The 2011 NOFA Summer Conference hit a number of themes; all grounded in immediate consequences for the health of the world around us. Climate change, GMO’s, Transition Towns, and Animal-Power were all topics at the conference which reflected NOFA’s desire to mitigate the destruction happening to the soil, to the agricultural industry, and to our communities. As Julie Rawson, Executive Director of NOFA/Mass, captured it: “There are two types of people in the world: those who believe that we should master and overcome the natural world, and those who think we should collaborate with it.”

The focus of Friday night keynoter Eric Toensmeier’s talk was his current passion and project: utilizing regenerative and perennial agriculture as a way to address climate change. He gave a sober warning: we can expect much more warming—“three times as much, even if we hold steady at current CO2 levels.” Current practices put us on a path to desertification of 30% of the planet and a sea level rise of 2-5 feet by 2070, as well as ocean acidification and the subsequent decline of the global fishing industry. Northeast farmers can expect increased weed and pest pressure, heat stress on livestock, and more extreme and erratic weather.

What needs to happen, Toensmeier said, goes beyond just drastically reducing our emissions. We have to actually pull from the atmosphere and sequester already-emitted carbon. While local organic food “is a huge part of the solution,” it can go farther toward carbon reduction, through the use of regenerative techniques and perennials. Toensmeier gave a fascinating overview of agricultural practices with climate stabilization potential. Familiar ones include localization of food production, increased production of traditional perennial crops, and utilization of rotational grazing for meat production. Less familiar ideas primarily focused on the integration of both wild and cultivated perennials into agricultural systems, including no-till organic agriculture, no-kill pasture cropping, coppicing, perennial grain polycultures, alley cropping, and silvopastures.

Toensmeier closed with a rallying call for an active citizenry. Practice and develop local agriculture, no-kill pasture cropping, coppicing, perennial grain polycultures, alley cropping, and silvopastures.

Chapela asserted, the effort has largely fallen short in generating returns for investors and in recouping R&D costs. Contrast the lack of returns from genetically modified seeds with the growth of the organic foods industry, which leaps upwards at 20% each year. A strict economic analysis would seem to shine a ray of hope in NOFA’s direction.

Chapela compared the genetic manipulation of living things to major politically-driven science experiments such as the Manhattan Project. DNA replacement (particularly across species) is similarly a very dangerous thing. The method for injecting one species with the genetic material of another species causes that new DNA to become “promiscuous.” The material can go to unpredictable places within cells, and can potentially even travel via bacteria or viruses, once again, to another species. This continued and completely unpredictable trajectory of DNA once it’s removed and manipulated, is extremely problematic. It should be studied carefully before it is deregulated and sanctioned in the environment.

(continued on page A-7)
Changes in The Natural Farmer

We hope you have enjoyed the new sectional format for this paper. Several people have asked why we divided the paper into sections A and B. There are really two reasons.

First, for technical reasons involving the number of rollers on the press, we can get many more color pages by going to two sections. A lot of our advertisers prefer the color format, and to serve them all would have meant that we could not have had many color pages left for content. This change gives us a lot of new flexibility with color.

Second, we can print more of one section than another if we want. On the last issue we had a pre-print order for several hundred extra copies of the supplement which we were able to fill. If you are interested in getting extra copies of a future supplement, you can do so now at a reduced price without having to get the first section, which we use for current news and events.

We are also looking at a major change in format—going from a tabloid to a magazine style paper. If you have feedback on this, or other about these format ideas, please let us know. We want to serve the NOFA membership with a quarterly journal which is well read and convenient for folks. Thanks!

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Chemical Trespass Grounds to Sue in Minnesota

Olaf Johnson’s 12,000-acre organic farm in Stearns County, Minnesota, has been subject to pesticide and other chemical drift many times in the past few years. But the Minnesota Court of Appeals has just decided that Johnson and other farmers in a similar situation can sue to recover their losses. Letting damaging chemicals cross property lines is trespassing, the Minnesota Court of Appeals ruled on July 25. Moreover, since those pesticides made his crop unsalable in the organic market, Johnson is entitled to damages from the company that applied it, the Paynesville Farmers Union Cooperative Oil Co., the court said.

“Whenever this happens it will give people with overspray a legal avenue to pursue,” said Doug Spanier, an attorney with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, which administers pesticide enforcement regulations in the state. And that could go for any farmer whose crop is made inedible by someone else’s chemical spray and even homeowners whose property has been damaged by a neighbor’s overuse of RoundUp, legal experts said.

Recently, an organic farmer in California won $1 million in damages when pesticides were carried by fog from faraway fields to his own. He had to throw away a season’s worth of herbs destined for organic markets. The Minnesota court’s decision on Monday “puts it in line with how other jurisdictions have dealt with this,” said Alexandra Klass, a professor of environmental law at the University of Minnesota. “The vast majority of jurisdictions find that pesticide drift is a trespass.”

