



Bottom Land News



A Late Winter Snack

Farmer Andy Jones takes advantage of a mild winter day and harvests spinach from ICF's unheated hoopouses for the 2007 Winter Share. Although the spinach can survive temperatures that drop below freezing (under row covers and in the hoopouse), it can only be harvested when the leaves are thawed. This spinach was planted in October—and it sure tastes delicious in March!

2007 PLANT SALE

Once again, the Intervale Community Farm will offer a spectacular selection of flowers, herbs, and vegetables at our fourth annual plant sale. **Plant sales are each Saturday in May (May 5, May 12, May 19, and May 26) from 9 am–12 pm.** We are also growing vibrant hanging baskets that will brighten up your porch or patio. Our plants are naturally grown in fiber pots and cared for with horticultural expertise. We also expect to have **fresh asparagus** for sale from our recently acquired asparagus patch.

We suggest that anyone who would like to swap perennials should bring divisions to the plant sales. We will try to coordinate the swapping - and swap some of our own plants as well.

If you would like a plant list or any further information, please e-mail rebeccamaden@yahoo.com or call 658-2919.



ICF Hires Member Service Coordinator Keri Latiolais Joins the Farm Full-Time

The Intervale Community Farm is thrilled to announce that Keri Latiolais, who has worked at the Intervale Community Farm since 2005, has joined the Farm in a full-time role. Keri came to ICF with a strong plant background, including a degree in Horticulture and Environmental Studies from Iowa State University.

Prior to her first season here, she was a market garden apprentice at Shelburne Farms. During her time at ICF, Keri worked in all aspects of field operations, from tillage to harvest to crew management. Her positive spirit and wide range of skills makes her an incredible asset to the Farm, and we are proud to welcome her year-round.

In her new role, Keri is responsible for member services, which includes billing, bookkeeping, organizing recipes and other pick-up related activities, and responding to membership-related inquiries. Keri will also tag team with Andy and Becky as a field manager. The Farm is fortunate to welcome someone with such diverse and refined skills to the staff. In anticipation of her new responsibilities, Keri says, "It is so exciting to become a full time member of the staff. I am really looking forward to being more involved with member services on the farm and having more responsibilities in the field. ICF has been such a great place to work and I am thrilled to be one of your farmers."



Bridging the Gap:

Eating Locally at the End of a (long) Vermont Winter

By Becky Maden



March and April are difficult months for produce lovers in Vermont. Storage crops that survived the winter are wiggly and soft; carrots grow hairy and green shoots poke out of the tops of onions. Potatoes start to sprout eyes, and half of a cabbage must be stripped away before it is edible. Even squash—that delicious backbone of winter cuisine—declines in flavor and texture. And above all, even the most dedicated “localvores” can grow tired of the endless root purees, roasted root vegetables, soups, and vegetable casseroles. Suddenly anything green looks tempting at the store—broccoli, greens, even herbs like cilantro and basil... those elusive (and far off) flavors of summer.

Early spring is an exciting time for farmers as warm weather taunts and teases, as seeds are planted in the greenhouse, as land is prepared for planting, and as equipment is cleaned and readied for use. But food—a huge reward of farming—is scant in a Vermont spring. Here are some suggestions for ways to keep your food local and exciting during these last months of winter.

• **Make Your Own Sprouts**—*Sprouting is fun, easy, and a great activity for kids.*

Materials needed:

1. A container to hold your sprouts. A large mouth makes it much easier to get the sprouts out.
2. A square of cheesecloth or other screen to cover the mouth (makes it easier to rinse your sprouts).
3. A rubber band to hold cheesecloth to the container.
4. A small dish to set the sprout container on.

Pour dry seeds and/or beans into container (you can use pretty much any seed or bean—alfalfa, lentils, mung beans, radish seeds, clover seeds are good to start with.) Do not fill the container more than 20% -- sprouts will increase in volume more than 5 times as they grow. Place the cheesecloth over the top of the container & secure it with the rubber band. Pour cool water through the cheesecloth and into the container. Swirl it around, and then slowly pour off the water. Refill the container with water, let it soak overnight, and then drain. (This initial soaking is to hydrate the beans/seeds. After this time, do NOT leave the sprout container full of water -- they'll drown!) Set the container upside down on the dish. This will keep the sprouts moist as they grow. **Rinse the sprouts twice a day** with cool water. The rest of the time, leave the container sitting upside down on the dish. In 3 to 6 days (when they are 1-2 inches long and have tiny leaves) they're ready! To harvest, remove the cheesecloth, and put sprouts in the fridge in a sealed container.



