



BIODYNAMIC FARMLAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

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NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2016

APPRENTICE PROGRAM

Training Our Farming Future

Our apprentice program is built on the idea that farming is a small word for a very big set of tasks. From crop growing to mechanics to financial reporting to labor management to chemistry to sign making, this job has many components to master in order to operate a modern, diversified, farm business. If we want to train people to become farm-

ers, we could operate a school. In that case, it would be difficult to create a real-world feel for the education. We could get plenty of information, but it would be difficult to portray how much triage is involved in such a complex pursuit. Sure, our broccoli should be irrigated with 1" of water each week, but what if the irrigation pump is broken, the forecast is for dry weather for the next week, and we need to get the tomatoes planted this morning? We could hire employees and train them on the job. If we did that, our priority as managers would be maximize their labor. In order to do that we would reduce the number of tasks we would require each employee to perform. They would become specialists, slowly building skill capacity and then repeating those skills on into the future. But we know that good farm managers will need

see "Apprentice," p.8

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT BROOKFIELD FARM

Our 29th Year Finished Strong!

The view from the office now is a lot like early April. After a warm December, we finally got a little taste of winter in mid-January. That lasted about 2 weeks. Now it's over 50F and the mud is everywhere and it seems like the buds will be swelling by the end of the week. So, I guess that just puts a little fire under me to get this newsletter done

and out. If we are going to go ahead and get right to spring, I want to get these recollections about last season on paper; out of my head and recorded for posterity.

I spend the months of December and

January trying to get a handle on everything that happened on the farm, from the time when we fired up the greenhouse heater (March 17) until the time when we cleaned out the cow barn at Snyder Farm (December 3). Since it was so warm in December, I spent as much time outdoors as possible trying to clean up accumulated project remains. Zoe took her vacation. Abbe cleaned up administrative piles. Eventually, though, the cleanup was done, the last purchases made and bills paid. And then I set to the process of taking stock. Of counting it all up. Zoe, Abbe, and I looked at production records. Financial

see "What's Happening," p.6





GET A HAMMER AND A NAIL

Continuing to Build Capacity

We need a lot of tools to make our work possible. And we need infrastructure to store our tools, or process our products, or just get from place to place. While the outcome is always on our mind (growing vegetables, training apprentices, etc), in order to get to these goals we have to continually inventory, evaluate, and improve our tools and infrastructure. Our overall strategy has been that while we are enjoying a strong market now (since at least 2001) we want to use this position of strength to invest in our tools and spaces so that we can continue to produce even if we have a few tough years (weather, market, other?). Over the past 15 years we have invested well over \$1,000,000 in our barn, apprentice housing, vegetable production equipment, land maintenance equipment, etc. and we feel these investments have made our farm more resilient as it faces an always-uncertain future. And this year was more of the same.

Buildings & Grounds:

We had one big infrastructure project – renovating our walk-in cooler. During our barn renovation (2004), by the time we got to the cooler, we were stretching our budget, so we decided to rebuild it ourselves,

re-using our old compressor and evaporator. This solution worked okay, except it was clear that we weren't very good at managing moisture and our insulation was inadequate. We were running the risk of rotting the wood around the cooler, and we were wasting a lot of energy with cold-air leaking out in various places. Using a REAP (USDA) grant and community donations for an energy-efficiency project (raised from a 2011 PV Installation Capital Campaign) we were able to hire Tim & Lise Coppinger to re-insulate and waterproof our cooler. Then Chagnon Refrigeration installed a brand-new energy-efficient compressor and evaporator. We prioritized this project as the cooler is our biggest single user of electricity.

Beyond that big project, we also continued to improve on a smaller scale with other projects around the farm. We had new road signs designed and installed at the farm entrance and on Bay Rd. Our old signs were made in 1996 and were getting a bit shabby, plus we wanted people to know we were here and open for new shareholders!! We also installed bird netting on the ceiling of our Farm Shop and in our



Loft so that the starlings that were nesting there would be encouraged to find another place to call home. In addition, we used our nice new dump truck and loader tractor to haul stones from the notch and improve the roads at Snyder Farm and around the Hulst Rd fields. This endless task is helped by having good equipment to use whenever we have a window to get something done.

Equipment:

We were also busy either repairing good quality equipment or making new purchases. We completely rebuilt our plow and harrow, which have served us well for over 15 years, preparing our 30 acres of ground for planting. In addition, our main cultivating tractor (Case 265) needed an engine rebuild, the fork lift needed a new clutch, our Sprinter delivery van needed the suspension, steering, and brakes rebuilt, and we installed a new engine on our 30-yr old Wheel Horse rototiller. Each of these rebuilds brought these not-too-old machines back to a place where they can serve us well for hopefully another 10 years.

WISH LIST

*Someone to build us
a small cabin the woods*



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Karen Romanowski	Crew Cook, Farm Nurse, etc, etc.
Abbe Vredenburg	Administrator
Zoe Abram	Assistant Manager

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But it was not all just band aids this year. We were able to purchase new equipment, where we could upgrade to a more appropriate tool for the job. We bought our first appropriate-scale lawn mower which can properly care for the pathways of our acre of blueberries and raspberries, as well as the farmyard, apprentice house, and the paths between the pick-your-own fields. We invested in a nice new “V-plow” for our dump truck, a new hose-trolley system for the greenhouse, and a much-improved plastic-mulch layer which will more effectively let us tend our eggplants and peppers and keep their pathways free of weeds. We also purchased an appropriately-sized “Weeder Van” (15 passenger), and a new wheeled trimmer (to keep the edges of the field-houses clear.

