

STONY KILL ALMANAC

SPRING 2023





OUR MISSION

To educate the public and cultivate environmental stewardship through interpretation of the rich historical, environmental, and agricultural heritage of Stony Kill Farm.

To inquire about submitting an article or images for the Almanac, email: Almanac@stonykill.org

**Cover photo by Samantha Reischer*

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Community Makes the Farm Thrive



Just over 45 years ago, Stony Kill Foundation was formed by a group of volunteers to support the newly established Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center. The organization initially played a supporting role to NYS Department of Environmental Conservation staff, assisting with education programs and providing volunteers for events and farm activities. The Foundation's role has evolved significantly since then. Today, Stony Kill Foundation is tasked with overseeing all programming and activities at Stony Kill Farm, and each year we host more students, campers, and visitors on the farm than ever before. Keeping the farm going takes a village, and it is safe to say that Stony Kill is the wonderful place it is today because of the generations of dedicated community members who have shared their time and support for Stony Kill. Thank you for being part of our community and helping this wonderful place thrive!

Erik Fyfe

Executive Director

Stony Kill Foundation

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Nature's Milestones

By Tim Stanley

March and April - The farm's heritage chickens, which had been laying fewer eggs as they responded to shorter days and longer nights during the winter months, once again begin to increase egg production.

April 6 - Full "Pink Moon"

Early-Mid April - Spring grasses have begun to re-establish. The cows and sheep transition from eating hay back to fresh grass, and the upper pastures are reopened.

Early May - Bluebirds have one of the longest spans of nesting times of any species in Dutchess County. Look for them along the farm lane.

May 5 - Full "Flower Moon."

Early-Mid May - Root crops do best when the moon is waning, so if you missed the April window, plant potatoes, turnips, carrots, and beets now.

Mid-May - Coyote pups are emerging from dens. They help farmers and the ecosystem by controlling woodchuck populations that can wreak havoc on pastures and hayfields.

Late May - Haymaking season begins with the first hay crop ready for harvest. Hay is mowed, raked, baled, and then stored in the barn to provide winter feed for the Stony Kill livestock.

Humans of Stony Kill



I like to volunteer. I like the greenhouse and the animals. We do a lot of hiking. And the festivals! **Jim Moseman**

I like to do everything. Gardening is my passion. Walking, hiking the trails. I love everything. Especially Lulu the cow, she is so sweet. **Maria Pittman**



WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO AT STONY KILL?



We like to look at the cows and see the baby lambs. We watch the mowing and the weed wackers. We like going in the corn crib and finding black walnuts.

Jen, Juni, and Ozzy Vehaba

I like to walk. To see the animals. It's nice seeing the lambs and the view here in general.

Sabine Frisbee and Katlyn Wright





Homeschooling on the Farm

By Alanna Facchin

My daughter, Meadow, is fortunate enough to be an “Unschooler.” It’s not my preferred term for our form of homeschooling, but it is useful in that it quickly sums up the general philosophy: self-directed, joy-based, and interest-led home education. This is a beautiful way for us to take in the world and there’s no better place for this style of learning than Stony Kill Farm.

We feel deeply blessed to have Stony Kill as our “home base” for homeschooling and to be a part of something so much larger than ourselves. Meadow is enrolled in the Homeschool on the Farm program, which allows her to explore hands-on science and nature-based education while creating cherished childhood memories. Here we have made long-lasting friendships with fellow homeschool families, educators, gardeners, farmers, and the farm animals. We have enjoyed pressing apples for cider, growing our own mushrooms, papermaking, extracting honey from bee hives, and dissecting owl pellets.

After our weekly class, the kids run off to their secret hideout in the woods to construct a “café” out of sticks, logs, and stumps. They work cooperatively for hours without interruption, helping each other haul tree branches while considering their blueprints and ensuring that their business is a success. Every week, I sit back and

watch them from a distance and think how lucky they are to be so immersed in play, feeling safe and having the time of their lives. I appreciate that there are no adults directing them, no one is placing limits on their imaginations, and the kids are figuring it out for themselves. While they are building their forts, they don’t realize they are also building great community, socializing, making mistakes, problem solving, and learning endlessly.

