A Wet and Wild
2012 NOFA Summer Conference
by Mindy Harris,
Public Relations Coordinator, NOFA/Mass

After what has been, to date, a very hot and dry summer, the rain gods came to the rescue of farmers across the region with some torrential downpours, in what was one of the soggiest NOFA Summer Conferences since its inception almost 40 years ago. The organization has now held the conference on the campus of UMass Amherst for 5 years. Throughout that time UMass has been an outstanding host, providing dormitory housing, conference classrooms and meeting spaces, camping space, and fabulous all-organic meals in its dining hall. Over 1200 people descended upon the Pioneer Valley from across the Northeast. Despite muddy grass, a dripping tent, and many makeshift solutions to protect product and displays, the NOFA 2012 Exhibitors demonstrated an enormous amount of good will, waiting out the storms through the conference. Campers scurried for cover as small valleys in the campus lawn became small lakes in a matter of minutes. Once the sun emerged for the afternoon on Saturday, August 11th, customers bustled through a crowded marketplace of artisan offerings, food producers, book stores, seed companies, non-profits, and educational institutions. Next to marketplace shoppers, slightly moist children partook of annual fair activities such as scarecrow Stuffing, tomato-bobbing, sack races and various other games.

The conference provided over 200 workshops and featured a handful of thematic tracks including: Permaculture, Winter Growing, Nutrient Density, CSA’s, Beginning Farmers, Organic Land Care and Draft Animal Power. Conference attendees also demonstrated their hardiness and loyalty as they sloshed through puddles and sheets of rain as they traversed the campus to attend courses. One such attendee sent her thanks via a NOFA sponsor, Boston Organics: “We heard so many wonderful, cutting edge speakers! Like David Jacke of Edible Forest Gardens. Funny how the old ways have become ‘new’ again! The weekend was packed full of information and inspiration. May God continue to bless the work of all your hands as you continue to be good stewards of His bounty. Many thanks to you all!” As is often the case with NOFA, there is a sense of common purpose amongst conference attendees, sponsors and presenters, and there is often overlap amongst those constituencies.

continued on page A-2

Jeffrey Smith ran a pre-conference training for anti-GMO activists which was well attended.
The Saturday workshop on lawnmower repair was hands-on and down-and-dirty!

Carolyn Llewellyn, from Glynwood Farm in NY, has been attending the NOFA Summer Conference since 2001. This year, as every year, Carolyn brought along her daughter EJ (6), who was enjoying the Country Fair on Saturday afternoon.

Carolyn appreciates the children’s program, which allows her to attend the adult conference workshops without worry. She knows that the kids are going to receive the same level of thoughtful educational and hands-on learning as she will. She also enjoys the scope of workshops, which target various levels of interest and ability. “Since I started coming to the NOFA Summer Conference, I went from being a farm intern, to a farm manager, to a farm educator.”

Mowing Seeds, stationed in the Exhibitor tent on Saturday workshop on lawnmower repair was hands-on and down-and-dirty!

Brian Turnbaugh, a member of the farm staff at Lin-dentree Farm in Lincoln, MA, recently went through a career change and decided to go into farming. Working in environmental policy down in DC, Brian decided that he could have a stronger impact on the various environmental causes that he believes in by going into farming. In February, he packed up his bags and his family, moved to Arlington, MA, and got a job on a farm. This is his first season farming. This was also his first season attending the NOFA Summer Conference. Every NOFA workshop is a new and exciting learning opportunity for him. “I came to the NOFA Summer Conference to learn about sustainable farming. I am thinking about starting a farm in the Boston area,” he shared. Bryan has already investigated land opportunities, and is thinking about starting a farm in the Boston area, “It’s very helpful for us as exhibitors to have direct communication with our customers. We really enjoy and benefit from immediate feedback from farmers and growers on what is going on with our seeds this season. People let us help us on any of these topics, or have ideas for new ones, please get in touch. We need your help! Deadlines are same as for ads. <p>Advertise in or Sponsor The Natural Farmer

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The Natural Farmer is a quarterly membership journal of the Northeast Organic Farming Association. We plan a year in advance so those who want to write on a topic can have a lot of lead time. The next 3 issues will be:

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Beginning Farmers

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If you can help us on any of these topics, or have ideas for new ones, please get in touch. We need your help! Deadlines are same as for ads.

Moving or missed an issue? The Natural Farmer will not be forwarded by the post office, so you need to make sure your address is up-to-date if you move. Those who regularly send us a subscription fee should send address changes to us. Most of you, however, get this paper as a NOFA member benefit for paying your chapter dues and should send address updates to your local NOFA chapter (listed at the end of each issue).

Archived issues from Summer 1999 through Fall 2005 are available at http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/digital/tnf/. More recent issues are downloadable at www.nofa.org as pdf files.

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Northeast Organic Farming Association, Inc.
Jeffrey Smith arrived in Amherst on Thursday, August 9th, to offer a pre-conference seminar on organizing against GMOs. Dozens of attendees received hands-on training to be able to speak in public, and become effective advocates in their communities. Smith was impressed with the enthusiasm and energy around the GMO issue within NOFA. “It is clear that the issue has expanded, and that the time is ripe for accomplishing great things,” Smith observed. On Saturday evening, August 10th, Smith painted a picture of how activism around genetically modified seeds has evolved since their introduction onto the market, almost 2 decades ago.

