

Heart of the Earth



Making A Difference in the Red Hills and Gulf Coast Bioregions

Summer, 2002

Local Food: A Heart of the Earth Initiative

If it's not one thing, it's another...who knew we needed to track not only the gas mileage of our cars, but our vegetables, in the interest of cutting down our personal contributions to global warming?

Local organic grower Louise Divine points out a 1997 Maryland study that documented astounding average travel times for produce. To-

matoes: 2,786 miles. Fruits: 2,416 miles. As Barbara Kingsolver says in her new book, *Small Wonder*, "Transporting 5 calories' worth of strawberries from California to New York costs 435 calories of fossil fuel!"



This is where food becomes a

focus for Heart of the Earth, and all of us in North America, we who have so many choices and resources. And therefore, effect, on how the world goes. In this issue of Heart of the Earth news, we've gathered a sampling of the many ways to eat locally in our bioregion. We hope our writers' experiences will be helpful to you, and that you'll choose and enjoy local foods whenever

Americans have a taste for food that's been seeded, fertilized, harvested, processed, and packaged in grossly energy-expensive ways and then shipped, often refrigerated, for so many miles it might as well be green cheese from the moon. Even if you walk or bike to the store, if you come home with bananas from Ecuador, tomatoes from Holland, and artichokes from California, you have guzzled some serious gas. This extravagance that most of us take for granted is a stunning energy boondoggle: Transporting 5 calories worth of strawberries from California to New York costs 435 calories of fossil fuel. The global grocery store turns out to be the last great losing proposition of our species.

The Economy of Our Garden

By Janise Ray and Raven Burchard

Every evening when the two of us sit down to supper, we give thanks. There are several recurring themes in our gratitude—our children, our friends, good health, a rain. And at least one of us is thankful, daily, for our garden. Every evening we take not of

what elements of the meal we grew: yellow squash, sprinkled with herbs and grilled; steamed new potatoes; and in a salad—lettuce, starting to go bitter; cucumbers, the first tomato. What a joy and taste sensation to eat vegetables and fruits harvested only minutes before.

Because we get so much pleasure from our garden, it doesn't look like the serious undertaking that it is. It is holy work, maybe our life's work: We are trying to produce as much of our own food as we can.

We are doing this because we are convinced that industrial capitalism is at the base of our environmental crisis. As we learned from reading the great thinker, Wendell berry,

our economic system in this country is inherently violent, because it destroys that which it depends upon, meaning natural resources. Meaning the Earth. The motto for industrial capitalism is *more and more*—there are always stockholders wanting more profits. These profits come at the expense of local ecosystems, local communities and local economies. Always.

Most of us have failed to understand that we cannot go on producing endlessly. Our country fails to see that industrial capitalism, which has now managed to spread globally,

doesn't mean prosperity for all, as it promises, but for the few. It is a system that produces too much, resulting in

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Do you live on the north side of town? Check out Herman and Louise Divine's locally-grown, organic flowers, herbs, and vegetables at the Timberlane Square farmer's market every Saturday between 9 am and 1 p. They publish a terrific, informative newsletter for customers of their farm. "The food we offer doesn't suffer from jet lag," says Louise.

Join A Community Garden

By Tamara Weinstein

I don't know how to garden. I've never planted anything. I grew up in the concrete jungles of Chicago and then lived on Miami Beach. But here I am in Tallahassee. The green spaces are tugging at my sleeve, cajoling me into partnership, interdependence. So I've joined up with Heart of the Earth to begin the journey into learning about my chosen bioregion—and how to become an earthy part of it. My first assignment to myself was to check out the community garden at Florida A&M University; here's what I found.

You go down Adams Street south and take a right on Orange Avenue just before the main post office. After a few

moments, on your left, you'll see a field of garden plots. Take a stroll around the gardens—postage stamps from different imaginations, each one a mark of someone's personal delight and hours of happy toil. On my first visit, the gardens I investigated included corn, squash, zucchini, strawberries, and tomatoes.

I also saw eight old men playing cards and sharing tall tales. They told me how they come here and work their shared plots, enjoying the sun and the quiet. Here, I thought, is community in the making. A good place to grow friendship, as well as food. On subsequent weekend visits, I

met young folks, professors, families, and more old folks. I felt welcome.



