



Sharing the Harvest Farm

2009 Year End Report

Year in Review

In 2009, the Sharing the Harvest farm had another successful season despite poor seasonal weather and sub-par production performance.

Ultimately aimed at 20,000 pounds, farm production fell short to 11,022 due to several factors, primarily the wet first few months of the growing season and the early and severe blight of tomato blight. (See Page 5 for weather, Page 6 for diseases)

Harvest by the Numbers

Pounds by Month:

April	91
May	39.5
June	806.5
July	1493.5
August	3976.5
September	2832.5
October	1782.5
Total	11022

Donations from area Farms:

Brix Bounty Farm Donations: 787 pounds. Donations included Leeks, Kale, Chard, Lettuce, Squash, Herbs, Beets, Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Carrots and many other varieties.

King Farm Donations: 634 pounds. Donations included Radishes, Peas, Green Beans, Turnips, Carrots, Cabbage, Kale, Beets, Brussels Sprouts and Squash.

Misc. Donations: We also received a few handfuls of donations from Donna Edberg, our Volunteer Coordinator, one of the farm camper's parents, and three

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boxes of Asiatic Pears from the Town of Dartmouth's Souza-Lagasse Farm in North Dartmouth.

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Total Harvest by Vegetable:

Crop	Lbs.
Basil	26.5
Beets	211
Broccoli	15
Cabbage	42
Carrots	541
Celeriac	20
Celery	36
Corn	64
Cucumbers	1855
Eggplant	171
Garlic	32.5
Garlic Scapes	12.5
Green Beans	231
Kale	352
Leeks	20
Lettuce	720
Onions	90.5
Peas	19
Peppers	179.5
Potatoes	112
Pumpkins	33.5
Radish	412
Scallions	112
Sorrel	4
Spinach	31.5
Squash	1544
Strawberries	294.5
Sweet Potatoes	38.5
Swiss Chard	133
Tomatoes	655
Turnips	1308.5
Zucchini	11

Volunteer Information

Although our year in production was a tough one, in terms of volunteers our year was phenomenal.

From the season's opening to it's closing, we had 4,121 total volunteer hours from 2,133 total volunteers.

As the populace's diversity is quite ranging in the southcoast, our groups also ranged tremendously in their age, home and vocation.

School Groups:

In the spring we had nearly five consecutive weeks with two school groups per day. With those groups ranging in age from nursery school to junior high school, our tasks and abilities varied from day to day and group to group and although it was a bit hectic (especially for Donna) we managed to get some production done while hopefully teaching some valuable lessons.

For the future, as some of the groups were up to 50 kids in number, and I would say it was often challenging keeping them all working together and orderly, we will try to secure (by volunteer or another means) another person to work with Donna during the groups.

In terms of there geographic location, it seems most groups were from New Bedford, several from Fairhaven and a few from Dartmouth, but not too many. We also had students from Old Rochester Regional High School twice.

Additionally, we were also visited a half dozen times by the local Kiddie Campus program.

From colleges, we had groups from UMass Dartmouth three times and we had freshmen from Boston University visit for six hours on three consecutive days.

Seasonal Volunteers:

Throughout the year, on nearly every workable Wednesday we had normally two groups of challenged adults, whose enthusiasm I must say was outstandingly refreshing each and every week. Additionally, St. Vincent's School, a school for troubled kids in Fall River, came nearly twice per week for much of the season. We also had the PAACA's Green Youth Brigade (usually about 15 kids) one day per week from the middle of July through the end of September. We also had three young men from the Wheeler School in

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Providence volunteer for several weeks to complete their summer volunteer hours.

For the month of August we also had two farm employees from New Directions, Jordan Rivera and Rasheek White. Jordan and Rasheek were good to work with, and although one was a much harder worker than the other, both were fun to work with and get to know. As they both provide a much-needed break from the summer solidarity and a helping hand, were the New Directions opportunity to present itself in the future, I would strongly suggest participating again.

I also cannot forget those individual volunteers who came to visit us all spring and summer on Wednesdays and Saturdays, they are truly priceless.

In regards to these folks, our regular volunteers, they are the volunteers with whom I had the wonderful chance to work with continuously throughout the year. Getting to know them and becoming friends while helping our community all at the same time was certainly the highlight of my season here.

Single Day Volunteers/Groups:

As far as one-day groups, we've had bankers, realtors, a church, a bible camp, boy scouts, community action groups, and the United Way Day of Caring twice.

We also had a few visits from YMCA staff who were very helpful and it was nice to get know some other association workers.

Future Notes:

As mentioned above, regarding school groups I feel it will be both highly helpful and increase production efficiency to have a third hand with the groups, especially in the spring. Additionally, in terms of volunteer drop-in hours, I think they'll be revised to have longer time periods, and at the end of school for the year, we'll drop the Thursday afternoon time as not many folks came then after June.

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Weather:

Although the weather cleared up for August and September, the 2009 growing season presented a wet and cold challenge for the Sharing the Harvest Farm.

