



BIODYNAMIC FARMLAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

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NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

APPRENTICE PROGRAM

Low-Drama Crew For High-Drama Season

As usual the primary work at the farm was done by participants in our farmer-training Apprenticeship Program – now in its 26th season. These folks are somewhere on the questing continuum of exploring the experience of spending a season on a working farm to honing the specific skills to be ready to manage their own farming operation in the near future. This season we had four aspiring farmers, which made for a lively group of adventurers ready to make the trade: their labor for our information. Little did any of us know what the season had in store.



The farm shop gets a Covid-19 facelift
opened here this past season.

Before anyone arrived at the farm in late March, it became clear that this was going to be a special season of working. Due to public health concerns we decided our best bet was to try to create a “pod” of our apprentices and managers and try to keep everyone else out for the spring. If we could get past the first couple of weeks where everyone was coming together from different places with extra emphasis on cleanliness, distance, and hand-washing, we could then limit contact with the outside world (pretty easy on a vegetable farm!) and hopefully weather the pandemic without all of our crew getting sick (and bringing the farm down with it).

see “Apprentice,” p.8

WHAT’S HAPPENING AT BROOKFIELD FARM

Change & Growth

This winter continues to roll just the way it wants to, not too cold, then not too snowy, then colder, then snowier and snowier. No matter what happens outside, I am sure that this is still a good time to take a look back at the year that was. As the days start to lengthen, I am also sure that seeds will be sown and plants grown again before too long. But before the farm rolls into the new season, it’s helpful to remember before it’s gone forever in the haze of every-year-bleeding-into-every-other-year, just what hap-

When it started, we had all sorts of plans. As usual, we intended to focus on managing our CSA as a core activity, training the next generation of farmers, and continuing to deepen our involvement in using our farm for outreach of all types. We also hoped to update our existing CSA sales in a changing marketplace and to engage in a capital campaign to purchase the farmland that we use around South Amherst. The short story is that all of our goals & plans were over-ridden both by the public-health concerns that arose with Covid-19, as well as Karen & I making the decision that after 27 years it was time for the Board to find new leadership for the farm. We had a tough start

see “What’s Happening,” p.6



The farm crew ready for the final farm shop distribution of the season



All hands on deck to get the last tomatoes before the frost does

GET A HAMMER AND A NAIL

Modest Beginnings End With A Bang

We went into the season with modest plans for infrastructure improvement: continue to upgrade and repair our existing buildings and grounds, sell unused equipment and purchase upgrades, and add the loan for our purchase of the 16 acres off Warren Wright Rd to our existing loan payments. None of these areas were slated to have much work done before April 1.

Buildings & Grounds

When April dawned, we found ourselves using the usual “extra time” for projects, mostly eaten up by preparations for the public health protocols that were now necessary. But, there were a few exceptions. We were finally able to re-construct our hay storage at Snyder Farm which had been vexed by wind for the last four years. Ben & Serena were able to rebuild the frame in April and Joseph and Marlee successfully installed new wind bracing which completed the structure by July (*still intact, knock on wood*). In May, Karen cleaned up the west field hedgerow and sold the un-used low-tunnel hoops forgotten in the weeds. And our neighbor (and guardian angel) Jason Edwards cleared some overhanging vegetation & trees from the field edges and the northern edge of the blueberries (on the task list for 3 years!).

Equipment

We made a necessary upgrade to our “service truck,” retiring the red ranger to become a flat-bed harvest truck and replacing it with a much newer & cleaner silver version. We were also able to successfully secure a grant from the Grinspoon Foundation to purchase a new flame-weeder. And then we stopped purchasing equipment as we awaited the coming season to see what it would bring. After the dust settled, in November we realized that this had been a pretty styl-



Marlee & Joseph put the finishing touches on “Hay House 5.0” at Snyder Farm

lar financial season on the farm (see below) and we had some ability to purchase upgrades to our vegetable & livestock equipment. This corresponded well with Kerry & Max making plans to come to the farm. We used the opportunity to purchase their equipment that represented upgrades for us (cultivating tractor, loader tractor, cultivating equipment).

SPECIAL THANKS
to our *neighbor & welder*
Bob Gray for completely overhauling our disc harrow this spring (and so many other genius repairs over so many years)

Land

We continued to cover-crop the new field off of Warren Wright Road. On the Northern half of the field, Gordy Cook cut our winter rye for our strawberry straw mulch, and then we bare-fallowed it to cut down on the viability of the horse nettle that was growing in that area. Then we sowed more winter rye in that section and it grew into a beautiful green blanket of grass before the end of November. This field is still slated to have Brookfield Farm vegetable crops grown on it for the first time in in 2022. We also continued to work & improve the hay field at the Tate Farm on Middle St. Jason Edwards cut 40 round bales for our cows, we removed rocks from the bottom section, and saw the clover, sowed in 2019, begin to grow-in during the fall.

BIODYNAMIC FARMLAND CONSERVATION TRUST (BFCT), INC.

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Winter rye growing nicely at Warren Wright Road field in October

SPREAD THE WORD

Straight From the Field

This year, despite the limitations caused by the public health concerns related to gathering people together, we continued to use the resources of the Trust and our experiences operating Brookfield Farm to provide opportunities for learning about sustainability, food production, energy use, nutrition, and related topics.

