

Meet our New Farmers!

Who's growing what at the Ignatius Incubator Farm



MATT REEVES

A young grower with a background in biodynamics, Matt Reeves is using his plot at the Ignatius Incubator Farm to explore the healing power of sustainable vegetable production for marginalized people.

The Series

FarmStart's New Farms Incubator Program supports new farm enterprises by offering access to land, equipment, and infrastructure at reasonable rates, and by providing participants with mentorship and training.

The *Meet Our New Farmers!* series introduces our incubator farm participants, a group of new farmers whose diverse entrepreneurial strategies contain the seeds for a more just and sustainable regional food supply.

Participants in the program include:

Mike Driscoll - A second-career organic hops and barley grower

Matt Reeves - A young farmer with a background in biodynamic agriculture and horticultural therapy

Simon Jacques - A regional pioneer in organic coloured bean production

Tarrah Young - The New Farms Incubator Program's first graduate farmer!

Missing a profile? Please visit www.farmstart.ca for the complete series.

When Matt Reeves first heard about the New Farms Incubator Program, he was working as a cook at Meals that Heal, an organic café and home delivery service in downtown Guelph.

At the time, Matt was looking for a way to create a therapeutic gardening project for people who have special needs or are otherwise marginalized.

Having served a two-year apprenticeship in biodynamic

market gardening at Camphill, a UK intentional community, Matt had a strong foundation in organic growing methods. Living at Camphill – a community that welcomes and supports people of all abilities – had also exposed him to the therapeutic value of work, and to vegetable production as a means of providing restorative, empowering employment to marginalized people.

Matt had further pursued his interest in therapeutic work through a month-long course in

horticultural therapy. He had a strong vision for a productive, therapeutic herb and vegetable garden – a ‘mutual act of healing’ between people and the Earth.

However, he lacked the access to land and capital necessary to start a pilot project.

Matt’s plot at the Ignatius Incubator Farm measures just a tenth of an acre, but it supports a rich array of unusual heirloom vegetables and herbs: edible chrysanthemum; black pineapple tomatoes; red, gold, and white beets; three different kinds of thyme. Matt received help sourcing the unusual seed from FarmStart’s Program Manager, Mike Shook, who passed along heirloom seed catalogues and shared contacts with local seed producers.

Matt worked part-time through the summer of 2007, and tended his garden two days a week. He travelled the short distance between Ignatius and downtown Guelph on his bicycle. Much of his bountiful harvest has been sold to the chef at Meals that Heal, and to Homefield Organic Food Company, a Guelph-area organic food box service.

Unlike the other participants in the New Farms Incubator program, Matt does not necessarily intend to start a commercial operation. He remains committed to his vision for a horticultural therapy project, but his experience at the Ignatius Incubator Farm has underlined for him the challenges of running an economically sustainable organic market garden.

Instead, Matt sees himself drawing from his experience at FarmStart to start a not-for-profit garden for marginalized people.

While vegetable sales will contribute to the garden’s economic viability, support from donor agencies will nonetheless be a critical element of the project’s funding.

With the business planning and grant-writing skills he’s developed at FarmStart, Matt now finds himself in an excellent position to further pursue this dream.

What is FarmStart?

The objective of FarmStart is to **support and encourage a new generation of farmers** to develop locally based, ecologically sound and economically viable agricultural enterprises.

There are many challenges in agriculture today but there are also **many exciting opportunities**. By thinking about agriculture in new and innovative ways we can meet the challenges head on with a variety of solutions that promote a **sustainable, healthy and regional food supply**.

Successful farms make important contributions to the health and vibrancy of both rural and urban communities. FarmStart encourages new farmers to engage in **entrepreneurial strategies that creatively turn challenges into opportunities**.

To learn more please visit www.farmstart.ca or call 519.836.7046



The Ignatius Incubator Farm - Guelph, ON