

Published Articles

NOFA NEW HAMPSHIRE



SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER 1994

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CHAPTER OF THE NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING ASSOCIATION

THE VOICE OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

On October 8th

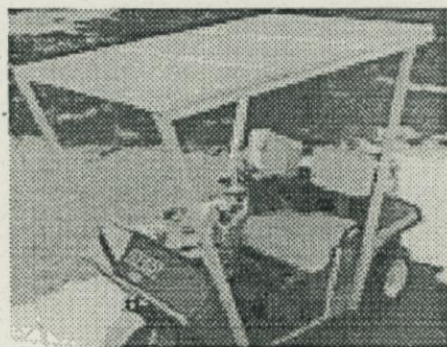
Corn is believed to be over 5,000 years old. It may have first been a wild, seed-bearing plant with tiny, one-inch-long ears. Today corn is the major crop in the world. Most of it has been grown from hybrid seedstock and has been developed by giant seed companies. Many natural varieties of corn are being lost each year.

NOFA-NH and the Mt Kearsarge Indian Museum in Warner will sponsor a lecture on Saturday, October 8 at 7 PM by Carl Barnes that will be of interest to growers and non-growers alike. Carl is a Cherokee Indian who has been saving and preserving Native American corn varieties for the past 50 years. His work has been featured in major publications (like National Geographic).

The Mt Kearsarge Museum has one of the largest private collections of Native American artifacts around. To find the Museum, take I-89 north to Exit 8 and follow the signs. If you wish to attend, please let the Museum know by calling ahead: 456-2600. This talk promises to be very interesting, thought-provoking and possibly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Admission is \$5.

TWILIGHT MEETING — SEPTEMBER 21 ON SMALL FRUITS & SOLAR GOLFCARTS

Why operate a 2-ton pickup truck to do the job that a solar-powered golfcart could do? Like all farmers we have many transportation needs on our farm: tools, materials, produce and customers (for our PYO operation). We have been using Garden Way carts, wheelbarrows, a jeep, tractor and pickup for hauling heretofore. We got to thinking: does this make sense? Inspired by a request for a proposal from Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (formerly LISA), we requested funds to retrofit a used golfcart so it would be powered by photovoltaic (solar) batteries. We knew a solar vehicle could do many of the tasks which now require fossil fuels. There were several issues here: increase in farm safety due to low speed and low center of gravity, use of renewable energy, reduction of farm-generated pollution, reduction of farm costs, reduction of soil



This solar-powered golfcart was funded in part by a grant from USDA's SARE program (formerly LISA).

compaction through use of a lighter vehicle, and improved access for our disabled and elderly customers.

Fortunately, the project was (partially) funded. We created a "Solar Surrey" (or PVEV—photovoltaic electric vehicle) using a used EZ-GO golfcart with 6 six-volt batteries (\$500), 3 100-watt photovoltaic modules mounted on steel supports (\$2100), and connected it to a charge-controller to prevent overcharging (\$180). We have been using the cart since June 6th without needing to use an electric charger. The cart can run for about 45 minutes each day on its own solar power. It doesn't use power when the vehicle is not moving because there is no idling. We hope to use it into December with weeding, mulching, pruning, etc., and save about 50 gallons of gas this first year. We want to add a rack on the back so we can take full advantage of its 700-pound payload. We've discovered that we could have been using the cart three times as much as we do each day. (We've used it for 822 minutes — 13+ hours — through the end of July.)

If you are excited by this idea and would like to know more about its functioning, come visit us at Berry Hill Farm (61 Heights Road, Stratham. 772-6646) for a meeting on September 21 at 4:30 PM.

At this meeting there will also be a presentation on growing quality berries with an emphasis on pest prevention and control options with UNH Extension specialists, Alan Eaton, Bill Lord, Cheryl Smith and Stan Swier.

Pesticide credits have been requested for attending this session.

VOTE!

If you can't attend the NOFA-NH annual Membership Meeting on November 1, then use the ballot inside for Board elections.

— Caroline and Buck Robinson
Berry Hill Farm, Stratham

OFPA (continued from page 1)

Then write to USDA for a copy of the NOSB recommendations and read them. It is a long document: 29 pages on crop production standards, 27 pages on livestock, 7 pages on labeling, 9 pages on the Organic Handling Plan, 4 pages on requirements for organic handling, 3 pages on imports, 26 pages on the accreditation of organic certification programs and the application for accreditation.