Once again, our past apprentice, Leila Tunnell (aka “Farmer Leila”), expanded and enhanced her role as not only our “Farm Educator,” but as the “Garden Educator” for the Amherst Public School System. Despite the challenges of remote learning she continued to implement the 21st Century Grant with Amherst Middle School by creating new programming, which included providing weekly boxes of fresh produce to participating students who then attended remote cooking classes, preparing meals and special treats for their families using farm produce. In addition, she developed and implemented curriculum to 41 Amherst Public School classrooms (every K-4 class in the district, over 750 elementary students) providing virtual garden lessons. Check out the videos available for the School Garden Program website and Farmer Leila’s youtube channel - <https://sites.google.com/args.org/amherstschoolgardens/home?authuser=0>

Despite not being able to host farm visits, Renee Ciulla connected her UMASS Sustainable Ag class by working with Dan to create research projects for students based on real-farm needs this spring and then returned in the fall to create a video about our farming philosophy.

Farmers and service providers sought out our consultation about lease making, CSA management, Covid-related distribution changes, WWOFFING, root cellar construction, Jiffy Hitch systems, and organizational structure. We were consulted by researchers about greenhouse construction, food systems & equity, and the effects of the pandemic on food businesses. And we were the host site for a

UMASS Biology research project on the role of songbirds on insect pest control. We provided crop planning spreadsheets to 51 farmers and gave a presentation on “30 years of CSA farming” at the Vermont Veg Conference in January before the remainder of our speaking plans were cancelled.

We also continued to use whatever resources we could afford to support our local community. We donated greenhouse plants to the Hartsbrook School and Erin Ferrentino’s



Leila gathers the first harvest from the school garden headed for students kitchens!

SPECIAL THANKS

community gardening project. We allowed the use of our back porch and upper & lower fields for Jade Alicandro-Mace’s herbalism classes from June - November, our firepit to a local men’s group to hold weekly meetings, and our Harvest Schedule to be used by Just Roots in Greenfield. We donated vegetables to food pantries (Not Bread Alone & Amherst Survival Center) and we received kitchen scraps weekly from Not Bread Alone to add to our compost making operation.

To shareholder *Andrew Parker-Renga* for initiating & delivering donations to the Amherst Survival Center. And to *Anna Kaplan* for volunteering to coordinate the harvest for each weeks’ donation. Over 24 weeks they managed to bring over 5600 lbs of gleaned produce to those in need.

GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

Charitable Giving Increases

Once again, while we made modest efforts towards asking for support for the outreach work we do on the farm we reaped greater rewards than we expected; 2020 will be remembered in general as a year of unstoppable generosity – from shareholders, friends, and complete strangers. Share fees pay for the food production at the farm. For everything else we do – interacting with public school groups around the farm, creating content for local college classes, providing consulting to aspiring farmers – all of these “outreach” efforts are supported by our Annual Fund and other non-solicited donations which we receive as gifts.

ANNUAL FUND

- ❖ total dollars (\$9866) +26%
- ❖ total gifts (104) +40%
- ❖ participant rate +38%

The Annual Fund consisted of a single appeal in November and yielded \$9886 (up 26% from 2019). In addition, the total number of gifts received (104) increased by 40%. And in a nod to how widespread giving was in 2020, the average gift was lower (-25%).

Our Donor Supported Share Fund was created in 2014 to support people to join the farm who need some financial assistance. This season, which was difficult financially for many, saw \$2400 disbursed to scores of shareholders to help them with varying levels of support to make our shares affordable. At years end the fund had \$8117.56.

In addition, we received a number of incredible unsolicited gifts – a relative of a long-term shareholder gave \$1000 in recognition of “the work we have done over so many years” and a long-term shareholder gave \$500 to support paying young people to work on the farm.

And beyond all of that, the public health emergency brought out a waterfall of volunteering & giving efforts all season long. We were showered ceaselessly with help & gifts in the midst of this season of change. Please be assured that they were gratefully received by all.

IN MEMORIAM

We remember our long-term shareholder *Jackie Churchill* who passed away in the early summer. She was a constant positive support to us for many decades. We were so moved when her husband, Andy asked people to make donations to the Trust in her memory and we intend to use the \$3000 which was given to create something to honor the legacy she left.

“She really loved being at the farm - it was one of her favorite places. Thanks for all the happiness you brought Jackie and our whole family.”

LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

The Next Generation

When Dan & Karen told us it was time to start planning for new leadership at the farm (back in February), we immediately “retreated” to take stock of our organization and make plans for the future. Our process for the impossible task of replacing them began in earnest in June. We reached out through our lists, to other farms, to food and sustainable agriculture organizations, and through social media. We received about 30 applicants and half were seriously considered. In November, the board unanimously voted to hire Kerry & Max Taylor, who have a long history both at Brookfield and in the Pioneer Valley (*see below*).

As you may know, our farm was the 3rd CSA in the US. We have many members who took their children to the strawberry fields, and then 20 years later watched their grandchildren in the same fields. We also have a rich history of apprentices working and learning in our fields and then leaving to start farms of their own.

It feels so right that we welcome our next generation farmers who are a part of our past and now our future. We hope that when you meet them (again) you will feel the same way.

*For the board and with deep appreciation,
Peter Littell, board President*

The Journey Continues

What a year this has been! We ran a community farm, which brings hundreds of people together to pickup food weekly during a public-health pandemic. There was a serious drought and a fraught political election. And on top of that, we decided it was time to pursue a transition after 27 years of calling Brookfield Farm our home.

