Oh the Buzzin’ of the Bees in the Red Maple Trees!
Submitted by Julia Cartabiano, Spring Valley Student Farm Manager

The first days of spring are still weeks away but we are already “busy as bees” down at UConn’s Spring Valley Student Farm. Even though there is still snow on the frozen ground we are diligently working on developing an outstanding selection of vegetable, herb and flower varieties to grow for Chuck & Augie’s Restaurant, select dining units, and the Farm Fresh Market on Fairfield Way opening in May. We met with Roselyn Lamont, Manager of Chuck & Augie’s, Sous Chef Jen Lyder, and Chefs Tyler May and Karen O’Neil to discuss 2012 successes and 2013 growing opportunities. From their feedback we refined our growing list for 2013 to include 70 seed varieties.

There is plenty to do at the farm even when Mother Nature is still half asleep dreaming wintery dreams. In addition to the soon-to-begin spring seedling transplants starting in the green house, we are currently growing a variety of greens in the solar heated hoop house. The greens include kale, which was started last fall and over winter, and newly planted lettuce. The hoop house was the place to be for the lettuce and mesclun planting party on Saturday!

A new product we are trying this spring is microgreens. These super-sized sprouts are green, crunchy and full of healthy delicious nutrition! They have a more intense flavor than regular sprouts. Some varieties we are trying are beets, Swiss chard, turnips, arugula, broccoli raab, and basil. Look for them this spring on salads at Chuck & Augie’s and at select dining units.

The buzzing of the bees in the Red Maple trees is not far off. We spent one Saturday morning with Amy Gronus, Dining Services Production Chef, cleaning out our extra bee hives for their new occupants arriving this spring. The Spring Valley Student farmers and EcoHouse students will have the opportunity to learn about beekeeping, honey production and how to create a healthy environment to support healthy bees. Bee-u-ti-ful!

EcoHouse students living in Sprague Hall have been coming to the farm weekly to help in the green house, hoop house, edible forest garden, and with the current bee hives’ snow removal. The shuttle leaves Sprague Hall for an afternoon foray at the farm twice a week, Tuesday and Friday from 3:00pm - 5:00pm, changing to 4:00pm - 6:00pm beginning March 12. These trips are ongoing and open to anyone on campus, so just contact us if you would like to come out to the farm. If you have questions you may contact the Farm Manager at julia.cartabiano@uconn.edu. Bee Happy!
Local Farm Highlight

Spring Valley Farm Concept

Spring Valley Farm was created in Spring 2010 by Residential Life. The Spring Valley Farm is now an extension of the EcoHouse Living Learning Community. It provides an opportunity to learn about organic farming through classroom and applied learning while also providing a residential living option with additional independence and responsibility appropriate to returning upper-class students. Spring Valley Farm exists as a collaborative venture between Residential Life, First Year Programs and Learning Communities, Dining Services, the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the Office of Environmental Policy.

Spring Valley Farm Mission

EcoHouse and Spring Valley Farm exist to foster meaningful student learning, engagement, collaboration, and camaraderie around environmental and sustainability issues. As an extension of the EcoHouse Living Learning Community, Spring Valley Farm provides students the opportunity to act on their interest in sustainable agriculture through organic farming. Spring Valley Farm allows students to gain practical knowledge and skills through experiential learning while simultaneously modeling a closed loop food model in which organic produce is grown on campus for UConn Dining Services. Spring Valley Farm aims to be a place where students, faculty, staff, and Storrs-Mansfield community members can come together to learn about the connections between land, food, and people.

Spring Valley Farm Goals

• Promote EcoHouse at Spring Valley Farm as an example of sustainable education and living for the UConn campus, local community and the state of Connecticut.
• Model efficient, effective, sustainable farming practices that are economically viable and ecologically sound.
• Serve as a vanguard for a local, organic food movement on the UConn campus by encouraging students, faculty, and staff to consider the environmental and human impacts of the foods they consume daily.
• Encourage imaginative, innovative, and creative thinking to achieve more sustainable lifestyles and solutions.
• Evolve into an organic farm that produces hundreds of varieties of vegetables, fruits, herbs, and flowers.
• Host workshops, seminars, tours, and volunteer work days for campus, local residents, and local schools.

