

2022 Farm Report to the Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative

Dear Friends,

When I arrived at Scattergood in 1999, David Rossell, who was a Humanities and Social Studies teacher, was completing his dissertation on the spread of mulberry trees in colonial America. These trees were intentionally planted to support the nascent sericulture (silk) industry which soon created its own speculative bubble that ultimately burst and left mostly fodder for future PhD students. Of course, our contemporary mulberries leave behind much more than that, often on our sidewalks, windshields and clothes drying on the clothesline. I feel that this year in particular, I have been thinking much about mulberries. They fill the fruit gap between strawberries and raspberries, often providing a welcomed snack while we work in the fields and pastures; however, they also fill the gaps between fence posts, in our prairie plantings and elsewhere that require us to constantly remove them, an unpleasant job that never ends. Many weeds can feed us, but few offer such extremes in pleasure and pain.

On the Scattergood Farm, there was much to be pleased with during the past year.

Students were again involved in the farm in many ways, beginning with Farm Fun Day during fall orientation. This introduction was followed up with more intensive interactions through the High School Farm Term classes offered on Trees, Flowers and Seed Saving, and with the Middle School beginning each day at the farm with Collection, livestock chores and science class. This fall the Middle School will also be doing their own Farm Term and will join the high school on the farm many mornings. Throughout the year there were Crews working on the Farm, Farm Team PE classes in the fall and spring, a Food Preservation Project in the fall, and a Meeting for Worship Spiritual Practice group which went to the farm to quietly observe the livestock. Two students volunteered to do evening chores several times per week and Ben Heller worked hard to get the Biology and Advanced Biology classes learning on the Farm during all times of year and in all weather conditions. During May Term Ben and Annabel Higgin-Howser taught an Ornithology class that amongst many other things, raised broiler chickens.

The Farm continued its outreach to the wider community with visits from The Tamarack School in Iowa City, Taproot Nature Experience, Camp Scattergood, staff from the Iowa Valley RC&D, Grinnell College student gardeners and their faculty advisor, farmers from Sundog, Bluegate, Millet Seed, and Genuine Faux (pronounced "Fox") Farms, gleaners from Table to Table, attendees to a Field Day co-sponsored by Iowa State Extension and Practical Farmers of Iowa, parents and alumni during Scattergood Day and Commencement Weekend, and volunteers who came last spring to help rebuild the high tunnel which was damaged in what appear to have become our annual derechos. We are doing two PFI field trials this year, presented at their Annual Conference and attended their Cooperators Meeting, as well as conferences conducted by Iowa Organic Association and The Savannah Institute. A group of student cyclists rode to Echollective, Sundog and Lucky Star Farms where they camped and worked, and the Seed Saving class did

service work at Genuine Faux Farm. We also served on a grant committee for NCR-SARE and were featured in a PFI video (<https://youtu.be/p8lySv3oHkc>) detailing our work in creating beneficial insect habitat on the Farm.

This was the work of many people starting with Ben Heller, who is beginning his second year as Livestock Manager. In addition to all of the farm work that Ben accomplished, he has also been an instrumental part of the team of teachers who helped with the Middle School farm adventures and taught Farm Term and May Term classes. Inikka Dalton has been indispensable as an hourly employee this summer and Irving Treadway, Adam Hanson and Karen Huff feed us well with so many things from the Farm. The Farm Subcommittee of the School Committee has offered wise guidance and Kent Tjossem somehow found time to help with big projects and big equipment. Many thanks to all.

There is much to learn from, appreciate and lament on a small diversified farm, and mulberries will continue to provide opportunities for each of these, perhaps even more so as Ben researches the viability of planting non-fruiting mulberries for grazing on a problematic pasture. Rethinking a common piece of our landscape is worthy practice for all of us as we engage with our complex, frustrating and beautiful world.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Quee, Farm Manager