

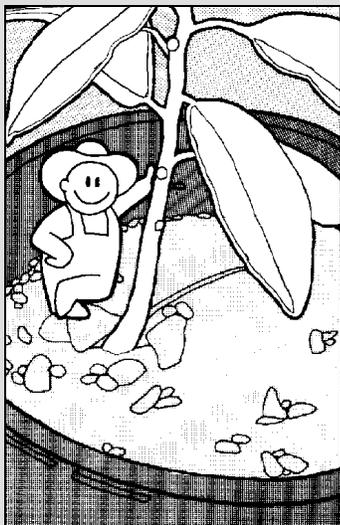
Bringing Home the Harvest

Newsletter of Rural Roots:

The Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Association

Spring 1999

Volume 1, Number 4



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USDA's Educational Campaign--"Farming g heartily. To join send a message to

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Look for Summer's Focus Topic:
Organic Production and Marketing



PLEASE NOTE: Our new name is Rural Roots The Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Association. After this issue, *Bringing Home the Harvest* will be available by subscription only (free for Rural Roots members/\$5.00 for non-members). Please send in the enclosed membership/subscription form in order to continue receiving this newsletter.

"Task Force" to "Rural Roots"- Where We've Been, Where We're Going

by Vickie Parker-Clark

Remember September 1997? That's when we held the first task force meeting. Those of you who attended remember our farm tour and discussion with Gail Feenstra from UC Davis about existing community food systems and what we wanted ours to become. The group decided we wanted to continue meeting, and at our winter meeting we developed a list of goals for the task force including:

- Provide an opportunity to network and partner across segments of the food system;
- Provide educational opportunities;
- Provide a "face" and a "voice" to local growers;
- Enhance the economic viability of local growers and potential growers by identifying road blocks to their success;
- Inform segments of the food system about regional and national policies that may impact them, and teaching them how to become active participants in the policy-making process.

At our January 1999 meeting task force members discussed moving to a formal membership organization. It was felt that doing this would bring a clearer "face" and "voice" to the group, and would be a vehicle for seeking grants and support for activities, such as this newsletter and the website. In April, the group brainstormed a name – a number were suggested. Through email and individual contacts, the association's name became "Rural Roots" with a subtitle of "The Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Association."

To illustrate the growing interest in community food systems, we'd like to highlight some of the programs and projects that have been implemented in this region (by the task force, its members or friends) over the past year.

- Farm tours and on-farm workshops throughout the region to inform potential producers, current producers and consumers about farming and marketing practices in the region;
- A series of "Taste the Harvest" panel in Coeur d'Alene; results from the taste panel were published in the CDA Press;

Bringing Home the Harvest is a quarterly newsletter of Rural Roots: The Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Association and is published jointly by the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension, the *Palouse-Clearwater* Environmental Institute and Washington State University Cooperative Extension.

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, 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 UI, PCEI or WSU.

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- Shared use commercial kitchen network task forces in the Moscow-Pullman area and the Coeur d'Alene area to connect approved kitchen owners with specialty foods producers. A *Kootenai Kitchens Directory* was developed this spring.
- "Eating on the Palouse" dinners and workshops, funded by a \$22,750 Partnership 20/20 grant to highlight locally grown, organic produce;
- Workshops in Pullman and Coeur d'Alene to inform farmers' market vendors about health department regulations;
- A marketing cooperative workshop in Coeur d'Alene which prompted interest in the development of a marketing to restaurant group;
- A Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant proposal, submitted in 1997 and resubmitted in 1998, to measure the economic and quality of life impacts of small acreage farmers and farmers' markets to the Inland Northwest. We did not receive the grant, but many task force members felt the process of applying "fused" our group together.
- A Small Acreage Farming/Market Gardening short course in Coeur d'Alene co-sponsored by the Kootenai County Farmers' Market Assoc. that attracted over 40 participants. The notebook developed for this course was distributed in WA, OR, and ID.
- An herb publication which is currently under review;
- Partnership with the new WSU Spokane County Small Farm Resource Center;
- The development of a list-serve, a web site, and this quarterly newsletter;
- Participation in a national USDA Agricultural Research Service focus group on direct marketing issues for small acreage farmers;
- The formation of a small farm organization in Stevens County WA;
- "Cultivating the Harvest," an Inland Northwest Small Acreage Farming conference which offered over 30 sessions on production, marketing, business management, and economic opportunities for the region. Over 180 people attended all or part of the three-day conference.

So, where do we go from here? A membership form is enclosed with this newsletter. Please take a few minutes to fill this out and send in your membership dues (the year will officially start July 1st). Note that members receive this newsletter for free and pay a reduced fee for events such as the summer tours that are cosponsored by Rural Roots.

