



Bringing Home the Harvest

Newsletter of Rural Roots:
The Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Association

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VISION QUEST FOR THE SANDPOINT R & E CENTER

Written by Diane Green

The face of conventional agriculture is changing. As we look toward the twenty-first century, farms are becoming more diversified. This diversity is a matter of survival for large and small farms across the country. Most of the food that feeds the population travels an average of 1,400 miles from the field to the plate. Forty-six acres of prime farmland is lost to development each hour. These issues have been identified and it is time to assist, encourage, and empower future farmers by creating an Educational Center.

Members of Rural Roots, representatives of the University of Idaho and the Bonner Business Center met in October, 1999, to tour the Sandpoint R & E Center. While the on-going projects at this site are worthwhile, there is plenty of land available to expand this facility to include a new Center.

Our discussion focused on the idea of developing a systemic approach to creating a Small Acreage Farming & Educational Center on the land near the existing R & E Center. We would like the Center to emphasize demonstration as a viable means for people making decisions on what it takes to develop a small farming operation. By combining a teaching center with a working farm, people could have opportunity for hands on demonstrations, internships, apprenticeships and work-study programs.

We would like to establish certified farmer instructors to pair research at the Center with research on-farm. The educational component will include both organic and non-organic techniques, alternative crops, no till, green manure crops, cover crops, and storage options as well as a marketing and education of consumers component. We would like to include some sort of connection with small-scale livestock and animal production as well.

Who would use this center?

Who would use this Center? The Center would be open and available to northern Idaho, eastern Washington and western Montana regions. Probable users include students (K – 12 and University), potential new farmers, existing/experienced farmers (transitional farmers shifting from conventional to organic, looking for new crops, new ways of farming), community gardeners, handicapped gardeners,

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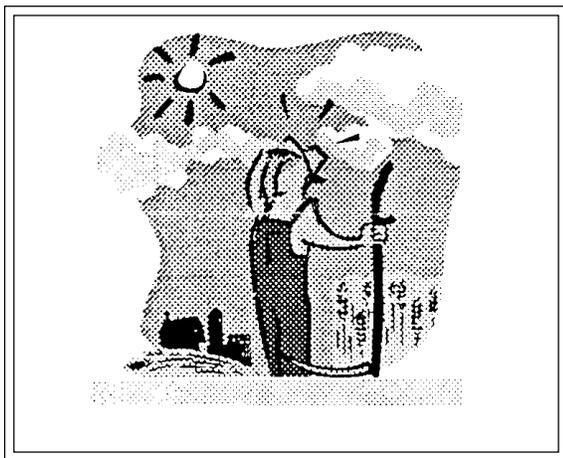
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Vision Quest for the Sandpoint R & E Center

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value-added business enterprise linking production and processing, nutritional and culinary academy.

What's feasible? What's the next step? We don't want to reinvent the wheel here. We need partnerships that work with existing programs like the Bonner Business Center, county faculty, the Idaho Nursery Association, etc. Thought needs to go into who will be on the advisory board for the long-term direction of the Center. A new building will need to be designed, hopefully using earth friendly and efficient, alternative architecture. We need to decide what the prioritization process will be for the demonstration projects. Currently, we are limited with human and funding resources. We need to be creative about funding and partnerships to overcome these limits. We need feedback from other groups in addition to Rural Roots for coming up with a viable proposal.



On April 27th, we will meet in Sandpoint to further explore options. We will meet from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Hawthorn Inn. Space is limited, so please notify us if you plan to attend (208/263-8957 or gteenat@dmj.net).

Farmers & Gardeners Track Panhandle Temps

by Vickie Parker-Clark

This spring, ten northern Idaho farmers and Master Gardeners are confirming what they already knew....there are many micro-climates in the Idaho Panhandle. As a part of an Extension project that was partially funded by a District 1 Extension grant, cooperators trek to weather shelters located on their property (built by Master Gardener Frank Guenther, Post Falls) and press "view" on data loggers (built by Chuck Mancuso of Sandpoint, Idaho). Weekly, they record average soil temperature at the 2" depth and accumulated growing degree days (GDD's).

