



Field Notes

August 2006

Newsletter for the Phillie Bridge Farm Project CSA

And On That Farm...

Here we are in August, the heat of summer and the height of produce. Weekly vegetables on the farm have shifted from kale, chard and arugula to eggplant, summer squash and the first tomatoes. By now you've "met" an array of vegetables on the farm – but have you met the animals?

Of course, there is the flock of 40-some Barred Rock hens and two roosters that provide us with fresh, yellow-yoke eggs. These chickens came to the farm last spring, and have lived their entire lives with access to open space, growing pasture, and lively insects. When we work the fields adjacent to their mobile chicken coop, we overhear their clucks and coos and dinosauric calls, reminding us of birds' ancestry. Every day or so, an adventurer will fly the coop – as they say – and we'll find her wandering contentedly among half-harvested beds of lettuce or nestling under canopies of summer squash. These escapees can always be coaxed back into their communal living area without too much difficulty, particularly around evening feeding time.

Our most infamous escapee, and probably our most distinguishable chicken, is a plucky blond we refer to as Chicky Baby. Chicky Baby was hatched at Phillie Bridge Farm last fall by a red hen who escaped the soup pot fate of her comrades by beginning to brood. Chicky Baby spent the days of her youth at her mother's side, exploring the farm and learning where to scratch for the best worms. When the winter weather turned cold and the ground became frozen, we introduced mother and now adolescent Chicky Baby into the coop with the other chickens. Come spring, we discovered Chicky Baby had a free spirit we couldn't contain; she just wouldn't stay inside the chicken fence. In early May, we discovered her under a mossy log, sitting on a clutch of eggs. Three weeks later, she made her way around the farm with her

Upcoming Events at Phillie Bridge Farm

**8/15 – CSA Potluck, 6 PM
BYO plates, cups, utensils**
**8/19 – Gentle hike on the
nature trail led by Tim
Biello, resident farm
naturalist. 11 AM in front of
the Harvest Room.**
**8/19 – CSA Potluck, 1 PM
BYO plates, cups, utensils**
**8/19 – Pickling & Canning
workshop led by Susan
Loxley. 10 AM in the gray
barn. RSVP (appreciated
by not required) to
sloxley@hvc.rr.com**
**9/30 – The Auction
(formerly The Gala) at
Phillie Bridge Farm,
2 – 5 PM, Rain or Shine.
Paintings, pottery and a
pleasant afternoon.
Proceeds go to benefit
Phillie Bridge Farm
Project.**

own two chicks at her side – one yellow like herself, the other black-and-white like the Barred Rock father. The chicks are almost full-grown now, but you can likely see this gang of three clucking around and getting into trouble in the animal barns or the compost pile.

On a drizzling afternoon in early June, Daisy, Ruby and Lily, three pure-bred Border Leicester ewes, arrived on the farm. They were donated to Phillie Bridge by their previous owner, Sandy Levy, proprietor of Helltown Antiques in New Paltz. Initially convinced we were out to murder them, the sheep would bolt in whatever direction was opposite us. Over time, they adjusted to our presence and now follow us eagerly when we shake a bucket of grain. We rotate their grazing through the pasture during the day and bring them into the barn at night, where their wonderful bedding will add to our compost.

And if you do nothing else in this entire month, you must at least peek into the goat barn to see the newest addition to our Phillie

Bridge animal family: Gadi, a black-and-white male goat born on July 29th. Three days after his birth, the occasional failure of his gangly, wobbling legs didn't stop him from chasing chickens in the barn.

– Gwenaël Engelskirchen,
co-farmer/project coordinator

Honoring Gayil Greene

Many of us connected to Phillie Bridge Farm Project mourn the recent passing of our friend Gayil Greene. From the early days of the Farm Project, Gayil was an enthusiastic organizer and a fierce promoter of the farm. She invited people's participation, advocated for farms and locally grown produce, and brought an exciting "can do" spirit to the activities of the farm. Gayil served on a number of the Farm Project's committees (including on the board of directors), assisted in recruiting new farmers and staff and initiated collaborations at local restaurants to fund raise for the Farm To Families program.

Gayil was an active and passionate force around issues of local food: she fed senior citizens at the Jewish Community Center, started the local chapter of Slow Foods, taught vegetarian and natural foods cooking, advocated for farmers markets. She was a community leader whom we all admired.

Gayil leaves a legacy of caring, creativity, and commitment at the Farm Project and across the Hudson Valley. We all miss her.

-- Fred Mayo, Board President

A Season's Reflections

Tim Biello joined us at Phillie Bridge Farm in March, and in mid-August he will complete his farming/education internship. His contributions to Phillie Bridge have been numerous, including designing a trellising system for the grapes, organizing viewings of The Future of Food, sharing his knowledge as a naturalist, and engaging young minds during education programs. He (and Hank) will be dearly missed! Below are his impressions of the farm.



