

Annual Report

2025 Foss Farm Community Gardens

Since its establishment in the 1970's, the Community Gardens at Foss Farm have provided an opportunity for gardening on conservation land in the Town of Carlisle. Foss Farm is a unique location with ideal gardening conditions that has full sun, rock-free river silt to plant in, and easy access to water from shallow wells fed by the nearby Concord River through a natural layer of sand. The garden this year was run by Jonathan DeKock as Garden Manager with the help of three Assistants: Dennis Lieb, Thomas Hedden, and George Romanski, plus 14 Helpers, all gardeners and volunteers.

This year the Community Gardens had 103 available 25'x30' plots and 120 gardeners participating. There were 60 applications and an additional 60 people participating as co-gardeners. 51 applications were for returning gardeners and 9 were for new gardeners. 27 applicants requested one plot while 33 requested two plots. Four of the returning gardeners newly requested a second plot, two requested plot reassignments, and one gardener returned after taking a year off. One applicant requested an additional lottery plot and five requested an additional plot to grow food exclusively for donations to food banks. The four remaining unassigned plots were used to grow cover crops and wildflowers. Three plots were abandoned mid-year, one of which was re-assigned as an additional lottery plot.

The gardens were opened this year on Monday, April 7th after being plowed by the Farmer on Friday, April 4th and harrowed on Saturday, April 5th with many volunteers helping to re-stake the plots on Sunday, April 6th. The last hard freeze in the spring was the morning of Thursday, April 10th, with the last light frost on the morning of Monday, April 21st. We brought the first wells on-line on Tuesday, April 15th and had all of them functioning by Saturday, April 19th. This fall some gardens experienced the first light frost in the morning on Friday, October 3rd, and we had the first hard freeze on morning of Friday, October 10th. The wells were all decommissioned on Wednesday, October 8th to prevent freeze damage.

Financially, the Community Gardens is self-sustaining through the use of a Revolving Fund. In the 2025 calendar year, the Community Gardens raised \$2,865 by charging \$25 per plot plus donations to help cover the cost of well installation and maintenance. The Community Gardens spent \$2,165.08 on well maintenance, garden stakes, cover crops, signs, and fencing. The difference stays in the Revolving Fund to manage large expenses in future years such as the cost of installing or rehabilitating the shallow wells.

This year two wells were upgraded to have power-pump attachments bringing the total to 7 out of 10 wells with power pump attachments. Three of the wells with power pump attachments were upgraded to automatic check valves to simplify their operation. Five of the wells were cleaned with an air compressor to help improve flow rate and ease of use.

Other maintenance and improvement projects included the installation of signs to advise gardeners to drive slowly and watch for turtles, the addition of a gravel speed bump to act as a reminder, repairs to the fencing in the parking lot, the filling of potholes in the gravel roadway, the creation of many longer yellow plot markers to make it easier to mow, the mowing of the gardens and the trails, and the receipt of 32 yards of free compost from the Town of Bedford with delivery compliments of the Carlisle DPW.