

Roots & Sprouts

late winter 2012

News and Ideas from the Belmont Food Collaborative

www.belmontfarmersmarket.org



*Opening Day
June 14th -
rain or shine!*

**Thursday afternoons
1:30 to 7:00 pm
Belmont Center parking lot**

in this issue . . .

Landscaping with Edible Plants
Customer Feedback about the Market
Farming Continues on Ogilby Land
Recipe for Spicy Lamb Chops

Welcome to our first winter issue of ROOTS & SPROUTS. With the incorporation last year of the Belmont Food Collaborative, ROOTS & SPROUTS will now be bringing you news not just about the Farmers' Market, but about the Collaborative's year-round activities. On page 3, check out our upcoming community programs. We also give you the info you'll need to plan an edible landscape this winter in time for spring planting.

Delicious Landscapes

A primer for the Belmont gardener

You may be closer to edible landscaping than you think. Many plants seen as nuisances (or 'weeds') in our gardens, such as dandelion, ground ivy, common plantain, common blue violet and purslane, are actually edible. But if you are in search of more typical delicacies with a planned and less weedy appearance, there is good news: you can augment or replace your ornamental garden plants with equally attractive edible plants.

Prior to planting, analyze your site in order to choose the right plant for the right place. See the information on page 4 for items to consider. A good understanding of your site helps to better group plants with similar light, spatial, water and soil needs. When making a final selection of plants, be sure to pay attention to the fact that some fruiting plants require cross-pollination in order to fruit (such as some cherries, kiwi berries, and apple trees).

Depending upon your spatial and time constraints, and your culinary interests, you can begin your edible landscape on the small side and work upwards. In addition to providing food for you and for local wildlife, edibles add texture and seasonal interest to your garden. Consider adding an almost tropical leafy accent with the large wavy and red-veined leaves of rhubarb or the intricately curled leaves of kale.



Incorporating edibles can be as easy as intermixing low-growing herbs and groundcovers towards the front of your existing beds. Low-growing perennial groundcovers such as strawberry, bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*), lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), lowbush cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*) and lingonberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) can replace typical groundcovers such as pachysandra and vinca.

If you are looking to create an enclosure or divide a space with a hedge, consider a fruiting shrub such as high bush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), currant (*Ribes rubrum*), American cranberry bush (*Viburnum trilobum*), or elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*). Or fill an empty corner of your yard with a larger shrub or small tree such as a serviceberry (*Amelanchier species*), Chicago hardy fig (*Ficus carica*), or a beach plum (*Prunus maritima*). However, beware that the fig will die back in winter.

Architectural alternatives for creating spatial enclosure—such as arbors, pergolas and fences—can also be used as planting structures. These structures are a viable option for smaller gardens or spaces with few or no garden beds. If you plan on growing vines on a structure, ensure that it is sturdy enough to support heavy loads—as some vines (such as Arctic kiwi) become quite heavy over time. Other vine options include grapes, hops, and scarlet runner beans.

(continued on page 4)

Survey Results

Your feedback helps inform future plans

It's been six years, 40 vendors (roughly), 120 market days (more or less), and countless volunteers—rain or shine. So we thought we'd ask you how we're doing!

About 100 of you responded to the Shopper's Survey that we sent out via our e-Newsletter at the end of the 2011 Farmers' Market season. Your observations were resoundingly positive, insightful, and caring. We thought we'd share the results.

We were gratified to know that 98% of respondents gave the Market an overall rating of "positive" or "very positive." Most of you live in Belmont—almost 70%—with the rest coming from adjacent communities, as well as Somerville, Bedford, and Allston.

Your preference about Market closing time—6 pm or 7 pm—was that 32% of you felt that a 6 pm closing time for the entire season would be inconvenient. Sixty-one percent of you thought that a season-long 6 pm close would work just fine. For the past few seasons, the Market has been open until 7 pm from June until Labor Day to take advantage of long summer days, and until 6 pm from Labor Day until Market season close at the end of October. You've given us something to share with our vendors, and think about.

