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Genesee Valley Organic Community Supported Agriculture

<http://www.gvooca.org>

# GVOCSA News

*On the way to your stomach something happens to your soul.*

*March 2005*



## Notes From The Farm

By Elizabeth Henderson

This has been an odd winter. Bursts of cold and snow alternate with warm spells. So far, there has been less moisture than in other years. The Farmers Almanac predicts more cold ahead and then a cool, but more or less normal summer. With our new well, some additional irrigation tape and the drainage tile we had installed in the wet spots in the Tear Drop Field, we are better prepared for either wet conditions or dry.

### How Sustainable is Peacework?

The slower pace of our winter work allows time for reflection on our farming and for reevaluating our goals. With Katie Lavin joining our partnership, we have an extra incentive to look long and hard at what we are doing. We have said that we want to create a farm that is sustainable. Sustainability is a three-legged stool – environmental, economic, and social. At the NOFA-NY Conference, Prof. Anne Clarke of Guelph University in Ontario gave a talk on making organic more sustainable. She pointed out that our current system was not designed to be sustainable and asked what agriculture would look like if we deliberately tried to design for sustainability. To get at



## 2005 Season Signup Meetings

Friends' meeting house  
84 Scio Street

3/16/05 7-9 pm  
\*\*OR\*\*

4/2/05 2-4 pm

Mandatory presentation for new members begins promptly at start and lasts one hour

Returning members may sign-up anytime during the meetings

the environmental aspects of design, she listed the categories of soils, biodiversity, energy and nutrient management. How does Peacework measure up?

**Soils:** The grass strips between our beds limit erosion and tillage. The spader is gentler on soil aggregates than disking or plowing. The Cornell Soil Health Project says we are doing well compared to other vegetable growers in NY.

**Biodiversity:** We are constantly amending our crop list to add more

varieties. Again, the grass strips add diversity to our fields. They abound in wild, flowering broad leafed plants as well as native grasses. We could do much more to add diversity in the field borders.

**Energy:** Since we do not use nitrogen fertilizers, we use far less energy than conventional vegetable farms. We use much less diesel fuel and gas as well. But in other respects our energy use is all too conventional. In the future, we

## Member Action Items!

- ❑ **Signup meetings 3/16 7-9 pm, 4/2 2-4 pm; see notice on this page**
- ❑ *There is an opening on the Core group for an Inreach coordinator. Contact a Core group member if you are interested (see the listing of all Core group members inside).*
- ❑ *May Day celebration – Sunday, May 1 at Peacework Organic Farm. Food! Dancing! Come join in the celebration! More information inside.*
- ❑ *The annual GVOCSA picnic is currently planned for some time in June and will be at Peacework Organic Farm. The theme will be "Preserving Peacework" and will give everyone the opportunity to see why we are dedicated to the long-term stewardship of this land. Updated information in the coming weeks!*

would like to shift to biodiesel for the tractors, waste vegetable oil to heat the greenhouse, and wind energy to pump water. Greg has attended two conferences on using wind energy, and says it is still too expensive for us to consider yet.

**Nutrient balance:** We buy very little of the materials we use for fertility, relying on composted horse manure and cover crops. We purchase some of the ingredients for our potting soil, some minerals to help balance the fertility of our soils, and a little bagged organic fertilizer, mainly as insurance for the sweet corn. Greg spends long days hauling the manure. He is under constant pressure from the horse farm two miles up the road to move the piles before they block access to the barn. Using Doug's old dump truck, Greg makes windrows of the manure, straw, and wood chip mixture. Sometimes he spreads it in the fall before we plant cover crops, and sometimes we allow it to compost and spread it in the spring. As required by certification, we never spread raw manure before a food crop or on frozen ground.

**Economics:** Peacework has no debt, which immediately places us in a rare category among farms in the US, and we do not have any subsidies to rely on. Through our cooperative relationship with the GVOCSA, we have been able to assure stable revenues despite the vicissitudes of the weather. Four years ago, we added a small annual pension allowance for each farmer, and we have replaced our previous poor medical insurance with better coverage. We are clearly making progress.