Before it all passes into memory, we want to share a few things. First, why are we doing this? Quite simply, we just know it is time for us to do something else. After nearly three decades of building our lives around this project, we think the time is right to pass the baton forward. Additionally, the farm is in a great position to weather a transition. The board is ready for the task of working with new leadership. The community that has supported Brookfield during our stewardship is still here and engaged. The farm is no one’s and everyone’s. Multiple farmers came before us and we are hopeful that many more will follow.



Ian, Daniel, Nicki, Claire, & Dave, Lower Field, 1985



Dan, Anna, Karen, & Jacob Middle Field, 2001

What are we going to do next? The short answer is stop doing what we have done for 27 years so we will have space and time to figure out what is next! Continued work being of service to our community remains at the top of our list - only maybe with

weekends off! Karen will continue her work as a nurse and Dan is ready to find new projects. We have no plans to move or leave the area. We love where we live and look forward to remaining a part of this community. We have all intentions of being available to Kerry and Max as they move into their new roles, but we also want them to have the space they need to start calling the job their own. We expect this transition to take place incrementally over the next 1-2 months. Expect to see us less, but not never, and hopefully in the u-pick fields picking and chatting, not weeding.

Mostly we want you to know that we are filled with gratitude for having been able to do this work and be surrounded and supported by this community for so long. We are grateful to the Fortiers for their initial vision, for building the original barn, for donating their land and creating the BFCT to be a caretaker of this project. We are grateful to Ian and Nicki Robb for stewarding the first 12 years and birthing Brookfield Farm. We are grateful for the shareholders, apprentices, neighbors, volunteers, board members, and collaborators who have given of themselves to grow this project from what it was then to what it is now. And we are excited for Kerry and Max to grab the baton and continue to guide this dream into the future.

And a dream it has been! From Claire and Dave’s initial dream of a biodynamic farm, through Ian and Nicki’s careful pioneering of Brookfield to become the third CSA in the US. We have been inspired to try to grow the farm with our eyes on the “triple bottom line” – sustainability in agriculture (farm-raised, solar-powered fertility), economics (producer/consumer partnership), and spirit (community, wellness, and education). We are sure we have *not* realized the farm’s potential: We have attempted to add a layer and we know there is a lot more to do. Our lodestar has been that “Brookfield Farm is a 1000-year project” and we are humbled to have been steering this ship for a few decades. We are thankful for your companionship on this journey (we estimate there have been over 5,000 families who have been shareholders since we’ve been here). The connections we have made in the service of stewarding this land for the nourishment of a supporting community are what we cherish dearest and will remember most vividly. We look forward to keeping in touch as this journey continues.

Dan & Karen

Can’t Wait To Get Our Hands Dirty

We are Max and Kerry Taylor and we are absolutely thrilled to introduce ourselves as your new farmers. We know that Brookfield Farm is incredibly important to so many of you. Dan and Karen have been mentors to us for the past 15 years and we feel humbled and honored to continue and expand on their work here at Brookfield Farm.

Our roots in the Pioneer Valley run deep. We are both grads of the 5 colleges; Kerry from Mt. Holyoke and Max from UMass. Kerry started working at Brookfield Farm in 2007 as an apprentice. She worked her way up to Assistant Manager and completed 5 seasons on the farm. Max got his start on other organic farms in the Pioneer Valley before landing at Riverland Farm in Sunderland MA, in 2008. We met on an inter-farm field trip, tubing down the Deerfield river in the



summer of 2009 and became friends largely due to crew exchanges between Riverland and Brookfield Farm. We were married in the west field at Brookfield Farm in 2011.

Since 2012 we have been running Provider Farm, in Salem CT. We did our best to create a farm very much in the image of Brookfield. Much like Dan and

Karen, we believe in the importance of growing real food for real people, using methods good for the earth and good for you. Our CSA was the engine of our farm and we recognize and appreciate how important the community is to our success. When our son Shepard was born early in 2016 we quickly learned that farming with a kid is certainly different. Sharing the wonders of farming with Shep has been an absolute joy and we are so excited for him to grow up in the Pioneer Valley at Brookfield Farm.

Since November, we have been running our winter share, and closing down our business at Provider Farm while meeting with Dan and Karen to develop a solid transition plan for 2021. We've been moving equipment up to Brookfield and moving our home as well. Come March 1, we expect to be on the ground and ready to get busy at Brookfield Farm.

Transitioning a farm, especially one as influential as Brookfield, is never going to be an easy task and Covid-19 has added a few additional wrinkles and hurdles. Community events and gatherings may continue to look a bit different for a little while but we are feeling optimistic and hopeful we'll be able to gather again soon and are looking forward to meeting everyone. The pandemic has really demonstrated to us the importance of community farms and keeping things as local as possible.

We feel that Dan and Karen are incredible people. They have built Brookfield into what it is today and touched so many lives along the way. They are leaving us some very big boots to fill and we know the task won't be easy, but we are so excited to continue their legacy of growing great food. We can't wait to get our hands dirty.

Your new farmers, Max, Kerry and Shepard

"neighbors," cont. from right

You might see Joanna or Victoria here and there walking their sweet little black hypoallergenic poodles around the farm - if you do, please remember how much our farms' current success is due to the ongoing flexibility and patience they have shown with our smelly, early-rising, noisy farm operation keeping them company all the time. We remain thankful for all of our neighbors who encircle our farm with support and generosity which continues to keep this farm afloat in our little corner of South Amherst.



