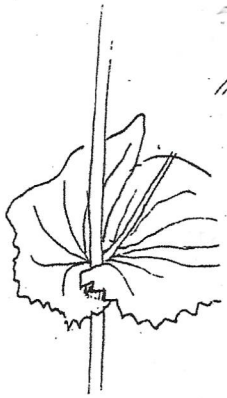
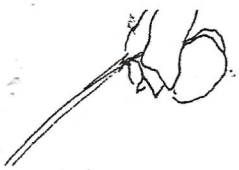
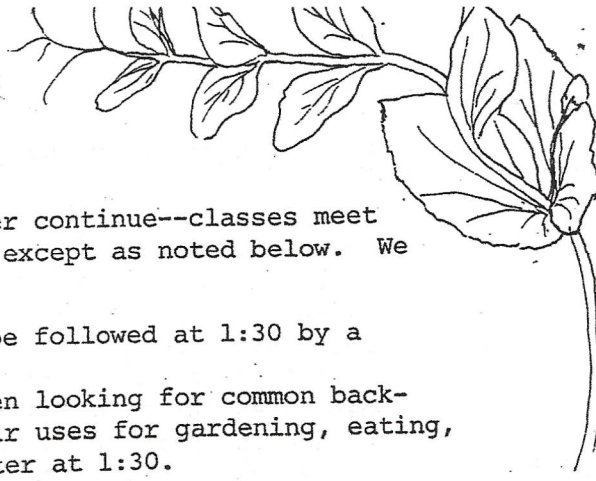






ECOLOGY ACTION NEWSLETTER

April 22, 1983

Garden Classes

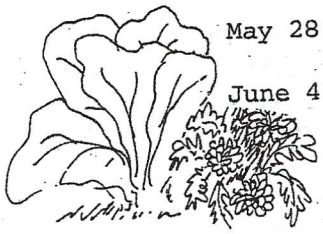
Saturday morning classes at the store/center continue--classes meet at 10:30 am and usually last until about noon, except as noted below. We are asking a one dollar donation per class.

April 30 - Companion Plants - This class will be followed at 1:30 by a weed walk in a local garden...
Weed Walk - We'll tour a local garden looking for common backyard type weeds, and talk about their uses for gardening, eating, and healing. Meet at the store/center at 1:30.

May 7 - Insect Control

May 14 - Introduction to Bio-Dynamic/French Intensive Gardening - Our excellent slide show on biointensive gardening and our work with it, and how it fits in the world's food situation

May 21 - Solar Power at Home - Ed Spurr and Willie Barril will talk about solar space and water heating...catch those rays!



May 28 - no class; Memorial Day break

June 4 - Saving Seeds - Craig Dremann of Redwood City Seed Company will share his considerable knowledge about raising and collecting and storing our own seed... a good way to develop varieties especially suitable for your own backyard!

June 11 - Food Drying - How to keep the harvest without slaving over a hot stove.

Store News

Our busy spring rush of customers has begun with occasional "slow downs" when the weather behaves like winter again. We have the store fully stocked and have added some new items:

A bagged compost called Albert's Best which comes from the Ft. Bragg area and is 50% fish

Oyster shell in flour form which is rich in calcium (calcium carbonate) and also has about 10% phosphorous

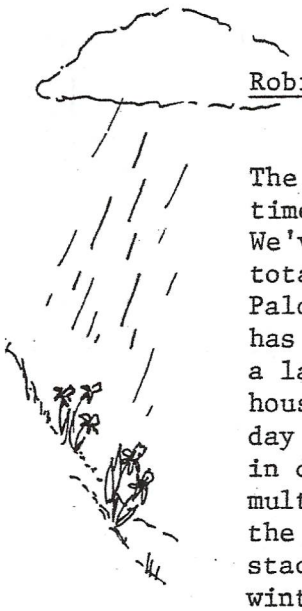
Tomatillo, yellow pear tomato, and rocket salad seeds

also just arrived: Pima limas Navajo melons - grow in any climate

Vegetable seedlings have been selling very fast this year. We are in great need of washed yoghurt and cottage cheese-type containers in which to sell these seedlings. We also need more paper bags. Thanks for your help!

We often have calls from people outside the Bay Area asking for the names and addresses of other stores selling organic soil amendments. If you know of such a place, anywhere in the U.S and also worldwide, please let us know.

