

Scattergood Friends School and Farm
Farm Report to the Yearly Meeting
July 2016

Dear Friends,

Many tools now seem so vital to farming. One wonders how we grew food before they existed: the tractor of course and its many implements; the walk-behind rototiller; the many hand tools, most of them for weeding or harvesting; the various trays for seed starting and seeders for planting; even Microsoft Excel, which I often tell people is one of the most valuable tools in our farming system, since it helps us track dates and data so that we might hopefully learn from our experiences and not remake mistakes. But in a challenging season like this one, with spring weather flipped, first warm then cool; an early summer drought followed by periodic rains which preclude field work; rabbits, ground squirrels, thistles and purslane claiming parts of the garden as their own...in seasons like this one the most trusted tool on the Scattergood Farm is the Serenity Prayer:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change
The courage to change the things I can
And the wisdom to know the difference.

We can't make it rain, nor make it stop; we can't rescue the apple buds nor safeguard the peaches. But we can add resiliency through healthy soils, diverse crops and succession plantings. And we can be ready when the skies clear and the gardens dry, to work hard at sowing, cultivating and harvesting. We can recognize the beauty in aching muscles, clean rows and full bins and then rest, eat and play, preparing for whatever comes next.

What steps did we take this past year on the Scattergood Farm?

Ninth and Tenth grade students took part in the inaugural Farm Immersion Program, spending each weekday morning of the first quarter on the farm exploring academic subjects and sustainable agriculture. They harvested and did livestock chores, but also designed and implemented a scientific trial, researched changing demographics in the Iowa landscape, and learned much Spanish, including the words for "carrot," "box," "cows," and "fence." Later, the geometry class studied building siting and design and submitted a recommendation for a new building to house the Farm Immersion Program.

Agricultural Research again served as a capstone science class for several students and allowed them to research and explore topics in agriculture: introducing dairy goats to Scattergood, sustainable beekeeping, soil microbiology sampling, and soldier fly larva production for chicken feed protein supplementation.

May Term classes included constructing a butterfly garden and studying animal behavior, which had students training a chicken to run an obstacle course for a color-coded treat, teaching a pig to sit, and encouraging our very skittish rams to come when called. We also had one student working daily on the Farm during May Term, doing the necessary animal chores while also helping with the gardens and outreach.

These highlights were in addition to our Farm Fun Day which occurs at the end of Orientation, the daily crews, Farm and Prairie Projects and the various other ways that Biology, Agricultural Science and Art classes frequently utilize farm resources.

As we look to the future with our strategic planning, two areas of growth relate directly to the Farm: increasing students' learning opportunities with livestock and developing a summer semester program to take better advantage of the seasonal opportunities on the Farm.

Outreach continued to be a major focus of the Farm as well. We hosted 80 guests as part of a Practical Farmers of Iowa Field Day, welcomed Taproot Nature Experience, Outdoor Adventures Camp, Scattergood Summer Camp, Willowwind School, West Branch Elementary School teachers, University of Iowa Visiting Scholars, Great Peace Marchers, and others who were visiting for Scattergood Weekend, Graduation and a wedding. We also took the Farm on the road, participating in two Farmer Fairs at Iowa City elementary schools, speaking at a publicity event hosted by Pesticide Action Network of North America, hosting two webinars, and consulting with Stone's Throw urban farmers in Minneapolis.

We completed two SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) grants. One allowed us to increase our worm composting capacity, while the other helped us take erodible land out of production and restore it as prairie for pollinator habitat. We continue to use cover crops intensively on our gardens and work hard to build our soil and care for our livestock.

Many people had the courage to make these things happen on the Farm. Ben Bowman has been a steady presence, caring for the livestock, landscape and machines, while Sam Taylor and Brian Ratcliffe are supplying much needed summer support. Mike Severino loves shoveling manure as well as serving as a steady guide in all of the Life Sciences classes. Our cooks—Irving Treadway, Karen Huff, Dana Foster, Thomas Weber, and Stephanie Sheikholeslami continue to transform our farm products into meals in which (most of) the community finds joy and nourishment. Ken Fawcett continues to admirably manage our conventional row crops and freely advises us on all things Farm related. Neighbor Dave Sickles allows us to graze our sheep on his pastures through the summer and fall and the Farm Subcommittee continues to guide us as we find our way forward. Special thanks go to Louis Herbst who recognized immediately the academic potential of the Scattergood Farm and worked hard to help us achieve what was possible.

Not fixating on weird weather, lost crops or weeds are never easy, but I have gotten better at simply appreciating the wonder of working amidst the beauty of the Scattergood Farm. Though the job is often sweaty, dirty, and can feel never-ending, I have found serenity in the rhythms and rightness of what we are trying to do. Perhaps wisdom awaits.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Quee
Farm Manager