



**BUMBLEROOT  
ORGANIC FARM  
Windham, ME**

Jeff Fisher, Abigail Fisher,  
Ben Whalen, and Melissa Law  
2016 Loan and Business  
Assistance Recipients

**Loan History**

Friends Jeff and Abigail Fisher, Ben Whalen, and Melissa Law met in Boulder, Colorado, where Jeff and Ben worked together as farm interns, Abigail served farm dinners and brewed craft beer, and Melissa studied herbal medicine. Jeff and Abigail moved to Maine in 2013, and Ben and Melissa followed a year later so they could start a farm together.

The four friends began growing vegetables and flowers on just two acres of leased land in Buxton, Maine, in 2014. As they gained experience, their dreams grew, and they set out to find a piece of land of their own. “For new farmers, finding land that is affordable with the necessary infrastructure to run a business is challenging. You really have to make do with what you have and make it work,” said Jeff.

When 88 acres of farmland came on the market at the former Weeks Farm in Windham, the friends jumped at the opportunity. The land had been in agricultural use for generations, and a conservation easement from Maine Farmland Trust brought the costs within reach. What’s more, the property’s proximity to Portland would mean easy access to the city’s many farmers markets and restaurants.

Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI) stepped in to support Bumbleroot Organic Farm with business advising and a loan backed by The Carrot Project. “From day one everyone at CEI was supportive of our proposal and helped us to articulate our business plan and vision for the property,” said Jeff. “As a multi-member LLC made up of two couples, having just finished our first farm season, we might have seemed like less than ideal candidates for a loan. But CEI recognized what we had accomplished in our first year and believed in our potential to deliver on our plans for the future.”

**Farm Snapshot**

Jeff, Abigail, Ben, and Melissa grow certified organic vegetables, herbs, and flowers on The Weeks Farm in Windham, ME. They have an 80-family CSA program, sell at 3 Portland farmers’ markets, and supply 15 area restaurants.

**Entrepreneur’s  
Philosophy**

“Bumbleroot Organic Farm seeks to connect people with the land and food that sustains them. Our goal is to build community and sustainable systems through the organic production of food.”

**Innovation**

Bumbleroot Organic Farm donates locally-grown farm-fresh food to low-income and disadvantaged Mainers through programs including Creative Trails in Portland and My Place Teen Center in Westbrook, as well as accepting SNAP benefits.

## **Overview of Outcomes**

Establishing roots at the new location in Windham has helped the farmers not only grow their production, but also their clientele. With daily reach into the Greater Portland area, Bumbleroot is already expanding their CSA offerings and membership. In 2017, their first season on the new property, the Bumbleroot crew scaled up from two to five acres of certified organic vegetable production, sold at three farmers' markets, supplied 20 weeks of veggies to 80 CSA families, and worked with 15 restaurants in Greater Portland. They are also growing more cut flowers and in 2018 will offer full-service and DIY flowers for weddings and events as well as a flower CSA and market bouquets.

Bumbleroot Organic Farm is a rising leader in the southern Maine community because of its commitment to increasing access to locally-grown farm-fresh food. They donated hundreds of pounds of produce to low-income and disadvantaged Mainers through programs including Creative Trails in Portland and My Place Teen Center in Westbrook, as well as accepting SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps).

## **On the Horizon**

Thanks to a conservation easement through Maine Farmland Trust, the 88-acre Weeks Farm is now protected for agricultural use as a Forever Farm. The ample acreage will allow the farmers to add livestock, perennial crops, cover crops, and winter greenhouses, all managed according to sustainable, certified organic methods. Medicinal herbs and educational programs are also on the horizon.

“Bumbleroot Organic Farm seeks to connect people with the land and food that sustains them,” Jeff concluded. “Our goal is to build community and sustainable systems through the organic production of food.”