Parking at the Market seems manageable; 64% reported never having a problem finding parking, with 11% sometimes having to search for a space. Biking or walking to the Market is a great alternative.

We encourage Market visitors to take advantage of the Belmont Center stores. Many of them support the Market with gift certificates and thoughtful gestures such as hot tea for our vendors on stormy days. Most of our survey respondents—64%—said they "always" or "sometimes" patronize these businesses on Market days.

Finally, you told us that you get most of your information about the Market from the weekly e-Newsletter, followed by *ROOTS & SPROUTS*, and belmontfarmersmarket.org. We do our best to get late-breaking Market news to you in a timely manner so that you know which vendors will be there.

Your thoughts and opinions mean a great deal to us, and we thank you for your participation. Even though farmers' fields are resting under the snow, the Farmers' Market Committee continues to work and plan throughout the winter so that we can bring you a thoroughly enjoyable seventh season. Only four more months! See you at the Market!

—Evanthia Malliris, BFCI Board of Directors



Photo courtesy Belmont Farmers Market

Free concerts while you shop. Performers appear frequently at the market as a way of showcasing local talent—young and old.



Belmont Food Collaborative Board of Directors

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BFCI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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The Market is a member of the Belmont Center Business Association.



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2012 Events

Upcoming community programs presented by the Belmont Food Collaborative

Pomona Project 2012 Plant Ordering

Order deadline: Saturday, February 25th.
Plant pick-up in late April.

Order edible landscaping plants at wholesale prices. This year's list includes varieties of strawberries, blueberries, currants, blackberries, raspberries, and figs. Check out www.belmontfarmersmarket.org (click on Community) for order forms and more information.

Backyard Chicken Keeping in Belmont

Sunday, March 18th 1:30–3:30
Belmont Public Library, Assembly Room

Belmont allows residents to keep up to 5 hens. Come learn what you need to know to raise chickens and keep them safe and healthy in your backyard. The presenter is Joan Teebagy, longtime chicken keeper who has taught backyard chicken classes both in Belmont and at Codman Community Farm in Lincoln. *Free.*

Community Seed Swap

Sunday, March 18th 3:45–4:45
Belmont Public Library, Assembly Room

Bring your extra vegetable, flower, or fruit seeds to swap for different seeds, and meet other gardeners just in time for Spring! *Free.*

Food for Thought

Belmont's last farm reflects the town's agricultural past

Once filled with market gardens and greenhouses, most of Belmont's land is now covered with houses and asphalt roads in neatly portioned rows. But what people used to call the "Sergi Farm" on Glenn Road has a different story. Something unusual happened to this particular ten acres: The owners, Lydia Ogilby and her family, made the momentous decision that the land should remain undeveloped in perpetuity. The land is now under an Agricultural Preservation Restriction held by the Belmont Land Trust (supported by the American Farmland Trust). In effect, this is a grand donation to the people of Belmont, and to people everywhere concerned with healthy farming and local eating.

The land has been farmed since 1634, when Abraham Hill received an enormous land grant from King Charles I. Abraham and his descendants, the Richardsons and Ogilbys, thrived by farming the land, dividing it among their descendants, and selling it off in lot-sized chunks.

Lydia's grandfather, Jay Howard Richardson, sold his produce at Faneuil Hall market. "He grew the best beets around and he grew asparagus and he grew cucumbers and all of the summer crops: spinach, lettuce," she said. There were greenhouses and a boiler house to heat them. But he was badly injured when his horse-drawn produce cart turned over in 1921.

Then Lydia's mother, Grace Phippen, moved back to the farm from Brooklyn with her two children. To keep the farm in use and the soil tilled, she rented the land to Joseph Sergi in 1945. There were dozens of brothers, nephews, grandchildren, and cousins at the work of market gardening throughout the rest of the century.

The farm that did not die

At the same time, "My mother had a very keen business mind," said Lydia Ogilby. "She developed Glenn Road and sold property all along Bright Road. And I can remember saying to her, 'Mother, you've got to stop, I'm going to move away if you don't.'"

