

Environment and Programs Report for the Year 2022
Annual General Meeting, CHRHS
March 21, 2023

Environmental

Gardens

The Farm's gardens continue to be a highlight for those visiting the site, however the dry and hot weather conditions made for a difficult growing season, introducing more opportunities for pests to thrive. The deer have also become very familiar with our gardens and grounds over the last few years, to the point that we have considered implementing a "deer garden" near the Wetland to deter them from visiting our edible and perennial gardens. The perennial beds were as beautiful as ever this year, thanks to our dedicated Dartmouth Horticultural Society (DHS) volunteers (Karen Rutherford, Barry Gorman, and Marie Sentner), Farm garden volunteers, Environment Technician, Makayla Cole, and gardening student, Tanna Burke. One of Makayla's focuses last season was improving water conservation at The Farm. We now own 3 new spruce rain barrels from the Nova Scotia Shelburne Barrel Factory, providing a water source for the pollinator garden and orchard, as well as the main produce garden.

Goals for 2023 will include a more efficient in-house composting system, applying additional compost from Garlic Mountain Farms, improved natural pest control through encouraging parasitoid wasps with the introduction of plants within the carrot (umbelliferae) and cabbage (cruciferae) families, and introducing "no-dig" permaculture practices into our edible gardens, to improve soil structure, and therefore, food production.

Meadow/Orchard

Additional pear, peach and apple trees were donated, purchased and planted in the Orchard last Spring to establish further opportunities for food production, nectar, and pollen sources. The coniferous and deciduous trees planted in 2020 are slowly filling out, and for the most part, remain healthy and intact.

Goals for 2023 will include establishing a healthy and diverse wildflower population within the meadow, maintaining and supporting our new trees, and implementing more native shrubs and trees, including serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*), elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), and more.

Wetland

The wetland continues to be a feature of the site, providing further opportunities for connecting with nature; listening to bird songs, observing wildlife, and admiring some of the unique wetland

vegetation. However, the alders, angelica, and multiflora rose are encroaching on the wetland, requiring immediate proactive efforts to control their population.

In the Works

In collaboration with Ducks Unlimited, plans for the overall health and conservation of the wetland will begin with a water quality survey, and development of an invasive species management plan.

Programs & Events

In addition to our regular school programming tours, Makayla developed an iNaturalist scavenger hunt to invite visitors to observe and document life on the farm! Farm Camp was a roaring success with the help of summer staff, and will continue in 2023 with 4 Farm Camps. We welcomed back our market vendors on Wednesdays for our Pop-up Market, but will be reconsidering this model for 2023, as we struggled to maintain a regular clientele. Fibre Frolic was a lot of fun, with two spinning demonstrators, sheep shearing, and our popular Frolic Grill! Mark your calendars for Fibre Frolic 2023: June 3. Our well-loved Strawberry Social and Rhubarb Rhapsody events returned and proved successful as ever. Outdoor Movie Night featured a staff favourite, "Biggest Little Farm," but we will look at inviting the community to vote for this year's movie choice! Farm Fest was rescheduled due to Hurricane Fiona, but still gathered many families to the Farm for a day of Farm fun activities. The Warm up to Winter Market has become a popular Winter shopping experience, continuing to provide opportunities for supporting local artisans and crafters. Volunteer, Sue Corser, rallied several Fibre artisans for a Fall and Winter Workshop series at the Farm, bringing in additional revenue for the Farm during the slower months.

In the Fall, we were invited to host an interpretation lunch for delegates attending the National Interpretation Conference. This was a unique opportunity to showcase all that we have to offer. Delegates enjoyed a multi course, seasonally inspired meal in the Giles House and Harris House, including vegetable ferments and pickles, leek, potato and brie soup, chive biscuits and herbed butter, garden salad, apple crumble and blackberry ice cream, and chilled switchel (a traditional fermented ginger, lemon and honey drink). The participants were thrilled with their meals, and we were honored to be able to provide guests with this unique experience!

New event added: Winter Solstice

As this was our first year offering this event, we were careful to keep numbers low. As expected, registration filled quickly, and individuals and families joined us for a solstice walk around the Farm, a yule log activity, followed by hot chocolate and carols in the Farmyard.

In the Works

Winter and Spring workshop series, including: Fibre Workshop with Sue Corser from Two Ewes

on First, 3 Soap Making Workshops with Maggie Jenkins from Saltmarsh Soaps, 2 Salve Making Workshops with Farm staff, Neighborhood Soup Party, and more in development.

Beginning May 2023, we will be partnering with Ducks Unlimited to offer Wetland Programs to grade 4 classrooms in HRM. They will provide a May training to staff, and interested volunteers.

We were granted \$12,337 of New Horizons Federal funding, which means Garden Buds will be returning for a second year!

Volunteerism

In addition to our DHS garden volunteers, we welcomed new gardening volunteers, Tim and Anita into the fold this season, bringing knowledge of permaculture practices, fruit tree growing, food production, medicinal plants, and more. Wayne and Paul Bonang repaired the Farm's fences, installed spruce barrels, and helped with general maintenance around the Farm. Blacksmith, Kevin Thomas continues to be a steadfast supporter and volunteer of the Farm, helping with fundraising initiatives, technical maintenance projects, and bringing the Blacksmith Shop to life. Robin Kirkbright is our go-to volunteer for all things Farm, including general maintenance, animal support and transportation, events and programming support, and so much more! Thanks also to neighbor, Angus Stewart, for keeping the farmyard clear of snow.

Thank you

My family and I will be moving to The Annapolis Valley in the Spring, and I will be leaving the Farm in May to re-establish roots in our hometown of Bridgetown. After my first summer here as Student Horticulturist in 2017, I was hooked. The sense of community that I found at the Farm made me feel at home. This, coupled with the excitement of food, plants, environment, programs and museum initiatives has provided me with the most fulfilling role of Environment and Programs Manager at The Cole Harbour Heritage Farm. Thank you to our inspiring leader and Executive Director, Janice Kirkbright, who hired me (!!) and has coached me along through ups, downs, and all-arounds, providing wisdom and support in all things museum, food service, environment, ethics, family, and so much more. Thanks to my colleague, Heather Adams, who has been alongside from the beginning, always with a spirit of lightheartedness. Thanks to Makayla Cole for carrying the torch, to the kitchen team for making dreams come true, and to all the Summer Staff over my time here. Many thanks to The Board of Directors, all of our dedicated volunteers, including the passionate and diligent garden crew, and to our members for supporting and enabling the endeavors of the Farm Team! 2023 at the Farm is shaping up to be a wonderful and inspiring year!

Respectfully submitted,

Emma Agombar