Rural Roots will meet in the fall to elect a leadership team, adopt by-laws, and celebrate a busy, bountiful farming season. We'll post the meeting date on our Web site and the list serve, and mail out post cards. Watch for these notices in September.

The name of the group is different; the goals and objectives remain the same. We continue to strive to meet these goals.





Resources for the Small Acreage Farmer

Books:

You Can Farm 480 p. Joel Salatin, Polyface, Inc. The entrepreneur's guide to start and succeed in a farm enterprise. Acres USA (800) 355-5313

The New Organic Grower, 340 p. Eliot Coleman, 1995 A master's manual of tools and techniques for the home and market gardener. Chelsea Green Publishing Co., ISBN #0-930031-75-X

Starting a Specialty Foods Business, A Comprehensive Guide for Idaho Specialty Foods Producers Available through Idaho Dept. of Ag. (208) 332-8530

Selling Produce to Restaurants, 49 p. Diane Green, 1999 Order from Greentree Naturals, (208) 263-8957 or gtreenat@dm.net

Periodicals:

"Pacific Northwest Sustainable Agriculture" College of Ag and Home Ec; PO Box 64624, WSU, Pullman, WA 99164-6242

"Growing for Market" News and ideas for market gardeners. Available PO Box 3747, Lawrence KS 66046.

Small Farm Digest Subscriptions are free. For information call Betty Hodges, Small Farm Program, (800) 583-3071 www.ree.usda.gov/smallfarm

Small Farm Today Dedicated to the preservation and promotion of small farming, rural living, sustainability, community and "agriprenurship." Phone (800) 633-2535

"Connecting with Your Roots" Summer Farm Tour Scheduled

by Vickie Parker-Clark

University of Idaho Extension, Rural Roots, and WSU Extension, are partnering to offer a trilogy of summer tours. Space is limited (30 people per tour), so sign up soon if you are interested. Pre-registration is required. The cost per tour is \$20. Members of Rural Roots (those who have paid their dues) will get a reduced rate of \$10. Call University of Idaho Extension, 208-667-6426 to register and get directions.

June 23rd - Nothing But Herbs, Hayden ID - In addition to providing an herbal tea tasting, owner Barbara Arnold will show us her greenhouse and field production. Barb grows over 225 herb varieties and sells through wholesale and retail markets, as well as doing value added products. Tour from 9 a.m. to noon.

July 10th - Small Planet Tofu & Penrith Farms, Newport WA - Small Planet Tofu supplies tofu to stores/restaurants in the Inland Northwest, Seattle, Oregon, and northern California. Penrith Farms is a group home for troubled teens. The teens grow their own food and have a CSA. Lunch at Small Planet Tofu is included in the tour. Hosts are Sherry & Jim Brewster and Phil Spiegel. Tour from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

July 31st - Greentree Naturals, Sandpoint - Diane Green will again host a tour of her organic market garden. Diane's grower collective sells to restaurants, a CSA, and sells at the local farmers' market. We will be able to sample Diane's "garden faire" as a part of the tour, which starts at 1 p.m.



WANTED: PRODUCERS

Producers growing food or fiber for local/regional direct markets that would like to be included in an **Inland Northwest Small Acreage Farming Directory 2000**. Producers from northern Idaho, eastern Washington, and western Montana are invited to participate. The directory will list your farm's name, location, contact information, type of products grown or raised, quantities grown or raised, acres, whether food/fiber is certified organic, transitional, etc., and information on value added products. The directory will be compiled this fall and distributed in January/February 2000 to consumers, restaurants, health food stores, food cooperatives, and grocery stores. Depending on funding, an interactive web site directory is also planned. For more information contact Vickie Parker-Clark, Univ. of Idaho Extension, 106 E. Dalton Ave., Coeur d'Alene ID 83815, (208) 667-6426 or vickiepc@uidaho.edu.



Are You Being Served? The Rural Roots List Serve

by Beth Malouf

A list serve is a single email address to which someone can send one email message and reach all members of the list. List serves usually focus on some topic of common interest (such as community food systems), and they can be a great way to keep up with what is happening. Anyone who has been involved in a list serve knows that it's up to the members to make it dynamic and useful through the messages they send and the discussions that result. The Rural Roots list serve, also known as the Inland Northwest Food Systems list serve, (inwfs-list@uidaho.edu) currently has 25 members and averages a few messages per day. These are generally announcements of events or useful resources.

Another way to use a list serve is as a problem-solving tool. When I encounter a difficulty and present it to the list, I can tap into the knowledge of experts who belong to the inwfs-list. And, of course, the solutions that are useful to me will probably be useful to others on the list.

