

Living Energy Farm July, August, September 2014 Newsletter

Living Energy Farm Needs You!

Have you ever thought about helping Living Energy Farm? Well, now we have a warm, dry place for you to stay. After the relentless cold and wet of last winter, facing the prospect that our project could come to a halt this winter, we worked with our supporters to gain the use of a



house in the town of Louisa, one mile from LEF. (We call the house Magnolia, in honor of the massive Magnolia tree in the yard.) This will allow us to keep the project moving through the coming cold months. If you have any carpentry or mechanical skills, that's great. If not, we can still use your help. Now we can offer you a warm bed. Much better than a tent in winter!

We are, in all honesty, stretched pretty thin right now. With Debbie and Alexis expecting their new baby any time now, we are trying to bring in the

harvest, keep construction moving, and take care of the daily necessities of life. In our last newsletter, we put out a call for support. The response was tremendous. We have had numerous people come by and pitch in. That has been a huge help! Now with Magnolia in place, we can support more people through the winter. We have a lot to learn from each other. Consider giving us a visit! If we are slow to communicate, be patient. We have our hands pretty full.

Earthheart

Our main house at LEF, Earthheart, is coming along. We have it “dried in,” meaning the roof, windows, doors, and sheathing are done, so the building can go through the winter without damage. Thanks to some glorious volunteer crews from our local Louisa Baptist Church and the APO Service Fraternity of UVA, the first coat of exterior stucco is largely done. The interior framing is complete. Most of the wiring for our DC electrical system is done. We still need to do



some plumbing, and get the ductwork in place for the solar heating system. Once those utilities are in place, we can put in the ceiling, and the strawbales, then push to completion! We will have a strawbale workshop sometime in the next few months. We will post a note to our lists when that time comes.



Seeds

Our seed harvest is almost finished for the year. This year our crops included corn, okra, watermelons, peppers, squash, and eggplant. We have “contracts” for each of these crops. These contracts are a non-binding agreements we make with the seed companies to produce a certain amount of seed. We will make almost all of our contracts this year, and we will have a significant surplus of some crops/ seeds.



This year we also contracted with seed companies to do variety trials of sweet corn and tomatoes. A variety trial consists of growing many different varieties (usually a few dozen) under identical conditions to compare yield, flavor, disease/insect resistance, and other factors. Our trials included many heirloom favorites, a few hybrids, and some new varieties coming from open-pollinated

plant breeders across the country. Variety trials are a new and exciting line of work for us. They are the first step in the research and development of the best quality open pollinated varieties for organic conditions in our area. We are excited about pursuing this work in more depth next

year, and maybe doing some breeding work as well, in cooperation with our friends at Common Wealth Seed Growers (www.commonwealthseeds.com).



Persimmons

We started picking our first cultivated fruits from trees we grafted on the land just 3 years ago. The photo is of Rosa, our youngest member, holding Yates persimmons. The Ruby persimmons also made a good handful of fruit this year, though they are not ripe yet. Yummy!

People's Climate March -- New York City

Several of us from LEF went to New York City to attend to the People's Climate March on Sept 21. (Lovely train ride.) We tried to get near the front of the march to hand out flyers and talk to people as they marched by, but we never found the front of the march. After many hours of

handing our flyers and talking to people, we never saw the end of the march. Any guesses about number of people attending can only be guesses. Manhattan was swarmed by protesters. One of our supporters in the city made us a beautiful banner and sandwich boards. (I wore one that said "I am Building a Community that Runs Without Fossil Fuel.") A LOT of people were interested in our project. We conducted more than a half dozen interviews with independent film makers, handed our flyers, and spoke to hundreds of people.

The march was huge, diverse, impassioned -- a beautiful display of the desire for a better world. As throngs of students, religious groups, and countless organizations chanting slogans about ending fossil fuel dependency passed by, I was deeply struck by how little understanding exists among the public of exactly what that means. After the march, numerous commentators have made the point that while it is clear what the march was opposed to, it was not clear what it was in favor of. We feel like LEF is an answer to many of the problems caused by fossil fuel, and that is not a small matter. But we cannot expect important truths to magically transmit themselves. Corporations sell their products by communicating in multiple medias at the same time. We have to do something similar -- keep talking about our important truths, over and over again. The most important thing you can do is to start taking your own life in the direction of fossil fuel sobriety, and talking to your friends about it. If we can help you do that, let's see what we can teach each other. Life without fossil fuel is not hard, but we have to show people. We have to convince them. We will have to keep working on that for a long time to come.

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.