

## Farm Report to Iowa Yearly Meeting

Dear Friends,

I remember farming at Scattergood before purslane took over our vegetable fields and wild parsnip sprang up in our pastures. Of course other weeds preceded these--lamb's quarters, Canada thistle, pigweed and many others--but the purslane and parsnip form a distinct line of before and after in my memory.

The soil has a memory, too, much longer than mine. When we recently decided to retire some of our conventionally farmed corn and soybean acres and plant chestnut trees and pawpaws instead, I asked Tom Wahl how we should prepare the understory. Tom offered several suggestions of grasses and clover to plant, but also said that we could plant nothing and simply keep the former cropland mowed short and eventually Canada bluegrass would rise from the seed bank and spread. Seeds from the past, awaiting evocation and opportunity.

What should we choose to remember from the last year?

All students took part in four weeks of Farm Term, choosing amongst classes on water use, pastoral poetry, construction and animal behavior. Each day involved a walk to the farm, study and creation, snacks, chores and farm-related Spanish lessons. Farm Term followed orientation week, which again included a Farm Fun Day, with work projects done in small groups, followed by a picnic dinner and our first Meeting for Worship together around a bonfire in the woodlot. In Agricultural Research class students explored biochar production, tomato breeding and aquaponics; they studied mapping in a May Term class; they learned and worked on the Farm and Prairie in Project Classes; the entire school helped harvest vegetables one afternoon in October. Five students attended a conference for Quaker schools with farms and two helped provide childcare at the Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference. Several students adopted bottle fed lambs and cared for them in the dorms.

The Farm also welcomed the community. Classes from Willowwind School and Longfellow Elementary in Iowa City visited. Outdoor Adventures Camp, Taproot Nature Experience, two Scattergood Summer camps and the Iowa City Autism Community explored and ate. A researcher from the University of Iowa College of Public Health learned about variety selection. We grew flowers for a wedding, welcomed artists on retreat, hosted a dinner and field walk for the Iowa Organic Association. Educators from Ames explored farm opportunities as they consider starting their own independent school. The Governor of Iowa visited. We conducted a workshop on cover crops for the Iowa Valley RC&D and remained connected with Practical Farmers of Iowa, Sustainable Iowa Land Trust, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, and Field to Family in Iowa City.

All this is done through the hard work of many. Ben Bowman continues to manage our livestock program, while Dana Foster guided Farm Term in new directions. Kelsey Clampitt cared for our prairie and included the farm in her academic classes. Jenevieve George and Keva Fawkes have

helped with field work and fence building this summer, while our cooks, primarily Karen Huff and Irving Treadway, continue to showcase in the dining room what we raise on the farm. Our rowcrop acres are now rented to neighbor John Black, though Ken Fawcett remains a valued consultant on many things. The Farm Subcommittee has been especially helpful this year: Kent Tjossem as our clerk, Tom Wahl as our guide to chestnuts and pawpaws, and Bob Winchell who is helping us secure two donkeys for the Farm. Thank you all.

Canada bluegrass is no native grass, but was introduced to this continent over 200 years ago. In that time, this piece of land we will soon transform has witnessed the destruction of the prairie, the advent of Scattergood, the construction of the interstate, the evolution of corn and soy genetics, the introduction of thistle, ragweed, mustards, purslane and parsnip. Soon chestnuts and pawpaws will separate the before from the now. The soil will remember and the Canada bluegrass will continue to wait.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mark Quee  
Farm Manager