



**COLUMBIA**  
LAND CONSERVANCY  
PO BOX 299 | 49 MAIN STREET  
CHATHAM, NEW YORK 12037  
518 392 5252 [www.clctrust.org](http://www.clctrust.org)

## **Resources for Assessing and Leasing Farmland**

### **FARMER VOLUNTEERS**

*Farmer volunteers are available to help landowners assess the agricultural potential of their property, and also to serve as mentors/advisors to young farmers interested in leasing farmland. Contact Marissa Codey at 518-392-5252 x211 or [marissa@clctrust.org](mailto:marissa@clctrust.org) to arrange a meeting.*

### **Gale Bury**

Gale Bury is a Trustee of the Columbia Land Conservancy, and serves on the Conservancy's Agricultural Committee. He is a retired dairy and grain farmer, currently working part-time for Gibson Farms, in Schodack Landing. Gale has worked at the Gibson Farm, a grain operation, for approximately 10 years. Before that, he ran a family dairy operation for 20+ years. He received an AAS in Agricultural Science from Delhi Ag and Tech and served in the US Army. He is available to help you assess the agricultural viability of your land and to discuss various options for growing crops or livestock.

### **Barry Chase, Chaseholm Farm**

Barry Chase and his wife Rosey are dairy farmers who own 350 acres of land. Their farm is located in Ancram and Pine Plains, NY, and 140 acres of the farm was recently protected with a conservation easement held by the Columbia Land Conservancy. Barry has farmed for his entire life, purchasing the family farm after his father's death in 1972. The farm grows hay, corn and oats to feed the registered Holstein herd. They only need to purchase soybeans to balance the protein in the grain. Presently he is semi-retired and rents the cow barn to another farm family who milks 60 cows. They rent some of the better land to him and he grows the corn and chops it for them. His herd now consists of 2 head of cattle, 16 chickens, and 3 pigs. Barry and Rosey's son Rory recently returned to the family farm and has established a probiotic cheese operation on the property known as The Amazing Real Live Food Company ([amazingreallive.com](http://amazingreallive.com)).

### **Jean-Paul Courtens, Roxbury Farm**

Jean-Paul is a Trustee of the Columbia Land Conservancy and serves on the Conservancy's Agricultural Committee. Jean-Paul lives in Kinderhook with his wife Jody Bolluyt and his three children. Jean-Paul and Jody own and operate Roxbury Farm which was founded in 1990. Roxbury Farm is a 310 acre, diversified operation producing vegetables, hay, beef, lamb and pork. The farm is a CSA with 1200 member families in NYC, Westchester County, Columbia County and the Capital District. Roxbury Farm, in collaboration with Equity Trust, implemented a model lease to ensure long term land and housing affordability. Jean-Paul completed four years of training at Warmonderhof in the Netherlands in biodynamic agriculture. He currently serves as a board president of the Biodynamic Association and works in partnership with the Open Space Institute, NEON, the Cornell Soil Health Team, and the Cornell Cooperative Extension. Jean-Paul and Jody were the 2004 recipients of the Patrick Madden award for outstanding sustainable practices and education.

### **David Rowley, Monkshood Nursery, Gardens and CSA**

David Rowley and his wife Melinda have leased an 82-acre farm in Stuyvesant, NY since 2003. The farm is used for certified organic field vegetables and greenhouse crops, cover crops, grazing of summer Heifers and a collection of family barnyard animals. Extra leased land is put into hay. Their business currently has 150 CSA share members, and they market fresh produce and specialty crops (e.g. medicinal herbs) both locally and in Manhattan, NY.

### **Benjamin Shute, Hearty Roots Farm**

Ben Shute operates Hearty Roots Community Farm, where he produces vegetables and eggs, using organic practices, for 550 CSA members locally and in New York City. The farm currently operates on land that the farm owns in Clermont, and land that the farm rents in Red Hook, for a total of about 20 acres of vegetables and 50 acres of fallow fields and pasture. Hearty Roots operated exclusively on rented land from 2004 - 2011, leasing from two different property owners in Red Hook. Ben, his wife Lindsey, and their daughter Piper live on the farm in Clermont; this year is first time they have ever lived on the same land that they farm. Ben and Lindsey are co-founders of the National Young Farmers' Coalition.

### **Martin Stosiek, Markristo Farm**

Markristo Farm is a family business located in Hillsdale, NY, one mile from the Massachusetts border. It is Certified Organic by NOFA NY. Martin and his wife Christa believe strongly in a local food system and have built their farm around the needs of many wonderful restaurants and resorts in our area as well as the Great Barrington Farmers' Market and a number of fine stores and plant nurseries. Together with our their children and two to three interns annually, they raise 20 acres of diversified crops. They focus largely on salad mixes and other greens, but not excluding many root and fruit crops, like baby beets and heirloom tomatoes, as well as a beautiful selection of cutting flowers. Now in their 22nd year, they thrive on the creative challenges of mind, body and spirit intrinsic in a sustainable lifestyle and greatly enjoy the knowledge that caring people are being nourished by their fresh organic produce.

