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American Community Gardening Association 38th Annual Gardening Conference Tour



Colchester, Connecticut

Exploring And Learning from
Colchester's Vibrant
Agricultural Community

July 29, 2017



Welcome to Colchester First Selectman Art Shilosky

Notes / Things to Remember

We are honored to have been chosen by the American Community Gardening Association to host one of the tours as part of their 2017 national conference. I would like to thank you for selecting the Town of Colchester as your tour destination. We look forward to sharing the gardening and agricultural experience with you that Colchester has to offer.

Colchester is rich in agricultural history starting from its beginnings back in the 1600's. Our agricultural heritage continues with several farms celebrating 100 years of continuous operation. Today, Colchester is a growing community with some new residents selecting Colchester for their commercial agriculture or personal farming and husbandry pursuits – including numerous equestrian facilities, a new hopyard, apiary, goats, and more. We strive to maintain our agricultural heritage with the 2007 Survey of Colchester Farms prepared through an Agricultural Viability Grant awarded by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, the 2011 implementation of our Agricultural Commission in support of local agriculture and the implementation of other noteworthy recommendations, Farm to School Council, and the weekly local farmers' market on the town green from June through October.

We are proud of our many volunteer organizations who also contribute with several of them sponsoring tour stops - Colchester Giving Garden and Colchester Garden Club. You'll have the opportunity to meet representatives from other organizations at lunch – Colchester Agricultural Commission, Colchester Land Trust, Colchester Community Free Lunch Program, and Colchester Farmers' Market.

These organizations, the Colchester Historical Society and many others contribute to making Colchester vibrant and with a real sense of community. Please enjoy your day with us in Colchester, and plan to come back and visit us in the future.

Art Shilosky, First Selectman

Special Thanks

Contributors

Colchester Agricultural Commission
Colchester Farmer's Market
Colchester Garden Club
Colchester Grange
Colchester Historical Society
Colchester Land Trust
The Farmers' Cow
Town of Colchester
Westchester Congregational Church

Event Committee

Randy Benson, Co-Chair
Katherine M. Kosiba, Co-Chair
Joan Aubin
Chris Bourque
Peg Filloramo
Joyce Maine
Mary Jane Slade
Evelyn Taggart

Farm to Table Lunch

Joan Aubin
Kathy Culhane
Peg Filloramo
Susan Haas
Katherine M. Kosiba
Cathy Russi and Clients of
Harrington Court Genesis
Healthcare
Cathy Shea
Kevin Shea
Mary Jane Slade
Evelyn Taggart
Odessa A. Turner

Tour Site Hosts

Darren Cugno
Peg Filloramo
Katherine M. Kosiba
Liz MacAlister
Jim Melillo
Toney Palakewitz
Joyce Maine
Leslie Curtis (CLT)
Bacon Academy students

Centerpieces

Lynn Coffey
Jackie Lucco
Katherine M. Kosiba
Christine McCarthy
Nicole Santini
Cathy Shea
Mary Jane Slade
Kathy Stone
Evelyn Taggart
Bonnie Trecarten
Georgia Stauffer

Program cover design

Julianna Wasniewski Cameron

Program

Katherine Kosiba

Message from Colchester ACGA Tour Co-Chairs

We are happy to welcome you to our community and are thrilled the day has arrived to take you on our *Vibrant Community Agriculture* tour of Colchester.

The first discussions about planning our tour in Colchester began in November 2016. Since then its been a steady progression of engaging a committed and energized group of community organizations, local farmers and volunteers to be part of the initiative. Meetings were few and tasks were many to prepare all components for this event. We focused on developing an educational and memorable experience for you aligned with the ACGA 2017 conference (*CONNeCting to Our Roots for Community, Food, & New Directions*) and its themes:

- Cultivating community, sustainability, policy and social justice
- Gardening and running a community garden basics
- Youth and school gardening
- Innovative programs and new directions

There is so much planned for your day with us; we hope each tour stop will add to your level of understanding how a community like ours values agricultural pursuits, and how townspeople continue to take action in a wide variety of ways by preserving and expanding agriculture in Colchester. We hope your day with us is something special and memorable.

Randy Benson
Town Planner

Katherine M. Kosiba
Colchester Garden Club, President
Advanced Master Gardener
Community Wildlife Habitat of Colchester
Colchester StoryWalk™ Committee

Here You Are in Colchester...

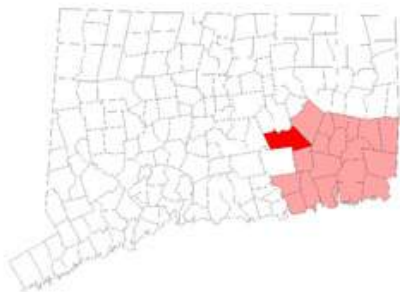
Colchester is located in southeastern Connecticut in the western part of New London County, midway between Hartford and the Connecticut shore of Long Island Sound. The town is conveniently located on one of the state's main commuter highways, Route 2.

"Location is part of why Colchester is "the fastest-growing town in Connecticut over the last two decades." The schools and the rural ambience combined with convenient shopping opportunities also contribute to its growth. Today the town is a mix of historic homes and farms with modern subdivisions and amenities. Within minutes of exiting Route 2, one can wind through woods on dirt roads. A minute's drive from the charming town green surrounded by beautiful nineteenth century homes, one finds grocery stores, restaurants, and other modern services."

Source: The 2007 Survey of Farms Colchester, Connecticut



Gazebo on Colchester Town Green



Through its history Colchester evolved from an agricultural community to one of early industry. By 1873, the Airline Railroad was functioning from New Haven to Willimantic through Colchester. The freight and passenger trains using the air line became quite numerous. By 1877, Colchester center was linked to the air line at Turnerville (now Amston) via the Colchester Railroad (Airline Spur). This railroad ceased to run due to a number of factors. In 1996, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection proposed the rehabilitation of the railbed as a multipurpose trail and linear state park. Now, Colchester is a suburban/rural community with farms, and residents commuting in various directions.