As you may know, GDD's are a measure of heat. GDD's are calculated by taking the average of the maximum plus the minimum temps for a day minus a base temperature (say 40-degree F.) The resulting figure is called a "growing degree day." These GDD's accumulate throughout the growing season and can be used to predict plant growth and the potential for insect and disease occurrence. In many cases, GDD's are a much better predictor than calendar days.

Cooperators e-mail or phone their accumulated GDD's to the University of Idaho Kootenai County Extension office where we summarize them and send the summary back out. They also share information about weather, crop emergence, insect activity, etc. Because four of the locations are in Bonner County and six are in Kootenai County, accumulated GDD's can vary by quite a bit.

As the season progresses, we will observe if plant growth and pest appearance occur at similar GDD's even if not at similar calendar dates. Ultimately, we hope to develop a weekly "Pest Alert" network that can give farmers and gardeners a "heads up" to potential pest problems. If you'd like to receive the weekly GDD summary via e-mail or fax, contact me at vickiepc@uidaho.edu



Bringing Home the Harvest is a quarterly newsletter of Rural Roots: The Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Association.

Bringing Home the Harvest shares the knowledge and experience of people working in community food systems and the opportunities and challenges facing small acreage farmers and market gardeners in the Inland Northwest. In addition to sharing information and resources, **Bringing Home the Harvest** helps make connections between producers and consumers in northern Idaho and eastern Washington. It encourages sustainably produced foods, and works to enhance the economic viability of small scale producers and the communities where they live.

Articles for publication and letters to the editors are welcome and must include the name and address of the author. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of Rural Roots.

Editors

Colette DePhelps
Leadership Team Member
Rural Roots
208/883-3462
dephelps@earthlink.net

Vickie Parker-Clark, Ph.D.
Extension Educator
Small Farms/Crops/Horticulture
University of Idaho
208/667-6426
vickiepc@uidaho.edu

Visit our web site at:
www.uidaho.edu/inwcfcs

Liability Insurance for your Farm

Written by Diane Green

Visitors to the farm can be a great asset. Throughout the summer months, we have quite an assortment of people coming to visit our farm. We hold occasional workshops, farm tours, and have a wide variety of 'volunteers' come to have a day in the garden to help out.

One afternoon a couple of years ago, a friend was visiting from out of town and slipped on his way down to tour the garden. He sprained his ankle pretty badly, and ended up requiring medical treatment for his injury. Fortunately for us, our friend was willing to deal with his own medical bill. This experience got me to thinking about the possibilities of 'what if'.

As a small farm, most of the people who come to visit our gardens are people that we know. We never worried about being sued for an accident or illness from eating some of our produce. This has been a very optimistic view, and we have learned that there are many things to consider when taking this outlook. The most important thing to consider is that someone who gets sick from eating one of your products or is injured on your farm may be forced to sue you by their own insurance company. Your customer may love you, but if they have an insurance contract, their company will seek repayment from you if they get injured on your farm. I have heard enough stories to scare us into following through with buying insurance to protect us and make certain that no accident would create the possibility of us losing our farm. This country seems to have an incredible amount of people out there who will sue you for practically anything.

A telephone call to our insurance company for our homeowners insurance made me realize that we were not really covered for the farm related injuries on the rest of the property. I made a list of all of the 'what if's' I could come up with and asked our agent to look into a commercial liability policy. We found a policy that covers farm and product liability that has given us the peace of mind that allows more visitors to our farm. American States Insurance has provided us with a farm policy that costs us \$200.00 a year. For this basic individual business policy, we have enough coverage to address most situations that would come up at our farm.

Every farm has different needs and a different amount of risk. If you should decide to pursue finding insurance coverage, I would encourage you to make a list of 'what if's' that includes every part of your business to help the agent understand exactly what it is that you do at your farm. We went to the insurance company that addresses our homeowners insurance and they found a company that would meet our needs. We have made this choice for peace of mind.



How to Extend Your Gardening Season

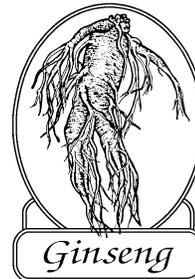
Saturday, April 29, 2000 beginning at 12:30 pm, Diane Green will be presenting a workshop on how to build a cost effective season extender for your garden. Diane will teach you how to build an 18' x 13.5' Hoop House. Workshop fee is \$10 per person which includes step-by-step instructions. Class will last about 2 1/2 hours, rain or shine, so dress accordingly. For information, contact Diane at 208/263-8957 or gtreenat@dmn.net. Greentree Naturals, 2003 Rapid Lightning Road, Sandpoint, Idaho 83864.