When class is not in session, we enjoy the grounds of Stony Kill for all manner of learning. The Woodland Trail offers a distinct opportunity for phenology studies with fleeting vernal pools and spring ephemeral flowers, native plants, and bird habitat. We take part in multiple citizen science projects here, which involve helping our amphibian and monarch butterfly friends during migration periods. We often peek through the windows of the Tenant Farmhouse where we find ourselves imagining life in the 18th century. The Manor House and the barn spark curiosity in the Verplanck family and the history of the land, which in turn leads us to studies of the Wappinger people. Hidden in plain sight amongst Stony Kill Farm’s 750 acres lies an entire homeschool curricula; you just need to know how to look.



On Growing Garlic

By Tim Hetrick

Garlic has the potential to grow very well in the Hudson Valley. The plant comes in two subspecies: hardneck and softneck. Hardneck varieties are durable in the cold, produce scapes, are flavorful, and can develop robust bulbs. Softneck varieties store longer, have a milder flavor, and are a good choice for a green garlic harvest.

Planting Your Garlic

For best results, garlic should be planted at the end of October. Late planting is ideal so that the garlic does not sprout prior to winter, which would deprive the garlic of the energy it needs for root development.



Garlic needs to be spaced 4" to 6" apart in an area that receives full sun, as it performs better without competition. Weeds should be kept to a minimum, as they outcompete garlic for both water and nutrients, decreasing bulb size.

After planting, mulch over the garlic beds with straw or leaves so as to regulate ground temperatures during the freeze/thaw cycle of late winter/early spring. The mulch will help keep the garlic at a more constant temperature as temperature levels swing within the soil. Another positive of mulching your garlic beds is that it helps suppress weed growth.

Feeding and Harvesting

Garlic loves to grow in well-draining soil. It is a heavy feeder, so it will produce larger yields in soils that are heavily composted. It's best to fertilize three times: at the time of planting, when the garlic begins to sprout (early spring), and then once more four weeks later.

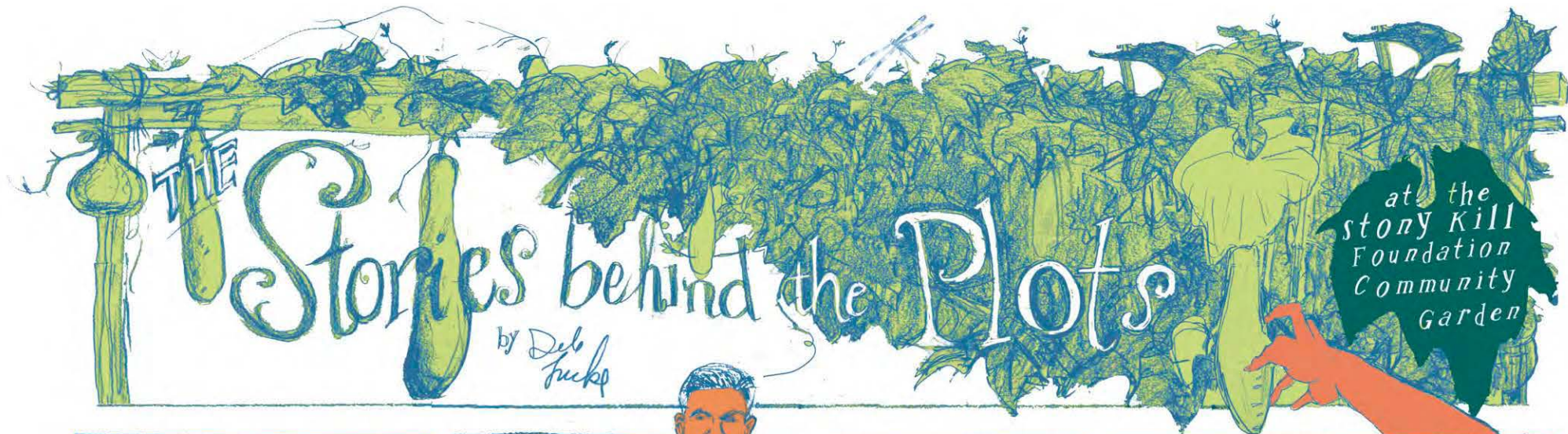


It will take approximately 180 to 210 days for garlic to fully mature, depending on both the weather and the variety of garlic. Most garlic is harvested at the end of June or early July. Softneck garlic will begin to fall over, letting you know it is time to be harvested. Hardneck varieties, which produce scapes (the flowering reproductive stalk), should be harvested four weeks after you cut the scapes. If the scapes are not cut, bulb size will be decreased, as the needed energy will remain in the scape, not the bulb.

