


The Valley Green Journal



Grassroots connections – agriculture, communities, nature

FREE

September 2012  Volume 1

Welcome to the First Issue of The Valley Green Journal!

Do you garden, or buy fresh produce at a local farmstand or farmers' market? Are you concerned about making ends meet or your neighbors and their kids getting enough to eat?

Do you enjoy being out in nature, doing things like bird watching, canoeing, fishing, or simply taking a walk through the countryside? Are you concerned about the welfare of wildlife?

The Valley Green Journal is for people who care—about nature and our farms, about people, about the food we eat. This journal is about the vibrant natural lifestyle followed by many innovative folks in our wonderful green Connecticut River Valley. But it's more than just about us, it's about our food connections with the rest of the globe, and how we can make informed choices that help rather than harm people and natural environments around the region, the nation, and the world.

We hope you will read our first efforts and decide to join us on an adventure of discovering how small operators are making a big difference in how we can grow our food and treat nature respectfully at the same time, and have plenty for everyone to eat! This is not just an idle "pipe dream," there is a world-wide movement going on right now, and grassroots folks are at the heart of it to change the world for the better.

We chose our name, The Valley Green Journal, first because it is about "the valley," that is, our Connecticut River Valley in the general area of Brattleboro, VT up to about Hanover, NH, a ways east and west on both sides of the river. The word "green" is quite a catchall term these days, but more and more it seems to refer to technology that is environmentally friendly. We are all for green technology, but what we are writing about is the natural green - of farms and gardens, fields and forests and marshes, and the other parts of the natural and agricultural landscape that go along with natural green— lakes and streams, animals and wildlife, even the weather.

Grassroots connections-agriculture, communities, nature

In our subtitle, we want to stress that this journal is for all of us who consider ourselves to be the "grassroots"; people just trying to make a

decent living, care for our families and friends, and participate as best we can in our communities. Agriculture, communities, and nature are three vital interconnected components of our culture and indeed of our survival. We seek to foster grassroots connections so that all of us may feel more connected to our sources of food and other natural products, our community life, and the natural world around us in this valley and beyond.

The way we plan to write about agriculture for general readers as well as farmers, is to let everyone know how small family farms can support us more sustainably than the vast network of industrial agri-business. We will write about all kinds of agricultural products, especially food. For us, food means a basic, life-giving source of nourishment, and we are concerned with how best to produce our food so that it is fresh, unadulterated, nutritious, and delicious-naturally.

We need communities, of course, so that we can get the food we need, at least for most of us. (It would be interesting to write about those few hardy souls who manage to raise or forage all their food!) For many of us, feeding ourselves involves a combination of gardening, going to markets or pick-your-own farms, but mostly, the supermarket. Every time we shop for groceries we tap into a vast global network, which we can affect, for better or worse, by



Photo by Jan Lambert

An innovative way to grow tomatoes – from the ceiling, at Cogger Farms and Greenhouses.

which food choices we make. We can discover how to make the better choices, by becoming educated about the origins of our food, and how its production affects other people in other communities in other lands and other ecosystems besides our own.

Through our communities we also can learn how to take care of our less fortunate
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Meet The Valley Green Journal Staff-All Two Of Us!

We, Jan Lambert and Carmen Bywater, are a couple of middle-aged local women who have decided that the time is ripe for us to venture forth and try to help make a difference, locally and globally. Carmen has teamed up with Jan to found The Valley Green Journal. Here is just a little bit to explain who we are and where we are coming from:



Carmen comes with 20 years of experience in graphic design, and owns and operates Lone Leaf Graphic Design; she is also experienced at photography.

She has considerable gardening expertise as she also gardens for others through her second business, Lone Leaf Garden Service. She lives with her cats in the village of Putney, VT.



Jan is a naturalist/gardener/writer who has always wanted to become an editor. She is experienced with writing nature journalism. She lives on the end of a dirt road in Charlestown NH on a mini-farm with her husband John, two miniature horses and a cat. Jan loves to walk in nature and look for plants and wildlife.

Mission statement: Our mission is to foster grassroots connections, locally and globally, to help grow caring communities based on sustainable agriculture; we emphasize living in concert with nature and conserving lands, waters, and wildlife.

Sharing Their Harvest



Area vegetable growers and gardeners donate to help feed the hungry

By Jan Lambert

Like many valley residents, you may not be aware that the area's emergency food shelves no longer store only the usual imperishable goods such as canned soup and macaroni. Many now have refrigeration and can furnish their patrons with a rare treat, fresh fruits and vegetables, which most of us take for granted. Some of our neediest residents are elderly, on low fixed incomes, and have health problems that make the need for a healthier diet even more acute.

