

GTPulse: Tiny Traverse City Farm Provides Food and Education For All

September 8, 2020 by [Brigid Driscoll](#)

Poesis (pronounced like Po-ee-sis) Farm is a seed saving farm in Traverse City started by Jamie Schaub and Brenin Wertz-Roth. The volunteer-ran farm is a tiny piece of organic paradise that provides the community not only with fresh food but also, an opportunity to gain skill and learn more about farming.

“It’s a Greek word, it comes from the same root as poetry. The idea of poetry in Greek is that it’s bringing something into existence. Because we focus on seed saving and thinking about seeds, we’re bringing a lot of things into existence.”

The four-year-old farm is located a short walk up from the Community Garden at Historic Barns Park. The land is leased through Traverse City nonprofit SEEDS, fitting for the farm’s mission.



Seed saving is so important to Jamie and Brenin because it’s a commonly overlooked aspect of farming.

As seeds go through a growth cycle, they produce new seeds that are even more equipped to thrive in their region’s conditions than their parents.

"We both have backgrounds in farming, but both have full-time jobs that aren't in farming. Both of us kind of dove into seed saving because four years ago there wasn't a lot of that happening up here."

They're soon going to begin the seed saving process again.

"Basically right now we're waiting for everything to dry on the plants so that we can save seeds from them. We're still harvesting so there are lots of things to eat from the garden over the next month and a half, maybe. But the whole farm will eventually turn brown, which is actually what we want because then the seeds are dry and able to be saved."

Jamie, Brenin, and a team of volunteers will carefully harvest seeds from all of the different fruits, veggies and flowers on the farm. Because it's important to be careful with not mixing seeds, it's a slow, intentional process.

"It's a lot," Jamie laughed. "Kale, cabbage, 12 types of pepper, 12 kinds of tomatoes, cucumbers, six kinds of beans. The amount of different flowers we have is...I don't know, maybe 50."

Everything at the farm is given away, back into the community. Jamie arranges the flowers into bouquets for the elderly living in senior care at the Grand Traverse Commons. The food goes to Father Fred's.

Jamie and Brenin will spend the winter at home, processing the seeds on weekends. Once all of the varieties are sorted, they'll go to seed swaps where people will take what they need to begin the year's garden.



Jamie works as a TCAPS teacher and brings her students out to Poesis. Both students and volunteers find being out on the farm a therapeutic experience.

"I think a lot of it is observing and careful watching, you know, I'm looking at the cilantro and noticing there are some brown parts in it and thinking that I need to go and grab those. The bean pods, when you break each one open it's very relaxing."

They get to experience indigo dyeing as well. In past, COVID-free years, Jamie has held workshops on indigo dyeing. This year's harvesting and dyeing process had a little more solitude.



“Well, we have several dye plants out here. And that’s just another project, this is an educational space because it’s a public park so we’re able to engage with them in different ways whether it’s talking about saving seeds or when to harvest things or about natural dyeing. The process of



indigo is a lot more intense than other flowers. Marigolds all you really have to do is make a tea and you can dye with it. Indigo is more of a chemical reaction where you soak the leaves until they ferment. You’re changing the pH to separate the pigment from the water. It used to be what most of our jeans were dyed with. It’s pretty labor-intensive. There’s kind of been a resurgence in the U.S. I think, of natural dyeing. So we’ve been saving seeds from those plants for the past couple of years.” Whether it’s blue jeans or saving seeds, harvesting clean food, or donating to local food pantries, Poesis certainly does what its name says. It has brought something to Jamie and Brenin too, which is the joy of others learning more about the natural world around them.

“I just think about being able to give things away, and that’s really enjoyable. And usually, the people that come out and help are happy to be out here and enjoy the space. I know being able to interact with people out here is my favorite. Whether it’s people that are walking on the trail and just are curious and come in or we’ve been here in the evenings and there’s a lot of times where there’ll be family portraits that they’re taking on the farm, and it’s just kind of sweet to think about all those people who had an experience out here.”

If you’re in need of a quiet fall activity where you can clear your mind and get some fresh air, stop by Poesis Farm to help wrap up their season. Follow them on Facebook and Instagram to keep up with all of their latest and learn more about volunteering.