

Spring Classes

Classes meet at 10:30 am at Ecology Action on Saturday mornings. Usually they last until noon. We are asking a one dollar donation per class...still one of the best deals in town! We often spend part of the time at a demonstration site.

- February 12 - Keeping Backyard Chickens with Keith and Carol Barner, including a visit to the Colorado Ave. chicken co-op coop.
- February 19 - Drip Irrigation with Tom Bressan of The Urban Farmer
- February 26 - Exercises for Gardeners - This will be a special class beginning at 9:00 am at the store. Ruth Steiger will teach some easy exercises to warm up winter-stiff muscles, so we don't put our backs out on the first warm day of digging! Wear non-restrictive clothing; it's best not to eat beforehand. The class will be over by 10:00, when the store opens.
- also Feb. 26 - Introduction and Soil Preparation - The history and basics of biointensive techniques, with emphasis on how to prepare the soil for raised-bed gardening. This class begins at the usual 10:30.
- March 5 - Compost with Dave Duhon of Bayview Organic Mini-Farm
- March 12 - Seed Propagation with Kevin Raftery
- March 19 - Companion Planting
- March 26 - Insect Control with Kevin
- April 9 - Introduction and Soil Preparation
- April 16 - Seed Propagation
- April 23 - Compost
- April 30 - Companion Plants---this class will be followed at 1:30 by a "weed walk" in a local garden. Find out how useful those weeds can be!
- May 7 - Insect Control

Store News

We're getting ready for spring! We have bare root boysenberries, raspberries, strawberries, asparagus, horseradish, rhubarb, and artichoke. Seed potatoes have arrived, and best of all -- five big cartons of spring seeds, bursting with new energy. We will again have organically grown vegetable seedlings from the Saratoga Community Garden, and beautiful herb plants from Saso Herb Garden will be coming in late February. We'll have California natives from Yerba Buena Nursery, and some interesting old-fashioned perennials from Ricki Rauzin. Come and catch spring fever!

The store needs used paper bags and washed yogurt or cottage cheese type containers

Membership Renewal

It's that time again! If your address label has a red x on it, you need to send us \$7.50 to keep this newsletter coming. If the label is marked  $\frac{x}{2}$ , you only need to send \$3.25. Do it now, before you forget!

It's-Good-to-Have-Friends Dept.

Ecology Action survived a close call financially this winter, due to the generosity of some of our loyal members who sent donations at the end of the year. You bolstered our spirits as well as our bank account! We feel cheered and ready to plunge into spring with renewed energy. Thank you!

## Robin's Notes From the Top of the World



It is windy at the top! The cool breezes we were so thankful for in summer are now icy gusts that blow and tumble from all directions. They shake the trees in a swaying dance, ripple the plastic windows reflecting our lamplight in moving Rorschachs and blow down the stovepipe making it resonate like a pipe organ. The winds shift daily; gentle warming drafts rise up from the valley to the west, icy gales from the east get up to 50 miles an hour and big rain storms blow up from the south. A day of thorough caulking eliminated most of the drafts and thick carpeting on some of the floor cut the cold. We have real central heating with most of the day's activities centered around the wood-burning stove.

In summer it was simple living, but now we feel more like pioneers, chopping wood, carrying water into the house (and taking dirty water out), lighting the morning fire. I keep a big canning kettle of water on the woodstove and when it gets hot enough we wash dishes. "Helping" with the dishes is Annaliese's favorite sport - she tries to dump most of the rinse water on the floor. Her most smashing victory was when she somehow slipped off her chair onto the floor while flipping the rinse pan so as to drench herself from her hair on down. I thought it almost funny except that John was meeting with five other people at the adjoining kitchen table. At least once or twice a week we haul out a big wash tub and heat water for the kids' bath. Playing in the warm water is bliss for Bjarne, 1 and Annaliese, 2. The rest of us make do, and sometimes shower at the campground in town.

Willits is changing. There were no bookstores when we moved here. Now there are three, but the one and only movie theater, built in the 30's, has closed. The heating system never worked very well and winter patrons used to bundle up with blankets and hot chocolate to watch the show. We all hope it reopens by summer.

