

Finding Common Ground

September 2025

Up Front

EVERYONE NEEDED!! ON BOARD, NOW!!!

BIG NEWS—We have signed a contract with a construction firm to break ground this fall!!! Task Teams to prepare the land and all its creatures for development are forming and working NOW. More leaders and support people are needed. **We need EVERYONE to volunteer now to bring tender loving care to the land before the big equipment arrives in late October.** Read more about it under Planning & Development below.

Here are some cool groups that are forming:

- **Pond Team** to relocate fish, turtles and frogs from pond before it is drained and refurbished.
- **Tree Protection** ID and marking team
- **Wildflower** re-location team
- **Wildlife Thicket** Team to create thickets adjacent to areas of tree felling, in coordination with contractors' work
- **Neighbor Relations** Coordination Team to reach out to immediately adjacent neighbors near the Frazier Rd. entrance prior to contractors showing up.
- **Maple Tree** Team to remove a large, dying Maple tree at our entrance ASAP
- Etc.!!!



*Caleb measures out the new high tunnel footprint (Photo, Kai)
Banner above: Sunset over the far field (Photo: Rachel B)*

How to volunteer: Contact Janey meadows.maryjane@gmail.com and/or sign up at this [link](#). Many ideas are listed in this spreadsheet and there's room for more. Also, could someone take the lead to coordinate individual teams with each other and with overall development activities and priorities?

You'll find many more ways to contribute to this revitalizing work in this Almanac, including pitching in to finish building two high tunnels for the barn. ★★ ★ **Stay Tuned for upcoming community work day opportunities in September & October** ★★ ★

Circle News



Goni surveys the high tunnel hardware (Photo: Kai)

On the Farm

Gifted Garden Hands needed for High Tunnel and Greenhouse construction!

Building is under way for these new additions that will make it possible for us to expand our veggie offerings for our Winter Season CSA members. Infrastructure Instigator & Adjunct Farmer Goni is leading the build and needs some extra hands getting it assembled and up. Working with Goni is a pleasure and seeing the tunnel come together is gratifying.

Here's what would be ideal at this stage in the tunnel project:

- People with good spatial awareness & mobility who like to learn
- Folks with basic carpentry skills
- Someone who can bring their own drill and driver

If you like building projects and can offer 2-4 hours on Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays through September, please text Goni to help out: (518) 567-3194).

This is a project long in the making. Two years ago, Caleb and Paul discussed the farm's desperate need for a high tunnel. The need was based on the ability of the farm team to extend

Meetings & Events

- ♦ **All gatherings are in Eastern Time** and open to everyone unless otherwise stated.
- ♦ **You must RSVP** for details and last-minute changes.
- ♦ **COVID Policy:** For your safety and others', bring a mask in case it is needed. At CGEV, we protect those most vulnerable.
- ♦ **Accessibility:** At this stage, terrain is unpaved and uneven, and restrooms are not wheelchair-accessible.
- ♦ **Google Calendar Link:** CGEV Calendar
To subscribe, add or change an event, email Ren at calendar@commonground.eco
- ♦ **Discourse Forum Link:**
<https://discourse.commonground.eco/>

Circle Meetings

Financial & Legal Subcircle of P&D

Every Tuesday, 3:30-5pm, Zoom. [RSVP to Theresa](#) with subject "F&L" to participate

Planning & Development

Wednesdays weekly or bi-weekly, 4:00-5:30pm, hybrid. [RSVP to Anthony](#) with subject "P&D"

Membership

Thursdays, September 4 and 18, Zoom. Task meetings, as needed, are on alternate weeks, same time. [RSVP to Lisa](#) with subject "Membership Circle"



Swallowtail butterfly sips nectar from a Zinia (Photo: Kai)

the growing season. High tunnels protect against extreme weather conditions, allow for greater crop diversity, reduce the need for pesticides, and provide comfortable working conditions during the winter months. Now we have what we need to build a high tunnel and a greenhouse.



