Saving the Farms that Feed Us

Giving hope to farms throughout the region

Stuart’s Fruit Farm, the Oldest Farm in Westchester is Protected – Forever.
~ 4 ~

Six Ways You Can Support Local Farms
~ 5 ~

EXCLUSIVE
Betsy Stuart’s Apple Crisp Recipe
~ 6 ~
Dear Friends,

AS I TOURED a small Westchester farm earlier this month, brightly colored free-range chickens scurried about my feet, micro-greens were sprouting in the hoop house, and the season’s organic tomato crop was in the ground and looking lush. This farm dates back to the 19th century, with the original farmhouse a stately 18th century farmer’s stagecoach stop. I was moved by the owner’s clear love for their land, and desire to keep it from being converted to residential development—its likely fate in Westchester County. Having recently come off of the high of completing the preservation of the much larger Stuart’s Trust Farm in Somers (see story on pp. 4-5), I was all the more motivated for Westchester Land Trust (WLT) to provide as much assistance to these farm owners as possible.

Westchester Land Trust has prioritized the preservation of farmland throughout our 30-year history, and many of our 206 conservation easements allow farming activities. This special edition newsletter highlights our farmland protection efforts. We are excited to share with you our strategies for identifying and preserving farmland and the ways in which we support local farmers and growers. Your generous support of WLT affords us opportunities to partner with American Farmland Trust (p. 6), Biocentric Food Association (p. 8), Scenic Hudson (p. 5) and other groups prioritizing the protection of farms.

As you read these stories, we hope you will be inspired to get involved in this work. Contribute to a specific farmland protection project! Volunteer with us at Sugar Hill Farm! Get to know a farmer at your local farmer’s market! Plant natives in your garden to attract pollinators! Your role in farmland protection is an important and powerful one. Together we can - and are - making a big difference in the preservation of farmland - the heart and soul of our region.

Thank you,

Lori Ensinger
President

THIS YEAR, Westchester Land Trust is highlighting 30 of our influencers who are deeply committed to protecting natural resources, including farmland, in your communities. We are pleased to feature stories about eleven of these influencers in this newsletter and are featuring their names in yellow. They are Ellen Best, Beth Crowell, Doug DeCandia, Frank Fox, Colin Greene, Scott O’Rourke, Ellen Reimer, Norma Silva, Betsy Lifschultz, Doug DeCandia, and Bob Stuart. We appreciate and thank all who have made our first 30 years successful and look to the future with excitement and gratitude.

SINCE 2016, Westchester Land Trust has partnered with Bedford Hills resident Colin Greene, founder and principal of Atmosphere Academy, a Charter School in the Bronx. Throughout the school year, Atmosphere Academy students get hands-on, experiential learning opportunities about local agriculture, how food grows and farmland ecology through visits to Sugar Hill Farm and WLT preserves. Thank you for supporting WLT and helping us foster the next generation of environmental leaders and farmers through programs like these!

Join a Pollinator Pathway Community!

D reams of pollinator enthusiasts unite us for a Pollinator Pathways workshop hosted by the Hudson to Housatonic, Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP). The June workshop generated interest in connected habitats for native pollinators. New strategic conservation priority maps are being used to identify where future pollinator pathways should be created.

Contact Kat Deasy (RCP - westchesterlandtrust.org) to learn how you can join this fascinating workshop and HhRCP@org to learn about our regional conservation work.

WHAT’S ALL THE BUZZ ABOUT?

WLT supporters share their tips and ways that we can all help our pollinating friends

IF YOU ENJOY FOOF, you can thank pollinators including bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. The American Farmland Trust (AFT) reports that bees pollinate approximately 75 percent of all the fruits, nuts and vegetables grown in the United States. Unfortunately, pollinator populations are declining at alarming rates due to factors including a changing climate, pesticides and parasites.

ARE THERE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP RELIEVE POLLINATORS’ PLETH? ABSOLUTELY!

