

Down on the Farm

Uniqueness & Variety

"Diversity provides both the resistance to monocultures and the creative alternative. Our strength is our uniqueness and variety, a strength that can be eroded only when we give up on it ourselves." — Vandana Shiva

Diversity in nature appears to be a cornerstone of sustainability. And sustainable agriculture, according to ATTRA, the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, "follows the principles of nature to develop systems for raising crops and livestock that are, like nature, self-sustaining."



Our farm directors observe and teach this principle daily: Greater diversity leads to less pest problems. Imagine 2 acres of a single crop that a pest loves, then imagine 2 acres of diverse crops that includes habitat for beneficial insects. The nutrient levels of the soil can be more easily maintained because different crops give and take differently. With a diverse farm plan, if you lose a crop, you don't lose everything. You're not investing all your eggs in one basket. For these same reasons, diversity encourages resilience—another key element of sustainability. Agriculture grows evermore sustainable as it approaches the profound diversity of Nature.

Diversity is a feature of the community of people at HGP also. Diversity makes our community more resilient which helps to sustain it. One of our farm directors observed: "Well, we've all had different experiences and have different strengths, so when we approach a problem, we have different insights." The relationship between diversity in agriculture and in community is more than poetic. At the intersection of agriculture and community is food. *Manifestos on the Future of Food and Seed*, speaks of "food communities": "These communities are depositaries of ancient and modern wisdom. They are an important and strategic factor in human nutrition, in the delicate balance between nature and culture that underpins our very existence." For the past 22 weeks, I witnessed the beauty of our "food community," as food harvested in the morning was shared in the afternoon with our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) members. Gifts of zucchini bread or cookies were made, recipes were exchanged and evaluated.

As Thanksgiving's harvest celebration of gratitude approaches, we move from the garden to the workshop to craft—from the farm's abundance—gifts that will fill our holiday store. Please support our programs by shopping at our store and encouraging your friends and neighbors to visit us. You'll see in this newsletter that the Good Times has included us in this year's Good Times Community Fund. To all of our readers who donate time and money to help our programs, thank you. Thank you for working with us to achieve and sustain our goals of diversity and resilience. We depend on your strengths, insights and generosity of spirit.

— Darrie Ganzhorn is Director of Programs and Operations

Thanks Giving

When I was young, I would sometimes go to work with my dad. Walking from the commuter train to and from the office, we'd pass individuals "begging" on the streets. Every time, he would drop money into their cups or hats laying out on the sidewalk. He did it almost in a reverent sort of way. Eventually I asked him why he seemed to go out of his way to do that, and he replied, "There but for the Grace of God, go I." It was his way of giving thanks. At 18 years old, the Homeless Garden Project is in a growth spurt—and much like any 18 year old, it is a time of evolution and growth, and looking forward to an exciting—and not entirely known—future.

Here are the exciting parts: after 18 years, the Homeless Garden Project continues to thrive with an expanded garden and more produce filling the bags of our CSA members than ever before; expanded outreach to the broader community through presentations and publicity.

With over 50% of our income coming from donations, it is challenging to plan our budget each year; we estimate based on previous years. Of course, each year we'd like to provide more services than the previous year. CSA helps because we know that everything we grow is sold; we know what our total income from CSA will be for the year, and when it will come. Because we want to provide the highest level of services possible with the resources we have, we are looking for ways to build in this kind of predictability.

This is where you come in! A long-term strategy at the Homeless Garden Project is to create a more level and more predictable income stream. One way to accomplish this is to ask our wonderful and giving donors (you) to consider making monthly pledges, a thanks giving if you will. It's easy and not at all painful, we can even make regular secure deductions from your credit card so that you don't even have to mess with envelopes and postage—adding to the concepts of green and sustainable! Just fill out the form next to the address panel, send it in the enclosed envelope and we will take care of the rest.

— Suzy Hunt, Development Director

Voices from the Fields...

Interview with Betty.

*This interview is a collaboration between two trainees—
one wrote the questions and one answered.*

What is your previous employment experience?

I did computer drafting and technical illustration for 17 years and I was definitely blessed working there. I learned a lot. I worked for some highly intelligent people. It blows me away that they hired me off the street and totally trained me. We had a lot of good times. It really built my morale to have a sense of community at work. It was a shock getting laid off. I really loved my job and being unemployed was scary. I was insecure because I'd never had a real job interview.

What are your passions, talents and gifts?