Under the capable chairmanship of Michael Sligh, Executive Director of RAFI-USA, the NOSB hammered out these pages in the full light of public scrutiny. Over the past two and a half years they held hearings all over the country where any interested party was welcome to participate. These meetings, while not always at convenient seasons, were attended by many organic farmers, consumers and representatives of certification programs. Members of the NOSB made themselves available to discuss their proposals at organic meetings and conferences and sat still for some unpleasant tongue-lashings. On numerous occasions, the NOSB amended its draft proposals in response to suggestions from groups like our Northeast Interstate Organic Certification Committee. This is not to imply that the NOSB recommendations are flawless, but there can be no doubt that the members have tried as hard as they could to involve the organic community and to keep their ears open.

The next step in the legislative process is not so open or participatory. Deep in the warren of offices at the USDA South Building, the OFPA staff, Michael Hankin, Julie Anton and Ted Rogers, will rewrite the NOSB recommendations into regulatory language, "the rules," with some help from the USDA legal staff. In September Grace Gershuny, long-time NOFA/VT member and author of *Soul of Soil*, will join them as specialist on accreditation. (How Grace will fare in the belly of USDA is anyone's guess. I am sure she will be happy to hear from old friends in the Northeast.) Since the NOSB is an advisory board, USDA is not obliged to use all of its suggestions. And USDA does not have to debate or explain its changes in public.

That is why I appeal to you all to read the NOSB recommendations. Then write to USDA and tell them what you think. To be sure your views do not get lost in a lower drawer somewhere, send me a copy too (P.O. Box 149, Rose, NY 14542). Some of these letters will be printed in a coming issue of *Farmer to Farmer*, the Ozarks paper devoted to the organic legislation, which will soon have a new, countrywide editorial board. When the regulations appear in the Federal Register, we will all have done our homework and will be ready to evaluate them in comparison with the legislation and the NOSB's work.

Along with the NOSB recommendations, USDA can also send you the drafts of several pieces which have not been finalized. These include the National List for prohibited natural and allowed synthetic materials, specialized standards for greenhouse and mushroom production and a statement on "organic good manufacturing practices." Comments (in 16 copies) on these drafts are invited. Write to Michael Hankin or Ted Rogers, USDA/AMS/TMD Room 2510-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, DC 20009-6456, or call (202) 205-7806.

Another little-publicized portion of the USDA OFPA staff's job is to produce an economic impact study on the effect of the legislation on organic farming and the "organic industry". Julie Anton, an agricultural economist, is in charge of this project. If you have views on the potential economic effect of this law on your farm, the region or the "industry", please write to Julie at the above address.

The NOSB will continue as an Advisory Board to USDA beyond the completion of the regulations. There will be four openings on the NOSB in the near future. If you are interested in serving please contact me or Katherine DiMatteo of the Organic Food Production Association of North America (OFPANA) at P.O. Box 1078, Greenfield, MA 01302 (413) 774-7511. Once again, despite the Bush administration's poor response to us in 1991, the Organic Farmers Associations Caucus (OFAC) and OFPANA are cooperating on joint recommendations of candidates for the NOSB.

In a letter accompanying the NOSB recommendations, Michael Sligh adds a suggestion of his own; that the

