



WINTER SOLSTICE REPORT

9/12 to 12/13

Organization:

Meetings:

A core group of 3-6 members have been meeting bi-monthly at Owl and Raven CC in Northampton, on the 2nd and 4th Thurs. of each month from 7 – 8:30p.

Process:

Since starting out we've identified, designed, approached, negotiated and planted at many sites. We're looking to further refine this process to make it applicable on a larger scale and in more communities, as more volunteers join.

Volunteers:

In addition to a core organizing group, a half dozen folks have been involved during larger planting projects. This year, **6 Five College interns** logged ~100 hours at Tripple Brook, earning HYS plant credit, as well as doing site prep and plantings. Additionally, **13 8-12th graders from North Star and Four Rivers** put in a full week of work on the Rail Trail and beyond, planting and clearing.



Four Rivers 12th graders plant 2 persimmons at North Star in Hadley as part of a weeklong planting intensive

Year in Review:

HYS purchased more than **2,000 plants** with funds raised in 2013. These were stored bare root in Northampton before making their way to numerous planting projects in the Valley, or sold to community members to help cover stock costs. Many were healed in at Tripple Brook Farm, Southampton. At the end of the season, we have only a few plants left waiting in pots to get in the ground.

Planting projects:

HYS initiated more than **30 ongoing planting projects** in a number of towns in the Valley, primarily Northampton, Greenfield and Hadley, making lasting relationships that will grow over time with:

- More than dozen different **public K-12 schools**
- **Community gardens** in 4 towns
- Small **businesses** and **public institutions**
- **Non profits** like Community Action, Just Roots, Grow Food Noho & Gardening the Community
- Rec. Departments, Cons. Coms, DPW and DCS



Putting in raised veggie beds on the Rail Trail

Ongoing projects:

We're involved with design work for some exciting projects for the spring, such as the **Hampshire Council of Government's Lawn** in Northampton, the **Brookie Sculpture Park** in Greenfield, the **Parent Child Dev. Ctr.** in Amherst and many of **Nuestras Raices'** community gardens.

Upcoming possibilities:

Projects in the negotiation phase include plantings at the **Forbes Library**, the **Northampton and Holyoke Public Schools**, **Wentworth Farms Cons. Area** in Amherst, the **Green River Rec Area** in Greenfield, more small businesses, and community access trees on peoples' home lawns.

Measuring Success:

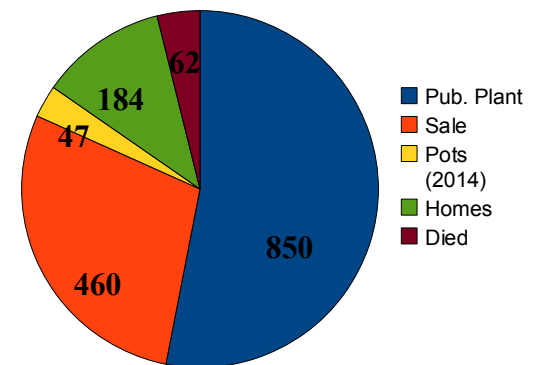
Plant volume & handling:

Despite handling a large volume of bare root and fragile stock, we have had very good success. Of all trees planted, only 2 died. Extra seedlings after planting and sales were offered in plant give-aways.

Plant sources:

Larger saplings were ordered from Millers Nurseries, Fedco & Tripple Brook. Many plantings consist of 1-3 trees, which could expand to polycultures or forest gardens over time. Bare root orders from Cold Spring Farm & the NH State Forest Nursery shipped more than 1000 <2ft native nut and fruit trees and shrubs. These will b transplantable as larger saplings later. Those remaining will become a food forest near GCC.

Plant Destinations



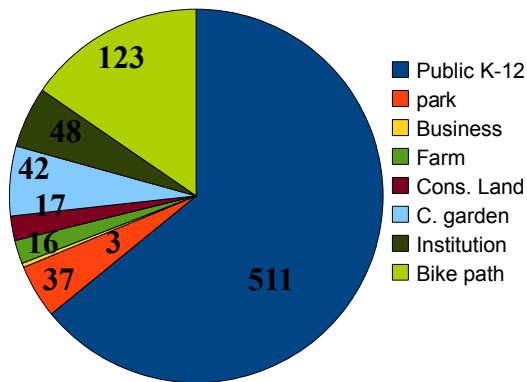
Publicity:

- Rail Trail project and HYS in the Gazette (4/13) Brookie park in the Recorder (10/13).
- We gave a presentation promoting public edibles to the Northampton City Council in April.
- HYS Facebook page keeps growing (230 'likes'), blogs are published once a month, and web site traffic avg. 20 hits a day.

Impact:

- **Over 2,000 perennial, food-bearing plants** added to the communities, ecosystems and food systems of the 3 county area: 500+ at or near schools, 120+ along the Rail Trail, 160+ at organizations, parks and comm. gardens, and 660 to area homes and gardens through sales and gifts.
- **Dozens of community members and many K-College students** had an opportunity to plant perennials at public locations meaningful to them over the year.
- In countless instances while working on plantings along the Rail Trail, passersby were **overheard excitedly commenting** about the gardens, and observed picking produce.
- **Volunteers led 28 free plant walks** along the bike path in '12 and 10 more in '13

Planting Location by Type

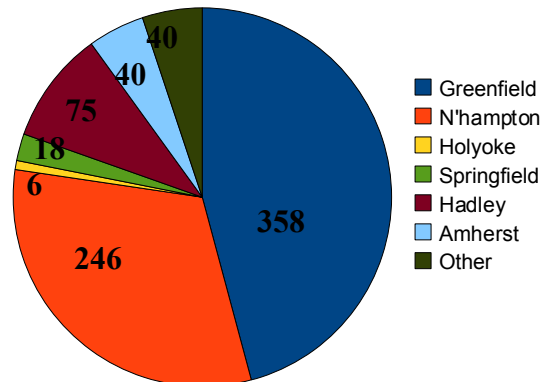


Planting locations:

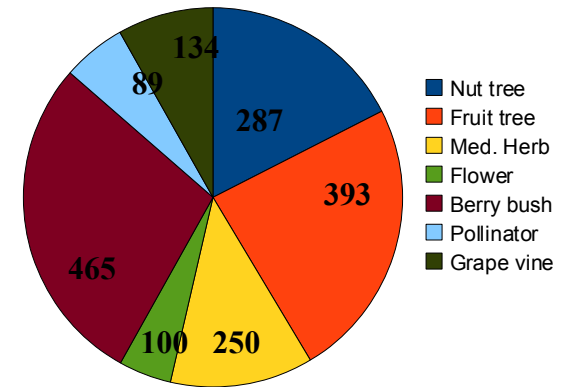
While great potential for public planting exists everywhere, circumstances led us to our first round of planting projects:

- **Northampton:** Manhan Rail Trail @ Nagle Walkway, 'Frog Town', O'Donnell House and Cahill Apts (NHA), Chabad Northampton, Vernon St. PCDC, Community Staffing, Cutchins Academy
- **Florence:** Florence Organic Community Garden
- **Greenfield:** K-12 (Four Rivers, Newton Elem., Center School, Four Corners School, GHS), Brookie Sculpture Park, Green Riv. Rec Area, Comm. Action Youth Programs, Just Roots
- **Holyoke:** E.N White and Morgan schools
- **Springfield:** Gardening the Community (Hancock St. youth garden), Lebanon st. CG
- **Hadley:** NorthStar Teen Cntr, PV Chinese Immersion Charter, Trans' World Food Market
- **Amherst:** UMass, Amethyst Brook Cons. Area, Fort River Elem., Hampshire College
- **Cummington:** Berkshire Trail Elem
- **Barre:** Barre Regional HS
- **Montague:** Brooks Bend Farm
- **Williamsburg:** Helen James school

Plantings by Town



Plantings by type



Networking & Outreach:

Town chapters?:

A different organizing group has started to form in Greenfield, being the first offshoot of HYS, broadening the focus of organizers from Northampton to the larger Valley. How can community scale and focused chapters collaborate and communicate? What are the benefits of larger, regional cooperation? Let's find out!



Planting 3 apples at the PVCICS school in Hadley. This orchard abuts the rail trail & Hampshire Mall.

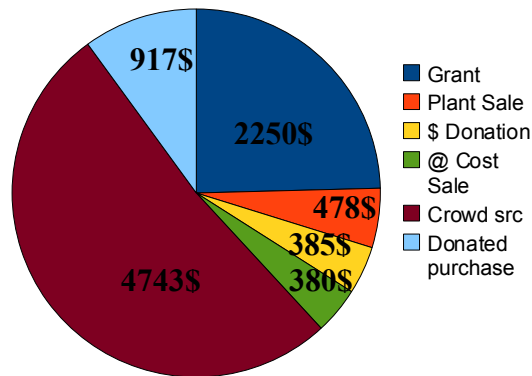


*Kale and tomatoes up for grabs on the Rail Trail.
Beds were picked clean by Oct.*

Finances:

HYS received two Ritual Arts Collective community grants, a number of donations of resources and money, had a successful plant sale, and organized a crowd sourcing campaign. Having spent 7000\$ on plants and 400\$ on supplies, we stand with 2,300\$ and plans for a winter fundraiser.

Income Sources



Challenges and Limitations:

Burden of Maintenance:

The burden of maintenance will grow for HYS with each new project, and as existing plantings grow. Though forest garden design aims to create self-maintaining systems, the ability of this organization to demonstrate quality and competently maintained gardens in the future will be limited by the size of volunteer pool, +/- or the ability to offer a stipend for a youth maintenance corps. This is critical, as garden presentation affects the decisions of other institutions in regards to planting on their property. Additionally, maintenance effects harvest yield, and will either inspire or disappoint the communities that interact with the plantings.

Membership:

A wider pool of members would help sustain HYS financially and logistically, spread out maintenance labor and increase capacity for further organization and plantings. This bottleneck has limited the capacity and scope of plantings, in the context of outreach, finding planting locations, and especially, design.

'Institution Interface':

Navigating the concerns and complex politics and ownership claims of the commons has been getting easier. Can we codify this process?



PYO medicine herbs + info signs at the Florence Organic Community Garden



*'Frog town', Maplewood shops parking lot in late summer.
PYO med./culinary herbs, 3 potted figs, hardy banana, gooseberries, and a bench, presided over by the frog transformer.*

Goals for 2014:

- **Increase membership** to 20 volunteers w/ yr long commitment of maintenance. Find volunteers willing to engage the community with the landscapes through education and plant walks.
- **Connect plantings at public schools** to volunteers in the community who, using the plantings, can help promote permaculture to K-12 students and their community.
- Offer **volunteer trainings** for weeding, season-long care, pruning, grafting, and home-scale propagation of polyculture plants.
- Form local **'Hidden Harvest' chapters** to collect and distribute fallen fruit, mitigating concerns of refuse and maximizing harvest potential.
- Begin **mapping plantings**, existing trees and wild food patches to identify and publicize both the project and sources of sustenance.
- **Increase awareness of plantings** through signage, walks, murals and promote wild food literacy!
- **Keep growing!**

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