Colchester Schools:

Colchester Elementary School

Agriculturally-focused books and bookcase barn donated to library through Colchester Agricultural Commission purchased with community donations

Jack Jackter Intermediate School

Keepin' It Fresh production company (Sampling of their activities):

- October 2016 -Shared morning announcements to raise awareness of "Farm to School Month"
- Researched local farmers and produce grown in Colchester and Connecticut. Wrote public service announcements and created posters to encourage classmates and teachers to "keep it fresh" in their own lives
- Milkweed and beans seeds sprouted in soda bottle greenhouses. Students compared sprouts not same size, even though seeds planted on same day. Tasted mystery food - tasted like licorice, looked like celery. Fennel! Opened an aloe leaf, talked about how the gel is used, and rubbed some on our hands or elbows.
- March 2017 - Held digital learning night; students were thrilled to share their knowledge about plants.
- June 2017 - Annual JJIS Farmer's Market - various flowers and plants for sale along with beautiful crafts made by the students.

Bacon Academy

Family & Consumer Sciences Department (FCS) provides students the opportunity to develop their 21st century skills through exploration of careers within the Human Development, Culinary and Textile fields. FCS learning builds 21st century and technical skills through alignment with 8 career clusters including - Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources

More Gardening Together in Colchester

- Colchester Scouts – Earn badges for gardening, wildlife and more. Participate in Colchester Volunteer Spring Clean-up Day.
- Apple Rehab (Short term rehabilitation, long term living) Garden courtyard and raised beds, and other activities for clients
- Volunteers tend:
 - gardens at Westchester Congregational Church
 - raised vegetable beds at Colchester Federated Church
 - gardens at St. Andrews Church
- And more.....

More Gardening Together in Colchester

Harrington Court Genesis Healthcare

(Short stay care, long term care, hospice care, transitional care)

Programs and activities are offered to clients that involve gardening that include: starting seeds, making birdfeeders and mason bee houses, planting flowers, vegetables, nature walks, and more. There are residents who independently take care of plants by watering and weeding daily. Members of the Colchester Grange conduct cooking groups clients usually focused on seasonal recipes, such as fresh salsa in the summer and an apple dish in autumn.

The residents at Harrington Court have started the Permaculture Committee in 2017. The committee's mission is to *improve the lives of the residents at Harrington Court Genesis Healthcare "through gardening, environmental awareness, water conservation, community outreach, waste reduction, and education using the technique of permaculture – which encompasses all of the above. Our goals include improving the landscape, providing wildlife habitat, improving the nutrition of our residents and the community through edible gardening and education, reducing waste, and reducing our carbon footprint."*

Several years ago the Colchester Garden Club donated raised beds for clients to garden more easily from wheelchairs and walkers.

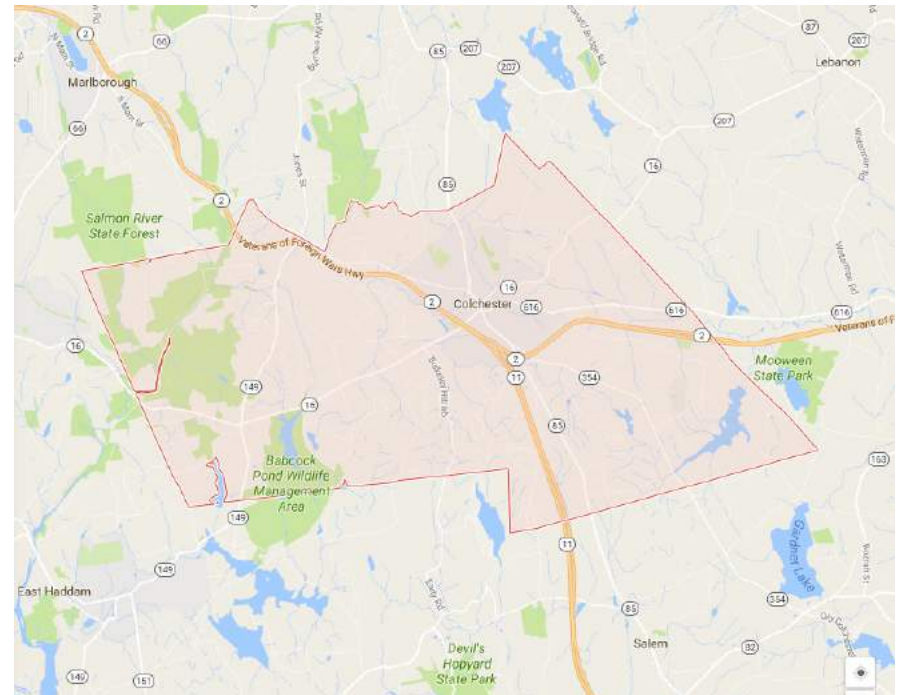


Colchester Garden Club members with Harrington Court Program Manager and client after the planting of the new raised bed.

The town has a total area of 49.8 square miles, of which 49.1 square miles is land. There are 3300 acres of state forests, parks and wildlife preserves, and 627 acres of town open space.

Water makes up the remaining 0.7 square miles. Among the many waterways are the Salmon River, Jeremy River, and Dickinson Creek, which includes the Lyman Viaduct, Day Pond, Babcock Pond and many other small streams, ponds, brooks, vernal pools and wetlands. Colchester straddles two major watersheds which in turn both feed and impact Long Island Sound. Elevation varies in town from 70 feet above mean sea level at Old Comstock Bridge to 629 feet above mean sea level at Homonick Road.

Significant opportunities exist for residents and visitors to hike, hunt, fish, paddle, bike and view wildlife.



A Historical View of Colchester

Colchester Historical Society

The Town of Colchester, Connecticut was founded in 1698 at a point just north of the present Town Green at Jeremiah's Farm on land purchased by Nathaniel Foote from the Sachem of the Mohegan Indians. Nathaniel Foote's grandfather had emigrated from Colchester, England, early in the 17th century and Colchester in America was the vision of a group of early English settlers who sought to lay out a new plantation in a large tract of virgin wilderness.

Colchester's early history, like many towns in New England, centered around the church parish. In 1703, the General Court of the Colony of Connecticut ruled that the settlement could organize a church body here known as Colchester. Within a few years, several grist mills and saw mills were built to provide grain and lumber. In 1706, the first street was laid out and called Town Street. This street was nearly 200 feet wide and is now the southern end of Old Hebron Road. By 1714, there were nearly 50 families in town.