For Smith, educating others fuels his work. “Education is a big deal,” he remarked in his keynote speech, “I heard about GMOs in 1996, and heard a scientist, who is a genetic engineer, describe the details of what can go wrong, and why Monsanto’s venture of putting these not-ready-for prime-time seeds into the environment has an unprecedented trajectory of harm. Nowhere before in history have we seen the products of an infinite science affect everyone that eats.” In addition to his keynote address and pre-conference training, Smith also presented a film screening of his new film Genetic Roulette: the Gamble of our Lives, which played the day before the conference began, on Thursday, August 9th. At the core of Smith’s film, and his latest book of a similar title, is the health risk message. Motivated by political and media strategy, the GMO leader’s message has narrowed from an all-encompassing warning about environmental damage and agricultural damage, to a singular message: GMOs pose a major health risk to anyone and everyone.

Much of Smith’s rhetoric is aimed at demystifying the science for an average audience. He explains about the process of creating a GMO plant in his film: “The process of insertion plus cloning creates massive collateral damage.” The health message has galvanized the medical community, parents fearing for their kids, as well as consumers and farmers alike. Smith’s language hits home with a wide variety of listeners, and he was well received at the conference. The GMO concern is perhaps the greatest food policy issue NOFA has tackled in its history, and will continue to drive political activities within the organization, including its ongoing appeal within the OSGATA v. Monsanto federal lawsuit.

Congresswoman Chellie Pingree served as the keynote speaker on Friday evening, August 10th. An articulate and visionary leader, Pingree inspired many listeners to tears, as they applauded a strong ally in the federal government. An organic farmer herself, Pingree speaks with authority when she advocates for food policy at the national level. Pingree was elected in 2008 to represent the first district of Maine, and many think her political career in the Democratic Party is only just beginning. Born in Minnesota, the now national organic food advocate has farming in her roots. In 1971, Chellie moved to Maine as part of the back-to-the-land movement. She eventually was a farm intern, then studied under Eliot Coleman and attended the College of the Atlantic. She bought a farm on the island of North Haven, in Maine, starting with 2 acres of vegetables. Over 30 years later, after establishing herself as a successful farmer and businesswoman (she started her own knitting business, inn and restaurant), she is combining her passion for a healthy food system with keen political abilities.

Pingree currently serves on the House Agriculture Committee and has been intimately engaged with the development of the current Farm Bill, which is due to be renewed this fall. As a farmer, Pingree evokes a strong sense of authenticity to those who listen to her. In her keynote, she indicated that as a farmer in Maine, she is delighted with her farm continued on page A-11
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Twice each year the USDA’s National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meets in a public forum in various locations around the country. At these meetings the Board considers and votes on proposed recommendations for new or amended organic regulations pertaining to a wide variety of issues, e.g. synthetic substances and ingredients to be allowed, or disallowed, in organic products; on-farm production practices such as animal welfare, composting, and pest control, among many others. The NOSB’s decisions directly affect every certified organic farmer, food manufacturer and organic consumer in the country.

That’s why hundreds of farmers, food manufacturers, experts, interest groups and citizens show up at every NOSB meeting to speak directly to the Board and discuss (and argue about) proposed recommendations of concern to them.

On October 15-18 the NOSB meeting will be held in Providence, R.I. This will be the first time the Board has met in New England. It is a great opportunity for individuals, farmers and businesses to become directly involved in organic policymaking. And, it’s a great “education” about the process of how organic rules and standards are developed.

Full information about the NOSB and its meetings can be found on the NOSB webpage – search “National Organic Standards Board”. There you will find records of past meetings and Board decisions, as well as information about the October meeting, including lodging information. Your state NOFA chapter may be able to help those interested in attending with carpooling arrangements, etc.

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The Natural Farmer
Fall, 2012
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New GE Seeds Clog Pipeline

With public opposition to GE foods and crops growing by leaps and bounds, the Big 6 pesticide corporations (Dow, Monsanto, DuPont (Pioneer), Bayer, Syngenta and BASF) are rushing to quickly ram a dozen new GE crops through the pipeline. Nine of the new GE crops in the pipeline will be reviewed under USDA’s newly devised “fast-track” regulatory process, which aims to reduce approval time for GE crops from the current average of three years to just over a year.

As if the swollen pipeline of a dozen new GE seeds weren’t bad enough, industry allies in Congress have buried deep in the Farm Bill - signed off on by the House Agricultural Committee - three riders that provide multiple mechanisms for fast-tracking backdoor approval of GE crops. A fourth rider in the House Agricultural Appropriations Bill would enable USDA to permit continued planting of GE crops, even when a court of law has ruled that such crops were approved illegally.

*source:* http://www.panna.org/blog/flood-advisory-ge-seeds-clog-pipeline

CCOF and Oregon Tilth to Merge

Two of the nation’s largest organic certifiers, California Certified Organic Farmers and Oregon Tilth, plan to merge subject to an October vote by members of both organizations. The union will create an organization that certifies 4200 organic farmers, processors, handlers and retailers, and is able to do so with less paperwork and faster inspections and reviews. For more information on the merger, see www.ccoftilthmerger.org.

