



D Acres of New Hampshire

Organic Farm & Educational Homestead

www.dacres.org

Quarterly Newsletter

Summer 2005

Kids Love the Farm!

So far this year we have accepted requests from seven school and youth groups to come visit the farm. Over 100 kids and learners have been licked by the oxen, thrown recycled food waste to the pigs, harvested lettuce from the raised beds in our new greenhouse, and climbed the ladder to Sanctu Treehouse, one of our rustic woodland dwellings. They have learned how we dehydrate culinary and tea herbs for the long winter months; how we use the natural tendencies of the chickens to revitalize our garden beds; how we catch rain streaming off the buildings to irrigate the gardens and to provide drinking water for the animals; and how we use the juicy leaves of the comfrey plant to heal the scratches on our hands. We talked about the differences between organic or ecological farming and conventional farming, especially as it relates to the way that animals are cared for, and how we combat pests and weeds in our gardens.

We appreciate the open ears, wide eyes and great questions that came with students from

Interlakes Day Care
Mt Prospect Academy
Dublin School
Rivendell School
Granite State College
Proctor Academy
& the Hunter School

Bringing groups of young people to the farm is always a great experience for the kids that visit and the staff that introduce them to the

continued on pg. 2

BASKING IN THE SUN

On May 17-18, our friend Chip Taylor of Sunweaver coordinated the installation of fifteen solar panels on a pole mount just South of the Community Building. The small-scale solar installation is designed to document the effectiveness of photovoltaic systems in this area, to promote understanding of alternative energy systems, and to reduce our monthly electric bill.



Several members of the Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative (PAREI) volunteered their time to assist with the installation. PAREI formed recently in response to concerns about the inevitable peaking of the world's oil supply, and the

impacts that will have on the Plymouth community. The Initiative's solution to what they describe as an "uncertain energy future" is to encourage people to embrace energy conservation, increase the use of energy efficient products and install renewable energy systems in their homes and businesses. We are delighted to have such a progressive organization just down the road.

The Community Building system is the third solar electric installation at D Acres. At last year's alternative energy workshop, D Acres' Executive Director, Josh Trought, and workshop participants wired a solar panel to a water pump directing water from a pond into the irrigation system serving the lower gardens.

The year before, Josh and Chip collaborated to wire a solar panel to a treehouse. The cabin system provides the inhabitants with electric light and music. At this year's SOLAR ENERGY DAY workshop on July 9th, Josh added components on solar cooking and passive solar design. The cloudy day thwarted efforts to utilize our solar oven, but the group discussed tactics on the parabolic solar cooker that Josh has been retrofitting from a salvaged satellite dish. §



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Kids continued

wonders of the farm. Because we have found interactions with these groups to be so meaningful, we are planning to begin a Youth Education Project. The project will enable groups to come to the farm, including those that cannot afford to pay. Focus groups for 2006 will be 2nd graders from local schools and at-risk youth. In order to pay for the expense of this project (primarily labor), we are applying to local foundations for grants. We will also be requesting funding from you, our members and supporters, at year-end to support this important project. §

Volunteer Day – July 31, August 28

In response to the repeated query, “When can we come work at the farm?” we decided to begin a Volunteer Day each month. We invite anyone interested in getting his or her hands dirty to join us on the last Sunday of each month from 10am to 3pm. Volunteers will work on various projects around the farm including fence building, moving manure, hauling brush, and other dirty work! A limited number of people will be invited to work in the gardens.

Lunch will be provided at 1pm for all volunteers. Choice of projects is on a first come, first serve basis. Please call to let us know you are coming, and if you prefer to be in the gardens, or on another farm project. Kids are welcome, but must be supervised by the adults that bring them! §

In the Media

We would like to thank our publishing friends for printing our articles and helping us get the word out about the work that we are doing at D Acres. You can read about last year’s alternative greenhouse building project in the Summer 2005 issue of Permaculture Magazine, and about our Sustainable Forestry and Wood Crafting project in the Summer 2005 issue of Small Farm Journal. Many thanks to Matt & Shelly for including our workshops and events in each edition of The Cardigan. §

notes from the garden...

Greens and Roots Wild and Mild

The long history of plant breeding is incredible to think about – how humans have saved seed for hundreds of years, selecting for certain traits and developing varieties adapted to certain conditions or remarkable for their flavor, color, or uniqueness. Beets and chard, for example, have the same origin. Beets developed over years of saving and planting seeds from *beta vulgaris* with freakishly swollen roots. Chard, on the other hand, is essentially a beet plant with especially large leaves instead of a swollen taproot. The diversity of our vegetables, then, also results from the lucky fact that we eat so many different plant parts. Not only do we eat roots and leaves, we also eat flowers, fruits, seeds, stalks, shoots, and bulbs. And each plant part is generally suited to certain growing conditions.

Here in our harsh, cold New Hampshire climate, crops grown for their leaves are some of the easiest to grow over the longest period of the growing season. The garden here is busting with greens, and has been since early spring: lettuce, radicchio and chicory, kale, mustard greens, and pac choy.

