



# BIODYNAMIC FARMLAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

PO BOX 227, AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS 01004 (413)253-7991

WWW.BROOKFIELDFARM.ORG INFO@BROOKFIELDFARM.ORG

## NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2019

### APPRENTICE PROGRAM

#### This Hard-Working Train Keeps Rolling!

For the 24th season in a row, we welcomed a (mostly) new group to fully operate our farm, to learn the skills necessary to one day perhaps, operate their own. Our apprenticeship is a simple trade. We ask for labor to run this farm. And in return we provide education on how we run this farm, at this time. We understand that agriculture is a broad pursuit and it is a lifetime of learning, even under the best of circumstances. That said, we feel that clearly demonstrating how we make the decisions necessary to operate this farm, will help when they turn their attention to operating their own farms one day.

This year we welcomed three new faces to the farm. Jake Cardoza see "Apprentice," p.8



More rain? So what? Ben & Jake get the harvest done.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING AT BROOKFIELD FARM

#### A Tough Season, But We're Still Standing.

Winter comes and goes these days, but even if it does feel like spring sometimes, there are still a few minutes to take some time for a good look back at last year. It's tempting to turn away from the past season; from what ended with one difficulty after another. It might be more fun to forget about all of the rain, all of the mud, all of the rot and set our sights on a mythic future – a hopeful place where all seeds turn into bountiful fruits. That's how I approached this year-end review, but, as the ray-of-light-curmudgeon that I am (at times), I was pleasantly surprised by the results. The mud was certainly there. And the rutted roads. The rotten broccoli and non-existent Brussels' sprouts. But so was the bounteous sweet potato crop, and big melon see "What's Happening," p.6



Saturday morning on the farm.



## GET A HAMMER AND A NAIL

### Continuing to Build Capacity Into The Future

When we budget our finances before the beginning of every season, we make a distinction between the money we will spend on operating and capital expenses. We consider operating expenses to be costs for resources that we will use for one year only. Good examples of these are labor, fuel, seeds, and water. Capital expenses are costs for resources that we will use for multiple years; Tools or improvements that will enable us to produce vegetables (our core product) for years to come. We don't have the cash to purchase every tool or build every building that we would love to have to make growing vegetables easier. We have to set priorities for limited resources. And we have to borrow money. Since 2004, nearly all of these purchases were made using funds that the Trust has set aside for capital improvement. 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 in-house, investment engine that we use to plan for the future of this project. 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 a typical year with magic of compound interest, we can spend \$40,000 on capital improvements each year, while the capital account remains steady at around \$30,000. Over the past 20 years we have invested more than \$1,000,000 in our barn, apprentice housing, vegetable production equipment and land maintenance equipment. These investments have made our farm more resilient as it faces an always-uncertain future.

This season we continued to invest in the future – here's how:

#### Buildings & Grounds

We continue to maintain and improve our "apprentice house" at



The hay storage gets a new skin in May

20 Hulst Rd. This year our neighbor, Chris Zobel, orchestrated the renovation of the master bathroom, with a new shower, toilet, sink, and floor. (And while he was at it, he also repainted a bunch of walls around the house). We continued to maintain and upgrade our field-houses by reskinning the hay storage at Snyder Farm, and rebuilding the frame & hip walls on the small fieldhouse before re-skinning that structure. Our re-imagining of our old "perennial garden" to become a "side garden" filled with flowers and moving the herbs to a field scale was fully implemented with loads of blooms exploding from where there once was a weedy mess. In addition, the community composting area got a facelift (and an animal-proof box) and the accessible garden began to get some more attention. In our most



Our new potato digger making the work easy

#### BIODYNAMIC FARMLAND CONSERVATION TRUST (BFCT), INC.

PO Box 227  
Amherst, MA 01004  
Phone/Fax:: (413)253-7991  
Email: [info@brookfieldfarm.org](mailto:info@brookfieldfarm.org)  
Website: [www.brookfieldfarm.org](http://www.brookfieldfarm.org)



#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Peter Littell, President  
Phil Petitt, Treasurer  
Roberta, Lojko, Clerk  
Donald Allison  
Joanna Ballantine  
Jen Veshia  
Jessica Wolff

#### STAFF:

Dan Kaplan	General Manager
Karen Romanowski	General Manager
Ellen Drews	Assistant Manager
Abbe Vredenburg	Administrator

#### BFCT NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2019, VOL 33, #1

Writer/Designer - Dan Kaplan  
(except where noted)

The BFCT NEWSLETTER is published once yearly  
(February) by the BFCT, Inc.