**Social:** We have devoted our farm meetings this winter to work on our partnership and on the lease language with the Genesee Land Trust (GLT). We want a legal structure that will allow partners to come and go over the years ahead, and we need a solid entity to sign a long term lease with GLT. A

general partnership dissolves when a partner dies or leaves. We are getting lots of advice – lawyer George Parker is helping with the lease, and FarmNet and lawyer Alaine Espenscheid are helping with the legal structure. We have been studying the ins and outs of LLCs, non-profits, worker owned coops, c-corps, and s-corps, seeking the simplest form – fewest fees, least paperwork, and lowest taxes. Peacework functions like a worker-owned coop with one member, one voice on decisions, but we have not yet found the ideal combination.

In writing the lease with GLT, we started with a model land lease provided by Kirby White of Equity Trust. The most controversial issues are the length of the lease, a fair payment structure, and whether some of the land might be reserved for future residences for farmers. We would like the longest term lease possible to allow us to make the investments in the farm that will lead to the highest quality of land use, construction and social relations. Our research on the going rentals for farm land in NY came up with surprising results. The average rental payment is \$37 an acre. Multiplied by the number of tillable acres, that does not even pay the taxes. Negotiations with Gay Mills and the GLT Board are progressing smoothly as we answer the many questions we all share about how to arrive at a fair and equitable solution.

The Preserving Peacework fundraising is going well. In pledges, we are up to almost half the money needed! Also, Becky Kraai has signed the option with GLT. By July 2005, GLT needs to have that pledged money in hand to pay Becky.

Our annual search for interns continues. So far we have made a commitment to Brigitte Derel, a recent graduate of Marquette College, and in March, we will interview two more good

candidates.

## Seeking Organic Seed

Your responses to the veggie questionnaire have been very helpful to us in guiding our seed orders. Since using organic seed is a requirement of the National Organic Program, our certifier has been putting pressure on us to use as much organically grown seed as possible. On the plus side, the number of varieties available is growing steadily, though the quality of the organic seed is not always all that we might hope. Price is still a big problem. We could buy five pounds of untreated bean seed for \$9, while organic goes for \$30. Our

### GVOCSA Vision Statement

We envision the creation of a land-based community of people of diverse ages, backgrounds and incomes, farmers and non-farmers, who are committed to love, justice, equality, democracy and cooperation, and honor the intrinsic value of nature and food, and the dignity of labor.

The members of this community will work gently together to learn and teach others to live sustainably, in the broadest sense, for the health of all living creatures and the planet. We will practice an agriculture that supports a whole, healthy, sustainable and loving community.

### NEWS

#### Volume 15 Issue No. 2

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regular supplier of NYS-grown conventional potato seed charges \$20 for 100 lb (or 20 cents a pound) with no shipping charge. The nearest source of organic potato seed is Maine where several companies charge \$140 for 100 lb (or \$1.40 a pound), plus 20-cents/lb shipping. Sadly, a NY organic farmer who tried to produce organic potato seed for the first time had the same problem with late blight in 2004 that we did, so he had to sell his crop for immediate eating. Fortunately, we found a compromise – by going in with other farmers, we can purchase organic potato seed directly from a farm in Colorado for 40 cents/lb plus 10-cents/lb shipping. Still, that is 2 ½ times the price of the conventional NY potato seed.

Our other big project for the winter is equipment improvement and repair. Our friend and neighbor David Doktor is helping us piece together a new cultivator to increase our options for killing weeds using the Allis Chalmers G tractor, and adding hydraulics to the rear of the tractor so that small people like me will be able to manipulate the implements. David is also replacing the worn bearings on the spader. However, you can't just toss the 1,300-pound spader in the back of a pickup! So on one slightly less frigid winter day, Greg drove the spader the 10 miles to David's workshop on the 4610 tractor.

Winter is also the time when we farmers can socialize with our families. Greg, Ammie and Helen traveled to Massachusetts to see Ammie's ma over Christmas. Katie spent the winter living with close friends in Ithaca and come March, will settle into a place yet to be determined near the farm. I made my annual trip to Berkeley, CA, for a week with my son and his wife. On the workdays, I rose with Andy at 5:30 am to make the hour and 20 minute commute to the school where he teaches 6th grade in a bi-

lingual program. I get great pleasure seeing my son in action, working so lovingly with children. Since he comes to work on the farm every summer, I feel it is only fair for me



**May Day Party at  
Peacework Or-  
ganic Farm!**

Please join us in dancing around the May Pole on Sunday, May 1, 2005 at the farm from 2-6 pm. No previous experience necessary! Potluck supper at 4:30 – please bring a dish to pass. Drinks provided. All GVOCSA members, Peacework farm members, and their respective friends and family are invited!

to help in his classroom in the winter. When I show my slides of the farm, his students have such thoughtful questions.