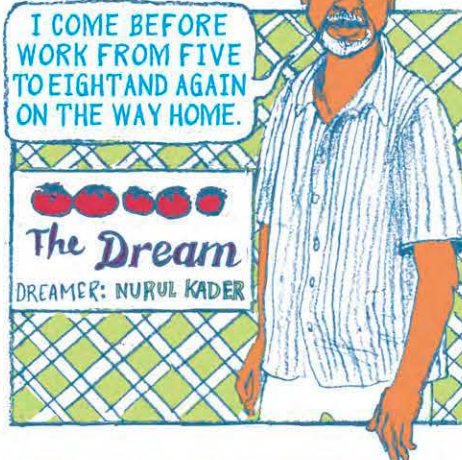
Remember, growing garlic is a marathon, not a sprint. If done right, the reward will be worth the wait.

Recipe: Easy Roasted Garlic

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. On a large bulb of garlic, make a small cut on top to expose the cloves.
3. Add a pinch of salt to the bulb and drizzle with olive oil.
4. Place on a cookie sheet. Roast for 40 minutes to 1 hour.
5. The cloves will become soft like butter, and their uses will be endless. Enjoy!



Once upon a time there was a man who dreamed of dirt. That's because for many, many years—ever since he emigrated from Bangladesh—Nurul Kader had lived in rentals without space for a garden. When he found out about the community garden at stony Kill, he signed right up.



The Owls of Stony Kill

By Margaret Maruschak

There is something about the “hoot” of an owl in the dark of night that elicits surprise and awe. With silent flight and nocturnal habits, the secretive owl is simply not a bird most people see every day. But a little research by our staff revealed that the mature forests, wetlands, and fields at Stony Kill collectively make prime habitat for Barred Owls.

In Search of Owls

Packed with flashlights and cameras, staff members set out to survey the Stony Kill woods for resident owls on a moonlit March night. We called for them, watched, and waited. And there she was! A female Barred Owl with soulful, dark eyes that pierced the night! We didn’t even hear her fly in on wings so silent. Known as a curious bird, the owl looked at us with interest and turned her head to listen to us with her feathery, sensitive ears.

We noticed the owl’s great curved bill and her sharp, powerful talons. She is efficient in catching her dinner: mice, moles, or other small prey. We hooted to her again. If Barred Owls could speak “human,” their hoots seem to say, “who cooks for you, who cooks for you all?” A second owl, a male, flew in and the mated pair hooted and cawed in a duet that sounded like spooky laughter.

Learning Hands-On

In the Stony Kill classroom, students learn that owls do not digest the bones and fur of prey; instead, they “cough up” a pellet of the

undigested material. When handed a foil-wrapped, sterilized owl pellet to dissect, the typical student’s initial wariness quickly turns to fascination as they tweeze out small rodent skulls, ribs, and leg bones from the pellet.