Hubbs' Pasture (looking west) in May

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

A Long Tradition of Cooperation

Our farm is located in the midst of a densely populated area with many residential neighbors surrounding our fields. In addition, we have over 20 fields, far-flung over a 2-mile radius, with many specific lease & partnership agreements. On top of that, our mission is public centered; As an educational nonprofit 501(c)(3) the center of our work is engaging the general public with information about sustainable agriculture to help create a vital partnership between our human community, soil microbes, flora, fauna, water, air in relation to food production. In short, we are really in this together with a lot of other people; This is not a family farm, it is a farm of many families.

One thing that stands out to me in all of this is how many deep and long-standing connections we have with so many of the neighbors who live around the land we work; Helen Fortier, the daughter of the farm's founders, Claire & Dave. Nicki Robb, our original farmer. Cynthia (longtime board member) & Lee Barstow who have allowed us to use a part of their land to grow (carrots this year) in the West Field. Leila Tunnell & Jake Mazar, who were apprentices at the farm and can walk out their back gate into our fields to pick veggies to cook in our crew lunches or Wheelhouse Farm creations. Elaine Kenseth, whose father Arnold, a beloved pastor at the S Congregational Church, wrote poetry blessing our fields. And on and on it goes. The farm has been dependent on the good graces and generosity of all of these neighbors who have let us cross their property, put up with our loose pigs in their gardens, and encouraged us with support in so many ways over so many years.

One other neighbor, the Hubbs family, has been especially important to the development and operation of our farm since their land sits right in between our two main fields and their house is literally surrounded by our barn, pick-your-own fields, and pathways. When I first visited the farm in 1992, Ian Robb gave me a farm tour and showed me the Brookfield herd of Dexter cows grazing in Hubbs' pasture (next to the western road of the farm) and explained his hopes for the cows to use land in a sustainable fashion. Brookfield has grazed cattle (usually young stock) on their pasture for over 30 years and they have graciously (and for no fee) let us use their road as a farm by-way to get from the Lower to the West Field countless times over those years. When poison ivy started to get bad in the pasture, we raised pigs there for a number of years which eradicated most of it from the west and south areas of the pasture. And I even remember having a few goats out there in 1995. Basically we have been buoyed by the generosity of the Hubbs Family (Clay (a Missouri farm boy who passed away in 2007), Joanna (along with Clay an original Hampshire College professor), and their daughter Victoria) as we have tried to continue the long-standing Brookfield tradition of figuring out creative ways to farm in the midst of lots of people.

By 2020, our herd had gotten a little bigger and we began to outgrow the Hubbs' pasture. In August, we hit a milestone and moved our young stock to other rented land nearby. We took our cattle fence down so that Joanna and Victoria can once again walk unencumbered around their beautiful field. Going forward we hope the farm can continue to use the road and keep the field mowed twice a year in exchange. When you visit our farm, please respect their boundary, stay on the existing roads and paths and please don't stray into their pasture.

<---continue reading at left

“What’s Happening,” cont.

to the growing season with cold, wind, and then drought making spring production tough. The pandemic created a huge increase in “stress-food-purchasing” while labor, CSA distribution management, and outreach efforts required an entirely new set of procedures and policies. The Board conducted a national search and hired our incredible replacements in only 9 months. In the end we came out strong, but there was a lot of work and flexibility needed to get there. As you will see, the strength of our overall organization made it possible to weather these unexpected challenges. As we get ready to hand the reins of management off to the next generation, we are buoyed to report that the farm and the Trust that owns it, are in great shape – financially, agriculturally, socially, managerially – demonstrating the resilience that we have long strived to build into all of our endeavors.

None of this could have been possible without the continued contribution and commitment of shareholders, donors, friends, and relatives who support us financially, emotionally, and spiritually. This is amplified when we look back at the steady stream of well-wishes and offers to help we received over the past 12 months. We are reminded again 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, and our land. For this we thank you, as always, and hope that through the following pages you can get a glimpse of some of what your contribution has helped to grow and nurture.

Farmer Dan (for Karen & Abbe)

OUR FARM YEAR

Pandemic. Wind. Drought. Adjustments. Rain. Beautiful Fall Harvest. We Made It!

After what was really a dream-world in 2019, we knew the farm wouldn’t roll like that again, but we had no idea what was about to come. Let’s just say it’s exhausting just to think about it, but that’s probably because we’re a little old and stodgy, and in 2020 we had to be fresh and adaptable at every turn. Everything seemed to be just ticking along until mid-March and then the world changed. And we changed with it. We were wrapping our minds around the public health challenges related to managing the farm, when we realized it was really cold and windy. And then it stopped raining and we were irrigating every minute of the day. With June approaching, we completely overhauled our on-farm distribution scheme and got bikes for the weeder crew so they wouldn’t have to cram into the van to get around the farm. Then the rains came and the crops grew and the crew thrived with their masks on and bikes pedaling around the



Ben, Jake, Karen, Anna, Joseph, & Wally feeling good with the August melon harvest