My art work—I do pen and ink drawings and photography. Since I started working at the farm, I've really gotten back into my photography. It's really opened my eyes to my passion for art work. I feel I get along with people. My gardening skills.

How do your passions and skills serve you at the garden?

Well, I sold some of my art work. I definitely don't mind getting wet and dirty. I like helping people out. It's fun to laugh up there at the garden. I've met some good people. My passion is to learn. There's a lot to learn there. When I first started working there, I thought I knew everything about gardening. I don't, but I'm working on it.

What positive experiences have you enjoyed at the Garden?

Laughter, learning, making friends. Realizing that organic farming is very important.

Where would you like to go after the garden?

That's what I'm getting scared about, because I don't know. I don't want to leave the farm. I don't know what's going to happen. It's a jungle out there. I need to get busy with my art work. I need to learn more computer skills and get back into my art classes. When I leave the garden, I'm going to take a lot with me—a lot of memories, a lot of friends.

What is most valuable to you at HGP?

Being at HGP opened my eyes to other avenues in life. I love seeing the whole cycle, from the ground up to the gift shop, from seed to wreath. What I've learned here I can apply to a lot of things. It makes me realize that the world is a beautiful place and I want to give more to the community. There are a lot of people that need—and I'd like to give more.

It's a blessing to see the children who visit the farm and gather the food from the fields. I find it a shame that the kitchen was burned down, but it was a blessing how the people in the community came to help. It's neat that volunteers bring us lunch; that people go out of their way and donate their time to feed us. I appreciate the job training lectures—Joanne (a volunteer) showing us how to make pots with mosaics, Dawn showing us how to make candles, and Bob Bugg (a volunteer) doing a class on entomology.

At the garden, everyone teaches others something. Everyone has something to offer. There might be differences between people, but you can tell everybody cares.

— Betty is a HGP trainee

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Voices from the Fields...

Time for Learning and Time for Healing

In *Think on These Things*, Krishnamurti suggests that we “...observe the falling of a leaf, ...and your own thoughts as they chase each other across the space of your mind. If you are able to be alone and watch these things, then you will discover extraordinary riches which no government can tax, no human agency can corrupt and which can never be destroyed.” I feel this is a very important thing that happens on our farm. People are given tasks to complete, offered direction, then set free to discover it as it all unfolds before them. The Homeless Garden Project doesn't simply supply trainees with jobs and an income. It gives them the space to grow, to explore the inner workings of their minds, or to expand beyond that. Sometimes this experience can be soothing and comforting, other times we may be shocked by what is revealed. Either way, we are bound to learn something!

I, too, have the pleasure of discovering this in the garden. My job is often to be the face of the garden, to host groups and welcome volunteers. I learn a lot this way, pushing through the everyday interactions of humans and soil, personalities and plants. Often, I find that I learn even more from my own push and pull with emotions, thought processes and the wonders that quiet hands in soil can work.

The past few months have offered me some of life's greatest challenges resulting in my widest smiles and my most feared tears. The one solid thing through these trying times has been the garden. I woke up many mornings, forcing myself out of bed only so I could go to work to get dirty and find comfort in what was there. There's this thing that happens when I weed a bed that is akin to no other. It's my chance to be alone in the garden, after everyone has left for the day, and move through some stuff. I can start out angry, sad, confused, and through the process of removing all those unwanted plants, I am left feeling more settled and grounded. Slowing down after a long day's work helps me to see the beauty in life's simplicity.

Gardening is all about picking and choosing and following your passion." Each of us who step on to Natural Bridges Farm can feel this, whether we're going through recovery, dealing with trauma, or simply learning new skills.

In her book *Gardening at the Dragon's Gate*, Wendy Johnson observes that: “Gardening is about awareness and relationship—consequential relationship. It's about taking a stand, and standing by your principles. At the same time, it's about giving up control and learning from our mistakes... Gardening is all about picking and choosing and following your passion.” Each of us who step on to Natural Bridges Farm can feel this, whether we're going through recovery, dealing with trauma, or simply learning new skills. It's up to each of us everyday to decide to pull the weeds only to get up feeling more entangled with life's dramas, or to use that as an opportunity to clear out the cobwebs and move forward more clearly. We each make thousands of choices every day, and I'm learning from the garden—I choose to thrive.

—Layla Aguilar is Outreach Director at the Homeless Garden Project and is currently helping to supervise trainees in the workshop as we get ready for the holiday season.