Beginning with moderate temperatures in April, the weather fluctuated rapidly until roughly June 1 when the average daily temperature virtually mirrored past year's average low temperatures. Beginning in mid August the temperature began to climb to it's normal high, but virtually overnight on September 1, it dropped back to the average low again.

Coinciding with the lower than normal temperatures, we had more than average rainfall throughout the spring and into the summer.

Month	Rainfall	Average	Number of Days with 0.1 or greater
April	5.98	3.7	9
May	3.96	3.3	11
June	4.34	3.3	11
July	8.04	2.8	13
August	7.54	4.2	3
September	2.67	3.2	5
October	5.78	3.3	7

The combination of cold, cloud-covered days and regular rain prevented the soil temperatures from reaching many germination ranges as early as expected. The poor germination, and lack of soil warmth to encourage growth left many of our plants stunted or simply not fruiting.

The worst cases of stunting and poor fruit production I witnessed here were the winter squash plants, some summer squash plants, and both the watermelons and the muskmelons. Additionally, early in the year, when the ground was still saturated, we had very poor germination from our peas.

The cold, damp weather also added to the potency and rabidity of the late blight, allowing the fungus to thrive and spread more rapidly across our region's tomatoes.

Crop Diseases

This season, the single most devastating insect or disease pressure was easily the tomato blight (Late Blight: a disease especially found in solanaceous plants caused by the fungus *Phytophthora infestans*).

Of the roughly 900 tomato plants we grew, transplanted and staked, nearly all of them were infected, which effectively killed our tomato crop for the year. From the 900 plants we donated only 655 pounds of fruit, most of which was completely green and unripe.

However, on a more positive note, our 200 feet of potatoes were planted earlier and did not show any real signs of the blight.

Newspaper Report of the Blight in the Northeast:

July 29, 2009

Northeast Tomatoes Lost, and Potatoes May Follow

By **JULIA MOSKIN**

RIPE local [tomatoes](#), keenly anticipated by growers and cooks, will be missing from many markets, farm stands and farm shares this summer.

Although there are no official estimates yet on crop loss, a severe outbreak of late blight fungus in tomatoes, first noted in June, is sweeping through farms and gardens in the Northeast.

John Mishanec, an educator with the integrated pest management program at [Cornell University](#), compared the highly contagious and incurable disease to a “nuclear explosion” in the region’s tomato crop. “And unless the weather changes, it’s going to get worse,” he said.

Consumers, he and others said, must be prepared to pay high prices to support local agriculture this summer.

Organic farmers, who have only a few approved weapons in their arsenal of pesticides, are absorbing much of the damage. Other farmers, whose tomatoes are already coming in late and stunted because of cool, wet weather, are waiting to see if pesticides, sunshine and luck will cooperate to prevent the infection from reaching their fruit.

The Hudson Valley region of New York, where the disease has jumped from tomatoes to potatoes and is wreaking havoc in both, has already experienced widespread crop loss. “I’ve never seen anything like this,” said Amy Hepworth, a seventh-generation farmer

who is raising 20 acres of organic tomatoes in Ulster County, N.Y., for customers that include Whole Foods and the Park Slope Food Co-op. On July 25, she was burning affected plants to try to prevent the fungus's spores from spreading farther into her fields.

Keith Stewart, a farmer in Orange County, N.Y., who has lost much of his tomato and potato crop, estimates his loss so far at \$40,000. Jay and Polly Armour, who grow about 40 different kinds of tomatoes at Four Winds Farm in Gardiner, N.Y., say that at least half their crop is gone. They sprayed their tomatoes for the first time in 20 years of organic farming, but the disease had already taken hold. "The fruit is rotting under the spray," Mr. Armour said.

Farmers and pathologists said that the fungicides available to organic farmers, mostly copper-based sprays used since the 19th century, are only intermittently effective.

Many farmers say that tomatoes are their most important cash crop and that the blight will be devastating. "Tomatoes get me out of debt every year," said Kira Kinney, an owner of Evolutionary Organics in New Paltz, N.Y., who has late blight on potatoes and tomatoes and expects that most of the crop will be destroyed. "I go into the season with credit card debt and I come out O.K.," she said. "That's how I cover my annual costs for the whole farm."

On July 23, Billiam van Roestenberg said that 11 of the 12 growers who participate in the weekly farmers' market he runs in New Paltz had already seen late blight in their fields that was likely to ruin their crops. The next day, the 12th farmer — Mr. van Roestenberg himself — found the disease on his own tomatoes.

Late blight, which caused the Irish potato famine in the mid-19th century, thrives in damp, windy weather. Its symptoms include white powdery spores, brown spots on leaves and open lesions, each of which can produce hundreds of thousands of infectious spores. Burning, spraying and deeply burying infected plants are options for farmers; home gardeners should pull plants out at the first sign of the disease. Rather than composting them, the plants should be sealed in plastic bags and thrown away.