Vegetable Production 2020

	per share unit	2020 (lbs)	2019
BEEF	7.3 LBS.	3850	3260
BEEF W/TOPS	2.4 BU.	1270	1540
BITTERMELON	0.0 LBS.	0	0
BROCCOLI	3.0 LBS.	1555	3385
BRUSSELS' SPROUTS	2.7 PC.	1415	1255
BRUSSELS' TOPS	3.3 LBS	1730	315
CABBAGE	26.7 LBS	14040	10574
CABBAGE, CHI.	2.1 HDS.	3285	3204
CANTELOUPES	2.9 PC.	7705	10600
CARROT	36.9 LBS.	19380	12445
CARROT W/TOP	1.8 BU.	940	1470
CAULIFLOWER	1.5 LBS.	775	2355
CELERIAC	2.3 LBS.	1200	1250
CELERY	2.7 PC.	1435	1763
CHARD	2.6 LBS.	1350	1470
COLLARDS	4.0 LBS.	2095	2275
CORN	2.9 DZ.	9060	8640
CORN, POP	0.0 LBS.	0	200
CUCUMBER	12.3 LBS.	6455	7030
EGGPLANT	10.3 LBS.	5425	5010
ESCAROLE	1.5 HDS.	1610	1250
FENNEL	1.6 PC.	865	690
GARLIC	0.0 LBS.	0	1250
GARLIC SCAPES	0.6 LBS.	320	405
GREENS	5.9 LBS.	3075	4502
KALE	17.5 LBS.	9195	10772
KOHLRABI	1.4 LBS.	725	923
LEEK	15.3 PC.	8020	6039
LETTUCE	14.5 HDS.	7620	6696
LETTUCE	4.7 LBS.	2455	2095
OKRA	0.4 LBS.	215	10
ONION	18.2 LBS.	9575	8065
PARSNIP	0.4 LBS.	225	0
PEPPERS, HOT	1.9 LBS.	995	530
PEPPERS, SWEET	7.5 LBS.	3925	2950
POTATO	27.3 LBS.	14335	14925
POTATO, SWEET	31.6 LBS.	16580	17675
RADICCHIO	1.0 LBS.	510	397
RADISH	4.1 BU.	2175	1960
RADISH, DAIKON	4.9 LBS.	2560	3485
RADISH, STORAGE	6.1 LBS.	3210	1650
RUTABAGA	7.0 LBS.	3675	5125
SCALLION	4.0 BU.	2090	1915
SPINACH	2.3 LBS.	1200	360
SQUASH, SUMMER	16.0 LBS.	8400	7270
SQUASH, WINTER	40.5 LBS.	21250	39800
TOMATOES	25.7 LBS.	13480	9420
TURNIP, HAKUREI	1.2 BU.	640	1365
TURNIP	8.6 LBS.	4530	4957
WATERMELONS	32.6 LBS.	17115	17400

fields. Somehow we found ourselves in a dry, but glorious fall harvest eventually filling our root cellar to the brim. And then we hit the pillow – hard! And now we realize this story really happened. And here it is:

Vegetable Crop Production:

Our overall production was down from a stellar 2019 (-7%) and



nearly identical to our 10-year average (-.8%). Thanks in large part to a forgiving late summer and fall, we grew 274,086 lbs of vegetables, fruits, flowers, and herbs. We had very wide-ranging crop success (having only two “Brookfield Farm records” - Collards: 2095 lbs. and Escarole: 1600 (huge) heads) leaving our production totals overall very typical. Our winter storage production (48,290 lbs) was significantly higher (7%) than our 10-year average .

Our crops generally went in on time, but early season struggles with wind and a deep drought kept yields of early crops (greens, radish, etc) significantly lower through early July. We kept our crops alive with a lot of irrigation in May and June (thanks to Ben and the crew with the pipes and sprinklers, and Marlee and the bucket of drip irrigation fittings!). And then in July when the rain returned and the weather stayed warm, the stage was set for a late summer & fall harvest. There were a few notable losers; we continue to be challenged with growing parsnips, which we lost for the 4th time in 5 years basically to weed control in the first month. And the dry early summer kept winter squash yields below average and a returned dry spell in September reduced yields from fall brassicas (cauliflower & broccoli) and celeriac. But overall the winners – beautiful kale all season long, solid eggplants & peppers (thanks to Bob & Sally Fitz letting us set up drip irrigation in this field for the first time), bumper blueberries, booming tomatoes, immense & sweet fall carrots and plentiful sweet potatoes & fall cabbage – made this an overall solid production season.

CSA Distribution:

The biggest change we saw due to the public health concerns related to COVID-19 related to our On-Farm Distribution. How do we make it safe for 400 families to come to the farm each week to pick up their food? We completely re-thought our distribution flow in the

farm shop (keeping people moving in only one direction), offered a pre-boxed “curbside pickup & home delivery” option (thanks Carol!), and a signup-genius-based system (thanks Ben!) to ensure the farm shop wasn’t overcrowded. Karen managed a 26% increase in Farm Shop sales, including an online farm store created (thanks Anna!). This was invigorating to our well-worn neural pathways and in the end felt like a success mostly due to the incredibly positive attitude of

	2020	2019	% dif last year	% dif 10 yr avg
Total Production				
total lbs (including PYO)	276566	292145	-5.6%	0.3%
total lbs. (no PYO)	243766	252065	-3.4%	1.1%
winter share production	48290	50530	-4.6%	7.0%
acreage planted	25.4	28	-10.2%	-13.5%
crops planted	64	64	0.0%	1.9%
Distribution Comparison				
total lbs per share	423.5	471.3	-10%	-8%
cost per lb. share	\$1.42	\$1.27	12%	14%
avg. lbs. per share each week	16.9	18.9	-11%	-10%

all our shareholders who changed their patterns, their expectations, and basically deluged us with a steady stream of gratitude all season long. Every day on the farm was like the day before Thanksgiving.

