by Ben Grosscup, Conference Coordinator

The first NOFA Summer Conference was held in 1975, and 2014 will bring the 40th one. We will be celebrating with an exciting program of workshops, pre-conferences, and a keynote designed to empower participants with the knowledge needed to transform their local food systems for the better and to transition this world toward organic.

For the 2014 NOFA Summer Conference, we’re condensing the main conference from three to two days: Saturday and Sunday, August 9-10, 2014. We’ll still have eight total workshop slots by adding a workshop slot from 3-4:30 p.m. on both days, making a total of four workshop slots per day. Friday, August 8 will be reserved for full day and half day pre-conferences.

One of those full day pre-conferences will be presented by our keynoter for this year, Dr. Elaine Ingham. Dr. Ingham may be best known as the President of Soil Foodweb Inc. Her teaching has equipped farmers and land care professionals all over the world to work with the knowledge to manage soil for best plant growth and nutrition.

Further details are forthcoming on what Dr. Ingham will present. But the pre-conference will be called “Changing Dirt into Soil: Specific Approaches for Different Soil Types and Crops.” She will also present breakout sessions on Saturday, August 9 focusing on biologically managing weeds, on compost versus extract versus tea, and a demo of microscope assessment that anyone can learn to do themselves.

Call for Workshops

Every year the NOFA Summer Conference recruits creative and enthusiastic presenters for workshops for adults, teens, and children.

The conference features workshops for adults on a full range of topics connected to organic agriculture, ecological sustainability, and community building. If you would like to submit a workshop proposal contact: Ben Grosscup at ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or call at 413-549-1568, or visit the website at www.nofasummerconference.org.

There will be a Children’s Conference (ages 2 - 12) and a Teen Conference (ages 13 - 17), which explore many themes in common with the adult workshops in a manner that is appropriate for each age. If you want to submit a proposal for either Conference, contact Valerie Walton at aallspice@aol.com; (978) 689-0716.

The vast majority of decisions on accepting workshops will be made by the end of February 2014.

All workshop presenters receive free conference registration and a $50 honorarium for presenting a 90 minute workshop.

Interested in Sponsoring?

If you want to sponsor or advertise your business and gain excellent exposure for your products and services, including a logo and website link placement on the NOFA Summer Conference website, see this link to last summer’s sponsors: http://www.nofasummerconference.org/sponsors.php.

Larger level sponsors also receive exhibit space and registration. Businesses and farms are also welcomed to simply exhibit and advertise in the Program Book. For more information, contact Bob Minnocci: bob@nofamass.org or 617-236-4893.

40th Annual NOFA Summer Conference
Set for Aug. 9-10, 2014 UMass Amherst

Dr. Elaine Ingham to Keynote

The Dr. Elaine Ingham will keynote the 2014 Summer Conference on Saturday night, Aug. 9

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Letters to the Editor

To the editor: While my husband spent 2 hours in the eye doctor's in upstate NY this AM I kept my rescue dog company and read nearly your entire articles on food preservation. It was marvelous to say the least. I have been canning since I was 5 years old but learned much from your well-written articles. The amount of work you put into those articles was amazing and humbling so you have a big Thank You from me. My husband and I used to attend the NOFA meetings many years ago, but things change and while we occasionally go to the Common Ground Fair we haven't been there in several years. Even though we are New Yorkers (way upstate) we laud all you New Englanders and to the Common Ground Fair we haven't been there for a while. We wrote letters, made phone calls, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond group from my church worked hard on that both this year and last year. We wrote letters, made phone called, signed petitions, made signs and marched with the Wendell-Rosemond...
Underground Farm for Sale

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News Notes

(continued from page B1)
exemptions were required by law to expire, known as “sunset,” unless they were reinstated by a two-thirds “decisive” majority vote of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), which would include a public review. This is no longer the case.

Under the new policy, an exempt material could be permitted indefinitely unless a two-thirds majority of the NOSB votes to remove it from the list.

