



Reclaiming the Commons: Community Farms and Forests in a New England Town

Brian Donahue

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This book is a lively account of a community working to combat suburban sprawl, to protect a large part of the landscape as common land, and to enjoy the land productively in an ecologically sustainable way. Based on the practical experience of one New England town, the book urges suburban environmentalists to go beyond preserving open space to actively engaging people with the places where they live. Brian Donahue, an environmental historian, in 1980 was a founder of Land's Sake, a community farm in Weston, Massachusetts. Working with the town's Conservation Commission, Land's Sake cultivates a twenty-five-acre organic fruit, flower, and vegetable farm, makes apple cider and maple syrup, maintains a sixty-five-mile trail system, harvests firewood and timber from fifteen hundred acres of town forest, and has kept draft horses and sheep. Donahue recounts the joys and sorrows of farming the suburbs. But beneath the light hearted tales of sheep straying into tennis courts and middle-school students tapping sugar maples in the town cemetery runs an incisive ecological history of New England and a penetrating analysis of how to live responsibly with this difficult but rewarding land. Donahue concludes with a call for all places to protect common land and establish community farms—especially in the suburbs, where most Americans live and where, like it or not, environmentalists may make their most lasting mark on the world.



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