The first high tunnel rib is slotted in place (Photo: Kai)

In October 2023, Paul and Caleb wrote and submitted a proposal to the Natural Resources Conservation Service as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. We lost in the first round but were told that our proposal would carry over to the following year and possibly have an advantage in the competition since we were denied in our initial submission. Caleb shepherded the proposal through the second round, through our then emerging Common Ground Growers Cooperative, and it was funded! **This \$20,000 grant provides the funds we need to proceed.**



What a difference a couple of days makes (Photo:Hope)

General Circle

Sundays, September 7 and 28, 6:30-8:30pm, Zoom. [RSVP to Hope](#) with subject "GC" two days in advance

Land Stewardship

Circle meetings: Tuesday, September 9, 7-8:30 pm, on the land at the barn (hybrid if needed). [RSVP to Doug](#) with subject "LSC" to confirm details

Governance & Communication

Tuesday, Sept.16, 7-9pm, Zoom
Seeking members with administrative, marketing, governance, and IT interests. [RSVP to Quai](#) with subject "G&CC"



Lucas and Goni pound in the high tunnel posts (Photo: Kai)

All About Events

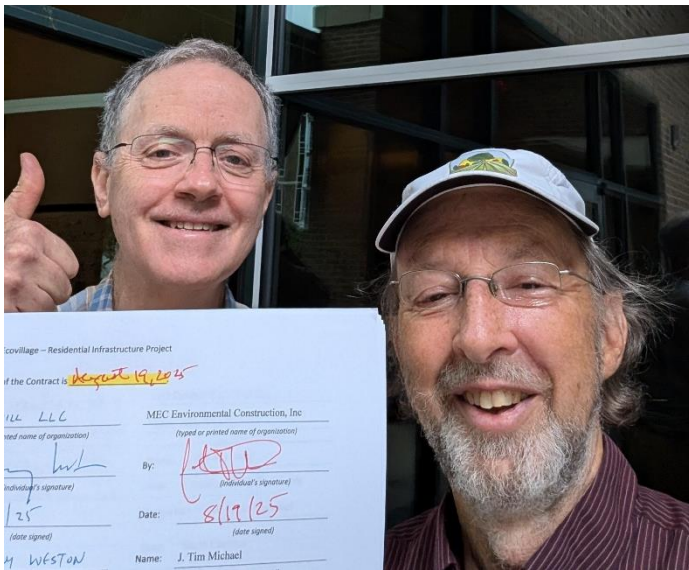
Tours of the Land

Membership Circle

Are you a new Common Ground member or a curious person who is thinking of joining?
Contact Lisa and put "Request for Tour" in the subject line: Lberley@yahoo.com. Or text 919-619-2979. We usually have a tour each month at 1:30pm on the same day as the Community on the Ground (COG) meeting and Potluck.

Planning & Development

August was a momentous month! **The headliner was signing a contract with MEC Environmental Construction for the main infrastructure construction for the village.** This includes land clearing, road construction, utilities such as the water distribution system, a swale-and-berm system for drainage and erosion control, pond renovation, and more. Wells and septic bids will be coming as separate contracts with other outfits. Big money, too – all of this is well over a million dollars!



Randy and Anthony sign the MEC Contract

To be very clear: signing the contract commits us to MEC and MEC to us (advantageous for one thing because it locks in prices from the bid in June) but it does not yet start the actual construction ball rolling. **MEC stands ready, but we must still have our financing secured before we can go ahead and commit to building.** Thus the concurrent work of the Finance and Legal Subcircle is now front and center, led by the indefatigable Theresa and Becky with the able legal assistance of Eric and the all-around project management skill of Robyn Heeks of Heeks Collaborative.