An unusual number of people have been asking us this year what to do with their peach trees which have peach leaf curl. We've had great success treating the trees with liquid sea weed. Remove infected leaves (without completely stripping the tree), and keep dropped leaves cleared from under the tree. Spray weekly--regularly--with liquid seaweed, which will not only strengthen and fertilize the tree but also act as a fungicide. You should have a noticeable improvement within 3-4 weeks. Next winter, be sure to give your tree a dormant spray with 3% oil. The Rodale book, Organic Plant Protection suggests that an onion spray (which will also get the aphids) will help rid a peach tree of peach leaf curl too! We don't have onions, but we do sell Maxicrop Liquid Seaweed here at the



Robin's Notes from the "Top of the World'

The only news here, as all over California is rain, rain, rain. The local weather forecaster continues to predict rain about half the time and sun half the time, so he comes out right about half the time. We've actually had 3 or so sunny days in the past 2 months. The rainfall total since last summer is over 71 inches (6 feet!)--about twice what Palo Alto has gotten--but it has caused fewer problems here. Willits has taken the rain and shed it like a duck. Ages ago this valley was a lake and part of it reverts to lake every winter. Few build their houses on the low land. In spite of the rain, and 4 hailstorms one day in March, daffodils are up everywhere, all along roads and scattered in drifts across the fields. Deer won't eat them so they thrive and multiply, adding a bright note to grey rainy days. This is known as the cozy time of year, when man's best friends are cords of wood, neatly stacked on the front porch. Next year we'll be more prepared. This winter we've been able to collect wood every few days and haul it inside where we saw it in hunks and stack it by the wood stove, hoping it will dry out a bit before we need it. By next year, too, our house should be insulated. I can hardly wait.

So we have worked a lot reading and writing and waiting for Spring. We have nearly 1000 strawberry plants and 10,000 garlic bulbs waiting in flats or boxes for a break in the rain--looks like they'll finally touch earth next week. Two days of sun in a row and we'll be getting out our sunglasses and Hawaiian shirts! Hardest of all to believe is that a few months from now it will be all dry and golden and hot. If the rain were just better distributed it would be ideal. Water storage is critical here. Hope spring will be as welcome to all of you.

Volunteers who can be on site for at least one week are needed for various projects this spring including the installation of a small water reservoir, burying the garden waterline, working on a drainage system, and terracing for growing areas.

Open garden days will be on the first Saturday of each month during June through October while the major growing season is underway.

News from Marion

Near Chicago, Marion Cartwright will be working with 16 Laotian families who will be farming 1½ acres of land. They are part of a community of 120 families recently chased from their mountain homes by the Vietnamese in retaliation for help they gave the U.S. during the secret war in Laos. Marion says they are very unhappy, displaced country people but very interested in the biointensive techniques as they have done similar gardening in Laos. They liked the slides of Beth and the Kenyans working with the jembe. They use a similar tool.

The seed of God is in us. Pear seeds grow into pear trees, nut seeds into nut trees, and God seed into God.

Meister Eckhart

Next Board Meeting

The next Board Meeting for Ecology Action will be Thursday, May 12, at 7 pm. The meeting will be at Judy Derrick's house, and there will be a vegetarian potluck dinner before the meeting at 6:30. At the last board meeting, John reported that How to Grow More Vegetables has been selling very well this year which may mean a financial upturn for Ecology Action. The French translation of How to Grow More Vegetables is at the publishers (Ten Speed Press) and will be in print soon. Ten Speed Press has also put the booklets 3 through 8 from the Self-Teaching Mini-Series into a new book called the Backyard, Homestead, Mini-Farm and Garden Log Book. It will be out in mid to late May ($10.00 postpaid worldwide from Ecology Action). Of great interest was an idea to upgrade Ecology Action's mail-order side and put together an appealing catalog of our publications and books we carry with good detailed descriptions. Altogether 1983 promises to be a busy and productive year though staff at the store/educational center continue to be overworked and underpaid for the affluent Bay Area. Ecology Action continues to function because of the dedication of our many "volunteers" and we are always looking for more part and full-time people.

We've Got a Hit!

How to Grow More Vegetables is in the "Top Ten" of gardening books in the United States. We're number eight.

Puffed Wheat

Robert Collins, Chairman of the Board of Pacific Coast Producers wrote in his newsletter:

"After eating my Wheaties and Cornflakes contentedly for all these years, I saw the prices on the packages one day. I got out my trusty computer with the following results:

"The wheat I sell for $100-130 per ton comes back to me puffed with air and shot out of a gun as Puffed Wheat, 6 oz. for $1.16 or $6,186 per ton. Wheat Chex, I find, is a better buy at 15 oz. for $1.59, an economical $3,392 per ton...Cornflakes, which I use occasionally, sell at $1.49 for an 18 oz. package, another cheap buy at $2,650 per ton.