Importantly, all of these purchases were made using funds that the Trust has set aside for capital improvement, since 2004. This Capital Account (started from a generous donation from a shareholder, invested wisely by the board, and then set into a very stable fund) is our engine for



PEOPLE YOU’LL MEET

Welcome Home, Zoe!

Ever since Sue Wasseluk was hired as our first assistant manager in 2002, we have conceived of this job in two important ways. First, it was designed to be our 2nd full-time, year round employee. When I was hired in 1994, I was the only one. And that’s how it stayed for 8 seasons. This was fine when we were growing our business and growing skills. But as the farm customer base and scope increased, it became increasingly difficult to hold all of the management tasks in my little brain. It was a huge relief to have Sue (and then Casey, Jeff, Chris, Adan, Kerry, Pete, and Zoe) assist

me in the management of the farm. I think of farm management as being a good listener. The farm talks, and as a good steward, I try to listen to what is being said and figure out how to respond. Our farm is large and complex enough that the talking can feel like shouting at times (or maybe the Tower of Babel). It’s really nice to have another set of ears out there!

The other aspect of the assistant manager job was conceived as a stepping stone between the apprenticeship and the possibility of managing a farm on your own someday. We know how difficult this transition can be and we thought by providing an intermediate step we would be able to improve our apprenticeship as a training program, and our overall ability to train farmers. If you look at the above list, 6 of the 8 took the steps to begin their own farms after leaving us as assistant managers. 5 are still actively farming today. Of course, the downside of this is that we were always losing assistant managers. If we kept them for 2 years we thought it was a good deal for us. But only Kerry ever stayed for 3. We were always retraining.

This year, after much deliberation, we decided to make an important change. Karen and I realized that we were ready to look for a permanent assistant manager. One that would make a commitment to the farm and all of its ongoing programs for the long term. We knew this would mean we’d have to pay them more. And we’d have to give them more responsibility. And it would change our apprentice program expectations if that opportunity wasn’t there for moving up the ladder. But all in all, it seemed like the right time to make the change. After all, how long will we be able to do this job on our own!?

Luckily (as these things tend to go), we were fortunate enough to find Zoe Abram in a compatible position in her life. She realized that she really wanted to pursue managing an existing farm more than creating one from scratch. And the farm she was interested in was a lot like the one that she already worked for. And she has all of the skills and interests to do this job now and into the future. And we all get along quite well. So, for now, it is a match made in heaven. Welcome home, Zoe! You are the first new permanent assistant manager in the history of Brookfield Farm – great to have you back for the first time.



Our mechanic Ken Dziuba hard at work!

planning for the future. Every year the farm borrows money from this fund and pays it back to the Trust at a rate of 3% over 5 years. In the typical magic of compound interest, this year we were able to spend 39,508 on capital improvements, while the capital account INCREASED in value by 12.8% (finishing at \$35,699 after starting at \$31,133).





SPREAD THE WORD

Straight From the Field

This year we opened our farm up to many school groups. In our biggest venture, we were partners in a successful 21st Century Grant with the Amherst Middle School and Seeds of Solidarity. Our apprentice, Leila Tunnel, administered this grant by hosting 10 after-school farm visits based around the theme Farm and Foods! In the summer, she ran a series of week-long intensives (for three weeks, 3 days per week) where kids explored the theme in depth. And then in the fall, once again she ran 8 after-school field trips. This program was renewed for 2016 and Leila will be working the Amherst Public Schools to bring food production and consumption to the curriculum.

In addition, the Hartsbrook High School brought their 10th graders for a series of work visits where we talked about topics of seasonal, agricultural importance to our work. Kathleen Maiolatesi brought her Sustainable Ag and Politics of Food classes from Holyoke Community College to the farm for a couple of visits in the fall. The Crocker Farm Kindergarten and Wildwood Kindergarten brought students for field trips in October. Zoe visited Holyoke HS to talk about Sustainability, the Hartsbrook HS 12th grade class came for a discussion of land stewardship, and the UMASS Sustainability class came out for a one-hour talk about fertility management, and then help us with the fall harvest of carrots and potatoes.

We gave farm tours to the NY Foreign Press Center, the NOFA summer conference, the Farm School Learn To Farm program, a Pakistani exchange summer program at UMASS, and Dig-In Farm, an intensive permaculture training program in Leverett.

Farmers consulted us about developing their CSAs, our farm budget, and apprentice program materials. We were consulted by researchers and organizers about social media use among non-profits, community aspects of CSAs, a crop irrigation project at UMASS, and solar energy use on the farm. And in the most involved request of the year, Dan was interviewed on a popular new podcast – The Farmer-To-Farmer, with Chris Blanchard and continues to receive a lot of feedback from people who have heard the discussion about “shared risk and contained loss.” Check it out! - <http://www.farmertofarmer-podcast.com/episodes/kaplan>

We gave workshops and presentations throughout the year. Dan presented a talk about Farm Labor Management at the NOFA-MA Winter Conference. Zoe presented a workshop on “Organic Pest Control” at the Master Gardener Symposium in Deerfield in March. And Dan presented a workshop on “Farm Labor Management” at the NOFA Conference in August.