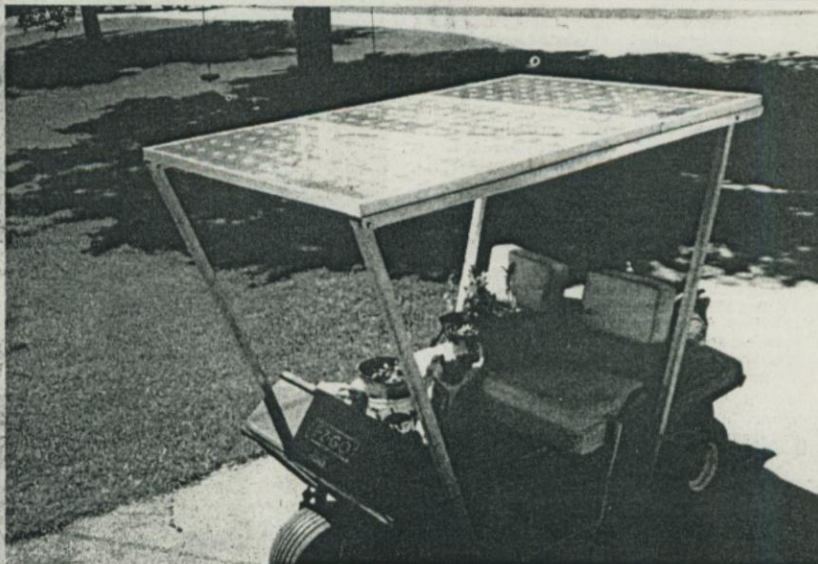


photo courtesy of Caroline & Buck Robinson

A Solar-Powered Farm Cart

by Caroline & Buck Robinson
61 Heights Rd., Stratham NH 03885
(603) 772-6646

Why operate a 4000-pound pick-up to do the job that a solar-powered golf cart can do? Like all farmers, we have many daily transportation needs on the farm. We use Garden Way carts, wheelbarrows, a jeep, tractor and pick-up truck to haul materials to and from the fields. We got to thinking, "does this make sense?" Inspired by a request for proposals from SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education), we requested funds to retrofit a used golf cart so that it would be powered by photovoltaic (solar) modules.

We currently grow three types of berries: strawberries, raspberries and blueberries, for both pick-your-own and wholesale customers. We have 2.5 acres under cultivation. We needed the cart for on-farm transportation of tools, materials and berries, and to reduce our use of internal combustion engines. During the hours that our farm is open to the public, the vehicle would also be used to transport customers with disabilities from the parking lot to our berry patches where, if necessary, they could pick from the cart.

Having had some experience with photovoltaics, we knew that a solar vehicle could do many of the tasks which now require fossil fuels. There were several issues for us here: increase in farm safety due to low speed and low center of gravity; use of renewable energy; reduction of farm-generated pollution; reduction of farm costs; reduction of soil compaction through use of a lighter vehicle; and finally, improved access for people with disabilities and elderly customers.

Fortunately, the project was funded. The cart was retrofitted on June 6th and we have been using it all summer. We call it the Solar Surrey or the PVEV (photovoltaic electric vehicle). Here is what

was involved: we bought a golf cart (a \$500 used EZ-GO, with 6 six-volt batteries; we bought 3 photovoltaic modules of 100 watts each (total \$2100); we mounted the modules on steel supports bolted to the sides of the cart; and finally connected them to a charge controller (\$180), to prevent overcharging, and to batteries located under the bench seat. The modules thus serve as the roof of the cart, collecting energy while they keep us in the shade.

Our solar input averages 7 amps per hour @ 36 volts, for about 5 hours per day (10 am to 3 pm), or 35 amp hours per day. The EZ-GO cart draws 50 amps per hour (@ 36 volts) when it is running. Therefore, the cart can run on its own solar power for about 45 minutes per day. (Unlike an internal combustion engine, an electric motor does not use power when the vehicle is not moving, because there is no idling.) We do have an electric charger, but have not had to use it since early June when the modules were installed.

We now find that we could have been using the cart three times as much as we do each day. We've kept a record of the minutes we *have* used it, and our total through July is 822. We figure that we saved about 16.5 gallons of gas up to that point. We will use it into December with weeding, mulching, pruning, etc. so we hope to save almost 50 gallons of gas during this first year. We also plan to add a rack on the back which will allow us to take full advantage of the 700 pound payload. We are just beginning to tap the potential of this little solar workhorse! We didn't even anticipate the cart's most important benefit: saving time.

Come see the cart at the Twilight Meeting on September 21st at 4:30 pm. Berry Hill Farm is located at 61 Heights Rd., Stratham, NH (603) 772-6646. Partial funding for the work reported here was provided by a grant from the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program.

NOFA Conference Report: A Trip into the School Cafeteria

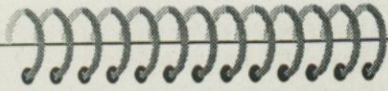
by J. Claude Bourrut

During her workshop "Healthy School Lunches" at the recent NOFA Summer Conference, Jane Dewey from Northeast Coops presented different programs trying to improve school lunches served in cafeterias across New England and the U. S.

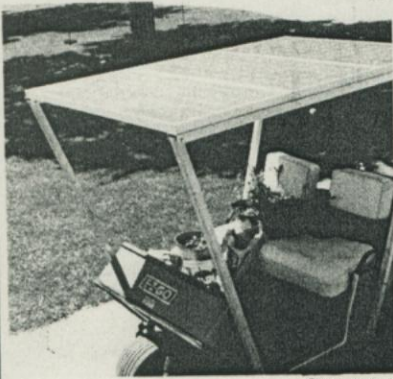
concern, along with the Commodity Program. Solutions have to be worked with and around them. Numerous resources exist (magazines and bulletins, food coops such as Northeast, people who have been successful in their schools...)