*source:* In Good Tilth, July/August 2012

Higher Welfare Animals Produce More Nutritious Foods

A new nutrition report reveals that meat, dairy and eggs from animals reared in higher welfare environments tend to be better for our health with less fat, a greater proportion of Omega-3s and antioxidants. Emily Lewis-Brown, Research Manager at Compassion in World Farming, says: “The industrial farming model is unsustainable and relentless in its exploitation of animals, land, energy and water. An urgent move from intensive to higher welfare farming is required to improve animal welfare, and in doing so, contributing to improved nutrition. The compelling results in our report indicate that raising animals in high welfare systems can have nutritional benefits for people.”

Higher welfare food has a lower fat content. A free-range or organic chicken may have up to 50% less fat than an intensively farmed one. Pasture-reared beef has between 25 - 50% less fat than its industrially farmed counterpart. Additionally, there is more Omega-3 in higher welfare animal products. In fact, in higher welfare chicken, this percentage can be up to 565% higher – a staggering difference. Higher welfare eggs have up to 170% more Omega-3 and humanely reared pork has up to 290% higher levels.

*source:* Compassion in World Farming, www.ciwf.org/nutrition

Fourth Case of US Mad Cow Confirmed

The USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed the 4th US case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (Mad Cow Disease or BSE) in a dairy cow from Central California. The cow never was presented for slaughter for human consumption, and milk does not transmit BSE, so the animal was never a danger to the public, according to the USDA.

Michael Hansen, a spokesman for Consumer’s Union, noted, however, that:

1) the USDA tests only about 40,000 cows per year out of the one million slaughtered, and then only those sent to renderers, not slaughtherhouses,
2) the agency prohibits private companies from testing their own beef for BSE, and
3) the ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban in place to prevent the spread of Mad Cow Disease is inadequate as cows can be fed to pigs and chickens, and their remains fed back to cows, possibly enabling the spread.

*source:* The Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener, June-August 2012

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Monsanto Linked to Coup That Ousted Paraguay's President

President Fernando Lugo, a “left-of-center” politician democratically voted into office by the people of Paraguay back in 2008, was forced from office by a parliamentary coup in June. Among those who initiated and brought about this coup was multinational biotechnology giant Monsanto, which was apparently threatened by Lugo’s resistance against the company’s genetically-modified (GM) crop agenda.

“Monsanto planned to introduce a genetically modified seed for commercial use in the country...” (But) under Lugo’s administration, Paraguay’s National Service for Plants and Seeds Quality and Health (SENAVE) refused to approve the seed’s use,” writes Berta Joubert-Ceci of Workers World concerning Monsanto’s involvement in the coup.

“The right-wing oligarchs favor dissemination of Monsanto seeds, while the peasantry has been demonized against it.”

Though not perfect by any means, Lugo had at least tried to fight back in some ways against Monsanto’s gradual takeover of Paraguay’s agricultural land, the vast majority of which is now owned by less than three percent of the entire population. Many of Paraguay’s family farms have been eliminated over the years and forcibly replaced with large mono-crop plantations that now grow Monsanto’s GM soy and other cash crops.

source: Natural News, 24 July 2012

Battle Over Genetically Engineered Food Heading To California Voters

California could become the first state to require labels on genetically modified, or GMO, food products. Proposition 37 promises to set up a big-money marketing campaign against multinational companies. The outcome in California could rattle the entire U.S. food chain.

An estimated 70% to 80% of processed foods sold in California could become the first state to require labels on genetically modified, or GMO, food products. Proposition 37 promises to set up a big-money marketing campaign against multinational companies. The outcome in California could rattle the entire U.S. food chain.

According to the USDA, the number of small egg producers increased 60 percent from 1997 to 2007. Hatchery business is historically best when people feel they need to be self-sufficient as during the 1973 oil crisis or the 2001 terrorist attack.

source: The Germinator, Summer, 2012

Chicken Hatcheries Booming

The boom in backyard chickens has, of course, caused a boom in business at chick hatcheries. According to the USDA, the number of small egg producers increased 60 percent from 1997 to 2007. Hatchery business is historically best when people feel they need to be self-sufficient as during the 1973 oil crisis or the 2001 terrorist attack.

source: The Germinator, Summer, 2012

High Fructose Corn Syrup is Different

High fructose corn syrup (HFCS) and white sugar are absorbed differently in the body and drinks sweetened with HFCS increase systolic blood pressure.

source: The Germinator, Summer, 2012

New Foundation Supports Sustainable and Organic Food Systems

United Natural Foods, Inc. has set up a charitable foundation to fund non-profit programs emphasizing sustainable agriculture and organic farming. It began accepting grant applications on August 1 at

source: Organic Broker, July/August, 2012
Johnny’s Selected Seeds is Now Fully Employee-Owned

Johnny’s Selected Seeds, the Albion, ME, seed company established in 1973, has announced it is now 100% employee-owned. In 2006 the company put in place a 10-year plan to transfer ownership to an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) Trust. On July 12, 2012, however, it announced that the Trust has now acquired 100% of the stock.

