



UNADILLA COMMUNITY FARM
EDUCATION CENTER INC.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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ABOUT & MISSION

The Unadilla River, which runs alongside our farm, gets its name from the indigenous Oneidan word for “a meeting place.” And at its very core, Unadilla Community Farm is just that - a place for people to come together, learn valuable skills from one another, and celebrate our togetherness with each other and with the natural world.

We are a non-profit organic fruit & vegetable farm and permaculture education center, situated on 12 acres of field and forest in central New York State. Our mission is to provide a space for the teaching and practice of sustainable skills. Our work centers on providing education and training on sustainable agriculture, natural building, and food equity, and providing access to fresh organic produce for low-income and low-access communities. Founded in 2014, Unadilla Community Farm Education Center Inc became incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in 2020. Tax-deductible donations can be made to support our work training the next generation of young farmers and increasing access to fresh organic produce for Edmeston families.

We are showcasing a range of cutting-edge sustainable agriculture practices. Our off-grid center grows 200+ varieties of organic annual and perennial vegetables, mushrooms, herbs, and cold-hardy fruits, nuts, and berries. As a center for sustainable education, we showcase a diversity of USDA NRCS conservation practices, such as rainwater collection, multi-story and alley cropping, no-till management, wildlife habitat planting, heavy mulching, on-site composting, crop rotation, and high tunnels. We also collaborate with local farms and businesses in the area to pick up food scraps, manure, and yard waste for our on-site composting program, as well as cardboard for use in sheet mulching or no-till “lasagna gardening” as a method of bed preparation. Through these reciprocal relationships, we turn what is otherwise considered a waste product into valuable organic matter for the farm to amend our soil. We divert hundreds of pounds of food from the landfill and return it to the earth.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Nina Buxenbaum was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY to a politically active, multi-racial household. She received her MFA in painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art and her BFA from Washington University in St. Louis in drawing and printmaking. She is a Tenured Professor of Painting at York College, CUNY as well as a member, and current faculty, at The Silvermine Artist Guild in New Canaan, CT, and Adjunct Art Faculty at Western Connecticut State University. She and her husband, Roberto Zapata, have been building a Food Forest and hosting classes at their home and have begun a larger scale project at York College, in Jamaica, Queens.



Tianna Kennedy (Vice President) has been farming and organizing in the Catskills for a decade now. She is co-owner of Star Route Farm with Walter Riesen and owns and operates the 607 CSA, a multi-farm CSA, from the Delaware, Otsego and Schoharie counties. She also co-organizes with Bushel Collective to operate a mixed-use art space in Delhi, NY. Tianna founded the National Young Farmers Coalition's Greater Catskills Chapter and runs special ops with the Greenhorns to round out her (Agri)cultural undertakings.



Greta Zarro (President & Treasurer) is the farm's Internship Coordinator. Prior to joining Unadilla Community Farm, Greta worked and WWOOFed at organic farms and vegan retreat centers across North America. She also previously worked as New York Organizer for Food & Water Watch, campaigning on issues related to fracking, genetically engineered foods, climate change, and the corporate control of our common resources. In addition to her current work with Unadilla Community Farm, she is the Organizing Director for World BEYOND War, a global anti-war non-profit.



Bari Zeiger is the Director of Development and Administration at Providence Farm Collective. She is also the Farmer Representative of NE SARE's Administrative Council, a grant reviewer for the New England Grassroots Fund, the Women Affinity Representative on the Federal Policy Committee for the National Young Farmers Coalition, and a member of the Finger Lakes Permaculture Institute's Board of Directors. Formerly, Bari managed the farm at Frost Valley YMCA, optimizing and expanding production, educational programs, and community relationships. In 2020, Bari began the process of building her own agricultural small business, Healing Poem Farm, in Java, NY.

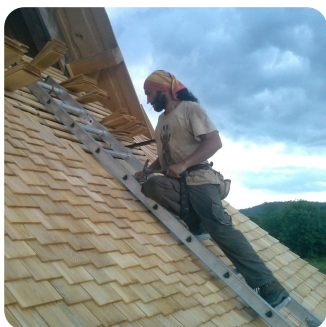


BOARD OF DIRECTORS



A practitioner of permaculture and owner and manager of Let it Grow Landscapes, **Vic Ziminsky** (Secretary) creates and installs edible and ecological landscape design plans for community and home gardens. He became certified to practice permaculture design through the Center of Bioregional Living, in New York City. Let it Grow Landscapes is an Organic Landcare company, certified by NOFA-CT. Vic also studies at the New York Botanical Gardens School of Horticulture and Landscape Design.