Zoe and Ellen get the new water reel going during a dry June.

visible project of the season, we cleaned up the barn bathroom and were lucky enough to have Rosie Dinsmore (shareholder and high schooler) volunteered to paint an inviting, whimsical mural on its walls!

### Equipment

We made significant upgrades to important areas of vegetable & animal production this season. We improved our washroom by replacing the old (24 yrs) wooden barrel washer with a new, cleanable metal/plastic model. We replaced our worn out (40 yr old) potato digger with a brand-new, quiet 2-row model, which also lifted sweet potatoes, increasing our harvest efficiency by 50%. We replaced our flame weeder and small sprayer update these plant-care tools.

### WISH LIST

*Full Size Pickup Truck  
(runs but can't pass inspection)*

### SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Mary and Sarah Fitts, Becca Nicolson, Wheelhouse Farm Crew, Zoo Disc, Ben Mertz, Alexandra Codina, and Carol Wood



Rosie Dinsmore takes the bathroom walls to a new level!!

## GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

### Charitable Giving Increases From All Directions!

Once again, we made modest efforts towards asking for support for the outreach work we do on the farm. And once again, those modest efforts reaped greater rewards than we expected. Share fees pay for the food production at the farm. For everything else we do – having school groups on the farm, giving farm tours to 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 (\$6375) +5%*  
❖ *total gifts (62) -10%*

In addition, in May we took part, for the 4th (and final) time, in an online philanthropy event –Valley Gives – to enlarge our reach, by focusing our attention on our “Donor Supported Fund (DSF).” We consider this project another form of “outreach” as it gives access to our CSA shares to people who might have a difficult time affording the cost of our share. We didn’t promote Valley Gives’ program widely this year, as we were concerned that people might be suffering from “donation-fatigue.” We just registered and had our listing on the website. Still we received over \$1500.

### SPECIAL THANKS

❖ *Brian Adams and Morey Phippen for including us in their incredible, Valley-wide project - <https://vimeo.com/313828345> - for helping non-profits build their capacity while lowering their carbon footprint. Working with Northeast Solar, they donated a solar PV system installed on the roof of our apprentice house. We are honored to be included with such other organizations as the Amherst Survival Center, Dakin Animal Shelter, and Historic Northampton. Thank you Brian and Morey!!*

Later in the season, totally unsolicited we received a gift of over \$5000 for our DSF. Jake and Leila decided to ask for donations in lieu of gifts at their wedding, and this gift will now be used to amplify the good work this fund will continue to do. In addition we were also humbled to receive an additional unrestricted \$5000 gift in the memory of Gordon Thorne, for us to continue our work in the best way we know how.

Add all of these to our Annual Fund, which consisted of a single appeal in November and yielded \$6375, and we were able to fund these outside activities with over \$18,000. This year, we continued to increase our pool of recipients for that money as kindergartners, aspiring farmers, and financially-struggling families all benefitted from your donations. 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 OUR FANTASTIC STAFF

*Our Administrator Abbe Vredenburg  
(24 years and counting!) &  
Ken Dziuba our mechanic for  
the past 6 seasons.*

### AND GUARDIAN ANGELS

❖ *Rosie Pearson for Reiki treatments to the farm crew!*

❖ *Doug Adler for a dehumidifier to our apprentice house*



## SPREAD THE WORD

### Straight From the Field

It has always been an explicit goal of the Trust to use 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, expanded and enhanced her role as not only our “Farm Educator” but as the “Garden Educator” for the Amherst Public School System. She continued to implement the 21st Century Grant with Amherst Middle School by hosting after-school farm visits in the spring and fall. In addition, she worked in 22 classrooms year-round in the Amherst public elementary schools (every K, 1st and 2nd grade classroom in the district). Under her guidance, 17 Amherst elementary school classrooms visited Brookfield for a field trip including every Kindergarten and first grade classroom at Crocker Farm, Fort River and Wildwood.

In addition, Kathleen Maiolatesi again brought her Sustainable Ag and Politics of Food classes from Holyoke Community College to the farm for visits in the fall. Renee Ciulla brought her UMASS Sustainable Ag class for a one-hour talk about fertility management, and then helped us with the fall harvest. This year we welcomed the UMASS Sustainable Soil and Crop Management class of Massoud Hashemi to give them a tour of our growing systems. We gave farm tours to the Farm School apprentice program and the MacDuffie School summer program. We hosted the UMass Ultimate Frisbee teams, who gave us a hand with our sweet potatoes in October as part of a community service requirement. In addition, we worked with a group from the Hartsbrook High School who harvested carrots and heard the biographies of our own young farmers.