On the distribution-value side, poor early-season harvests translated into somewhat decreased distribution amounts for our regular season CSA shares. Our on-farm share saw a 10% decrease in total share volume from 2019, and the Boston share was down 9% . Because the fall harvest really picked up, our Winter Share was 7% larger than 2019. Our price per pound was \$1.42/lb. (+12%) for the On-Farm Share, \$1.88/lb.(+11%) for Boston shares, and .74c/lb (-6%) for the Winter Share compared to 2019. We know that there are many (non-monetary) values for purchasing a CSA share. But, we also think that

see “Our Farm Year,” p.11



“Apprentice,” cont.

In the end, this strategy helped this group form a strongly-bonded unit that not only performed all of the usual tasks around the farm, but also navigated all of the new processes we needed to implement after April 1. They sowed seeds in the greenhouse, plowed & harrowed fields, made planting beds, put seeds in the ground, and tended growing plants. They also figured out to use masks appropriately when packing spinach for 500 families, pre-packed hundreds of “curbside-pickup” shares, and stayed socially-distant in the field.

As usual we immersed them in as many different aspects of our operation as possible – field work, farm shopkeeping, delivery driving, livestock chores – so that they could learn from a diverse set of experiences. And in the fall, as our farm work becomes more straightforward, we sit down each week for a “business management” topic where we explore our budgets, financial reports, marketing & communications strategies, labor relations, bookkeeping, etc. to help them get “behind” the daily activities to see how the sausage is really made. In addition, apprentices participated in a slightly-modified CRAFT program (www.craftfarmapprentice.com) where they travelled to other farms in the region for masked, socially-distanced, outdoor visits to collaborating farms that also train apprentices to get some other perspectives on how they farm in New England in the 21st Century.

This year we welcomed Serena Xu who came to us from NYC where she had been working in tech for the past bunch of years. She was in the “explorer” stage and wanted to “be involved as much as possible across all operations of the farm.” She brought her incredible work-ethic and no-nonsense mind set and quickly learned how to use machinery. While she was here she specialized in making stale seed beds, pulling transplanters, and digging potatoes with the Landini 5860. In addition, she also cultivated all of our tomatoes and beans using the Farmall Cub and took her turn as harvest & share-packing manager in the fall. And her love of cooking, crafting, and painting added greatly to our farm shop & crew social life as well. When the season ended



Serena always finds the winning radishes



Marlee, Anna, Wally, Serena, and Jake - fall harvest bliss!

she headed to hibernate with family in NJ and plans to be an apprentice at Sister’s Hill Farm (another CRAFT farm) in Stanfordville, NY next season.

Joseph Bernstein was finishing his degree at Hampshire College and started his apprenticeship in April working part-time through May. He is a born-tinkerer and loves figuring out and fixing all manner of tools. He brought this curiosity to the farm in the hopes of exploring a small mechanized diversified farm in New England

for an entire season. His tractor time was mostly spent making planting beds and mechanically cultivating all of crops with the IH265. In addition he also field-seeded all of our finicky crops – carrots, beets, parsnips, and greens with our finicky

Allis Chalmers G tractor and also took his turn as harvest & pack manager as well as Boston share delivery driver in the fall. At the end of the season, he stayed in the apprentice house (next to the farm) and has worked for

our neighbor (and welder), Bob Gray, while making plans to (potentially) work at a horse-powered farm in Central New York.

We were also lucky enough to have Jake Cardoza (’18) re-join our apprentice crew after a break managing the indoor growing spaces at Fresh Box, in Millis, MA. He wanted to get back into growing in soil outdoors, so we set him up making & spreading our compost with the Hesston 80-60 and doing a variety of “plant care jobs” – from spraying to cultivating to bed preparation with our JD2355. He took his turn with the harvest & pack management and delivering Boston shares and we were so thankful for his skilled and experienced presence back on the farm for a 2nd season. At the end of the season he took a job as an assistant manager at Farmer Tim’s, in Dudley, MA.

All these folks joined Marlee Giacometti who returned to the farm for her second season as an apprentice. She did all of our field prep, pulling the plow and harrow behind the John Deere 2355 and also mechanical cultivation with the Allis Chalmers G basket weeder. Marlee also took on increased responsibility by managing our field planting in the spring, organizing materials and people to successfully put over 200,000 seedlings into acres of planting beds. And then, starting with the watermelons in August, she managed our bulk harvest – coordinating our small regiments of harvesters to bring in tens of thousands of pounds of food from the field to the greenhouse, cooler, and cellar – from August thru November. Her hard work and organizational abilities sometimes had us all happy to be working at “Marlee’s Farm” during many points during the season. At the end of the season she took a job as Environmental Coordinator at Marquis Energy in her home state of Illinois.

Joseph cleans out the early tomatoes from the fieldhouse





This crew had one thing in common – they just got to work and got the job done. They were incredibly resilient and flexible when it came to changes that were necessary due to the pandemic. And in the end they managed to keep our farm crew illness-free for the entire season and feeling bonded and together like a good “pod” should feel. They also did it with a low-key positive, incredibly mature attitude that kept the food flowing to hundreds of shareholders each week. They give us hope for the future as they take their skills with them as their adventures continue.