ADVISORY BOARD



Born in Norwalk, CT, **Roberto Zapata** is a first generation son of Mayra, from Costa Rica, and the late Roberto Zapata Sr., from Colombia. He has had a long history of wood working and construction. Roberto is a passionate builder, designer, and creator. He apprenticed with an arborist for three years. He has independently pursued the study of tree, plant, and mushroom medicines. In 2015 Roberto started a community garden project, Meadows Garden Pride, in the public housing complex where he lived. From 2017-2018 Roberto led campers ages 8-18, and adults of all ages, in foraging, plant identification, and medicinal plant harvesting classes at Holmes Camp & Retreat Center. In 2018 he earned his permaculture certification. La Jolie Journet is a mobile community outreach program that Roberto, along with Nina Buxenbaum, are currently building, and invite all those interested to link up.

STAFF



Ben Tyler is the farm's Project Manager. He has over a decade of experience in permaculture design, sustainable housing, organic farming, and community development projects. He has worked with local governments, NGOs, non-profits, organic farms, and intentional communities in North America, Latin America and Europe, and teaches permaculture design certification courses, natural building workshops and organic farming seminars. He is also currently serving on the Finger Lakes Permaculture Institute's Board of Directors.



Greta Zarro is the farm's Internship Coordinator, overseeing the recruitment and application process for the internship, as well as on-site management of the program. She also serves on the farm's Board of Directors.

OUR PROGRAMS

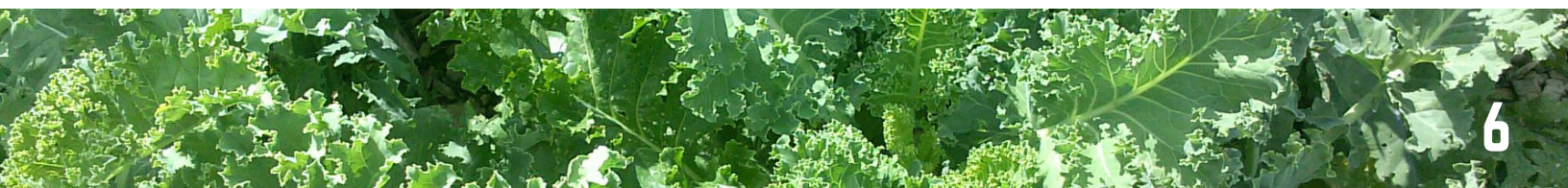
PERMACULTURE INTERNSHIP

Our internship provides hands-on training, weekly seminars, room and board, and the option to earn college credit, all while remaining free for participants to maximize the accessibility of the program. We equip young people (ages 18-35) with the skills for climate-resilient agriculture to grow their own food, start their own food and farm businesses, and build infrastructure using natural building methods. Our internship is more than just a beginning farmer training program. It is an immersion into a rural, off-grid sustainable way of life, with each intern staying for a minimum of 1 month and up to 5 months on the farm.

Despite the immense challenges of the COVID pandemic, which shut down nearly all in-person programming in 2020, we were able to put in place a COVID safety plan which allowed us to continue our internship program, as well as our veggie box program. And not only did our programs continue, but we greatly expanded this season.

We hosted 25 interns in 2020, a 39% increase from the previous year. We attribute this influx to a number of factors, including the lack of competition from comparable programs that had to shut down in 2020, and restrictions on traveling abroad which left many people seeking domestic programs. Also, while many schools shut down and students had to take gap semesters, we were able to continue offering college credit, allowing students to continue working towards their degrees. Furthermore, the pandemic underscored the importance of the self-sufficiency and sustainability skills that we're teaching. The spread of COVID and related impacts like food and supply shortages and job lay-offs reveal the side effects of globalization, causing a renewed interest in gardening and homesteading.