So, if you don't already belong to inwfs-list, consider joining and participating heartily. To join send a message to "majordomo@uidaho.edu":

- ◆ type no subject line
- ◆ type "subscribe inwfs-list" as the first line (do not include the quotation marks)
- ◆ type "end" as the second line

(If you have any questions, contact the "list master" Vickie Parker-Clark at vickiepc@uidaho.edu.)

Eating the Harvest

Meals at the Small Acreage Farming Conference

by Peggy Adams

In an attempt to walk our talk we decided to use as much seasonal local produce as we could in developing menus for the Cultivating the Harvest conference. Finding a sufficient variety of foods on the Palouse in March proved to be quite a challenge. The process brought to clear consciousness how dependent we are on other regions to provide us the variety of foods we have come to expect.

The first step in the process was to contact growers to discover what foods they would have available in early March. Nothing is growing at that time so we had to depend on products which store well. Grains, potatoes, winter squash, dry beans, parsnips, and walnuts were available and you'll find them in the dishes we're serving. To round out the menu we did have to use products that were not available from our local growers but we tried to stay with seasonal produce.

Adding to the challenge was our obligation to use the services of Sodexo Marriott to prepare and serve the food. Since their usual menus are heavy on meat and pre-prepared items I suspected that creating vegetarian dishes from whole, fresh foods without additives might be a new experience for them. To make it easier, I felt that we needed to create menus with dishes that were easy to make, could be prepared ahead of time, and would hold well in steam trays. I experimented with a number of dishes and used the PCEI staff as guinea pigs. Some of the foods we served were favorites of the PCEI staff.

Ordering proper amounts proved to be another challenge. Normally, the Marriott would use their own suppliers and order within two or three days of the event. Those suppliers can provide just about any amount of just about any food on short notice. With that kind of service we could wait until the last minute to give them a head count of registrants and be sure that we purchased only the amount we need. When working with our local growers, lead time needed to be longer. We had to order quantities well in advance of final registration head count. Since we were expecting anywhere from 100 to 300 people we just had to guess. Our local suppliers had to save and store their products from the end of the growing season until March. We knew we were asking them to risk not being able to sell what they stored. In some cases the produce we expected might be available, such as fresh greens, fell prey to weather. Our risks were minimal since we could always fall back on the global food distribution system to provide us with whatever might be short.

Using fresh food from suppliers outside the normal corporate channels created another challenge for us. Normally, the distributor assumes the risk for food safety and that risk is covered by insurance. The Marriott was not willing to assume risk for the safety and purity of products which did not come through their normal channels. Fortunately the Moscow Food Co-op was willing to allow us to channel produce through them so that it could be covered by their insurance. The Co-op was not willing to accept any "high risk" foods, such as meats, though. The Marriott would have been hesitant to accept even USDA stamped meat if it had been obtained outside their normal channels.

(Are You Being Served continued)

This message, posted May 17, 1999, is an example of how helpful it can be to increase communication among farmers and friends involved in the Inland Northwest food systems.

"I had a problem with an organic potting soil which turned out to be not organic. It's Black Magic Professional Potting Soil. The label does not list the urea which the company adds. I found this out by calling the company after the soil starting sprouting lots of small gray mushrooms. The person mentioned that they do add urea to the soil. This of course is not considered organic and I had already planted lavender in my garden which were grown in this soil along with all my tomato, basil and various other starts. Some have been planted in the garden, some have not. So much for organic certification for another three years according to Jim Boatman in Boise. I'm appealing but it does not look promising. Has anyone else had a similar experience?"

"I found out that the FTC has an exception in place concerning potting soils - they do not have to list all ingredients on the label, but they can have the word organic on the label!!

"All organic growers beware"

Cindy dePaulis



Preparing fresh food did prove to be a challenge for the Marriott staff but not for the Chef. The staff worked hard and long at washing, cutting, and peeling more fresh squash, potatoes, onions, parsnips, and mushrooms than they had seen in a very long time. The results were great. The Chef did a great job at expanding and interpreting the recipes we supplied. He told us at the end of the conference that it was a pleasure to work with "real food" again.

Recipe Corner...

Moroccan Stew

Serves 8

Spice Mixture:

2 Tbs. cumin seeds
1/2 Tbs. fennel seeds
1 Tbs. black peppercorns
1 Tbs. whole allspice
3 whole cloves
1/2 tsp. turmeric

1 Tbs. grated fresh ginger
pinch saffron
2 Tbs. paprika
1/2 Tbs. coriander
1/2 tsp. cinnamon

(This quantity of spice mixture is more than is needed for the recipe. Adjust to suit)

Pound together with mortar and pestle and set aside.