Winter has its advantages: no rattlesnakes, few yellow jackets, and plentiful water. We had been hauling water up to the house for the last six weeks of summer. Even after the rains came it took nearly a month to get water to flow through a hose to the house - then it mysteriously slowed to a trickle and stopped. No one had time to figure it out until the hose came loose at the spring and Brian found a dead salamander had swollen up inside the end. Poor creature. Now the water flows fine.

We do have electricity of sorts. A heavy duty 12-volt car battery powers a tape deck and a radio. We balance our day with All Things Considered and Paul Harvey. Best of all is the Prairie Home Companion on National Public Radio Saturday night. My brother was here for Christmas and even rewired the Christmas tree lights and hooked them up to the car battery for Shawna.

We've had three light snows so far. The one just before Christmas lasted three days and was just gorgeous. We've managed to stay warm with lots of visitors. Albert, a most bright and energetic man from Kenya, arrived on our coldest, wettest day in November with the UPS delivery truck. Albert had just finished a year of study in the biodynamic/French intensive method at La Mesa project in Santa Barbara. He stayed a week talking with John and Brian and giving us a lot of insight into life in Kenya and biointensive possibilities there. Two weeks later we hosted the third meeting on the upcoming project in Kenya (described in more detail later). Then we had a big family reunion at Christmas followed by a wonderful visit from Marion Cartwright and Beth Pinckney. Marion put her astounding energy to work in the Syntex garden for three years and dug up a mini-orchard in the two days she was here. Her current

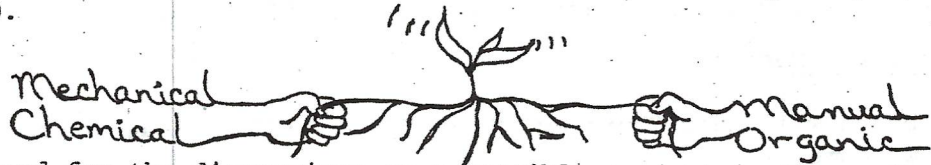


Beth, Illinois. Beth worked in the Syntex garden for a year while her husband finished his studies at Stanford's Food Research Institute. They are living in Nairobi, Kenya, where Beth has found her niche teaching food gardening to both urban and rural Kenyan women. She brought wonderful photos of raised beds dug with jembes, and great stories of her experiences there. We're so inspired by Beth's work because of her simple and effective approach. She tours the villages, sets up a half day class in which 30 or so participants come and work on a garden together, digging, planting, making fences and sharing. Then Beth checks back on the gardens periodically. She gets a lot of comments on her blond hair, the knitting she learned there ("We didn't know white women did that!") and the fact that she has no children yet ("Oh, so sorry!"). She loves the people and will make her home there for a while more. Of course we are using her feedback and assessments to help set up the "Manor House" project in Kenya.



For our winter project, John and I just finished a new book, The Seed Finder. It is just that, listing vegetables, fruits, flowers, trees, herbs and nuts offered by 21 seed houses, so you can find that old-fashioned tomato, or the white eggplant or the native Columbine or whatever else you are looking for. We've found it to be quite useful for ourselves and made some intriguing discoveries, like a watermelon that will store into fall. Copies will be available after February 15 for \$4.00 postpaid from Jeavons-Leler Press, 5798 Ridgewood Road, Willits, CA 95490.

#### Kenyan Project



A great crew arrived for the discussions on a possible project in Kenya: Doug Maher, soil scientist, his wife, Gae, who is from Botswana, two of their three sons, Polly Noyce and Mark Bartle, the motivating forces behind this project, Thomas, a former Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya, and Peggy Cleveland, a friend of Ecology Action who spent 15 years teaching food raising in Zaire. Present in our thoughts were Albert, now in Kenya, and Beth Pinckney, who will be there for two more years.

The Kenyan trustees had proposed a food-raising program based on tractors and chemical fertilizers. Ecology Action made a counter-proposal stressing our small-scale, manual, organic approach. The Kenyan counter-counter-proposal now suggests both; using chemicals at first because they are experienced with them, then experimenting with biointensive. Ecology Action is standing firm on its urgent commitment to biointensive. The proposals and counter proposals sailing across the ocean reflect larger world-wide issues. We don't feel it necessarily helps people to introduce them to large American style agriculture. In Kenya, for example, only one out of 17 people are involved in the "Money Economy" necessary to that kind of agriculture. (Albert recently reported that new fuel shortages are hitting hard. The manually-oriented farmers are planting crops but the larger farmers are having difficulty getting fuel to plow or plant.) Peggy reminded us that the real food raisers are usually women. Any educational program must be aimed at their needs. The discussions often got quite intense. Practical matters such as staff salaries, what kind of staff is needed, renovation of existing buildings at the site, how to recruit apprentices, transportation dilemmas, and the actual teaching program were also explored.