Monsanto Gives $4.2 Million to Kill California GMO Labeling Initiative

New campaign finance reports reveal that Monsanto Co. just contributed $4.2 million to defeat Proposition 37, which would require labeling of genetically engineered food. That is the largest contribution in the race. Total contributions to defeat Proposition 37 amount to $25 million.

Other major new contributions against Proposition 37 were given by E. I. Du Pont de Nemours ($1,273,600), Dow Agrosciences ($1,184,800) and PepsiCo ($1,126,079).

“The giant pesticide and food companies are afraid of the mothers and grandmothers who want the right to know what’s in our food,” said Stacy Malkan, media director of California Right to Know. “These companies will try to buy the election, but it won’t work. California moms and dads will prevail over Monsanto and DuPont.”

Thus far, the “Big 6” pesticide companies (Monsanto, Dow, BASF, Bayer, Syngenta and DuPont) have contributed $13.5 million to defeat Proposition 37.

Of the twenty largest contributors to the No on 37 campaign, only one (Nestle USA) is from a company based in California. And even Nestle USA is a subsidiary of the giant Swiss food conglomerate Nestle S.A.

To date, total contributions against Proposition 37 are approximately $24 million. Details of the newly reported contributions are below. source: MeltWater Press press release, August 15, 2012

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Total: $13,000,000.00

Organic Continues to Grow

Organic products made up 3% of total food sales in the US in 2008, up from 1% in 2000. They make up 4.2 percent of all food sales now. The organic food industry grew to $31.5 billion in sales in 2011, and it is continuing to grow at about 9% a year. The industry has generated more than 500,000 American jobs as of 2010. There are 17,673 organic farms and processing facilities in the US at the end of 2010. source: Organic Broadcaster, July/August, 2012 & Organic & Non-GMO Report, June, 2012 & The Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener, June-August 2012

I just wanted to say thanks for a great product that made my life easier, and to tell you some success stories that I, and others, have experienced using the new Plantskydd Granular Repellent.

A couple of years ago I had a herd of 30 whitetail deer crossing my vegetable farm...
OTA Proposes Organic Check-Off
The Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 has exempted organic products from agricultural check-off programs, but the Organic Trade Association is floating a proposal to include them as a means of getting money to support re-search into and promotion of organic production. This has caused howls from small producers who feel their interests would not be promoted under such a check-off. Historically, agricultural sectors with such check-offs do not favor small producers – witness eggs and pork. But the aggressive promo-tion of “natural” products in the marketplace have cut into organic sales and OTA members are looking for ways to respond. Stay tuned for more on this topic as it develops.


GMO Grass on Horizon
Scotts-Miracle Gro’s Roundup-Ready Kentucky Bluegrass is coming to stores soon. The seed was cleared for release in July of 2011 by the USDA, and was engineered in a way which the USDA has ruled does not make it subject to federal regulation. This is because the limited USDA power to regulate GMOs is based on the Plant Protection Act and its concern that new plants not present the potential for new ‘plant pests’. In its letter to the USDA, Scotts states that because the species is not a plant pest and no plant pests components were involved in engi-neering it, the grass is not subject to USDA over-sight. The USDA agreed. Critics wonder if other new GMO organisms will not also make the same arguments and remove themselves from USDA oversight.

source: Pesticides and You, Spring, 2012

GMO Corn Harms Soil Life
A Portland State University study published in the American Journal of Botany has found colonization of plant roots by beneficial fungi was lower in Bt corn plants than in non-GMO corn.


Roundup Linked to Deformities in Amphibians
A University of Pittsburgh professor of biological sciences has published research in Ecological Appli-cations showing that the herbicide Roundup caused two species of amphibians to alter their morphology. This highlights that pesticides can have unintended consequences for species that are not the pesticide’s target.


‘Corporate Agribusiness’ Challenged at NOSB
The Cornucopia Institute has charged that the organic label is being jeopardized by the ‘corporations that have gobbled up most of the pioneering organic businesses’ in their “shortsighted pursuit of profit.” Specifically, they allege that 2 NOSB members whose employers use a certain product (carrageenan - a family of linear sulfated polysaccharides that are extracted from red seaweeds, and have been linked to human cancer) voted for that product to be a synthetic ingredient allowed in organic production. In addition, a third, who occupies a seat reserved for a farmer, is neither an ‘owner or operator’ of a farm, as the laws requires. These three joined oth-ers to cast the crucial votes favoring carrageenan (it needed 5 votes) at the May NOSB meeting in Albuquerque, NM. They also cast crucial votes for the use of choline, inositol and other synthetic materials, according to Cornucopia.

source: The Cultivator, Summer, 2012

TNF Now Searchable Online
Twelve back issues of The Natural Farmer are now published online at http://infarchive.noafa.org/ in pdf format. These issues are fully searchable by Internet search engines, so they can be accessed by anyone typing a search engine text string which ap-pears in an article. Type “Striped cucumber beetle in the Northeast” and the TNF article on Striped Cucumber Beetles from the 2005 Summer issue is the 5th listing on Google. The work posting these 12 issues was performed by David Pontius, the NOFA webmaster, and paid for with a generous grant from the Organic Farming Research Foundation. We hope to post other searchable TNF issues should these prove useful and popular.

source: The Natural Farmer press release, August 20, 2012

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OMRI Comes to Town
by Jack Kittredge

The Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) is a non-profit organization based in Eugene, Oregon, which is recognized by the National Organic Program (NOP) to review material input products for use on organic farms. For the first time since they were formed in the 1990s, OMRI sent a representative, Doug Currier, to the NOFA Summer Conference to staff an exhibit table. I took the opportunity to interview Doug about how OMRI works, what it charges, and how an individual with an idea for a product can apply for OMRI listing.

