

VERMONT
FARMER
PROFILES 

BY UNIVERSITY
OF VERMONT
COMMUNICATIONS
CAPSTONE TEAM

Common Roots Farm

An Urban, Non-Profit Farm in South Burlington, VT with a mission!



FARM OVERVIEW

Fae Blackmer, farmer, joined Common Roots in January of 2019. Last year, she married two of her interests, cooking and agriculture, by developing and managing the new value-added products line for the Farmstand while producing 17,000 pounds of food with her partner, farmer Katie Rose Leonard. This position gave Fae the opportunity to draw from her previous experiences in preparing and executing a whole farm business plan. Katie Rose farmed and had the responsibility of further developing the Farmstand operation. For this 2020 season Fae has the lead farm position. The value-added products will be produced by Chef Zack Forsythe, a 13-year chef trained in southern New Hampshire. He is the lead on the Farmstand operation as well. Chef Zack is talented with ethnic foods, has the knack for spicing and has the heart for the mission of Common Roots; food education and access.

The Common Roots farm operates a community food share program, giving food to families facing food insecurity. Now that South Burlington has a Food Shelf, Common Roots will set up a Farmstand at the Food Shelf for folks to select what they need for the week. The farm plans to grow 33% more certified organic food in 2020.

SEVERE WEATHER

Due to the small size of the operation, and the significant role Common Roots plays in the local community, any disruption feels magnified. Like many farmers in the area, Fae Blackmer and our former farmer, Katie Rose Leonard cited **extreme weather** due to climate change as one of the biggest challenges facing the farm:

“The severe weather events that we’ve experienced in the past few years don’t go unnoticed as our site is very windy. We are farming on heavy clay soils, [which are] significantly impacted by precipitation and heavy rain events. It keeps us out of the field much longer than it would for folks that are growing on a sandy farm.”

HEAVY WIND

Heavy wind and rain have caused many headaches for Fae Blackmer and her team. The flat grade of the land and nature of the soil causes drainage issues with any rain. Increasing frequency of heavy rain events have only exacerbated this. When asked about plans to prepare for further climate shifts, Fae had this to say:

“I am aware that this farm is on a windy site compounded by the issue of climate change to further be explored for mitigation.”

ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

The Farm Team mostly relies on academic resources for future adaptation strategies which are incredibly helpful and so accessible. The UVM Capstone students provided some information from the **USDA Northeast Climate Hub**. Many resources dealing directly with heavy rainfall and our changing climate are available.