

# Zenda Farms Preserve: Open Grasslands, Agricultural Legacy and Community Hub

Zenda Farms brochure © 2025 Thousand Islands Land Trust  
All illustrations by Robert McNamara  
Of The Art of Wilderness  
Back cover photo by Ted Mascott

Directions to the Preserve:  
38975 Zenda Rd Clayton NY 13624  
From downtown Clayton, take Rt 12E S. towards Cape Vincent. Follow for about 1.3 miles. Turn right onto Zenda Rd. Parking area is on the left across from the trailhead.



PO Box 238 Clayton NY 13624 P: 315.686.5345  
info@tlandtrust.org tlandtrust.org



Hit the Trails!

Lois Jean and John MacFarlane Trail

This 1.35 mile trail on a gravel surface is ideal for an early morning run or walking your dog.

Two new additions to the Preserve have added

another mile, and new habitat to explore. The Zenda Trail Spur circumnavigates the vineyard and winds into the meadows, while the

Zenda Woods Trail

escapes into the forest behind the farm.

The trails are open daily from dawn to dusk and visitors are

welcome year-round.



Grasslands are important! Open grasslands, like the grasslands at Zenda, are essential to a healthy environment. They maintain biodiversity by providing habitat for numerous birds and wildlife species, resist climate change, protect waterways, and offer recreational and aesthetic opportunities. Simply put, they enhance our overall quality of life.

Many species of birds raise their young in the tall grasses of prairies and meadows. Foxes, woodchucks, mice and voles live in burrows or dens, while deer and even the occasional grassland coyote forage or hunt here.

Fragmentation from agriculture, renewable energy, and overdevelopment threatens grasslands.

TILT is working to protect its grasslands in various ways. Haying is delayed until August, when young of the year have fledged. Trees were planted to restore and enhance the surrounding forest, helping soften hard edges. Maintaining plant diversity protects the St. Lawrence River and its tributaries through filtering water and reducing soil erosion.



lost to a fire in 1991 leaving only the historic skiff house, which is now privately owned.

Lois Jean and John MacFarlane donated 107 acres of the farm to TILT in 1997, to ensure that Zenda's rich agricultural history and pastoral landscape would forever be part of Clayton. The 405 acres that now make up Zenda Farms serve as a symbol of Clayton's heritage.

More recently, sheep and a variety of small farm animals have roamed the land during the peak season.

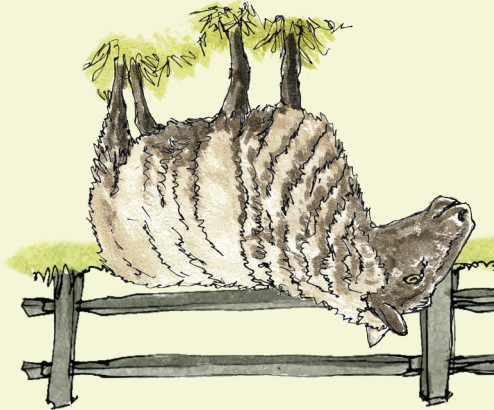
Zenda truly comes alive in the summer, stop by for a visit June through September!



The Importance of Open Space

Open space is not just big fields without trees. Forests are open space too.

Undeveloped land is essential to water and air quality. It contributes to the scenic character of an area, and the quality of life for the wildlife and people that inhabit that area.



Zenda Farm's Rich History Merle Youngs turned Zenda into an innovative dairy and beef farm, building the unique Jamesway barns, and using the latest technology to keep his animals in top condition. In the summers, he grazed his beef cattle on Carleton Island in Cape Vincent. The Farm thrived into the 1960's. TILT continues the farming legacy, developing practices that are compatible with a busy village like Clayton. A new maple sugarbush and grape vines have been planted. Bee hives on the south side of



Zenda produce 100% local honey. Be sure to get your Zenda Farms maple syrup and honey today!