We can't wait to hear where they go as they now join over 50 past Brookfield Farm apprentices making the world safe for agriculture. In midwinter, before the big snow, Ben made next-year's compost piles. When he was done, I remembered that Abbe had reached out to all of our past apprentices asking them to help celebrate the 25th Anniversary of our Apprentice Program in 2019 by sending us a small bit of their current soil in honor of our annual Top Soil Award. So, before the snow flew, I brought these contributions to the compost area near the North Field and created a “brew-for-the-ages” by adding them all to the Brookfield Farm wheel of fortune. *If you want to catch up with what our past apprentices are up to....check out our website - www.brookfieldfarm.org/our-crew-1.*



Jake stays balanced

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FANTASTIC STAFF

Our Administrator **Abbe Vredenburg** (26 years and counting!) &

Ken Dziuba our mechanic since 2013. *This was Ken's final season on the farm and we thank him for keeping our machines running, fixing countless brake lines, & being a true friend of the farm!*



Ken rocks the workshop

FAREWELL BROOKFIELD

Special Thanks to Ben Fishbein

Ben joined us as an apprentice in 2018, after kindling his interest in agriculture on farm stays in Argentina & Chile in the spring of 2016 and then a winter on a sustainable livestock farm in upstate NY. He was ready to spend an entire season on a working farm, to learn new skills and learn the business of farm management. He wanted to “one day fully live from his own means.” Fast forward to the end of the 2020 and Ben has not only completed two full seasons as an apprentice, but he became our 10th assistant manager at the end of 2019.

When Ben was an apprentice, he stood out for his eager ability to pick up new skills and get jobs done quickly. He became a skilled machine operator as well as a friendly presence in the farm shop. He also loves music and could usually be seen carrying away the crew speaker to the next work-zone with some sweet deep-cuts playing in the background.



Ben gets the greenhouse cleaned up while stylin!

His season as Assistant Manager was one of the most eventful in recent memory and Ben rose to the task. Like all of us, he needed to adjust to some very different circumstances due to the pandemic. Unlike the rest of us, he also needed to figure out how to manage the regular harvest crew (12 of us with masks on), share packing (for an additional 20% of our shareholders), irrigation (in a drought year), and on-farm distribution (in a year of the sign-up-genius!!). Ben responded by meeting the demands of the tasks - our crops were watered, then harvested, then packed & picked up in a one-way re-designed Farm Shop.

While we were able to successfully navigate our management transfer to Kerry and Max, one of the only disappointments in this quick and successful transition was that we were not able to keep his position moving forward. We have been so thankful for his flexibility and patience and understanding for this difficult situation and we continue to offer him all of our mentoring and support as he brings his considerable skill set to the next step on his professional journey. He is currently looking at a number of positions using horticulture in an educational setting and we look forward to staying in touch with him as he thrives in his new endeavors.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS VOLUNTEERS

Peter Aronson, Pete McLean, Leila Tunnell, Caroline Pellegrini, Charlotte Lindbloom, Chris & Veralin Vriezen, Madison Cushing, Liz Lacey.

& OUR SUPER WEEDER CREW:

Lukas, Sydney, Oli, Caleb, Gabe, Spencer, Ally, Becca, Raphael, Sarah, Rachel, Jana, Ethan, Angela, Terra, and Orion



PARTY TIME

All Work and No Play.....

Food production is the basis of our activities on the farm. But we have always hoped that through this basic pursuit, the farm could also become a site for other events – only bounded by imagination.

We were lucky enough to have Zoe Abram ('12-'18) return to the farm for her first year as our Events Coordinator. Of course, every plan she made in February was rendered moot by March. But Zoe (as a good farmer) adapted, made edits, and creatively found ways to allow the community to safely, productively, and joyously gather.

She started the year with a video showing shareholders all of the changes to expect at the farm on opening day. This was viewed on youtube hundreds of times and got people in the right frame of mind to meet the new farm experience. In June she made some “self-serve” scavenger hunts to help new folks find hidden treasures at the farm as well as a video of Leila in the kitchen whipping up some farm-based treats. In July she coordinated a successful socially-distanced Garlic Harvest and in September a very festive and well-attended Pumpkin Pick. And in October, after an early snow-storm melted quickly, 30 people come out to Small One’s Farm to bring in the rest of the potatoes from the Pump Field on Middle Street.



Potato Dig gets done quickly with a big crew on Halloween!!

In addition there were events that others organized around the farm. Rosie Pearson once again celebrated the New Year with a Beating of the Bounds around the perimeter of our patch of earth in January. Tim Holcomb used our farmyard as a site for screening of the movie “Kiss The Ground” about sustainable soil management in October.

Our events season wrapped up with a “virtual harvest celebration” on zoom where we showed some great photos of the season (check them out on our website), thanked all of those who contributed so much to a memorable season, and introduced our new farmers Kerry & Max to the community. There was nothing typical about this year, but despite all of that we found ways to get together safely and celebrate the simple act of feeding ourselves.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PANDEMIC GUARDIAN ANGELS

❖ *Carol Wood* - home delivery of CSA shares, farm-crew mask production, pre-packing produce for curbside & Boston pickup, and greenhouse seeding

❖ *Janet Marquardt, Bonnie Sennott, Zoe Crabtree, Roberta Lojko, Michele Emanatian, Jeannie Esposito, Claudia Phillips, Sue Kelly, Leah Badenoch, Pete McLean, Zoe Abram* – Farm Shop Greeters

❖ *Kissie Mathewson* - home delivery pinch-bitter!

❖ *Chris & Noah Zobel* - constructing handwashing sinks, towel racks, picnic tables, party tent, and the share (bomb) shelter!!

❖ *“Farmer Dave” Welborn* - fixing the rotten post in the harvest shed!

❖ *Dennis Mathewson* - landscaping, cleanup of front of farm!