Elaborate financial scenarios are being worked out. We're involved in discussions with lenders for the short-term construction loan we'll need

Racial Awareness Book Group

Membership Circle

Every Monday, 7-8 p.m., Zoom

Contact Lisa to join with subject "Racial Awareness Book Group": Lberley@yahoo.com

*The book group is for CGEV members and the larger community. The format is reading aloud and breaking between paragraphs to share personal reflections, questions, and ideas. People attend as often as they can. **September is a good time to join the Book Group as we have a new selection to read.***

Community Farm-to-Table Lunch

Land Stewardship Circle

Every Tuesday at 1:00pm at the Barn

Contact Lucas if you plan to come:

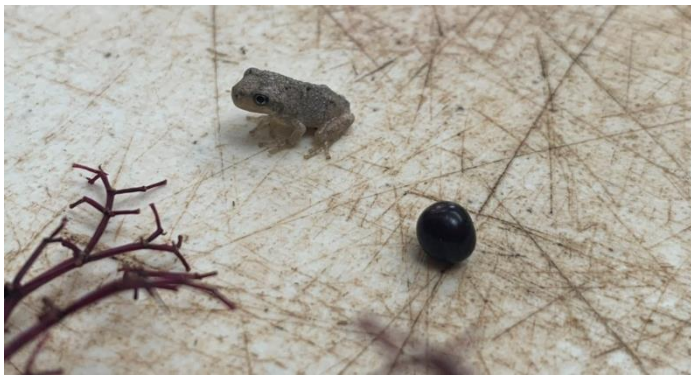
lucas.babinec@posteo.net, 301-767-6720

*Come enjoy a simple, nourishing meal prepared straight from the garden plus thoughtful conversation with good humans who care about the earth. **In order to put these meals on every week, we need support.** Come to learn the skill of cooking for a community with what's seasonally available. Lucas can help you plan the menu and get everything ready to put on a yummy farm-to-table meal for other community members and visitors. Please sign up to support the cooking or the post-meal dishwashing [here](#). And remember to offer donations—cash, Venmo, or pantry staples are much appreciated.*



Taking time out on a hot Summer's day (Photo: Kai)

(to be paid off by lot sales when the infrastructure is complete). At the same time, we need to get together the HOA agreements that will be part of our lot sales contracts, nail down the legal structures for the HOA as well as a co-op which may end up owning different parts of the land. This looks like a crazy quilt to a lawyer – they are on board too – but we want it to be clear and fitting to our strategies, to us. Pods with co-owners are firming up. We have applied to our preferred external lender, the Housing Assistance Council (HAC), which is not a bank but a national non-profit devoted to affordability. Their decision date is September 18th — fingers crossed!



Tiny frog barely bigger than an Elderberry appears (Photo: Kai)

Internally, Finance & Legal is organizing a Loan and Gift fund to match up people needing financial help with people who are able to give it. If HAC comes through, infrastructure work could begin in late September. By then we'll need most pre-sales agreements to be completed, along with a deposit of at least 25% of the eventual lot price. But the financial picture is still in flux, so members can watch their emails and the [Discourse Forum](#) for details. Very big changes are therefore almost upon us. One is that by next summer – maybe even earlier – people could begin building houses. Common House work should begin even sooner. P&D has established a Design Subcircle (contact Anthony at weston@elon.edu) specifically to consult with member-builders on design following our Architectural Guidelines. They have met several times and are already looking

New Member Coffee Meet Up

Membership Circle

Sunday, September 14, 11am-12:30pm at Caribou Coffee, 1408 E. Franklin St, Chapel Hill

Contact Lisa for more info or to sign up:

Lberley@yahoo.com or 919 619 2979

This is a great opportunity for those who are curious about CGEV and want to make connections with other members.

Full Table Farm Dinner

Land Stewardship Circle

Thursday, September 18, 5pm onward (we eat at 6:30pm)

RSVP to Farmer Caleb: (323) 561-1960

Every third Thursday of the month, come out to the farm for a simple, nourishing, farm-to-table meal prepared by your favorite farmers from the abundance of what's in season, shared with other wonderful humans dining al fresco beside the garden. Feel free to come as early as 5:00 to stroll in the garden, settle in, maybe pick some flowers for the table, and work up an appetite for the 6:30 meal. Children are most welcome!



