

# Janet's Agricultural Tours Newsletter

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## Fall Tour of Northern New England and Québec Features More than Foliage

“There were 28 people on the tour, and only three of them had not toured with me before,” remarked Janet Spear, commenting on her recent tour of northern New England and Québec. Unlike many autumn tours of the region, this one was focused on much more than seeing fall foliage. Leaving from Topsham, Maine, the group traveled 1200 miles in six days, October 25 to 30, visiting a variety of farms and historical and cultural points of interest.

The first stop was to Locally Known, a 170-acre organic farm located in Bowdoinham, Maine, which produces baby salad greens. From there, the group went on to Clinton to visit Flood's Farm, the largest dairy farm in Maine. With 3600 head, they milk approximately 1600 using a 100-cow rotary milking parlor that was constructed in New Zealand and transported by ship. It is the only one of its kind east of the Mississippi River.

The final visit of the first day was to Arnold Farm, a maple sugar operation located between Jackman and the Canadian border. Living in an area endowed with a wealth of native maple sugar trees, the Arnold family has found a sustainable way to harvest “liquid gold” from the Maine woods.

After an overnight stay in Jackman, the group crossed the border into Canada and headed for Québec City. There they enjoyed a guided tour of this 400-year-old city, known for its European charm and French culture. Some points of interest were the Old Quebec district—still surrounded by its ancient

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## See Texas in 2011

Texas, the “Lone Star State,” is the biggest state in the union, except Alaska. It's also big in the agricultural world, being this nation's #1 producer of cotton, sheep, goats, wool, and mohair, as well as a leader in cattle production, corn, wheat, hay, greenhouse and nursery stock, and other products.

We kick off our ten-day Texas tour on October 30, 2011, with a flight to San Antonio (with its fabulous River Walk), where we will start by enjoying a cocktail cruise on the San Antonio River. Next day we'll tour the Alamo, then visit the brand new campus of the Culinary Institute of America. After lunch we'll visit Breckenridge Park, Fort Sam Houston, and King William Historic District with its 25 blocks of restored Victorian-era gingerbread houses.

The next day we'll drive to Johnson City and visit the LBJ Ranch, the Texas “White House,” and the Johnson family cemetery. Our next stop is Fredericksburg, first settled by German farmers in 1846. Here, we will visit Wildseed Farms, the largest working wildflower farm in the U.S. With over 1000 acres under cultivation, the farm produces 88 varieties of wildflower seeds that are sold all over the country.

In the Texas capitol, Austin, we'll view the capitol building, a beautiful Italian Renaissance Revival style structure. Then we'll visit the Texas Department of Agriculture to receive an overview of Texas agriculture and its major and unique products. Then we'll visit the Texas State History Museum and Markley Farms vertical vegetable and berry farm.

Corpus Christi, on the Gulf Coast, is our next destination. On the way we'll visit the Sandy Oaks Olive Orchard, where

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*Inside one of the huge tunnel houses at Locally Known, which produces baby salad greens for local markets.*



*The San Antonio River Walk is a popular tourist destination, and a tour boat ride is a great way to view the city.*



*In Québec City, the Funiculaire, an outdoor elevator, takes people from the Frontenac Hotel down into the Old City*

fortified walls—Parliament Hill, and Palace Royale. Later, the group visited nearby Montmorency Falls, one-and-a-half times taller than Niagara Falls and first to be harnessed for hydro-electric power.

The afternoon ended with a tour of an organic orchard on Île d'Orléans. Domaine Steinbach produces apple products and other gourmet items. The group enjoyed sampling delicacies and cocktails before continuing on to Sugar Shack Chez Dany for dinner accompanied by traditional Québécois music played by local musicians.

Day three included a late-morning departure from Old Québec, allowing free time to explore some of the city on foot. The next stop was Bissonnière Farm, which maintains a herd of up to 200 bison. Bissonnière raises the animals using no chemical products, resulting in a high-quality, natural product. In addition to selling bison meat, the farm offers tours, so visitors can safely view the animals up close. A stop at a 1200-acre Victoriaville-area dairy farm which milks approximately 225 cows was memorable for the robots that perform some of the farm chores.

In Drummondville the group visited Rose Drummond, the largest fresh flower producer in Québec. Dozens of varieties of



*At Bissonnière Farm the group saw bison up close and enjoyed a buffet lunch featuring dishes made with bison meat.*



*Inside view of one of the greenhouses at Rose Drummond.*

roses, alstroemeria, gerbera, and calla lilies in many colors are raised here in greenhouses for wholesale and retail markets.

Stops in Vermont included Nelson Farms. Owner Doug Nelson has developed Cowtown, a Derby, Vermont, sales pavilion and embryo transfer facility for his elite purebred Holstein herd.

The final visit of the fourth day was to the Cabot Cheese Center of Cabot Creamery, where visitors sampled some of Cabot's many cheese varieties and learn about the agricultural history of Vermont and the creamery.

When thinking of Vermont, the image of picturesque dairy farms with cows grazing on lush green hillsides comes immediately to mind. The next day's first visit featured the expected landscape, but with a difference. Oak Knoll Dairy, in Windsor, Vermont, has the largest registered herd of LaMancha dairy goats in the United States, a breed that was developed in the U.S. for the excellent flavor of its milk. The dairy is Vermont's only Grade A commercial bottler of goat milk.