Did You Know?

Spring Valley Farm has their own blog! Filled with news and pictures of all of their latest events, visit www.springvalleyfarm.blogspot.com

Recipe

Chunky Vegetarian Vegetable Soup

A chunky vegetable soup thick with potatoes, okra, kale and corn

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil
½ onion, chopped
3 stalks celery, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
4 cups vegetable broth
1 15oz. can tomato sauce
4 carrots, peeled and cut into ¼ inch rounds
2 baking potatoes, cut into bite size pieces
1 cup frozen corn
1 cup frozen shelled edamame
1 cup frozen sliced okra
2 leaves kale, roughly chopped
Salt to taste
1 teaspoon ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Cook and stir onion and celery in hot oil until onion is softened and translucent, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir garlic into the onion mixture; cook and stir until fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes more.
3. Pour vegetable broth and tomato sauce in pot. Simmer for about 10 minutes.
4. Stir carrots and potatoes through the broth. Simmer until carrots are tender, 10 to 15 minutes more.
5. Drop corn, edamame, okra and kale into the soup. Continue to simmer until okra is tender, 5 to 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
Farmers Market Season is Here!
Local farmers markets will begin over the next few months. Here are links to some of them:

Coventry Farmers Market - June
Cited as New England’s BEST farmers’ market by Yankee Magazine and selected as one of USA Today’s “Top 10 great places to shop at a farmers market,” The Coventry Regional Farmers’ Market is like a country fair every Sunday. www.coventryfarmersmarket.com

Ashford Farmers Market - End of May
Located next to the old post office on route 44, the Ashford farmers market has been in existence for 6 years. www.ashfordfarmersmarket.com

Storrs Farmers Market - May
For 19 years and counting, Storrs Market has provided premium "CT Grown" fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, eggs, and more to the greater Mansfield community. www.localharvest.org/storrs-farmers-market-M3812

Tolland Farmers Market - Early May
www.farmfresh.org/food/farmersmarkets_details.php?market=321

UConn’s own Farm Fresh Market will begin sometime in May for the summer season. Stay tuned for more information! www.dining.uconn.edu

Growing Farmer-Chef Relationships
Several UConn chefs recently attended a first-of-its kind event through Connecticut's Farm to Chef (FTC) Program. Growing Farmer-Chef Relationships, a trade/buying show held on Saturday, February 3rd, introduced Connecticut Grown producers to foodservice buyers.

During the daylong event held at Manchester Community College, foodservice professionals had an opportunity to learn about the very best Connecticut Grown ingredients available for their restaurants and institutions. This was a chance for chefs and purchasing agents to not only meet and get to know local farmers, but also place orders for the 2013 season of fresh Connecticut Grown products.

FTC encouraged farmers and chefs to enter into agreements in advance of the season to help balance supply and demand, and balance the risks associated with growing, producing, and using fresh farm products.

At the event, each participating farm was provided space for a table display with information about its crop plans, product lines, and wholesale price lists for the upcoming season.

UConn’s Landscaping Department will help with soil remediation efforts. The design plan is being finalized with an install date planned for the weekend of May 4th, 2013. Tanner Burgdorf is the lead designer for the project. Mark Westa is working as Faculty Director and Chris Tenaglier, an Environmental Engineering student, is also helping. Among other purposes, herbs grown there will be used in nearby Whitney Dining.

2012 - 2013 CT NOFA Farm and Food Guide
This is the Connecticut Northeast Organic Farming Association’s annual directory of organic and sustainably grown food in Connecticut. Whether you are a first time reader, a seasoned veteran or somewhere in between, this Guide helps to connect you with the bounty of fresh, organic, healthy and tasty food that the CT NOFA farms have to offer.