The new policy allows USDA to re-list exemptions for synthetic materials without the recommendation of the independent board and outside of public view, as required by current law.

source: September 17 press release by Consumers Union, Food and Water Watch, Beyond Pesticides and the Center for Food Safety.

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Researcher Who Questioned Syngenta Herbicide’s Safety Loses Lab Financing

The University of California at Berkeley cut laboratory financing in August for a professor who has complained for years about corporate-led retaliation for his association of health risks with a widely used herbicide. “We’re dead in the water,” Tyrone B. Hayes, a professor of integrative biology, said Tuesday after being told by his department chairman that the account containing his laboratory funds—needed to pay for basic functional operations, such as the care of test animals—had been frozen.

The chairman, John P. Huelsenbeck, confirmed that Mr. Hayes has had his research activities “paused,” though he said he couldn’t provide details, and a university spokesman said he was unaware of any formal punitive action. The episode marks the latest chapter in a long-running saga dating back to 1999, when Mr. Hayes, working on a contract for Syngenta, found the company’s herbicide atrazine might be inhibiting the sexual development of male frogs.

An article published in June by Environmental Health News cited company documents as showing that Syngenta spent several years and millions of dollars on a campaign to discredit Mr. Hayes and other scientists involved in the matter. The article says the company’s efforts included contacting Duke University, which shortly afterward withdrew a job offer to Mr. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes said he believes some Berkeley officials, including Graham R. Fleming, vice chancellor for research, may have joined in efforts to penalize him out of a desire to protect a $25-million, five-year research agreement between Berkeley and Novartis, a parent company of Syngenta.

Oregon Governor Signs Moratorium on Canola Production

Governor John Kitzhaber has signed into law a bill banning commercial production of canola (rapeseed) until 2019 inside the three million acre Willamette Valley Protected District, one of the world’s pre-eminent vegetable seed producing regions. Center for Food Safety (CFS) had sued the Oregon Department of Agriculture after seed and or-
ganic vegetable farmers objected to a controversial decision to permit canola production in the Willamette Valley. In court filings, Center for Food Safety argued that canola readily cross-pollinates with brassica specialty seed crops like broccoli, kale, and cabbage; spreads plant diseases and pests to brassica vegetable and seed crops; and can contaminate pure lots of vegetable and clover seed, rendering them unsalable in international and local markets. The vast majority of canola is genetically engineered, which contaminates organic and conventional varieties, as well as cross-pollinates with weeds, creating new invasive species problems, as herbicide resistant traits spread to native weed populations.

The new law overturns an unlawful rule adopted by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) in February 2013 that would have allowed thousands of acres of industrial canola to be planted over the next decade in a region where production of the plant for its seed has long been banned.

source: Center for Food Safety press release, August 15, 2013

APHIS Approves Bayer Soybean Resistant to Glyphosate, Isoxaflutole

The United States Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in August granted non-regulated status to a new line of soybean, FG72, engineered by Bayer CropScience. The soybean is resistant to the herbicides glyphosate and isoxaflutole. The decision clears the way for the sale and use of the crop in the U.S. Isoxaflutole, which is a restricted-use pesticide registered for use on corn, is identified as a probable human carcinogen on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)’s website. APHIS stated that its determination was based on a review of field and laboratory data submitted by Bayer, studies referenced by Bayer, peer-reviewed publications, and other relevant information. Its determination was also issued despite numerous complaints filed by environmental groups. Bill Freese, a science policy analyst at the Center for Food Safety, said approval of the FG72 soybean would likely lead to a significant increase in the use of isoxaflutole in the U.S. "We are poised to dramatically increase use of a probable human carcinogen," he said, adding that the herbicide is toxic to aquatic organisms and non-target plants.

APHIS, in a document addressing comments, said the general use of herbicides is "outside the scope" of its environmental assessment of the soybean, and acknowledged that approval would result in an increase in isoxaflutole use.

day: Bloomberg BNA Daily Environment Report (22 Aug 2013)
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Hawaii’s Kaua’i Puts People Over Pesticide and Biotech Industry.