OMRI is the best known of several organizations authorized by the NOP to review and approve products for use in organic systems. Others include the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and the California Department of Farming and Agriculture (CDFCA), as well as individual certifying organizations.

“We were created by certifiers to do input review,” Doug states. “They found that it was impossible to do the in-depth review necessary in order to know that a product was okay to use and also do the certifying of food or fiber for the output. So they look at the outputs and we look at the inputs. We publish a list of products — crop, livestock, and processing products — for growers as a way of communicating to the organic grower what is okay to use on their farms. We also communicate with certifiers who are out in the field doing inspections so they can look to see if the product being used has the OMRI seal. If so, they know it has been reviewed to the National Organic Standards and that it is okay to use on the farm.”

Currently there are no qualifications required for an organization to do such reviews, but the NOSB has just concluded recommendations to the NOP for such input review standards. The organization itself is accredited as meeting ISO 65 quality standards.

OMRI does not certify or approve products. The proper term for approval by OMRI is that a product is “OMRI Listed”. The way people and companies get a product listed is through an application process. They apply to OMRI, fill out a checklist, and give the organization a total ingredient list of what is in the product. OMRI reviews that and the manufacturing processes. This is primarily done by evaluating applications, although they perform an on-site random inspection of 1% of products for which applications have been filed.

Also, they do semi-annual inspections of manufacturers of all high-nitrogen liquid fertilizers, (3% nitrogen or over). This involves going onsite and inspecting the manufacturing facility, looking at what they are buying in, and comparing their records with what is happening on site.

“OMRI also always attends NOSB meetings,” Doug adds, “and gives public comment on proposals. We monitor the NOP and rule changes. With 21 people on staff, we have 7 technically trained people actively working on the product reviews. Each final recommendation is always voted on by a review panel and if we feel we need it we bring in experts from the organic community to help us. An example would be a reaction that happens within a product when you mix two allowed materials that might create something not allowed on the National List.”

Doug Currier, OMRI representative, was at his exhibit throughout the Summer Conference to talk to farmers and people interested in how the institute reviews organic farm inputs.
The main source of OMRI income is fees from the makers of listed products. For single ingredient products the initial review fee is $215, and for multi-ingredient products it is $700. There is also an annual renewal fee if you want to stay listed. There is also a supplier fee, ranging from $425 to $2450. This is charged per company rather than per product, and is based on the gross sales of the company. This also is higher the first year, and reduced for each year of renewal. As for the cost of inspections, for the randomly selected products there is no additional fee, but for the high nitrogen ones them it is an additional flat fee.

OMRI relies a lot on trust and in the past there have been cases of fraud associated with listed products.

“They don’t always tell us all the truth,” explains Doug. “I believe the California program is more rigorous because it goes on-site for every product. But OMRI is such a recognized name that many products stay with OMRI even though California requires their program if you are going to sell in the state.”

The organization publishes a list, the OMRI product list, which is accessible online for no cost at: http://www.omri.org/omri-lists. You can search it for particular products and it is indexed in various ways – by brand name, ingredient, etc. The online version is more up to date than the printed one because it is updated regularly.

### Table of Product Review Fees

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<th>Review Cost</th>
<th>Renewal Cost</th>
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### Table of Annual Supplier Fees

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<th>OMRI Review Fee</th>
<th>OMRI Renewal Fee</th>
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<td>$2450</td>
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consumers’ level of interest - an interest in their farm work - which, according to Pingree, is unprecedented. Pingree is one of the authors of the Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act in the Farm bill, which addresses issues such as farm credit, farm crop insurance for diversified crops, hoop houses, season extension, organics, SNAP benefits at farm stands, promotions for farm stands and markets, and support for schools that want to source locally. To date, the Senate has passed its version of the Farm Bill, which contains many of the provisions articulated by Pingree’s bill, but the House of Representatives’ version veers away from the goals of the Senate Bill. Pingree indicated that the bill may go to conference, where the two legislative entities work out their bill versions. However, she believes that the Farm Bill may not come together until the lame duck session, after the election in November.

Pingree left the audience with a great sense of hope that Congress and the American public are going in the right direction. “We see the convergence of a trend. Markets and consumers are saying ‘I want to start eating healthier food. I want to look the farmer in the eye and say ‘what’s in this stuff I’m about to eat?’” Indeed, the NOFA Summer Conference success each year is in large part due to people’s thirst for knowledge. Food is no longer a trivial part of people’s lives. Farmers are no longer alone in their concerns for the food system. They are now supported by a strong network of consumers and activists who respect them, advocate for them, and collaborate in building healthy communities.

