



# Weekly News

## Welcome to the 2009 season! ~ Michele Roy

We are happy to have 3 wonderful people helping us this year: my daughter Anna Smith, who many of you know from last year; Jayme Walden, from Kansas, and Molly King, from Brunswick. Jayme and Molly are first-time MOFGA apprentices, and Anna is participating in MOFGA's Journeyperson program. She'll tell you more about it in her regular column. All three have a column in the newsletter this week, and plan on being regular contributors throughout the season.



*Michele explains what a wheel hoe does to a group of kindergarten kids and their parents from Gardiner on May 26. Two busloads descended on the farm for what has become an annual spring field trip.*

Because of all the early help we are on schedule in the garden. The greenhouse is bursting with spinach, beets, and car-

rots—it will soon be transformed when tomatoes, cukes, and peppers are trans-

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## Jayme: Out of Kansas

“You’re not in Kansas anymore!” Keeping a tally of the number of times I have had to hear this phrase along my 4,275 mile journey across half of the United States in 4 months wouldn’t have been a bad idea. Except, when I accepted a costume internship from Mill Mountain Theatre in Roanoke, VA a few weeks after graduating Kansas University (B.F.A. in Theatre Design), I never would have guessed they would have gone bankrupt 7 weeks into the internship. With an overwhelming sense of freedom, a car, and a little bit of cash, I embarked on what I considered to be my own “Tour de South.”

With New Orleans as my final destination, I crossed the northern mountains of Georgia, the small towns of Alabama, and the swampy marshes of the Mississippi until I reached the state of Louisiana. It was here I fell in love with New Orleans, a city that has more spirit than a bottle of Bacardi 151. I worked here assisting a costumer on an all-girl’s Catholic school production of, coincidentally, *The Wizard of Oz*, in exchange for a place to stay. With Mardi Gras approaching, finding a job was a cinch and the next thing I knew I was serving Café au lait and explaining to tourists what a beignet is at a café in

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### Beet Greens-Cheddar Appetizer Squares

*preheat oven to 350 degrees*

- 1 bunch beet greens, chopped
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 pound Cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 tablespoons butter

In a skillet over medium heat, add greens and a couple of tablespoons of water. Cook, stirring occasionally, until greens

wilt, about 3-5 minutes. Remove greens from skillet, drain in colander, pressing on leaves to extract as much water as possible, and place hot greens on a cutting board to cool off slightly. Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, beat egg; add flour, milk, salt and baking powder, mixing well. Stir in onion and cheese. Chop greens more finely; stir into egg mixture. Place butter in a small baking dish and place dish in oven to melt butter; this should take only 2-3 minutes. Remove pan from oven and swirl melted butter to coat bottom and up the sides of the pan slightly. Pour mixture into pan and bake for 30-35 minutes. Cool thoroughly.



*Goats galore —New arrivals on the farm this year are 15 yearling goats from Dragon Fly Farm in Dresden. They will help Ollie, Oboe, Barbara and Sylvie devour pasture until the fall.*

## *This year's 'major project' underway* ~by Denis Thoet

One of the great benefits of being a CSA farm is that we can work with a predictable income that allows us to create a budget at the beginning of the year and stay with it throughout the year.

It also permits us to plan a major project each year and to finance it with our own money, not borrowing from another source.

Last year's project was an 8'x26' greenhouse addition to the west side of the house. The year before that was building apprentice quarters on the top floor of the apprentice house.

This year's project is a 12x12' addition



*Oriental poppies and Lupine.*

### **Molly: Many questions**

There are a lot of questions I can't answer. If you asked me today how I ended up at Long Meadow Farm, I'm not sure I'd know what to say. I thought I came here to start answering some of those questions, but it turns out I'm only finding more.

I got my first taste of agriculture during college when I begged my way into a part time job harvesting for Hearty Roots Community Farm, a vegetable CSA in Tivoli, New York. I won't lie to you and say that the work was all great, but most days we just shined. The satisfaction I got from twisting tomatoes off of their vines was so much deeper than that given to me by finishing an essay on French politics. I found my politics in farming. Helping to feed families felt so much more consequential than academia, and I derived more pride from having dirt under my fingernails than from getting As.

I'd had dreams of leaving school before then, but working an agricultural job definitely cemented something in my head. I wanted (and still want) to learn about food--agriculture, sustainability,

to the apprentice house, with a loft sleeping area above and a root cellar underneath. The addition will be super tight and insulated so that a person can comfortably stay through the winter without using a lot of firewood.

That person is daughter Anna, who gamely tried to survive in the building's downstairs before being driven into our house to spend half the winter sleeping on the living room floor.

We also knew we needed a root cellar for storage crops since our 3' crawl space under the house was barely usable.

