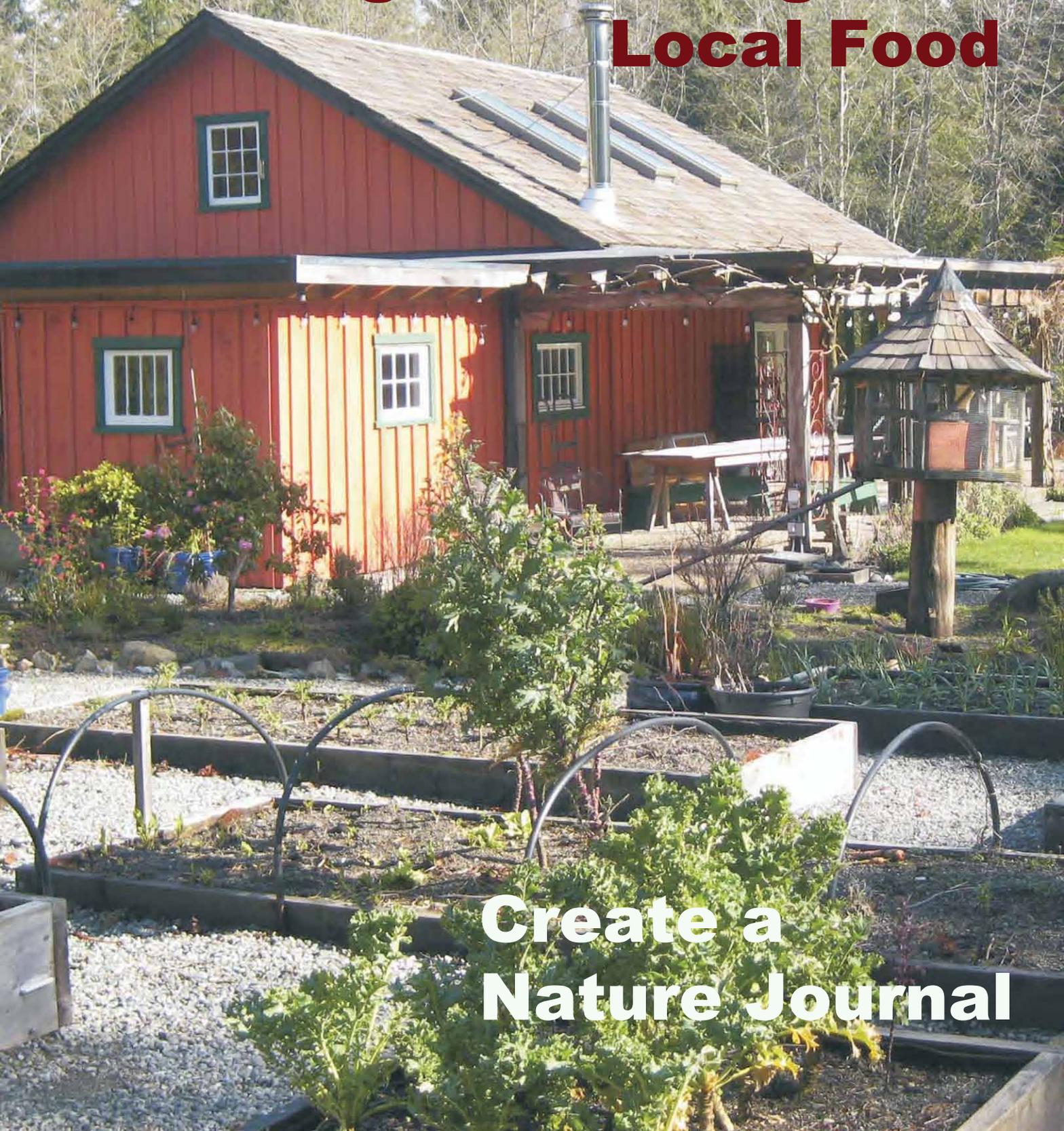


Natural Life

Magazine

**Producing and Selling
Local Food**



**Create a
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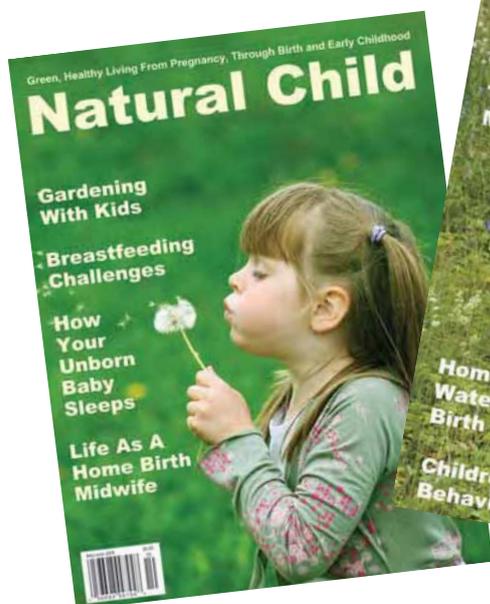
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Inspiring natural family living since 1976

