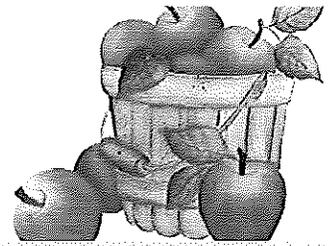


October 2013 Issue

Holden AgCom News

Our Mission Statement: To serve, promote, and enhance agriculture within the Town of Holden; To be a liaison between town officials and residents; To provide a resource to assist local farmers and help preserve the town's open space



What we are plowing toward:

Showing Pride in our community with posted "Right to Farms" Signs

Assisting our Board of Selectman with guidelines on Chapter 61A Right of First Refusal Procedures

Our Meetings

Are open to the public and are held once a month on every 3rd Tuesday at 6:30pm in the Selectman Room of the Starbuck Building

Next Mtg is on Tuesday, October 15th.

RED BARN FARM DAY EVENT

SATURDAY
OCTOBER 19TH 1-4PM
AT THE RED BARN
IN HOLDEN

Come celebrate National Food Day with us at the Red Barn. Food Day is a national grassroots movement celebrating healthy, affordable and sustainably produced food.

We are happy to welcome Dawn Miles Ertel Food Consultant and owner of Dawn's Delights. She will be joining us at the event and have food for those interested in Vegan, Gluten-Free and Paleo foods using whole and organic ingredients.

For more information about this family fun filled event go online to www.redbarnholden.org.

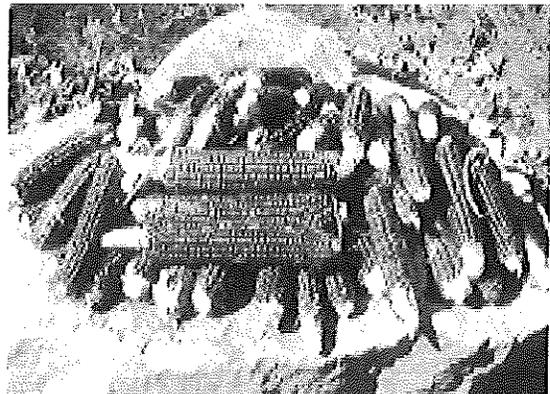
HOW ABOUT THEM APPLES!

Have an abundance of apples from your apple tree and don't know what to do with them? Here's the perfect opportunity to learn how to press them into cider. We will have two cider presses and will be giving demonstrations on how to make your very own apple cider. Don't forget to bring empty jugs to fill with the "fruits" of your labor!

GROWING HEIRLOOM INDIAN CORN FOR FOOD

By: Judith Haran

The community garden on Whitney Street has branched out this year into carbohydrate production. Inspired by the Seeds of Solidarity booth at last year's Garlic and Arts Festival (www.garlicandarts.org), which included piles of colorful, edible corn, we bought a few ears of Hopi Blue (a very old open pollinated corn from the Southwest) to dry and use as seed corn. This June we planted about 100 seeds. We were amazed by this corn! By August it had grown to 8-9 feet and was extremely lush, despite being in just average soil with no amendments/additions. From our 100 seeds (which was just a handful, about 1/5 of one ear) we harvested over 150 fresh ears of beautiful blue corn, some more than a foot long. (We also got one ear of a different color, a beautiful deep maroon.) We're drying it to grind up into cornmeal. According to wikipedia, blue corn meal, a staple of New Mexico cuisine, has 20% more protein and a lower glycemic index than regular cornmeal. It's also a more complete protein source and has a great, nutty flavor. For more info on this corn, or on the Whitney Street community garden (which is accepting applications for members for 2014), email Judy at jah1954@hotmail.com. Seed packets are available to anyone who promises to grow this amazing heirloom corn next summer.



PREPARE FOR SPRING PLANTING THE EASY WAY WITH SHEET MULCHING!

By: Jonathan Hart

Would you like to reclaim a weedy area of your yard to plant something new? Do you need to improve the quality of your soil so your plants will really thrive? The technique of sheet mulching allows you to do just that and gives your plants a chance to get established without being over run by weeds. Sheet mulching is a process that mimics what happens naturally on the forest floor. It is the easiest way to tame out of control weeds and at the same time build rich soil to nourish new plantings. Fall is a great time to sheet mulch an area you would like to plant in the spring. Here's how you do it:

Step 1: Cut or knock down the vegetation in the area you would like to plant. Remove any woody materials (like tree branches or brush) that are greater than 1" thick. Feel free to leave any existing plants you want to keep in place.

Step 2: Sprinkle compost or manure over the area at a rate of about 50 lbs per 100 sq. ft. Now wet the area down thoroughly. This helps to activate the decomposition of all the organic material in your planting area.

Step 3: Cover the planting area with 3 layers of corrugated brown cardboard or a layer of newspaper about 1/2" thick. If you left any plants in place, just put the layer down around them. Wet down each layer thoroughly as you put it in place so it will conform better to the ground and will not blow away in the wind. This also helps with the decomposition process. This layer acts as your "weed barrier" so be sure to overlap the edges by 6 - 8 inches so weeds can't regrow up through this layer. If you desire to plant anything edible, try not to use cardboard or newspaper with red or orange inks on them and also avoid white cardboard or glossy newspaper sheets. These materials are likely to contain toxic chemicals that will leach into the soil. It is also a good idea to remove plastic packing tape and staples from your cardboard as they will not break down quickly.

Step 4: Add 6-8" of weed free organic material on top of the cardboard such as compost, manure, straw, or grass clippings and leaves. Since you want this layer to break down it is a good idea to try and mix carbon rich (brown) material with nitrogen rich (green) material. Water everything thoroughly again. If you use compost for this layer, feel free to plant right away otherwise wait until spring. If you have existing plants you left in this area keep this layer a few inches away from them to prevent rot.

Step 5 (optional): Place a 2" layer of bark mulch or wood chips on top of the other layers. This layer will help retain moisture which again aids the breakdown of all the other layers.

This sheet mulching technique comes from Permaculture, which is a school of thought that strives to find logical and balanced ways to create true sustainable living. Permaculture emphasizes maximum benefit from minimal effort. Look for more articles that share thoughts from Permaculture in future newsletters.