On an Owl Prowl

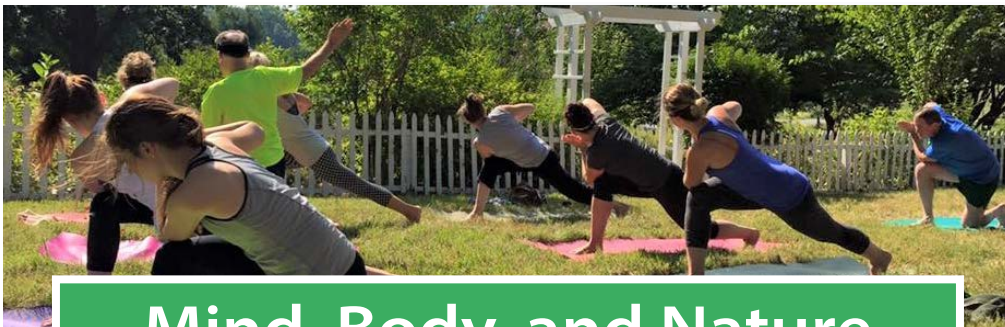
Since our first sightings, we have had the good fortune to reliably see Barred Owls on both sides of Route 9D, and we opened educator-led owl prowl groups to the public (having received special permission to be on the grounds after dark). Watch the Stony Kill events calendar to join the next owl prowl, usually held on full moon nights.

Just before dusk, careful observers can also see a pair of Great Horned Owls sitting in the trees at the edge of the forest or swooping down over the hayfield to catch mice. Though owls are primarily nocturnal, hikers on Stony Kill’s trails have reported owl sightings during the daytime. Be alert and maybe you, too, can be lucky enough to spot an owl in the Stony Kill woods.



Specimen mounts of a Barred Owl (above) and a Great Horned Owl (below)





Mind, Body, and Nature

By Shelly Loveland

"Driving in to Stony Kill, there's this feeling that you're putting your body in the right place for your practice." That's how Lauren Magarelli describes the experience she had each time she arrived to teach Yoga on the Farm last summer. "Yoga is inspired by nature; it's filled with beautiful poses like tree, cow, butterfly—any of which you may see at Stony Kill."

That connection with nature also resonates with Qigong on the Farm instructor Felicia Ballos. "One of the postures we practice is wu ji, where you simply stand and line up your bones. Doing it while being able to root into the earth, and with the cosmic energy coming down from above...you're relating to what's around you, whether it's the warmth of the sun or the chill of the dew."

A Moving Meditation

Think you need to be super fit or flexible to practice qigong or yoga? Not at all. Both are forms of moving meditation that, with a teacher's thoughtful guidance, enable you to practice in a way that's just right for you. "Qigong is a healing therapy," says Felicia. "You are working with the energy inside your body and connecting it with the energy outside your body." Adds Lauren, "Yoga is a way of getting to know yourself by bringing yourself back to your breath. It's so much more than flexibility."

The Importance of Community

Learning and practicing together is key. "Being in a class, you're more likely to do it, because there's the discipline and responsibility of meeting up with people," says Felicia. "And when you inhale and exhale together, your heart spaces naturally connect with each other." For Lauren, it's also about the engagement that happens. "I love the conversations we have before and after class. It's important for people to breathe together and make personal, human connections."

Adds Lauren, "I would say to anyone considering yoga—just trust and try it twice. Even if you come and just sit on your mat, breathe, listen to the sounds, and be in your body. You can't do that wrong!"

When not teaching on the farm, Felicia Ballos is a resident practitioner at Valley Spirit Acupuncture and Lauren Magarelli is the owner of beBhakti Yoga, both in Beacon, NY.



Stony Kill Foundation: 45 Years of Perseverance

by Mara Farrell

Stony Kill Farm has brought joy to the Hudson Valley for generations. Over the past four decades, the steadfast commitment of Stony Kill Foundation volunteers and staff has guaranteed a future for the farm and center for environmental and agricultural education, historical interpretation, and outdoor recreation. Working farms have become few and far between up and down the Hudson River, and Stony Kill represents a community resource like no other.

To understand the Stony Kill Foundation's legacy, we must first jump back in time to 1942, when James DeLancey and John Bayard Rodgers Verplanck donated the 754-acre Stony Kill Farm property to New York State. The deed stated that Stony Kill must be forever used for agriculture, or be returned to the Verplancks' heirs. SUNY Farmingdale operated Stony Kill as a teaching farm until 1973, when it was passed to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to be an Environmental Education Center. In 1977, Stony Kill Foundation was formed to support DEC's work, and Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center thrived for three decades. Then in 2010, Stony Kill Farm's future became precarious.