We continued to use whatever resources we could afford to support our local community. We donated greenhouse space to the Hartsbrook School, our Farm Shop space to UMASS Extension for a “Train the Trainer” about EPA Worker Protection Standards in April, and our farmyard to a local men’s group to hold round-the-fire meetings in the evenings. We donated vegetables to silent auctions for various community groups (Family Outreach of Amherst, Common School, and Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture) and to the NOFA Conference. We received kitchen scraps from Not Bread Alone weekly to our compost area. And, Jessica Harwood, at Rachel’s Table in Springfield, arranged for over 1000 lbs of produce to be gleaned from our fields and distributed to food pantries in the greater Springfield area.





GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

We Keep Asking. You Keep Giving!

First, let's get some things straight: Our farm runs on the money we charge for shares. That is, we figure out what it costs to produce all of this food, then we divide it by the number of families we think we can feed. That's the share price. And it covers costs of production – seeds, labor, fuel, capital loans, etc. We think it's important that this concept is central to our financial picture. We don't want people to think

ANNUAL FUND & GIVING TUESDAY

❖total gifts (83) +8%
❖total dollars (\$8,375) +30%

that our farm can only happen if we get people to give us money for free. We want this farm to be replicable in as many situations as possible.

But our farm also participates in lots of other activities outside of production. We vaguely call this “outreach” and it encompasses everything from having school groups tour the farm to welcoming volunteers on our harvest crew, to giving workshops at farmer conferences. We try as much as possible, to pay for this work by soliciting donations from our community (far and wide). Now, we know that this can't be completely “clean.” There's going to be some overlap. But we try our hardest to keep the streams separate so we can know our true costs of production and not let our outreach work take away from our first priority of giving our shareholders what they pay for!

For this “outreach” money, we have relied on our annual fund, which has been a consistent source of revenue (about \$5000 per year) for over a decade. And this year, just like a last year, we also took part in an online philanthropy event – Giving Tuesday - and just like last year's Valley Gives, we ended up receiving more total support than when we only had an annual fund. In addition, last year we started our “Donor Supported Fund (DSF),” which we consider another form of “outreach” as it gives access to our farm to people who might have a difficult time affording the cost of our share.

We set overall targets for our donation efforts and when those targets were met we put the additional donations towards our DSF. This way our regular outreach was funded first, and we hoped the DSF would provide incentive for people to give a little more. And so it went. This year, we not only increased our overall donations, but we increased our pool of recipients for that money. Not only kindergartners, and apprentices, but also folks on limited incomes who loved bringing their children to help pick peas at the farm. To all of you who made donations, please be assured as to where they went and that they were gratefully received by all.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

❖**John White** for loaning us his staging to install our bird-netting in the barn

❖**Dennis Mathewson** for training our apprentices in body-mechanics

PARTY TIME

All Work and No Play....

Food production is the basis of our activities on the farm. It's the reason we are doing what we are doing. But we have always hoped that through the production of food the farm could also become a site for other events – both food and non-food related.

This year, we were once again lucky enough once again, to employ the talents of Tamsin Flanders as our Events Coordinator. She used her talents to continue many of our traditions, as well as to create some new ones. We started the year with a Farm Open House and Spring Planting Day where we showed some new folks around the farm and planted the accessible garden. Then in mid-June we created the all-new Solstice Concert and Potluck Dinner as we welcomed some local talent and had a great dinner (despite the ill-timed rain!). In July we had a great Garlic Harvest where we brought about half of our crop from the field to the barn. But, since the pumpkin crop was a failure, we brought back the ol' Potato Dig for October and were joined by the UMASS Ultimate Frisbee team who helped us bring in over 8000 lbs of beautiful spuds before eating some delicious chili

around the fire. We ended our events season with a high-spirited Harvest Dinner potluck celebration in November where we looked back on our season, gave some special recognition to our neighbor and friend Chris Zobel, and looked ahead to some exciting plans for the coming year.

In addition, there were many events that other people brought to our farm. Rosie Pearson once again celebrated the New Year with a Beating of the Bounds around the perimeter of our patch of earth. John Root gave a workshop on Wild Edibles around the farm. Wheelhouse Farm Food Truck hosted a series of farm-yard dinners in June, July, and August. We were a destination for a “Western Mass Bike Party” where participants enjoyed Artifact Cider in our farmyard after riding from a long way away!! There was a Valley Food Swap in our farmyard in October and Wheelhouse Farm Food Truck made a super fancy and delicious meal for 50 lucky people on a luckily-warm November Sunday in our lower field.

Donor Supported Share Fund

Starting Value (as of Jan 1, 2015): \$7500

Direct Support Given: \$2270

Shareholders Supported: 10

Donations Received in 2015: \$1814.67

Ending Value (as of Dec 31, 2015): \$7044.67

"What's Happening," cont.

records. Seed orders. Harvest record sheets. Farm shop register receipts. Our Cow herd. And eventually wrote it all down and tried to make some sense of it all.

Overall, I would have to say 2015 was one of our strongest seasons yet. While it started with some uncertainty (where is our waiting list?) and then some weather challenges (where are our spring rains?), it clearly ended with a very-well rounded string of successes. We were able to sell all of our CSA shares and increase our community diversity. We were able to improve our production techniques and deepen our outreach work. We were able to provide employment for more people and end with a very positive cash flow. We were able to invest in new infrastructure and solidify our long-term personnel position. Really, what more could we ask? I'm not sure.

None of this could ever be dreamed about without the continued contribution and commitment of shareholders, donors, friends, and relatives who support us financially, emotionally, and spiritually. As we move towards our 30th year, I am more convinced than ever that the most important work we do on this farm is stewarding our relationship with our supporting community of eaters, cooks, nature-lovers, parents, seekers, children, activists, sisters, etc. For this we thank you, as always, and hope that through the following pages you can get a glimpse of some of what your contributions

have helped to grow and nurture in the past year.
- Farmer Dan (for Karen, Abbe, and Zoe)



Another happy customer.