WLT Board Member and Bedford-based green thumb gardener Beth Crowell, fills her backyard with native flowers that keep bees and butterflies buzzing. Beth’s garden includes native dogwood trees and flowering spirea bushes.

The monarch butterfly population in North America has declined by over 90% in the last 20 years so our newest Board Member and avid gardener Norma Silva beautified green spaces at her hq in Yonkers by planting native milkweed in raised beds. Milkweed is the sole monarch butterfly host plant. Norma keeps the plants and soil in her pollinator friendly raised beds as healthy as possible by using native seeds and topping beds by cutting off their tops or digging them out of the ground, as opposed to using herbicides.

When it comes to helping pollinators, Doug DeCandia, Feeding Westchester’s Food Growing Project Coordinator, says “less is more.” With this in mind, Doug says homeowners and renters with yards can move their lawns to a higher level of growth. This will encourage native plants, such as dandelions and wildflowers, which are sources of food for pollinators, to grow.

Whether you have a large green space, raised beds or a window box planter, Doug says you can attract pollinators by growing native plants such as early yellow violet and yellow jacob’s ladder.

What does it take to be a Pollinator Pathway influencer?

We are looking for influencers who will share their pollinator-friendly tips and stories with our WLT supporters and in our WLT newsletter.

If you or someone you know is a pollinator enthusiast, please let us know. E-mail us at Michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org or call 914-234-6992 ext. 22 to schedule your article.

Thank you, William Taylor, Executive Director

NATURE NUGGET

When you are out in nature and find yourself becoming distressed by poison ivy, oak, or stinging nettles you can reach for the jewelweed plant and slice the stem, then rub its juicy inside on the painful area. This will provide immediate relief and usually prevents further discomfort for most people.

Thank you for your support. WLT and other local growers like Scott O’Rourke and Beth Crowell O’Rourke.

SHARING LAND AND PLANTING SEEDS FOR SUCCESS

Deep Roots Farm is off to a Great Start

Scott O’Rourke, a young farmer, started his farming operation on his family’s property in West Harrison, New York, but soon realized he needed more room to grow. Access to farmland is difficult to come by for young farmers like Scott, who often lack the money to purchase land. After searching for nearly two years, Scott came across an article about WLT, and our role as one of the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network (HVFL)’s partner organizations that are working to ensure the availability of land for new and beginning farmers. We met with Scott to learn about his farming plans and land needs. “Westchester Land Trust was so helpful,” says Scott, continued page 6

CONTACT US!

E-mail: michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org or contact, Michelle Pleim at Michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org or earthshareny.org or call 914-234-6992 ext. 22 or westchesterlandtrust.org
I T IS 4:30 AM. While the sun is still below the horizon, Bob Stuart, a seventh-generation farmer in Somers, New York, gets out of bed to tend to the land on Stuart’s Fruit Farm, the oldest working farm in Westchester County. For nearly two hundred years, the Stuart family has provided produce and dairy that has fed generations of New Yorkers and connected thousands of tristate area residents to nature through locally grown food.

As the sun slowly rises, Bob is already at work tending sections of the 172-acre farm while Betsy, Bob’s wife of nearly 50 years, prepares for a busy day. During the school years, Betsy leads between 150-175 farm tours for children hailing from schools across the region and New York City.

With Betsy as their spirited guide, young visitors come to the farm for generations, hungry to see apple picking and tree cutting on a cider donut or two. The Stuarts have seen many farms in the County close or selling and moving on. “We’ve been passionate about protecting farms and farmland, including Stuart’s, to ensure the land is being taken care of properly. When the ink is dry on the conservation easement, our work has really just begun. We have so many families that leave it to heirs or sell it, but the conservation easement remains tied to the land. So we pledged to protect that land forever. The land may change hands, a landowner can’t do it alone, but the community treasures—forever. The landowner can’t do it alone, but the community treasures—forever. We are truly passionate about protecting farms and farmland, including Stuart’s, to ensure the land is being taken care of properly. When the ink is dry on the conservation easement, our work has really just begun. 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Apple Brown “Betsy”

Brown Betty is a traditional American dessert made from fruit (usually apple, but also berries or pears) and sweetened crumbs. It is usually served with ice cream or whipped cream. Betsy Stuart of Stuart’s Farm shares her top secret tips and prized Apple Brown “Betsy” recipe. Enjoy!

