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Hidden Jewel of Information Uncovered

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Gardening Topic for September 2005
Hidden Jewel of Information Uncovered

Provided by the Western Massachusetts Master Gardener Association
www.wmassmastergardeners.org.

By Madeleine Charney, Master Gardener Intern

The New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI), located at 275 Jackson Street in Belchertown, was founded in 1978 by Judith Gillan as a citizen action group called Women in Agriculture. Its mission is to promote the viability of our region's small farms through the development and delivery of innovative, farmer-guided programs and resources, direct assistance to aspiring, new and developing farmers, and advocacy for sustainable, small-scale agriculture.

NESFI is housed in a refurbished, historic barn and sits on a 416-acre farm boasting a full view of the Holyoke Range. It is well-known in the region by farmers and the agencies which serve them. People from all over New England visit the website, attend NESFI-sponsored courses, call for information, and utilize their matching services for seeking/offering land and farm work opportunities.

What often goes undiscovered however is the treasure trove of information in NESFI's Library. The NESFI Library is one of the largest specialized collections on small-scale farming and sustainable agriculture in the Northeast. The collection contains over 5,000 books, periodicals, documents, videos, and microforms. Furthermore, you can now browse most of the library's holdings via the online catalog accessible through the NESFI web site http://www.smallfarm.org/library/

However, the best way to become familiarized with the breadth and depth of this collection is to set aside a few hours, settle into the "comfy chair" and read to your heart's content. The Library is open to the public and all are welcome to browse, free of charge (borrowing privileges may be obtained with a $10/annual membership). Library users include seasoned, beginning, and aspiring small farmers, Extension specialists, students, farmers transitioning to organic and sustainable practices, and policymakers. Many items could be of interest to the Master Gardener as well.

Consider how these tools will boost your understanding of your own landscapes as well as aiding in your preparations to educate the public. For instance, the library contains books on plant identification, videos on small-scale composting, information on permaculture (an ecological design system), and instructions for growing flowers, vegetables, nuts, and fruits.

Here are some titles to whet your appetite:

The Backyard Berry Book: A Hands-on Guide to Growing Berries, Brambles, & Vine Fruit in the Home Garden by Stella Otto
The Bug Book: Harmless Insect Controls by Helen and John Philbrick
Designing and Maintaining Your Edible Landscape Naturally by Robert Kourik
Forest Gardening: Cultivating an Edible Landscape by Robert Hart
The Gardener's Guide to Common-Sense Pest Control by William Olkowski
Greenhouses for Homeowners and Gardeners by John W. Bartok, Jr.
Growing Great Garlic: The Definitive Guide for Organic Gardeners and Small Farmers by Ron L. Engeland
How to Make a Forest Garden by Patrick Whitefield
Insect Pests of the Farm, Garden, and Orchard by Ralph H. Davidson
Living Fences: A Gardener's Guide to Hedges, Vines, & Espaliers by Ogden Tanner
Medicinal Herbs in the Garden, Field, & Marketplace by Lee Sturdivant

The Pruning Book by Gustave L. Wittrock
Successful Organic Gardening: Companion Planting by Rodale

Library users may also peruse more than 90 magazines, journals, newsletters, and bulletins at the NESFI Library. Here is a list of some enticing publications and feature articles therein:

Common Sense Pest Control Quarterly with articles such as "IPM for Garden Thrips" and "Roses Without Pesticides."
Countryside & Small Stock Journal: The Magazine of Modern Homesteading with articles such as "Feed a Family from the Garden" and "Cold Frame Construction."
Eco Farm & Garden with articles such as "Controlling Pests with Plants" and "Mulching for Water Conservation."
Northland Berry News with articles such as "Raspberries Year Round" and "The Strawberry Plant - A Quick Review."
Organic Gardening with articles such as "Flowers for Cutting" and "Community Gardening."
Permaculture Activist with articles such as "The Elements of Dowsing: The Subtle Energies of Flowing Water" and "Tree Vegetables: Salads That Grow on Trees."

Library hours are weekdays 9 am to 5 pm. To schedule an appointment with the librarian, Madeleine Charney, please call (413) 323-4531 or e-mail library@smallfarm.org

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