

Living Energy Farm

September- October 2013 Newsletter

Third Annual Land Day Party

Despite a last minute rescheduling due to inclement weather, LEF's birthday party- which we call Land Day, the anniversary of when we bought the land- was a big success. About 40 people came out, many of whom had not seen the land before. Highlights of the party included a game of "Vegetable Twister"- invented by our intern Stephanie- on the recently constructed house foundation; a delicious chili dinner; and a late night acoustic dance party around a bonfire, under a starry sky.



Valerie celebrates Land Day- and fall equinox- by adjusting the solar panels.

We had a lot of fun showing off our progress to friends old and new. We've come a long way in three years- built a productive farm, completed a half mile of erosion control and road upgrades, framed the kitchen, built the house foundation, and experimented with many of the technologies we will need to make our project work. Giving tours puts all this in perspective and keeps us excited about how much we've done, and what we plan to do. If you haven't gotten a tour of LEF recently, come on out! We'll be happy to show you around.

Louisa Baptists Pitch In

September 27th was a day of service for the Louisa Baptist Church, when over a hundred members of the parish worked on service projects throughout Louisa county. We were happy to have 20 of them come out to LEF, to help out with the farm and on construction. Our volunteers were cheerful, efficient and willing to do anything we asked of them! The exchange was mutually beneficial; all who came out had a good time while we got a lot done. We sent our volunteers home with as many vegetables as they would accept.

It was exciting to connect with our local service community, and we'd like to continue to grow this relationship in ways that will benefit all of Louisa. The church has an active Youth Ministry which does outreach programs to youth in need throughout Louisa county. As our farm becomes more established, we'd like to set up educational programs through the church where local youth can experience being part of a working farm.

Interns Depart

As the growing season winds down, Living Energy Farm is saying farewell to our 2013 intern crew. Carrie and Rachel left at the beginning of October, and Stephanie and Andy a few weeks later. Keith is staying on to help us with the continuing work of construction. We're grateful for his dedication, and his cold hardiness!

Carrie has headed south for the winter, and is currently traveling in New Zealand. She may return next year for another season with LEF, but her plans are still in flux. Lucky for us, Rachel is not going so far away- she is moving to Woodfolk, a cooperative house in Charlottesville, and will still be coming out to see us on weekends. Andy and Stephanie plan to spend the winter with family in Philadelphia. After that they plan on exploring membership at Earthhaven Ecovillage.



Andy hones his construction skills on the composting toilet.



A whole lot of seed fermenting!

Seed Growing: 2013 in Review

Thanks to our dedicated crew of interns and volunteers, the 2013 seed growing season was our most productive yet. Most of our varieties performed very well. Highlights included Amish Moon and Stars watermelon, which had excellent flavor and production despite the cool wet conditions; Seminole pumpkin, an old favorite of ours which has outstanding disease resistance; and Jimmy Nardello's drying pepper, which has all the flavor of a hot pepper without any of the heat- it has to be tasted to be believed.

With the incessant rain, this summer was a particularly bad one for fungal diseases which can shut down production in tomatoes and cucurbits (plants in the cucumber family, including squash and melons). A few of our varieties had low yields or were near failures because of downy mildew. Abraham Lincoln tomato proved to be a very disease resistant variety- although the plants had some blighted leaves, they continued to crank out tomatoes right up until frost.

All this rain and disease has made us very grateful for okra, corn and sweet potatoes, none of which are bothered much by foliar disease. Our sweet potato harvest is now underway. After all the taters are dug and cured, we will have a taste test of the 11 varieties we're growing this year. Watch our next newsletter for the full report, and we'll let you know what to plant next year!

Upcoming Workshops

On Saturday, November 16, we will conduct a Green Building workshop at LEF, with an emphasis on passive and active solar design. The workshop will start at 10 AM and will be led by Alexis. Please RSVP alexis # at # cone.v.org. LEF is at 1022 Bibb Store Road, Louisa VA, 23093.

Follow the road back (hop over the gate with the No Trespassing sign if it is closed), right at the Tee.

Living Energy Farm is a project to build a demonstration farm, community, and education center in Louisa county that uses no fossil fuels. For more information see our website www.livingenergyfarm.org, or contact us at livingenergyfarm@gmail.com or 434 409 6006. Donations are tax deductible.