The Kaua’i County Council in Hawaii passed a law that would create a new system to protect the public from pesticide exposure and assess the risks stemming from the use of pesticides and the cultivation of genetically engineered (GE) crops. Bill 2491 requires the largest biotech companies to report and publicly disclose the pesticides and GE crops used on the island. The bill prohibits all pesticide use near schools, medical facilities, parks, and waterways that flow into the ocean, and calls for the County to prepare a detailed analysis of the numerous environmental and health impacts of pesticides and GE crops. The victory comes despite intense pressure from the agricultural biotechnology and pesticide industry, which has considerable power on the island, as well as attempts to water down the bill from some state officials.

source: Center for Food Safety press release, August 15, 2013

Disruption of Gut Microbiome in Americans is Result of National Food Policy

There is growing evidence that compromised, imbalanced gut flora, resulting from a combination of environmental toxins, genetically modified food, overuse of antibiotics, and chronic stress has a strong link to increasing incidence of disorders like autism, Alzheimers, and multiple sclerosis.

In a recent study, researchers using high-tech DNA analysis found significantly fewer kinds of intestinal bacteria in children with autism. Implications of this and other research “has triggered support of the National Institute of Health for a human microbiome mapping project similar to the human genome project” notes Autism Speaks senior director of environmental and clinical sciences, Alycia Halladay. The project will pave the way to understanding a complex, symbiotic relationship with a population of cells within us, but not us. Called the “forgotten digestive organ” in a 2006 medical study by the National University of Ireland, gut flora consists of a population of 100 billion bacteria from 2,000 different species inhabiting the mucosal lining of the digestive tract. It is essential for human function. Some scientists refer to this world within a world as an “extended self”, detoxifying, providing immunity, and enabling digestion of nutrients essential to life. Pesticides and herbicides – residual in soil, produce, and groundwater – are deadly to gut microfauna and flora. They upset the balance of the microbiome environment, allowing some microbes to flourish, resulting in disorders like autism, Alzheimer’s, and multiple sclerosis.

source: Center for Food Safety press release, August 15, 2013

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No scientific consensus on GMO safety

A group of over 90 scientists, physicians, academics, and experts from disciplines relevant to the scientific, legal, social and safety assessment aspects of genetically modified organisms has released a statement that they ‘strongly reject claims by GM seed developers and some scientists, commentators, and journalists that there is a “scientific consensus” on GMO safety and that the debate on this topic is “over”. The statement made the following points:

1. There is no consensus on GM food safety
2. There are no epidemiological studies investigating potential effects of GM food consumption on human health
3. Claims that scientific and governmental bodies endorse GMO safety are exaggerated or inaccurate
4. An EU research project does not provide reliable evidence of GM food safety
5. A list of several hundred studies does not show GM food safety
6. There is no consensus on the environmental risks of GM crops
7. International agreements show widespread recognition of risks posed by GM foods and crops

source: October 21 press release by the European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility

Recycled Sewage Water for Irrigation? Not if You Mind Pharmaceuticals!

A field study of the use of recycled sewage water for irrigation has found low levels of pharmaceuticals and personal care products in crops. The U.S. recycles about 2 or 3 percent of its sewage water this way, but some desert countries like Israel recycle 80 percent of their effluent this way, resulting in toxicity, cell death, and consequences of inflammation and impaired immune function. Pesticide amounts regulated to be safe for human consumption by the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are more than enough to create die-off of delicate intestinal flora.

source: http://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/11/10-1#.Un-6BcS7QcQ.twitter

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source: http://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/11/10-1#.Un-6BcS7QcQ.twitter
Organic Builds Soil, Sequesters Carbon
A long term study at Iowa State has found that, properly managed, an organic farm can reach equal yields, higher returns, and better soil quality than conventional ones. The study looked at three- and four-year rotations of corn, beans, oats and alfalfa. The organic crops fetched about $200 more per acre than the conventional over the 13 years of the study.