For the past several years I have been taking some extra lettuce, beans, squash, cucumbers, and tomatoes from my garden over to my local food shelf or soup kitchen. I have found invariably that my modest offerings were received by the

Welcome!

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neighbors, many of whom simply do not have the money to buy food. We need to be aware that it has been proven, that not just here but everywhere in the world, there is usually an ample supply of food. People go hungry simply because they do not have the money to buy food. We all need to be aware that the conventional food chains we have formed in our industrialized world inevitably make people go hungry. It gets very complicated trying to figure out why children go to bed hungry every night when there is so much food. Many excellent books and articles have been written on the global patterns of hunger, and if more of us were aware, hunger could be wiped out. So with that in mind, we will strive in our journal to present you with inspiring stories, and recommended reading, on grassroots food movements. We hope that you will not come away not depressed, but hopeful and wanting to join the worldwide movement for food justice.

We will take note that our faith communities are instrumental in taking positive action to end hunger. From churches collecting for the food shelves very Sunday, to those helping to rebuild areas devastated by natural disaster, the folks working to usher in the Kingdom of Heaven can be

volunteers there with enthusiasm and gratitude.

This summer I have expanded my mode of operation by asking some farmers in the area to donate.

I have discovered that farmers in this valley are generous with their fresh produce, and anxious to help everyone eat fresh produce even if they cannot pay. I have not even begun to tap into all the possibilities, but here are some of the discoveries I have made in my area:

At the Walpole Farmers' Market in Walpole, NH, I dropped in right before closing time to seek some "leftovers." The director, Holly Gowdy, introduced me to the small number of vendors who had set up who were willing to tough it out under rainy skies. Even

so, I was graciously presented with a respectable amount of new potatoes from Abenaki Springs Farm in Walpole, summer squash from Old Drewsville Farm in Walpole, and freshly picked blueberries from Elsesser's Blueberry Acres in Acworth NH.

I also have had the pleasure of appreciating the generosity of Coger's Greenhouses in North Springfield, VT, which uses four all-season greenhouses to produce a variety of gourmet vegetables for local restaurants and specialty markets. Dozens of raised beds full of organic compost are planted with a variety of herbs and greens; on my last visit I recognized basil, dill, sage, Swiss chard, and several different kinds of salad greens. At their location since 1998, Gayle Morabito and her husband Michael own and run the enterprise, which is very labor intensive.

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wonderful leaders of positive action in our communities. The same goes for schools and civic groups.

Locally or globally, we are all part of nature, and agriculture and nature can make very good partners when we learn to farm with nature instead of fighting nature. You may or may not be familiar with the term, "agroecology," but this is a rapidly expanding field of research and down-to-earth practices whose emphasis is on discovering and re-discovering how human agriculture and the natural landscapes and wildlife can exist happily side by side.

But for many of us, nature is far more than a set of natural resources; it is also a daily source of food for our souls. Accordingly we will share experiences out in the wilder places and clue you in on great places to go to get away from it all.

As we explore all these ways of becoming closer to the earth and to each other, we hope you will actively join us. Contact us at: writetous@valleygreenjournal.com. We will be glad to hear what you have to contribute to our grassroots effort to make a big difference for our valley and the world!

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Jan Lambert photo

Donating salad greens - BJ Sterrett at Cogers' Greenhouse.

Earlier this season, while chatting with Gayle, I mentioned my interest with getting more fresh vegetables into my local food shelf, in addition to my small donations from my home garden. Gayle immediately seized

on the idea, explaining that each week they had been forced to throw away a certain amount of perfectly good vegetables, as they do a new harvest each week. Being a very busy person, she had not yet found anyone willing to come pick up the excess and distribute it where needed. So I immediately volunteered and have been picking up a different product each week, and amazing the volunteers at my food shelf with bags of pampered greenhouse lettuce, Swiss chard, and tomatoes .

Meanwhile Pete's Stand in Walpole, NH has been providing fresh produce to the valley's residents for many years, and in fact the present farm managers are of the third and fourth generation of the Janiszzen farming family which arrived from the Ukraine in Russia in 1912. They also regularly donate to food shelves. During my visit to Pete's Stand on Rt. 12, just north of Walpole Village, Mike Janiszzen explained that his dad Pete, for whom their farmstand was originally named, had a big heart and was known for his generosity to local people. For years Pete would

even deliver boxes of free produce to the needier families. This spirit of giving has come down to the present day, and Teresa Janiszzen, Mike's daughter-in-law, says that they typically donate "truckloads" of vegetables to area food shelves. They also strive to keep their prices low at the stand. As a family operated farm, Mike



Jan Lambert photo

5th generation farmer: James Janiszyn, age 2, peeks out from under the shelf holding a pile of corn-on-the cob at Pete's Stand in Walpole. His mother, Teresa Janiszzen said that he is already working as a fifth generation farmer on the Janiszyn family farm, which owns and runs the stand; James knows how to pick vegetables, and run toy farm equipment!

explained, they are able to use their own labor to grow and pick the extra produce for the needy, on their 20 plus acres of cropland near the farm stand.