Every state in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic has confirmed recent cases of late blight, which normally does not appear in the region until August, if at all. The source of the outbreak is being investigated by pathologists. Home gardens likely helped spread the infection: Lowe's, Home Depot, Kmart and Wal-Mart all sold tomato seedlings with late blight in their garden centers from April to June. All are offering refunds or credits to gardeners who must destroy their plants.

But there is no similar recourse for farmers. Even those who have not lost a crop to blight are suffering financially because of it. To ward off the infection, which has been sweeping through farms in her area, Ms. Hepworth has been spraying all her plants with a covering of fixed copper, an approved organic fungicide that creates a physical barrier preventing spores from reaching the plant. Because copper, unlike synthetic fungicides, washes off in heavy rain and must be carefully reapplied, "It costs me \$1,000 every time it rains," she said.

Dale Mohler, an agricultural meteorologist at AccuWeather.com, said that low temperatures in June and July broke records across the Northeast and that rainfall is running 50 to 100 percent higher than normal around the region. Mr. Mohler, who said he lost his own home-grown tomato plants to late blight, said August isn't likely to bring

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the sustained hot weather — about 10 days with temperatures above 85 and dry conditions at night — that could stop the continued spread of late blight.

Like other growers, David Hambleton, a farmer in Dutchess County, N.Y., whose crop is shared by about 250 members of the Sisters Hill Farm community supported agriculture program, is concerned that members who do not receive the vine-ripe juicy summer tomatoes they look forward to will not pay \$500 to \$700 for a share next year. “Last year was a bumper crop, one of the best ever,” he said. “This year, we’ll have to ask our members to participate in local agriculture in a more realistic way.”

Farmers who do not practice organics, like Bill Maxwell of Changewater, N.J., are using pesticide sprays to protect their tomatoes, but still must worry about blight, weather and the state of the crop, which is running about a month late. “I have huge, beautiful cauliflowers, but I’m not going to make a lot of money on that in July,” he said. “People want their tomatoes.”[∞]

[∞] New York Times, July 29, 2009

Fertility

As part of our continued effort to improve the longevity and sustainability of our farm fields, we added 2,000 pounds of soft-rock phosphate, 250 pounds of humates, and 1,000 pounds of high-calcium lime. Additionally, the fields and crops were regularly dosed with topical fish fertilizer.

For 2010, we are also looking to include a pelletized post-crop-planting fertilizer to give many of our crops a much-needed boost. The topical granular fertilizer will be applied as an addendum to our normal fertility plans.

Farm Camp

Although I was not involved as much in Farm Camp as I was in the daily operations of the volunteer-based farm, it seems that from an onlooker's perspective, Ms. Szynal did an excellent job keeping the campers active, engaged and interested in camp and the farm. Hannah employed both a variety of games and farm activities to keep the kids engaged, and despite the few sweltering days in August, kept them cool and happy.

Regarding the camp, my only comment would be that the half day of farm camp should take place in the morning when it's cooler and kids are more focused, rather than the hot and tired summer afternoon when it's harder to stay focused and work outside.

Summary

All in all, I believe the 2009 growing season at Sharing the Harvest Community Farm was a successful year. This year we faced a bad New England summer, as many other New England farmers have done, and rather than delve into the negative, we expanded our volunteer core tremendously and were still able to produce more than 10,000 pounds of fresh produce.

I know we all hope that next year will be a great year weather-wise, but at least as this test has proven that Sharing the Harvest is a farm built to endure and withstand, a farm to help it's community the best it can no matter any adversity it faces.

2010 Goals

The 2010 growing season will present entirely new challenges for Sharing the Harvest.

As an initiative to produce some revenue ourselves, we will be both growing and selling our own hay and pumpkins. At this season's end, Billy Viveiros (the previous hay tenant) was notified that beginning next year the YMCA will be borrowing equipment to cut, bale and sell our own hay.

Additionally, grown to coincide with the Fall Family Festival, we'll grow pumpkins just south of the shed and east of both the 'BA' and 'CA' field parcels. To hasten their growing season they will be planted on black embossed plastic, much like our tomatoes, eggplants and peppers were this season.

As mentioned above, 'CA' is a new parcel to Sharing the Harvest and will receive it's first crop planting next spring. Increasing our garden size by CA (3/4 of an acre), the pumpkin extension, and the hay will really test our capabilities, but if it works out, our horizons will be greatly expanded too. 'CA' also brings another challenge although it's not necessarily one for the farmer or volunteers. Being the furthest parcel from our well, and adding nearly 33% to our production, the new plantings will test the capabilities of our well to water the entire farm on hot summer days.

Another future project, as anyone who walks the farm will notice, is the replacement of our wooden-sided raised beds which are in rough shape. Many have even rotten and collapsed apart. That may be the 2010 challenge of the spring, both purchasing and building 10 new wooden-sided raised beds.

Lastly is our production goal for 2010. As we noticeably fell short of our 2009 production goal of 20,000 pounds, I'm instituting a bit lower number (albeit still higher than 2009 production) for next season. In 2010, we hope to grow and donate 18,000 pounds of fresh, local and organic produce to aid our community in need.