source: The Organic and Non-GMO Report, July/August 2013

Australian Study: Pigs Fed GMO Corn Had Inflamed Stomachs
Female pigs fed genetically modified corn had, on average, a 25% heavier uterus and markedly higher stomach inflammation. The study, by researchers at Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia, was published in the peer-reviewed “Journal of Organic Systems”. It involved 168 newly-weaned pigs, lasted more than 5 months and was conducted in the U.S.

source: The Organic and Non-GMO Report, July/August 2013

Farmers in Countries with GMO Seeds Have Fewer Seed Choices
A study published in “Environmental Sciences Europe” has found that seed choices dwindle in countries where GMO seeds are grown. Researchers found that in European countries where GMOs have not been grown more corn seed varieties are available to farmers today than they had in the 1990s. Where GMO corn is grown (primarily Spain) farmers experienced a decline in the total number of corn varieties available.

source: The Organic and Non-GMO Report, July/August 2013

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Syngenta's GMO Ethanol Corn a Threat to Corn

Maryland City Ordinance Restricts Cosmetic Lawn Pesticides on Private Property

Syngenta has developed a GM corn (“Enogen”) that contains high levels of a heat-resistant enzyme which breaks corn starches into sugars to ease the conversion into ethanol. The trouble is, grain dealers say, that if Enogen mixes with corn grown for food it will break down those starches in the city of 17,000. This is the first time a local municipality of any size has used its authority to ban pesticide use on private property. The City Council acted unanimously to protect the health and welfare of residents.

source: Pesticides and You, Summer, 2013

Syngenta’s GMO Ethanol Corn a Threat to Corn

About 40% of US corn production goes to make ethanol. Now Syngenta has developed a GM corn (“Enogen”) which cost millions to settle. One kernal of Liberty Link Rice in 2006 as examples of contamination which is used for milling.

Enogen was approved by the USDA in 2011, and is grown under a closed production system designed to minimize the chance of contamination. But industry observers point to the StarLink debacle in 2000 and observers say that if Enogen mixes with corn grown for food it will break down those starches as well, making the corn unsuitable for milling. Enogen is used under a closed production system designed to minimize the chance of contamination. But industry observers point to the StarLink debacle in 2000 and observers say that if Enogen mixes with corn grown for food it will break down those starches as well, making the corn unsuitable for milling. Enogen was approved by the USDA in 2011, and is grown under a closed production system designed to minimize the chance of contamination.

source: The Organic and Non-GMO Report, October, 2013

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Peter Ruegemer

“... aids in prevention... and higher quality milk.

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Windishill Dairy, owned by Sara’s parents Peter and Anita Ruegemer, has been certified organic since 2006. Their 136 cows are milked robotically with special gates for all day pasture access. The Ruegemers say Udder Comfort’s yellow spray is a valuable tool for cow comfort and milk quality, and easy to do on a robotic dairy. Sara sets the robot to identify high conductivity milk and to ‘catch’ those cows, and the fresh cows, from 2:00 to 8:00 a.m., so they are ready for her to spray udders in the morning.

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“With the swelling gone, their quarters milk out easier, which in turn aids in mastitis prevention and production of higher quality milk.”

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Peter and Anita Ruegemer with daughters, Sara (left), Jessica, Rachel (front) and son Nathan. Not pictured are daughter Melissa and sons Jeremy and Jason and Jason’s wife Beth and their three boys Luke, Shawn and Caleb.

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The Organic Grain Grower
by Jack Lazor
published by Chelsea Green, www.chelseagreen.com
copyright 2012, 448 pages, $45.00 hardcover
reviewed by Klaas Martens

Jack Lazor is a born farmer. Despite beginning life in a very non-farming environment, he followed his calling and found his way back to the land on a small farm in Northern Vermont. In this book, Jack takes us with him on his journey of adventure and discovery as he retraces this history, and describes how it has shaped the future of the land where he and Anne have made their home.

He shares his experiences with each new crop that he learned to grow. The frustrations and setbacks he encountered in planting, harvesting, storing and using his crops were the lessons that made him competent and successful. He conveys the joy and satisfaction that his crops were the lessons that made him competent and successful.