The state Agriculture Department said it fields 100 to 150 complaints a year from farmers about overspraying, but only about 35 a year result in some kind of financial penalty. For Johnson and his wife, Debra, it’s been a long, hard fight. The Johnsons made the decision to become organic farmers in the 1990s. They asked the local pesticide cooperative, Paynesville Farmers Union, to take precautions with spraying around the farm. Nonetheless, the cooperative repeatedly sprayed pesticide and herbicide on neighboring farms in a way that violated Minnesota law, the court said in its decision.

The first time it happened in 1998, the cooperative apologized but refused to pay the Johnsons for the damage caused by the overspraying. When it happened again in 2002, Johnson complained to the Agriculture Department, which determined the chemicals had been sprayed illegally, tainting Johnson’s crop. He sold it at lower, nonorganic prices, and, following federal rules, removed the contaminated field from production for three years. That time the cooperative settled out of court with the Johnsons. But it happened again in 2005, 2007 and 2008. In all, the state cited the cooperative four times for violating pesticide laws by applying the chemicals on windy days. But the Johnsons also paid a price each time it happened. They had to burn fields and plow under soybeans and take their fields out of production. In 2009 they sued the co-op, charging negligence and trespassing.

source: Minneapolis Star Tribune, July 25, 2011

Wheat Growers Pushing for GMO Wheat

The American National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) is working to educate members as well as millers, bakers and others on GMO technologies and research which could benefit the industry such as low gluten varieties. Corn and soybeans, which are selling at record prices now, have pulled many growers away from wheat and the NAWG feels part of the reason is biotech developments which boosted the profitability of those crops.

source: Australia’s The Land, 3 August, 2011

Promiseland Livestock Organic Certification Suspension Effective July 28

Suspension of Promiseland Livestock’s organic certification became effective on July 28, 2011, representing a victory for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to protect the integrity of the USDA organic label.

“We are pleased about the outcome, not only on behalf of the agency but for organic consumers as well,” said AMS Acting Administrator David Shipman. “We’ve maintained our resolve to the principle of organic integrity so that consumers can continue to trust the USDA organic label, and our diligence in this long battle has paid off. The organic standards are rigorous, all certified operations are expected to adhere to them.”

USDA originally issued its decision to suspend Promiseland’s organic certification last year, citing the company’s repeated withholding of records from authorized agents that would have allowed them to conduct audits of the company’s facilities. On Dec. 2, 2010, Promiseland filed a motion requesting a stay of the decision and order on the grounds that the company was preparing an appeal of the decision in U.S. District Court.

The company eventually withdrew the motion late in June. During the five-year suspension, Promiseland Livestock is prohibited from representing its products as organic.

source: July 21 press release by Agricultural Marketing Service

Monsanto Developing GMO Sweet Corn

Monsanto, whose GMO corn has been restricted to grain corn used for feed, fiber, or processing into sugars and oils, has decided to go head to head with Syngenta and is developing a sweet corn variety with both Bt and Roundup Ready traits. The announcement was made on August 4, 2011 at company headquarters in St. Louis.

The sweet corn market is much smaller than the 90+ million acre grain corn market. The engineered seed should be available by this fall.

source: Bloomberg News, August 4, 2011

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The Natural Farmer
Fall, 2011
France Vote Outlaws ‘Fracking’ Shale for Natural Gas, Oil Extraction

French senators voted June 30 to outlaw hydraulically fractured, or fracking, making France the first country to pass a law banning the technique for extracting natural gas and oil.

“We are at the end of a legislative marathon that stirred emotion from lawmakers and the public,” French Environment Minister Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet said before the vote. Hydraulic fracturing will be illegal and parliament would have to vote for a new law to allow research using the technique, she said.

Energy companies that plan to use fracking to produce oil and gas in France will have their permits revoked and its use could lead to fines and prison, according to the bill while the opposition Socialists rejected the proposal for not going far enough.

Fracking, widely used in North America, uses a mixture of water, sand and chemicals injected under high pressure to break dense rock to release trapped oil and gas. Green groups and politicians led protests across France, saying the method could cause environmental damage. Government ministers and industry representatives say it is the only method currently available to extract hydrocarbons from the rock.

source: Bloomberg News, July 1, 2011

Organic Industry Still enjoys Strong Growth

Despite much of the economy being mired down in slow to non-existing growth, the organic industry continues to grow. The largest growth has been in fruits and vegetables (albeit currently available to extract hydrocarbons from the rock).

source: Acres USA June, 2011

Cows on Pasture Better for Environment

Agricultural engineer Al Rott led a team of scientists through a modeling study that evaluated how different management systems on a typical 250-acre Pennsylvania dairy farm would affect the environment. The study’s findings include:

- Keeping dairy cows outdoors all year lowered ammonia emissions by about 30 percent.
- Average net farm greenhouse gas emissions dropped about 10 percent by keeping the herd outdoors year-round.
- When fields formerly used for feed crops were converted to perennial grasslands for grazing, carbon sequestration levels climbed from zero to as high as 3,400 pounds per acre every year.
- They found that a well-managed dairy herd kept outdoors year-round left a carbon footprint 6 percent smaller than that of a high-production dairy herd kept in barns. Although the confined cows produced 22,000 pounds of milk every year and the foraging cow produced only 13,000 pounds, the total amount of milk protein and fat produced on the two farms was essentially the same, because the foraging cows produced milk with more fat and protein.