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The days are already getting noticeably longer. Our hibernating will end in just a few short weeks. If you are suffering from cabin fever, come join us in the greenhouse in March or help put up the hoop house the first week of April. Our farming foursome looks forward to another season of growing good food for and with you!



## Medicinal Herbs at Peacework

*By Katie Lavin*

I knew when I came to Peacework as an intern two years ago that it would be a great place to learn about organic vegetable production. The Peacework farmers are serious about their commitment to mentor and educate aspiring farmers, and I was thrilled when they had me back for a second

season. I have now joined Peacework as a junior partner, and my decision to farm here was based on many factors. I was attracted to the transparency and structure of the farm business, the productive land, the supportive nature of partnership farming, and the reciprocal relationship with the members of the GVOCSA. Oh, and the tomatoes taste great, too!

Adding a new position means adding another salary. Instead of expanding the CSA beyond a manageable size, we decided to delve into the cultivation of medicinal herbs. I have been an herb enthusiast since I planted my first herb garden with my mother in high school. I was living in Vermont when I learned from my neighbors about harvesting woodland edibles like fiddleheads and wild leeks, as well as which plants to use for first-aid. In California, I took classes at the Dandelion Herbal Center and learned how to make herbal formulas and remedies. I spent many hours walking slowly through the coastal forest, nibbling redwood violet, salmonberries, and miner's lettuce (and some other plants that didn't taste so great).

Since I have been at Peacework I have collected and used the nettles, peppermint, catnip, and yellow dock that grow abundantly in the fields and hedgerows. I have also identified and planted some wild and rare plants in the forest, like bloodroot and goldenseal. This year we are starting many plants that are revered for their medicinal value. We will be able to harvest some herbs this season, such as chamomile flowers and arnica. Others, like Echinacea and valerian, we are growing for the roots, which will take a few years to mature.

While I know about growing, harvesting, and drying techniques to preserve the medicinal properties of plants, I am not a trained herbalist (although I plan to pursue this training at some point in my life). I

have used herbs for years as I journey on my own healing path and discover what works for me. However, I am not comfortable offering advice beyond simple remedies and first aid to others.

We see this new beginning as an opportunity for collaboration with members of the GVOCSA who are involved in health or healing practices. Since we are in the early stages, we are seeking a broad spectrum of input as we develop our business and focus. I would love to hear ideas and comments from you in the next few months. Please come and talk with me at any of the sign-up meetings this spring. I can also be reached by email ([katiemae46@hotmail.com](mailto:katiemae46@hotmail.com)) or telephone (585.704.4508). Since I have all of your phone numbers and email addresses from the membership list, I may contact you! If there is interest, we could set a date to have a group brainstorming session in Rochester one evening this spring—I will bring the tea!



## RESULTS OF THE 2004 VEGGIE QUESTIONNAIRE

*By Ammie Chickering*

Many thanks to all the members who filled out the 2004 veggie questionnaire – your input is valuable to us! We received 44 questionnaires at the farm by early January, which allowed me to tally them up and use the results to help us with our seed orders and field plans for the 2005 season.

Generally, people expressed a great deal of satisfaction with the quantity and frequency of most of the vegetables on the list despite a dismally wet and “un-sunny” growing season. Understandably, people were the least satisfied with their shares of cantaloupe (some of you are saying, “Did we get any cantaloupe?”) and, to a lesser degree, the other vine crops:

watermelon, cucumbers, summer and winter squash, and zucchini. All plants in this family require hot, sunny weather to grow well and last summer we had no really hot weather and almost no sun until September. Cukes, summer squash, and zucchini have a fairly short growing cycle so we do two plantings of these. Usually, the second crop is ready close to the time the first planting has succumbed to the striped cucumber beetles and squash bugs. Melons and winter squash take a long growing season to produce one crop. It’s a race to get ripe fruits before mildew kills the vines. With winter squash, fully ripe fruit is not only critical for a full, sweet flavor, but also for the outer skin to “harden off” so they will keep well. In wet years we end up with quite a lot of unripe squash, especially butternuts that Liz can’t bear to till under. We gave people “green” (unripe) butternuts in the shares last fall with instructions to eat them like spaghetti squash. Absolutely no one commented on the green butternuts on the questionnaire so we don’t know if you liked them or not! The good September weather helped us get better winter squash than we expected but the melons never did well. Truth be told, melons are so tough to grow in NYS, it hardly seems worth the effort. But we can’t seem to resist planting them every year, hoping that maybe this year conditions will be just right.