We welcomed two students for 3-week farm-practicums this spring. Jonah Crema, from Providence, RI, filled part of his gap year by help-

ing with blueberry pruning, potato planting, and greenhouse sowing. And Ella Helmuth, a 9th grader from the Free Waldorf School, in Hassfurt Germany lived with our shareholders, Susan Fields & Keith Fairey, and helped us transplant early crops in the field and in the greenhouse.

Farmers and service providers sought out our consultation about non-profit/CSA development, apprenticeship programs, budgets, management transitions, and CSA payment processes. We were consulted by researchers about weather-related crop problems, climate and energy policy, agricultural land use and pv systems, farming on land-trust land, CSA history in the US, and mentoring farmers.

We gave workshops and presentations throughout the year. Dan taught a 1-credit class at UMASS (Stockbridge School) on “Financial Management for Vegetable Farms” in the spring. Zoe appeared on WRSI to advocate for HIP program in March. We provided resources (photos & experiences) for NE Hub Climate Change Conference. Dan and Karen were profiled in the Boston Voyager Magazine and Growing For Market. Dan gave the “Farm Report” at the “New City Opry” at New City Brewery, Easthampton and appeared on Ira Bryck’s podcast “the Western MA Business Show” in December.

We also continued to use whatever resources we could afford to support our local community. We donated greenhouse space to the Hartsbrook School. We allowed our main barn to be used by the Pioneer Valley Grain CSA for a distribution in January, our back porch and upper & lower fields for Jade Alicandro-Mace’s herbalism classes from April - November, our firepit to a local men’s group to hold weekly meetings, and the ARHS Hurricanes Ultimate Frisbee teams for an after-tournament dinner in May. We donated vegetables to silent auctions for various community groups (Family Outreach of Amherst, Wolf Creek, Pelham PTO, and Hartsbrook Farm2Table) and to the NOFA Conference and we received kitchen scraps weekly from Not Bread Alone to add to our compost making operation.



Ella helps Ellen plant zucchini and Jonah seeds melons in the greenhouse



Pete loads up the Zoo Disc community service crew in the sweet potato field

## IN MEMORIAM

**Gordon Thorne (June 27, 2018)**

Longtime BFCT Board member (since 1995). Artist. Entrepreneur. Developer. Maker. Philanthropist. He will be missed.

Here's what I said at his memorial at Bramble Hill Farm in August:

I have worked with Gordy, one way or the other since 1995. In those years, he has played the role of advisor, inspirer, consultee, angel investor, friend, conscience, colleague, and gadfly among many others. He not only helped me with my "life's work," but he sought my help with his own farm project -- where we sit now.

I knew Gordy as an artist. He oozed a deep aesthetic sensibility. And also, a mischievous sense of play and thoughtfulness which he seemed to like to employ in the service of really digging down into the meat of something. We didn't dwell much on the surface; He went straight to deep with me.

I also knew him as a maker. His hands were rough from working and he took obvious joy from tromping and hammering, honing, painting, and creating contraptions and objects. He seemed well-fed from his connection to the practical, to craftsmanship, to labor, to pruning.

That intersection between those two worlds landed him in the domain of agriculture. He saw how the practical side of production dovetailed with the human needs of the cultural moment, how work and play could interact with each other to create solutions to current conundrums; His sights were set high --- on new creations for land use, social interactions, capital infrastructure management, productivity -- finding the joy & civilization out of being useful and practical.

This is where we bonded and worked together for the past 23 years. He participated as a board member that oversaw our farm -- someone who read reports, gave advice, shared experiences, floated loans, asked questions, designed buildings -- even made a little model which would help with our fundraising goal for a new barn in 2003. His support never wavered -- yet it varied -- he was not always the wise one dispensing advice -- sometimes he was the questioner dispensing doubt, confusion, or unknowing.

I was not his equal -- neither in age nor experience nor resources nor understanding. Yet he heaped onto me all of the unconditional love and support that a father-figure could probably do more easily than a father. His generosity and his willingness to sit with (and acknowledge) the uncomfortable places which are inherent in creating

something new, created a mutual respect that was deeply meaningful to me -- as a fellow seeker, a fellow pilgrim, a fellow broken human who didn't know, but wanted still to find out, and to at least try to do good when we had the chance.