BT Toxin from GMO Plants Found in Human Blood

Fresh doubts have arisen about the safety of genetically modified crops, with a new study reporting presence of BT toxin, used widely in GM crops, in human blood for the first time.

Genetically modified crops include genes extracted from a soil bacterium called Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) to make them resistant to pest attacks. Till now, scientists and multinational corporations promoting GM crops have maintained that BT toxin poses no danger to human health as the protein breaks down in the human gut. But the presence of this toxin in human blood shows that this does not happen.

Scientists from the University of Sherbrooke, Canada, have detected the insecticidal protein, Cry1Ab, circulating in the blood of pregnant as well as non-pregnant women. They have also detected the toxin in fetal blood, implying it could pass on to the next generation. The research paper has been peer-reviewed and accepted for publication in the journal Reproductive Toxicology. The study covered 30 pregnant women and 39 women who had come for tubectomy at the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Sherbrooke (CHUS) in Quebec.

None of the women had lived or worked in contact with pesticides. They were all consuming typical Canadian diet that included GM foods such as soybeans, corn and potatoes. Cry1Ab toxin was detected in 93 per cent and 80 per cent of maternal and fetal blood samples, respectively and in 69 per cent of tested blood samples from non-pregnant women.

“Generated data will help regulatory agencies responsible for the protection of human health to make better decisions”, noted researchers Aziz Aris and Samuel Leblanc.


New Organic Corn Seed Developed for Northeast at Cornell Now Available

Cornell breeder Margaret Smith, working with Klaus Martens of Lakeview Organic Grain, has developed a corn hybrid designed for Northeast growing conditions. It is called D2901 and was bred from two parent hybrid lines which are vigorous and easy to grow, qualities helpful to organic farmers who can’t use pesticides and herbicides to help their plants compete. Smith, one of a handful of corn breeders in public research institutions, was helped in this work by a grant from the New York Farm Viability Institute. The seed is available from licensed distributors, including Blue River Hybrids.

source: The Organic and Non-GMO Report, June, 2011

Sixteen States Considering GMO Food Labels

The failure of the Obama administration to regulate GMO crops has resulted in grassroots efforts around the country to pass regulations at the state level. In 16 states, including New York, lawmakers are considering bills that would require labeling of products containing genetically modified ingredients. Some groups are calling for a national standard, while others are pushing for state-by-state solutions.

source: The Natural Farmer

Agricultural Research Magazine

The interests of agriculture are bound up, in all directions, with the widest spheres of life. Indeed there is scarcely a realm of human life which lies outside our subject.

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level. The most popular regulations involve food labeling, although seed labeling is also being considered in some states. Food labeling bills have been introduced in Oregon, New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, North Carolina, West Virginia, Vermont, Tennessee, Maryland, Illinois, Iowa, Hawaii, Connecticut, California, Alaska and Mississippi. California, Oregon, Vermont and Alaska are also considering laws to label GMO fish given possible approval of their commercialization by the US Food and Drug Administration. Diana Urban, a Connecticut state representative, filed a labeling bill that ultimately failed. “If each state makes it different,” she says, talking about the provisions of state labeling programs, “then the big corporations will be begging the federal government to step in and do regulation. That’s a strategy!”

source: The Organic and Non-GMO Report, May & June, 2011

South Carolina Prison to Start Dairy

A South Carolina prison, one of three which already produce all the milk and eggs prisoners consume statewide, is opening a 1000 cow dairy this summer. It will be the largest dairy in South Carolina.

source: The Germinator, Summer, 2011

Asthma Rates on Rise

The number of people in the US diagnosed with asthma grew by 4.3 million between 2001 and 2009. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2009 nearly 1 in 12 Americans were diagnosed with the disease. The reason for the growth in asthma rates is unknown, although some speculate it is related to the growth in consumption of foods containing GMOs.

source: Acres USA July, 2011

Organic Milk Sales on Way Back Up

Strong sales have resulted in a rising retail prices and better pay prices from both Organic Valley and Horizon Organic for Northeast organic dairy producers. While the retail price is higher, the gap between organic and conventional milk is at an all-time low of $1.92 per half gallon. Presumably that will encourage more consumers to buy the organic product.

source: R-CALF press release, August 4, 2011

GMO contamination is an increasing risk. Some buyers insist on a GMO-free sample, which is not always easy to control with drift, contaminated seed and problems during transport. The quantity and quality of forage produced this year is variable, and some dairies will have a hard time covering extra expenses with the higher processor price.


