

Living a Full Life

by Wendy Thomas



lovely Farm, a small vegetable farm in Greenfield, is

run by Terra Fletcher and Dan Legnard, a young couple who tend the farm when they are not in school or working at other jobs.

Fletcher, who is a third-year student at Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass., is working toward a degree in art education; she hopes to someday incorporate both agriculture and art in her work.

“I like the art that you find in a garden,” she says, and freely admits that she’s a “c’est la vie” gardener at heart.

Legnard, who has a degree in environmental studies from St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y., says he’s more of a farmer than a gardener

and likes it when rows are orderly and well kept. He points out that he’s not a fan of one particular weed: velvet leaf, which seems to crop up everywhere in their garden.

“It’s a challenge,” says Legnard. “Farming doesn’t bring in a lot



Farm: Cloverly Farm Town: Greenfield
Farmer: Terra Fletcher & Dan Legnard
Grow: Vegetables

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of money. But you find that it’s really about the connections and the people you meet.” Case in point: One nursery owner donated a tray of 20 basil plants to Cloverly Farm to help the young couple start out.

The pair, who seem to balance one another’s philosophies about farming remarkably well, met while working at a summer camp. They wanted to extend that sense of community connec-

tion and service they felt at the camp to their lives, Fletcher says. So, with the blessings of Fletcher’s parents — who owned land that was once a dairy farm — the two made the leap into the business of farming.

Many lessons have been learned along the way. For example, they now know that hand tilling the land results in lots of pain, aggravation and very little progress. This year, they rented a tiller to do the job. They also used sunflower stalks to tie up tomato plants but discovered when a hurricane hits the area, sunflower stalks are some of the first to get blown down.

Still, they are making it work: This is the couple’s second growing season. Ten CSA shares sold this

summer; selling produce at local farmers’ markets has helped to defray the operating costs.

“We’re not making a lot of money, but we are living inexpensively,” says Fletcher. “We’re getting skills that will hopefully help me for the rest of my life.” This summer, she learned how to make her own ketchup and barbecue sauce, two things that are difficult to find in her quest to eat locally. Fletcher also plans to use her mother’s canning supplies to store up food for the winter.

The two are not sure what they will plant in the spring, but are considering growing grain to produce locally made flour. As they anticipate intense school schedules and the need to work other jobs, it seems clear they will need to focus on a crop that is not as labor intensive as their current one of 30 vegetables, she said.

“But there’s no way we’d stay away from farming,” says Fletcher. To which Legnard adds: “In the overall arc of our lives, this is only round one.”

Wendy Thomas is an award-winning journalist, columnist and blogger who lives in the Monadnock Region.

Photo: Kimberly Peck