Cultivated greens are often cousins to wild, more bitter and tougher plants: they have usually been bred for qualities of tenderness and mild flavor. Lettuce and its wild counterpart, prickly lettuce, which is also edible, are good examples. To bring up another family, the chikoriums, radicchio and chicory are relations of endive, escarole, and dandelion, all bitter greens. For many people, bitter greens are an acquired taste. But they become delicious, and the bitterness is toned down, when mixed with seasoned dressings. My favorite is olive oil with balsamic vinegar, lemon juice, salt, and mustard. Cultivated chicory, to mention another wild-cultivated relationship, is different than but was bred from, wild chicory, a common weed with wheel-shaped blue flowers. The wild variety is edible too: young leaves in salads or cooked and the roots can be roasted for an excellent coffee-like hot drink.

Root vegetables also grow particularly well in New Hampshire. Cold-hardy and nutrient rich, their variety in flavor and color is spectacular. Radishes, carrots, and beets can each be vivid purple, red, or white. At this point we’re on our third and fourth sowings of each of these marvelous root vegetables. We’ve just seeded rutabaga too, a wonderful storage vegetable in the brassica family (just like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cabbage) that will keep for months in the root cellar and is delicious in a root vegetable mash at thanksgiving. Potatoes are not actually a root vegetable, but a tuber, which is essentially the equivalent of an underground stem. All of this diversity, and we haven’t even gotten to the shoots, fruits, flowers, seeds or bulbs yet. We’ll save those for next time. -Michelle Nowak §

An Intern's Perspective....

I was drawn to D Acres because of the variety it had to offer. My main focus is gardening but the baking, woodworking, alternative building, and goal of sustainable living also had great appeal. I began my internship June 15, two days before my 29th birthday, not knowing what to expect. What I have received so far has been a valuable experience. The tasks: hilling potatoes, looking for garden pests, weeding, gathering eggs, feeding chickens, using hand tools to construct a dove tail box, starting a fire in the cob oven to cook dinner, my evening walk to my tree house, did I mention the weeding. I mention weeding twice, not because there is so much of it, which there is but it is also one of my favorite parts. I came to this place not only to learn about gardening, cottage crafts and sustainable living but also I wish to learn more about myself and the place I wish to hold in this world. As I weed in the garden with my hand in the earth I allow my mind to wonder and continue the "weeding" of my life. Plucking out the things that are no longer needed or nourishing the things that I really want to have flourish. I plan to leave D acres in the fall for Graduate School at Antioch in Keene NH. I hope to take hard skills learned here to create my own garden. More importantly I hope my time here will provide me with renewed strength and an increased connection with the earth and with myself. - Adrienne Jones §



The theme of *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight* by Thom Hartman is man's oil usage. Mr. Hartman explains the short history of oil gluttony from the first industrial extractions in the late 1800s to the present astronomical consumption levels. The book presents the case that the high standards of living enjoyed in modern society is primarily dependent on a resource which is over half exhausted. Mr. Hartman uses rational thought process to promote a spiritual attachment to nature for the reader.

Mr. Hartman's history of petroleum is thorough and thought provoking especially to the uninformed. The facts regarding this crisis were first explained to me during my time as a student at the University of Colorado in the early 1990's. For me this book was not a revelation that we have used half of the resource and oil will be virtually depleted in the next 30-40 years. His poignant explanation of a spiritual relationship to creation is powerful and can help change the behavior that is causing this energy crisis. The terms "peak oil" and "resource war" are becoming part of our vocabulary. The case that is presented in the book is that this energy crisis is also a time to review our culture and our pattern of conquest and exploitation. We must review our patterns because the negative impact is increasingly evident.

I like the book. It reminds me of "Ishmael" and other books that identify the consumptive pattern of our society then use rationality and ethics to provide a basis for a sustainable behavior pattern. These books form the philosophical groundwork for society to learn alternatives and develop the ethos that can help us redefine the way we live. The solutions that are offered are tangible but not a quick fix. Hartman paints a picture of redeveloping the food, economic and community system that is similar to what we are doing at D Acres.

As I was reading the book I felt justified and encouraged. There is a rationality to conserving resources and promoting a community based lifestyle. But I was also reminded of the challenges that we face. The nomadic hunter gatherers of older societies did have a pure and simple life that was not environmentally destructive. Their resources were renewable because they were not faced with the current population problems. City dwellers may yearn for the good life working the land but few would trade their desk job for the hardships that face a homesteader. So we must learn a compromise that provides the standards of living that we desire without destroying the environment. Instead of competing to be the most consumptive we must work together for the common good. - jt §

Book Review
by Josh
Trought



This mailing was paid for by our local sponsor, **KTM Auto**. We are grateful for their support of our mission. We hope that, like us, you will consider KTM for all your automotive needs.

Everybody's Invited to **FARM DAY!**

The 7th annual summer celebration at D Acres!

August 20, 2005

Plant Walk 2-4pm

Dinner 5pm

Music provided by

Jim McHugh

& the Crunchy Western Boys.

Pig Roast!
Farm Tours!
Raffles!

All Farm Day events are free and open to the public. Tax-deductible donations are gratefully accepted.

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