Herbal Conference Explores Markets for Alternative Crops

By Cinda Williams

“HerbsPLUS 2000: Opportunities in Value-Added Medicinal and Herbal Products,” will explore the opportunities in product development, marketing and distribution channels that will help area growers take part in the booming market in medicinal herbs. The conference will take place Thursday and Friday, April 20 and 21, at the University Inn–Best Western in Moscow.

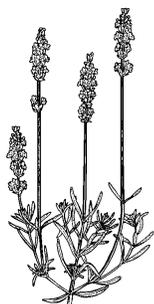
Over 20 professionals will offer presentations on consumer trends; medical perspectives on herbal products; label regulations for herbal supplements; ethics of harvesting medicinal plants; product labeling and packaging; and herbal marketing channels. More sessions will cover operating a commercial kitchen; organic certification; forming a cooperative; and logistics for small-scale manufacturing. Herbalist and author Tim Blakley will serve as the keynote speaker for the conference.



A highlight of the event is the Thursday evening “HerbFest” featuring herbal product demonstrations, dinner buffet and a silent auction of herbal products.

Registration for the conference will be \$95 for individuals or \$161.50 for couples. The complete agenda and speaker information is available on the Internet at www.woodnet.org/conference.htm. You can register via the web site or by e-mail at conference@moscow.com. The Clearwater RC&D Council at Moscow also has conference brochures available by calling 208/882-4960, ext. 102.

The conference is sponsored by the Woodnet Development Council of Orofino. Co-sponsors include the Clearwater Resource Conservation and Development Council, University of Idaho Sustainable Agriculture program, the newly formed Clearwater Specialty Plants Network, entrepreneurs and herbalists.



Lavender Frog

by Cindy dePaulis

My love affair with lavender began with a warm summer day on Vashon Island near Seattle, Washington. I had taken the ferry from Seattle and was looking for an herb farm on the island. I stopped at the local Chamber of Commerce for directions and the woman at the chamber office said that the herb farm was no longer in business. She then said that if I liked lavender I should go to Sequim, Washington, about a 2 hour trip from Vashon Island, where there were fields of lavender. She gave me some brochures about Sequim and their lavender farms. I thanked her and began my journey on the next ferry.

When I arrived in Sequim two hours later, I first visited Purple Haze lavender farm. There was row after row of beautiful lavender. It stood three feet high and waved gently in the breeze. I understood where the farm got the name purple haze - the late afternoon sun filtering through thousands of purple flowers and that wonderful lavender fragrance. I met the owner, Mike, and he showed me the different varieties, their many varied fragrances and colors. From the sweet fragrance of Provence that I was familiar with to the more pungent Dutch and Dutch Mill, I was amazed by the diversity of fragrance. Hidcote Giant was truly a giant with huge, very full flowers and a stem nearly two feet long. Sweet Sachet with its lovely fragrance and deep, deep purple flowers, while not as tall as other lavenders, had a color that defined the word purple. Mike also had Alba and Melissa which is pink. My love affair with lavender was in full bloom. Purple Haze is a U-pick farm and Mike gave me cutting shears and a basket for my lavender bouquets. I thanked him for answering my many questions. He directed me to another farm in the area, Cedarbrook, which has specialized in herbs since 1955. Here I found many other varieties such as Seal, Super and Fred Boutin. After purchasing several plants, I

headed back to Seattle and home to Idaho with visions of lavender fields swaying gently in the breeze.

From this chance encounter, my dream of growing lavender began. I read all I could about lavender from books to the internet and the versatility of this herb amazed me. Mike calls lavender the “Swiss army knife” of the herbs and I think it truly is. I took cuttings from my lavender and slowly started to change over from herbs to lavender. My soil is ideal for lavender as it drains well and my lavender fields are slowly growing and expanding. A light dose of fertilizer in the spring and some irrigation during the hottest part of the summer will be rewarded by fragrant bouquets. A spring haircut keeps the shape of the plant and prevents the legginess that cultivars such as Munstead are prone to. It also promotes greater flower bloom. Our climate zone only allows the growing of the *augustifolia* and some of the *lavadins*. I have collected 50 cultivars and the harvest from my first five Grosso plants was a delight. The long stems are easy to cut and dry to a beautiful color. Lavender wands and fragrant lavender wreaths are some of the wonderful things I make from this versatile herb.

