



Technical Assistance Consultant Directory



Coming Together:

Connecticut's Beginning & Experienced Organic Farmers

About the Program

The CT NOFA Technical Assistance Program, *Coming Together*, contracts experienced organic farmers from around the state to provide short-term technical assistance to Connecticut's beginning farmers.

Beginning farmers with fewer than ten years experience operating a farm business can use this program to work through organic production and business challenges directly with experienced organic farmer consultants. All beginning farmers within the state are eligible to participate in the technical assistance program regardless of membership status at CT NOFA.

Using This Service

1. Beginning farmers can view the directory of technical consultants and their expertise. Before a beginning farmer can contact an expert farmer they must first join the program at no cost by filling out a short online form. They will then be sent the contact information for the consultants.
2. Once connected the beginning farmer and the technical consultant can choose to use phone calls, Facetime, Skype and/or e-mails to help work through specific technical questions. There are a very limited number of on-farm consultations available when over the phone/email assistance cannot solve the issue.
3. Following the consultations, the farmer consultants will submit quarterly invoices to be paid by CT NOFA and beginning farmers will be contacted by the Beginning Farmer Program Coordinator for short follow-up evaluations.
4. Each listed organic technical consultant has been invited to participate by CT NOFA, but CT NOFA is not responsible for the information provided by these consultants.

Consultant Directory and Privacy

To sign up for the program fill out the online form at ctnofa.org/technicalassistance. CT NOFA's s Technical Consultant Directory will feature consultant photographs, background information and areas of expertise.

FAQ

Who is eligible?

All Connecticut commercial farmers with ten or fewer years of commercial production experience are eligible to use the directory and contact a technical consultant. To engage in the consultancy program, you must currently be engaged in commercial production (i.e., growing and marketing food and/or fiber).

What does it cost?

There are no direct costs to the beginning farmer for using this service.

How long does a technical consultancy relationship last?

Technical Consultancy relationships have a maximum length of 6 hours per beginning farmer per topic.

Bill Duesing

Old Solar Farm

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In 1972, inspired by reading *Farmers of Forty Centuries*, Malabar Farm and Wendell Berry's early essays, I bought part of what had been Joe and Josephine Solar's farm in Oxford. It included some prime farmland, beautiful hilly woodlands, a wetland and old apple trees. I wanted a place where I could plant trees and watch them grow; where I could continue the organic growing which had excited me for several years. Now, one of those trees, a black walnut, is three feet in diameter and I've been producing food on the Old Solar Farm for over 40 years.

In 1972, I connected with just-formed NOFA in Vermont and started learning from that wonderful network. Over 40 years NOFA has provided great opportunities to learn about biodynamics, permaculture, pastures, soil health and much more.

Early on I practiced rotational grazing with a small herd of goats and then cows. Later I used chicken tractors to graze chickens, for eggs and meat, and turkeys. Aside from eggs my longest animal enterprise was raising pigs over several decades and using them to recycle food waste from New Haven and leaves from nearby towns to produce compost for my landscaping business, fertile fields for vegetables and good pork (and in some years feeder pigs). I stopped raising pigs in 2000 because I wanted the farm to be all organic and much of the food they got from the health food store, while healthy, wasn't organic. We were certified organic from the middle 1990s to 2002 when CT NOFA stopped certifying. In the late 1990s Suzanne and I helped start farmers markets in Seymour and Beacon Falls and sold our produce and eggs there.

Environmental and food activism and writing kept my farming part time throughout my career, but my farming was an essential ingredient and inspiration for the work I did.

Currently Suzanne and I raise fruits and vegetables on less than an acre for sale to neighbors and friends through a weekly email. We have several wholesale outlets for any excess. We work with hand tools, try for minimal soil disturbance and are trending toward more perennial crops. Over the next few years, we will be using cover crops to bring another 3/4 acre into organic production.