**Recipe Box**

**Apple Brown “Betsy”**

**Recipe Box**

**Ingredients**
- 12 apples peeled, cored and sliced (Betsy recommends Cortland apples)
- 2 TBS cinnamon
- ½ cup flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 stick butter softened (Betsy leaves the stick of butter on the stove to soften while the oven is warming up)

**Directions**
1. Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Arrange slices in the bottom of a lightly greased large baking dish.
3. Pour ½ cup of hot water on top of the apples.
4. Mix flour, sugar, butter and cinnamon together until crumbly.
5. Place mixture on top of apples. Feel free to sprinkle more cinnamon if you’d like.
6. Bake at 350 for one hour.
7. Serve with ice cream or whipped cream.

**Deep Roots Farm: continued from page 3**

“They introduced me to farmers in the area and to Dick Button, Westchester resident and Olympic figure skating legend.” Dick owns farmland and was seeking a farmer to keep his land in agricultural production. Within a few months, Scott and Dick drafted an agreement allowing Scott and Stormie, his wife and fellow farmer, to operate Deep Roots Farm on 1 ½ acres of Dick’s property. Scott and Stormie successfully farmed on Dick’s land, thanks to the support of their customers, WLT, and Dick’s generosity.

The O’Rourkes, along with their newborn baby girl, spread their wings and moved Deep Roots Farm to Hudson, New York, and then Copake, before deciding to relocate back to Westchester County. You can now find Scott, Stormie, and their happy toddler farming at Ryder Farm in Brewster. “We’re having a great year and are looking forward to harvesting a ton of heirloom tomatoes in August” says Scott. We encourage you to visit John Jay Homestead and Piermont Farmers Market to purchase Deep Roots Farm produce. You can also purchase Ryder Farm produce at Brewster’s Farm Market and the Union Square Green Market in New York City.

Are you thinking about becoming a farmer? Scott recommends young people interested in pursuing farming visit established farms and learn about the business of running a farm. “Ask local farmers about their operating procedures and how they effectively and efficiently manage their farm” says Scott. “And connect with organizations like WLT. They were incredibly helpful and supportive of young farmers like me.” If you’re a farm owner, please see our list of Purchase of Development Rights criteria at right to learn more about how you may be able to permanently preserve your land for agricultural use.

Visit [https://www.instagram.com/deeprootsfarmny/](https://www.instagram.com/deeprootsfarmny/) to learn more about Deep Roots Farm. Contact Kasa Wilain at Kasa@westchesterlandtrust.org to learn more about WLT’s Farmland Match Program and the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network.

**WLT LAND DONOR WORKING THE LAND**

We are thankful to Frank Fox and his wife, the late Evan Fox, for donating their land to Westchester Land Trust. For more than 50 years, avid outdoorsman Frank Fox has explored nature and farmed the land right in his own backyard. Since 1978, Frank has tilled maple trees for syrup on his property. Over the years, Frank has expanded his operation from a casual pastime with a few taps to an interlocking system consisting of more than 100 taps, connected to an intricate system of tubing, all leading to the impressive sugar house he had built on his land. We wish Frank best of luck during this year’s maple tapping season!
FIELD DAYS ON THE FARM: SUGAR HILL FARM VOLUNTEER SESSIONS
Let’s Get Growing for Our Neighbors in Need!
All ages welcome.
SUGAR HILL FARM, 403 HARRIS RD, BEDFORD HILLS
10AM – 2PM, RAIN OR SHINE
2ND & 4TH THURSDAYS & A SATURDAY!
AUGUST 14 & 28    |   SEPTEMBER 1 (SAT)
SEPTEMBER 11 & 25    |   OCTOBER 9

CONSERVATION HAPPY HOUR!
CAPTAIN LAWRENCE BREWERY,
444 SAW MILL RIVER RD, ELMSFORD, NY 10523
THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 6PM
A Happy Hour for all who care about agriculture, conservation and fine ales.
*No registration necessary.