• **Discover What is Still Available Locally...and get creative with it!**

Believe it or not, there is still some delicious local food available at the market. This time of year, local **parsnips** taste divine. Another amazing find is local **apples**—many of which still taste autumn crisp right now. And when they are not crisp, applesauce, apple crisp, and apple pie ALWAYS taste good. And carrots...that delicious year round snack, which is locally available much of the year. There is still a wonderful supply of local **potatoes** at many markets—which can also be prepared in endless ways. Try this simple but yummy recipe for potato or parsnip chips:

1-2 pounds parsnips, cut into sticks less than 1/2" wide.

1-2 pounds potatoes, sliced less than 1/2" thick.

3 T olive oil

5 cloves minced garlic

Sprinkling of salt and dash of cayenne pepper (or black pepper)

Toss the vegetables with oil, salt, and pepper. Bake at 350F for 15-20 minutes; then add garlic, stir again, and bake for 15-20 minutes more.



• **Preservation!**



If you were ambitious in 2006, you may have frozen, canned, and dried lots of produce. Keep this in mind this season as you look at produce—*what would I really use over the winter?* Dried tomatoes? Frozen broccoli? Frozen peppers? Beans? Frozen berries? Think about what would be most useful in your winter cooking—and this year, try to put up simple things from the Farm. If ICF doesn't offer enough of something, ask about other farmers that might have excess of that product. You will be amazed by how much food you can easily freeze...and how good it tastes in February!

These are long months for all of us, and sometimes you need to indulge your spirit. So dream of summer—and in the meantime, think creatively about how to satisfy your palette locally!

(Editor's note: Erik Rehman, leaves the ICF staff after 7 years of amazing personal, physical, and artistic contributions. He will be deeply missed by all of us--thank you, Erik, for all you shared with the Farm.)

a farewell

and so this seed has broken surface, exposed to the unfurling touch of sun and rain (as a pupa, unearthed, stirring), in the sometimes near-intolerable period of germination, taken its first standing stretch from sleep; and trusting, somehow, the incessant whisper, the gentle relentless tug of its frail new root as it leans to a sun until then unseen, its stalk becoming a path that may grow many paths...

it is with a mix of many emotions that i leave the farm; most are of a nature my experiences have been: of grace, sustenance, happiness, serendipity-sometimes stark as the light echoing from a crow's wings as they lift under an october sky; sometimes gentle as the touch of a potato-mistaken toad.

and so, a grateful thankyou:

to the beautiful farm-the many days laced with the rhythmic swish of harvest knives; the dilapidated wagon, lichen-strewn, swollen with its abundance of pumpkins in the setting sun; purple cabbage in the rain; a galloped shadow sliding through the dew-laden kale, sleeved in frost; the snow of cottonwoods, their susurrant glissading the slopes of wind;

to the membership-for your consciousness, community, and support...and tasty morsels of warmth on frigid pick-ups (Bonnie's near-impossibly delicious cobbler);

to the working members, memories shared-Gary (aka the buffoon) and I trying to down Air Force One with a red pepper; beet-finder Henry; "...let the rabbits wear glasses..."; Holly, the cucumber samurai; "I met the most interesting gastropod.."; and on and on into further absurdity;

to the amazing farmers I've been graced to meet, share laughter with, grow friendships with-your influence and what you commit your lives to are a gift to me;

and last (but not last) and biggest thanks to Andy Jones-for his mentorship, understanding, kindness, and dear "behooving" friendship-i thankyou with all my heart.

these days will be missed, with me always, and intermittently, returning (barefoot permitting).

erik.

Buy Lucky Ladies Eggs Anytime!