There's room for more growing if you want to be a part of the FAMU community garden. You pay only \$15 a year to rent your plot. You'll certainly get your money's worth of produce, fun, and community. The plots are plowed each spring and fall, but you can join at any time. Irrigation is provided. To join, call Betty Judson with FAMU Extension Agriculture Program at 599-8824.

Community Supported Agriculture: Right here, Right Now

By Ed Oaksford

Every Saturday morning, it's my pleasurable duty to pick up our weekly produce – 10 to 15 pounds of cucumbers, squash, tomatoes, beans, whatever is currently in season – from a delivery truck near my home. I'm one of the 15 lucky shareholders in our bioregion's first venture into Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), the Native Naturals Farm in Monticello, Florida. It's owned and operated by Susan Anderson and Roy Stanley and Heart of the Earth is helping to promote its growth.

Ever since the CSA movement got started in the U.S. (the concept originated in Japan in



Susan Anderson (third from right) meets satisfied community-supported agriculture customers for weekly produce distribution.

the 1960s), it has been a growing trend. Today, there are more than 1000 CSAs all over the country. Here's how they work. You, the consumer, buy a seasonal share in the local

organic farm. This way, the farmer has guaranteed capital prior to the growing season, and the shareholders receive a variety of veggies and other produce throughout the dura-



Heart of the Earth

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What is Heart of the Earth

Heart of the Earth is a movement fostering practical actions to reduce global warming and provide more sustainable lifestyles in the Red Hills and Gulf Coastal Lowlands bioregions.

Heart of the Earth Council

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Jeff Chanton
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Tamara Weinstein

Newsletter Editors

Susan Cerulean
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The local growing season, ours being about 28-32 weeks. It puts produce production close to home, saving energy and supporting the local economy. And it assures shareholders a steady supply of organic produce.

With CSA, shareholders put themselves squarely in the hands of nature, just as the farmers do when they plant their crops each year.

So there are risks, as well as rewards—all of which will only heighten your respect and admiration for the farmers that grow our food.

If you're interested in participating, send an email to nativenaturals@earthlink.net, or call Susan and Roy at (850) 997-1001.

Growing All Your Own

By Crystal Wakoa

"I get tremendous satisfaction from knowing I can feed my family nearly all year round", says Tracy Schneider, as she walks me through row after row of her vibrant and well-loved garden. Planting this miracle of May abundance that I am visiting begins in mid-March, just as the winter harvest of collards, broccoli, carrot, sugar snap peas and lettuces is coming to a close.

"My philosophy is to eat fresh out of the garden as much as we can, and when it gets ahead of what we can consume daily, to can and freeze," says Schneider, who lives with her husband Ben Green and daughters Emmie and Eliza in the Grassroots Community on Old St, Augustine Road.

As Tracy leads me between 30-foot rows of green beans, she tells me this is the first crop of the season that she'll be "putting up." But the largest area of the garden is de-

voted to the pea patch: seven 50-foot rows of black-eyed peas, and white and purple speckled butter beans.



Emmie and Eliza Schneider-Green with a day's harvest from

Tracy's annual goal is to freeze 100 dinner-portion sized bags of peas and beans. "these are the foundation of our meals," she says. "Add rice and a salad, and that's how we eat." June is the month she'll pick and shell, and "it could be a month of hell," she says frankly. "It's just about all we do. But Em-

mie and Eliza love to shell, and we invite neighborhood friends over to watch movies and help. Sure it's work, but it's work that brings us together."

Blueberries ripen May through July, all the family can eat and bake; the rest are frozen for wintertime treats. In July, the corn comes in, ready all at once. Tracy tells how the family eats it like mad, then scraps and freezes what's left, cream-style: "heaven in the middle of winter."

"We always look forward to those days in July when everything on our dinner table has come from the garden," says Schneider. Her tomatoes are picked full size but green in June and July, so the bugs don't get them. She tells me there may be 200 at a time ripening on her kitchen counter. She quarters the tomatoes, once ripe, and cans them for soups, salsa and pasta sauce.

Three 30-foot rows of cucumbers are among the most satisfying things Schneider puts up, because the pickle recipe comes from her dad and all the ingredients peppers, dill, and garlic-come from the garden.

Schneider and Green have been gardening at their home for eight years. They use only organic fertilizer from a giant compost pile, along with droppings from their 12 chickens. Organic pesticides are used only when needed.