We have been very lucky for two reasons: CSA member Brian Kent of Litchfield made drawings and specifications for the addition, without charge, and neighbor Kevin Peckham volunteered to do the excavation. We are extremely grateful to both of them.

Through Kevin, we hired David Swift

and the injustice of current distribution systems--and college just wasn't obliging. Something in the back of my head told me that education could be different. That it could be inclusive, enjoyable, and even affordable. That all I had to do was to find it.

So I've transferred to the college of Long Meadow Farm. My new professors might not look the part, but I'm starting to prove to myself that education can take many faces. Eliot Coleman's *New Organic Grower* is my current textbook of choice, and Michele gives energetic, though sporadic, lectures on gardening in straight lines (not that we do much of that) and transplanting brassicas (tuck them in deep!). I actually have so many more professors now than I ever did in my formal education. I'm learning immensely from pretty much everyone I talk to, but I'm also learning from more unlikely teachers: the endless tomato seedlings, the dandelion "weeds", even the alarm clock. I'm not finding concrete answers to the questions I came here with, but I am having a lot of fun finding new questions. And don't get me wrong, it's not all I'm here for, but I'm hoping I'll even learn something from you.



*David Swift works on our latest major project at the farm — root cellar below and winter apartment above.*

of Litchfield to do the work and he is doing an excellent job at a reasonable rate.

A side benefit is that, with all the soil moved around the south and east side of the new addition, there's plenty of room for an apprentice kitchen garden. Anna has a few ideas on that already.

### **Anna: Let's eat weeds**

Springtime at Long Meadow Farm is dee-licious. After an unusually cold, harsh winter (Remember?! It feels like so long ago now...), the first vegetables of the growing season are a green blessing. Spinach, beet greens, and/or lettuce have graced our plates daily at lunch and dinner for the past several weeks, and I recently enjoyed my first kale and radishes of '09. As exciting as these new additions have been, though, the real culinary excitement this year has been found in edging away from the familiar and the cultivated. This year, my favorite foods have been weeds. As food and as medicine, these wild-gathered plants have found their way into my regular routines:

Dandelion greens have been sautéed and served with apple cider vinegar and tamari while their blossoms have been battered with milk, flour, and egg and

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*Mighty threesome —Anna Smith, Molly King (holding Violet, the “really free-range” hen, and Jayme Walden are the real moving force on the farm this year. Thank you for all you have done and all you will do for the farm!*

## **Anna,** *continued from page 2.*

fried or baked, sprinkled with salt and garlic powder and enjoyed with maple syrup or ketchup.

Stinging nettle, one of my favorite medicinal herbs, has been steamed and eaten in place of spinach and we’ve been drinking lots of nettle tea. Deb Soule, founder of Avena Botanicals, says that women in particular should drink several cups of nettle tea a day for 6 weeks in the springtime for its overall toning affect. A jar of pickled

## **Jayme,** *Continued from page 1)*

the French quarter. I stumbled upon a local vaudeville troupe and landed a spot performing burlesque at their shows. I made many good friends, saw amazing street musicians and performers, and got a true taste of the spirit and vigor of the people of New Orleans. After meeting the wizard, I clicked my ruby red slippers together and repeated “There’s no place like home,” until I made it to the eastern lands of Kansas, where tornado warnings were issued all across the Great Plains, and I knew I had made it home.

After spending a week of quality time with friends and family in Kansas City,

nettle is sitting in the pantry, waiting to be opened on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 6 weeks after the time it was prepared.

The bitter root of yellow dock, which bursts from the sogger areas of our farm every year, makes another great springtime tea for cleansing the blood and stimulating the liver. Its sour-tasting leaves can be steamed and eaten with tamari, apple cider vinegar, and rice. I have also been experimenting with yellow dock as a dye for our white sheep wool, but this has only resulted in light beige so far.

the winds descended and swept me into the foreign lands of New England. Upon arriving in Maine, my dad asked me over the phone why I felt I needed to travel all the way across the country to work on an organic farm. I responded with the question “Wouldn’t you, if you had the opportunity?” My interest in organic farming/medicinal herbs goes back quite a ways, and now that I have the liberty to invest my time in learning real life skills, I figured learning in a beautiful, new place like Maine would be a good place to start. Having only been at Long Meadow for a little over 5 weeks, I feel at home and know that I have made the right choice. I might as well start tallying up the Wizard of Oz references now, because who knows when I’ll be home...

Violet blossoms, those tiny purple and blue beauties who herald in the spring in the shadier parts of our backyard, make an elegant and delicious addition to any spring salad. I have several jars of violet blossoms tinctured in apple cider vinegar. Violets are thought to be softening to people emotionally, and also are used for literally softening swollen glands, lymph nodes, and cystic tissue in breasts. Molly has been experimenting with tincturing violet root as a treatment for gout. We’ll see how that turns out...