The commitment is there and it will continue to take a lot of hard work to get the project started.

#### Update from Inca Ecuador

They write: "In Ecuador inflation erupted 200% in 1982, and 80% of all able-bodied persons do not have sufficient income to support their families.... Our trade school now enrolls over 100 students and our year round demonstration farm harvests over 15 nutritious crops for area residents." Gifts are most

The garden/farm site in Willits is holding up well under cascades of rain. Trenches dug in fall and winter are now diverting the worst of the downpour. Some new springs have bubbled up in a few raised beds and Brian has done quite a job channeling new streams as they appear. Some erosion has occurred, but we expect to be able to remedy it.

Areas have been dug for a small orchard: a dozen trees, mostly old-fashioned apples which will come from Tree Crops Nursery in Covelo during early February. During winter an 80-bed garden has been planned and seeds ordered. Our next big job is to terrace the hillside for 30 or so new beds. Does anyone have experience or know of any good books or articles on rock wall terracing? We have not found much detailed information yet.

There is room for a few more committed apprentices in Willits, in West Virginia and near Santa Rosa. Those interested should write Ecology Action for our new booklet describing our general program.

#### Become a Life Member

Life memberships in Ecology Action are \$500 and are valid as long as we're all here to continue researching, teaching and promoting small-scale food production, hopefully 50 years at least. This is our life's work!

#### Next Board Meeting

The board will meet Thursday, March 17 at 7:30 at 1044 Maddux in Palo Alto. All are welcome.

#### Saratoga happenings

The Saratoga Community Garden has a good schedule of classes set up for Saturdays this spring. Their classes meet at the garden, 14500 Fruitvale Avenue, behind the Odd Fellows Hall in Saratoga, from 10 to 1. There is a \$7.00 fee. On Saturday, March 19, they will be holding their big spring plant sale - bedding plants, perennial flowers, shrubs, vegie seedlings, and berries will be available. For more information about their classes or sale, call 408-354-8648. A beautiful day trip is a combined visit to the Saratoga Garden and the Saso Herb Garden, across the road at 14625 Fruitvale...call Saso's first at 408-867-0307 to make sure they're open; mornings are best for them.

#### IFOAM Update

The fourth conference in 8 years of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements was held last August in Boston. The major issue discussed was conserving nutrients with scientific papers presented on nutrient fluctuations (particularly nitrogen) in compost, manure used fresh, cover cropping and other recycling processes. There were also discussions of tree cropping, amaranth, pest control and other issues. Proceedings will be available in Fall 1983. Proceedings from the first conference (October 1977 in Switzerland) are available for \$12. Proceedings from the second (Montreal 1978) and third (Brussels 1980) conferences are combined in one volume available for \$16. Both volumes (from all three conferences) can be obtained from the Rodale Research center, Kutztown, PA for \$26. Papers are given in original language with abstracts in English, French and German.

Also reported in the IFOAM Bulletin was a unique Japanese farm marketing set-up. Mr. Ohira farms two acres organically in a "green belt" area of Tokyo. Like many urban farmers he contracts with 10 to 15 city families who "subscribe" to his farm, paying the farmer monthly for the produce supplied and providing labor when needed for weeding, cultivating and harvesting. The farmer has a guaranteed cash flow, the families get fresh, organic produce and are eager to

### Update from Hope International Foundation



Among their several projects, H.I.F. is setting up chicken farms in Uganda. It takes \$900 to launch a farmer in business. The \$900 covers cost of 200 chickens, a chicken house, seeds and tools to grow chicken feed, and immunizations. The farmer provides land, labor and water. The average expected income of the chicken cooperative member is \$1,420 per year (current average income in Uganda is \$410 per year). The \$900 is paid back with 8% interest in 5 years to launch more farmers. They are looking for more sponsors. Hope International Foundation's address is P.O. Box 4116, Pasadena, CA 91106.