At summer's end, they clean up the stalks, plow the earth and plant field peas as a cover crop to fix the nitrogen in the soil.

This model of sustainable gardening requires serious work. "But I think I must have lived through hard times in a former life," says Tracy Schneider, half-jokingly. "I love putting food away and saving it."

Tracy Schneider grew up in a gardening family. "If we lived in a place where we couldn't garden, we went to U-Pick-It places. It was my Mom and Dad who taught me how to can and freeze," she says. But Tracy was never forced to do more than she wanted, which usually meant she shelled peas, just like her girls do now. The rest of the time she watched her parent's enthusiasm and the pantry growing food right out of their love. This very same love shouts green and holy from her own garden today, spreading down and into the grateful earth. and outward into the next generation of gardeners.

What's In Our Name

Heart

We now know that the human brain supplies a running report of our environmental situation to the heart, and that the heart governs the brain's response. While the intelligence of the brain ask of a particular situation, "Can it be done?" the intelligence of the heart asks, "Should it be done?" It is imperative that we listen to

Earth

The fertile matrix, the Mother Gaia from which the web of life began to unfold 4 1/2 billion years ago, which is still unfolding, and of which humans are a part.

Heart and Earth share the same letters. For generations the disembodied intellect has ruled, and must now re-root in Heart and in Earth.

Can You Believe It? Local Cheese

By her own admission, dairy farmer Desiree Wehner never liked cheese until she discover "real" cheese in Italy. Desiree, with husband Al, decided to make cheese from the milk of their own cows and goats and opened Sweet Grass Dairy in Thomasville. The family operation produces a plethora of goodies: fresh Chevre, Georgia Gouda, Pesto Feta, and my favorites, two Pyrenees cheeses, one goat and one cow's milk. Sweet Grass Dairy products are carried by local retailers Someone's in the Kitchen, The Wine Club and Mosaik.

www.sweetgrassdairy.com

Locally Raised Beef

By Mary Beth McBride, a Subtle Energy Healer and Physician's Assistant

As an energy healer, I find it is important to eat high quality food. Moreover, my energy levels are stronger and more grounded when I eat food that is locally grown. Depending on my own healing process, I need a variety of foods at different times, and that occasionally includes red meat. However, I couldn't eat the meat sold in the grocery stores – full of antibiotics, growth hormones and chemicals. In contrast, meat from grass fed cattle has less fat and more beneficial components, such as vitamin E, beta-carotene, omega 3 fatty acids, and conjugated linoleic acid.



Home Park Farm, located in Thomasville, Georgia offers

high quality, locally raised beef for sale. Last spring, I visited Home Park—I wanted to see for myself how it operates. Neither the fields, nor the greenways along the roadside, are sprayed with any chemicals. The cows look healthy, with shiny eyes and sleek coats. Charles Conklin, Home Park's owner, doesn't use antibiotics or hormones on his herd, instead allowing for natural selection and a stock that is strong and naturally resistant to diseases. Conklin has lived on this land all of his life, and raised cattle here for 35 years, pioneering in his efforts to raise Angus cattle in an environmentally sensitive way.

Home Park beef is sold by the whole or half cow (you'll need to coordinate your own group of buyers to share the meat). When it's time, the cow is taken to a local butcher shop in Georgia, where it is ground or cut up into steaks and roasts. Last year I bought a half a cow with 4 other families; my share filled half of a top-loading freezer, and has provided me more than a year of absolutely delightful dining. Cost is approximately \$2-3 per pound.

To contact Home park Farm, call (229) 228-6548 or write 167 Home Park Farm, Thomasville, Georgia 31757

The Economy of Our Garden

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an astonishingly wasteful society: too many cheap products winding up in local landfills.

We give permission to corporations to produce whatever we desire. In most cases, we have no idea what goes into the production of items we buy, the true cost to us or others in terms of health and wholeness, nor who or what suffered in their production. This is especially true of our food, the most fundamental of necessities: most of it arrives heavily fertilized and pesticides, gassed or waxed, irradiated, treated with hormones or steroids, highly processed or genetically modified; and from a very long distance, requiring

a tremendous use of fossil fuels. Corporate production of food comes at great expense to our land, our rural communities, and to our own bodies.

