EDUCATION FOR ALL

Not only is Waltham Fields Community Farm producing great vegetables, we're also providing education about sustainable living, and giving people the chance to have meaningful interactions with each other and the natural world. The 2008 season included workshops on land preservation, culinary herbs, energy conservation, and basic bicycle maintenance. Hundreds of volunteers offered their time to help with food production as well as organizational tasks, while at the same time learning about growing produce, food distribution channels, environmental and food security

issues, community-building, and non-profit development. Erinn and Jonathan, our farmers-in-training, worked closely with our Farm Managers to become more knowledgeable and effective in organic farming and volunteer engagement. We hired Paula Jordan to work alongside returning Children's Learning Garden (CLG) Coordinator, Mark Walter, on expanded programming, and added 6-week spring and fall sessions. Paula's patient and reflective nature makes her a great asset to the CLG program staff. From planting seeds, harvesting and creating farm-fresh recipes to drawing in farm journals, dissecting the compost pile, and watching killdeer birds and insects in the field, there are countless examples of children enjoying themselves, learning about food, farming and nature this year. We look forward to providing more positive educational experiences in 2009!

FARM TO SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

Waltham Public School students are eating our produce this fall! We are supplying their lunch program with harvests of summer squash in September, sweet potatoes in October and Waltham Butternut squash in November (a variety of winter squash developed by UMass Extension on the very land now leased by the farm). We also participated in the 2nd annual Massachusetts Harvest for Students Week, hosting an event on September 24th in partnership with the Waltham Public Schools and Healthy Waltham. Approximately 60 students engaged in harvesting, apple cider pressing, recipe preparation and healthful eating with special



Superintendent Dr. Peter Azar and students dig sweet potatoes destined for their school lunch program.

guests, including Waltham Mayor Jeannette McCarthy, Waltham Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Peter Azar, School Committee Member Margy Donnelly, Northeast Elementary Principal Nadene Stein, and UMass Extension Educator Wendy Marcks. The event was a great chance for Waltham to show support for maintaining a strong farm economy and promoting fresh fruit and vegetable consumption. Thanks go out to Rhonda Spigel and Chef Vin

Connelly at the School Food Services, Maria DiMaggio and Brian Friedberg of Healthy Waltham, Lynn Harris at Autumn Hills Orchard, and the Massachusetts Farm to School Project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2008 Season Highlights.....	1
From the Farm Office	2
From the Board President	2
Spotlight on Climate Change.....	3
Ways to Get Involved.....	4
Creating A Restful Place	4
Mark Your Calendars!	4

WALTHAM FIELDS COMMUNITY FARM

2008 Board of Directors

President: Judy Fallows (Watertown)
Vice President: Heather Harris (Waltham)
Secretary: Kathy Diamond (Watertown)
Treasurer: Greg Burns (Somerville)

Josh Apgar (Somerville)
Reva Dolobowsky (Waltham)
Adam Kessler (Somerville)
Owen Lefkon (Somerville)
Rebecca Nesson (Cambridge)
Margaret Post (Waltham)
Ana Rivera (Arlington)
Sam Robinson (Waltham)
Stephanie Thurrott (Dedham)
Chris Yoder (Dover)

Year-Round Staff:

Claire Kozower, Executive Director
Amanda Cather, Farm Manager
Andy Scherer, Assistant Farm Manager
Deb Guttormsen, Admin/Finance Coordinator

2008 Seasonal Farmers:

Jonathan Martinez, Assistant Grower
Erinn Roberts, Assistant Grower
Dan Roberts, Farm Crew
Amanda Jellen, Farm Crew

2008 Children's Learning Garden Staff:

Mark Walter, Coordinator
Paula Jordan, Assistant

We promote local agriculture through growing and distribution practices that are socially, ecologically, and economically sustainable. We forge relationships between people, their food supply, and the land from which it grows.

Waltham Fields Community Farm is the business name of Community Farms Outreach, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization.

Contact us:

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(781)899-2403 • www.communityfarms.org

FROM THE FARM OFFICE

It is an honor to write to you as I settle into the Executive Director position. Having worked with farms in the Greater Boston area for the past decade, I have had the pleasure to follow the work of Waltham Fields Community Farm from afar, and am thrilled to now have the opportunity to join the team. I am also grateful for the ability to receive on-going training and guidance from the former Executive Director, Meg Coward, who has agreed to be one of the farm's Advisory Board members. We welcome Meg in her new role!

Recently, we began our planning and budgeting process for 2009. This is a time for reflection on what has worked well, what could work better, and what new things should be tried out. Meetings with the farm and education staff have centered on plans for increasing food access and education initiatives, maintaining shareholder satisfaction, improving our service learning volunteer program, expanding farmer training opportunities, reducing our carbon footprint, and growing our support of other local farms.

