

Winter 2022

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A fond farewell to Alison Quaglia

At the end of January, Alison Quaglia retired after 47 years at Morrison Center. Alison worked as an Ed Tech in our special purpose school and has worked with countless students - many of whom now attend Morrison programs as adults. She was celebrated by the school staff and students, had a cake and coffee reception with other agency staff and friends of the agency, and received letters of recognition from Senators Angus King and Susan Collins. Alison hopes to travel during her retirement and was given a gift certificate for a bus tour from Morrison Center. Alison will be missed and we wish her a fun and relaxing retirement!



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Morrison Center provides services throughout the State of Maine

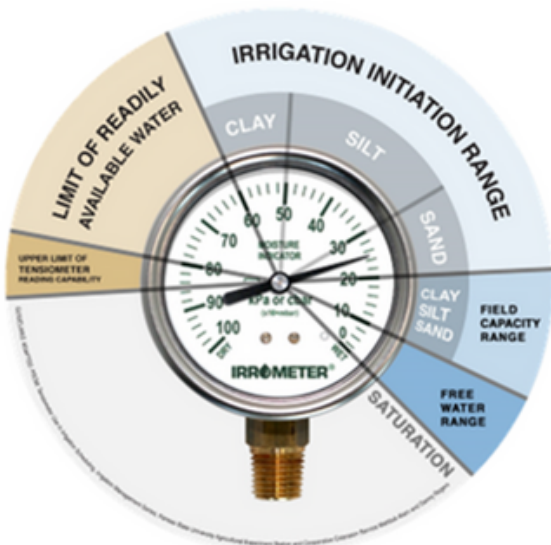


News from Opportunity Farm: Corn and Climate Change Study



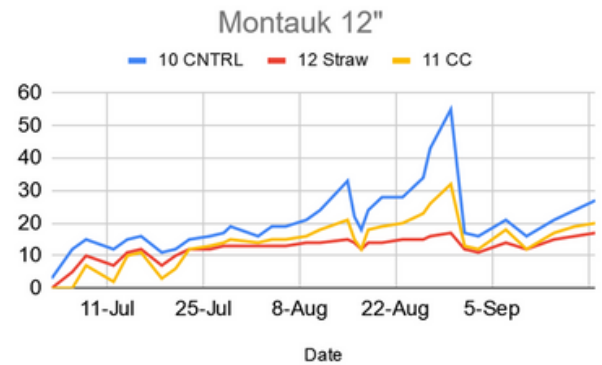
If you were at Opportunity Farm between July and September this year, you might have noticed that the corn plants had some “accessories” installed amongst the plants. This year, Opportunity Farm was part of a region wide research and networking project to help farms adapt to changing climate and weather patterns, known as the Climate Adaptation Fellows. As part of our participation in the program, we monitored soil moisture levels in our sweet corn with the hope that the farm can reduce irrigation needs while still optimizing crop production.

The “accessories” you saw in our corn plantings are all the locations that probes were installed to monitor soil moisture. Soil moisture is important to manage for crops, much like hydration is important to human health. If plants are grown in soil that is too dry, they will become stressed and wilt or die; if the soil is too wet, crops will be stunted and have a higher chance of developing root rots and pest issues.



The moisture probe works by measuring electrical resistance in the soil, mimicking the ease or difficulty a plant root has accessing water in the soil. If the soil is wet, electrical conductivity is high, reducing the resistance and giving a low reading (below 20 kPa). When the soil is dry, electrical conductivity is low, increasing resistance and producing a high reading (above 20, ideally not higher than 60 kPa).

In addition to monitoring soil moisture, we also tested three different methods of weed management to see how they affect available moisture. In the below graph charting soil moisture for the variety 'Montauk', we can see the three weed management treatments and the changes in soil moisture overtime. Our control is known as "open cultivation", where weeds are removed on a 7-10 day schedule, with soil left bare and "open".



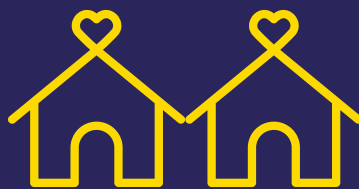
In the straw planting, corn plants were mulched with a 2-3" of straw when they were planted. "CC" stands for cover crop, where a beneficial crop of red clover and assorted grasses were planted once the corn was 4-5 weeks along. Most notable in the below graph is the spike of the blue line in late August/early September. This was one of the last dry spells we saw during the growing season in 2021, and it's clear from our data that the use of mulch or a cover crop can help reduce plant moisture stress during dry periods. With the use of mulches or cover crops in our farm production, we can further reduce our irrigation needs by delaying how often irrigation needs to be run between natural rain events.



Through this work we were able to test new management strategies, create on-farm data testing those strategies, and develop a plan to reduce irrigation needs without compromising crop yields. These findings are being shared with other farmers in the Climate Adaptation Fellows, featured in an article of the The Maine Organic Farm and Garden newsletter this winter, and presented to fellow Maine farmers at MOFGA's Farmer-to-Farmer conference in November. This project is funded and supported by Northeast SARE and UMaine Extension.



New Residential Program Open in Gray!



We are excited to announce that our newest adult residential location is open and ready for clients in Gray! Located right downtown in the former town hall building, this bright and beautiful home is convenient to everything the village has to offer!

Meet Maria Winn, Rockstar Volunteer



Maria Winn has always had a desire to help. As a child growing up in Newfield, Maine, she experienced first-hand the impact a community can have through the support given to her family during a time of crisis. She gives back now in any way she can including organizing the adoption of a local family each holiday season, working with others to provide presents and a Christmas tree.

Maria's relationship with Morrison Center began in 2017 when her son with autism began attending our Scarborough preschool. She recalls appreciating the feeling of belonging and understanding she felt when they visited the campus, "They knew how to approach him and treated him like a normal human being."

Since then, Maria has been integral in recruiting volunteers to decorate wreaths for our annual sale through her employment at UNUM where she has worked for almost 10 years. This past year, we had 29 volunteers decorate 1000 wreaths. Also amazing at her job, Maria was awarded a CEO Award at UNUM this past fall. Recipients are 6 top-performing employees and a UNUM makes a donation to the charity/cause of their choice - Maria generously chose Morrison Center.

If this didn't keep her busy enough, Maria is also an Arbonne Independent Consultant and District Manager as well as a member of Toastmasters International where she has earned the highest individual honor awarded of Distinguished Toastmaster. Thank you for all you do for Morrison and our community, Maria!

**Speaking of wreaths
... Our wreath and
poinsettia sale was a
huge success this year!
Between the sale and
our end-of-year giving
campaign, we raised
close to \$40,000 for
agency programming.
Thank you for your
continued support!**