"If my digestion holds up, I think at these rates I can save more money by switching from Wheaties to Cornflakes than I can by farming."

Reported by Henry Schacht in the San Francisco Chronicle, Monday, January 31, 1983.

Books Needed in India

From SANTHI READING ROOM, Door No. 3-130, Nutakki 522 303 A.P. India: "Respected Sir, we lost all of our Reading Room's books in the November 19, 1977 cyclonic storm which claimed more than 10,000 human lives...
We recently reconditioned our Reading Room's building. But we do not have sufficient books to reopen it. So, we humbly request you to kindly send us some books as your contribution. You may send us some old or discarded books and journals of your library." Especially requested were the following:

The Organic Gardener	Pfeiffer Garden Book	Agriculture
The Vegetable Garden	The Soil and Health	Comfrey
Weeds, Guardians of the Soil	Companion Plants	Insects
Fruit Trees, Berries & Shrubs	Tree Crops	Insect Pests
Handbook for Vegetable Growers	Handbook on Soils	
	The Potted Plant	
	Organic Care Handbook	

We are printing this list so members with no-longer needed copies can send them along. Book rate postage is very reasonable, even to India.

Report from Sustainable Agriculture Conf.

The "Farming with a Future" conference was held January 21-23 in La Honda, California. Attendance was very good, with about 500 participants. Both Dave Duhon and Kevin Raftery graciously sent us notes and comments from which this report is woven.

There were many excellent presentations. Richard Merrill, a professor at Cabrillo College, talked on biointensive techniques which he has researched for many years. Dor. Richard Harwood from the Rodale Research Center spoke on the role of research in the transition from conventional agriculture to sustainable techniques. Miguel Altieri, a dynamic USDA Biological Control Division entomologist talked on self-sufficient farming systems from around the world. Steve Gliesmann, head of the new Agro-ecology department at UC Santa Cruz, made the important point that for an agricultural system to be systainable, it must be feasible economically AND ecologically. Kevin also enjoyed hearing from the many farmers who attended, notably Tony Sherer, an innovative organic grower from Santa Cruz County, and Dick Harter, a long time Central Valley farmer.

Dave noted that most participants fell into two classes: the small scale, mechanized, organic farmer, and the permaculture/natural farming advocate. For the farmers, sustaining themselves commercially was a key factor, while the permaculturalists generally had little interest yet in the question of commercial feasibility. More middle ground might have been of the greatest interest and many participants commented on the need for additional focus. Everyone gained new friends, contacts and information.

Information regarding a written report of conference proceedings should be directed to Miguel Altieri, USDA Biological Control Unit, 1050 San Pablo Avenue, Albany, CA 94706.

Note: Unfortunately we did not receive word of the conference soon enough before hand to note it in the newsletter, but we will be notified farther ahead next year.

News out of UC Santa Cruz

A new Agroecology Program has started with a crack staff directed by Stephen Gliessman. The program stresses interactions between all organisms in an agricultural system. They are soliciting research projects and available test plots from the agricultural community and will keep people informed via a quarterly newsletter, The cultivar. For more information write the Agroecology Program, College Eight, UCSC, Santa Cruz, CA 95064.

The UCSC Farm and Garden will hold their second annual plant sale Saturday, April 30 from 11:00 to 1:00. Members may come an hour early and anyone may become a member the morning of the sale. If you join sooner ($8 for individuals) they will send a complete list of plants to be offered at the sale. The emphasis is on hard-to-find perennials, herbs and annuals. Three plants are mentioned specially to whet your appetite: Geum chiloense, variety Mrs. Bradshaw; Linum perenne, perennial flax; and Echinops ritro, blue glove thistle.