Friday night also saw the presentation of the NOFA Person of the Year. The 2012 winner was Liana Hoodes, a New York member who is active in organic policy work in Washington DC. She had this to say: “I would like to thank all of NOFA for the “Person of the Year” award you gave to me at the Summer Conference. I want you to know that when D.C./federal policy work becomes unfathomable and downright discouraging, I renew my inspiration from the work that you all are doing to advance true organic, ecological food and farming systems—thank you!

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Many Americans, if not most of us, had significant losses in the financial crash of the last five years – some in the form of retirement savings, some as housing equity, some as jobs themselves. This has left many of us with distrust for a Wall Street that seemed to be more interested in speculation – generating questionable paper value and then betting on its future – than in its textbook function of directing capital to productive uses. At the same time there has been a growth of interest in building small businesses, often with a food, agriculture, or other natural resource base. Finding that capital for such enterprises is not easily available through normal channels, especially after the credit squeeze of the last few years, alternative models such as cooperatives, local non-profit investment funds, pooling of small donations, direct public offerings (DPOs) which make shares available to the public without traditional Wall Street underwriting, and even local stock exchanges are being tried.

This book is a good introduction to their story. Amy makes a strong case for the importance of small business. Firms with fewer than 500 employees make up 99% of all US companies, she says, and these 27.5 million businesses generate 50% of private GDP, or about $5.5 trillion annually. In this time of high unemployment it is also of interest that the smallest of these, firms with fewer than 20 employees, between 1990 and 2003 generated 80% of net new US jobs!

Amy proceeds logically, first explaining the importance of small and local enterprises, and how the US financial system is not designed to serve them well, and then exploring how we might, and in some situations have already been able to, find creative ways to meet their needs for capital.

The first chapters of the book explore local and small businesses and how the national tax, finance, and subsidy institutions fail them. One calculation based on NASDAQ data, for instance, suggests that of the trillions of dollars that flow through our stock markets, about 1 percent goes to actually funding companies through initial and secondary offerings enabling them to innovate or expand. The rest involves trading shares among buyers – not an unprofitable enterprise, but not directly funding business growth either.

In another example, while the federal government provides much assistance. When it comes to taxes, although the official US corporate tax rate is 35%, a quarter of the country’s largest businesses paid no federal income taxes in 2005 despite $1.1 trillion in gross sales. Despite this kind of regulation, Cortese finds, many efforts to bring financing to local activities are thriving. The second half of the book is devoted to telling these stories. Many Americans are moving their money from large national banks to community banks and credit unions, which tend to invest locally. Community Development Loan Funds are specialized institutions that borrow at fixed rates from local lenders and lend for community businesses, housing, and consumer finance that banks have turned down. Royalty financing pays a fixed percentage of revenue each month to investors until the initial investment plus a negotiated multiple is

If you have less, you need SEC protection and can select only from publicly traded, registered securities and must avoid many small private ventures deemed to risky for amateurs. To no one’s surprise, it takes hours of work and thousands of dollars to meet SEC registration and reporting requirements, a threshold beyond most small businesses. So most of us are excluded from investing in these small, local enterprises.

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the natural farmer

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Peter Bane has edited and published the Permaculture Handbook: Garden Farming for Town and Country by Peter Bane published by New Society Publishers, 2012 $44.95, paperback, 464 pages

review by Jack Kittredge

Peter Bane has edited and published the Permaculture Activist magazine for over 20 years, as well as being active in teaching and consulting on permaculture design. This large book, after some initial discussion of scale, devotes 80 pages to general permaculture principles and perspectives, and then creative design to natural systems to meet human needs sustainably. In simpler language, it is using common sense to live in harmony with nature. Aboriginal cultures were the first students of permaculture, you might say. If they ignored its principles, they didn’t survive. But how do you tell modern people how to do that? Many of us are too far removed from the natural world to easily relate to it. So we use words to try to teach. But there is far more to understand than we can list, so we categorize and become more and more abstract and end up sounding like Kant or Hegel. All said and done, Bane does a good job trying. But it is a struggle.

In the chapter on the Bloomington, Indiana, case Bane tells of the improvements he and his partner made to their ¾ acre homestead, fixing up the cellar. None of this is too remarkable. Many NOFA permaculturists are so opposed to tillage. This gets a little dense, so follow closely.

In the chapter on Bloomington, Indiana, case Bane follows this history with four chapters that peel away toward understanding it.

As the above all-too-brief review suggests, local investing is right now an incredibly fruitful area. Amy Cortese has written a useful primer to get you well started toward understanding it.

Bane is writing primarily for folks who do not have large acreages of agricultural land, yet hanker to build soils and appropriate growing areas for their crops, and seeds. Again, these are well thought-out products. It would be an interesting place to visit!

In the Colorado case, Bane focuses on a difficult site – elevation of 7200 feet, rainfall of only 17 inches a year, little soil. Yet it seems the owner has built a small Eden of fruit, greens, tomatoes, herbs and flowers. He uses microclimates, small ponds, greenhouses and legumes judiciously to build soils and appropriate growing areas for his products. It would be an interesting place to visit!

The chapters that follow deal with soils, plants, crops, and seeds. Again, these are well thought-out and introduce in thoughtfully applied ways some of the more general thinking Bane is concerned with. I was particularly interested in his explanation of why permaculturists are so opposed to tillage. This gets a little dense, so follow closely.