By 1756 Colchester was one of the thriving rural towns in the Colony. Its population was recorded as 2,300 inhabitants and by 1782 grew to be 3,300.

Settlers were mostly self-sufficient. One of the first textile mills in America began operation in 1780 in Westchester. Other early industries were iron works, clothier shops, potash works and brick kilns. Industrial expansion in America was evident in Colchester by the 19th Century. There were three tanneries and a woolen mill in 1819, a hatter in 1828, a wheel and carriage factory in 1858, a paper mill in 1869, a creamery in 1886 and a canning company in 1893.

During this industrial heyday, the Hayward Rubber Company was established in 1847. Nathaniel Hayward along with Charles Goodyear had discovered the process of vulcanized rubber. It is said that Hayward was the true inventor and Goodyear provided the cash to fund his experiments. Hayward founded his new company in Colchester and where rubber products, boots, and shoes were shipped all over the country. The company thrived until 1893 when it closed. Later the building burned to the ground.

About Colchester Land Trust

The Colchester Land Trust is a local, non-profit organization formed by a visionary group of citizens in 2003 to protect land in Colchester for its natural, recreational, scenic, historic or agricultural value.

We depend on volunteer leadership and support to pursue conservation goals and oversee land under our direction for present and future generations. While we are not a political organization and not a branch of town or state government, we often work cooperatively with these agencies to acquire or manage land. We may also work with other non-profit organizations or developers to ensure that important land use decisions are openly discussed and prudently implemented. We are dedicated to maintaining Colchester's rural character and stand for clean air and water, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and local agriculture.

To date the Colchester Land Trust has directly preserved nearly 240 acres of significant land in our community. We manage 3 preserves and 2 conservation easements and have additionally collaborated with local and state agencies on the preservation of another 400 acres. We embarked last year on an ambitious 3-year campaign to create a 130-acre community forest known as the Bulkeley Hill Preserve, which will serve to educate and engage members of our community both young and old, and to preserve an 88-acre working horse breeding farm with prime agricultural soils.

The Colchester Land Trust holds monthly outdoor 'Discover Colchester' excursions that are free, open to the public, and designed to connect people to the natural places in our community. We conduct an annual earth-friendly road race, the Salmon River Run, on the Saturday before Mother's Day and invest in the next generation of conservation by offering an annual college scholarship to a Bacon Academy senior planning to further their his or her education in a related field of study. We are part of the Colchester Community Partnership.

Learn more about us by visiting our web page at:

www.colchesterlandtrust.org

Transportation during this period included the railroad. In 1875 the link between Willimantic and Middletown on the Boston to New York line was completed. The section ran through North Westchester and over the Lyman Viaduct to the west. In 1876, the town appropriated \$25,000 to lay track between Colchester and Amston. Both freight and passengers were carried over this track for nearly 80 years.

By 1900 farming had diminished and the rubber mill had closed, but this was a time for another new beginning for Colchester. The Hirsch Foundation of New York discovered Colchester was an excellent place for the settlement of European Jewish immigrants. Since farming was no longer prosperous, many began to supplement their livelihoods in the summer by taking on boarders from nearby cities and New York.

Within the span of a few years, Colchester became the 20th Century's "Catskills of Connecticut". At least seven major hotels thrived including the Broadway House, owned by Abraham and Rose Jaffe, Harris Cohen's Fairview House, Julius Sultan's Hilltop Lodge, Schwartz's Kessler's Horowitz's and Barnett Dember's. The tourist industry boomed throughout the 1930s.

Postwar growth in neighboring towns led to a new era for Colchester. A new generation of suburban dwellers found Colchester to be an excellent "bedroom" community due to an improved highway system and its proximity to Hartford, Middletown and the Norwich/New London areas. During the 1950s the beach traffic brought many through Colchester to their favorite stops including Harry's Place, the Colchester Bakery and Levine's Coat Shop. The Route 2 by-pass of the town was completed in the 1960s. But for those who did not just pass through, Colchester's dedication to the public school system, its acceptance of all peoples and its quality of life increased its population to 7,761 by 1980.

In its July 2005 issue, Money Magazine ranked Colchester as the 57th best place to live in the U.S. In celebration of this national honor, the town implemented a family festival called Colchester's 57 Fest held every year.. Today, over 300 years after the settling of Colchester, the population has grown to over 16,000.



Historical Agricultural View

“Connecticut’s agricultural roots date back to the crop gardens planted by indigenous peoples who cultivated such staples as the Three Sisters (maize, beans, and squash), sunflowers, and Jerusalem artichokes. European settlers brought their own land-use practices, such as clearing large tracts of land for crops and grazing livestock, and learned new techniques from the region’s Natives. By the late 18th century farming was an economic mainstay for most residents, but by the middle of the 19th century the rise of industry changed the state’s agrarian landscape to an industrial one.”

Excerpt: <https://connecticuthistory.org/topics-page/agriculture/>

“In 1940, Farm Security Administration photographer Jack Delano went to Colchester to photograph the Jewish farmers. He was Jewish, and he wanted to illustrate the plight of the part-time farmer.

*Jewish farmers
working in a small
Colchester coat
factory*



During the Depression, people who both farmed and worked part-time in light industry weren’t eligible for federal relief programs aimed at helping farmers. When Delano went to Colchester in November 1940, one-quarter of the town was Jewish – down from half in 1920. Colchester’s Jews ran dairy and poultry farms, clothing factories and retail stores. Alphonsine and Jacques Makowsky fled the Nazis and settled on a poultry farm in northeastern Connecticut to raise African guinea hens. A fire destroyed their henhouses and they began to cross breed Cornish gamecocks with hens. Result: the Cornish game hen.



We have partnered with schools for planting demonstrations, garden improvement, and an educational program on Native/Invasive Plants to support the 3rd grade environmental curriculum. This year club volunteers partnered with the Beautify Our School production company at Jack Jackter Intermediate School for a donation and planting of a native tree - Chestnut Oak - that created a school-wide learning opportunity on the importance of native Oaks for the environment and local wildlife.

The Colchester Garden Club is a member of the National Garden Clubs Inc., New England Garden Clubs, and the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut. Our club sponsors the NGC Youth Poetry Contest with a different theme each year. The club is an active partner organization of the Community Wildlife Habitat of Colchester contributing significantly to the 2010 certification through the National Wildlife Federation and ongoing certification, is a partner of the Colchester StoryWalk to promote literacy and getting children and families outdoors and the Colchester Community Partnership.