❖ *For donations received:*

tables: Cappie Glica, Bill Tunnell, Ana Devlin-Gauthier,

lawn signs: Wendi Weinberg, Jenni Abingsole, Lyle Denit,

Kerry Spitzer, Chris Volonte

Bicycles: Todd Holland

Supplies: TP/Paper Towels – Wheelhouse Will & Jake

“Thank you for providing such a vital resource. Having safe access to fresh, locally grown vegetables and fruit has always been important, but at the moment, it feels downright critical. At the risk of sounding dramatic, Brookfield Farm feels a bit like a lifeline right about now”



The Pandemic Farmyard - weeder crew bike rack & Zobel’s tent

Carol Wood packs up her delivery truck



The herd reluctantly agrees to eat hay in a dry October



“Our Farm Year,” cont.

it’s good for us to know how the share stacks up from year to year, so that we can compare that to the general marketplace. It also helps us to quantify how shareholders really do help by taking on a piece of the risks and rewards of our farm production, a core piece of the CSA model. The numbers confirm what we have, at this point seen many times in the past: on tough growing years by spreading the risks among many families, we are able to keep the farm in good financial shape with only a modest rise in costs to each shareholder.

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 the fields of Gray’s Farm on Southeast St) and left us over 50 tons of manure in the barnyard. They went onto the pastures at the end of April, and spent the growing season grazing the fields at Snyder Farm. Karen managed all of the pasture fencing this season successfully enough that I can’t remember them getting out and running loose at any point.

We raised 6 calves & 1 bull (born in 2019) in Hubbs’ pasture (between our Lower & West Fields) beginning in May. This big group out-grew the pasture, which was somewhat stressed by the drought, so we moved them in August to the North Field at Small One’s Farm where they were very happy through the fall on 5 acres of grass & clover. We also had 6 calves who were born in 2020 (4 in May/June & 2 in Nov/Dec) who stayed with the herd at Snyder Farm. With the uneven moisture, our grazing was somewhat challenging to keep steady this year. Luckily our neighbor Jason Edwards cut some extra bales for us (from the Gray Farm and the Tate Farm on Middle St.) so even though we needed to start feeding in late October (one month

early) we should have enough hay to make it through the winter. We culled two older cows and brought the big bull and a big steer to the butcher in October. By February, the herd stood at 8 cows, and 11 calves (5 old, 6 young) all seemingly contented, eating hay again in the barn yard at Snyder Farm on Southeast St.

**SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR
“PANDEMIC-FAMILY-FARM-CREW”**

A special year was made even more so when our daughter *Anna Kaplan*, after her summer clinical was cancelled, took us up on our offer for her to work on the farm. And then our son’s housemate, *Sean Wallace*, reached out to do a “gap semester” living at our house and working on our crew. These two worked more than a full-time schedule, brought a solid work-ethic, strong muscles, and keen minds to our crew (you will see them all over these pages) and we are thankful for their special contributions this season.

Before we brought the herd back into the barnyard, we cleaned out last year’s manure/hay deposit. We shoveled out the barn, and then used the loader to scrape the barnyard and make a great compost pile – about 60 tons. This will be ready to spread in the spring. In April and May, we spread about 200 tons of compost onto about 1/3 of our vegetable fields (about 20 tons/acre). And in May we made compost from the materials that had been delivered in late 2019 when the ground dried (one great thing about the spring drought!). Later in the fall, at our compost site on Hulst Rd, we gathered materials (leaves from the town of Amherst, food waste from Not Bread Alone, veggie scraps from our harvest shed, cow manure from Cook Farm in Hadley). Snow came in early December causing us to hold off on see “Our Farm Year,” p.12





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“Our Farm Year,” con’t.

compost making, but when we found ourselves in a snowless January we made about 150 tons of beautiful compost. 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 able to grow nutrient-rich plants year after year after year.

The farm was also host to 2 apiaries - managed by two different shareholders. In the West Field and the filter strip at the back of the compost piles there are active hives that bring insect activity to all corners of our farm. We thank these hard-working people for bringing their wonderful bees to play their important role in our farm organism.

CSA Share Sales:

Basically the pandemic changed everything in this area for us. Whatever trends we had been seeing related to people’s purchasing habits was totally upended during one week in March. We not only sold out all of our shares for the season earlier than ever (April 18th) but also saw the reinstatement of a very large waiting list with over 274 people putting their names on the list in 2020. We served more households (770) last season (+8.6%) than ever. Our overall retention rate remained high - 81.1% (+.9%) and our senior share remains very popular, growing by over 30% and continuing to sustain our multigenerational farm community.

Looking forward, our renewals for 2021 show continued strength with over 60% of shares renewing by January 1 (an increase of 15.8% from the rate in 2019).

SPECIAL THANKS

*To our farming neighbor **Gordy Cook** who cuts all our straw and supplies us with manure to make compost. He also helps us out of any type of jam any type of time. A true friend indeed.*

Farm Finances:

Overall, this year our finances were very different than planned, and largely due to increased demand, much more positive than expected. We had a big increase in share dollars (6%), bulk produce (25.5%), farm shop sales (+29%), and donations (+39.4%). Despite increases in labor costs (bagging, packing, etc +34.1%), and distribution supplies (boxes, etc +27.3%) our overall net profit was \$13498 (19.6%) higher than expected. We added the financing of the Warren Wright Rd land to our yearly loan payments, financed more capital improvements than planned, and were still able to increase our capital account balance to \$35,287 (+\$3500 than expected). Paying our loans and investing in infrastructure (land and equipment) has helped our balance sheet continue to show signs of overall health with our overall assets up (2%), and our total equity (\$507,288) rising by 4.8%.



Ben gets the big gun pumping in June!