The next most-wanted-more crop was the edamame, or green soybeans. This crop is fairly easy to grow in a wide range of weather conditions but picking all those tiny pods is the logistical problem. Mechanical pickers are VERY expensive and certainly not justifiable for the amount of soybeans we grow. I think of them as a little treat a couple of times a season (instead of a staple veggie in my diet) and feel very appreciative of the members who were at the

farm on the days they were picked.

I am pleased to see we are gaining every year on supplying more satisfactory amounts of shelling and snow peas in the shares. People would still like more sugar snap peas and we will try to accommodate them this year. One variety of sugar snaps germinated very poorly in 2004 so we will double the planting rate in each row and hope for the best.

I am also pleased to see more people are satisfied with the amount of sweet corn they received in 2004, though with corn, it’s always the more the merrier! This crop requires good amounts of rain in the summer (which we had!) and an extra side-dressing of fertilizer to produce full ears. Most of our crops grow well with just the composted horse manure we add to the beds and the cover crops we till into the soil. Corn really needs an extra boost of nutrients so we purchase organic bagged fertilizer for it. “Side-dressing” means we run a line of fertilizer down each row of corn when the plants are knee-high and work it in while we’re cultivating for weed control. We will do two plantings of sweet corn again this summer.

We will double our row feet of both Brussels sprouts and celery this year in response to requests for more. Both of these are late season crops but we can offer them more times in the late fall. We will try treating our Brussels sprouts seeds with hot water this year before planting. The black rot that looks so unsightly on them is apparently a seed-borne disease.

Many people asked for rhubarb more often. Rhubarb is a perennial plant that should only be harvested in the spring. Approximately one-third of the stems must be left on the plant to nourish the root system for the following year. We continue to expand the rhubarb beds by dividing the bigger plants and

replanting the root stock.

I was very surprised that 25 people said they were satisfied with the amount of tomatoes they received last year. Most of your tomatoes came from the new hoop house we built. We ripped out 2 1/2 beds of field tomatoes when the farm was hit with late blight. We had planted many new (for us) varieties of heirloom tomatoes to try out on you last year. We still have the seeds and will try them again this year.

I was interested to see that 12 people wanted onions more often and 10 asked for a larger amount in the share. For years we have been alternating garlic and onions every week in the fall shares. Eight people wanted garlic less often, eight wanted it more often, and seven wanted larger quantities than our usual two or three heads. An equal number of people (25) were satisfied with garlic and onions as

given. Maybe we can continue to alternate weeks giving them to everybody and offer them as a choice with something else on the off weeks.

We are planning to have more fall leeks this year and also plan to double the amount of carrots and leeks we over-winter for the spring of 2006.

It's always fun to read people's written comments under the "Please also grow" heading. "More cilantro!" "Less cilantro!" "Smaller bunches of cilantro more often." "More thyme." "More parsley." (x 3) "Get rid of the herbs!" We also have requests to grow southern crops like yams, sweet potatoes, and okra that are even trickier than melons in our climate. Okra also has to be picked daily to be edible, which we don't have the labor to do (sorry). But we will be honoring the request for jalapenos. One person asked for more ripe and less green

peppers in the shares. We grow peppers in a hoop house so we can reliably get ripe peppers even in low light conditions like last summer. We also participated in a Cornell field trial of many pepper varieties, the goal being a bell pepper that produces abundant, early ripe peppers in the field. We selected three or four pepper varieties that met the criteria (and also tasted very good) for the researchers to save seed from and grow out again this year. Hopefully, in a few years' time, we can grow lots of ripe peppers for you in the field.

Again, thank you to all who gave us your feedback on the questionnaire. We aim to keep you as happy as we can given the limits of our climate. And, at long last, asparagus will be coming to you from the farm this year!