Learn more about our club at:

http://www.colchesterct.gov/pages/ColchesterCT_WebDocs/PopularLinks/CGC/index



About Colchester Garden Club

The club's focus is education through program speakers, sharing horticultural information, hands-on learning opportunities, gardening together for garden projects, and member garden tours. We partner with the local library to bring additional educational programs and displays with useful handouts to the public.

Club volunteers beautify and care for the landscape at the Cragin Memorial Library. After supporting an Eagle Scout garden project at the Colchester Senior Center, our volunteers now maintain those gardens monthly, and most recently worked on and continue to tend the renovated/expanded a Butterfly-Pollinator Garden at Cohen Woodlands as a educational garden. Additional beautification and seasonal projects are accomplished annually. The club supports its Master Gardener members by providing opportunities to earn community outreach project hours to maintain their active certification status who in turn contribute their knowledge and experience to club activities.

Over the years, the club has coordinated garden therapy activities at the senior center and a local rehabilitation facility which included the donation of garden beds on legs for clients in wheelchairs or using walkers. Understanding the importance of gardening with children, members have teamed up with Daisy/Brownie and Girl Scout troops to help the girls earn Gardening, Native Plant and Wildlife badges. We have guided the Scouts to assist with Colchester Volunteer Spring Clean up Day, put in Spring bulbs for beautification, and plant zinnia seeds/seedlings at the Butterfly-Pollinator Garden building pride in contributing to the beautification of our town.



*Abraham Lapping Nov. 1940
Jewish poultry and dairy farmer.*

*"They run a small farm and take
in tourists during the summer,"
wrote Delano.*

Photo courtesy Library of Congress.

Delano's photographs capture the beginning of a shift, as the state's land use moved from agriculture to housing and industry. Many of Delano's photographs portray immigrant farmers, who moved to Connecticut's agricultural lands to seek opportunity, stabilizing the declining rural population. "The diversity of ethnic groups in this region was fascinating," he later wrote, "Poles, Italians, Portuguese, Irish, Armenians, French-Canadians, Jews, and Native Americans." Excerpt:

<https://fairfieldmuseum.omeka.net/exhibits/show/delano/farms>

During the 1950s and 1960s, agriculture in Colchester was vibrant. There were still many egg and dairy farms. In the 1970s and 1980s, urbanites moving into Colchester during the housing boom raised complaints about noise, odors, dust and flies. At the same time the Federal government, in an effort to boost the larger dairy farms, created a buy-out program for finally-distressed small dairy farms. Both situations impacted some Colchester farms to close. Also during this time, two pieces of legislation critical to the safeguarding of Connecticut's agricultural land base were passed. The 1978 Connecticut legislation established the Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program; this program purchases the development rights to prime cropland thus keeping said land in production agriculture in perpetuity. <http://www.ct.gov/doag/cwp> In 1981, Connecticut Right to Farm Law was passed to limit the circumstances under which agricultural operations could be subject to lawsuits. [www.cfba.org/images/resources/right to farm.pdf](http://www.cfba.org/images/resources/right_to_farm.pdf)

"Farmland acreage and the number of farms in the state have steadily declined well into the 21st century. However, there is a renewed interest in local farming, and today's small farms produce dairy, eggs, fruits, and vegetables that contribute to the state's economy."

Excerpt:

<https://connecticuthistory.org/topics-page/agriculture/>

The Importance of Preserving Farmland

“There are many reasons for Colchester to work toward preserving its farmland. Farms operate as self-funded open space. Farmers undertake the cost of maintaining this space, keeping it attractive and productive, contributing to town character. Also, farmers pay taxes on their property and the products they sell. In fact, farmers pay significantly more in taxes than they receive back in town expenditures, so they help to support the town budget, even when they receive special farm tax rates.

Farms are also important in the preservation of the environment in ways that are important for public health. Farms often include wetlands which are vital parts of the town’s hydrologic system, absorbing excess rain or stream water and releasing it slowly so that flooding is reduced. Wetland soils filter and purify water, removing excess fertilizers and other chemicals before releasing it to the ground water that feeds wells. When these natural hydrologic systems are dismantled through development, the public has to pay for sewers and sewage plants to take their place.

Another important environmental role of farms is the preservation of natural habitats and movement corridors for wildlife. These habitats allow the natural predators of insects and vermin to thrive, helping to naturally rid the town of disease vectors.

Local farms are a very important source of food security. High transportation costs, widespread crop losses from natural disasters, and looming water shortages in agricultural areas supplied with water from mountain snow packs all threaten food supplies and raise food costs in Connecticut. Some local farms produce food already, and those that don’t, hay lots or Christmas tree farms, for example, keep the soil ready for food production in the future. Once a farm is stripped of its top soil, the land paved over, the wetlands destroyed, and water-conducting landforms are planed down, that farm and its environmental services can never be reclaimed; any attempt to do so would be economically unfeasible. Our working farms are land banks, saving the complex system of soils, water courses, drainage, and wildlife habitats necessary to grow food and cleanse our environment for future generations. Investment in preserving local farms not only benefits us today, it also keeps the land whole and productive for future generations.”

Source:

http://www.colchesterct.gov/Pages/ColchesterCT_BComm/EDC/docs/FarmSurvey.pdf

Colchester Community Free Lunch Program

The Community Free Lunch Program started over 5 years ago, serving bag lunches out of a car, and now serve a sit-down meal 5 days a week. St Andrew Catholic Church, and the Colchester Federated Church serve as host sites on a two week rotation, with Westchester Church serving every Friday at the host church.

Our purpose is to provide a hot, balanced, nutritious meal to our homeless, needy and/or at-risk fellow community members at no cost to them.

We are all volunteers and our program is not funded by the federal or local government, Town of Colchester or area churches. We rely on donations for day-old breads, desserts, and meat from Stop and Shop, as well as, seasonal fresh produce from the Colchester Giving Garden, and local farmers. The wonderful array of fresh vegetables also provides us the opportunity to introduce new and innovative ways to prepare and serve seasonal produce. Many had never tried fresh swiss chard, beets not from a can, or multi-colored carrots just to name a few. Our meals always include fresh fruit, garden salad, soup in cold weather and a protein. Hot coffee and cold drinks are also provided. Any produce we have left is put out for our guests to take.