More on the Organic Farming Bill

The Organic Farming Act of 1982 was defeated by a very slim margin, 198 to 189. It is being reintroduced as the Agricultural Productivity Act. US. Representative James Weaver (D-Ore.) is sponsor of the bill. Letters to your Congressman or Senator can really help, especially of they voted against it last year. We have a copy of the vote at the center or it can be looked up in the Congressional Record, August 17, 1982. Notable among the Nays was the Bay Area's Pete McCloskey. The Act will set aside $2 million of the USDA's $430 million annual research budget to research organic techniques and keep farmers informed via ag-extension offices. It will also set up networks to help those farmers who want to make the switch from conventional methods to organic ones. Organic techniques can and do cut soil erosion and reduce water

Green Deserts

Brian Hoeve, currently apprenticing at our Willits garden site, has alerted us to a lively British group called Green Deserts. They advise and assist with desert reclamation projects around the world, research and report on related topics in a direct and practical way, and publish an informative magazine. They are definitely one of the more worthwhile groups with which to stay in touch. For more information on membership write Green Deserts, Rougham, Suffolk 1P30 9LY, England.

Farm Apprenticeships

The American Farm Foundation, a non-profit organization committed to increasing local production and marketing of food, is now offering a three year apprentice training program in garden-to-market farming. The program starts October 1, 1983 near Vienna, Missouri and will have 6 apprentices in the first class. Completion of the program will enable people to acquire the skills needed to establish farms, build professional parnerships, and practice agriculture profitably. The program costs $3,000/year including room and board. Apprentice candidates must apply by April 20 and be prepared to spend two weeks in May or June at the School to be evaluated.

The staff that we know are good. The board of directors and advisors is impressive. For more information write Bill Booth, School of Agricultural Enterprise, c/o Thompson Angus Ranch, Paydown Landing Road, Vienna, MO 65582. (314) 744-5366.

Aquaculture

Integrated Aquaculture (P.O. Box 107, Waimanalo, HI 96795) analyzes, designs and implements integrated agriculture/aquaculture farming systems, worldwide. If interested, a publications list and further information may be obtained by writing them. They have an impressive, active staff.

Watch Your Goat

California Agriculture (Nov/Dec. 1981 issue) reports a medical case of interest to backwoods homesteaders.

"In September 1980 a baby boy born in the mountainous backcountry of California (Trinity County) was brought to the U.C. Medical Center with severe bone deformities in his arms and hands...goats (from the same homestead) also gave birth to kids stillborn or with deformed legs and puppies born to a dog fed the goat's milk during pregnancy were likewise deformed."

It is strongly suspected that the cause may be a perennial lupine, identified as the widely distributed Lupinus latifolius, which often formed the principal low-growing forage for the goat.

Goats can browse on toxic plants; their diet should be monitored to avoid obvious poisonous plants like lupine, poison hemlock and others. There are books describing toxic plants at most libraries. We have 1 or 2 at Ecology Action.

E.F. Schumacher Conference

"Searching the Future" is the title of the U.C. Appropriate Technology Program's annual conference, May 6 and 7 at U.C. Davis. For further information contact Michael Corbett at (916) 758-8505 or Isao Fujimoto at (916) 752-1805.

The Bear Tribe Medicine Society, a non-profit teaching organization and self-reliant community that works with the promotes native American outlooks, is in need of an experienced biointensive gardener. They write that their former gardener had to return to Denmark. The garden is about three acres. It is a full-time job, with assistance. Many visitors like to help in the garden but need supervision. The person will live with the Tribe and participate as a member of the family. If interested contact COUGAR, The Bear Tribe Medicine Society, P.O. Box 9167, Spokane, WA 99209.

Revolutionary Garden Party

Revolutionary Garden Party, a group in Berkeley, is exploring the possibility of composting on a community-wide scale. Berkeley already composts its leaf material with bulldozers at the landfill, but they are interested in a high-quality brew of restaurant and supermarket (as well as kitchen) garbage.

Labor intensiveness of aerobic composting is an obstacle to its popular acceptance, so they are also interested in alternatives to cubic-yard bins (revolving metal drums, for example) or practical anaerobic methods. They would appreciate hearing from anyone who knows about such experiments, especially the politics (i.e., dealing with health departments) or alternative designs. Their address: 2143½ Derby Street, Berkeley, CA 94705; contact Tara Avery, Compost Cadre.

Master Gardener Needed

The Ojai Foundation, a non-profit educational community located on 40 acres of Chumash Indian land, is looking for a gardener with knowledge of Biodynamic French Intensive techniques, composting, pruning trees and bushes, growing and marketing herbs, and setting up drip irrigation systems. The person should also be able to do some teaching. All positions at Ojai are non-salaried, but a tent-site, meals, participation in community life, and free tuition to all programs will be provided. For information contact Ann Hammond, Ojai Foundation, PO Box 1620, Ojai, California, 93023 (805-646-8343).

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