A note from Layla:

It is with great excitement (and a bit of anxiety!) that I announce my departure from the Homeless Garden Project. The experience of working here over the past two years has provided many enriching lessons and challenges. It has been wonderful to see everyone that works here grow with the Project, and I am grateful to the hundreds of community members, particularly youngsters, I have had the pleasure of working with. Without the support provided by you all, and the eagerness to learn more about what we do, I wouldn't have had such a fulfilling job to do for the past two years! So, thank you. The HGP is hoping to refill this position in the spring of 2009.



Photos in this issue were taken by Jon Kersey, Carol Buse, and Michael Laffoon. Thank you!

Voices from the Fields...

Recent tribute gifts

made to the Homeless Garden Project

A tribute gift to the Project is a great way to show your support of our programs while honoring the generous people in your life! We'll acknowledge your gift promptly by mailing a beautiful card of our organic flower farm to the individual, family, or organization that you are honoring or remembering. (Please remember to send their addresses!) For gifts of \$50 or more, we'll also send your tribute person a pair of 10" handmade beeswax candles created in our workshop program. The gift amount is not included with the card or candle. You'll receive our grateful confirmation of your gift for tax purposes.

Recent tribute gifts made to the Homeless Garden Project:

In Memory Of:

Dori Kessler Bodenheimer

— Allen Podell and Janet Silver Podell, James Kessler, Cathy Stefanki-Iglesias, Amber Jayanti, Jean Alexander, Nicolette M Czarrunchick, Andrea Tracy Reupert and Trent Reupert, Barbara Kletzman, Barbara Gabriel Litsky, Anonymous Allison Kroft, Melissa Haber, Adam Jones, Anna Landau, Anonymous Robert Kessler, Joyce Nicholson and Donald Kaleas, Thomas and Jeanne Lawrence
C.E. Angel —Catherine Steele
Mary Jo and George Miller — Betty and Peter Michelozzi
Abraham Cohen — Gena Connelly

In Honor Of:

Peter Michelozzi's birthday — Caitlin Brune and Christine Reyes
Michael DeNeffe's 52nd birthday — Joan DeNeffe



Thank you to our generous business supporters!

One business that was left off the list in our summer newsletter...

Cisco/Global Impact

Thank you to *Habitat for Humanity*

Local members of our local Habitat for Humanity came out to our farm and rebuilt our shed that was destroyed last year in a fire.



Thank you to the Foundations that have supported us in 2008

- AT&T Pebble Beach Charities
- Aufmuth Family Foundation
- Carolyn Moore and the George L Shields Foundation
- Helen and Will Webster Foundation
- JH Herz Family Foundation
- Kendall Jensen and Connie Hale Fund
- Lynne and Dan Alper Fund
- Mazal Foundation
- Newman's Own Foundation
- The Purple Lady/Barbara J Meislin Fund in honor of Stuart Kaplan
- The Quentin Hancock Fund, an advised fund of Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- Stocker Family Fund at the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County
- The Wendy E Jordan Fund



Homeless Garden Project

*selected by
Good Times
Community Fund!*

The Homeless Garden Project is honored to be selected by the Good Times as one of this year's four Good Times Community Fund recipients.

The Good Times Community Fund is a collaboration between the Good Times and the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County to raise awareness of and support for organizations like the Homeless Garden Project during the holiday giving season.

This means that the Homeless Garden Project will benefit from a feature length article about our programs in the Good Times. The Good Times also donates a full page ad to the campaign each week during November and December, encouraging Good Times readers to donate.

Donations will be eligible for 1:1 matching funds from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

In order for donations to qualify for the funding match they must be:

- 1 Made payable to the Community Foundation of SCC with "Good Times/Homeless Garden Project" on the memo line.
- 2 Checks must be dated and received by the Community Foundation no later than **January 5, 2009**.
- 3 Checks should be mailed directly to the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, 2425 Porter Street, Suite 17, Soquel, CA 95073.

You may also donate online at www.cfsc.org.

But remember, in order for HGP to be the recipient of the donation, please be sure to check the box designating the Homeless Garden Project. This also applies if submitting a donation using the coupon found in the Good Times.

Birdies for Charity® is a fun and easy way to make a charitable donation to the *Homeless Garden Project* plus a **10% match!**

It's based on the number of combined "birdies" scored by PGA Tour players throughout the 2009 AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am golf tournament, February 12-15, 2009. Great prizes, too!



Contact us at 831-426-3609 for a pledge form, or go to <https://birdies.attpbgolf.com> for rules and prize information and to pledge your support! Be sure to designate the Homeless Garden Project to receive your donation, plus a 10% match!