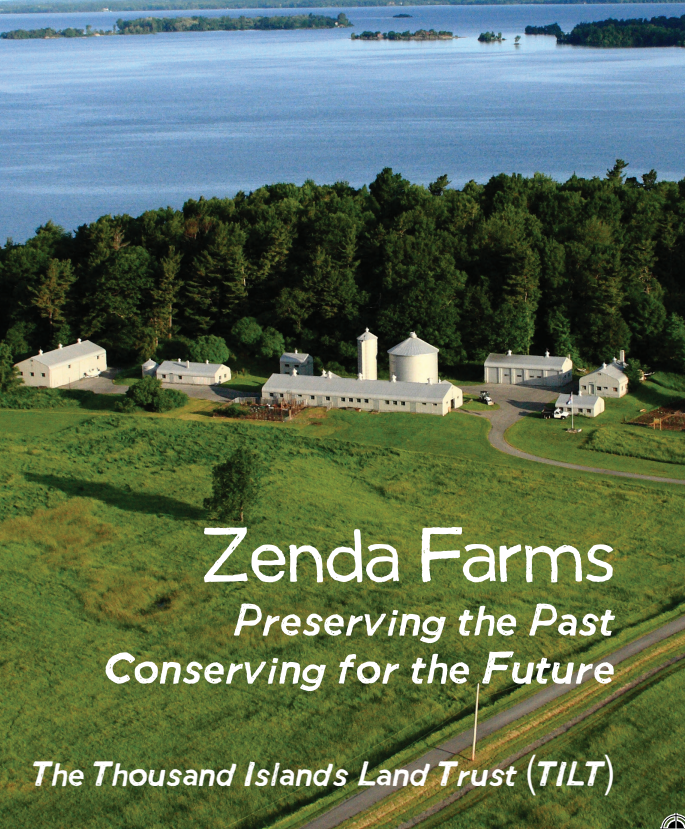
The Zenda Community Garden opened in 2009, and has given numerous families the opportunity to grow their own fresh food and enjoy gardening with their neighbors.



Everything is shared.

Zenda Farms Preserving the Past Conserving for the Future

The Thousand Islands Land Trust (TILT)



ZENDA FARMS PRESERVE

TRAIL GUIDE

Why is it called Zenda? In 1915, James Hackett, a celebrated Shakespearean actor, purchased the waterfront property just west of the Village of Clayton. Hackett named his new home after the 1913 movie, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, in which he played a starring role. The property featured a large shingle-style home on the waterfront with a skiff house. In 1939, New York industrialist Merle Youngs purchased the home. He soon acquired adjacent parcels, eventually totaling 734 acres, and developed the extensive farming enterprise. At his death in 1958, he left the farm to his friend and business associate, John MacFarlane, who continued to run it until the late 1980's. In 1968 the waterfront house and boathouse were sold as a corporate retreat. The house was



