



NEWTON
CONSERVATORS

SPRING ISSUE

NEWSLETTER

Newton's land trust working to preserve open space since 1961

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Tenth Anniversary of the Newton Community Farm

By Craig Grenier, Member of the Board of Directors of the Newton Community Farm

Since 1679, there has been a farmhouse on the corner of Winchester and Nahanton Streets. The old farmhouse, situated approximately where the current farmhouse stands today, and 120 acres of surrounding land were owned by Samuel Truesdale. At that time, and well into the early 20th century, the southern part of Newton from the Charles River to Route 9 was predominantly farmland, woods, and streams. As Ted Chapman explains in his *Cultural History of the Angino Farm*, "the Charles River in the Oak Hill region was slow, meandering, with extensive wetlands. It was because of the lack of potential waterpower to run mills that the land remained agricultural and pastoral, unlike much of the rest of Newton. Wealthy landowners owned huge estates along the Charles in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the hillier land remained farms."

Crescenzo Angino, a recent immigrant from Italy, purchased the farmhouse and land that is now Newton Community Farm in 1917. He and his family maintained its status as a working farm for 84 years, until his son



PHOTO: MARGARET MALLORY

Charlie Radoslovich, Assistant Farmer



PHOTO: MARGARET MALLORY

Volunteers Jasper and Marissa

Jerry's death in 2001. The Anginos planted five hundred tomato plants every year, some with seeds brought from Italy, yielding fruit coveted by many Newtonites. Jerry especially loved a hybrid red tomato named *Ramapo* (*Lycopersicon lycopersicum*) that was developed at Rutgers University and became the quintessential "Jersey" tomato (<http://njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/RamapoTomato.htm>). The Anginos also grew corn renowned for its sweetness.

In 2004, the Newton Conservators achieved a long-term goal: facilitating the purchase of the farm by the City of Newton. In the period between the Aldermen's vote to approve the purchase and the subsequent release of Community Preservation funds, it was the Newton Conservators who guaranteed the mortgage on the purchase of the farm. They continue to hold the conservation restriction to this day.

Under the auspices of the newly created non-profit, Newton Community Farm, Inc., farming began anew in 2006. Newton

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PHOTO: MARGARET MALLORY

Spring Seedling Sale

Community Farm now serves a vital community function by providing locally grown produce as well as educational programming and seasonal events. The land and historical buildings preserve a living memory of Newton's agricultural past. Community farms are a visible testament to the local food movement, which is so central to conservation in general and sustainable agriculture in particular.

On November 13, 2016, we celebrated Newton Community Farm's tenth anniversary with *Tenth Harvest*, a gala dinner at Mount Ida College. The event brought together present and past presidents of the Farm along with our farmers, educators, and board members, Historic Newton, members of the Newton Conservators, Edible Boston, local leaders, key volunteers, and farming and conservation enthusiasts. The evening featured presentations on the history of the Farm and farming in Newton, education and conservation, and the local food movement in Boston over the past ten years.

10th Anniversary Milestones:

- **125,000 pounds** of produce sold at the farm stand
- **100,000 seedlings** grown and sold to local gardeners
- **8 years** of summer programming for more than 600 kids
- **25,000 pounds** of produce sold at Newton's farmer's markets
- **Advice, support, and programming** to 10 educational gardens in Newton
- **4 produce-share programs** each year
- **120 high-school-student** volunteers
- **15 farm-to-table** dinners
- **40-week expanded growing season** using the greenhouse and 3 high tunnels
- **7 seedling** sales

- **245 paid educational programs** onsite for over 1,000 participants
- **700 community-supported** agriculture shares
- **Work with 1,000 kids** in local schools
- **Maintenance or renovation** of 3 buildings, 2 farm stands, and 1 tractor shed

As we celebrated our first ten years, we noted that conservation was central to the founding principles of the Farm and is at the core of our mission for the next ten years and further into the future. We seek to model sustainability, not only by growing food from seed to sale, but by undertaking steps to protect the environment both locally and beyond. On a practical level, this means composting, feeding weeds and vegetable scraps to the chickens, and drawing irrigation water from our well. It also includes crop rotation and using soil science to improve soil health and to prevent disease. Further sustainability initiatives include emphasizing recyclable or reusable items at farm events and eliminating bottled water and food waste entirely.



PHOTO: MARGARET MALLORY

Carrots by the Bushel



PHOTO: MARGARET MALLORY

Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager

Over the next ten years, the Farm will prioritize increasing the use of renewable energy sources, including solar, and future renovations of the farmhouse and outbuildings will be planned with energy-saving principles in mind. Where possible, we will seek to transition our small fleet of necessary vehicles to more energy efficient alternatives.

Climate change is a concern for many in our community, and the Farm represents a unique window on the effects of climate and weather in a living environment. We are constantly adjusting the crop mix and planting and harvesting schedules around the realities of temperature and precipitation, and these changes are clearly demonstrated in educational programming and via the Community Supported Agriculture shares. Hoop houses not only mitigate some of the effects of changing weather, they also help control the spread of diseases such as late blight, a growing threat to tomato and potato cultivation in the northeast.



View of the Farm in Summer

Education is at the bedrock of the social mission of the Newton Community Farm, and messages of ecology, sustainability, and interconnectedness are woven throughout the curriculum. Alison Scorer, Education Director of the Newton Community Farm ensures that students notice, interact with, and--most of all--enjoy nature so they will

invest in and care for it in the future. Our programs have a strong focus on multisensory observational skills, starting with the youngest children in the Farm Sprouts program.

An important teaching tool, worms are a complex symbol of interconnected systems on the Farm and beyond. Young students learn how worms break down compost and help recycle nutrients back in soil and feed chickens to create more compost. As kids get older, they learn about more complicated ecosystems and how our desire for non-seasonal or exotic produce impacts our global carbon footprint, climate change and the locations where these fruits are grown.

Farms by their very nature are dynamic. They are living organisms that respond to stimuli from humans and nature alike. Beyond just a visible illustration of open conservation space, Newton Community Farm embodies the ethos of sustainability on a local level. It represents nature that you can touch, smell and taste. ■

🌿 President's Message 🌿

Congratulations to Greg Maslowe and the Board of the Newton Community Farm on their 10th Anniversary! They've not only preserved the farm and become a role model for sustainable agriculture on a small site but also welcomed the whole community to share the adventure with them.

The Newton Conservators are proud to have worked to save the land back in 2004, and we look forward to partnering with the farm in future years. (For more information about their work, check their website, <http://newtoncommunityfarm.org>.)

Webster Woods

We hope that ten years from now, we'll also be celebrating the preservation of Webster Woods. Please continue to let your city councilors and Mayor Warren know that this project is important to you. We hope there will be more progress soon. (To keep up to date, visit the Facebook page for the Friends of Webster Woods: <https://www.facebook.com/fowwnewton>.)

New Editor

It's with great pleasure that I announce (and welcome) Ken Mallory as the new editor of this newsletter! He has a combination of editing and writing experience, photographic expertise, and knowledge of Newton and its environmental community that makes him the ideal editor for the Conservators' newsletter.

He'll tell you more about himself in the mini bio on the next page.

Ken will start his new job with the summer edition and would love to hear about any topics that you'd like to see in the newsletter. You can reach him at newsletter@newtonconservators.org.

Beth Wilkinson