We serve 5 days a week in good weather and bad. People who are in need may be depressed, lonely and feel isolated. This program gives our guests a chance to socialize, have access to programs/services available to them as well as enjoy a hot, tasty nutritious meal which may be their only meal of the day.

<http://www.standrewcolchester.org/community-free-lunch-program>

Colchester Community Free Lunch Program

Colchester Federated Church



St. Andrew Catholic Church



Westchester Congregational Church



Exploring and Learning from Colchester's Vibrant Agricultural Community



TOUR

Depart Hartford

Colchester Giving Garden ^W*

Bacon Academy – Farm to School ^W

Ruby and Elizabeth Cohen Woodlands ^W*

- Butterfly-Pollinator Garden
- Colchester StoryWalk™,
- Open Space

Cugno Farm ^W*

Cato Corner Farm ^W*

Farm to Table Lunch - Westchester Church
^W*

Toney's Farm ^W

Priam Vineyard ^W* and Farmers' Market
Experience

Depart Colchester

- ^W Water refilling stations will be at various stops on tour.
^{*} Indicates restroom facilities or Port-o-Potty available

Welcome to the Colchester Giving Garden

Host: Peg Filloramo

The Colchester Giving Garden is a volunteer-organized and operated community vegetable garden that grows and donates fresh produce for the Colchester Food Bank, Colchester Free Community Lunch Program and area soup kitchens. The garden is located at 95 Norwich Avenue in Colchester behind the Colchester Senior Center. With increased experience, our harvests have grown each year allowing the Colchester Giving Garden to expand the donation of fresh produce to the Colchester Senior Center and the town's low income housing facilities in town.

The Giving Garden began in 2013 with a few Colchester residents who wanted to have a source of fresh vegetables available to families and individuals in need. In the Spring of 2013, the Board of Selectmen unanimously approved the town social services department to partner with the Colchester Giving Garden organizing committee. The Board of Trustees of Bacon Academy who owned at the property at the time gave their approval for the new garden in March 2013 and for a second garden expansion in Spring 2015.

To date the Giving Garden has grown and donated over 3,600 lbs. of fresh produce and herbs from our 40' x 40' garden. Starting in 2017, we will be harvesting asparagus and blueberries from our second garden.



About the Colchester Agricultural Commission

As a commission and advisory board we:

- address information and education concerning agriculture,
- support agricultural within the Town of Colchester,
- act as a mediator for conflict resolution on issues impacting agriculture, and
- support economic opportunities involving agriculture

A significant accomplishment of the Agriculture Commission was the rewrite of the Town Ordinances and Regulations by the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) that related to Agriculture. Though the Agriculture Commission has advisory duties only, the P&Z commission ultimately adopted all suggested language into its final version of our local regulations. (2013-2015)

A substantial improvement of the rewritten regulations was to take most investigation complaints regarding local farming activities out of the jurisdiction of the Town Zoning Enforcement Office and place it under the purview (or forward to) the CT Department of Agriculture staff to enforce current state Best Practices recommendations.

We are helping farms start and grow, working to assist existing farms through complex and vulnerable transitions, guiding other commissions to understand the need for local food sources and how they can help our farms, and bringing agriculture into our schools through efforts such as Farm to School lunches and agriculture in the classroom.

History of the Colchester Agricultural Commission

The idea for Colchester adopting an Agriculture Commission was first formally proposed by Consultant Llyn Kaimowitz in her comprehensive and landmark 2007 Agricultural Viability Report on the Town. The report was funded by a grant from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and strongly encouraged by Elizabeth MacAlister Gillman, owner of Cato Corner Farm.

The 2007 Survey of Farms Colchester, Connecticut document:
http://www.colchesterct.gov/Pages/ColchesterCT_BComm/EDC/docs/FarmSurvey.pdf

The results of the study were presented by its author at a town-wide forum. The cause of making our town's agricultural heritage more vibrant and prominent in the public discourse and policy-making was furthered by the Board of the Colchester Land Trust who organized a joint working session for any interested member of the Colchester farming community. This meeting was very well attended. One of the outcomes was to prioritize the list of recommendations (presented as the conclusion of the 2007 study by its author) of positive steps the Town could take to further the goals of making our town's local governance more friendly to its local farming community.

The top priority was for the Town of Colchester to ratify the language of the State of Connecticut's "Right to Farm" legislation in its local ordinances and regulations. At a subsequent public meeting, this goal was duly accomplished.

Another very high priority was for the Town to establish an Agriculture Commission. Working in collaboration, the Colchester Land Trust and a group of local farmers moved this proposal forward to its successful adoption. On November 21, 2011 the first meeting of the new Agricultural Commission was held and officers of this new Board were elected.



Through the school setting, the Giving Garden has encouraged students to learn more about the benefits of gardening. Each spring we have sponsored a learning activity with elementary school students planting seeds to encourage gardening and teach them the importance of helping those in need.

This year we were involved with the school system on several levels with hands-on programs at the high school S.O.A.R. Program, seed planting with the "Keeping it Fresh" production company at Jack Jackter Intermediate School for their June farmers' market, and an invitation to return to meet with two 5th grade classes about the Giving Garden to spark their interest in gardening and the importance of helping others. In June, the Giving Garden was represented with a table display at the "Keeping It Fresh" production company farmers market at the Intermediate school..

The Colchester Giving Garden volunteer organization is a member of the Colchester Community Partnership and has spoken to other civic groups about the garden initiative.

The garden welcomes all volunteers who want to participate regardless of age or experience in gardening. We have a very diverse group of individuals and families with children as young as nine years old to many retired citizens and all ages in between. The garden is active from April through October. Our only pre-requisite is to have enthusiasm to help others!

Colchester Green Team

Before the Colchester Giving Garden

The vegetable garden and raised herb bed now used by the Colchester Giving Garden were originally created in 1997 and later tended by the Colchester Green Team, an intergenerational gardening program sponsored by Colchester's Youth Services and Senior Services.