He believed in the power of creating spaces; spaces that would be taken up by people with projects. He wanted to use the resources at his disposal to make opportunities available. He believed in the power of free people, acting responsibly, allowed to muddle through to an unknown future. He did that here at this farm. Iteration after iteration, and finally a place that had all of the pieces that he dreamed -- farm production, farm-based education, public access, opportunity spaces, a beautiful woodshop.....incredible lawn mowing....



He was shy, self-effacing, and private. Most people who came to our farm for the past 20 years didn't know who he was or what he did to help ensure its success. Or to support the success of the many apprentices who were trained there to go on to their own operations (including one here at Bramble Hill). And I would venture to guess that might be the same for Old Friends Farm as well -- that he wasn't seen much by the people who work there, didn't make his presence

known widely. It was a non-typical attitude for a landlord or overseer.

Now, of course, he also had his foibles, his opportunities for growth, his areas for improvement. He didn't always attend to cleaning up his files. He didn't like new technology in general, using his black paper weekly planner. Then having Annie call me on her cell phone to cancel an appointment that he forgot about because he didn't have his planner with him on the ride home from Vermont. He was suspicious of being taken-advantage-of. He was conflict-avoidant. He had a hard time getting excel files to open on his Mac or to print on a single page.

And he also seemed to have a hard time admitting his own success -- telling me numerous times he doubted whether he had created anything of lasting value. But, he was also so accepting, when I gave him my (opposite) impression. And it wasn't hard to tell whether he accepted it -- he was open enough to freely show his emotions to me, to visibly tear-up and be moved by his own inability to see himself.

I have never met another person like Gordy, his gentleness and fierceness. His genteelness and his down-to-earth paint-stained pants. His generosity and his desire for people to be held accountable. His guarded privacy and his welcoming warm smile. He supported me and inspired me to support others as we walk on a somewhat-obscured road through an open field that maybe, just maybe, could lead to some place of value.

“What’s Happening,” cont’.

harvest, the new young families making first memories in the sandbox, the unsolicited donations, and acts of kindness. Eventually after it was all written down, and we began to try and make some sense of it all, a picture of our vibrant little farm, in the midst of a turbulent world, emerged.

Overall, the growing season was the most challenging in our history as managers here at the farm (24 years). Record rainfall caused widespread crop losses after August. Still, with a great crew and three very big storage crops (squash, sweets, and spuds), we harvested and distributed over 250,000 lbs of fresh produce. We were not able to successfully implement our desired management restructure. However, we learned some very important lessons along the way, and re-committed ourselves to our previous management scheme with enthusiasm. And, largely due to cost control and some timely unsolicited donations, we find ourselves with a larger profit margin than anticipated, a fully-funded capital account, and all loans paid off on time. Our senior share was three times more popular than we expected and our overall retention rate remained steady-and in some categories hit an all-time high. We were able to maintain a full and dynamic slate of outreach activities, which continue to help us to live up to one of our commitments-to make this farm about “more than just vegetables.”

None of this could be possible without the continued contribution and commitment of shareholders, donors, friends, and relatives who support us financially, emotionally, and spiritually. This is brought into focus when we go through such a challenging season. We are 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, 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 in the past year.

- Farmer Dan (for Karen, Abbe, and Ellen)

## OUR FARM YEAR

### It Was Good. It Got Bad. It Got Worse. We’re Still Smiling.

After a relatively “easy” growing season in 2017, we knew not to expect that again. But the season started easy again, with plenty of sun, plenty of rain, but not too much of either. We planted on time and things were rolling. The strawberries were great. The zucchinis and cukes were flying. And then, it all came down in a torrent of rain.



Oliver shows us how the Weeder Crew gets it done.