Overall, a positive and constructive approach made a lively workshop, unfortunately attended by too

LOCAL NEWS



NEWS-LETTER NOTEBOOK



Courtesy photo

This golf cart's unique roof helps supply the power it needs to move. The Berry Hill Farm in Stratham has been experimenting with the "Solar Surry." See Notebook item below.

Solar power puts local farm in driver's seat

Put a few photovoltaic modules on top of a golf cart and voila! Instant farm equipment that saves time, money and energy.

Berry Hill Farm in Stratham has tried this over the summer and claim it saved 16.5 gallons of gas through July. They hope to save about 50 gallons by the end of the year.

Farm owners received grant money to buy a used golf cart, three 100-watt photovoltaic modules and a charge controller (totaling \$2,780). They mounted the modules on the cart as a roof, which serves as a shade while collecting energy.

The so-called "Solar Surry" is being used instead of wheelbarrow, carts, tractors and pick up trucks to carry materials to and from the fields. It will be used in the cooler months for weeding, mulching and pruning.

The Solar Surry is also used to transport customers with disabilities to the berry patches for picking.

—Daphne Sterling

Near the top

The snowplowing team of Jeff Beck and Jay Perkins came close to winning the plow crown last week.

The Exeter Public Works Department had three teams competing in a snowplow rally at Phillips Exeter Academy last Thursday, but the Beck/Perkins duo was the only to score highly.

They earned two second places (in "pre-trip inspection" and a multiple choice quiz) and one third place (in front plow mounting).

Still, such success could not derail the

First year of teachers p

Health-care contribution continues to be issue of contention for some

By Daphne Sterling
RCN Staff

STRATHAM — Despite an argument that the town needs more than a 5 percent health-care contribution from teachers, voters approved money for the first year of a three-year contract Friday night.

The voters approved \$54,036 for the first year of additional costs associated with the new contract in a ballot vote of 66-32.

Selectmen Chairman Martin Wool took a stand against the contract at the special school district meeting, saying teachers should "get into the real world" and contribute more than 5 percent toward health insurance.

Wool said the district's expenses are soaring too fast to not have teachers compromise more.

He cited other school districts in which teachers pay 10 percent toward their health insurance premiums. He also noted that although town employees may not contribute anything for health care, there are fewer town employees and they earn less than teachers, so it would not be a valid comparison.

The town has an excellent school system, he said. But calling it a "Catch 22" situation, Wool said, "Realtors go out and tell people that and they flood into town." Costs therefore spiral upward.

In what he called an unprecedented move, the Stratham Memorial School was built four years ago

Teachers: Vote

By Daphne Sterling
RCN Staff

STRATHAM — Contracts are settled and approved. Now teachers just want to get on with teaching.

It took seven months for teachers to agree with the administration on the three-year contract, settled in June, and both sides gave up more than they wanted. Voters approved the contract Friday night at a special school district meeting.

But those who felt comfortable speaking about the sensitive topic Monday at school said they felt the compromise was fair, considering the economy; and that school is off to a positive start this year.

Under teachers of the permit have a year. The pay scale and 3.2 two re

For 5 percent previous had g Blue plan which

Neg teacher was "I've al really s

with extra rooms. Now, because of the rise in inflation, he said, those rooms are full.

According to Principal Gail Hiltz, 40 new students enrolled this summer. The student population is now 706.

The problem with the budget, Wool said, is fixed costs such as heat, lights and janitor services don't leave much room to cut.

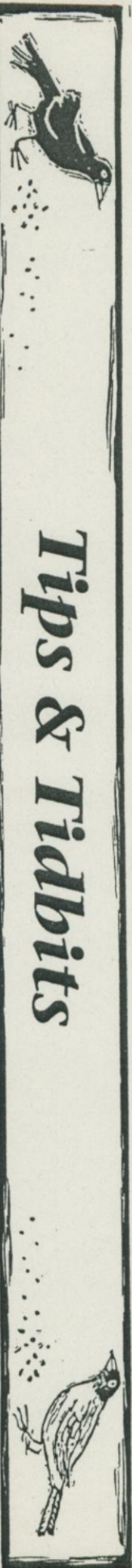
Every School Board member voted in favor



RCN photo

Hats off

David Slater of Pelham sizes up a hat for his granddaughter, Stephanie, 5, of Stratham at the annual Lincoln Street School flea market Saturday morning in Exeter.