WELLNESS WALK & GUIDED MEDITATION
PINECROFT PRESERVE, WACCABUC, NY
WEDNESDAY | AUGUST 22 | 10:00 – 11:30AM
Join Reiki Master/Teacher Betty Sue Hanson and experience the positive mind-body changes that accrue in those who practice mindful walking in nature. Learn how to focus on the present moment and gain the skills needed to successfully practice mindful walking on your own.

NATURE MEDITATION WITH LYNN TROTTA OF THE SAGE FIRE INSTITUTE
WESTCHESTER WILDERNESS WALK / ZOFNASS FAMILY PRESERVE, POUND RIDGE, NY
SATURDAY AUGUST 25, 9:00-10:30AM
In this 90 minute program, led by Lynn Trotta from the Sagefire Institute, you’ll be given the inspiration and essential routines to connect more deeply with nature, enabling you to amplify the power of this powerful meditation technique.

FAMILY FARM FESTIVAL
STUART’S FRUIT FARM
62 GRANITE SPRINGS RD, SOMERS, NY
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 | 6-7PM
The oldest working farm in Westchester County, Stuart’s Fruit Farm, has been protected forever! Join us to celebrate!! Enjoy hayrides, food trucks, live music, homemade apple crisp, family-friendly games, raffles and more. Admission is FREE and food will be available for purchase. Rain date is Sunday, September 9, 4-7PM.

ROCKY HILLS ENVIRONMENTAL LECTURE SERIES:
HEALTHY GARDEN HABITATS
NATIVE PLANT CENTER OF WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE, VALHALLA, NY
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25TH FROM 5:30-9:30PM
Join author Barbara Paul Robinson at the Rocky Hills Environmental Lecture Series where she will discuss and sell copies of her new book, Heroes of Horticulture: Americans Who Transformed the Landscape.

All above events are free and open to the public. Please contact Kat Deely at 914.234.6992 ext 15 or kat@westchesterlandtrust.org for more info and to RSVP.

BIONUTRIENT FOOD ASSOCIATION (BFA) MEETINGS
SUGAR HILL FARM
THIRD THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH
Healthy food comes from healthy plants, and healthy plants come from biologically vital, ecologically regenerative, and carbon-rich soils. Transferring carbon to soils not only forms the foundation for good soil health, it also helps reverse climate change. WLT is proud to host the Westchester/NYC chapter of the Bionutrient Food Association (BFA) at our Sugar Hill HQ and support BFA members as they develop sustainable farming practices to combat climate change and produce crops that are flavorful, aromatic, and highly nutritious.

We invite you to join Doug DeCandia and WLT Advisory Board Member Ellen Best for a monthly BFA meeting. Local growers, gardeners and anyone who may be interested in improving the quality of foods, which is the mission of BFA, through regenerative farming practices, are encouraged to attend! Visit https://westchesterlandtrust.org/calendar/ for the complete 2018 BFA meeting calendar.

Your Commitment Means the LAND to Us.

I would like to contribute:
☐ $1,000 ☐ $500 ☐ $250 ☐ $50 ☐ $25 ☐ other $  
☐ My gift is in honor/memory of  
☐ I have enclosed/will send a matching gift form from my employer.  
☐ I have remembered the Westchester Land Trust in my will.  
☐ I would like to make a ☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Bi-annual pledge of  
☐ I wish my gift to remain anonymous.  

For other ways to give, including by credit card, visit westchesterlandtrust.org

Name
Address
City State Zip
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Enclosed is my check payable to Westchester Land Trust.

Entering my email indicates my consent to receive occasional enews from Westchester Land Trust. We never share this information.

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