Baby Theo's first solid food....
Brookfield Farm carrots. *thanks for the pic John Pettitt!!*

OUR FARM YEAR

Record Breaking Production, Increased Distribution, Strong Sales, and Postive Finances

Vegetable production overall was again excellent this past season, with good strawberries followed by a lean July, and then most crops going gangbusters all the way through the fall. A dry spring made for a lot of irrigation work in the spring and some thin crops for early summer (zucchini and carrots), but once the field tomatoes started to produce heavily (mid July), we mostly just saw great

	2015	2014	% dif last year	% dif 10 yr avg
Total Production				
total lbs (including PYO)	304013	284703	7%	11%
total lbs. (no PYO)	263888	253015	4%	11%
winter share production	59170	48215	23%	52%
acreage planted	29.9	30.3	-1%	0%
crops planted	63	63	0%	8%
Distribution Comparison				
total lbs per share	499.2	483.6	3%	8%
cost per lb. share	\$ 1.11	\$ 1.15	-3%	-1%
avg. lbs. per share each week	20.8	20.1	3%	8%

Vegetable Production 2015

	TOTAL	Unit	per share	2015 (LBS)	2014 (LBS)
BEET	4620	LBS.	8.9	4620	7410
BEET W/TOPS	330	BU.	0.6	330	2120
BITTERMELON	0	LBS.	0.0	0	0
BROCCOLI	4510	LBS.	8.7	4510	4495
BRUSSELS' SP.	1760	PC.	2.6	1760	1230
BRUSSELS' SP. TOPS	345	LBS.	0.7	345	345
CABBAGE	10312	LBS.	11.8	10312	14429
CABBAGE, CHI.	1194	HDS.	2.3	3582	4350
CANTELOUPES	1585	PC.	3.0	7925	8100
CARROT	16987	LBS.	31.6	16987	29610
CARROT W/TOP	2988	BU.	5.7	2988	2045
CAULIFLOWER	1995	LBS.	3.8	1995	2985
CELERIAC	2625	LBS.	5.0	2625	4270
CELERY	455	PCS.	0.9	455	1990
CHARD	1885	LBS.	3.6	1885	3025
COLLARDS	838	LBS.	1.6	838	1295
CORN	1457	DZ.	2.8	10199	11739
CUCUMBER	4940	LBS.	9.5	4940	4340
EGGPLANT	5320	LBS.	10.2	5320	1630
ESCAROLE	785	HDS.	1.5	785	500
FENNEL	1255	PC.	2.4	1255	1025
GARLIC	1097	LBS.	1.3	1097	1138
GARLIC SCAPES	135	LBS.	0.3	135	280
GREENS	5852	LBS.	10.9	5852	5465
KALE	7920	LBS.	14.4	7920	7785
KOHLRABI	800	LBS.	1.5	800	810
LEEK	8200	PC.	13.8	8200	10175
LETTUCE	9010	HDS.	17.3	9010	9252
LETTUCE	1630	LBS.	3.1	1630	3955
OKRA	20	LBS.	0.0	20	17
ONION	10265	LBS.	19.7	10265	10295
PARSNIP	1680	LBS.	3.2	1680	2830
PEPPERS, HOT	635	LBS.	1.2	635	910
PEPPERS, SW.	3055	LBS.	5.9	3055	3195
POTATO	33100	LBS.	60.0	33100	18415
POTATO, SW.	12485	LBS.	24.0	12485	2875
RADICCHIO	655	LBS.	1.3	655	1085
RADISH	1452	BU.	2.8	1452	1740
RADISH, DAIKON	1525	LBS.	2.9	1525	3625
RADISH, STORAGE	500	LBS.	1.0	500	1335
RUTABAGA	6400	LBS.	9.4	6400	3100
SCALLION	2420	BU.	4.7	2420	3085
SPINACH	840	LBS.	1.6	840	1675
SQUASH, S.	5025	LBS.	9.7	5025	4665
SQUASH, W.	29700	LBS.	57.1	29700	29100
TOMATOES	16510	LBS.	31.8	16510	5040
TURNIP, HAKUREI	1043	BU.	2.0	1043	1080
TURNIP	5150	LBS.	9.9	5150	3540
WATERMELONS	12800	LBS.	24.6	12800	9290

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Sydney Zobel, Oliver Noble, Morgan Miller, Lukas Becker,
Jonah Toran, Mary Kowaleck, and Peter Aronson



crop after great crop all the way til Thanksgiving.

Vegetable Crop Production:

Our overall production was up 6% from 2014 and 11% higher than our 10-year average (272,000 lbs) tipping the scales at an all-time record of 302,000 lbs. An unusually dry spring, which brought the sprinklers out early and put a damper on germination, also brought about a nice crop of strawberries and early lettuce, which could be effectively watered. There were some thin summer carrot crops and our early swiss chard and spinach were hit heavily by the leaf miner. We struggled to get all of our plants in the ground without any rain, but by June the weather shifted nicely and we were able get our late summer and fall crops in the ground without much hassle.

We were relieved to see that our tomato crop was not hampered by any late blight at all this season. We grew many disease resistant varieties and sprayed copper when the weather shifted towards moisture patterns that made the disease more likely to appear. But this was not a “late-blight” year as our tomato production, all out in the field (not in the greenhouses this year), topped in at over 16500 lbs.