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At first, in early March, the farm was visibly barren, often covered in frost, and the leafless trees of the bordering orchard and fence lines yielded a clear view of the Shawangunk ridge. In the first few weeks of my apprenticeship at Phillie Bridge Farm, snow flurries drifted over the crop-less fields and the work was cold. Sometimes it was hard to believe that these seemingly vacant spaces would ever produce a tomato. But there's a soul to a farm that lives somewhere in the land, in the old barns and houses, in the view and the spaces around the farm, and in the fields that whisper about past work and seasons to come.

When I heard the two farmers planning for their full and productive acres, I witnessed the plants take shape before a seed had even touched the field's soil. I discovered that in the mind of a farmer, each farming season begins in the cold months of winter, when memories and learned lessons mix with plans for improvement and bounty.

Then the winter season turned to spring with gusty days. The song sparrows, house sparrows, robins, red-winged black birds, cardinals, starlings, and other migrants were back. The snow that showed squirrel tracks melted away and the grass returned. The ground became softer and the spring flowers began to appear. The farmhouses were surrounded in the bright yellow of forsythia and the air was soaked in the scent of lilac. It was time for planting.

From the wintry greenhouse, into Spring's early softening soil; up from the ground and into the harvest room. In late May, we shared the first harvest with CSA members – arugula, asparagus, dandelion greens, herbs, kale, mustard greens, sorrel and spinach. With the first harvest, the connection of our work to a purpose became even clearer to me.

And now it's summer. The heat, humidity, and tireless bugs are well established. A new season's come,

but there's the same purposeful feeling to the farm days. With only three busy weeks of summer camp left in my apprenticeship, I know that I'll soon be off of the farm. But Phillie Bridge Farm Project will long be in my mind, and I like to imagine that the work I shared on the farm will stay somewhere in it's spirit, too.

Thank you very much to Alex and Gwenaël, all of the interns, and all of the farm members who share in the farming cycles with us. Farming pulled the seasons against my skin, and it put soil into my soul.

-- Tim Biello

Introducing...

It seems that this is a newsletter of hellos and goodbyes – in that vein, we are thrilled to introduce the newest members of our intern crew, Mary Kelso and Amanda Smith. Mary has a background in education (she was formerly a high school English teacher) and will be working with the education programs in the fall. Amanda was already involved with Phillie Bridge Farm as the Optional Shares Coordinator for the CSA, but she is now also the full-time farming intern. Amanda recently graduated from SUNY New Paltz where she was involved with the Sustainable Agriculture Club and she wrote her thesis on Farm-to-School programs across the country. Despite an early bout with poison ivy (!), they both have wonderful enthusiasm, infectious positivity, and a thoughtful, energetic work ethic. We feel very grateful to have them as part of our team.

Jamming & Canning

Despite the rain, seventeen folks turned out on Aug 27 for a fabulous workshop on jamming, pickling and canning given by Susan Loxley-Friedle and her two friends, Barbara Nelson and Peggy Healey. The enthusiastic three amigas provided delicious drinks and refreshments, including some delectable samples of what can be produced if we follow their many,

wonderful and creative culinary tips. There will be a repeat performance on Saturday, August 19 at 10 AM in case you missed this delightful event and want to get a tasty lesson. We invite all preserving devotees to consider saving a jar or two of their "handiwork" to donate for sale at the Farm's Fall Harvest Festival. Also, for any enthusiasts, the Rosendale Pickle Festival is in November and it would be wonderful to have a "Phillie Bridge Contingent" submitting entries.

-- Janet O'Dowd, CSA Chairperson

Thai Eggplant Dip

Place 2 to 3 medium eggplants on a baking sheet and pierce several times with a fork. Bake in a 350 degree oven until very soft, about 1 hour. When cool enough to handle, remove skin. Mince together 4 cloves garlic and 1 tbsp chopped ginger in a food processor with the motor already running. Add eggplant and mix until smooth. Add 2 tbsp soy sauce, 2 tbsp rice vinegar, 1 tbsp sesame oil, 1 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro, 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes, and salt to taste. Serve with pita triangles, crackers or bread. Will refrigerate for up to 4 days or freeze.

Eggplant Sauté

Dip slices or chunks of eggplant in flour or eggs/bread crumbs prior to sautéing. Sauté in hot oil until lightly brown. Season with herbs, garlic, grated cheese, etc...

Oven Roasted Carrots and Beets

Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees. Chop carrots and beets so they are about the same size and shape, then toss with enough olive oil to coat generously, and salt and pepper. Spread a single layer of the vegetables evenly in a baking pan and roast, uncovered, stirring and tossing occasionally, until the vegetables are cooked through – about 30-40 minutes. Serve hot or chilled, sprinkled with freshly chopped herbs.