In addition to farms, there are listings for farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture farms (CSAs) and Community Farms as well as grocers and restaurants that sell produce and farm products from the listed farms. You’ll also find a Winter Food feature to encourage you to consume more Connecticut Grown fruits and vegetables in the winter, and a page of resources related to food and the environment.

CT NOFA is dedicated to sound farming, gardening and land care and to the development of local sustainable agriculture. You can view a PDF of the 2012-13 Farm and Food Guide here: http://ctnofa.org/documents/ff_guide2012_web.pdf
Earth Day Spring Fling
Thursday, April 18th
Rain date: Friday, April 19th
11:00am - 2:00pm
Fairfield Way at UConn
Earth Day Spring Fling is an annual celebration of sustainability co-sponsored by UConn’s Office of Environmental Policy, the Department of Dining Services’ Local Routes Program, EcoHusky Student Group, and EcoHouse Learning Community. Every Earth Day since 2008, this festival has featured organic and local food, eco-friendly vendors, green companies and student groups that join together to produce the greatest day of environmental awareness all year!

Upcoming Events

CFBA’s Farm Business Conference
Saturday, March 23rd
11:00am - 2:00pm
East Windsor, CT
The Connecticut Farm Bureau’s 4th annual conference focuses on building and growing a successful farm business by starting with a sound farm business plan. The program will review key components: measuring success, using demographics, evaluating market potential and benchmarking, plus considerations regarding labor, liability, entities and finding funding sources. Visit www.cfba.org for conference details and to register, or call 860-768-1100. (This program is a cooperative effort of the CT Farm Bureau, the UConn Cooperative Extension System, the CT Department of Agriculture and Risk Management Agency/USDA.)

Organic Bee School
Saturday & Sunday, March 23rd & 24th
All Day; Boston University, Boston, MA
Instructor Jean-Claude Bourrutt will go over the basic techniques of organic beekeeping, including: materials and equipment, beehive structure, the life cycle of bees, hive development, dynamic, seasonal apiary work, honey and hive products, common pests and diseases, and their organic management. Jean-Claude Bourrutt has been keeping honeybees for 20 years in urban and suburban settings.

Basics of Urban Chicken Keeping
Sunday, March 24th
7:00pm - 8:30pm
Groundwork Somerville, Somerville, MA
Raising chickens is not just for farmers! Terry Golson has years of experience caring for a small flock of laying hens in her backyard that supply eggs for her family’s table. In this slide-show and lecture, Terry will share all the information needed to get started with chickens, including breed selection, housing, feed, and how to keep the hens healthy. Terry will talk about chicken behavior, predators, and daily chores. She will also show how she composts the manure and uses it in her garden.

Why and How to Grow Organically
Wednesday, March 27th
1:00pm - 2:30pm
Hillandale Farm, Westerly, RI
Learn why organic growing techniques matter with Max and Ulrike Hence. The workshop will cover planting bed preparation, seeding, transplanting and an overview of organic practices. Hillandale Farm and several nearby farms are in a partnership with the AYERS Foundation, which works to connect people to fresh, local foods. Living classrooms practice and teach children about sustainable agriculture, holistic nutrition and healthy living. Learn more at www.nofari.org/events

Apple Pruning & Grafting
Saturday, April 6th
10:00am - 3:00am
St. Paul’s School, Concord, NH
Learn about bench grafting, and using the whip-and-tongue union to place a chosen variety on provided rootstock; You even get to make your own graft and take that baby tree home! Instructor Michael Phillips will discuss specific horticultural goals to keep in mind when deciding which limbs and shoots to remove.

Volunteering at Spring Valley Farm
Spring Valley Farm welcomes anyone who would like to come and volunteer or even get a tour of the farm. This summer we had volunteer days every Thursday and we hope to continue having a weekly volunteer day. If you would like to arrange for another day to come visit you can stop by or you can contact our farm manager Julia for more information at julia.cartabiano@uconn.edu

CT GROWN CROP AVAILABILITY CALENDAR

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