New Poll Finds Huge Majority for GMO Food Labeling

In March MSNDC conducted a poll asking if genetically modified foods should be labeled. Of 44,857 respondents, 96.1 percent said “yes”, 3.1 percent said “no”, and 0.8% didn’t know. What part of those numbers does the government not understand?

source: Maine Organic Farmer and Gardener, June-August, 2011

Cyprus Orders GMO Put on Separate Shelves

The government of Cyprus has passed a law requiring genetically modified foods to be displayed on separate shelves in shops and supermarkets. They must also be displayed with a prominent sign stating the GM status of the foods, and the signs need to be in Greek, Turkish, and English. Passage of the bill was welcomed by the Green Party.

source: The Organic and Non-GMO Report, May, 2011

Outdoor Access for Poultry Delayed at NOSB

The Livestock Committee of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) has postponed until the fall meeting action to strengthen animal welfare standards. A key difficulty here has been, on the one hand the push to make organics the gold standard in animal welfare, and on the other, the resistance of large industrial organic egg operations to sizeable space allowances for outdoor access. The Committee’s current proposal for 2 square feet per bird for layers and 1 square foot for broilers is less than the 2009 proposal for 3 square feet for both. Extensive lobbying from giant operators and the egg trade association (United Egg Producers) rolled the proposal back from the earlier number that the Organic Valley, the nation’s largest name-brand egg producer, requires 5 square feet per bird. European organic standards are far more spacious, requiring 45 square feet per bird. It looks like small organic poultry farmers will have to do their own lobbying for adequate space standards.

source: The Cultivator, Summer, 2011

Leafy Greens Agreement Caught in Bureaucratic Struggle?

The National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (NLGMA) is a voluntary agreement entered into by growers of leafy greens that they will meet certain requirements (burdensome, costly, and destructive of conservation efforts) in order to market to buyers who sign the agreement. It has been proposed by the Agricultural Marketing Service of USDA, which normally does not concern itself with food safety on produce operations. That job has been done by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which, in turn struggling with developing the regulations and administrative structure to implement the recently passed Food Safety Modernization Act. It is not clear who is going to regulate for food safety on produce farms, but in any case you can learn more about the NLGMA at http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/LeafyGreensagreement.

source: Virginia Biological Farmer, 2nd quarter, 2011

Meat Recall Second Largest in US History

Cargill Meat Solutions Corporation on August 3 issued the second-largest meat recall in history, involving 36 million pounds of ground turkey products potentially contaminated with a multi-drug resistant strain of Salmonella Heidelberg. The USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) classified the recall as a Class I event, meaning it involves a health hazard with a reasonable probability that use of the product could result in death.

“If we don’t immediately begin reversing this trend towards more-and-more concentration in the meatpacking sector, which leads to the centralization of our nation’s food supply,” said Bill Buliard, CEO of R-CALF, a beef raisers’ group, “our food supply will become increasingly vulnerable to widespread contaminations that could lead to serious and widespread health consequences and food shortages. This latest meat recall is a wake-up call highlighting the very real danger of our ongoing abandonment of a widely dispersed food production and food processing system. We are moving fast moving toward a corporate-controlled, centralized food production and food processing system that is inherently more vulnerable to failures that could adversely affect the food safety and food security for millions of U.S. consumers.”

source: R-CALF press release, August 4, 2011

Biotech to Self-Regulate

The USDA announced in the April 7 Federal Register that it would be letting the biotech industry conduct its own environmental impact studies, or pay third parties to do so. This makes official what has been common practice — the USDA and the biotech figures for its analysis of impact, rather than generating its own data through research or trials.

source: Acres USA June, 2011

South Carolina Oldest Operating Farm Composter

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source: Acres USA June, 2011

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For Chapela, the most immediate need and most useful solution in the fight against genetically modified organisms is knowledge. He is confident that the American public will resist consuming GMO products if and when they understand what they are and where they are. Understanding where GMO’s are underlies Chapela’s lab work at Berkeley. Together with graduate students, Chapela is trying to develop accessible technology for farmers, consumers – and, as he puts it “the housewife in her kitchen” – to detect genetically modified plants anywhere on their property, farm or backyard. The first step in the fight for autonomy in food sovereignty is detection.

The workshops this year spanned a number of different tracks: permaculture, animal-power, nutrient density, transition towns, CSA’s, organic land care, and season extension. A number of this year’s presenters are local activists, changing the way their entire community thinks about food. Julie Baird Holbrook, from Keene, NY is one such example. Julie came to tell her story about her local public school. As Food Director of a public school which serves roughly 150 students K-12, Holbrook’s cafeteria has done away with flavored milk and processed foods. Most of the food served to her students is made entirely by scratch, including the salad dressings, bread, sauces, pizza dough, pasta and desserts. She has integrated grass-fed beef into the menu (in contrast to the industrial beef provided through the governmental food commodities program), and spends a great deal of time hiding veggies in soups and other kid-friendly favorites.