### **LANDOWNER VOLUNTEERS**

*Landowner volunteers with land leasing experience are available to help other landowners interested in leasing their land. Contact Marissa Codey at 518-392-5252 x211 or [marissa@clctrust.org](mailto:marissa@clctrust.org) to arrange a meeting.*

### **Peter Reiss, leasing land to Threshold Farm**

Peter Reiss has had a long career in flight operations and aviation security and safety, as well as a continued interest in and devotion to agriculture. He is currently Chairman of the Town of Claverack's Agricultural Advisory Committee. Peter owns a portion of a family farm in Philmont that has been in the family since his grandfather bought it in 1938. For the first 40+ years it was farmed by the previous owner until his death. In 1993 the property was divided into two parcels: one was to be owned by Peter and the other by his late father, and now step-mother. In approximately 1993 Renate and Peter's father signed a lease with Hugh Williams of Threshold Farms to establish a biodynamic diversified farm operation on their 23-acre parcel. Two years later, after observing how well the arrangement was working out, Peter signed an 8-year lease agreement with Hugh on his 23 acres as well. The agreements between Threshold Farms and the Reiss family have been continuously in effect since that time. Recognizing the importance of long-term access to the property in order to justify the considerable

investment necessary to build up a farm and orchards, there is presently a 45-year lease between Hugh, his wife Hanna, and Peter. The arrangement between Peter and Threshold Farm is a wonderful example of how land leasing relationships can be developed, and how well transitions and changes in ownerships and personal circumstances can be accomplished. According to Peter “This long term relationship has worked exceedingly well. I would describe it as being similar to a marriage in that it must be based upon trust, friendship, ongoing cooperation, mutual goals, mutual respect, and an honest caring for the interests of the other person(s) involved. I could not ask for a better situation than what we have.”

### **Larry Steel, leasing land to Great Song Farm**

Larry and his wife Betti began leasing their 88-acre Milan property (40 acres of which are cleared) to Great Song Farm CSA in the fall of 2010. The land also contains 40 active beehives, which are managed by a local beekeeper. Larry, a non-farmer, has long been a sales representative for geothermal companies and recently started a seasonal rainwater harvesting business, Hudson Valley Rain Barrels ([www.hudsonvalleyrainbarrels.com](http://www.hudsonvalleyrainbarrels.com)), and is currently marketing geothermal utilities to Hudson Valley municipalities.

## **OTHER LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Appleseed Permaculture ([www.appleseedpermaculture.com](http://www.appleseedpermaculture.com))**

Ethan Roland is a native of Rennselaer and Columbia Counties, and works with landowners throughout the Hudson Valley and around the world to create economically and ecologically sustainable homes, farms, and communities. Ethan will work with you to integrate your goals and the needs of the land. Elements could include: Organic bee hives, ecological orchards, rotational animal grazing, sustainable forestry management, bio-intensive vegetable gardens, fruit-nut-fuel hedgerows, earth ponds for aquaculture, nut tree groves, community-supported agriculture, and more. Ethan understands that in order to create environmental sustainability, landowners must also create economic sustainability. He specializes in creating 10-50 year financial plans for organic farming and ecological land-use practices to ensure solid returns on ecosystem investments. Cost: After an initial site consultation (\$150-\$300 depending on property size), he will work with clients to develop a clear scope of work for his design services. Fees are agreed upon up-front and billed after work has been completed.

Contact: Ethan Roland. (518) 610-1375. [ethan@appleseedpermaculture.com](mailto:ethan@appleseedpermaculture.com)

### **Cornell Cooperative Extension**

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia County is available to help individuals interested in farming in a variety of ways. Cooperative Extension provides assistance to landowners and farmers in learning what soil resources are on the farm and how to use them wisely, testing the soil for nutrient values and information on a wide variety of different agricultural crops. Extension Educators are available to provide educational assistance for those wishing more information about: small fruits, tree fruits, vegetables, dairy cattle, equine, livestock and poultry. Extension Educators also provide assistance in developing business plans, farm leases and other business related functions in starting or operating a farm business. Cost: Much of the assistance that Cooperative Extension provides is free of charge. However, soil tests submitted to the Cornell Nutrient Analysis Laboratory cost \$18 per sample.

Contact: Steve Hadcock. (518) 828-3346. [seh11@cornell.edu](mailto:seh11@cornell.edu).

### **Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology Program (<http://www.hawthornevalleyfarm.org/fep/fep.htm>)**

The Farmscape Ecology Program is a research and outreach branch of the Hawthorne Valley Association. Its general focus is agriculture and land use change in Columbia County, with a broad goal of helping farmers and the general public interact with the nature of their landscape in a more informed way. It is coordinated by Conrad Vispo and Claudia Knab-Vispo, with the help of many others. Conrad and Claudia are available to help you learn about how specific habitats on your land affect native diversity, and what the interaction between that value and agricultural or other types of land use may be. Their basic protocol is to talk with the landowner and first understand what they want to know, and then they will summarize what they have to offer and develop a plan. Cost: Basic rate is \$50/hr so exact price depends upon what the landowner wants and the extent of the land.

Contact: Conrad Vispo and Claudia Knaub-Vispo. (518) 672 7500x 254. [fep@hawthornevalleyfarm.org](mailto:fep@hawthornevalleyfarm.org)