Roasted Vegetables

2 Tbs. olive oil
1/2 cups chopped onions
1 cup red or green bell pepper cut in 1 inch squares
3 cups peeled potatoes cut in cubes
3 cups peeled and seeded winter squash cut in cubes
2 cups sliced and peeled carrots
1/2 cup peeled and diced Jerusalem artichokes
2 cups diced canned tomatoes, drained
1 1/2 Tbs. spice mixture
3 cloves garlic minced
4 cups water or vegetable broth
salt
1/4 cup chopped parsley

Preheat oven to 450.

Toss vegetables and garlic in spice mixture, salt and oil. Spread on large cookie sheet. Roast in oven, stirring once or twice until lightly browned, 15 to thirty minutes. Transfer vegetable mixture to large saucepan or Dutch oven. Add water or broth and canned tomatoes. Simmer until vegetables are tender. 20 to 25 minutes. Garnish with parsley and serve.



Ideas for Future Programs

Some of the most useful information we collected with the Cultivating the Harvest conference evaluations is what future programs people are interested in.

Production and farm management:

- ◆ Pest control including management of gophers/voles/mice
- ◆ Animals in an integrated farm system, including using draft animals on the farm, small scale animal production and small scale fish culture
- ◆ Management tools to lower farm costs
- ◆ Alternative techniques/systems such as no till farming, permaculture, methods of season extension, seed saving, family woodlot management, planning a greenhouse, part time farming
- ◆ Post harvest activities/processing including root cellars and storage, homemade food drying systems and components, commercial kitchen sharing, alternative uses and markets for hay, how to set up co-ops, more on CSAs, and direct marketing beef

General perspectives:

- ◆ Nutritional aspects of organic and/or locally grown food
- ◆ Urban agriculture or urban food systems
- ◆ Cooperative degree and certification programs for small acreage and urban agriculture
- ◆ Stronger focus on low income
- ◆ More specific programs relating to successful community food systems and sustainable agriculture
- ◆ Higher level of thinking on sustainable farming practices: including soil management, worker satisfaction, financial rewards, lifestyle & social fabric & community, etc.

What We Learned From *Cultivating the Harvest* Conference Evaluations Summary

by Beth Malouf

We have received very positive feedback on the March *Cultivating the Harvest* conference. According to word of mouth and email comments, the event was a success, renewing people's enthusiasm for their work. Much appreciation has been expressed for the wealth of practical and inspirational information shared by the speakers.

We have reviewed the written conference evaluations and want to share some of the insights in them. Unfortunately, only 31 people, out of the approximately 100 participants on Friday and Saturday, turned in the green, overall conference evaluations. Still, there are some interesting trends in those who *did* respond.

There was surprising uniformity in the answers to the question "What were the three most useful things you learned at this conference?" One person's response represents the tenor of many of the answers:

1. *There are lots of small acreage organic farmers in this area.*
2. *I saw people succeeding at what I want to do.*
3. *Soil health is critical for my success.*

Many of the responses included the sentiment that this conference helped them realize that small farms are economically and environmentally viable. People were pleased with the positive approach speakers took and appreciated hearing from successful farmers. Many people also commented on their new awareness of a committed community of people who want to be involved in a grassroots organization that promotes sustainable, small acreage farming. Several people indicated that the conference convinced them that sharing information among like-minded farmers is critical.



Some of the folks who made the conference possible: Vickie Parker-Clark (Univ. of Idaho Extension), Don Dysart (Washington State Univ. Extension) Cinda Williams (Univ. of Idaho Extension), and Diane Green (Owner, Greentree Naturals, Sandpoint, ID).



USDA's Educational Campaign-- "Farming for Profit, Stewardship & Community"

USDA's "Farming for Profit, Stewardship & Community" educational campaign is built around 10 "tip sheets" listing free and low-cost resources on a range of topics, including improving soil quality, weed control, marketing, and low-cost livestock systems. These are designed to provide small-scale farmers and ranchers with comprehensive information about ways to increase farm profits, cut costs, broaden marketing alternatives, protect natural resources, and sustain communities.

The tip sheets tell producers how to obtain books, bulletins and access web sites for valuable information.

This educational campaign follows up on one of the key recommendations in the 1998 National Commission on Small Farms report. Many of the resources listed were developed by USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program.

To view a set of tip sheets on the web, visit www.sare.org and click on "Education." Copies may also be viewed at any local USDA Service Center or Extension office. For more information about the "Farming for Profit, Stewardship & Community" campaign, contact Valerie Berton, SARE communications specialist, (301) 405-3186 or vberton@wam.umd.edu.