July/August, 2013

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"To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival." ~ Wendell Berry

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From the Editor's Desk

It's Complicated

In the conclusion to her new book *Consumed: Food for a Finite Planet* (see my review on page 26), Sarah Elton wrote, "The future of food is not sound bite friendly." Indeed, creating the safe, healthy, fair, abundant, collaborative, sustainable, resilient, and affordable food supply that Elton describes seems to be getting ever more complicated.

The good news is that there are an increasing number of successful grassroots initiatives around the world that are contributing to the creation of such a food system. *Consumed* reports on a number of them, along with conversations with scientists and others who believe we can actually feed the world that way.

The bad news is that, in spite of the largest ever global protest against GMOs held at the end of May in over fifty countries, companies like Monsanto – with their genetically modified seeds and the ever-increasing amounts of pesticides those crops require – are still gaining ground (pun intended). Aside from all the evidence presented by Elton and what also appears to me to be a groundswell of positive change, there is still a lot of support for the corporate food agenda.

Unfortunately, we don't hear a lot about that positive stuff – the GMO protest, for instance, was barely covered by mainstream media. And while editing this issue of *Natural Life Magazine*, I came across a number of cynical and patronizing reviews of *Consumed* that seem designed to marginalize local and sustainable food systems. Elton's analysis and solutions have been called anecdotal, incomplete, elitist, oversimplified, wrong, naïve, and more. (I actually have to wonder if the reviewers – some of them academics – have read the book, since I found it to be comparatively thoughtful and balanced.)

Meanwhile, people continue to "offer an alternative economy, way of life, and way of experiencing life that is brave and far-sighted." Those are the words of our contributor Monika Carless, whose cover article in this issue offers profiles of some people who are growing food sustainably, and marketing it directly to consumers via CSAs, farmers markets, and roadside stands. Far-sighted, indeed. But it makes me wonder how something so simple could get so complicated.

Read Editor Wendy Priesnitz's blog at www.NaturalLifeMagazine.com/blog

Natural Life Magazine

July/August 2013

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Cover Photo:
© Monika Carless

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ISSN 0701-8002
Established 1976
Published six times per year
in digital format

Subscription Rates:
www.NaturalLifeMagazine.com/subscribe

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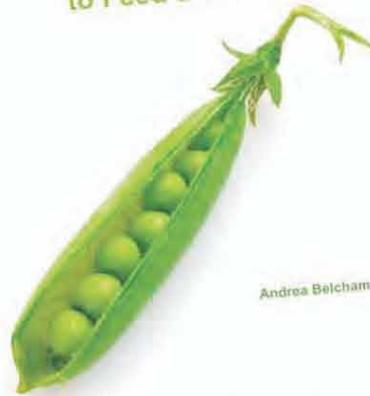
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Eco Nomics

Nurturing your Life and The Planet While Making a Living

By Wendy Priesnitz, Natural Life Magazine's Editor

Local Money

Few readers would disagree that our monetary system is dysfunctional. It rewards unsustainable growth, subsidizes economic disparities among people and locations, entrenches privilege, undermines democracy, and creates instability. The problem seems bigger than any of us. But there is a local solution, or at least a way of sidetracking the problem to some degree.

We can create our own local monetary systems. What are often called “complementary” currencies can create real, tangible wealth.

Although complementary currencies have a long history, the current economic conditions and the need for sustainable alternatives of all types have created an increase in interest. There are now thousands of these innovative currencies in use worldwide. Some are money-based systems where members pay for credits or paper currency that are used as cash to pay for goods or services. Others are time-based exchange systems and still others are community exchanges or barter networks. They all supplement conventional currencies as a medium of exchange and are not backed by national governments. Often, they are part of the shop local movement, encouraging people to support participating local and independent businesses, and keep money circulating locally.

If a community has high unemployment or underemployment, people have limited purchasing power. So local currencies provide a way for businesses to sell their goods and services and for people to buy what they need. Since they are generally only accepted within a specified community, their usage encourages the purchase of locally-produced goods and services, along with the resulting benefits to the local economy.

One long-standing system is LETS (Local Exchange Trading System), is time-based; members earn credits by providing a service to someone and “spend” them later on another service by another person in the network. LETS was started in 1983 in Courtenay, B.C., and there are now hundreds of LETS projects worldwide.