## Vegetable Production 2018

	per share unit	2018 (LBS)	2017
BEET	4.5 LBS.	2365	4670
BEET W/TOPS	2.3 BU.	1222	1857
BITTERMELON	0.0 LBS.	0	0
BROCCOLI	3.3 LBS.	1720	4690
BRUSSELS' SP.	0.0 PC.	0	2690
BRUSSELS' SP. TOPS	0.9 LBS.	470	655
CABBAGE	7.6 LBS.	3978	16683
CABBAGE, CHI.	0.9 HDS.	1437	4710
CANTELOUPES	3.9 PC.	8228	5000
CARROT	21.6 LBS.	11320	14607
CARROT W/TOP	4.9 BU.	2556	1682
CAULIFLOWER	0.9 LBS.	460	2420
CELERIAC	3.3 LBS.	1710	3200
CELERY	3.1 PC.	1631	1358
CHARD	3.5 LBS.	1820	1995
COLLARDS	2.5 LBS.	1294	700
CORN	2.3 DZ.	7230	11760
CORN, POP	0.0 LBS.	0	700
CUCUMBER	15.5 LBS.	8120	5080
EGGPLANT	9.8 LBS.	5125	2770
ESCAROLE	1.2 HDS.	612	620
FENNEL	2.3 PC.	1223	682
GARLIC	2.4 LBS.	1250	1440
GARLIC SCAPES	0.9 LBS.	450	500
GREENS	6.2 LBS.	3278	3405
KALE	9.2 LBS.	4844	6460
KOHLRABI	1.0 LBS.	501	1000
LEEK	9.4 PC.	4945	14840
LETTUCE	11.5 HDS.	6021	9745
LETTUCE	4.1 LBS.	2177	745
OKRA	0.4 LBS.	229	31
ONION	13.0 LBS.	6835	8290
PARSNIP	0.0 LBS.	0	3100
PEPPERS, HOT	1.5 LBS.	805	1610
PEPPERS, SW.	4.4 LBS.	2305	5915
POTATO	34.6 LBS.	18175	8925
POTATO, SW.	61.5 LBS.	32280	9100
RADICCHIO	1.1 LBS.	579	500
RADISH	2.8 BU.	1496	2199
RADISH, DAIKON	3.5 LBS.	1825	1800
RADISH, STORAGE	3.9 LBS.	2050	1635
RUTABAGA	1.1 LBS.	575	2675
SCALLION	5.4 BU.	2845	2777
SPINACH	1.9 LBS.	1000	2465
SQUASH, S.	15.8 LBS.	8310	6625
SQUASH, W.	60.4 LBS.	31725	27750
TOMATOES	19.0 LBS.	9985	14350
TURNIP, HAKUREI	2.0 BU.	1028	890
TURNIP	3.4 LBS.	1800	2365
WATERMELONS	25.1 LBS.	13200	14350

Amherst recorded it's biggest rain total since 1883 and the farm told the story. If it rains 2"-3" every week from Aug 1 through Thanksgiving, it's gonna be muddy. There's going to be crops that rot and melt away to nothing. Roads will be washed out. Farmers will start shaking their heads. Then their fists. Then their shoes will get sucked up in the swamp. All of this happened. And still, we live to tell the tale. Here it is:



### Vegetable Crop Production:

Our overall production was only somewhat lower than average (-7% from our 10-year average). Thanks in part to a great early growing season, as well as an absolute bumper crop of sweet potatoes, winter squash and regular potatoes, we grew a very-respectable 253,930 lbs. of vegetables (which, of course sounds even better when we say “more

	2018	2017	% dif last year	% dif 10 yr avg
<b>Total Production</b>				
total lbs (including PYO)	253930	277437	-8.5%	-7.0%
total lbs. (no PYO)	223450	244166	-8.5%	-6.7%
winter share production	54163	46550	16.4%	24.9%
acreage planted	28.7	29.8	-3.7%	-5.1%
crops planted	64	65	-1.5%	4.2%
<b>Distribution Comparison</b>				
total lbs per share	431.4	506.2	-15%	-5.8%
cost per lb. share	\$1.39	\$ 1.15	21%	15%
avg. lbs. per share each week	18	20.2	-11%	-5.3%

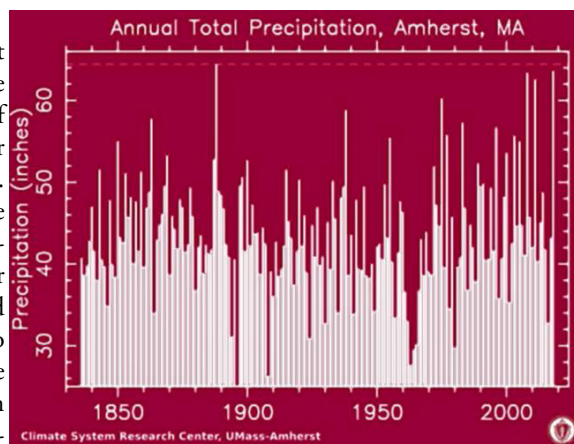
than a quarter of a million pounds of veggies!”). Our crops went in on time and were generally growing and producing at or above average through early August, and then the tide changed greatly.