David Fisher, owner of Natural Roots Farm in Conway, MA and coordinator of the Northeast Animal-Power Field Days at the NOFA Summer Conference was very pleased with the turnout of draft-animal constituents. This year was the first year that NOFA integrated a full slate of animal-power workshops at an offsite campus, in South Deerfield. Despite some initial concerns about transportation to the off-site location and whether the Vermont-based event would integrate well, by all accounts participants thoroughly enjoyed the various animal demonstrations including haying and mower workshops in particular. Many of the animal-power workshops hosted over 40 participants, and Natural Roots in particular drew over 65 to their farm tour.

Some regular features of the NOFA conference were fun and familiar: the Zydeco band, contra dance and film series entertained people throughout. Many exhibitors returned this year to display composting toilets, biochar, baskets and tie-dye shirts. The exhibitor tent also featured sponsors such as Whole Foods, Bejo Seeds, Horizon Organic and dozens more. The Saturday afternoon Country Fair was awash in color as the children paraded down in painted faces, ribbons and costumes, chaperoned by diligent oxen together with various and sundry musicians.

New smaller communities within the conference were notably visible this year. The Greenhorns and National Young Farmers’ Coalition set up a successful mixer for young farmers on the lawn, Saturday afternoon – and handed out glasses of fresh lemonade and homemade snacks. A group of Jewish participants celebrated the Sabbath with a veggie potluck outside the dorms, complete with communal singing and spiritual reflection. NOFA continues to demonstrate great acceptance and support for grassroots efforts within the conference, which allows individuality and creative expression to flourish. These are values which seem to be at the core of the NOFA mission across the region, and part of the reason why this conference has such a special character.

Ben Grosscup, conference coordinator summed up his experience at the helm this year: “It was an exhilarating first year for me as conference coordinator. Many people asked me ‘how I was holding up’. The fact is that to put on this event it takes a lot of people. Everyone is on at full steam during the weekend, because there’s so much to do and experience. The Summer Conference Committee attracts some very motivated and competent people and they perform a labor of love in producing this unique event. It’s a real honor to be part of it.”
The oxen were a draw for everyone. Here an intrepid youth tries to ride one the way the pioneers did on the way west.

Friday night dance at the Summer Conference was a popular affair with all ages.

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by Harvey Ussery
published by Chelsea Green, www.chelseagreen.com
© 2011, 416 pages, $39.95
review by Jack Kittredge

Attentive readers of this publication will have encountered Harvey Ussery before. He was kind enough to allow us to reprint some of his articles on raising poultry in our recent issue on Alternative Animal Feeds. Through numerous articles over the years for Backyard Poultry, Mother Earth News, and Countryside & Small Stock Journal he has earned the same stripes in poultry raising that Eliot Coleman has in 4-Season Growing or Michael Phillips has in Organic Apple Production. He is even coming to deliver the NOFA/Mass Advanced Growers Seminar on The Modern Homestead Nov. 4 & 5 (http://www.nofamass.org/seminars/fall/seminar.php).

In The Small-Scale Poultry Flock Ussery has delivered himself of a magnum opus on the subject. He goes into detail on every topic related to poultry, starting with Why Do It and proceeding through Bird Biology, Choice of Species, Brooding, Housing, Manure Management, Watering, Pasturing, Fencing, Shelters, Composting and Soil Fertility, Feeding, Making Feeds, Feeding from Home Resources, Free Protein, Keeping Harmony, Predation, Flock Health, Over-wintering, non-Chicken species of Poultry, Breeding, Broody Hens, Butchering, Cooking and Marketing. He includes 8 appendices providing the reader various designs for structures and equipment, spreadsheets on feed formulation and tracking expenses, comparison of natural vs. industrial egg production, and resource lists.

Harvey’s style is breezy and down-to-earth. He obviously loves his birds and the wealth of stories he can tell is amazing. To hear him go on, one assumes he has made every mistake imaginable when it comes to poultry raising. Perhaps he has, of course, but I prefer to think he just likes to tell a good story with himself as often as not the butt of the joke.

Ussery started out by following all the rules of conventional small-flock raising. But he soon began to question if there wasn’t a better way. Watching his birds, he began to change his management to accommodate them. Now, he says, he always takes his lead from the birds and watches what they prefer—in feed, in housing and protection, in egg laying preferences. Harvey’s avoidance of many of the products available for purchase by flock owners is motivated not just by a healthy skepticism and a touch of frugality, but by a desire to develop a better one himself. He grinds his own feed, for instance, and has pioneered in the raising of grubs and soldier flies on household waste in order to produce a high protein feed source for his poultry.