I served for 12 years as the Executive Director of CT NOFA. For three years, I chaired the board of the Community Farm of Simsbury which trains farmers, educates urban and suburban students and provides certified organic food to the needy. I frequently consult with farmers about organic certification.

Areas of Expertise

- School and other educational gardens and farms
- Cover Cropping
- Organic Vegetable production
- Organic small fruit production
- Soil Fertility
- Organic Certification
- Low Tunnels
- Urban Farming
- Season extension
- Farm Energy
- Community Relations
- Local Food Systems



Max Taylor

Provider Farm

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Max and Kerry Taylor own and operate Provider Farm in Salem, CT. They grow vegetables on 15 acres for their CSA, wholesale accounts, farmer's markets and winter CSA.

The goal of Provider Farm is to feed their community the highest quality produce possible. Max and Kerry believe that local food can be an essential part of people's lives and not merely a luxury. They believe strongly in developing and implementing efficient systems for their farm. Provider Farm has an emphasis on mechanical cultivation using tractors.

Max began farming as an apprentice in 2007 while studying agriculture and education at Amass Amherst. He spent 2 seasons at Seeds of Solidarity Farm a 3 acre human powered, no-till vegetable farm in central Mass, before moving on to Riverland Farm, a 25 acre diversified vegetable farm, in western Mass. Max spent 3 years at Riverland Farm working as assistant manager before moving to Connecticut and starting Provider Farm in 2012.

Areas of Expertise

- Tractor Cultivation
- Efficient Farm Systems
- Cover Cropping
- Organic Vegetable production
- High Tunnels
- Low Tunnels
- Farm Equipment and Tools
- Pest management
- CSA Management
- Selling at Farmers Markets
- Spring seedling production
- Hiring/acquiring farm help
- Marketing and promotion
- Season extension



Eero Ruuttila

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Managed for 22 years as director of Nesenkeag Farm, a 65 acre nonprofit farm in Litchfield, MA. During his tenure at Nesenkeag he transitioned its 40 tillable acres to certified organic status. Over time, Nesenkeag Farm became well known for its direct marketing relationships with regional chefs, for its green manure cover cropping practices, for its long term relationships with Lowell (MA) large Cambodian community, and for netting income from efficient cropping/sales practices as a nonprofit. Following his years at Nesenkeag Farm, Eero was Seeds of Change's research farm manager at its research farm in northern NM for 2 years.

Currently Eero works for the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project as its incubator farm coordinator, he assist beginning farmers on incubator farm plots at 2 incubator parcels in Dracut & 1 Newburyport, as well as teach a fall/winter farm business planning course. Two days a week Eero is a Sustainable Farming specialist for UCONN Extension. He work with CT's community of beginning farmers, providing assistance in developing vegetable production "best-practices" & infrastructure improvements as well as marketing and business planning.

Areas of Expertise

- Cover Cropping
- Organic Vegetable production
- Soil Fertility
- Organic Certification
- High Tunnels
- Flowers
- Farm Equipment and Tools
- Greens
- Pest Management
- Farm Planning
- Business Planning
- Restaurant Relations
- Pricing
- Hiring/acquiring farm help
- Marketing and promotion
- Season extension
- Food Safety and wholesale markets
- Federal programs available to farmers



Joan Allen

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Education: BS in Forestry from Michigan Technological University
MS in Plant Pathology from Cornell University

Work description: Current position is Assistant Extension Educator at UConn. Responsibilities include plant problem diagnosis and managing the UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory. Educational presentations and workshops are presented on topics including plant pathology, organic plant disease and pest management, vegetables, invasive plant pests and diseases, and other topics to professional and amateur audiences. Field research has been done to evaluate organic products for control of basil downy mildew. Publications include research reports, newspaper and magazine articles, fact sheets and blogs.

Area of Expertise

- Pest Management
- Plant Disease



David Zemelsky

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I've found all my jobs of interest, but it was only when I started farming that I found a true passion for what I do in this world. Farming is deep, meaningful and rewards in all aspects. Even the mundane and repetitive has a grace and honesty that is hard to find almost anywhere else in my life.