For over fifteen years, the Green Team met Wednesdays at the Colchester Senior Center in the vegetable garden, butterfly garden and at herb bed from May until late August. The program's format included the preparation and serving of a healthy snack often with vegetables from the garden coupled with a gardening lesson, followed by the children and senior volunteers working together in one of the three gardens under the guidance of Master Gardeners and interns. Sometimes the program included a garden-related arts & craft project, some of which can still be seen in the nearby butterfly garden, or the participants would walk to observe nature in and around the gardens.

The Green Team closed each gardening year with "the best Block Party in Town" for its participants and volunteers, their families, neighbors of the Senior Center, friends, and town officials. The Green Team would spend the morning preparing special foods made with the vegetables harvested from the garden, served delicious dishes and home-made desserts to the guests then took them on tours of the three gardens.



Photo compliments of the Colchester Bulletin





About the Colchester Farmers' Market on the Town Green

The Colchester Farmers' Market is open every Sunday from June through October from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at the Colchester Town Green. Unless it's a downpour or one of those late season hurricanes, we are open Rain or Shine!

We have a fantastic selection of vendors every week at the Market. Vendors and detailed descriptions of their products may be found on our web and Facebook pages with online links to those businesses. <http://colchesterfarmersmarket.com/>

Our participating vendors will be on the Green providing you with Connecticut- grown or handmade goodness; produce, cheese, apples, honey, maple syrup, meats, soaps, baked goods to name a few. Handicrafts of all types are also available.

Over the course of the season we showcase a number of very talented local musicians. We are family-friendly and pet-friendly.



Academy Acres is Bacon Academy's first organic garden. It was founded in November 2014 through the joint-effort of Mitchell Hallee ('15) and Lauren Hickey ('16). The idea for a garden was inspired by a 2013 petition from a local parent to provide GMO-free alternatives in the school cafeterias. In conjunction with the Farm to School program, the Academy Acres project was established to fulfill this mission of providing fresh, organic food to the cafeteria and school community. In November 2014, the Environmental Club and Student Council pitched in for the official groundbreaking ceremony. With the help of a few dedicated interns, the garden produced over 400 lbs. of produce in under 400 ft² of space in its first season! Produce was donated to the school cafeteria, summer interns, the Willimantic and Colchester Senior Center, and the school community during our First Annual Salad Day. produce in under 400 ft² of space in its first season! Produce was donated to the school cafeteria, summer interns, the Willimantic and Colchester Senior Center, and the school community during our First Annual Salad Day.

Academy Acres Mission

Our mission is to provide fresh food, promote stewardship and sustainability, and increase food education from seed to tray among our school and town communities.

Maintenance and Leadership

The school garden continues to be led and managed largely by students, including a select group of dedicated volunteers who water, weed, harvest, and distribute produce during the summer. Yet, this garden would not be possible without continued enthusiasm and support from Chris Juhl, Karen Christianson, Jill Levasseur, as well as the Board of Education and Superintendent, Bacon Academy Food Service staff, Agricultural Commission, local farmers, the New London County School Garden Network, and many local community organizations.



What We've Grown

Squash	Cucumbers
Lettuce	Tomatoes
Peppers	Cantaloupe
Peas	Gourds
Carrots	Spinach
Kale	Garlic
Shallots	Potatoes
Parsley	Radishes
Onions	Sunflowers
Mixed greens	
Sweet Potatoes	
Brussels Sprouts	

Growth and Expansion

This garden is just one piece of a flourishing movement changing the way our community sees food. In the winter of 2015 Jill Levasseur, Environmental Club advisor, received a grant from the Pollination Project to fund a greenhouse to expand the growing season of our school garden and further integrate interdisciplinary garden education into the curriculum. We also have an expanding fruit orchard near the faculty parking lot. We have supported other fresh food programs in schools across the district, including a composting partnership with CES, an apple orchard at JJIS, and the school garden at WJMS.



Welcome to Priam Vineyard

Host Jim Melillo



Priam Vineyards is a sustainable vineyard, a completely solar-powered winery and is nestled in the Salmon River Watershed area. ***100% of the water used on the property is from our own aquifers and all of it is returned back for use in the future.***

We use the remnants of our winemaking as ground cover and fertilizer on the vines. We use rye hay to prevent summer evaporation among the vines while using cuttings to suppress weeds.



Our winery uses multiple natural methods to control pests such as maintaining 45 blue bird boxes. This specie is famous for eating insects versus grapes and produces up to four offspring in a season. Our property is a certified Wildlife Habitat with the National Wildlife Federation.

Our thirteen International Award-Winning Wines produced are estate grown, blended, bottled and cellared on the premises. In the last 12 months Priam Vineyard has won Gold, silver and bronze medals at wine competitions in Napa Valley, New York City, and Berlin Germany against the top wines of the world.



Welcome to Toney's Farm

**Host: Toney Palakewitz, Joyce Maine,
and Leslie Curtis (CLT)**

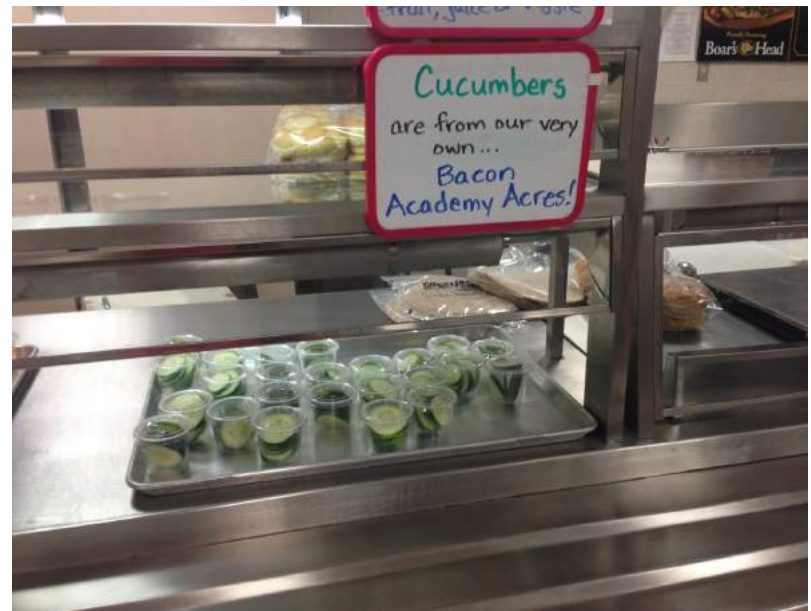
This River Road is owned by Toney Palakewitz who purchased the 1800 farm house in 1966 and 60 additional acres in 1977. The farm includes the farm house, 3 barns, saw mill, and a Quonset hut he built himself. In 2007, this farm was permanently protected from development by an easement donated to the Colchester Land Trust.

