



SOUTH BERKSHIRE FARM BULLETIN

LATE WINTER MEETING PLANNED

Only one hundred years ago, the Berkshires were made up of 85% farmlands and 15% forests. Today, forests have reclaimed 85% of the landscape and what little farmland remains is being lost to developers. Once our region was virtually self-sufficient in food. Now we are importing over 75% of our food from other parts of the country. Over the next ten years rising transportation and energy costs will force food prices higher. It seems that we in the Berkshire region should begin an effort to re-establish our strong agricultural tradition with an aim towards increased local food production and the end of dependence on imported foods.

At present there seems to be little incentive to farm in the Southern Berkshire area. Meager profits are eaten up by high property taxes. Land values have escalated making it difficult, if not impossible, to buy land for farm use. Young people who want to establish new farms are unable to do so. It is difficult to compete with the low prices of mass production in the West and Midwest. Markets for local goods are few and unorganized.

SHAREcroppers Agricultural group would like to take an active role in changing this. Our Bulletin was a first step towards improving communication between farmers and an attempt to link producers and consumers. We are now planning a late Winter meeting which would enable those interested in agriculture in the Southern Berkshires to get together to discuss a variety of issues of mutual concern. If farmers organize and pool resources and ideas, perhaps some of the problems of farming could be resolved.

At the late Winter meeting there are many possible topics for discussion.

There are the broad issues of land prices, procuring new markets for farm goods, implementing new marketing techniques. It would also be of value to hear from those who are involved in unusual or experimental projects such as vineyards, berry growing, maple syruping, extended season techniques, organic pest control, cheese making, etc. The meeting will be designed to meet the needs of the agricultural community as you see it. Please send in your suggestions and watch for the next South Berkshire Farm Bulletin with details of the meeting.



NOTES OF INTEREST

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is offering free seedlings of fruit and nut trees and berry bushes to any community based organization which can come up with a good proposal for their tending and utilization. Seedlings must be grown on public land. Contact the Cooperative Extension Service, 46 Summer Street, Pittsfield, (413) 448-8285 for details.

Monterey has been chosen to initiate a pilot program to reduce the town's dependency on outside food sources by 15%. Suggested goals include one or more community gardens and a sprouting jar in every home'. Workshops, films and training programs will be on-going and open to the public. For further information contact Ellen Pearson, editor of the MONTEREY NEWS, (413) 528-1988.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Local apples by the pound, peck, and bushel. Fresh pressed cider without preservatives. Several varieties of squash. Root crops, many grown locally. Corn Crib, Rte. 7, Sheffield.

Custom Wool Carding. Rose Carding Co. 528-9387.

Tractor mounted rototilling, plowing and firewood skidding. Vincent Scutellaro. 528-9244.

Stark Brothers fruit and nut trees. Ward's Nursery, Rte 7, Great Barrington. Open 9-5.

For Sale: Hay, Straw, Rye Seed, direct from Riverhill Farms, Great Barrington. 528-0828.

Wanted: Bio-dynamic grains: winter wheat, spring clear, and rye. High season usage: one short ton weekly. Will pay top price. Village Bakery, 159 Main St., Philmont, NY. (518) 672-7131.

Quality colored fleeces and lambs. Rose Sheep Farm, P.O. Box 298, Great Barrington. 528-0656.

Herbs and our own herb products. Country Herbs, Stockbridge. 298-3884.

Pure Maple Syrup and hay for sale. The Ripleys, Corner Farm, Beech Hill Rd., Blandford. 357-8829.

Farm Fresh Produce. UCF feeds and grains. Lee Farm Supply, Rte. 102, Lee. 243-2544.

Experienced orchardist will prune and manage fruit trees, mow fields and brush, set and repair fencing, cut trees and clear. Has tractor and can generally advise and implement work on your garden, orchard or fields. John Ingersoll. 528-0620.

A full line of natural foods is complemented by local vegetables and herbs at Berkshire Coop Market, Rosseter St., Great Barrington. Call 528-9267 to sell your produce.

ATTENTION VEGETABLE EATERS

SHAREcroppers would like to help coordinate bulk orders for local produce. This fall a Great Barrington food buying club received a ton of carrots for winter storage that was pre-ordered from a Monterey farmer. The carrots stayed crisp and sweet and found their way into Christmas salads and soups of buying club members. The Spring South Berkshire Farm Bulletin will contain a pre-order form for produce in quantity. Local growers should let SHAREcroppers know what they can supply on a regular basis and at what price.

BULLETIN SUBSCRIPTIONS

WE NEED MORE SUBSCRIBERS!! TELL YOUR FRIENDS. The Bulletin is published 6 times a year. Subscribers are entitled to one free ad per issue with a \$1 fee for additional ads. Subscription cost is \$5 payable to SHAREcroppers, Box 345, Monterey, MA 01245.



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