**I found
both men and women
like lavender.**

I have learned how to propagate lavender and have explored using both lavender essential oil and lavender infused oil in salves and healing balms. At the Kootenai Farmers’ Market, I found both men and women like lavender. My decision to specialize in lavender has been a definite plus and I have changed the name of my business from Birds, Bees & Butterflies to Lavender Frog. I feel that this name more clearly identifies my business. I’m fortunate to do something that I love and I look forward to many years of enjoyment and discovery with my beautiful, fragrant lavender.

Rural Roots Leadership Team

Diane Green, Chairman
Greentree Naturals
Sandpoint, 208-263-8957
gtreenat@dm.net

Wally Adams, Co-Chair
Coeur d'Alene Tractor
Coeur d'Alene, 208-765-2315

Cindy dePaulis
Lavender Frog
Athol, 208-687-2274
lucinda@lavenderfrog.com

Colette DePhelps
Moscow, 208-883-3462
dphelps@earthlink.net

Nancy Taylor
Potlatch, 208-875-1088
ntaylor@moscow.com

Maurice Robinette
Lazy R Ranch
Cheney, 509-299-4942
mlr@ior.com

Cathy Weston
Hauser Lake, 208-773-9420
cweston66@hotmail.com

Vickie Parker-Clark
Leadership Team Advisor
Kootenai County Extension
University of Idaho, Cd'A
208-667-6426
vickiepc@uidaho.edu

Cinda Williams
Leadership Team Advisor
Sustainable Ag Coordinator
University of Idaho, Moscow
208-885-7499
cindaw@uidaho.edu



Brainstorm Group Evolves into Network for Growing/Harvesting Non-Traditional Plants Species in Northern Idaho and Eastern Washington

by Malcolm Dell, Woodnet Development Council

Two years ago, a presentation at a woodland owners conference in Moscow, Idaho spawned a "think tank" of natural resource and economic development professionals, government agencies, entrepreneurs, herbalists, and public land managers under the banner of the Palouse Special Forest Products Task Force.

Coordinated by Clearwater Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council, Inc., based in Moscow, the group initially looked at how to expand the economy by developing wild plants and other non-traditional resources from forest environments. After many networking sessions, educational programs, and a lot of dedication, the group attracted two grants, expanded their geographic impact, moved meetings from Moscow to Lewiston, and changed their name twice.

The evolution of what is now called the Clearwater Specialty Plants Network has come a long way. Most of the participants are now landowners interested in small-scale, alternative agriculture, with a focus on "dual market" medicinal plants. As a risk reduction strategy, the group will favor planting of common medicinal species which offer a second customer market in case one market disappears or becomes glutted. For example:

- * Medicinal-Culinary (e.g. Garlic)
- * Medicinal-Nursery/Landscaping (e.g. Hawthorne, Ginkgo)
- * Medicinal-Floral

The Clearwater RC&D continues to coordinate the group, along with facilitation and development services from the Woodnet Development Council, based in Orofino. Technical advisors include Cinda Williams with the University of Idaho Sustainable Agriculture Program, Louise-Marie Dandurand, a consultant and plant pathologist at the University of Idaho, and Jim Flocchini and Meryl Kastin of Two Ravens Herbs in Kooskia.

At the March meeting, the group elected an interim Board of Directors, including Deloris J. Davisson (President), an organic farmer from Clarkston, Washington and four other landowners, Ed Berreth of Weippe, Carlene Whitesell of Fenn, and Tom Agte and Jack Bowlin of Plummer. Carmen Cook of Genessee does a bi-monthly newsletter, which is being phased out in favor of a digital newsletter, called ClearwaterHerbs@eGroups.com The free electronic newsletter is very

Brainstorm Group Evolves ...

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popular, attracting lots of networking and sharing of information, with almost 60 subscribers to date.