If you find that you are missing these delicious, organic, fresh, Intervale born and bred eggs, wait no longer! Now you can stop by Viva Espresso on N. Winooski Ave. to purchase eggs, or, for the best deal, you can stop by the self-serve egg stand on Pearl Street.

The stand is located at Lucky Ladies proprietors John and Lauren Cleary's home, **254 Pearl Street, Burlington**, on east side of the Pearl Street Beverage parking lot, located directly behind Dr. Feldman's dentist office. Come down the driveway on the uphill side of the building. You can't see the house from the street, but you will see a blue garage door and an "EGGS" sign. Eggs are in a fridge in a stand by the fence.

Feel free to call John and Lauren Cleary if you have any questions, 658-5475.



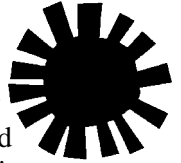
Steering Committee Contacts

The ICF Steering Committee exists to represent the interests of the ICF membership. This member-elected group wants to hear what you think! Contact them with any thoughts:

- Bonnie Acker - AckerArts@aol.com
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Energy Consumption at ICF

by Becky Maden



During the 2006 season, the Intervale Community Farm was fortunate to be the subject of a study done by two University of Vermont students, Peter Merritt and Evan Reiss on “Energetic comparison of inputs and outputs on the Intervale Community Farm”. The aim of the report was to help ICF staff and other farmers improve energy efficiency as they operate their farms.

The use of the word “sustainable” holds numerous meanings in our society, and is often used loosely to define systems that are far from sustainable. While the Intervale Community Farm strives to be a “sustainable” farm in many aspects of its operations, this report made it undeniably clear that the Farm is far from it from an energy consumption standpoint.

The report examined all inputs on the Farm, including buildings, tractors, fuel, electricity, plastics, irrigation, greenhouses, labor, compost, fertilizers, and seed. Each aspect of energy input was calculated in terms of the “embodied energy”, which refers to “the energy used to manufacture, transport, or supply a product or material, including the inherent energy of the material (as with fuels).” (Merritt and Reiss, 2006). The students noted that there is a great void of any recent research of this nature that has been conducted on organic farms; in fact, nearly all research is based on the work of one or two researchers evaluating farm practices in the 1970’s. As a result, Peter and Evan were forced to estimate some of the values attached to energy on an organic farm. For example, most literature assumes a 12 year life for tractors, whereas ICF’s tractors are between 17 and 57 years old.

Peter and Evan also calculated the amount of energy produced on the farm. The ratio of vegetable production outputs to inputs was 0.22, which is far below the desired 1:1 ratio. However, it stands far above California, with an output/input ratio of 0.14. It is also important to note that this ratio is affected by the types of crops grown—for instance, energy rich crops like potatoes make the ratio much higher. Because the Intervale Community Farm grows a wide array of crops to satisfy the needs of a Community Supported Agriculture membership, many of the crops do not contain a lot of energy. Furthermore, growing a diversity of crops means a loss of efficiency in production systems, which requires more inputs for less output.

The most glaring input that ICF needs to address is our propane use to heat the greenhouse in the spring. Although it is only heated from March through June, the amount of energy consumed is nearly double the energy consumed over the course of an entire season’s tractor use. If the Intervale Community Farm wishes to be a more “sustainable” farm, the first input we should address is the impact of running a greenhouse, and perhaps consider alternative fuel sources for heating it. Other inputs are also a cause for concern, including the impact of tractors, plastics, row covers, and member transportation to and from the farm. However, as the authors of the report note, “by enhancing public confidence of local food production, the amount of energy saved greatly surpasses the industrial agriculture we have today”.



The Farm extends deep thanks to Peter and Evan for all of their excellent work—and for helping the Farm realize what we need to address to lessen our impact.



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Bottom Land News is published periodically. We are always grateful for your feedback, favorite Farm photos, poems, letters, and ideas for articles. Please let us know if there is anything you would like to reprint. Contact the Intervale Community Farm for information on subscriptions.

The Intervale Community Farm is a not-for-profit, member-run, community farm growing organic produce for 500 households in the greater Burlington area. Our land is located in the Intervale, a place “between the hills” where people have farmed for many years. We are part of the global Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement, linking farmers and consumers together to build a sustainable food system. We are now in our 18th season.



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