As a small-scale poultry raiser myself, I found this book a wealth of ideas for innovation, of good stories, and of thoughtful reflections on what is really important about life. Ussery is a kindred soul who epitomizes what is best about the agrarian life. Wendell Berry is quoted throughout. I have only two quibbles.

One has to do with security from predators. Harvey devotes many pages to his efforts to seal off every tiny hole providing access to his birds (for weasel protection), to providing them with portable electric fencing (to deter raccoons and possums), to burying fence wire 8 inches underground (to discourage digging foxes). But he devotes only one page to what, for me, has proven the simplest, most effective security measure ever devised—outdoor dogs. Julie and I have heard the story so often I can repeat it in my sleep—new birds arrive, they are put into a new, securely built coop, and within a few weeks there is a heart-breaking slaughter. It turns out some predator with patience gnawed, dug, or pushed his way in after working at it several nights. We ask: “Do you have a dog?” “Yes” is the common reply. “Does it sleep outside?” is next. “Well, no,” is the answer. Thus the perpetrator had all the time in the world.

My other quibble is more fundamental. Harvey is generous to certified organic farmers, especially small ones. But he is not among their number and feels buying grain from a local farmer is a better way to assure its quality than to buy from a faceless company. But he neglects the important fact that unless that farmer is

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review by Sue Smith-Heavenrich

Subtitled “high-tech, low-tech and arts prevent using this slim paperb...h reference for the deer-plagued gardener. It’s actually a revised and lengthened version of a 54-page pamphlet Robert Juhre wrote back in 1996 and, granted, contains lots of material you could find on your own through the internet and at your local county extension office. But, as my neighbor pointed out, he’s done all that searching for you and sometimes it’s nice to have it all in one place.

“Caution: much of the information in this book is hearsay, based on folklore and reports from both amateur and professional gardeners,” Juhre writes in a disclaimer. But, he says, it also comes from his own experience and observations. With that, he delves into a no-nonsense discussion of how to deal with your deer neighbors.

Juhre begins with an appraisal of deer, both male and female. If you’re going to outwit them, he says, you’ve got to know them: their feeding habits, their preferences, how high they can jump, how small an opening they can squeeze under...They are, he says, creatures of habit. So if you don’t want them in your garden, you need to set those boundaries early in the game. Once they’re used to snacking on the gladilis it’s hard to change their ways.

Chapter two is a basic checklist of things you need to consider before investing lots of time and money. It’s aptly titled “Look at your problem, then figure out a solution.” Is your solution neighborhood friendly? he asks? Will it be interference in the long run? And can you afford it?

The next seven chapters outline various solutions: shooting and trapping; fencing; barriers other than fences; noisemakers; visual scare tactics; and repellents – both home remedies and commercial. Fences are food defense, Juhre notes, but you have to do it early. Before you plant. Not (like me) after they have snacked on all the bee balm and rudbeckia buds.

Juhre describes diverse fencing options including “pleaching”, an old-world method of creating a living fence from trees. Plant willows, beech, birch or similar trees close together and intertwine their branches as they grow, he says. Then adds, “Pleaching is not for the impatient or those who need immediate protection.” He accompanies this chapter with simple line drawings.

For those occasions when a fence won’t do, Juhre lists a handful of other options including cages and nets. For those gardens where a cage is not possible due to the size of the area, he suggests pleaching, an old-world method of creating a living fence from trees. Plant willows, beech, birch or similar trees close together and intertwine their branches as they grow, he says. Then adds, “Pleaching is not for the impatient or those who need immediate protection.” He accompanies this chapter with simple line drawings.

In chapter ten Juhre devotes 15 pages to lists of plants deer will “generally leave alone.” plants deer occasionally eat, and plants deer love to snack on. But, he warns, many factors enter into the “safety” of plants: the size of the herd and density of deer in an area, the available natural forage, time of year and weather conditions. During a drought year deer will tackle plants they otherwise avoid.

Near the end Juhre devotes a chapter to his attempts to foil plant-munching deer. He describes strategies that worked well (a sheep fence with hedge growing up it), some that worked less well, and some that were abject failures. He also compares repellents and provides a state-by-state list of online resources. And yes, he does include an index for quick reference.


I’m a big fan of Stephen Buhner, who changed the way I experience plants and our human connections to them with his book “The Secret Teachings of Plants,” so I was more than intrigued to read Timothy Lee Scott’s “Invasive Plant Medicine,” for which Buhner provides the foreword.

The book has an overall philosophy that a weed is merely “a plant in the wrong place” and that all plants have healing abilities and ecological benefits to share with humans, that they attempt to communicate with us, as they consume gardens, creep across farm fields and invade ponds, one frond at a time.