Several of the landowners are now planting species based on educational programs at the monthly meetings, and are sharing suppliers and opportunities through the e-newsletter. Current projects include a survey of members to create a database of landowner resources and interests.

Two grant applications are underway. One, sponsored by the Idaho and Washington Departments of Agriculture, is for research into markets and consumer attitudes toward medicinal plants and related value-added products. Part of the study would identify medicinal plants with significant production potential in the wide variety of habitats found in the region.

The other grant application is for developing an e-commerce site on the Internet to sell seeds, fresh and dried herbal products, herbal supplements, potted plants, and cuttings. While few of the landowners currently cultivate medicinal plants, the plan is to ride the back of common wild plants such as chickweed, St. Johns Wort, and mullein which will be sustainably and ethically wildcrafted. Sales from these wild plants and value-added products such as tinctures, salves, and oils made will create the market connections and sales research needed to help make planting decisions.

A grant already received from USDA Rural Development is for education and training in the making of value-added herbal supplements, and to create a regional brand of these products available for license to the individual entrepreneurs, cooperative, associations, or other groups.

The group normally meets the third Thursday of each month at the USDA Service Center in Lewiston. Everyone is welcome. For more information, call Dan Pierce at the Clearwater RC&D, 208/882-4960 x 110.

HerbsPLUS Features Extra Workshop on Growing Herbs by National Expert Tim Blakley

by Cinda Williams

Tim Blakley, one of the leading educators and authorities in the U.S. on growing medicinal herbs will be the featured speaker at a workshop following the Herbs PLUS 2000 conference. While the conference itself focuses on marketing and distribution, Tim's program will address aspects of growing medicinal herbs. The workshop "Growing and Marketing Common Medicinal Plants." is scheduled for Friday, April 21, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., at the University Inn/Best Western in Moscow, Idaho.

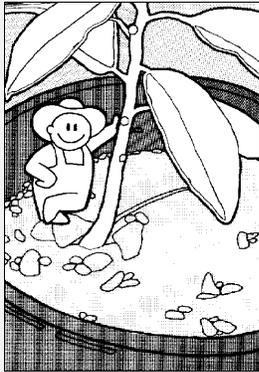
From 1994 to 1998, Blakley worked for Herb Pharm in Oregon, where he created their 85-acre organic herb farm and three acres of botanical display gardens.

Tim Blakley has over 20 years in the herb industry, specializing in the cultivation, uses, and quality of medicinal herbs. Currently he is land manager of the National Center for Preservation of Medicinal Herbs (www.ncpmh.org) in Ohio, and travels extensively as the Frontier Natural Products Cooperative (www.frontiercoop.com) herbal educator. From 1994 to 1998, Blakley worked for Herb Pharm in Oregon, where he created their 85-acre organic herb farm and three acres of botanical display gardens. Tim has recently co-authored *The Bootstrap Guide to "Medicinal Herbs in the Garden, Yard, and Marketplace."* Autographed copies of his book will be available at the workshop.

The Clearwater Specialty Plants Network (CSPN), a newly formed group of landowners and herbalists interested in small-scale, alternative agriculture in North Central Idaho and Southeastern Washington will host the workshop. Cost is \$29 for individuals and \$49 for couples. Information and online registration is available at www.woodnet.org/herbs.htm or by calling 208/476-4263 or emailing conference@moscow.com.



Rural Roots



Inland Northwest Food and Farming Calendar

- April 20-21 HerbsPLUS 2000
University Inn-Best Western
Moscow, Idaho
- April 27 Sandpoint R&E Center Visioning Session,
10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Contact Diane Green
- April 29 How to Extend Your Gardening Season, 12:30 p.m.
Greentree Naturals, Sandpoint, Idaho
- May 25 Rural Roots Association Meeting, 1:00 - 3:30 p.m.
University of Idaho Extension Office
106 E. Dalton Ave., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
- Sept 28 Rural Roots Association Meeting, 1:00 - 3:30 p.m.
Moscow, Idaho
- Oct 26 Rural Roots Association Meeting, 1:00 - 3:30 p.m.
Spokane, Washington
- Nov 30 Rural Roots Association Meeting, 1:00 - 3:30 p.m.
Sandpoint, Idaho

Rural Roots
Post Office Box 1618
Sandpoint, Idaho 83864