The oxygen-ethylene cycle

In a state of nature soil is never bare but is always covered with plant matter, and is also not compacted. Only 0.3% of our population derives her two million inhabitants consume on the 35,000 productive of soil. It would be an interesting place to visit!

Bane has charted a possible annual diet for a person, providing about 2800 calories a day, and how much land is required to produce it.

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continued from page A-16

This occurs when there is excess nitrogen in an area – a tree that had been taking it up dies, or a big thing is rotting and makes surplus nitrogen available, or man applies it as fertilizer. In these cases other soil bacteria (nitro-bacteria) convert the extra nitrogen into nitrate, which can be lost to the atmosphere or dissolve and flow elsewhere in solution.

As aerobic bacteria in an area thrive and use up oxygen, however, oxygen levels drop and two things happen. First, some aerobic bacteria fall back asleep and anaerobic bacteria become more active. Second, ferrous iron (Fe++) which is the red or rusty form prevalent in virtually all soils changes its valence and transforms into black or ‘reduced’ ferrous iron (Fe++). This often results in the release of an oxygen atom from a molecule in which it combined with iron, and enables the iron to form new and different compounds. This is the important change that initiates the assimilation phase of soil nutrient transfer to plants.

One result of this process is that ferrous iron reacts with precursors found in organic matter to release oxygen, however, oxygen levels drop and two things happen. First, some aerobic bacteria fall back asleep and anaerobic bacteria become more active. Second, ferrous iron (Fe++) which is the red or rusty form prevalent in virtually all soils changes its valence and transforms into black or ‘reduced’ ferrous iron (Fe++). This often results in the release of an oxygen atom from a molecule in which it combined with iron, and enables the iron to form new and different compounds. This is the important change that initiates the assimilation phase of soil nutrient transfer to plants.

Thus as soil microsite conditions change from aerobic to anaerobic, the plant nutrients – nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, calcium, magnesium and trace minerals, which had been tightly held in chemical bonds to iron or soil particles – enter into solution and can be taken up by plant roots. This does not occur when the soil is constantly aerobic, as when it is regularly tilled, nor when there is excess nitrogen present, as when chemical fertilizer is applied. In this latter case, some of the ferrous iron is reoxidized.

This entire process is cyclic, rocking back and forth but never quite stabilizing, at millions of microsites throughout a healthy soil.

I could go on and on about this book, pulling nuggets of interest from it. There is a section on animals, for instance, which would be excellent reading for anyone considering adding a few to a homestead. Species, feed, noise, pasture, housing, fencing and other aspects of care are discussed. The 2 chapters on trees (integrating them in the homestead is always central to permaculture) are thoughtful and contain many creative ideas, as does the chapter on structures and energy. Chapters on food, community, markets, and actually adopting this lifestyle end the book. Three appendices (a short one on metric conversion, an extensive one on bee forage, and a short one on nitrogen and biomass producing plants) end the book except for notes and the index.

My quibbles with the book – the font is thin and hard to read for older eyes, occasional illustrations (such as the graph on page 12 comparing recent oil consumption and production) are poorly labeled and confusing, and it focuses too much for me on small holdings while neglecting larger commercial operations – are just that. For it’s purpose, you won’t go wrong getting it from your library and settling down for a pleasant winter week of reading. I suggest the library because the price is a lot for many struggling homesteaders, but we all have a library looking for acquisition suggestions. I’m sure the publisher and the author both would appreciate a good word from you to your local librarian.


The fourth and latest edition of this beekeeping classic shows that even in a domain as studied as the honey bee, the latest research renews our interest and better the art and craft of keeping honey bees. In 1978 the first edition of this book was meant for beginners. Yet today, expanded and using the latest information, it will satisfy many seasoned beekeepers and challenge them to look at their craft in new ways.

The book now opens with a very attractive ‘fun bee facts’ page (inner front cover) on flight, consumption: one milligram, or 3.53 x 10^-10 of a pound, nectar collection, the queen: the queen larvae grows to be 1600 time the weight of its original egg, pollen and nectar collection. And then there are less fun facts on bee stings!! Who really needs to know there are 190,000 bee stings in an ounce of venom, eh?

The foreword of the first edition 35 years ago strikes with words about the renewed interest of producing our own food. “…more people have been caught up in what I think is a very commendable trend… work in a garden… produce their own vegetables… their own milk…their very own delicious honey.” “This is part of a yearning to do something that brings us closer to nature, …to experience the thrill of producing something from the earth…an interest in preserving the many wild, beautiful, natural aspects of our environment, a feeling that these things are important if we are to maintain our world as a place worth living.” Sound familiar? That was after all the 70’s and the back-to-the-land movement. Are 2010’s buzzwords – locavore, sustainable – and trends (more farms, women in agriculture, urban food production, local sourcing) evidence in a different form of the famous pendulum effect?

Now in the 21st century and with new tools, new research, our knowledge of bees has jumped in leap and bounds. New pests, diseases, and parasites are plaguing the bees. This is well covered in 2 different chapters. The updates on mites, viruses, new strains plaguing the bees. This is well covered in 2 different chapters. The updates on mites, viruses, new strains plaguing the bees.