The common plants in our fields and meadows to...
day, such as plantain, burdock, chicory and daffodil, were once “alien species that did not grow here until the first Europeans arrived.” Scott begins, pointing out that over time, plants adapt to find an “ecological niche” in our landscape, providing food, land protection, renewing degraded soils, cleansing waters and cleaning up pollutants – each in their own way.

The first part of Scott’s book delves into the politics, history and economics of invasives, while part two explores plant intelligence and the primal connections between humans and plants including deep ecology, the chemistry of plant medicine and treating “invasive diseases” such as Lyme, hepatitis C, HIV and West Nile encephalitis, with invasive plant medicine.

Japanese Knotweed, as Scott points out was researched by Buhner, was found to be an antimicrobial, antioxidant and immune-enhancing medicine that spread across North America at nearly the same rate and trajectory as Lyme Disease. Scott suggests this as a homeopathic medicine: “like cures like.” He points out that many antibiotics can be found in nature and goes into invasive plants that can help to cure these diseases, in helpful, easy-to-read short sections with charts.

Invasive plants can also provide vitamins and minerals – did you know that Japanese Knotweed, Russian olive and plantain are all good sources of Vitamin C, for instance, or that Japanese honeysuckle and Russian olive contain zinc?

Lovely color photographs grace the center of the book, serving as a good identification guide for some common invasive plants.

The book’s part three is a handy resource/reference guide to invasive plants, providing careful notes on harvesting, dosages and uses of plants, including their medicinal and other beneficial qualities. Each plant has its own section, with a map showing where it grows, a picture of the plant, Latin and common names, related species, a description, habitat, medicinal uses, pharmacological actions, plant chemistry, scientific studies, other uses and ecological importance.

Plants detailed in the book are: Artemisia, Barberry, Bindweed, Blackberry, Dandelion, English Ivy, Garlic Mustard, Japanese Honeysuckle, Japanese Knotweed, Knotweed, (Star Thistle), Kudzu, Oriental Bittersweet, Plantain, Purple Loosestrife, Reed (Phragmites), Russian (Autumn) Olive, Scotch Broom, Siberian Elm, Tamarisk (salt cedar), Thistle, Tree of Heaven, White Mulberry, Wild Mustard and Wild Rose.

Each section also includes a comprehensive list of references where even more information on each plant can be found. The book concludes with a full bibliography and index.

Throughout, the book is enhanced with quotes from such notables as George Washington Carver, Masanobu Fukudoka, Dave Jacke and Chief Hiawatha, founder of the Iroquois Confederacy.

“The secrets are in the plants. To elicit them you have to love them enough,” said Carver, quoted by Scott. Rosemary Gladstar, herbalist and founder of United Plant Savers, gave Scott a testimonial on the back cover of the book. “Brilliant and unique, Tim Scott’s new book is about to rock the world of plant enthusiasts.”

I would have to agree with her – this book is enjoyable, educational and eye-opening from the very first page.

Holy Shit, Managing Manure to Save Mankind, Gene Logsdon Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, VT 05061
Copyright date: 2010, 195 pages, $17.50

review by Leslie Cox

Yes folks, you are reading it right, one of the seven words you cannot say, but one of the words for many of us animal farm kids still has a dual meaning, because we have had to stand in it, walk in it, work in it, and get rid of “it”. So when we say it in a swear, it does not have the same meaning as for those folks that just know of it from looking at it in a toilet bowl full of water.

When I saw this book from Gene Logsdon, and it’s title I knew right away what Gene was going to have to say. He is one of those writers that has the wit of a great writer in organic agriculture, and the wisdom of a farmer with many generations of farm wisdom to build on.

He starts the book by thanking Chelsea Green Publishing for letting him write a book with SHIT in the title, and thanks his compatriots in the peaceful revolution, Wendell Berry, David Kline, Maury Telleen, Wes Jackson, and David Orr. Names familiar with those of us trying to bring sanity back to the art of agriculture.

The first chapter appropriately jumps right into it, by reminding the reader that shit has value, it is not a waste product, and in Gene’s words “was going to be the hottest commodity on the Chicago board of trade one of these days”. As petroleum based fertilizers are going up in price those of us who still use it, know he is right. I was surprised when I moved here in Massachusetts that my dairy farm neighbor had and has been selling loads of manure to the tobacco growers in the valley for years.

After chapters of the history of the valuable stuff, a particularly interesting piece on the technology of different forks, the value of different species manure, Gene even deals with human manure, giving tips on what technologies will help make that a valuable resource, and not a waste product wasting billions of gallons of valuable water around the world to flush it away.

I found particularly interesting a chapter on divine materials, were he talks about the soil life changing value of manures, and he even has a quote from a researcher that devalues bio-char as, “this material will require additional nitrogen fertilizer and say that the carbon added to soil with char amendments will persist, whereas carbon added from fresh organic matter will quickly degrade. What is not considered is that carbon added as fresh or composted organic matter will increase productivity of the soils, resulting in better plant growth, higher microbial biomass and so on. But making charcoal is hardly a way to cut down on carbon emissions. Making charcoal is, in fact a rather polluting process.”