Due to the pandemic, we necessarily had to make some alterations to the internship program. Interns are required to quarantine for 2 weeks prior to arrival, and upon arrival, to have their temperature checked using a non-contact thermometer. At the farm, we all quarantine on-site together. We cancelled off-site farm tours, field trips, and classes, replacing those with weekly on-site classes and virtual workshops. We anticipate that our COVID safety policies will need to remain in place throughout 2021.



OUR PROGRAMS

VEGGIE BOX PROGRAM

Our area is classified by the USDA as a low-income, low-access rural food desert, which means an area with high poverty rates where the nearest supermarket is 10+ miles and a significant number of households don't have a vehicle. We work to fill the gap, by providing healthy organic fruits and veggies in our community. 2020 is the second year of our weekly veggie box delivery program. The interns participate in all aspects of the program, from production to harvesting to the wash and pack station, to gain experience in operating a "CSA-style" farm model.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the precariousness of both the food system and the economy. Even in normal times, food insecurity is a pressing issue for Edmeston families, who have to drive 40 minutes to get to the nearest supermarket to pick up groceries. On top of that, due to COVID-related job layoffs, our community members are struggling to make ends meet. This situation underscores the importance of our program to provide local food to local people, delivered directly to their doorstep. In 2020, we doubled the number of shares in our veggie box program and switched to a 100% delivery-based model. This reduces human contact to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and it saves families time and money, so they don't have to spend hours to get food or pay a "driver" to take them to a supermarket. Every year, including 2020, we also donate to the local Edmeston food bank, as well as to the regional Farm-to-School program.

Looking ahead at 2021, we're excited to announce that we will offer the veggie box program on a sliding scale, to further increase accessibility of the program. We offer several veggie box sizes, customizable payment plans, and can accept SNAP. We also allow bartering, such as donating wood chips to the farm in exchange for veggies.



OUR PROGRAMS

RESEARCH

As an education center, Unadilla Community Farm is a site for experimentation and learning. We showcase a wide variety of sustainable farming techniques and conduct on-farm research to trial new methods, offer recommendations and provide replicable models for our interns and the broader farming community.

Unadilla Community Farm is currently serving as the research site to perform on-farm trials for the Northeast SARE project FNE20-967 on dynamic accumulators. This two-year research project began in February 2020 and will continue until December 2021. We completed the first year of the project, which involved establishing test rows for six promising dynamic accumulator species for Northeast farmers in zones 4+: redroot amaranth, red clover, lambsquarters, stinging nettle, Bocking-14 comfrey, and dandelion. This year, we also completed a series of soil tests on the test rows, as well as on a control row that is kept fallow. We presented our ongoing research on the Plant Cuning podcast, through a webinar with the Finger Lakes Permaculture Institute, during two on-farm seminars with the interns, and through an article published by the Permaculture Research Institute. 2021 will be the second phase of the research, when we will be tracking nutrient levels in the soil, and in mulches and liquid fertilizers derived from plant cuttings.



OUR PROGRAMS

LEATHERSTOCKING YOUNG FARMERS COALITION



Unadilla Community Farm co-founded & co-organizes the Leatherstocking Young Farmers Coalition, a chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition. We organize and facilitate regular meetings with beginning farmers following sustainable practices in the Leatherstocking Region of New York State, to provide a platform for communication, collaboration, skills and resource sharing, and advocacy.

We kicked off 2020 with a lively young farmers mixer, generously hosted by The Farmers' Museum in Cooperstown. Event sponsors also included The Rural Health Network of South Central New York, Origins Cafe, Ben & Jerry's, Brewery Ommegang, and Seek North. Live music was provided by young farmer Isaac Hill.

Due to the onset of COVID, in-person programming was postponed throughout the rest of the year. However, we organized two virtual workshops instead, in response to requests from farmers in our network. Daniel Prial, the Community Food and Outreach Specialist at NCAT Northeast, offered a farm marketing workshop covering the basics of marketing, branding, and identifying your audience. A.C. Stauble of Traveling Herb Farmer/Cohosh Creek Herb Farm taught a workshop on herbalism with a focus on building a medicine cabinet of herbs for immune and respiratory health.





CONTACT US

EIN: 85-0556763



info@unadillacommunityfarm.org



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PO Box 59, West Edmeston, NY 13485



unadillacommunityfarm.org