My partner and wife Ty and I started Star Light Gardens, a USDA Certified Organic Farm in 1999. Before turning towards agriculture, I have been a Family Therapist working with individuals and families in both private and institutional settings. During that time, I also acquired expertise in High Rope Course work, which I would incorporate in my practice when it was appropriate. Previous to that was the General Manager of a Connecticut Ski Resort. This position required me to create business plans, hire key managers of all departments, help create a vision of how to keep the business profitable which included marketing, public relations to name but a few. Earlier than this, I have been a public school teacher, teaching in an All-Day Kindergarden.

I have been practicing season extension farming since 1999. The farming communities of New England and New York have sought my expertise over the years, including presentations at the NOFA/New England Conference, NOFA/NY, NOFA/CT and the New England Vegetable and Berry Conference. We could be of special assistance to farmers who are starting a business on 1-5 acre parcels, both in the selection of profitable crops and efficient ways to grow and harvest crops, establish and size a CSA and help to get started at Farmer's Markets.

Areas of Expertise

- Cover Cropping
- Organic Vegetable production
- Soil Fertility
- Organic Certification
- Greenhouses
- High Tunnels
- low Tunnels
- Farm Equipment and Tools
- Greens
- Pest management
- Plant Disease
- Farm Planning
- Restaurant Relations
- CSA Management
- Selling at Farmers Markets
- Spring seedling production
- Pricing
- Hiring/acquiring farm help
- Marketing and promotion
- Season extension
- Community Relations
- Federal programs available to farmers



Mark Rutkowski

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I am the farm manager at Holly Hill Farm in Cohasset, MA. Previously I was assistant farm manager at Urban Oaks Organic Farm in New Britain, CT. I was also an incubator farmer at the Community Farm of Simsbury and spent a season at Grow Hartford. My season extension experience includes growing in heated greenhouses, high tunnels and under row covers. I have constructed hoop houses and I am particularly interested in cool and minimally-heated greenhouse structures.

Areas of Expertise

- Organic Vegetable production
- Organic Certification
- Greenhouses
- High Tunnels
- low Tunnels
- Urban Farming
- Greens
- Restaurant Relations
- Spring seedling production
- Season extension



Phoebe Browning

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I met Matthew in 1999 while he was attending Yale School Of Nursing getting his Master's of Nursing. I majored in business and have a B.S. of Finance and a MBA. While attending school, we were honing our entrepreneurial skills while growing food in a postage stamp sized yard in inner city New Haven. This taught us the importance of using land four seasons to maximize output. We were building up a real estate portfolio and starting other entrepreneurial pursuits while learning farming. We bought three houses in a row and after bringing in a dump truck of organic soil for raised beds, we started our urban farm. We managed to have meat bird production, egg hens, vermiculture, water collection, intensive four season vegetable/greens production, asparagus, fruit and a beautiful compost. After having a couple of boys, we figured we'd better find a way to feed them. After much debate and searching, we compromised on renting a farm and found a beautiful place in Woodbridge. We're on 13 acres - 8 farmable. Before - we were urban farmers. After - we've learned to learn to work a country farm with pigs, mushrooms, turkeys, maple syrup and bees.

I love producing my own food and providing the best fresh food to my family and community. At the end of the day, I'm an entrepreneur who works to make my farm a successful business. I can help farmers in some areas of production, and all areas of business. As a holistic child of the seventies, I'm here to keep the movement alive and moving forward for my children.

Areas of Expertise

- Permaculture
- Pigs
- Poultry
- Beekeeping
- Greenhouses
- Urban Farming
- Shiitake mushroom production
- Farm Planning
- Business Planning
- Restaurant Relations
- Grant Opportunities
- Legal Requirements
- Spring seedling production
- Recordkeeping
- Hiring/acquiring farm help
- Marketing and promotion
- Season extension
- Community Relations
- Bookkeeping,
- financial planning
- budgeting
- taxes
- profitability