After a nice melon crop (21,000 lbs) many of the crops in the field began to show signs of stress due to excess water. Basically water takes up all of the spaces in the soil, blocking out air, which is unfortunately very necessary for plant growth. Likewise, nutrients are washed out of the root zone, further leading to stunted crops. The crops that are affected first are leafy greens (summer kale melted away in late August) and then all brassicas (we didn’t see much broccoli or cauliflower). Then long-season fruiting crops can have build-ups of diseases – so we saw our tomato crop, very plentiful in early August, die off quickly and be totally gone by early September. By the end of the

growing season we had lost all of our fall greens (1/3 of an acre) and many of the roots (carrots, parsnips, rutabagas, beets) were stunted or gone due to excessive water in the root zone.

With all of that bad news, the surprise player of the year was our sweet potatoes. This is a crop we have been learning about for many years and have started to get ahead of the learning curve in the past few seasons. Our grow-

ing systems were primed for success as the season started and we were planning to grow more to replace the more finicky, disease prone, and less popular white potatoes. Well, it turns out sweet potatoes love water and as long as we could get them OUT of the wet ground, they were plentiful, flavorful, and stored well. We harvested a record (32,280 lbs) well over tripling our past best harvest. Largely due to this crop (and a lot of butternut squash), by the end of the regular season we had over 54,000 lbs of storage crops which was an increase of 24% from our 10 year average.



### CSA Distribution:

With below-average production this also translated into decreased distribution amounts for our regular season CSA shares, but again

see “Our Farm Year,” p.11





grew up in Cumberland, RI (home of Cumby's!), went off to Hawaii for environmental studies, walked the Appalachian trail (twice!?), and worked on some farms in Hawaii, Panama, and central MA before joining us here. He wanted to work for a farm that had established systems and dig deeper into New England agriculture. His tractor time was spent making stale seed beds, pulling transplanter using the Landini 5860. He also specialized in direct seeding all of our finicky crops – carrots, beets, parsnips, and greens with our Allis Chalmers G tractor. When the summer rolled on, Jake brought his super-positive, hard-working attitude to the harvest management rotation. And when the season was over, he was hired as a manager for Fresh Box Farms - <https://freshboxfarms.com/> in Millis MA. (He's also the biggest Patriots fan we've ever had working here (sorry, Marc and Scotti), so he led us through a crazy championship season!)

Ben Fishbein grew up in the Capitol region of New York and studied environmental science and philosophy at St Lawrence University. He worked on two organic farms in Argentina and Chile during a leave from school and wanted to spend a full season on a farm after graduation. His tractor time was spent spreading our compost and laying plastic mulch in the spring. He also did a variety of "plant care jobs" – from spraying to cultivating to bed preparation with our JD2355 and Hesston 80-60. Ben also took his turn at the harvest manager rotation, bringing his high-energy, and detail-oriented approach to this job. And if that all wasn't enough, Ben trained for and ran a marathon in October, easily winning the top farmer in the race. We are so happy that Ben has decided to return in 2019 and take on increased responsibilities in managing our greenhouse and daily harvest.

Alexandra Roach was a shareholder the past two years. And this year, this incredible woman decided, along with homeschooling her 3 chil-

## "Apprentice," con't.

dren (and so much more) she would do our (first-ever) part-time apprenticeship. She worked 12 hrs a week all season long. We tried to integrate her into as much "apprentice-time" as possible. And she learned how to cultivate vegetables using the Allis Chalmers G and the Farmall Cub tractors. She returned to her home and family responsibilities at the end of the season, but our farm was much stronger and richer as a result of her work with us.

All of these folks joined Ellen, 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. She also learned about mechanical cultivating by operating the International 265 on a wide array of crops. Ellen took on increased responsibility by managing our field planting and then the daily harvest – coordinating our small regiments of harvesters to bring in thousands of pounds of food from the field to the cooler each week. We are very lucky that Ellen has accepted our offer to become our 9th Assistant Manager and will be managing the weeder crew, field planting, new-share marketing, plant care, events, and tillage.

While it is certainly difficult to train and retrain new people on the farm every season, we do it because it is also rewarding to train new farmers. We are mindful of the personal sacrifices our apprentices make to do this work, without much hope of big financial reward and plenty of uncertainty of how to make these skills practically useful in their own futures. We are proud to be part of their work; hopefully one more positive step on the path towards a new way of relating to our earth around food production.