The Simon Pearce glassblowing mill in Quechee, Vermont, offered a distinct contrast with the many farm visits. Located on the Ottauquechee River, it derives its power from hydroelectric turbines. Here, visitors can watch not only glassblowers, but also potters at work and can shop the

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*Seeing a robot silage sweeper in action was a memorable highlight of a farm visit in Victoriaville, Québec.*

retail stores featuring handcrafted glassware and pottery.

Next, the group visited the Marsh Billings Rockefeller Museum, in Woodstock. This working farm, which was started in 1871 by native Vermonter Frederick Billings, is home to one of the finest Jersey herds in America. Its companion museum presents Vermont farm life from historical, scientific, and cultural points of view.

The group then traveled across New Hampshire, stopping first at the Lebanon Coop supermarket, one of two owned and operated by Hanover Consumer Cooperative Society. The Society's annual sales exceed \$65 million, making it the second-largest coop food retailer in the U.S. Offering a wide variety of organic and natural products among its extensive product lines, the coop deals with over 250 producers, giving priority to local sources.

The final visit of the tour was to the Pembroke, New Hampshire, facility of Pleasant View Gardens, the largest horticultural enterprise in northern New England. It produces millions of seedlings for the commercial greenhouse trade, garden centers, and other wholesale customers in 20 eastern states and Canada. It is one of the founding suppliers of the Proven Winners line of floral and foliage plants.

nine varieties of olive trees, specially selected for the local conditions, are grown. This farm also conducts trials of many other olive varieties from around the world.

The famous and huge King Ranch, with its Santa Gertrudis and King Ranch Sant Cruz cattle breeds, is our next destination. We will have guided tours of the cattle and horse operations, the feed yard and mill, the King Ranch farm, which produces cotton and sorghum, and the museum and saddle shop. A barbecue lunch is included.

A tour of the LBJ Space Center will be a stop on our way to Houston, home to more Fortune 500 companies than any other U.S. city except New York. Houston's vibrant economy centers around energy, transportation, medical technology, and the manufacturing of oil field equipment. Our city tour will include visits to the Astro Dome, the Medical Center, Rice University, and the River Oaks residential district.

In Dallas, our final destination of this fabulous tour, we'll conclude with a visit to the historic Ft. Worth Stockyards. This will be followed by our farewell dinner, featuring Texas-style entertainment. Our flight home on November 8th will depart from Dallas International Airport.



*Playing the spoons along with a Quebecois traditional musician at Sugar Shack Chez Dany, where visitors enjoyed a dinner of local foods.*



*The historic Alamo, in San Antonio, Texas*

*"Janet, you out do yourself on every trip. I have been on six trips and each one has been planned to perfection. Truly wonderful experiences and hope we can go on more trips with you." Al & Eleanor O., Waldoboro, ME*

**I'm interested! Please send me more information**

*Please print*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_

- See Texas - October 30–November 8, 2011
- Germany/Switzerland/Austria - March 2012
- The Netherlands Tour including the Floriade - Late Spring 2012
- I'm not ready to travel just yet, but please keep me on your mailing list for future trips

Please return form to: Janet Spear, 14 Eugley Hill Rd., Nobleboro, ME 04555

# Janet's Agricultural Tours

14 Eugley Hill Road  
Nobleboro, ME 04555



*The Lebanon Coop supermarket is one of two owned and operated by the Hanover Consumer Cooperative Society. Coop Manager Jeff Huntington (left) and retired New Hampshire Commission of Agriculture Steve Taylor are shown with tour leader Janet Spear.*

*"Ready to go anywhere, we feel comfortable and relaxed with your guidance." Arlan & Ellie J., Bethel, ME*

Don't Miss This One

## Germany, Swizerland, & Austria, March 2012

It's **not too early** to start planning for this not-to-be-missed early spring tour of central Europe. Spectacular scenery: the jagged Alps, flower-filled meadows, rolling hills of forests and farms, historic cities and picturesque towns. Visit a Swiss dairy farm, a Benedictine monastery, see how cuckoo clocks are made, take a cable car ride to the summit of Mount Titlis, and tour a Swiss village by horse and buggy, and a boat trips on the Rhine and Titisee Lake. Visit Mozart's birthplace on a walking tour of Salzburg, Austria, learn about beer making in southern Germany. Visit the Nymphenburg Palace and Gardens during a city tour of Munich, and then visit organic farms in Bavaria.

## About the Tours

These tours are just a few of the many that Janet Spear has planned and lead over the past 12 years. She specializes in tours with agricultural themes. Locations have included various areas of the U.S., South America, and Europe. In October 2010 Janet was inducted into membership in the exclusive Agricultural Tour Operators International (ATOI). She always has a number of tours in various stages of planning, and is also available to plan private tours for individuals and small groups. For more information, visit her Web site, [www.spearsfarmstand.com/tours](http://www.spearsfarmstand.com/tours), email [rwspear@roadrunner.com](mailto:rwspear@roadrunner.com), or call 207-832-4488.



*The quaint beauty of Heidelberg, Germany*

## Upcoming Tours

**October 30–November 8, 2011.** See Texas: San Antonio, Austin, Corpus Christi, King Ranch, Houston, Dallas. See article in this newsletter.

**March 2012.** Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. Just a few of the highlights: Frankfurt, Koblenz, Rhineland region, Mannheim, Heidelberg, Black Forest region, Titisee area, Rhine Falls at Schaffhausen, Lucerne Engelberg, Innsbruck, Radfeld, Salzburg, and Munich

**Late Spring 2012.** The Netherlands Tour including the Floriade World Horticultural Exposition