Your support is crucial to the continuation of our mission-driven work. Please consider donating to our annual appeal. You will receive a letter from us in November. And if you are not already a member, please think about joining. Many thanks to everyone in our community - the staff, board, volunteers, shareholders, members, organizational partners and donors - for helping to make the farm such a productive and inspirational place. I hope that you can join us for one of our upcoming events, and I look forward to keeping you informed of our efforts as we plow along!

Sincerely,
Claire



*From left to right:
Top row: Andy Scherer, Deb Guttormsen, Jonathan Martinez, Claire Kozower, Dan Roberts.
2nd row: Amanda Jellen, Erinn Roberts, Amanda Cather.
Missing: Mark Walter and Paula Jordan.*

FROM THE BOARD:

Welcome to Claire Kozower, our new Executive Director! We can already see her impact on the farm in her coordination of the MA Harvest for Students Week event that took place on September 24. The collaborative spirit with which Claire has brought other Waltham non-profits and city and state officials together to produce this event in her third month as ED speaks volumes for the vision and energy she brings to the work, and bodes well for our future together.

Meanwhile, our beloved farm manager, Amanda Cather, is bringing in her fifth harvest here on the farm. Her understanding of the ways of this land, communicated so eloquently in the CSA newsletters each week, gives us a feeling for the complexity of farming and the hard work the whole staff puts in to produce the CSA shares and to donate fresh vegetables to our hunger relief partners each week. Andy Scherer, in his second season as assistant farm manager, has broadened our outreach efforts this year with his amazing implementation of the Martha Creedon Outreach Market. The Children's Learning Garden program added spring and fall programming this year in collaboration with the Waltham Recreation Department, deepening our connections to the local community in yet another way. And for the first time this year, we are supplying vegetables to the Waltham Public Schools in a fledgling "farm-to-school" program.

We are growing into an ever more vibrant, multi-faceted, community farm, providing wonderful, powerful experiences for local children, volunteers and CSA members, and providing us all with a direct connection to the Earth that sustains us.

With best wishes for a bountiful fall and a peaceful winter, Judy Fallows, Board President

SPOTLIGHT ON AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

In 2007, food prices in the US rose more than 7%, enough to pinch families already having trouble getting enough to eat. Globally, 2008 data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), show a 53% rise, and food shortage situations have led to large-scale protests in Guinea, Egypt, Morocco, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger, Uzbekistan, Senegal, Haiti, Bolivia and Indonesia. Many experts agree we are facing the worst food crisis in decades.

The increase in prices and food shortages is attributed to rising energy prices, speculation on commodity crops, shortages due to a growing number of climate disasters, and the increasing use of food crops for biofuels. Over the past two years, tens of thousands of US farmers have switched from food to fuel production to reduce US dependence on foreign oil. Spurred along by generous subsidies, the US has transferred over 20



A BACE researcher takes a fresh soil core sample

million acres of grain from food to fuel production. Large areas of Brazil, Argentina, Canada and eastern Europe are also being diverted from crops to biofuels. This sacrificing

of food security for energy stability is even harder to swallow when we learn that the current production of fuel from corn and other grains is inefficient, requiring more energy to produce than it provides. Does it make any sense for us to be diverting food to fuel when getting 100 calories of fuel energy from corn requires about 400 calories of energy for fertilizer, planting, harvesting, processing, and transportation? And even if we stopped biofuel production based on the use of food crops, can mainstream agriculture as we know it continue down the path it's on?

How can we solve the energy crisis without compromising the ability to feed ourselves? Organic agriculture, the local food movement and scientific research all have roles to play in producing the answer to this question, and all are happening right here at the UMass Field Station, with Waltham Fields leasing land for sustainable vegetable production and the Boston Area Climate Experiment (BACE) using neighboring land to learn more about ecosystem responses to climate change. Currently, agriculture is responsible for 30% of CO₂ emissions, half of which comes from fertilizer production. Organic agriculture, however, uses significantly less energy - on the order of 26% less per ton of output - and emits significantly lower levels of nitrous oxide (according to findings of the International Scientific Dialogue on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change held in April 2008). Hence, basic organic agriculture tenets such as cover cropping, crop rotations with legumes, and the building of soil organic matter are just as important for climate control as they are for benefits of personal health, pollution reduction, erosion control, and biodiversity promotion. The local food movement can also serve to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping to cut down on transportation costs associated with going from farm to table, especially if more people carpool or bike to local food sources.

Helping us to understand the extent of the climate control mitigations that are necessary are projects like the Boston Area Climate Experiment (BACE), based out of the Dukes Lab at UMass Boston. We are fortunate to have BACE sharing land with the farm.

INTERVIEW WITH BOSTON AREA CLIMATE EXPERIMENT (BACE) STAFF MEMBERS:

Recently, Waltham Fields Community Farm (WFCF) staff sat down with two project researchers: Carol Goranson, BACE Project Manager, and Vidya Suseela, a PhD student studying carbon cycling. Below are some excerpts from our discussion

WFCF: What is the goal of the BACE project?