And so the newer version of The Beekeeper’s Handbook is greatly improved. 130 pages in the first version have become over 300 pages in 2011. Chapters have been expanded and divided: 12 chapters have developed into 15: ‘General seasonal management’ is now under more specific ‘Winter/spring’ and...
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Summer/fall management. In chapter 1, for example, ‘understanding bees’, taxonomy, social structure of the colony (what makes honey bees one of the few social insects), races, anatomy, life stages, and castes show how thorough this edition is.

It also responds better to the demand from beekeepers, especially the generation that has started with honey bees in the last few years. More beekeepers want to produce their own stock of locally-adapted queens with diversified genetics rather than relying on outsourcing mal-adapted bees. Attention is given in a separate chapter on queen rearing. A lot more
This Life is in Your Hands, One Dream, Sixty Acres, and a Family Undone by Melissa Coleman.

This is a beautifully written book by the daughter of organic farming pioneer, Eliot Coleman. Melissa Coleman, by telling her childhood story, provides a portrait of family life on an organic farm in the 1970’s, decades before the mainstreaming of organic farms. Her parents were part of the back-to-the-land movement inspired by Helen and Scott Nearing, authors of Living the Good Life. TheColemans followed the philosophy of the Nearings, even when they purchased a section of land in Maine from the famous homesteaders.

In the organic community Eliot Coleman has become well known as an accomplished organic farmer for his soil building techniques and especially for his books on heirloom crops and harvest vegetables all year long. His most recent title is The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year Round Vegetable Production Using Deep Organic Techniques and Unheated Greenhouses. NOFA-NJ can look forward to learning from Eliot Coleman as a keynote speaker from the winter conference in January 2013.

For a book that begins before her birth, Melissa Coleman had to do considerable historical research on her family. She often quotes from her mother’s journal and uses newspapers articles and interviews. Interestingly in the first chapter she describes her homebirth in detail. Dr. Eva Reich, who lived near by on an organic farm, served as the midwife. Eva’s father, Dr. Wilhelm Reich, was the natural scientist from Orgonon in Rangely, Maine is described in a biographical note and in the context of Eva’s gentle healing work with children. The author, in publishing accurate information about Wilhelm Reich, demonstrates a capacity for serious scholarship.

Young people turning to organic farming today often receive meaningful support from university extension services in ways that were once unimaginable. Consequently this new generation may lack an appreciation for the challenges of the organic movement before there was a USDA Organic Program. On this point valuable information is provided about how her father wanted to see organic farming taken seriously. The author quotes from media interviews with Eliot Coleman. “The scorn in which organic agriculture is held by the University of Maine and by the Extension Service is something which should be changed,” he told a reporter for the local paper. “The attitude probably isn’t based on malice but on misinformation. The organic idea has been presented in a naïve sectarian way, and I think we need to understand the reaction of the professionals but can’t condone it because they are not fulfilling their hired role to be investigators instead of front men. They should be the first to say, “Let’s look into it.” Instead they are the first to poo-poo it.”

In 1971 a front page story in the Wall Street Journal would lead to a transforming experience for the Coleman family. Eliot and Barbara Coleman are described in an article by David Gumpert generated an unprecedented number of letters to the editor. (Gumpert, has long been an important writer on alternative agriculture and food rights. He recently authored The Raw Milk Revolution and has been a speaker at several NOFA conferences). The efforts of this journalist focused national attention on the Coleman’s struggling organic farm in rural Maine. As more people learned about the farm’s vegetable stand the farm became more profitable. The farm became a popular destination for people interested in organic farming. The Wall Street Journal also served to spur on the burgeoning bee-keeping movement.

The Coleman’s farm became a haven for young people and interns wanting to learn about organic farming.

Husbands is essential to successful organic farming. The great responsibilities of caretaking and husbandry are threads running through a book that is true to its title. From crop failures to family dysfunctions, This Life is in Your Hands explores the personal challenges of family life and organic farming in an earlier time.
The Natural Farmer

Saturday, September 22: A Food Preservation Party, Barre, MA. For more info: 413-658-5374.

Saturday, September 22: Transitioning To Organic And High Tunnel Operations, Pulaski, NY. For more info: www.nofafy.org

Saturday, September 22: Fight the Frost! Fall Urban Gardening Series, Brookline, for more info: Drew Love, drew@nofamass.org.

Wednesday, October 3: Urban Chicken Keeping Workshop, Somerville, for more info: Drew Love, drew@nofamass.org.

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You may join NOFA by joining one of the seven state chapters. Contact the person listed below for your state. Dues, which help pay for the important work of the organization, vary from chapter to chapter. Unless noted, membership includes a subscription to The Natural Farmer.

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Massachusetts: Low-Income $25, Individual $40, Family/Farm/Organization $50, Large Farm/Business $75, Premier Business $125, Supporting $250, Lifetime $1,000
Contact: NOFA/Mass, 411 Sheldon Road, Barre, MA 01005, (978) 355-2853, or drew@nofamass.org or join on the web at www.nofamass.org

Contact: NOFA-NH, 4 Park Street, Suite 208, Concord, NH 03301, Phone: (603) 224-3022, Fax: (603) 226-6492, email: info@nofanh.org, website: www.nofanh.org

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