The knowledge he passes on in each chapter is relevant and successful. He conveys the joy and satisfaction that his crops were the lessons that made him competent and successful. He conveys the joy and satisfaction that his crops were the lessons that made him competent and successful.

I feel privileged to have shared some small parts of his journey with Jack and to have had many of my own farming experiences be very much like those he describes in this book. What is especially real about his story is the wonderfully described process of passing skills and knowledge from person to person, and from one generation to the next.

Through millennia this process of passing on the culture and craft of producing food has sustained civilizations and shaped history. We can look at history and see how improved agricultural production methods have often changed the course of history.

A new era in American agriculture has begun.

“The Organic Grain Grower” tells part of that story through the experiences of one of its pioneers.

Gaining Ground
by Forrest Pritchard
Lyons Press, 2013
Paperback, 288 pages, $17.95
reviewed by Janet B. Wilkinson

Gaining Ground is about the author and his family’s journey of “saving the family farm”. The book is filled with vividly written anecdotes of the real-life lessons learned on the job, from “getting treed” by an overgrown hog, to documenting the frustrating search for a dependable, trustworthy local butcher. He incorporates lots of familiar practices and philosophies for modern day small, sustainable farms that are reminiscent of his mentor, Joel Salatin (who wrote the introduction).

Pritchard has a goofy and often self-deprecating sense of humor that adds a lightness to the subject matter.

There are several thought provoking themes that knit together this story:

Can small, sustainable family farms be viable? The story takes place on a huge, fertile plot of Shenandoah farmland that has been in the author’s family for over a hundred years. This story starts in the mid-60’s, with the farmland suffering from drought and decades of mismanagement by subcontracted farmers. The family was in debt and the farm was losing money. Pritchard took a risk and pulled the farm out of the now-normal model of selling its products to huge wholesale corporations. He wanted to farm the land himself, and he wanted to transition the products to being sustainably grown and locally sold. The book is about the process of doing that.

How does a family deal with the challenges of running a family farm? The author’s spouse, sister and parents are all part of the business. He details the many challenges inherent in a true family farm, including conflicts of personalities, balancing of finances and ensuring that each member has a rewarding and motivating niche in the business.

The strongest theme is the author’s relationship with his father, which takes a heart wrenching turn towards the end of the book.

How does one toe the line of practicality vs. idealism on small farms? The author constantly challenges norms...
To organic farmers everywhere for treating their animals and earth with care and treating us with some of the finest organic ingredients around, thanks.
400 Years of Log Fences
by Eugene L. Fytche
Copies available for $15.00 plus $6 shipping (U.S.) and $3 (Canada).
Eugene L. Fytche, R. R. #1, Almonte, ON Canada
K0A 1A0, efytche@xplornet.com
reviewed by Kathy Morris

In only 79 pages Eugene Fytche describes the history of log fences (and fencing in general), the different types of log fences, how to build each type, and the future of log fencing. He first became interested in log fences when he purchased a farm in Eastern Ontario to raise sheep. This area of Canada still contains miles and miles of wooden log fences, and the author had five different types of log and split rail fences on his farm. When he went looking for a book that would describe the different types and how to repair them, he found a book published in 1876 but nothing since that gave him the information he wanted and needed. Thus began his search and research on the different types of wooden fences of which he has built many.

The first section of the book describes the settling of Eastern Ontario by transplants from the colonies who wanted to remain under British rule and who brought their knowledge of fences into an area where the rotting wood from the trees had heave - and thus had to be removed to cultivate the land - and where it would have been built, and an explanation of the details, advantages, and disadvantages of the fence. All the fences in the book are found in his area of Ontario but he also points out where else these fences were and are built.

The second section of the book is the “How to” section where he describes exactly how to construct each fence including a listing of the materials needed, step-by-step directions on how to put the fence together, and other helpful hints. Each type of fence also has a diagram of the construction details to further enhance the directions.

The fourth section of the book is called “The Summing Up” in which the author adds further information about the 14 designs described in the book and talks about the future of the log fence. In his area there is a resurgence of interest in the log fence (think “green”) and also a desire to repair and keep the existing fences and even build new log fences. He tells of his hope that people will document the fences that exist and keep the skills alive to preserve the heritage of log fences.