Rachel B. says, Watermelons build strength! (Photo: Kai)

at proposed plans. Note that the initiative lies with member-builders to bring forward developed plans (fairly early in the design process, please!) or ideas or requests to consult. P&D is also in discussion with a Durham-based design/build firm for possible shared designs and construction management – more on that very soon. Designing and preparing to build has enough lead time and it is definitely not too early to begin working on it.



A spirited volleyball game happens at the Nest (Photo: Kai)

The other big change will be on the land. Putting in infrastructure will, frankly, make a mess for a while. Some familiar and loved places will change dramatically. It will hurt! In going forward all the same, **we aim to mitigate the short-term effects while building toward a more vibrant, diverse, adaptable and resilient landscape for the long haul.** In this way hopefully we can find joy and promise in the coming of big changes (even big machinery) as well. (... but this is a complex and tender topic: Anthony plans to say more about it in a separate [Forum](#) post, starting a discussion to which all are invited to contribute.)

Meantime, the work commences. As one first step, a team developed a plan to drop-and-mill several dozen of the larger trees that will have to come out ahead of when the big equipment shows up. Much appreciation to Janey for hours of phone calls and relationship-building to find several people to help us do this work, to Randy for the wordsmithing, and to Doug, Goni, Rachel

Two Monthly Heart Shares

Membership Circle

These monthly gatherings offer a meaningful way for CGEV members to connect on a deeper level than our usual gatherings allow. New members often explore this way, so committed members are encouraged to welcome them.

- **Via Zoom—Friday, Sept 19, 7-9pm**

RSVP to Heart_Share@commonground.eco.

Organizers Ren & Quai, Theme TBD. Watch for a detailed email or just RSVP now! Facilitators are needed; we'll support you and you can choose the theme!

- **In-person on the land—Sunday Sept 7, at 10am, meet under Grandmother Oak. Reach out to Lucas with any questions (301-767-6720)**



Delicate Crane fly Orchid emerges (Photo: Rachel B)

Wheel of the Year Gathering—Fall Equinox

Land Stewardship Circle

Saturday, September 20, in the evening (time TBD) at the Pavilion Fire Circle

B., and Eric for looking at the trees and helping to think through the details. As Janey outlines Up Front in this Almanac, other groups will be challenged to take on other transitional and mitigation projects – some very soon. There is much to do to plan for that, and a plea for “all hands on deck”, or better put, all hands/feet/remaining body parts (including heads and hearts) showing up at Common Ground! **How to volunteer: Contact Janey** (meadows.maryjane@gmail.com) **and/ or sign up at this [link](#).**

Other planning work continues, too: a group working on the Common House design and preparation, for example, and another on village-scale layout planning and other architectural preparation. Actually, there is way too much to do for a group of people who also have other family and professional lives. **Still, this is the moment, friends! It's been a long time coming. Please step forward to join the work in any way you can.**

Land Stewardship

We are reckoning deeply with what it means to be in reciprocal and regenerative relationship with the land and all life out here at Common Ground. One way we cultivate reciprocity is through our community meals. The weekly community lunch (Tuesdays at 1pm) and monthly farm dinner (3rd Thursday at 6:30pm) are chances to enjoy the fruits of our efforts to create a more resilient and just local foodshed. Usually at least 75% of the ingredients in the meals are from the land here or other local farms within a 10-mile radius. As temperatures cool off a bit in September, there is no better time to get out to enjoy a meal here. **If the current rhythm and timing of meals doesn't work for you, please reach out to suggest alternative days and times.** We'd love to host more meals and we're looking for more folks to come out to help cook!

[Contact Kai](#) for more information and check email for details. No RSVP is needed.