Tips & Tidbits

Solar Golf Cart Lightens Farmers' Load

Caroline and Buck Robinson, who grow 2.5 acres of Pick-Your-Own and wholesale strawberries, raspberries and blueberries in Stratham, New Hampshire, have found a way to increase farm safety, use renewable energy, reduce pollution, farm costs and soil compaction, and help people with disabilities. They retrofitted a used, \$500 golf cart with three photovoltaic modules of 100 watts each (total \$2100) and used the cart to transport tools, materials and berries and to transport customers with disabilities from their parking lot to the berry patches, where these customers could even pick from the cart.

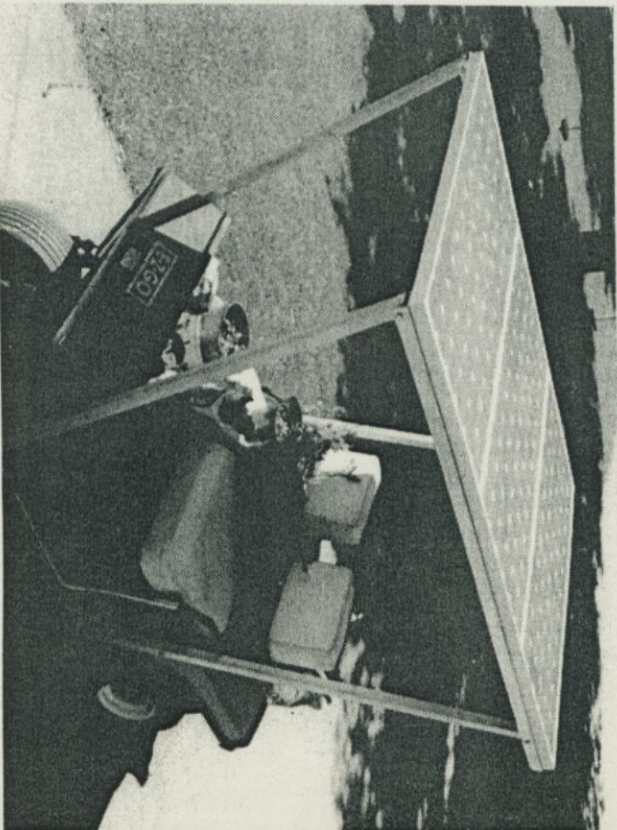
The modules, which collect energy as they shade riders, are mounted on steel supports bolted to the sides of the cart and are connected to a charge controller (\$180) to prevent overcharging and to six 6-volt batteries. The solar input averages about 35 amps per day and the cart draws about 50 amps per hour, so the

cart can run on solar power for about 45 minutes per day. (It uses no power when the vehicle is not moving.)

The Robinsons used their cart for 822 minutes during the first few months of the growing season, saving about 16.5 gallons of gas. They will continue to use the cart into December for weeding, mulching, pruning, etc., so they hope to save almost 50 gallons of gas this year. Next year they plan to put a rack on the back to take advantage of the 700-pound payload.

"We are just beginning to tap the potential of this little solar workhorse," say the Robinsons. "We didn't even anticipate the cart's most important benefit: saving time."

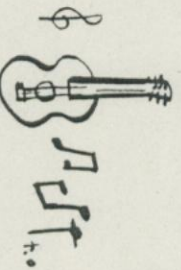
For more information, contact the Robinsons at 61 Heights Rd., Stratham, NH (603-772-6646). The Robinsons' project received partial funding from a grant from the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE, formerly LISA).



This golf cart, adapted to run on solar power, saved time and fuel for the Robinsons.

A Harmonious Solution to Rodents in the Barn

Our farm is surrounded by 20 acres of open pasture bordered by woods — the perfect habitat for rodents. Because of our concern over the risk of *Salmonella* spreading to our laying flock from rodents



Voting Guide

As a non-profit organization, MOFGA cannot endorse a political candidate. However, as you go to the polls this fall, you might want to keep the following "Manna-Pesto" in mind. It was sent to MOFGA by Freda Meredith of Dixmont, who says she came across it about 20