BACE: We are interested in finding out how ecosystems respond to varying amounts of heat and water. Essentially, we are trying to understand the consequences we will face as we deal with changing climate factors.

WFCF: Your display signage says this region is likely to see more rainfall in winter months as a result of climate change – but all the water this year seems to have come in the summer. What do you make of this?

BACE: It is a common mistake for people to try and attribute individual weather events as supporting or denying climate change theory, but it is important to look at climate changes as an average over time. The belief right now is that we will have more intense summer storms interspersed with periods of drought, and warmer winters which yield more precipitation as rain than snow.

WFCF: So, how long does BACE have to go on in order to get good results?

BACE: At least 5 years, if not more. Our baseline data were collected in 2007, and we have spent most of 2008 getting the experiment set up and running smoothly. Now that we have the treatment system refined and working the way we want it to, we need to have several seasons of data collection for our analyses.

WFCF: What aspects of your research might be most useful for farmers?

BACE: Well, we are trying to understand what happens to a soil's water holding capacity and nutrient availability as climate changes influence organic matter decomposition. We are also looking at how communities of nitrogen-fixing bacteria change based on soils being warmer, wetter or dryer. Water holding capacity, nutrient availability and nitrogen-fixing bacteria are all important soil characteristics for farmers. The agricultural community will be an important audience for this research. There has also been interest on the part of researchers to use this site for insect studies which look at the relationships between insects, plant herbivory and soil health based on the different treatments.

WFCF: Can you comment on how having Waltham Fields Community Farm as your neighbor has impacted your project & personal lives?

BACE: Well, on the negative side, it's made us feel a little bad about the amount of weed seeds that we're producing, since we're studying weed growth in response to our different treatments and need to let weeds go to seed to measure their different rates of seed production. But there are lots of positive things too, including farm visitors being exposed to our experiment, being able to share tools, and being able to get involved with the community supported agriculture (CSA) shareholder program. The staff have split a share for the last two years now. We love it. And we love that you are farming organically. The farm is a great neighbor – there's a lively atmosphere on distribution days and we enjoy the community.

WFCF: What do you see as common goals of both BACE and WFCF?

BACE: Preserving open space, providing public education, controlling invasive weed species, and sustaining the earth's capacity to provide for living creatures.

To learn more about BACE, go to <http://www.ecosystems.umb.edu/bace.html> or stop by the Waltham Field Station and take some time to read the Climate Change education materials erected next to the research plots.



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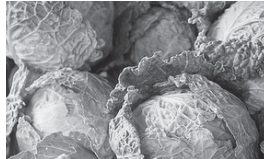
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WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Harvest Potluck Volunteers

We're looking for 5 volunteers to help with our Harvest Potluck on Sunday, November 9th. Get involved with the planning team and/or contribute to tasks on the day of the event. Contact Nathan at www.elbows@spamcop.net



SPROUT Volunteers and Auction Donations

Looking for a way to support Waltham Fields? There are many opportunities to help out with our annual spring fundraiser, SPROUT. Please think about donating some time for our organizing committee or for helping out on the day of the event. We're also eager to receive whatever donation items you come up with – gift certificates, handmade crafts, lessons for building skills, weekend getaways.

Special Project Opportunities

Want to help out with our education and outreach effort? We'd love to have your help organizing or helping with winter workshops, a food and farm film series, photography, carpentry, tabling at events, or an idea of your own that relates to our mission.

Mailing Coordinators

Long-time volunteers Alix Gitlin and Anna Gotkhardt have recently moved, and need to hand over their role as mailing stampers. This was a job done over 1 or 2 weekends at the volunteers' own home on their own time. Put on some good music and contribute to our efforts by stuffing envelopes and affixing stamps to our annual mailings. Thanks to Alex and Anna for all their past work!

Contact Claire at claire@communityfarms.org to express your interest.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Fall Greens Tasting, Sunday, October 19th Our last 3rd Sunday Gathering this season. Come on out for family-friendly volunteering anytime between 1:30 and 4:30, and join us from 4:30-5:30pm for a fall greens cooking demonstration and food tasting with guest chef and farmer, Verena Wieloch, from Gaining Ground, Inc! All are welcome.

Harvest Potluck, Sunday, November 9th: Waltham Fields Community Farm's annual Harvest Potluck will be held from 6-8pm in the UMass Field Station Auditorium. Bring a dish to share this season's harvest! We'll have music, children's activities and a raffle!

CREATING A RESTFUL PLACE

Some of the best newcomers to the farm this year were new



signage, a tent and furniture that can be easily transformed from benches into tables and back again. These items were the brainchildren of Meg Coward, former Executive Director, who recognized the need to create more opportunities for community gathering and restful contemplation at the farm. Stay tuned for future additions in keeping with this theme...