The book has a list of references for those interested in further information on fences and their history.

This book is obviously a labor of love and an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the history of fences and the construction of wood fences (remember log fences were in New England and stone walls only came later after all the land had been cleared and the stones had time to work their way to the top of the soil - think frost heave - and thus had to be removed to cultivate the land - there are several good books on stone walls). There is a lot of information in these 79 pages and this book may be of interest even if you never intend on building a single piece of a log fence. Copies of the book are available from the author.

Keeping a Family Cow: The Complete Guide for Home-Scale, Holistic Dairy Producers by Joann S. Grohman
reviewed by Suzi Konecky

It is clear that Grohman honors and respects dairy cows, but also depicts them with a healthy dose of realism and practicality. In the preface she shares, “Right now is the moment to abandon the fiction that cows are high on the food chain. The only things that live lower on the food chain than cows and cattlepers are bacteria.” She talks straight with the reader and presents her thoughts in a straightforward and approachable manner. She keeps the book fast-paced, moving steadily along from one topic to the next and touching on even the small or esoteric topics such as stray-voltage, eating weeds, and dealing with predators. However, she does spend time on the profitable ones further afoot in metropolitan Washington, and buy hay in instead. Another was to leave the making hay on the farm, sell all of the large equipment, and buy hay in instead. Yet, he refuses to take the next logical step of selling profitable ones further afoot in metropolitan Washington, and buy hay in instead. Another was to leave the making hay on the farm, sell all of the large equipment, and buy hay in instead. Yet, he refuses to take the next logical step of selling

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Federal Crop Insurance Programs are administered by the USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA)
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viewpoint is informative and intriguing. One can view this book as a manual for keeping a cow, or equally as an engaging book to sit down with on a pleasant weekend. It is adaptable in more than one way, with a better understanding of all that is involved in these complex creatures who so willingly give us their milk.

More and more, those who are interested in where their food was raised are also interested in how their food was raised. The study and understanding of food production are. This book is relevant to the person interested in raising a family cow, but also to those who are simply curious about how animals are kept in order to move from keeping a cow to being productive. Let this be the book that inspires you to take the leap into homesteading, or from homesteading to small-scale commercial production. It is packed with almost all the information that you’ll need to know and directs you where to find the rest. Even the city dweller who keeps a backyard cow would find some pearls of wisdom in this book — but be warned, you might finish the book scheming about how to convert your small patch of sidewalk to pasture so that you too can keep one of these magical beings.

The Sugarmaker’s Companion: An Integrated Approach to Producing Syrup from Maple, Birch, and Walnut Trees

By Michael Farrell

Published by Chelsea Green Publishing, 2013, www.chelseagreen.com

review by Maryellen Sheehan

Michael Farrell’s general overview of sugaring in The Sugarmaker’s Companion clearly shares his enthusiasm for making syrup from a range of tree species. While the focus is toward small-scale commercial production, Farrell also writes for new or potential sugarmakers under the assumption that if you get started on a hobby scale, you might have so much fun as to become commercial.

The Sugarmaker’s Companion starts by making a strong case for sugaring in “Why Maple Matters.” This case is tempered a bit by some of the reality checks in “Is Sugaring for You?” before the book dives into the nuts and bolts of sugaring. Farrell has a thorough understanding of the process, new technologies, and terminology, as well as information on helpful follow-up resources from the appendix.

A unique component to The Sugarmaker’s Companion are the number of chapters devoted to alternative tree species. Farrell’s explanation of strategies as well as models to help others participate or contribute in community sugaring. Farrell provides an overview of both the many maple species that produce sap and the botanical integrity. Farrell’s sugaring collection in chapters on “Sugarsacse Design and Construction,” “Gathering Sap,” and “From Sap to Syrup.” These three chapters form a solid overview of the process of collecting and making syrup and some of the equipment and structure considerations beginners should consider. Farrell’s participation in the sugaring process is evident, and so while at the end of these chapters I didn’t quite feel ready to go out and invest in a sugar house, I did feel like I had a better understanding of the process.