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Gene finishes the book by talking about the changing agricultural landscape and how we as farmers will go back to common sense methods of animal production. I, for one, know he is right. I hope others will read this book and try the animal nurture handling methods he laid out.

“Gene Logsdon is one of only three people I know who are able to make a living exclusively out of organic farming.” — Lynda Simkins, President, NOFA-Massachusetts

“The main benefit of Udder Comfort™ is the milk quality,” says fifth generation dairy farmer Leon Corse. He and his wife Linda and their daughter Abbie milk 50 to 60 cows at Corse Farm Dairy in southern Vermont, which was certified organic in 2008. “Since we’ve been organic, we get pretty terrific quality premiums, and that made SCC on even greater focus than it was before. "Historically, our SCC was up in the 150 to 200,000 range. Our numbers for the last 12 months show averages of 95,000 and as low as 75,000 in the first few months of 2010. It’s been a gradual decline since we’ve been using Udder Comfort consistently.

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Gene Logsdon talks about the changes that will take place in agriculture and how it will turn back to the basics. He finishes the book by talking about the changes that are happening in his life. He is able to use the techniques he learned to make a living exclusively out of organic farming.

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August 11th, Saturday 1st 11:00 AM

Dental Anxiety Workshop
August 18th, Saturday 1st 6:00 PM
Calendar

Sunday, November 13: Embracing Flower Essences for Transition and Change, Northfield, NH, for more info: nhbhr@nofanh.org or call 603-224-5022

Sunday, November 18: Cover Crops as a Key Component to Vegetable Crop Rotations, Poughkeepsie, NY, for more info: http://www.nofany.org/events/field-days

Monday, September 22: Making the Margins Work: Adding Value to Great Milk, East Mertedhel, NY, for more info: http://www.nofany.org/events/field-days

Wednesday, September 21: Grass-fed Lamb & Mat-tow, Rushville, NY, for more info: http://www.nofany.org/events/field-days

Thursday, September 20: Transitioning an Organic Farm to Draft Power, Kinderhook, NY, for more info: http://www.nofany.org/events/field-days

Saturday, September 24: Mushroom Cultivation Workshop, Basking Ridge, NJ, for more info: http://www.nofany.org/programs_special.html

Monday, September 27: Naturopathic Fertility Management, Bedford, NH, for more info: http://www.nofany.org or call 603-224-5022

Wednesday, September 28: Practical Tools for Small Farm Vegetables, Liviwo, NY, for more info: http://www.nofany.org/events/field-days

Thursday, September 29: Diversify your Dairy with Value Added Processing! Schenevus, NY, for more info: http://www.nofany.org/events/field-days

Tuesday in October & November: Exploring the Small Farm Dream, 4 sessions, Hillsborough, NJ, for more info: http://www.nofany.org/programs_esfd.html

Saturdays in October, November, & December: Tilling the Soil Opportunity, 5 sessions, Mullica Hills, NJ, for more info: http://www.nofany.org/programs_tso.html

Sunday, October 8 – Sunday, October 9: 7th Annual Connecticutt Garlic and Harvest Festival, Bethelme, CT, for more info: at 203-266-7810 or www.garlicfest.com


Wednesday, October 12: Alternative Energy Twilight Meeting for Farmers, Allamuchy, NJ, for more info: http://www.nofanj.org/programs_twilight.htm

Thursday – Friday, October 13 – 14: Training for Small and Mid-Sized Tractors and their Implements FOR WOMEN ONLY, Clarksburg, NJ, for more info: http://www.nofanj.org/AnnouncementRetrieve.aspx?ID=74650


Saturday, October 22: The Art of Goat Milk Soap Making, Keene, NH, for more info: www.nofah.org/herbworkshops

Wednesday, October 26: Agricultural Justice and Your Farm, Ithaca, NY, for more info: http://www.nofany.org/events/field-days/agricultural-justice-and-your-farm


Friday, November 4: NOFA-NY Organic Dairy and Field Crop Conference, Syracuse, NY, for more info: www.nofany.org/dairyconference


Saturday, December 3: Intro to Aromatherapy: Skin Creams & Bath Salts, Keene, NH, for more info: nhbhr@nofanh.org or call 603-224-5022


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<tr>
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<td>Steve Gilman, 63 Benton St., Rochester, NY 14620, (585) 271-1979, <a href="mailto:director@nofany.org">director@nofany.org</a></td>
<td>(908) 371-1111 x 1</td>
<td>26 School Street, Northfield, MA 01062 (413) 549-1568</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ben.grosscup@nofa.org">ben.grosscup@nofa.org</a></td>
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