

2021 Annual Report

The Northeast Organic
Farming Association of Rhode Island





About NOFA Rhode Island

NOFA/RI is an organization of farmers, gardeners and consumers working to promote organic farming and organic land care practices. Since 1990 NOFA/RI has worked to increase the acres of sustainably and organically managed land and to provide access to local, organic food for all Rhode Islanders.

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Last year, 2021 was a pivotal year for us as with many trying to re-invent their small non-profit into a useful organization during a pandemic. Keeping our farmers abreast of covid rules & regulations and helping consumers find them for direct sales was our primary objective and on that front we were very successful. Our farmers had a banner year here in RI in 2020...

We had stopped our face to face workshops right after our 2020 Winter Conference and hunkered down to support our farmers, members and others to survive the isolation imposed by so many businesses, schools etc. being shut down. Staff and board shortages complicated the issues, but we managed.

In Fall of 2020 we started partnering with CT-NOFA, Dina Brewster and Jeremy Pelletier for our WC. Soon it took on a larger scope with Dina taking charge of our Advisor's program and creating some virtual OFW for us in the spring. WC 2021, while not ideal for our RI farmers, took off and went very well for a combined effort, with a few of our farmers doing presentations on virtual platform. Dina & Jeremy did a great job orchestrating the conference, with little to no work on our part! Thank-you to Jeremy & Dina!

Big Thank-you to Mark Hengen who stepped in as Board President at WC...Mark also wrote another SC Grant for us, so we are now funded at our current level thru spring of 2024....more on this later! Mark Hengen got us up and running face to face "On Farm Workshops" in the summer as soon as the State opened up again for businesses.

Al Johnson's three workshop on Organic certification convinced a couple of our beginning farmers to apply for and receive certification. Very big deal in a small state.. In May, Al was kind enough to come to RI and film some of our NO-FA-RI founding farmers. You will be seeing some of that at our winter conference.

Monique Bosch's Classes on Microscopy were well attended and piqued the interest of many of our farmers to have their soil checked by her. Adding Monique to our list of advisors for this work has been a nice addition. CT-NOFA & Monique also surprised us with a wonderful video on composting for small scale farms & farmers.

Advisor's program also had the addition of Laura Davis, farmer & board president of NOFA Mass who is also an organic's certifier for Baystate.

Patti Fish joined us as our On-Farm Workshop coordinator for the remainder of the summer as Mark had some life changes, a big move and had to resign from NOFA-RI Board. Many THANKS to Mark & Patti for all they did last summer...we hope Patti will come back and help do it again this year!

Later in the fall we had Mike & Kelli Roberts "Roots Farm" join us in our Advisor's program. We now have advisors in all four corners of RI for those farmers who do not want to cross any bridges.

HUGE SHOUT OUT TO DAN LAWTON, the man behind the scenes to so many of us know & love for his loyalty to NOFA-RI over the years. Without Dan there would be no NOFA-RI!

We still need to eat and eating healthy, locally grown food has been our focus for quite a few years now. We are a public service non-profit, our attendance at events, even having events requires feed back from our members and all those attending our events.

We look forward to working with all of you in the future.

Jan Martin



“To grow your own food gives you power and dignity. You know exactly what you’re eating because you grew it. It’s good, it’s nourishing and you did this for yourself, your family and your community.”

-Karen Washington, 2021 Keynote Speaker

Winter Conference

“Growing Our Community through Essential Work”
- The 2021 Annual Winter Conference, hosted virtually for the first time, brought together farmers, gardeners, activists, and advocates for two full days of workshops from soil science to social justice issues.

In response to our organizational goal to increase collaboration among the NOFA states, we joined with our neighboring state to put together a special Connecticut/Rhode Island conference - growing our community, our impact, and our friendships with farmers across the Northeast.

Winter Conference workshops included:

- Intensify, Diversify, Perennialize: How to Profitably Incorporate Perennial Crops with Connor Stedman
- Goat Ownership and Management 101 with Grace Toy
- Domestic Seaweed Supply Chains: Opportunities and Challenges with Dawn Kotowicz and Sam Garwin
- Emergency Ag Preparedness For Farmers with Joan Nichols
- Wildcrafting Edible & Medicinal Plants with Lupo Passero
- How To Begin Growing Organic In Urban Spaces: A Success Story with Emmanuel Marte and Josephine Joiner
- Winter Greens Production/Interseeding Cover Crops in Cash Crops with Skip Paul
- Transitioning from Renting Land to Ownership with John Kenny
- Good Planting and Pruning Practices for Healthy Fruit Trees with Nicole Smith
- Healthy Soil Up Close, Practical Microscopy for Farmer and Gardeners with Monique Bosch & Justin Hawrysh



2021 Workshops

NOFA/ RI continues offering a wide range of farmer education designed to increase knowledge, practices, and guidance on specialty crops issues. NOFA/RI invites Rhode Island farmers to host these on-farm workshops. Host farmers receive a stipend for their program. These programs are made possible by a USDA grant from the RI DEM, Division of Agriculture.

Topics include soil fertility, urban farming, pathways to organic certification, weed control and cultivating equipment, as well as whole farm planning. The goal of NOFA/RI workshops is to increase the competitiveness of specialty crops in the marketplace.

Specialty Crops Training, as defined by this USDA-supported program, includes fruits, dried fruit, tree nuts, vegetables, nursery crops, Christmas trees, floriculture, cut flowers, honey, hops and turf grass production. Program participants learn how to enhance their market competitiveness with their specialty crops through: research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, trade enhancement, food safety, food security, plant health programs, education, "Buy Local" programs, increased consumption, increased innovation, improved efficiency and/or reduced costs of distribution systems, environmental conservation, product development and/or developing cooperatives.

2021 workshops

- The Road to Certification with Al Johnson
- Microscopy: Zooming in on soil health with Monique Bosch
- Seed Saving and Tomato Tasting with Bill Braun
- Compost and Crop Health with Various RI and CT Compost Farmers (recorded workshop)

Advisors Program

NOFA RI offers free technical assistance and advising to Rhode Island Farmers with funding from a Specialty Crop Block Program grant and has helped dozens of Rhode Island Farmers in 2021. Experienced organic farmers are paired with aspiring, new, or transitioning farmers to provide assistance in many areas.

Current Advisors

- Camille Abdel-Nabi, Little River Farm
- Mike and Kelli Roberts, Roots Farm
- John Kenny, Big Train Farm
- Monique Bosch, Wiggle Room
- Diana Kushner, Arcadian Field Farm
- Laura Davis, Long Life Farm
- Christina Dedora, Blue Skys Farm

“There are always people around who will answer questions, but it is good to have the formal relationship with someone who you know you can call, especially during the busy time of year.”

-Rhode Island Advisee

S T A F F & B O A R D

N O F A R I S T A F F

Dan Lawton | Bookkeeper

John Kenny | WC Coordinator

Jeffrey Matteis | ZOOM Coordinator

Niel Gan | Communications Coordinator

B O A R D O F D I R E C T O R S

Jan Martin, Board President

Laura Willson, Vice President

Sarah LaValley, Secretary /Treasurer



Butternut

\$1.50/lb

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