Chapter 2, “The Cultivator,” introduces the grower to the growth and knowing which zones fit certain crops that the pair are deeply in love with their new wives, we learn very little about Marikler and Meg independently of their husbands.

For those looking for more of a perennial polyculture how-to, I might suggest reading the author’s previous books, “Edible Forest Gardens”, (co-authored with David Jacke) and “Perennial Vegetables,” which are both highly recommendable. However, with the pair’s emphasis on permaculture with exotics and long forgotten native species that show promise in their own niche microclimate, I had a much better understanding of the process, new technologies, and terminology, as well as information on helpful follow-up resources from the appendix.

As a new forestland owner, I found the ending chapters, “Managing Your Sugarcabin for Optimum Sap Production,” “Other Non-Timber Forest Products from Your Land,” and “Syrup or Sawtimber Production” the most interesting. Farrell provides an overview of how to assess land and trees for sugaring potential, things to consider in your management, ideas of other crops that can grow in your woodland understory like ramps, mushrooms, and medicinal perennials, and tools to help decide the relative value of a forest’s timber versus sugaring potential (or at least the trees are stumped ideally at looking for a sugar bush). The Sugarmaker’s Companion ends with “Sugaring in a Changing Climate,” that raises some of the challenges of variable weather and changing forest structure, but overall leaves the reader with a strong sense of hope and opportunity for new and established sugaring operations, despite the challenges created by climate change.

As a vegetable farmer with a potential sugarbush, I found this interesting story in considering a sugaring operation (it also has me hungrily eyeing the black walnut in the yard). It is a well-written and enjoyable read, the author’s enthusiasm for the subject is clear, and the book has a thorough consideration of the steps, less traditional ideas like utilizing non-sugar maple species, changing tappings schedules, different forms of land access, and open-mindedness about new marketing options.

The Sugarmaker’s Companion would appeal to farmers looking for a little inspiration. We’ve never heard of Dave Jacke, Jonos Neiger, Nuestra Raices or many others that were interviewed in the book, you will be well acquainted with them by the end of this book.

“Paradise Lot” is divided into four sections, using the permaculture terminology. Farrell’s book gets started thinking about sugaring, as well as homesteaders, landowners, and gardeners interested in maple. There’s definitely more winter gear and snow shovels mentioned in the learning of a specific “how-to” manuals to undertake before starting any operation, but I like feel that this book is a good foundation resource.

Part two, “Planting and Harvesting” and “The Marketing and Business of Sugaring,” gets more into the practicalities including sap buying and dividing. Farrell provides an overview of the landowners, landowners, and gardeners interested in maple. There’s definitely more winter gear and snow shovels mentioned in the learning of a specific “how-to” manuals to undertake before starting any operation, but I like feel that this book is a good foundation resource.

The Organic Seed Grower: A Farmer’s Guide to Vegetable Seed Production

By John Navazio

Chelsea Green Publishing, January 2013

Paperback, 376 pages, $32.28

review by Robert Hadad, Regional Vegetable Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension

I rarely read the Introduction of books. Intros can be long-winded and dry. The anticipation of reading the book makes you want to jump right in and get going. Well, read this Introduction. The author really sets the stage for the reader to understand why you should save your own seed and what led up to the corporate “generalization of seed production.” If the Introduction is this good, the rest of the book must be fantastic. I was right.

The first chapter gives a brief overview of the development of modern agriculture and the gradual switch from farms saving their own seed to purchasing the “new and improved” varieties. This history gives a context of how we got to where we are today. Chapter Two is a quick refresher course in plant reproductive biology. For those who might have forgotten their high school bio or slept through an early morning botany course, Navazio gets right to the point in an easily digestible manner. By the end of this chapter, the reader is already a step ahead of those adding on-farm vegetable breeding and seed production to their already busy schedules, knowing the biology of annual plants is hugely important.