Going north up Rt. 12 toward Claremont NH, turn right on Piper Hill Road at the corn sign and you will find fresh produce in front of the farmhouse of LeClair Acre's Farm, primarily a dairy operation. I have been buying corn there all summer, so I ventured to ask for a donation of some extra produce for our local food shelf. Jean LeClair promptly presented me with a generous bag of tomatoes to take back to the woman at my church who delivers food every week.

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The Green Valley Journal News Briefs

Grassroots Group Challenging Proposed Biomass Plant in N. Springfield VT

NORTH SPRINGFIELD – Winstanley Enterprises, already the developer of several Vermont industrial projects, is proposing the North Springfield (VT) Sustainable Energy Project at the North Springfield Industrial Park, which would burn wood chips in a 25 to 35 megawatt biomass electric generating plant with auxiliary heating.

A group of North Springfield Residents, along with other interested individuals, which has organized as the North Springfield Action Group or NoSAG, are meeting together and developing a Web site and other actions to publicize and gather around serious concerns about the plant. They are concerned that a large biomass electrical generating plant, located in the midst of a small community, will pose considerable and serious problems for its neighbors.

True sustainability, emissions, and efficien-



cy of the plant, as well as water use, local and regional traffic (especially large trucks), noise, and the general size scale of this plant relative to its surroundings highlight the concerns. Pownal and Ludlow VT already have decided against such plants in their areas. For more information get in touch with the group at www.nosagvt.org.

Community Celebration for The Sustainability Project in Keene

KEENE – On Saturday, Sept. 22, doors will open at 6 p.m. at the Keene State College Mabel Brown Room, for a community celebration of music, dance, art and ecology. Proceeds will benefit The Sustainability Project of the Emerson Brook Forest located north of Keene NH. Suggested donation is \$10 for the event, which is sponsored by the KSC Ecology Club. Following is a quote from The Sustainability Project's Web site found at www.emersonbrookforest.org.

"Inherently, human beings know exactly how to live in perfect balance with all of nature. We have everything it takes, right now, to create a peace-filled, equitable, life giving, and sustainable existence on the planet. It is time to put an end to isolation and to begin thinking from the heart. In order to solve the severe ecological and social problems on our planet today, we need to gently rekindle our connections to ourselves, each other, and the natural world."

The Importance of Our Bees

It turns out that all these years humans have been trying to destroy "weeds," we have been cutting down and poisoning plants very much needed by our wild bees, which do much of the work pollinating fruits and vegetables for mankind. Goldenrod, pictured here, will help benefit our endangered



Carmen Bywater photo
Goldenrod is one of many wild flowers that benefit endangered insect pollinators.

insect pollinators, if we wait until after the flowers bloom to mow our fields. Incidentally, it is not true that goldenrod causes hay fever.

The Valley Green Journal will be researching the importance of our bees for future issues. In the meantime, you can read all about the importance of bees in a community newsletter, summer 2012 issue, put out by the Upper Valley Food Co-op in White River Junction; you may still be able to pick up a copy at the store, or find it online at http://www.uppervalleyfood.coop/images/stories/newsletters/2012_summer.pdf.

Pete's Stand
VEGETABLES

See us for all your Fall decorating needs.

We have:

Pumpkins- all shapes, sizes, even some heirlooms and pie pumpkins!

Gourds, miniature pumpkins, Indian corn, and corn stalks.

Plus an amazing harvest of winter squash and other fall vegetables.

Open 10-6, 7 Days a week

Family grown, local produce
Rt. 12, Walpole NH





At the Cornish (NH) Fair, held this year from Aug. 17 - 19, 4H kids were eager to show off their prize-winning vegetables. (Left) Amanda Witteman, 9, with paste tomatoes, and Tristan Provencher, 11, with pepper and zucchini, both earned blue ribbons. They are both from the Claremont Jaguars 4H Club. (Right) Morgan Snelling, 10, of the N. Charlestown Fun 4H Club, was awarded Best of Show for her basketful of fresh veggies.

Feedback

Next issue October 5th

As we venture forth with our new publication, we welcome feedback and ideas for future articles! Send your suggestions to: writetous@valleygreenjournal.com.