The only way our family knows to slow down the global market economy is to produce whatever we can, and to buy whatever else we need from as local a source as possible.



Because we garden organically, we get food that is more nutritious, containing trace minerals not found in synthetic fertilizers. A fair amount of exercise is achieved with tilling, hoeing, or chasing down grasshoppers. This gar-

den exercise also give us a connection with the earth, and time to converse.

Organic gardening is healthier for the plants as well. Synthetic fertilizers contain no carbon or organic matter. They usually work too fast and provide too many nutrients, most notably nitrogen. This causes plants to have thin cell walls, leaving them less able to withstand drought, cold, and insect attack. This process is much like what happens when we eat too much refined sugar in order to metabolize the sugar, minerals and vitamins must be borrowed from the body, lowering our defenses to cold and flu.



You are invited to join the work of Heart of the Earth

The money to print this newsletter (about \$800 per issue) and to cover the minimal expenses of this voluntary movement is donated by supporters like you. Please support our vital effort. And please: do something significant each week to curb global warming.

Sign our pledge. Join our efforts to "cool the earth"

Make a contribution

_____ \$10 _____ \$15 _____ \$25
_____ \$50 _____ \$100

Volunteer

As we try to keep our garden producing all year long, with as much variety as possible, we will have gaps, but there will be no gaps in our ooh's and ahh's as we bite into fresh-off-the-plant vegetables that replenished rather than depleted the earth, and that contributed nothing to a doomed economic system. *Raven and Janisse have been battling army worms all spring at the Crawfordville home. Raven is a wood worker and letter carrier, and Janisse is a writer, author of Ecology of a Cracker Childhood, which was chosen for All Georgia Reading the Same Book 2002. She is a commentator for NPR's "Living on Earth."*

**UPDATE:
The Earth Continues
to Warm...**

We can't relax our efforts to deduce global warming. Here is a list of global temperature ranks for the past 12 month, four of which have been the hottest on record (source: *Knight Ridder Tribune*)

2002

April: second hottest on record

March: Hottest on Record

February: second hottest on record

January: Hottest on Record

2001

December: tenth hottest on record

November: Hottest on record

October: Hottest on record

September: eighth hottest on record

CALENDAR

July 9

Tuesday, 7 p.m.
Call for Neighborhood Eco-Team Leaders

Coffee Shop "Java Heads", Railroad St., just north of the tracks.

Learn about a program that brings neighbors together, saving money and changing life styles. All welcome. E-mail Lucyann@heartoftheearth.org or call 668-1364.

July 28

Sunday
Upper Ochlockonee River Paddling Trip

For more info call The Wilderness Way at (850) 877-7200.

August 26 to September 4

World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg

10 years after the Earth Summit in Rio it's time to take some concrete steps implementing the Agenda 21. Keep up with what's happening at: www.johannesburgsummit.org

August 29 Environmental Candidates Forum Thursday, 6:30-9 p.m.

City Commission Chambers
Check out who stands for what—make sure your vote is an informed one.

September 23

Monday, 7 p.m.
"Sense of Place" Study Circle

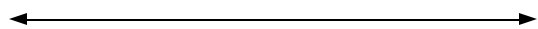
At the Healing Center, 847 Park Avenue
Organizational meeting for the 8-week session, developed by the Northwest Earth Institute. This course focuses on consciously developing an intimate relationship with our place and helps with understanding the bioregional perspective. All welcome. For more information e-mail barry@heartoftheearth.org or call 216-8400

September 22 Sunday, 11:55 p.m. Autumn Equinox

The Heart of the Earth Pledge

- I vow to investigate what it means to become native to this place, and to do so in accordance with the ecological realities of this landscape.
- I vow to investigate the use of fossil fuel energy sources by my household, and as far as I am able, to reduce that us by 30% within the next 36 months.
- I will measure my purchases, travel, lifestyle and desires against the following two questions:
 - Is it sustainable?
 - What do the unborn of all species, all those waiting to be born, ask of me now?

Our next newsletter is going to focus on alternative transportation issues in our bioregion. For ideas or special interests you think should be included please contact Kitty at kitkerner@att.net



Show your support for Heart of the Earth with our attractive bumper stickers, designed by E'Layne Koenigsberg. They are available at the Healing Center lobby, 847 E. Park Ave.