Our proactive measures with our basil crop also paid dividends this year – although there are still problems on the horizon. We got very positive feedback for providing every shareholder with some basil plants to grow in their own gardens (or containers) and very positive results by planting all of our basil in our fieldhouses. These houses

keep the moisture off the plants and make it harder for the downy mildew spores to come in off the wind and find the basil. While we did eventually have all of our basil succumb to the mildew, we were able to produce abundant, delicious Basil for over 7 weeks. Unfortunately, this issue is region-wide and shows no signs of either abating or responding perfectly to variety selection or organic controls.



Another area that was a big success for us this year was in our eggplant production. We have been struggling for years to try to get good yields from our overly sandy soils and this year got some good help from (our past apprentice) Paul Bucciaglia. He also farms very sandy, mineral soils and helped us figure out not only how to irrigate more consistently, but also to use organic fertilizer (made of fish wastes) through our drip lines, keeping these hungry plants bathed in nitrogen at important fruiting times. After mostly poor or inconsistent production over the last 10 years, our eggplant production tripled to over 5300 lbs. this year.

And as you all probably know (and especially you winter shareholders), the other area of huge improvement was in sweet potato production. We had already planned to increase our acreage (at the expense of white potatoes), since many of you had expressed your preference, And after realizing that there are no pests associated with this crop and the costs of buying plants (slips) is decreasing each year, we thought this would be a good plan. What we didn't count on was that when we grew them in plastic, and about 10% died off from

see “Our Farm Year,” p.11





“Apprentice,” cont.

to be generalists. So, we have tried to find the middle way. We use the word apprentice to signify that our intentions are different than if we were hiring employees. It’s the closest word we can find to signify an on-the-job trainee who is expecting to leave our farm for a future on their own.

serious attitude towards that task. Will is headed back to Wisconsin to work with a friend in his new public-relations startup business and we’re sure will use his new hard-won farming skills in many as-yet-unknown ways in the future.

Claudia Kelley had spent a full season at Horton Road Organic Farm in Oregon after walking the Appalachian Trail. She operated our main row crop tractor (Landini 5860), and so took part in all of the most basic functions of mechanized vegetable production, from bed prep to transplanting to cultivating. She also learned about small-scale vegetable cultivating tractors operating our Farmall Cub and cultivating our tender young crops of leeks, winter squash, and broccoli. She also took part in our harvest management rotation starting in August and kept us busy with her attention-to-detail and substantial organizational skills. She is planning to walk the Pacific Crest Trail with her new husband Pat in April and then they will be looking for a homestead somewhere still undetermined.

When apprentices return to the farm for a second season they are encouraged to take on a few management areas at the farm (in addition to the usual tasks performed by all apprentices). Leila Tunnell took

With this in mind, we set upon each year, to not only find people who are interested in getting the training needed to operate their own farms, but also to put them in situations which will maximize these opportunities. Each of our apprentices are involved in all aspects of the production of over 300,000 lbs of vegetables on 30 acres of crop land. They were, by turn, greenhouse propagators, vegetable planters, shopkeepers, delivery drivers, and harvest crew members. All season long, this on-the-job learning was supplemented through our participation in the CRAFT Program (www.craftfarmapprentice.com), which offers our apprentices 10 farm visits on various sustainable agriculture topics, giving them a chance to see how different farms solve similar problems, and to create a peer group with 40 apprentices from the other 15 participating farms. And in the fall, once the winter squash is in the greenhouse, we begin to have weekly sessions to go over a variety of farm business management topics – how to create a budget, how to read a financial statement, how to manage a website, how to plan for vegetable production, how to create a daily task list, among others.



on the management of our greenhouse seedling production and field planting. Her tractor work was spent making stale seed beds, operating the spray rig, and making compost using the JD 2355 and Hesston loader. She was also responsible for managing our daily harvest for the first half of the season. On top of all of this, Leila implemented all of our work with the Amherst Middle School after-school program. It was a lot to take on, and while sometimes she was over-loaded, she was able to gain valuable experience as a manager in real-time situations as well as developing capacities to integrate her new farming skills with her past work as an educator. While she is not coming back to work on our farm crew, she is staying in the area and working as a farm educator using Brookfield and other sites as settings to convey important lessons about the

environment, food, nutrition, and so much more.

This year we were happy to welcome some new faces to our farm. They quickly found their way around our little farm operation and became integral crew members. Will Calkins, coming from Wisconsin, had worked on a tobacco farm during summers when he was growing up as well as Growing Power in Milwaukee. He was interested in learning a variety of farm management skills and spending his first full season on a diversified vegetable farm. He specialized in direct seeding all of our finicky little crops – carrots, beets, parsnips, greens, etc. with our Allis Chalmers G tractor. In addition, he did all of our field prep, pulling the plow and harrow behind the John Deere 2355. When the summer rolled on by, Will took his turn in the harvest management rotation and brought his hard-working and





Special Thanks to our Weeder Crew who kept our crops clean this summer!



