

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

FREEDOM FARM COMMUNITY

GROWING IN FAITH...



Despite one of the driest seasons we've experienced, Freedom Farm's 2022 lettuce harvest was fabulous.

Looking Back on 2022 as We Prepare for the 2023 Growing Season:

Ann Rader shares reflections and photos from 2022

Oh tender red loose leaf and crispy romaine, how we miss you this time of year! Farmer Will's successive plantings and careful watering led to bountiful lettuce harvests to share all season long - especially with our neighboring Otisville Mt. Hope Presbyterian Food Pantry. Perhaps the tasty lettuce was rivaled only by the cherry tomatoes, for whom the drought only intensified their juicy burst of flavor delight.

A steady flow of vibrant young people blessed the land as groups from Iona Prep High School, Camp Deerpark, Germantown Mennonite Youth Group, and Radical Living came to help farm and learn about food justice, sustainable agriculture, and God's spirit moving in the earth and all of us.



PICTURING THE 2022 SEASON...

Garlic Harvest and Braiding with youth from Camp Deerpark (local Mennonite Camp owned by NYC churches)



Learning About Compost with Germantown Mennonite Youth from Philadelphia

Transplanting Spinach with group from Iona Prep in Westchester, NY



Milking Jerseys at neighboring Freedom Hill Farm with Radical Living (Community Gardening Organization in Brooklyn)



Huge Thanks to the fantastic volunteers who helped us last season - we appreciate you So Much!!

As we plant seeds and prepare for 2023 - thanks for all your prayers and support. You are a beloved, vital part of Freedom Farm Community.

Corn, Sweet, Corn by Will Summers



Farming can be challenging. Every year is different; weather conditions are volatile...and increasingly so. If something goes sideways during our growing season, we often have to wait until the next year to try again. That's why it's important to celebrate the moments when things go right. The summer of 2022 corn harvest was one of those moments.

The signs that things might go right with this particular corn planting were there from the beginning. We like starting corn in seeding trays that get transplanted into the field a few weeks later. It gives the corn a head start to outgrow the weeds. The day this corn was seeded, there was exactly the right amount of potting soil prepared for the number of trays we needed to seed. **Exactly.**

A few weeks later a group of volunteers from a nearby Bruderhof community joined us at Freedom Farm for a workday and a meal. Edgar asked me to take a handful of the folks into the field that afternoon to transplant the corn. We had set up a sheet of reusable plastic mulch in the field for this corn planting which has a fixed number of holes in it for corn transplants. At seeding time, we do our best to try to match the amount of plants we need for the field in the trays, taking into consideration that germination is rarely (if ever) 100%.

While we were planting, the oldest member of the group mentioned that she had to skip three holes because a colony of ants had made it clear to her that those holes were their territory. When the planting was almost finished, I peeled away from the group to work on setting up irrigation so that we could water the corn once it was all in the ground. As the group made their way back in my direction, I asked if there were enough transplants to fill all the holes. "There were only three left over," one of the volunteers said to me as she handed me the almost-empty trays. **Exactly** the number of holes that were skipped on account of the ants!

The group made their way back to the farmhouse to prepare for the meal, and I finished laying out the irrigation for the corn. Before I could turn on the water to irrigate the transplants, dark clouds rolled in and rain poured down. **Exactly** enough rain to give the corn a good drink before clearing out so that all the volunteers could enjoy a meal together outside. While it rained I stood under a canopy of trees, staying dry and marveling at how it all unfolded.

The corn we transplanted that day grew tall and provided us with a generous harvest – plenty to share with our partners in food distribution, friends, neighbors, and to eat for ourselves. It was **exactly** what we needed in the dry and challenging 2022 season to remind us of God's abundant grace and nourishment.



