

## 2023 Farm Report to IYMC

Dear Friends,

Time is measured in many different ways, some common like Yearly Meeting annual sessions, equinoxes and solstices, the sows begging for more food by mid-afternoon and the early morning alarms prodding us to the fields before the days get too hot. Other time measurements are less understood like the evolutions of our prairie plantings, intervals between derechos or previously-500-year-now-80-year-floods. In my 2004 report to the Yearly Meeting, I briefly mentioned how the students helped plant what was then our new asparagus bed. This planting fed us well over the years, sometimes much more than many would have preferred. Of course those students are now fully in adulthood, the asparagus field has declined, but the soil remains. This spring we entered Unit 2 of Asparagus Time, with several hundred new crowns planted and now looking strong. Borrowing and adapting from Henry David Thoreau: Time is but a field I go a-planting in.

Much student time was spent on the Scattergood Farm the past year. The Middle School began each day at the farm with chores, Collection and often science class. High School students took Farm Term classes about Insects, Dairy Production or Fairies, and then many also enrolled in a Physical Education class that focused on harvesting and animal husbandry. A Food Preservation class helped put by plenty of Farm produce last fall and another class learned about fungi in the spring. Everyone took part in the Farm Fun Day during orientation, building community with plenty of time spent working, playing, eating and worshipping together. We also began a successful weekend chore program for interested high school students, who worked on the Farm for pay.

The Scattergood Farm was again deeply involved with outreach to the wider community. We provided food to Iowa City's gleaning organization Table to Table, as well as to patients at the Iowa City Free Medical Clinic. We were a rest and food stop on the Farm Cycle ride when hundreds of cyclists toured the countryside and raised money for the Iowa City Bike Library. Staff and students did farm service work at the White Rock Conservancy in Coon Rapids, Iowa and the Savanna Institute in Spring Green, Wisconsin, as well as provided childcare for the Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference. We presented at the Great Plains Growers Conference, the PFI Cooperators' Meeting, received the Spencer Award for Sustainable Agriculture from the Leopold Center and consulted with the Abington Friends School Experiential Farming Program. Farm Staff and a student also attended the Paul Johnson Land Stewardship Policy Forum at the Harkin Institute in Des Moines and Mark will soon join the steering committee for the Rodale Institute Midwest Organic Center and remains on a grant committee for USDA SARE (Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education). Visitors to the Farm have included staff and students of Grinnell College, representatives of Practical Farmers of Iowa, the Xerces Society and the Pesticide Action Network, many guests on campus for the wedding of two former staff members, parents and friends attending Commencement and Scattergood Weekend, as well as the many children enrolled in the Scattergood Summer Camps and Taproot Nature Experience.

Ben Heller has been instrumental in so many of these endeavors and is constantly seeking ways to get students involved on the farm in their classes and free time. Dana Foster continues to shepherd the Middle School students on their Farm adventures and Irving Treadway, Adam Hanson, Theo Byrnes and Karen Huff taught so much about the Scattergood Farm through their work in the kitchen. Kent Tjossem provides valuable leadership and consultation on the School Committee, while Emily Fagan and Hannah Breckbill volunteer as associate members of the Farm Subcommittee.

Perennial plantings are necessarily hopeful and humbling: they hint at increased productivity and renewal, but often do so mysteriously and on their own schedule. Though the new asparagus patch will not be fully harvestable for several years, already it produces thoughts on transience, sustenance and the paradoxes of time spent working with plants on land immemorial.

In Peace,  
Mark Quee, Farm Manager