As usual we continued to hear from our past apprentices.....here's a few highlights:

Jake Mazar ('13-'14) and **Will Van Heuvelen ('13-'14)** (Wheelhouse Farm Food Truck, Amherst, MA) had a very successful first year and they plan to expand operations in 2016. We consulted with **Caro Roszell ('13)** (New Wendell Farm, Wendell, MA) about business planning for her new farm. **Peter McLean ('10-'12)** & **Tobin Porter-Brown ('10-'11)** (Book and Plow Farm, Amherst, MA), had a great 3rd season and are hiring new staff. **Aaron Shier ('12)** (Agriculture, Food, and Environment program at Tufts, Medford, MA) was our Boston CSA shareholder this fall. We saw **Erin Roche ('11)** (Extension, UMaine, Orono) at the New England Vegetable Conference in December. **Andy Szymanowicz ('07)** (Sol Food Farm, Ancram, NY) purchased some fall storage crops for his winter share and told us his plans to sell after 8 years, and begin a new farm in Spain. **Kerry Manire ('07-'11)** (Provider Farm, Salem, CT) completed her fourth successful season. We hear from **Lisa McKeag ('08-'10)** (UMASS extension, Amherst, MA) every week with vegetable crop reports. **Danya Teitelbaum ('08)** (Queens Greens, Hadley MA) completed her 7th successful season where our crew helped her skin a greenhouse in November. **Chris Babis ('04-'07)** (UNM, Albuquerque, NM) received a Masters Degree in Water Resource Management and sent us a great record-



ing of him playing guitar and singing at an open mic. **Amy Smith ('06)** (Heart Beet Organic, Prince Edward Island, Canada) completed her 7th successful season. **Amy Cloud ('01, '06)** (Three Rivers Farm, Elmhurst, IL) Completed her 9th successful season and is building a new main barn. **Marc Cesario ('02, '07)** (Meeting Place Pastures, Cornwall, VT) completed his 5th successful season and visited us for some beef sales this summer. **Jeff Tober ('03-'06)** (Fernbrook Farm, Bordentown, NJ) finished his 9th successful season, but had to suffer another season of losing Philly sports teams! We see **Scotti Goss ('03)**, when we go to the Moan and Dove and at the farm now as she became a shareholder this year! **Casey Steinberg ('02-'04)** (Old Friends Farm, Amherst MA) completed his 11th successful season and shared his newest product – Turmeric Honey Syrup (yum) and invited us to his wedding in September! **Paul Bucciaglia ('99)** (Fort Hill Farm, New Milford CT) completed his

13th successful season and traded summer carrots (his) for delicate squash (ours) this year! **Su Wasseluk ('00-'03)** took a year off her job as a Nurse Practitioner in Cape Cod and walked Appalachian Trail this year. We saw **Jenny Hausman's ('00)** (Picadilly Farm, Winchester, MA) husband Bruce at the New England Veg Conference in December and he reports all is well at Piccadilly Farm, Winchester NH. And we continued to work with **Don Zasada ('96-'97)** (Care-taker Farm, Williamstown, MA), as collaborators on the CRAFT program.



Special Thanks to our fall Harvest Crew - Andrew, Jake, Jane, and Erin (not pictured)



Great to see Erin, Lisa, and Kerry (and so many others) in December!

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

In Memoriam - Dana Snyder

(this is a reprint of his obituary, written by his family)

Dana Paul Eugene Snyder, an Amherst farmer who made his career as a professor of zoology at the University of Massachusetts, died peacefully in his sleep on November 18, 2015 surrounded by his loving family.

He was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada on April 29, 1922, the son of Golda Tie Crum and Mark Eugene Snyder, and was raised in Modesto, Illinois. He earned his Bachelor of Science from the University of Illinois and went on to earn his PhD in Zoology from the University of Michigan. He did his dissertation on the field study of small mammals, his favorite of which was the eastern chipmunk. In his freshman year of college, he was called to service in the United States Army, where he served from 1942 to 1946. He subsequently returned to his studies.

Dana married Mary Elizabeth Sumner in Brush-ton, Pennsylvania in June, 1952. They both worked at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, she for ten years and he for two, before moving to Amherst, where they settled and raised their four children.

He was a professor of zoology at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst from 1955 until his retirement in 1985. One of his greatest loves was working on his farmland. For many years, into his nineties, he could be seen at all hours of the day riding his tractor, haying, wielding his chainsaw, or just walking with Mary on the land. In later years, they leased the farmland to Brookfield Farms, a local CSA farm.

Dana took great pride in restoring his and Mary's 1760s-eras old saltbox house and barns on Bay Road. He was meticulously careful to maintain the historic integrity of the house as it was restored. He served on many local committees, including the Amherst Farm Committee and as an Amherst Town Meeting member. He was a lifelong proponent of preserving open space, farmland and protecting water sheds. In the 1970s, he co-led the Amherst Growth Study Committee, an effort to restrict overdevelopment in Amherst. Dana and Mary's sixty-acre Amherst farm was among the first to be part of the Agricultural Preservation Program.

He leaves his wife of 62 years, Mary Snyder; his four children, Mark Snyder and his wife Denise of Geneva, Illinois, Amy Snyder and her husband Gordon Gieg of Charlotte, Vermont, Tod Snyder and his wife Deborah of Mansfield, Massachusetts, Ellen Snyder and her husband Srinivasan of Newmarket, New Hampshire, and seven grandchildren, Reid Snyder, Brynn Hanson, William Snyder, Robert Snyder, Jason Snyder, Lia Gieg and Rosie Gieg.

An outdoor memorial service will be held on Memorial Day Week-end of 2016 (details to follow). Donations in Dana's memory may be made to the Kestrel Land Trust, P.O. Box 1016, Amherst, MA 01002.

The following was written by our then assistant manager, Sue, in April of 2002. We thought we'd reprint it this year so you could get an idea of the connection between our farm and the Snyders over many years.