COMMUNITY CULTURES GARDEN

Notes on Proyecto Faro and Freedom Farm Collaborations by Maria Marasigan, Co-Director of Proyecto Faro



In the Fall of 2021, Proyecto Faro (PF) staff, volunteers and board members broke bread together with the Freedom Farm team, thanking them for their generous farm produce donations to the PF immigrant community beginning in 2021 as of the Covid-19 pandemic continued to exacerbate food insecurity nationwide. This particular gathering however, was the initiation of a new way of working together where both teams would be collaborating to grow the food together, steward the land together, as well as bridging relationships and acknowledgements with the local Ramapough Lenape Indian Nation and the Sweetwater Cultural Center. We laid down our individual and collective intentions as we placed garlic cloves into the ground, moving down the rows together until all were completed. Other areas of the farm were sprinkled with cover crop and green manure mix to help rejuvenate the land before the upcoming Spring planting.

In the early part of 2022, we came together again, drafting out a potential calendar and gathering input about what seeds to grow for the upcoming season. Proyecto Faro put out a survey to community members and they responded eagerly about which fruits and vegetables they would love to see in their food distribution boxes and in the community fridge. We couldn't meet all of the requests due to space, time, capacity, seed availability, as well as climate requirements. However, we did our best to center community needs and wants while also supporting local seed growers and/or varieties that were non-GMO and had historical/environmental significance when possible. Together, we also gave the farm/garden the name Community Cultures Garden representing the diversity of everyone coming together to co-create, grow, and gift in the spirit of mutual aid together.

Farmer Will Summers from Freedom Farm taught PF staff members as well as PF's very first intern, Maia Snyder, about tilling and prepping the soil, how to lay down plastic mulch, how to put together an irrigation system and set a watering schedule, how to direct seed and transplant, weed, harvest, trellis, remove suckers from tomato plants, select when to harvest garlic scapes,





how to let things cure, and so many other aspects of farming. At the same time, we tested out tomatillos and chili varieties that were new to Will. Community members from Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador were teaching all of us about the proper time to harvest, other ways of planting and spacing, and delicious recipes from their home countries alongside stories of what they grew on their family farms back in their motherlands. Some even came ready with their own machetes from when they farmed in their countries to help tackle the overgrown

weeds when we couldn't always get to them and offered more efficient ways to work through particular parts of the garden.

The learning and teaching throughout the season came from everyone, with their own contributions that made the experience so much more than growing food; we were growing community. There was intergenerational and intercultural participation and support from retired senior citizens to 5 year olds helping their moms on their days off from work.

The fields were full of a mixture of laughter, sweat, stories, prayers, new friendships, multiple languages spoken, gratitudes to bodies, seeds, and sunshine, deeper understandings of "water is life", and gifted moments of peace and unexpected meditation, consistently



deepening in connection with one another, ourselves, our ancestors, nature and all of its nourishing elements.



We didn't measure how many pounds and crates of garlic, onions, beans, squash, cucumbers, corn, tomatoes, tomatillos, eggplants, sweet peppers, and hot peppers we produced and how many people and families were fed. What we do know is that we are growing something necessary and we are bringing folks together in ways that

are empowering and healing. We have created a space of safety and, in the labor, also a space of rest and community. We are continuing to figure out ways to improve this first trial and expand our network as we root and rise together.



At the end of the season, we came back to our harvested garlic and laid down the next generation for the next season. We gave thanks and recognition to loved ones who have passed, planted things we want to grow more of such as kindness and trust, and committed to our solidarity and social justice work. We hope more will join us in the

coming seasons as we continue to care for one another and all of our relations <3

To learn more about Proyecto Faro visit: www.proyectofarorockland.org



FREEDOM FARM COMMUNITY AWARDED GRANT FROM HUDSON RIVER PRESBYTERY

In December 2022, Freedom Farm Community received word that our grant application to Hudson River Presbytery's Legacy Fund was approved! The Legacy Fund uses money received by the Presbytery from sales of closed church buildings to fund new Spirit-led initiatives that carry out the values of the Presbytery: joy, hospitality, partnership, justice...and more. The Legacy Fund grant award is \$150,000 spread over the course of three years and requires that we raise 20% of the grant in matching funds (that's \$30,000...we did the math for you). The award will be a key support in expanding our ability to offer free and low-cost food to people facing food insecurity. It will also season our gatherings and faith explorations here on the Freedom Farm land as we continue creating space for reconnecting to God, creation, and one another. Thank you, Hudson River Presbytery! And, thank you in advance to all of you who we know will continue to partner with us to arrive at the matching funds goal.

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