Chapter 3 continues the emphasis on biology when he discusses the complex relationships between squash, cucumbers, and melons. Cucurbit species like squash, watermelon, and melons can grow in a variety of microclimates that are particularly well-suited to their unique biology. The chapter also provides an exploration of the variety of squashes and cucumbers that can be used in different parts of the country, including the importance of selecting the right variety for your climate. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how to select and prepare seeds for planting.

Chapter 4 is a how-to guide for starting a seed bank, with information on how to collect, store, and organize seeds. The chapter also covers the importance of seed purity and how to ensure it. A discussion of the role of seed banks in preserving biodiversity is also included.

Chapter 5 continues with a discussion of the role of seed banks in preserving biodiversity. The chapter covers the importance of seed banks in preserving biodiversity, as well as the role they play in ensuring food security. The chapter also discusses the role of seed banks in promoting local food systems.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the role of seed banks in promoting local food systems. The chapter covers the importance of seed banks in promoting local food systems, as well as the role they play in ensuring food security. The chapter also discusses the role of seed banks in promoting local food systems.

Chapter 7 is a how-to guide for starting a seed bank, with information on how to collect, store, and organize seeds. The chapter also covers the importance of seed purity and how to ensure it. A discussion of the role of seed banks in preserving biodiversity is also included.

Chapter 8 continues with a discussion of the role of seed banks in preserving biodiversity. The chapter covers the importance of seed banks in preserving biodiversity, as well as the role they play in ensuring food security. The chapter also discusses the role of seed banks in promoting local food systems.

Chapter 9 is a how-to guide for starting a seed bank, with information on how to collect, store, and organize seeds. The chapter also covers the importance of seed purity and how to ensure it. A discussion of the role of seed banks in preserving biodiversity is also included.

Chapter 10 continues with a discussion of the role of seed banks in preserving biodiversity. The chapter covers the importance of seed banks in preserving biodiversity, as well as the role they play in ensuring food security. The chapter also discusses the role of seed banks in promoting local food systems.
The Natural Farmer  
Winter, 2013-14

The chapters are set up under sections. The first 3 chapters focus on starting a farm. Part II covers tools and equipment. Part III deals with soils, cover crops, rotations, and fertility. Part IV goes into Stewart’s own farm experience. Included are which crops to grow and how to do it. Part V covers harvesting, storage, and a great deal on marketing. Part VI investigates insects, diseases, and weed management. Part VII is dedicated to business management.

Stewart does something really useful in this book – chapter recaps. At the end of each chapter there is a page or two highlighting the most important points being made. This makes sure the reader has covered everything there and can remind them to go back and reread a part that they are unclear about.

Keith Stewart’s writing style is free-flowing and it feels like he is having a conversation with the reader. He shares a lot of what worked for his farm, what didn’t, and not coming from a farming background – how to move forward with getting your own farm going. He is a realist. He sets up a list of questions you ask yourself to see if farming is right for you. Many people have a wide-eyed romantic notion of what it is like to farm. I have seen many valiant starts in May end in overgrown weed jungles by the end of August. Stewart is all too familiar with this and leads the reader forward providing a wealth of information in this thick volume.

Each chapter is so full of information it is astounding. Several chapters are outstanding. Chapter 10, Cover Crops & Green Manures: Increasing Sustainability on the Farm starts and ends with building up soils and to really reach healthy fertile soils, it takes green manure cover crops. Chapter 11, Crop Rotations, in-depth, personal experiences, maps & charts, who, what, where, how, and why. Chapter 25, Running a Business: a section all too often overlooked. Knowing your cost of production starts with keeping good records and using that information to make the tough necessary decisions needed to not only run a business but to grow a business.

Keith Stewart’s Growing Organic Vegetables & Herbs for Market is a must-read for produce farmers. It is well written from a farmer’s perspective and from someone who has first-hand knowledge of the experiences of the trials and tribulations of starting a market farm. This book could be the template for any new and beginner farmer education curriculum. I fully expect to see dog-eared copies of this book on the dashboards of pickup trucks and farm-house kitchen tables all across the region. No serious farmer should be without it.

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