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

**Rebecca Winters ('16 & '17)** worked as assistant director of Hartsbrook Land Stewardship program during summer of 2018. **John Dickens('16)** worked on a degree in Climate Science. They got engaged, had a party in our farmyard in August, and then moved to Oregon to continue with



Ellen plows the first fields



Alexandra cultivates the baby lettuce!!



academic and farm-based education pursuits. **Rebecca Leung** ('16 & '17) worked for Old Friends Farm, Amherst MA with our past manager **Casey Steinberg** ('02-'04). **Will Calkins** ('15) worked on a lobster boat on the coast of Maine. **Leila Tunnel** ('14-'15) continued and enlarged her role in her 3rd year as Farm Educator of Brookfield Farm, and ag-educator in Amherst Public Schools. And she and **Jake Mazar** ('13-'14) were married in the West Field in August!! Jake and **Will Van Heuvelen** ('13-'14) had a very successful and expanded 4th year at Wheelhouse Farm Truck, Amherst, MA. **Caro Roszell** ('13) completed her 4th season at her New Wendell Farm, Wendell, MA. **Peter McLean** ('10-'12) completed

his 2nd year with his facilitation business based in Amherst — True North — and when we needed it, he pitched in and helped us once a week on the fall harvest crew!! **Tobin Porter-Brown** ('10-'11) left Pete's Greens in Craftsbury, VT got married to, and now works with his wife Annie at Myers Produce. **Aaron Shier**

('12) spent his 2nd year as a Program Specialist in agricultural sustainability for the Environmental Defense Fund in Washington, DC. **Erin Roche** ('11) completed her 5th year as a Program Manager at UMaine, Orono Extension service. **Andy Szymanowicz** ('07) completed his 2nd year as the Master Farmer at La Granja in Ibiza, Spain. **Kerry Manire** ('07-'11) completed her 7th season at Provider Farm, Salem, CT. **Adan Martinez** ('07-'09) got married in October to Violeta and continues working as an attorney, advocating for (among other things) employee rights in New Haven, CT. **Lisa McKeag** ('08-'10) completed her 6th year at UMASS extension and began a mas-



Jake and Ellen clean up the Lower Field



ters program at VT Law School. **Danya Teitelbaum** ('08) completed her 10th season at Queens Greens, Hadley MA and welcomed baby Levi in August! **Chris Babis** ('04-'07) continues his work in Water Resource Management and slaying the guitar/vocal scene in San Antonio, TX. **Amy Smith** ('06) completed her 8th season at Heart Beet Organic, PEI, Canada. **Amy Cloud** ('01, '06) completed her 11th season at Three Rivers Community Farm, Elmhurst, IL. **Marc Cesario** ('02, '07) completed his 8th season at Meeting Place Pastures, Cornwall, VT. **Jeff Tober** ('03-'06) finished his 12th season at Fernbrook Farm CSA, Bordentown, NJ. **Casey Steinberg** ('02-'04) completed

his 14th season at Old Friends Farm, Amherst MA, appeared on the Martha Stewart Cooking Show and welcomed baby Emmitt in December. **Paul Bucciaglia** ('99) completed his 16th season at Fort Hill Farm, New Milford CT. **Su Wasseluk** ('00-'03) completed her 8th year as Nurse Practitioner in Hyanis, MA and we were pumped when she helped

us bring in the mongo-20,000 lb load of butternut in September! **Jenny Hausman** ('00) completed her 11th season at Piccadilly Farm, Winchester NH and **Don Zasada** ('96-'97) completed his 13th season at Caretaker Farm, Williamstown, MA, and continues to work with us as a collaborator in the CRAFT program.

All of these folks continue to have a mighty effect on our food system and we love hearing from them anytime they find the time. If you are not on this list, but you were our apprentice, we want to hear from you! Let us know what you are up to!!



Time to check the carrots!



Ellen and Alex get the spring harvest started!



## 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 Pete Mclean ('10-'12) was again our Events Coordinator. We started the year with a scavenger hunt in June to help get new shareholders to explore some parts of the farm they might not know about. In July we had a great Garlic Harvest where we brought about half of our crop from the field to the barn and on August 30, we had a food preservation workshop in the Farm Shop. With the pumpkin crop a failure (due to rain), we organized a Squash Lollopalooza on September 14 and brought in over 20,000 lbs on a beautiful afternoon. In October we dodged some rain drops and had a great potato

dig and chili supper by the campfire. And we ended our events season with a high-spirited Harvest Dinner potluck celebration in November where we recognized Zoe's contributions to Brookfield Farm, and gave a special tribute to our past shareholder Roger Fega, this year's recipient of the Top Soil Award!