Toney's interest in gardening has led him to create sustainable gardens for food including vegetables, small fruits (blueberries, raspberries, gooseberries, sour cherries), nut trees, and an orchard. All the produce goes to feeding his family, making jelly, jam, and honey. Toney freezes produce for the winter as well as dehydrating tomatoes, herbs, and apples.

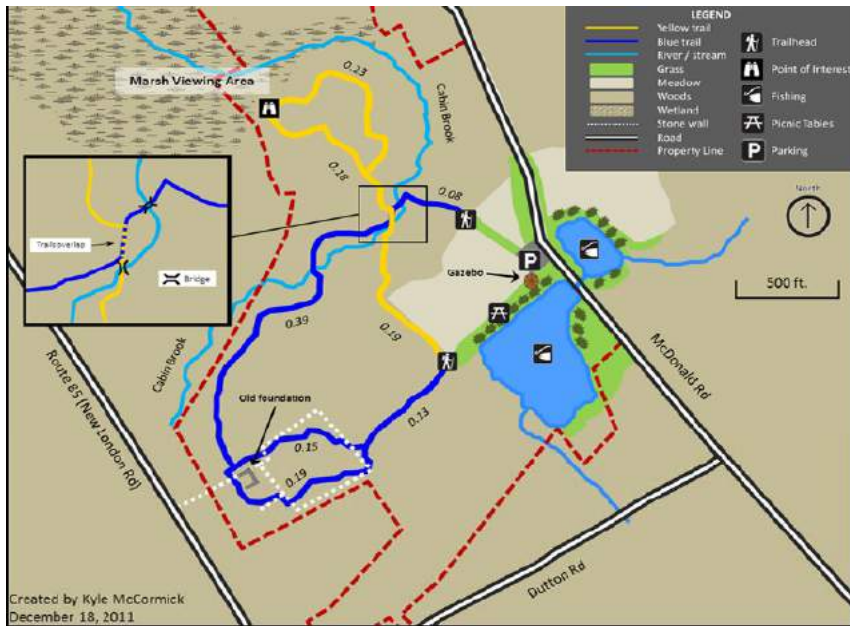
The orchard consists of peaches, nectarines, apples, pears and plums. Toney's fruit trees are dwarf or semi-dwarf in size. He has created some espalier for apples and successfully grafted various types of fruit trees onto existing stock.

A blueberry patch sits on the hill away from the main garden and consists of 100 blueberry bushes of different varieties. Toney treats the blueberries with Epson Salts as well as an early dose of 10-10-10. After spending years netting the blueberries and using a variety of devices to discourage birds, a Bird Cannon was purchased in 2016 and deterred the birds quite nicely.

A copious amount of horse manure with wood shavings is used on the vegetable gardens for weed control and mulch. Toney has been beekeeping since 1958, harvests honey every year and makes beeswax candles.



Ruby and Elizabeth Cohen Woodlands



About Cohen Woodlands

The majority of the property is heavily covered by trees with many acres of grassy open space, two ponds separated by McDonald Road and wetlands. The property is now 206.21 acres as a result of several land acquisitions.

Students from Colchester schools use this property as a field trip location in support of various curriculums.

Over the years, local Boy Scout Eagle projects have created 3 hiking trails, a park/trail map, and a 6-panel educational board near the gazebo.

Cohen Woodlands is certified as a wildlife habitat through the National Wildlife Federation.

The Butterfly-Pollinator garden is certified as a Monarch Waystation through MonarchWatch.

The Colchester StoryWalk initiative placed temporary outdoor stations on the property in 2016 as an outdoor literacy activity for families with children.

Colchester Farm to Table Lunch

Menu

Hummus and pita
Homemade Salsa and chips

Beef Brisket
Rolls and butter
Nicoise Salad
Old-Fashioned Potato Salad
Fresh garden vegetable platter
Broccoli Salad with sunflower seeds
Pasta Salad with fresh garden vegetables

Beverages:
Iced Tea, Lemonade, Water
Coffee, Decaf Coffee, Tea

Farmers' Cow Vanilla Ice Cream
Assortment of homemade baked goods

Beef Brisket purchased from: Scarpa Ledge Farm

*Most of the fresh ingredients purchased from:
Cold Spring Farm, Cugno Farm, Rose 'N Petal
Farm, Savitsky Farm, and Swider Farmstand*

About the Westchester Congregational Church

The Westchester Congregational Church was formed in 1726 when sixteen area residents petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly for a second ecclesiastical society of Colchester. On December 17, 1728, those men and women signed the covenant. Several members attending church today are descendants of the original signers of that covenant. Need for the Westchester Church was predicated by the difficulty of traveling by foot, horseback or wagon the several miles to the center of Colchester to attend worship services. By 1739 records indicate the congregation had grown to 198 persons under Reverend Mr. Judal Lewis, founding pastor, who is buried in the Westchester Center Cemetery. Another prominent church member was General Henry Champion who provided aid to General George Washington with cattle for his troops during the Revolutionary War.

The original church burned down and was rebuilt. Another fire later destroyed that second church. The current church was built in 1848.

Today Reverend Ron Thompson leads the congregation. A project is underway to restore and paint the exterior of the church. The meetinghouse supports Scout troops, a quilting group, and other area groups that meet on a regular basis.

The church landscape and gardens have been a source of *gardening together* for this congregation for many years. Following retirement, church members Bill and Helen Raymond began to garden on the property in 1981 and some form of congregation gardening has been ongoing ever since. In 1983 the gazebo, created from the original steeple that had been replaced, was added to the garden. The latest addition is the Angel Garden, a place to memorialize young children taken away much too early.