### Slide Show on Urban Self-Sufficiency

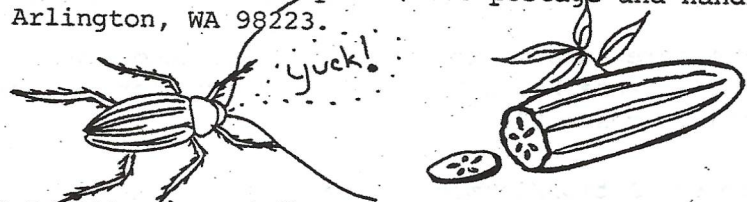
"Cracks in the Concrete", a 15-minute slide/tape program shows how major cities around the world are solving food and fuel problems. Slide/tape sets cost \$85, filmstrip copies cost \$20, or it can be rented. Write to: Urban Resource Systems, 783 Buena Vista West, San Francisco, CA 94117.

### Little Green Thumb

Elizabeth Morris writes that she is employed by the University Missouri extension service and is putting together a community garden for 100-150 low income children, ages 4-16. The only teaching materials available were highly pro-chemical fertilizer, so we've sent handout papers on their way and wish her the best.

### New Book from Tilth

The Future is Abundant, a sourcebook for natural farming and permaculture in North America, includes essays from issues of Tilth, a seed and plant directory, lots of good information. Very well done. \$11.95 plus \$1.00 postage and handling from Tilth, 13217 Mattson Road, Arlington, WA 98223.



### Natural Cockroach Repellent

The Washington Post reports that a researcher at Kansas State University, Clifton Meloan, has isolated several chemicals that repel cockroaches in two household items: bay leaves and cucumbers. They must be crushed, sliced or chopped to release the repellent.

### Apprenticeships in Book Production

Yolla Bolly Press (P.O. Box 156, Covelo, CA 95428, phone 707-983-6130) writes: "The Press will receive applications from students who wish to be considered for the position of resident apprentice. We will provide living quarters and training in exchange for labor. Instruction will include all aspects of book production, including editorial and design functions as well as retail sales. Applicants must submit a written description of their education, general background and interests, and be prepared to visit the Press for an interview. Apprenticeship terms are for not less than three nor more than eight months."

### Room Needed

A lot of interest is developing for a demonstration biointensive garden in Palo Alto. A site has been offered and we can probably find a person to start it, but living in Palo Alto is so expensive that housing is a problem. If anyone can offer a free room (or very inexpensive one) for such a person, call Ecology Action. It would help us in trying to set up such a garden.

Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA 98505 is offering a two year undergraduate program in Ecological Agriculture. For more information contact Pat Labine.

Graduate internships are also offered by the Land Institute, Salina, KS 67401 in sustainable agriculture using prairie type perennial seed plants.

Institute for Alternative Agriculture

We reported previously that the Organic Farming Coordinator position within the USDA had been ended, much to everyone's dismay. Garth Youngberg, who did such a good job in the position, is now starting a permanent non-profit institute to continue this and other work. The new institute will be a resource for organic farming information, and will publish a monthly newsletter. We heartily recommend support for this new group. Individual memberships are \$15. Send your checks to Institute for Alternative Agriculture, 9200 Edmonton Rd., Suite 117, Greenbelt, MD 20770. Organizational memberships are \$100.

Arid Farming

The December, 1982 Sunpaper from the New Mexico Solar Energy Association reports on two aids for arid farming. The first is called a water Y. It is a simple insulated metal device that concentrates available moisture from the soil and dewfall where it is needed for the plant.

Second is the use of Indian Rice Grass, a perennial bunchgrass native to the Western United States. It is very hardy and can grow in poor soils with as little as 5 inches of water per year! The seed is a survival food similar to millet. There is a demand for the seed from ranchers, people who revegetate, landscapers, and others. Seed sells wholesale for \$8.50 per pound. Yield is 100 to 500+ pounds per acre, making it a worthwhile cash crop.

For more information on both these items, write Michael Shepard, NMSEA, Box 2004, Santa Fe, N.M. 87501. The November/December 1982 issue reporting on these things costs \$2.

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