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. Zoe organized a concert by the Old Fashioneds in the farmyard in July. Jake and Leila got married in their backyard and the West Field in August and Sunny and John had their engagement party in the farmyard before leaving for Oregon at the end of August. And Wheelhouse Farm Food Truck hosted a pig roast in our lower field where they served a delicious meal for 75 lucky people on a beautiful fall evening in October.



Farmer Dave helps bring in the garlic harvest!!



10 George and Sarah follow the rainbow looking for the pot of gold in the potato field

## "Our Farm Year," cont.

because of a strong early season, we only saw a modest overall decrease. This year, the on-farm share saw a 6% decrease in total share volume, and the Boston share was 9% smaller. The Winter Share was 2% larger as we traded some of our sweet potato surplus for crops lost due to excess water (onions, cabbage, beets, and parsnips). Our price per pound rose to \$1.20/lb. (+15%) for the On-Farm Share, \$1.59/lb. (+19%) for Boston shares, and .73c/lb (+6%) for the Winter Share. We know that there are many (non-monetary) values for purchasing a CSA share. But, 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. 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 show what we already know: 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.

### ***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 neighbor's fields 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 grow-

Karen moves the cows to fresh pasture during a wet September



ing season grazing the fields at Snyder Farm.

Five yearling calves were raised in Hubbs' pasture (next to our West Field) beginning in May. With all of the moisture, our grazing was very easy this year, but with all of the fall rain we were not able to do much fence line clearing in the fall. The yearlings went to the butcher in late November and one bull calf returned to the herd. By February, the herd stood at 11 moms, 1 steer (CrazyCow!), and 1 bull all seemingly contented, eating hay again in the barn yard at Snyder Farm on Southeast St.

Before we brought the herd back into the barnyard, our neighbor Jason Edwards brought his excavator and really 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 our vegetable fields. Unfortunately, our loader tractor suffered a broken transmission in early May, and we were not able to make compost. We continued gathering materials, (leaves from the town of Amherst, food waste from Not see "Our Farm Year," p.12



## FAREWELL BROOKFIELD

### **Special Thanks to Zoe Abram**

Zoe joined us in 2012 as an apprentice. She became our 8th assistant manager in 2014 and our farm manager in 2017. She created many lasting legacies around the farm from the farm shop, to the irrigation pond, and on

our apprentice crew. She will be remembered by us for not only the amount of her time that she poured into this project, but also the special warmth and kindness she did it with.

Zoe always connected with people and with her welcoming smile brought people into the heart of this endeavor – how to feed ourselves, together. She left the farm this season at the end of August to pursue different work in a different setting. We are sure she will continue to bring her enthusiasm, love, and understanding to whatever it is she puts her energy towards.





THE BIODYNAMIC FARMLAND  
CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

P.O. BOX 227  
AMHERST, MA 01004  
WWW.BROOKFIELDFARM.ORG  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT  
BULK MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
AMHERST, MA  
PERMIT NO.237



**“Our Farm Year,”** con’t.

Bread Alone, veggie scraps from our harvest shed, etc) and when our loader was finally returned in early December, we were able to make a new pile in the North Field near the blueberries. 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 3 different apiaries as we continue to welcome these pollinators whenever possible. At Snyder Farm, the West Field, and the filter strip at the back of the compost piles, we have 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:**

Continuing to buck the national trend, our CSA shares remained strong in 2018, although there was one wrinkle of note. We sold more shares than ever and our overall our retention rate remained high - 81.5% (-.7% - right at our 10-year average), which to us represents shareholder satisfaction better than any other metric. As a sign of our long-term success, we saw a much bigger increase in Senior Shares than expected. This caused our overall share dollars to decrease (-2.7%), while overall household renewing rose (+1.3%). We have an aging community and plan to continue to attract the younger generation to our multigenerational community!

**Farm Finances:**

Overall, this year our finances were very different than planned, but

despite a difficult growing season, we had a better financial year than expected. We had a decrease in share dollars, but an increase in unsolicited donations, as well as decreases in labor, supply, and admin costs. We had an overall positive net profit: -\$1525.96 (which was twice as high as planned). In addition, we were able to fully pay back all loan commitments this year, purchase much needed infrastructure improvements, and leave our capital account with a higher ending balance (\$39,580, +15.2%) 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 \$275,670 (-5%) and our total equity (\$516,563) continues to rise up over 23% in 7 years.



Karen and Ben find riches in the first sweet potato harvest!!