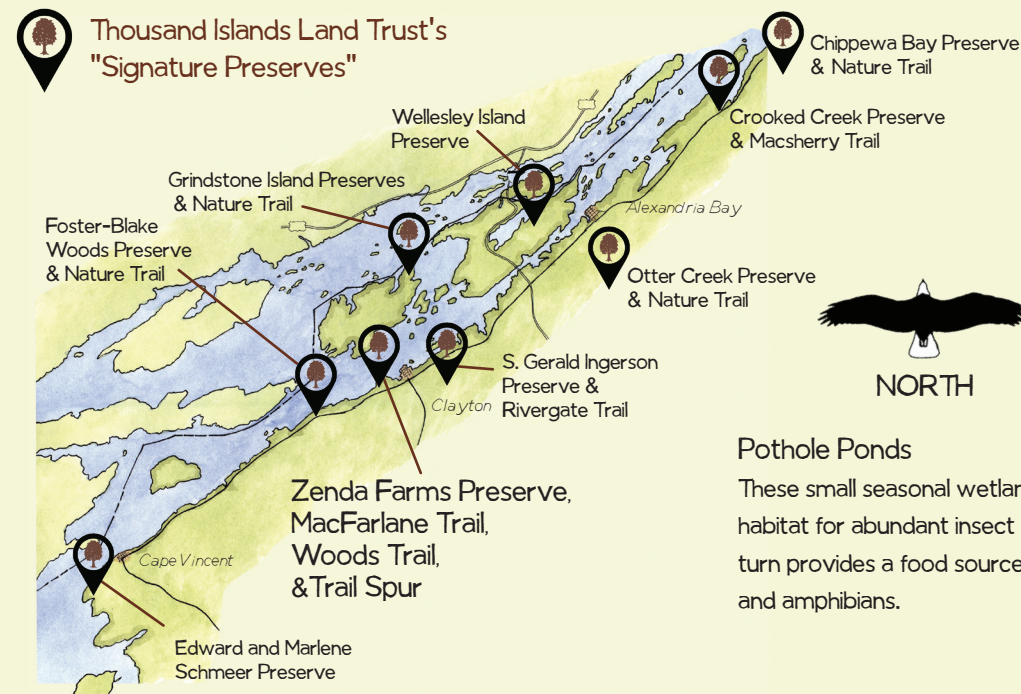
The Thousand Islands Land Trust (TILT) is...  
Working to conserve the natural beauty, diverse wildlife habitats, water quality and outdoor recreation opportunities of the Thousand Islands region, for present and future generations!



tilandtrust.org

info@tilandtrust.org

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#### Managing for Diversity

Zenda Farms Preserve includes different types of wildlife habitat: grasslands, wetlands, old fields and forest. The Preserve is adjacent to New York State's French Creek Wildlife Management Area, an important wetland habitat and fisheries resource. The variety of habitats here attracts a diverse group of both resident and migrant birds, mammals, insects, reptiles and amphibians.

#### Zenda Farms Jamesway Building Complex

#### Zenda Woods Trail

#### Lois Jean and John MacFarlane Trail



American Kestrel



Giant Green Darner



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail



Northern Leopard Frog

#### Pothole Ponds

These small seasonal wetlands provide vital habitat for abundant insect life, which in turn provides a food source for birds and amphibians.

#### Restored Wetland

This area, known as a glacial pothole, was restored as a wetland habitat in 2009 by TILT and Ducks Unlimited. The restoration included a water control structure that allows TILT to raise and lower water levels to achieve an optimal habitat for a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds.

Learn more online at [tilandtrust.org](http://tilandtrust.org)

#### Grasslands

Grasslands and open meadow are essential habitat for many species of birds, including declining species like Eastern Meadowlarks, Bobolinks and Henslow's Sparrows.

Henslow's Sparrow

Eastern Meadowlark

Bobolink



**Preserve Rules:** Please stay on trails • Trails are for walking, biking & skiing • No motorized vehicles • No hunting • No camping, dumping, fires, or collecting flora & fauna • Dogs must be leashed May 1 - Aug 1

#### French Creek Wildlife Management Area

#### Restored Grasslands

Once used by a local farmer as a pasture to graze beef cattle, TILT has restored these fields for grassland nesting habitat.

#### Cover Types

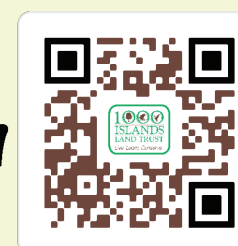
- GRASSLAND
- PASTURE
- OLD FIELD
- FRESHWATER EMERGENT
- OPEN WATER
- FOREST
- POTHOLE PONDS
- PRESERVE BOUNDARY
- TRAIL
- TRAILHEADS
- STORYTELLER SIGNS

#### Forest

Zenda Woods has a variety of maple, oak and pine trees. These trees provide important edge habitat and food for a variety of species, including owls. Owl species seen at Zenda include Great Horned Owls, Screech Owls and the endangered arctic Short-eared Owls, which are more abundant in years when the meadow vole population is high.



All Illustrations by Robert McNamara of The Art of Wilderness



Donate today!