Genesee Valley Organic Community Supported Agriculture  
Preserving Peacework Project pledge

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your address: \_\_\_\_\_

YOU MAY CHOOSE TO SEND A GIFT TODAY FOR ANY AMOUNT  
OR MAKE A PLEDGE FOR LARGER CONTRIBUTIONS.

I have enclosed a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_to preserve Peacework.

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Please remind me of my 2005 Pledge of \$\_\_\_\_\_and my 2006 pledge of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**The GVOCSA Preserving Peacework Committee, the farmers of Peacework Farm and the Genesee Land Trust thank you for your gift.**

*Your gift is tax-deductible. Please make check out to Genesee Land Trust and mail to:  
Genesee Land Trust, 500 East Avenue, Suite 200, Rochester, NY 14607*

# 2005 Budget Page 1

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Thank you.

# 2005 Budget Page 2

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Thank you.

## Core Group Changes

GVOCSA is extremely fortunate to enjoy continuity of stewardship within the organization. Many Core members have served for years, often performing multiple tasks if asked. It is a shining example of a central value of GVOCSA (both literally and figuratively): Community.

But, just like the seasons, change is inevitable. We bid a fond farewell to some and a hearty welcome to others. This year we offer our sincere thanks to the following members who have served so well in our Core group:

**Barbara Mitchell** – Barbara worked mostly behind the scenes, making sure the newsletter got from the printer and into member's hands in a timely manner. Other commitments have dictated that she take a step back. On behalf of GVOCSA, thank you, Barbara, for your hard work. Closer to home, Mark and I will miss you.

**Judy Emerson** – Dedicated people like Judy are the glue that's held GVOCSA together over the past 17 years and provided the solid foundation upon which we continue to grow. Judy was our co-Treasurer for over 10 years, providing quiet, steady leadership in a critical role. Many of you have seen and spoken with Judy at the sign-up meetings over the years. Personally, I only had a year of Core meetings to work with Judy, but her steadying influence and experience were evident on many occasions. I hope that as Treasurer Emeritus we'll have access to Judy's knowledge and experience for many years to come. Please accept our sincere thanks for everything you've done, Judy.

Stepping in to Core group roles this season are the following:

**Marilyn Ajavananda** – Marilyn has taken over newsletter mailing responsibilities and she's already a

## GVOCSA and the Internet

GVOCSA has a number of excellent resources on the internet. Our website is located at:

<http://www.gvocsa.org>

There you can find the squirrel bulk form, 2005 signup info, recipes, news and events, schedules for the farm and distribution, past newsletters, and much more!

Also, GVOCSA has an electronic mailing list to which you can subscribe. This is a wonderful way to receive timely information regarding special orders, news from the farm, recipes and special events right in your e-mail inbox! Also, it provides a method of actively conversing with the membership. To join, point your browser to:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gvocsa/>

grizzled veteran, having seen to it that the January newsletter reached everyone in a very timely fashion. Welcome, Marilyn!

**Nora Dimmock** – Nora has graciously stepped into the job of Co-treasurer. She had previously been a Sunday distribution coordinator. Welcome, Nora!

**Irene Bayer** – Irene has agreed to take Nora's place as a Sunday distribution coordinator. Thanks, Irene, and welcome!

**Liza Robbins Theuman** – Liza has agreed to become our Inreach coordinator, a new position at GVOCSA. One of her responsibilities will be to contact new members throughout the season, making sure they feel welcome and answering any questions they may have. Welcome, Liza!

We also need another Inreach coordinator to share the workload with Liza. If you are interested please contact a Core member.

## Politics of Food

Are you a member yet?

GVOCSA began as a project of Politics of Food Program, Inc. and we are still intimately connected. We share the vision of a sustainable food system that supports farmers, consumers, and the environment.

As the urban sponsor of the GVOCSA, Politics of Food continues 30 years of education & advocacy, working with youth in our Rochester Roots School - Community Garden program, sharing information through our newsletter, and working toward a healthy, local food system.

Please join us by sending \$25 to:

**Politics of Food**  
**121 N. Fitzhugh St., Rochester, NY 14614**

# **Core Member Directory**

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Thank you.



OPEN  
SEVEN DAYS  
M-F 8-8  
Sat 9-6  
Sun 11-6

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