As time passed, pressure built to develop the remaining land. "I was getting a nice business-like letter, 'We're interested in buying your land,' about once a week," said Lydia. "It was suggested we turn the area into a train station and rent out parking spaces."

Lydia and her family worked together on the land trust. It was a very hard decision to give up development rights to so valuable a property. Lydia believes her children all love the land. "It's part of their life. They've all lived in cities, every one of them has, but I think loving the land is in their DNA."

In December 2011 the Sergi family completed their tenure on the property. The Selectmen held a ceremony for them and Senator-elect Will Brownsberger presented a proclamation from the State House. There was a reception with carrot cake and drinks and numerous guests, including Lydia Ogilby herself.

At this point the land has a new young farmer, Mike Chase, who also rents the land from the Ogilbys. Mike is not new to the land, though: he apprenticed with the Sergi family. The Ogilbys actively support him, as they did the Sergis. The land is not named for the farmer, though. It's called Belmont Acres Farm, and it's in the same place it's always been.

See photos and learn more about the land trust at belmontlandtrust.org/conservation-restrictions/richardson-farm/

—Jane Sherwin, Belmont resident
and professional writer
jane@WordDriveCommunications.com



Photo courtesy Mike Chase

This spring, the new Belmont Acres Farm will replace Sergi Farm, which had been on the Ogilby land since 1945.

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Fruiting trees are another great way to incorporate edibles into your landscape. If a fruit tree is desired yet space is tight, there are several options. Many fruiting trees come in dwarf forms and also as cordons and espaliers. The latter two options can be trained against a sunny wall or fence and can be found in such fruits as quince, pear, apple, and peach. While not as tidy as trained fruit

trees, raspberries and blackberries can be trained against fences and walls or allowed to get a bit unruly in a more wild section of your garden.

Whether we choose to forage casually or plant deliberately in our gardens, edible plants bring us closer to nature on a daily basis. As Henry David Thoreau stated in his final

manuscript, *Wild Fruits*, "Do not think, then, that the fruits of New England are mean and insignificant while those of some foreign land are noble and memorable. Our own, whatever they may be, are far more important to us than any others can be. They educate us and fit us to live here."

—Elizabeth Gourley, Belmont resident and professional landscape architect
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Things to consider prior to planting your edible garden

"Get the Dirt" on Your Soil

- Test your soil's nutrients and composition at UMass Amherst: www.umass.edu/soiltest/soil_test_intro.htm
- Track how much sun your future edible garden areas receive.
- If you plan to grow lettuces and root crops, consider testing soil for lead.

Order Your Plants

- The Belmont Food Collaborative's Pomona Project offers edible plants appropriate to our climate at wholesale prices. Get your order in by February 25. For more info and to download an order form, visit www.belmontfarmersmarket.org
- Trees of Antiquity offers organic heirloom fruiting trees and shrubs by mail order: www.treesofantiquity.com



Several styles of espaliered trees and shrubs.

A recipe for winter and early spring . . .

Spicy Lamb Shoulder Chops

Local fresh lamb season is around the corner. If you are a lucky participant in a meat CSA, you may find lamb in your March share. Or check out winter farmers' markets in Cambridge, Somerville, and beyond—find links at belmontfarmersmarket.org/community/winter-markets-2011.html. This recipe comes to us from The Farm School in Athol, MA—one of our vendors at the Belmont Farmers' Market. Cooking these chops will fill your kitchen and home with delicious aromas. Enjoy!

- 6 lamb shoulder chops
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground cardamom
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon coarse salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium onions cut into ¼-inch wedges
- ⅔ cup dried apricots
- 1 tart apple, thickly sliced



Mix the spices and salt and rub into both sides of the chops. Let the meat come to room temperature.

Heat the oil over medium heat, then sear the chops for 2–3 minutes per side and remove.

Add the onion wedges, apricots, and apple. Add a cup of water, and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly for 1 minute.

Place the chops on top of the onion-fruit sauce, then cover and simmer over low heat for 2 hours until the chops are fork tender.