Ruby and Elizabeth Cohen Woodlands

Host: Katherine M. Kosiba

Cohen Woodlands Butterfly-Pollinator Garden



With growing concern for the decline of Monarch Butterfly population and dwindling number of bees and other pollinators, an Advanced Master Gardener/Colchester Garden Club member began a community outreach project to create an educational butterfly-pollinator garden at the front of the park.

In 2014, the original abandoned garden was reclaimed and planted. The garden doubled in size in late 2015. Native plants including different kinds of Milkweed (*Aesclepias*), perennials, annuals, herbs, and shrubs were added in 2016 attracting a wide variety of butterflies, bees, hummingbirds, and other pollinators. The garden is now a certified Monarch Waystation through the MonarchWatch Program. The project also supports the National Wildlife Federation Mayors' Monarch Pledge to plant more milkweed for Monarchs and encourage others to do the same.

Garden plants are identified with labels to help visitors learn to identify them. A brochure is available on the town web site as a guide to the garden with plant lists and tips to create a butterfly garden. The project was funded by Connecticut Master Gardener Association grants (2014-2016) along with material donations from members of the Colchester Garden Club. Significant volunteer hours were donated by certified Master Gardeners and interns, garden club members and community volunteers. Ongoing garden maintenance is a community service project of the Colchester Garden Club. Several educational tours are given at the garden each summer season.



**GARDEN
FOR WILDLIFE**

Colchester StoryWalk™

Established in 2016, the Colchester StoryWalk™ provides an opportunity for visitors to walk and read a book to youngsters focused on nature, wildlife, gardening and other related subjects. At the last station, visitors may take one of the activity sheets related to the book.

This literacy, fitness and nature initiative is a partnership between the Cragin Memorial Library, Colchester Children's Collaborative (C3), Colchester Garden Club, Colchester Land Trust and the Community Wildlife Habitat of Colchester. There is an Eagle Scout project underway to build more durable stations to replace the temporary tomato stake/laminated cardboard stations. StoryWalk® was created by Anne Ferguson of Monpilier VT and has been developed with the help of the Kellogg Hubbard Library.

Community Wildlife Habitat of Colchester

In 2010 Colchester was officially recognized as the first community in the state, and just the 36th in the country, to be certified as a Community Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation (NWF).

A Community Wildlife Habitat is a community that provides habitat for wildlife throughout the community—in individual backyards, on school grounds, businesses, places of worship, farms and in public areas such as parks, and community gardens. It is a place where the residents make it a priority to provide habitat for wildlife by providing the four basic elements that all wildlife need: **food, water, cover and places to raise young**. The community also educates its residents about **sustainable gardening practices** such as reducing or eliminating chemical fertilizers and pesticides, conserving water, planting native plants, removing invasive plants and composting.

A volunteer group continues to track the contributions of the town, schools, community groups and residents to meet the NWF requirements, and continue to recertify the town each year. Colchester is now participating in the NWF Mayor's Monarch Pledge to educate others on the needs of the Monarch Butterflies and encourage the planting of different varieties Milkweed (Aesclepias) in gardens and landscapes.

Cato Corner Farm - About our Cheese

We make all of our cheese by hand with raw milk from our 45 cows, mostly Jerseys, on our small Connecticut farm. We never use growth hormones, sub-therapeutic antibiotics, or animal-based feeds, and our cows graze freely so that they have happy lives with a rich diet of fresh pasture grasses, local hay, and a small amount of grain. All the rinds are natural and have natural surface molds that are integral to developing the full flavor of the cheese. We age and care for the cheese in our underground cave, ripening all varieties to their peak of flavor.

Mail Order and Online Retailers You can order Caro Corner Cheeses online at: <http://www.catocornerfarm.com/shop-online>

Many of our most popular varieties paired with wonderful Connecticut specialties are available in gift baskets through www.artisanmadeamerica.com

Finding Our Cheese Near You

You can find our cheeses across the nation; suggest you call in advance to inquire about selection and availability. Go to our national map at: <http://www.catocornerfarm.com/shop/>

- Red markers indicate cheese shops and groceries that carry our cheese.
- Green markers indicate restaurants that often feature our cheese on their menu.
- Blue markers indicate farmer's markets where you can find our cheese.
- Yellow markers indicate wholesale distributors.



Welcome To Cato Corner Farm (Farmstead Cheese)

Host: Liz MacAlister



At Cato Corner Farm raw farmstead cheese is made by hand from the delicious milk of Jersey cows. The cows are humanely raised on a pasture-based diet without growth hormones or subtherapeutic antibiotics. They are fed a small amount of grain to complement the nutrition in the grass and hay. Cato Corner cheeses are our own unique recipes, based on traditional cheese making styles and highlighting the flavor and terroir of our pastures and our farm. Cato Corner Farm is owned and managed by the mother-son team of Elizabeth MacAlister and Mark Gillman.

Liz MacAlister on Maintaining the Herd and Preserving the Land

I began making cheese in 1997. After raising goats and sheep since the 1970s, along with a few cows and chickens, the farm was not self-supporting. I saw cheese as a value-added product that would allow me to keep farming and earn a living. I started with 13 cows, selling cheese at farmers' markets and a few area stores.

Since Mark took over the cheese making, I am now in charge of the farm and the herd, as well as managing our NYC farmers' markets. We are milking 45 cows twice a day, and we have another 40-50 heifers and calves. Our cows are mostly Jerseys, but we have one Brown Swiss and we've just started to breed with Normande bulls from France. We have a closed herd, which means we don't buy cows from other farms – we keep the best of our heifers and sell the rest to other dairies.

Welcome to Cugno Farm

Darren Cugno, Host

Cugno's Farm is a small diversified family farm. We grow certified organic vegetables and seedlings. We also raise pastured broiler chickens and forest raised acorn finished pork. Breeds of domesticated pigs on our farm include Tamworth, Durco and Old Spot..

We are currently in the process of converting our vegetable operation to a no till/ minimal tillage system. We strive to produce unique, and heirloom, nutrient dense vegetables, along with gourmet, high-quality pork and chicken.

Our products are currently sold at the Wethersfield Farmers' Market, local restaurants, and an online marketing service.

Our goal as a family is to produce food of the highest quality for not only ourselves but also the community while working in concert with nature to preserve the soil and water resources for future generations.





American Community Gardening Association

Town of Colchester, CT Tour Program

Map Showing all Tour Stops