Our hawthorn trees, whose large, threatening thorns keep our 17 goats and 2 sheep at bay (mostly...), have been loaded down with blossoms this spring. Molly and I have picked several jars worth and are tincturing them in a vodka base. Hawthorn is one of the most effective heart-health plants, and the blossoms are also believed to be uplifting to the spirit.

My other excitement this spring, apart from learning about some of the many wild medicinals available to us here at Long Meadow, has been finding my mentors for the next year of my Journey-person experience. Michael and Nancy Phillips, of Heartsong Herbs in Groveton, NH, have agreed to take me on as a student of medicinal herbalism. As a side bonus, Michael is a very experienced organic orchardist so I will have the opportunity to learn more (much more) about improving and

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*Violets, ubiquitous on our lawn and the fringes of pasture, are healthy as a tincture in vinegar or alcohol.*

## Welcome.... continued from page 1

planted there. Be sure to look inside when you come for your share!

Outside we have a great patch of peas; a big new bed of carrots and beets (two kinds, Red Ace and Bulls Blood); lots of spinach; GARLIC (lots); potatoes, just starting to break through the ground; and cabbages (3 kinds so far: Minuet Napa, Early Jersey Wakefield, and FunJen). The first crop of broccoli is already in the ground, as is the first crop of summer squashes and cucumbers. The summer squash are what is under the row cover you see in the garden—both to deter striped cucumber beetles and to protect against the wind and cold. Beet greens! They have a surprisingly sweet, mild flavor, much like spinach or chard; these greens can be used interchangeably in many recipes. Try sautéing them in a bit of olive oil and sliced garlic, maybe add a pinch of crushed red pepper for some heat. Don't overcook! A mere 2-3 minutes will do; they should still be bright green. Try raw beet greens in salads. Greens, whatever they may be, are a very nutrient dense food and a valuable addition to your diet, both for health and flavor variety. Greens are the photosynthesis machines of the plant and capture energy from the sun, transforming it into energy for the plant and then to you when you eat it! Greens are high in vitamins A, C, K and potassium as well as iron, calcium and folic acid. They are also low in fat and high in fiber.

## Slow-Cooked Curry-Spiced Lentils with Beet Greens

1 1/2 teaspoons curry powder  
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1/4 teaspoon turmeric  
1/4 teaspoon cayenne  
1 medium onion, chopped  
2-3 garlic cloves, crushed  
1 cup lentils, rinsed and drained  
2 1/2 cups vegetable broth  
1 bunch beet greens  
Salt to taste

Optional garnish: Chopped tomato, chopped mint or cilantro

Combine curry, cumin, ginger, turmeric, cayenne, onion, garlic, lentils and broth in a Crock-Pot (slow cooker). Stir, cover and cook on low for about 6 hours. Wilt beet greens in a skillet for about 3-4 minutes, or microwave them in covered container for 3 or so minutes until they are wilted. Stir wilted beet greens into lentils, cover and cook for another 30 minutes. (Greens are wilted separately for ease in fitting them into the slow cooker, so do not cook them to the point of mushiness before adding them.) Lentils will be tender but not mushy when done.

This dish is also good with a dollop of

I've included 2 good beet green recipes, one of which I'm preparing as I write this. I'm making the lentil dish tonight so we'll have it for lunch tomorrow, after our first morning of picking and packing your shares.

We look forward to seeing you this week!



*The cold frame on the deck is a wonderful place to harden off the seedlings so they don't get nailed by their first windy day in the (very windy) front garden.*

plain yogurt on top, or even some crumbled feta cheese. You may add the wilted beet greens at the beginning of the cooking time and cook them for the entire 6 1/2 hours, but be advised they will turn a dull greenish-yellow color similar to the color of the lentils. This recipe is equally satisfying as an entrée or side dish. Serve with rice if you like.

## Anna, continued from page 3

maintaining the health and productivity of our fruit trees.

My excitement about this season and about my 2 year Journey person commitment is continuing to grow. I've got my herb and flower seedlings in the ground and am already making plans to rip up areas of the backyard for additional herb beds. Please feel free to check out the P.Y.O. beds in the main garden while the plants are still in their itty-bitty, non-pickable stage. It's exciting to watch the plants progress, and the garden will be a whole new world a month from now!

I hope you all are well and enjoying your first share of the 2009 CSA season. See you soon!



*Winter squash seedlings in the new sunspace. This will also be the ideal place to grow lettuce seedlings all summer. We don't know how we did without this space!*