These seasonal events help us to collectively regard the passage of time and honor the land and ones who came before us. The Fall Equinox can be seen as the beginning of a new cycle; a time to reflect on the bounty and lessons of the past year and prepare to start afresh. Come together to celebrate with feasting, storytelling, singing, dancing, and drumming. shows



Kai displays ginormous garlic bulbs from the Farm

Many Turtles Learning Collective Kick-Off & Fundraiser

Tentatively scheduled for the weekend of September 20 & 21. **Events and times TBD—check your email for details**

Let's learn further into a community culture of learning together! This Collective has been created to empower individuals, communities, and society by offering educational and sharing

The barn continues to beautify and become more and more welcoming for community events. Big, nice, hand-made shelves advance decluttering efforts. Janey's special tea tree oil infused cleaning spray keeps surfaces cleaner than they've ever been before. Big thanks to Rachel B, Goni, and Erin (who recently returned after 2 years in New Orleans and is staying in the barn apartment for a bit) for caring for and tending to this blossoming community space!



Kai guides the Lammas Fire Circle gathering (Photo: Becky)

In August we enjoyed a lovely Lammas celebration—an evening of fire, feasting, story, song, drumming, and dance in celebration of thunder and harvest. It also included a gentle mini “lesson” on why and how these lovely gatherings also help us realize our dreams and visions of living in community together on this land. Lammas was our fourth Wheel of the Year celebration of 2025 and the sense of deepening connection with the land and each other was palpable.

Our next Wheel of the Year celebration is this month, for the potent moment that is the Fall Equinox. If you've been loving these community-building celebrations on the land, or are curious to experience your first—**mark your calendar for Saturday evening, September 20** and stay tuned for more details coming via email.

opportunities for harmonious, sustainable and agrarian living. This celebratory weekend may include a Permaculture Walk and Talk with Lucas and Forest Walk with Rachel B. Contact Lucas at 301-767-6720 if you want to lead a 1-to-2-hour educational offering to support this wonderful occasion.

Community on the Ground

Governance & Communications Circle

Saturday, September 27, 1-5pm, Zoom and in-person at the Nest in Mebane.

RSVP to [Becky](#), subject “COG.”

These all-member meetings address timely topics and are reliably informative and connecting for all involved. Make it a habit to come to these events, and the Community Potluck which follows.

Community Potluck

Membership Circle

Saturday, September 27, 5:30-7:30pm, following Community on the Ground. Normally held on the land by the Grandmother Oak Tree. In inclement weather it is often held at the Nest.

RSVP is helpful for set-up and location. Contact Lisa at Lberley@yahoo.com or 919 619 2979.

Potlucks are our time to break bread together and socialize, play, sometimes chew over the Community on the Ground meeting content.



Jascha gets a super cuddle from Rachel B. (Photo: Kai)

COMPASSION CORNER

Making Life More Wonderful

Governance & Communications Circle

Saying "no" is self-ful, not self-ish, and is an act of integrity that benefits everyone involved.

When we say "no" to a request, we are simultaneously saying "yes" to meeting some of our own needs. Likewise, when we do say "yes", we are ideally choosing to meet our needs, self-fully, and with joyful intention. This awareness reduces the potential of unintentional harm and resentment and increases trust.

The practice: The next time you want to say "no" to a request or have a sense of obligation to agree, ask yourself which of your needs a "no" or "yes" would meet and only then respond from that awareness.

Gifted Garden Hand Highlight: Happy Farmiversary, Marilu!

We love having Marilu out at the farm. She brings joyful enthusiasm, wonderful questions, and attention to detail. August marks her one-year anniversary of devoting a lot of love plus her Thursday mornings to the farm. Thank you for being you, Marilu, and for all you do to help Thursday packing days be smooth.