Every morning at 6am from July through September we rumble through their farmyard, past the house, under the huge maples, and down to the field to go pick corn. You've got to pick corn that early in order to keep the sugar content high. But that's a loud truck. And you'd think after all of these years, Dana & Mary Snyder'd be getting sick of us driving through the yard every morning with the rooster. But not so, I'll stop driving through and take the long way around for a week or two and then they'll stop me to ask if everything's okay? I'll tell them that I was trying to be thoughtful and not make such a racket for them every morning and they'll say they miss seeing every-

one on the truck in the morning. Some neighbors you've got to put up with, and other's you just don't know how you got so lucky to have.

For a long number of years (all of the 4 that I've been here, plus before that) Dana & Mary have been good neighbors to our farm. At first.....the relationship between the Snyder's and Brookfield was a matter of the sharing of machines and tools. When Clare and David Fortier's son, Thomas, was building the Hulst Rd. barn and plowing up the first fields, he and Dana shared equipment. Dana went down there with his combine to harvest the vetch and grasses for feed. When Ian and Nicki bought the first Dexters, they asked Dana if they could share space in the Southeast Street

barn with Dana's Herefords. "Even though the Herefords were bigger, they were scared of the Dexters—must've been those big horns, they weren't used to critters like that." It wasn't really until Dan came that Snyder land was put into vegetables...."that Dan's got a lot of ideas!"

....since I've been here we've been renting land from Dana & Mary for growing crops and grazing cattle. We've also rented the cow barn on Southeast St to keep the cows there in the winter. At first it was just a couple of fields, but as the farm has grown we now rent almost half of Snyder Farm (and we'd rent more if Dana didn't want to keep growing hay at age 80!).

Dana grew up in Illinois and went to college there and in Michigan. Mary grew up in Pittsburgh and went to work at the Carnegie Museum. The museum was putting together a book at the time about Pennsylvania's mammals, and they called in a specialist - Dana. "The first time I laid eyes on Mary, she was too busy lighting a cigarette to notice me..." They were married in 1952, and Mary's energy turned to the mothering of four children. Dana found a job as a professor of zoology at UMASS, but Mary was none to excited about living in





the sticks. They were living with a friend on Southeast Street when they first looked at what was to become Snyder farm. Housing was as difficult to find then as it is now... They lived in a few different places in Amherst town before deciding to bite the bullet and settle into the old house on the corner of Southeast and Bay.

Dana grew all organic blue corn, popcorn, wheat and soybeans at the time. No one was too interested in soybeans, and they had to bring the wheat all the way up to Vermont to get it ground. The popcorn and blue corn were quite popular—they sold it to Bread and Circus, Atkins, the Leverett Coop, and even brought some up to Brattleboro. There've been ducks, pigs, goats, cows, and chickens living on that land at different times. It also used to be the neighborhood drop off for stray dogs and cats. Now they are cleaning up, making ready for their 50th wedding anniversary party. When that's done, there's the barn to fix, and some things in the house, the list goes on—never a dull moment and always time for a contra dance...

Our farm is fully grateful for the generosity of Dana & Mary who not only rent us their farm but pull us out of the mud with their tractor, find old tobacco lath for us to use in the barn, give us resources for the farm library to make our apprenticeship program richer, and always support the work we are doing.



overheating, the remaining 90% would have some much more space that they would grow as big as footballs!!! They still taste good, but they are a bit of an experience. So we are hoping to build on our success and grow as much weight without the goliaths.

We did have some losers in the fall as our parsnips had trouble germinating and our celery got hit by an early hard freeze on October 19. But besides those two, nearly every other crop produced as high or higher than average, with our potatoes going over the top weighing in at 33,000 lbs., an 83% increase over our 10-year average. Needless to say, our winter share is the most abundant of all time with production (59000 lbs.) 51% higher than our 10-year average.

Livestock and Compost Production:

Our herd of beef cattle spent last winter in the barnyard at Snyder Farm. They ate hay (that was grown on our neighbors fields on Southeast St) and left us over 50 tons of manure in the barnyard. They went onto the pastures late (at the end of April, due to the snowy late winter) and spent the growing season grazing the fields at Snyder Farm.

Eight calves, separated from their moms in June, were raised in Hubbs' pasture next to our West Field. At the end of the growing season, the brood cows birthed six new healthy calves. We brought two 18-month old steers to the butcher in November, consolidated all of



Karen steady hand leads the lost calves home in June!!

the remaining animals in the beginning of December, and culled an old cow and another calf in early January. By the New Year, the herd stood at seven moms, seven yearlings, and six new calves; All seem contented, eating hay again in the barn yard at Snyder Farm.

