

Living Energy Farm

October, November 2014 Newsletter

Finishing the Harvest, Welcoming New Members

Seminole squash are a wonderful, disease resistant, vigorous, delicately flavored squash that we grow for seed. This year we had an excellent harvest. One Tuesday, October 7th, we decided it was time to bring the Seminole harvest into storage before the frost. Alexis and a very pregnant Debbie made the one mile trek from Magnolia to LEF with Rosa in the bike trailer where we were joined by Adam and Nova. We spent some hours loading the trailer. We had hoped to get it all in one load, but realized at some point we were nearing the point of dangerously overloading the trailer, so we stopped, and headed back uphill with the tractor and trailer heavily loaded.

At the front of the property, we swapped Rosa to the bike trailer. Alexis took the tractor to Magnolia house, and Deb brought Rosa on the bike. We unloaded the couple thousand pounds of squash into the basement for further eating and seed processing while Deb cooked dinner.

At 2:30 AM that night (Wed AM, Oct 8), we realized that Debbie's "practice contractions" were evolving toward the real thing. At 2 PM on Wed, midwife Nancy arrived as Deb started having regular, stronger contractions. During the birth, Rosa kept patting Momma on the belly and saying "It's okay Momma, the baby's going to come out soon." At 4:29 PM, Nikita did just that. His color was great. He weighed nine pounds fifteen ounces, and has a full head of dark hair. He started nursing almost immediately. He's a healthy, happy baby. He eats a lot. Our youngest member. We also welcome Nova, our newest adult member, from New York. She has been working hard to help us bring in the harvest (tossing squash in the photo), and we are pleased to have her on-board.





Completing Our Zero Fossil Fuel Kitchen

We have been working at Living Energy Farm to complete our zero fossil fuel kitchen. The kitchen is large, so we can support residents, interns and guests in the future. The kitchen is separate from the main house in typical southern “dog trot” style. That approach to construction allows farmers to process food, such as canning tomatoes, in late summer, without dumping all that excess heat into the house.

We have put solar hot water panels on the roof. (See photo.) These are “flat plate” collectors donated by Ken Schaal of Commonwealth Solar. They are a very efficient form of solar water heating whereby fluid is pumped to the roof on a sunny day, then heat is stored in a tank for use hours or days later.



We have finished stuccoing the interior walls. Ken brought out his cellulose blower, and we insulated the ceiling. (Thank you Ken!) We are cleaning up the windows and doors in preparation for painting and finishing. The biggest job left to finish the kitchen will be completing the construction of the solar roof that will generate hot air that will pass under the floor to heat the building.

Workshops

We will have some **Green Building** workshops when time and weather allow as we are working on our house. We will send



out emails to alert you of those workshops if you are on our email list. You can join our email list at livingenergyfarm.org.

Organic Orchard Planning and Pruning

Everyone LOVES sweet, homegrown fruit! To have your own fruit, you have to know how to plan a successful orchard. The workshop will be led by Michael McConkey of Edible Landscaping and Alexis Zeigler of Living Energy Farm. For 35 years, Michael has run Edible Landscaping, a successful nursery that focuses on “less care” plants that don't need pesticides to thrive. Alexis has lived on fruit-producing farms all of his life, and teaches propagation classes every spring (see next paragraph).

When: **Saturday, Feb 21**, 9 AM to 3 PM, 912 Woodfolk Dr., Charlottesville Va, 22902 Cost: \$50 suggested donation, \$25 minimum. Contact: Debbie Piesen, livingenergyfarm@gmail.com, 540-967-0433. Mail checks to 217 Fredericksburg Ave, Louisa VA 23093. See flyer at <http://www.livingenergyfarm.org/workshops/flyer2.pdf>

Fruit Grafting and Propagation All Day Intensive

Participants will learn how to prepare fruit tree seeds for planting, how root cuttings, and how to graft using numerous grafting techniques. This is our most sought-after annual workshop. Reserve your slot before it gets full! When: **Saturday April 25 AND Sunday April 26**, 9 AM to 5 PM. This is NOT a two-part workshop. It is one workshop recurring on two dates so we can make room for more people. The workshop will be at Magnolia House, 217 Fredericksburg Ave, Louisa VA, 23093. Contact Debbie Piesen, livingenergyfarm@gmail.com, 540-967-0433. Mail checks to 217 Fredericksburg Ave, Louisa VA 23093. Cost: \$50. (Our overhead is fixed and significant, sorry, no sliding scale on this one.) See flyer at <http://www.livingenergyfarm.org/workshops/flyer2015.pdf>

Eating off the Land in the Fall

Late fall is a fun (and relatively easy) time to experiment with 100% homegrown meals. Our meals start with a starch- usually potatoes, sweet potatoes, or cornbread made with homegrown corn. Vegetables are easy. Greens (collards and kale) grow all winter in our area. If it's too cold to go outside to pick greens, we reach for our squash, cabbage, rutabagas, carrots, or onions in storage.

Proteins and fats are a little more difficult. Most local diets rely heavily on meat and animal products. While it is more profitable to grow beef than beans, it takes a lot more space. We feel that a plant-based diet with a modest amount of animal products is more sustainable and healthy than expecting to eat meat at every meal. While we are far from providing all our protein and fat needs from the land, we got a start this year by growing a delicious crop of peanuts for eating. We also grew cowpeas (the easiest dry beans to grow in the south) only to watch them be demolished by deer. Turns out it's easier to plant cowpeas and eat venison than to raise your own animals for meat. Last of all is dessert. Our favorite treat this time of year is a rich, sweet persimmon. Or if we're in the mood for some baking, a



sweet potato soufflé, made with homegrown sweet potatoes, wild pecans, milk from Twin Oaks Community, and eggs from Sapling Community. Yum!

Real Solutions for Real Problems

Most “solutions” to the fossil fuel economy are expensive and not accessible to the average person. A big part of our mission at LEF is to provide alternatives that are cheap and therefore relevant. Imagine a life free of corporate dependence -- no utilities bills, no car insurance, healthy and delicious food without huge grocery bills.

We do not presume that we have solutions for all of the world's problems, but we do feel that environmental answers must be accessible to be relevant. We believe we can have our project operational in 2015. We can finish the house, make the woodgas tractor run, and live on the land without fossil fuel. In the long run, we intend to be fully economically self-sufficient. But being a prototype zero fossil fuel community means we either have to get donations, or our startup is going to take a very long time.

We are not going to be able to finish our house without some more support from our generous donors. In our next newsletter, we hope to have an itemized list of specific needs for which you can contribute. For this holiday season, if you are thinking about giving to a worthwhile cause, please consider us. We will use your donations to support our educational program. That in turn will allow us to finish building our fossil fuel free demonstration house. Thank you for thinking about us.

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. Donations are tax deductible.