Amid the Great Recession, DEC ceased environmental education activities at Stony Kill and proposed closing the farm. Stony Kill Foundation responded by launching a "Save Stony Kill" campaign and sought solutions to the crisis. Foundation Board members Dick Lahey, Ed Hartmann, Tony Riccobono, Paul Adams, and others played pivotal roles in securing the farm's future, alongside support from the community. Legendary folk singer Pete Seeger picked up his banjo to protest the potential closing alongside Foundation



members at the farm's gates. The Board organized fundraisers, held meetings with DEC staff, and generated publicity to advocate that Stony Kill remain open. They needed to raise \$35,000 just for the basics—from feeding livestock to keeping the lights on.

One day in 2010, Dick Lahey got a call from a New York City philanthropist who had read about the potential closing of Stony Kill from Bloomberg News. He explained that his wife was worried about the farm, which spurred him into action. Preferring to remain anonymous, he sent a check for the desperately needed \$35,000 and the couple later came to the farm and toured the grounds.

With funds secured, the Foundation was eventually able to negotiate that Stony Kill could remain open. Beginning in January of 2011, Stony Kill Foundation would bear responsibility for operating the farm and continuing the environmental education and community programs at Stony Kill. DEC would maintain the grounds and later support Stony Kill in other ways.

In the organization's new role, Stony Kill Foundation rose to the occasion. Since 2011, the Foundation has adapted to its new responsibilities, helping ensure that Stony Kill Farm remains open for the community to enjoy. The story of the farm's survival reminds us all what we can do when we come together as a community to protect the places we love. With gratitude, we welcome a bright future for Stony Kill Foundation and all who have made this farm a part of their home.

Volunteer Spotlight: Alste Holmgren

By Annabeth Gausepohl

If you've appreciated the gorgeous flower boxes at the farm's entrance during the warmer days, make sure you thank Alste Holmgren for the beauty she and our greenhouse and gardens volunteer team members bring to Stony Kill.



Feeling Like Home

Alste began volunteering in 2019 after attending a honeybee event. She instantly fell in love with the farm and offered to help in the greenhouse. She says that what makes Stony Kill so special is that it feels like home. Having grown up on a 250-year-old farm, Alste finds that the centuries-old buildings and beautiful landscapes of Stony Kill offer her a sense of nostalgia and comfort that's hard to find in the busy world beyond.

Plant Whisperer

Starting at age five, Alste had her very own garden. Through years of trial and error, she began to instinctively develop "a feeling for plants." Even with all of her amazing knowledge and a definite green thumb, Alste says learning to care for plants is a lifelong journey. She has accidentally killed more plants than she can count and says it's easy to feel discouraged, but the joy of seeing her plants grow makes all the hard work worth it.

Alste's favorite part about volunteering is that it gives her "a feeling of freedom" and the ability to do what she loves and to do it on her own time.

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Support the Farm You Love

Did you know that there are many ways you can help preserve and improve the Stony Kill Farm for everyone to enjoy?

Make a Gift

Your support helps fund education programs, farming operations, preservation, and more. Donations are welcome year round and can be made online at stonykill.org/donate or by check to Stony Kill Foundation, at 79 Farmstead Lane, Wappingers Falls, NY 12590.

Find a Match

Ask your employer if they make matching gifts. It's a simple way to make your support go twice as far!

Donate from an IRA

IRA holders with a required minimum distribution (RMD) can receive tax benefits for making a qualified charitable distribution to Stony Kill Foundation.

Leave a Legacy

Please consider Stony Kill Foundation in your will and estate planning. Planned giving supports a lasting legacy of outdoor education, small-scale agriculture, and stewardship of Stony Kill Farm for all to enjoy. You can learn more about legacy gifts by contacting Executive Director Erik Fyfe at erik@stonykill.org or 845-831-3800.



Photo: Kara Cerilli

Thank You to Our
Champion Level
Sponsor!



OPEN BARN | FEB - NOV
Saturdays & Sundays 11am - 1pm



HARVEST FEST
September 30 (Rain Date Oct 1)

SEE YOU ON THE FARM!

Event updates at stonykill.org and
on social media @stonykillfoundation

BUTTERFLIES & BLOOMS

August 12 - 19



STONY KILL SPOOKTACULAR
October 28