Specific "useful things" that people said they learned include:

- ◆ A significantly better understanding of soil microbiology and integrated pest management,
- ◆ Specific, practical information on growing and marketing medicinal herbs,
- ◆ Incorporating poultry into a production system,
- ◆ Diversify and try new things -- new crops, new marketing techniques

There were a few noteworthy suggestions for improving the quality of future events. Many people were dismayed at how many sessions were offered concurrently. People suggested that it would be easier for people to decide which to attend if we supply more detailed and accurate information about the session topics. Some people thought that the conference should have been more widely promoted to reach a greater diversity of farmers and local officials. People also provided useful feedback to the organizers on logistics that we would be glad to share with anyone interested in planning a similar conference.

Tips on How To Be a Successful Small Farmer

Taken from a March 18, 1999 videoconference (sponsored by WSU AgHorizons and USDA-SARE) in Spokane and Colville, WA with Ronald E. Macher Editor/Publisher of *Small Farm Today* magazine.

1. Be open-minded. Be willing to consider that there is no right answer, only possible ways of doing things. Some will work, some won't.
2. Farming goals must be family goals. Do the goals of the farm meet with the needs of the family? Are their interests and concerns being addressed with current and future projects? How are decisions being made?
3. To be successful you must be sustainable; to be sustainable you must be profitable.
4. Big picture versus Band-Aid thinkers. Always include the whole picture.
5. *Agripreneurism* - Willing to think. Take your own advice. Access the new opportunities created by our changing culture. Originate and direct the productive potential of agriculture.
6. Avoid debt.
7. Have a plan; plan a profit.
8. Be an avid reader. Find out what other people know and have learned in the past. New isn't necessarily better, and old isn't necessarily worn out.
9. Have a system of production that balances farm labor and resources.
10. Keep good records. Know your cost of production. Make it work on paper.
11. Diversify crops and livestock for a broad base of support.
12. Sell crops and livestock, including value added, on a year round basis.
13. Make sure products and production are sound economically, environmentally, and socially.
14. Production system should balance labor and resources, not overload them.
15. Raise alternative crops - those that are not produced by the large agro businesses. Find niche markets. Use direct marketing. Do not attempt to compete on a commodity basis.
16. Own it all. Be vertically integrated: production, distribution, and marketing.
17. Have a story to go with your marketing. People want to have a connection to their food - where it came from, who raised it.



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Inland Northwest Food and Farming Calendar

May 26 *Landscaping with Natural Plant Communities*, Newport WA, 6:30 to 8:30 pm \$5. Tonie Fitzgerald, instructor. Contact Carol Mack, Pend Oreille Co. Ext. at 509-447-2401.

May 31 *Growing Medicinal Herbs*, Elk, Washington, 10:00 to 5:00 pm, \$40. Bring your own lunch. Presenters: Michael Pilarski and Doris Delatte. To register or for further details, Contact: Doris Delatte, Homestead Horticulture (509) 292-8188.

June 12 *Wading in the Water, Experiencing Creek Life*, 10:30 am, Newport WA. \$5.00. Contact Carol Mack, Pend Oreille Co. Ext. at 509-447-2401.

June 23 *Nothing But Herbs Farm Tour*, 8:45- 11:00 am Includes an herbal tea tasting, \$20 for non-members/ \$10 for Rural Roots members. Call: 208-667-6426.

July 6-20 *Permaculture Design Course*, Methow Valley North-Central Washington, North Cascades; \$850 (includes meals). Contact: Friends of the Trees Society (360) 724-0503. (after 5/24/99 call (509) 997-9200), Email: trees@telcomplus.net

July 10 *Tour of Small Planet Tofu & Penrith Farms*, Newport WA. 10:30 to 2:30 p.m. \$20 for non-members/ \$10 for Rural Roots members. Call: 208-667-6426.

July 31 *Greentree Naturals Farm Tour*, 1 pm Sandpoint, ID. \$20 for non-members/ \$10 for Rural Roots members. Call: 208-667-6426.

Sept. 1 - Nov. 17 *Small Acreage Farming/Market Gardening Course*, Wednesdays, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., Univ. of Idaho Extension, 106 E. Dalton Ave, Coeur d'Alene ID. Cost \$80. For more information, call 208-667-6426 or contact vickiepc@uidaho.edu

Oct 12-15 *National Small Farm Conference*, St. Louis Missouri, contact Dr. Denis Ebodaghe, USDA-CREES, 202-401-4385 or see <http://www.reeusda.gov/smallfarm.>

Complimentary Copy