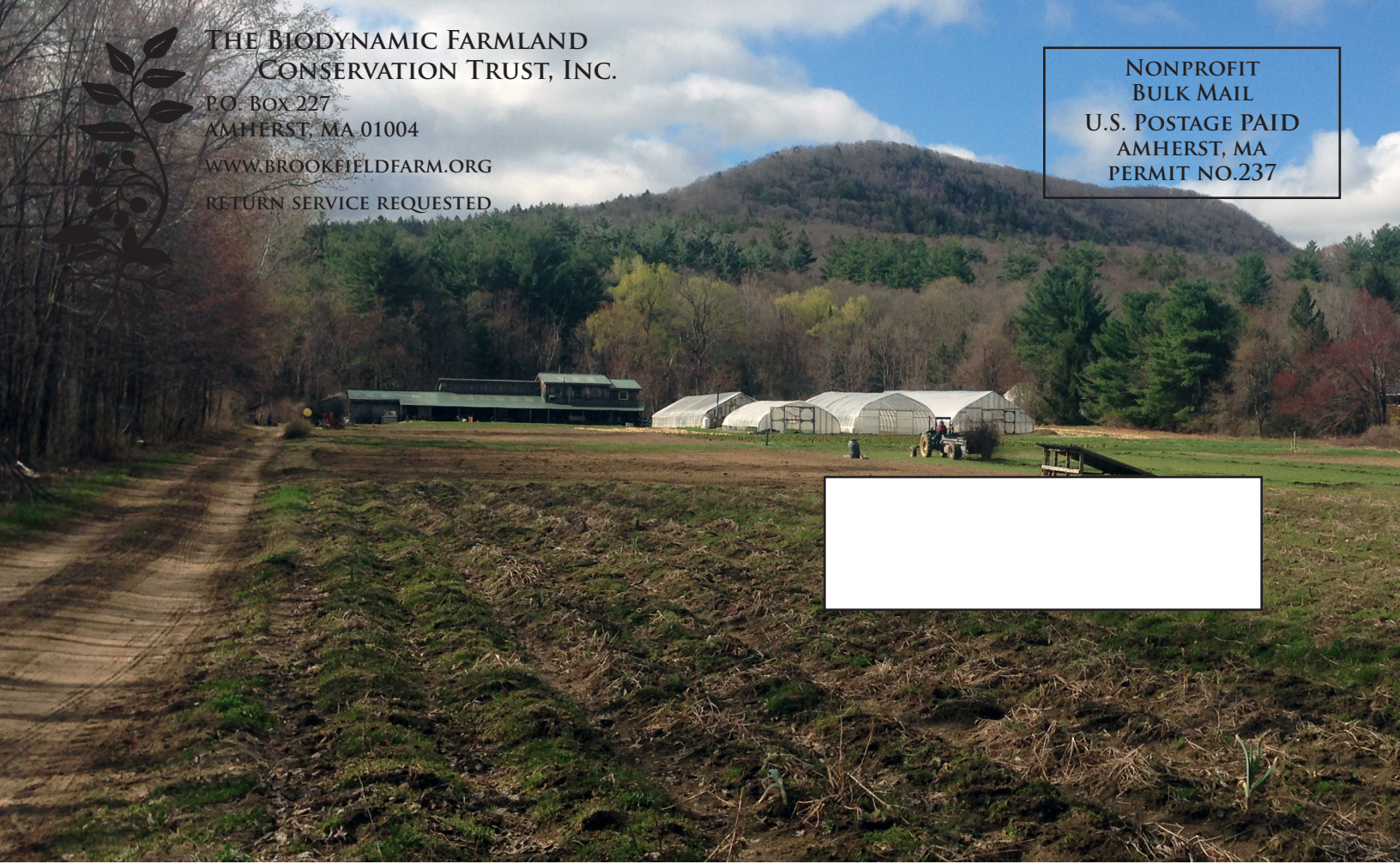
Before we brought them back into the barnyard, we spent a day cleaning out last years manure/hay deposit. We shoveled out the barn, and then used the bucket to scrape the barnyard and make a great compost pile – about 60 tons – next to the barnyard. This will be ready to spread in the spring. In April, we spread about 200 tons of compost onto our vegetable fields this season (see below). In November, we made another 150 tons of compost from cow manure from Cooks' Farm (Hadley MA) and about 100 yards of leaves from the town of Amherst. All of this compost represents one of the tangible benefits of our cattle herd to our overall farm health. Not only are there thousands of pounds of nitrogen for our plants, but there are also soil building micronutrients and micro-life that help ensure our soil is

see “Our Farm Year,” p.12

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“Our Farm Year,” cont.

able to grow nutrient rich plants year after year after year.

CSA Distribution:

As you’d expect – when production is up, so is the volume of our CSA shares. Our overall share size (Boston and On-Farm Pickup) was up 3% from 2014. With the same price from a year ago, this meant that the overall cost of the share (per pound) was down. This year our On-Farm share averaged at 499 lbs, which is \$1.11 per pound. We know that there are many (non-monetary) values for purchasing a CSA share. We also think that it’s good for us to know what the monetary value of the share is from year to year, so that we can compare that to the general marketplace. Whatever way you slice it, by numbers this was a great season of growing.

CSA Share Sales:

While we do not have the waiting list that we enjoyed in the early 2000’s, our CSA share sales continue to be strong. With so many other options for purchasing CSA shares, there is little incentive for anyone to put their name on a waiting list. But we have been tracking renewals and sales for over 15 years, and this year was not much different. Overall our retention rate was 80.1%, down slightly from our 10-year average (-1.8%). The real difference was in the Boston Area where retention was down 4.3%. Our on-farm retention was 86.1% (up .5%). We increased our marketing efforts, especially focusing on the idea we have shares available, as we know that many people believe we still have a waiting list many years long. We believe this

was effective in keeping our share sales strong. We increased our overall sales locally (+6.3%) to make up for the drop in the Boston Areas (-14.8%) which kept our overall share sales nearly even (-.2%).

Farm Finances:

Overall, this year we had a positive net profit of \$13,000 as our income was up (3%) and our expenses were level from 2014. This positive cash-flow resulted in our ability to fully pay back all loan commitments this year, purchase much needed infrastructure improvements, and leave our capital account with a higher ending balance (\$35,000, +10.5%) than expected. Our positive financial position has helped our balance sheet continue to show signs of overall health; Our long-term liabilities were down to \$314,000 (-3.9%) and our total equity is up to \$568,000 (10.8%).