Here's what Marilu has to say about her experience: *I love going out to the farm each week and seeing the crops, the flowers, the bees, and butterflies and I especially love all of the LEARNING that happens there for me. The whole farm team has SO much knowledge to share and we have so many great conversations. I've also gotten to know more people in the community. I think volunteering has really pulled everything together for me. When I arrived to Common Ground, I didn't know much about the farm. Now that I've moved here, I see how the community and the farm are so*

Please bring something to share. Vegetable dishes typically predominate, but all sorts of food and drink are welcome. Just bring a list of ingredients or jot them down when you come.

Member Offerings

Rachel B. reflects on the coming shift to Fall: *Each Season is sad to leave behind. I mourn the loss of Summer by playing in water and wearing shorts and eating vibrant fruits and vegetables and marveling at the color of flowers. And yet, I get excited to think about eating thick stews and wearing warm clothes and watching lots of films and taking long walks alone. I am a child of the Four Seasons. Chasing each high around the Wheel. Feeling glorious when the Sun is high and restful when the nights come on early. I wonder how my ancestors connected to the Seasons. What the ritual for loneliness in winter was and how they celebrated the abundant Harvest. I hope I am living a life directed in praise of my Dancing Ancestors, the ones who lived in alignment, so that I might right the wrongs of the Sorrowed and Broken Ancestors. So subtle are the movements of the skies and winds and unfurlings of the Earth. As such in my Internal World. Am I taking time in the day to listen?*



Luna moth at journey's end (Photo: Kai)

interconnected. I see us as an agrarian community. I think being part of the CSA and volunteering has really pulled it all together for me so I can see how connected everything is. I'm so glad I've gotten involved at the farm!



Marilu enjoys learning and meeting others (Photo: Kai)

Membership

We enthusiastically advanced three new Exploratory Members: Rachel (AKA Rachoog) in June and Jacq and Bradley in August. They are making creative, community building, skillful and necessary contributions to our community! A group of other members are well on their way to advancing to Exploratory and Engaged levels, and we also welcomed eight new Visiting Members in August. If you have questions about the steps of this discernment process, Lisa, Amy and Kathleen are here to support you. Don't hesitate to ask.

You might ask: why do we encourage new people to join CGEV if we already have current members interested in purchasing each of the 12 lots? The answers are: there are still opportunities for additional dwelling units on at least two of the lots. Though most lots are tentatively assigned, nothing is final until contracts are signed, so it's not too late to seek a place! Also, possible ways for people to live near the land are being explored, and some visiting members are looking for community but not for residential living as well.

Hope and Goni invite you to a Sonam concert:

We'll kick off our 2025-26 season on **Saturday, September 13, 2025, at 4:00 pm** at **First Presbyterian Church of Durham** for a joint concert with the Duke University Chorale. Donations in lieu of tickets will support [First Presbyterian's Walk-in Ministry](#) in its mission to help people in downtown Durham experiencing financial instability.

Goni offers a video skit that looks at food waste from a racoon's point of view:

In this installment, a discovery was made with a critter who has begun to "forage" or rather, collect, food waste from grocers as his main source of nutrition. There is so much waste! In the production, packaging, distribution, and consumption aspect of it. The awareness is very there, though it can be overburdening to think about or look at with both eyes. Especially when we get those treats we so love to intake. The engaging thoughts and questions to arise should be pondered on and expressed with those around you. **Watch Bloom of a New Racoon here:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owN6O8ZLBFI>

Outside Happenings of Interest (Not Sponsored by CGEV)

Durham NVC Practice Group

Sunday, Sept 7, 2-4pm

Westminster Presbyterian Church on 3639 Old Chapel Hill Road, Durham, NC 27707

This group meets on the first Sunday of every month. Several members of CGEV have been making a practice of meeting for a bag lunch at 1pm at their sheltered picnic tables overlooking the gardens before joining the NVC practice group at 2pm. Won't you join us? Contact Ren at ren.enberg2@gmail.com if you have questions and to confirm your interest in gathering!