Timebanks have qualities that make them particularly useful to the poor and underprivileged. They value everyone's hours equally, intentionally fund community service and development work that it often otherwise not fundable, and operate more like a gift economy than a currency.

The BerkShares program is an example of a money-based community currency. It's designed to support local businesses in the Berkshires region of Massachusetts and was launched in the fall of 2006. Close to

three million have been circulated to date, with more than four hundred businesses accepting them. Thirteen branches of five different banks exchange U.S. dollars for BerkShares.

The Ithaca Hour is a local currency used in Ithaca, New York that's based on time and money. It was started in 1991 and is thought to be the oldest local currency system still operating in the U.S., although some businesses have, in recent years, withdrawn or cut back from participation. Founder Paul Glover has said, “We printed our own money because we watched Federal dollars come to town, shake a few hands, then leave to buy rainforest lumber and fight wars.” An Hour's value was set at ten dollars – the average wage/salary in the area at the time.

The Bristol Pound is a local currency launched in Bristol, England in 2012. Bristol Pounds can be spent using both paper notes and mobile phone texts with every business that joins the scheme. It is a non-profit partnership between a Community Interest Company and the local credit union, which manages the transactions. Businesses can pay their local taxes with Bristol Pounds, and the local government uses the income to pay its employees, who then spend it with local businesses. According to an article in *The Guardian* newspaper by local currency consultant John Rogers, even the mayor takes his salary in Bristol Pounds.

Likewise in the city of Nantes, France, both citizens and businesses can earn local currency and use it to offer goods and services, pay for bus tickets, car parking, and after-school activities, as well as their local taxes.

Other types of complementary currencies can cover a much wider geographic area and help bridge distance barriers. The Fureai kippu

system in Japan, created in 1995, issues credits in exchange for assistance to senior citizens. Family members living far from their parents can earn credits by offering assistance to the elderly in their local communities and the credits can then be transferred to their parents and redeemed for assistance by local residents and organizations.

Another way that complementary currencies benefit their communities is by connecting people, rather than controlling them. As writer Mira Luna notes on the website of the *Community Currency Magazine*: "Where national currency is not available because of overall scarcity or there is not enough market value for the work, investing in community currency means investing in your community's health for the long haul, and therefore your own security and happiness."

The resources at the end of this column will provide an in-depth view of these various types of local money. You'll also find lists of programs around the world so that you can participate in one in your area.

However, you can also employ the principles of complimentary currencies even when there isn't a formal system available. For instance, if you own a small business, you might consider offering barter as a pay-

ment option. If a customer has available something you would normally purchase using regular currency, why not trade products or services based on what you agree to be fair value? Barter and some complementary currency transactions are considered taxable income, but you'll still be building both the local economy and social capital.

Learn More

Rethinking Money: How New Currencies Turn Scarcity into Prosperity by Bernard Lietaer, Jacqui Dunne (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2013)

People Money - the Promise of Regional Currencies by Margrit Kennedy (Triarchy Press, 2012)

Creating Wealth: Growing Local Economies with Local Currencies by Gwendolyn Hallsmith, Bernard Lietaer (New Society, 2011)

Money: Understanding and Creating Alternatives to Legal Tender by Thomas Greco (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2001)

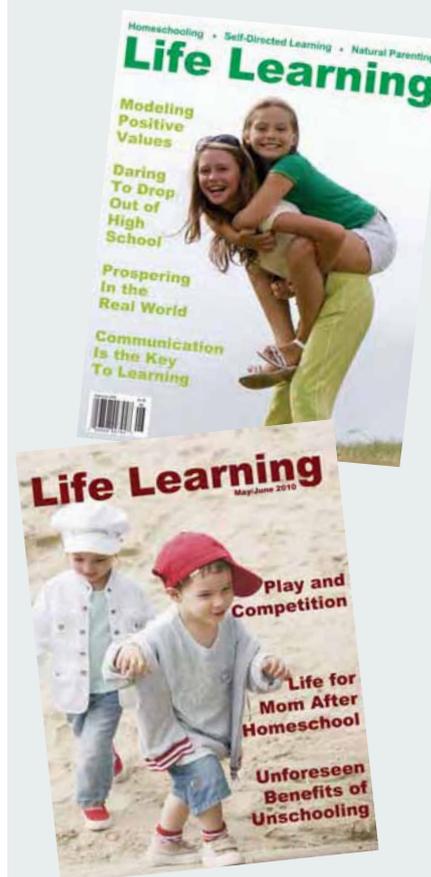
The Future of Money: Creating New Wealth, Work and a Wiser World by Bernard Lietaer (Century Publishers, 1999)

Hometown Money by Paul Glover (Ithaca Money, 1995, 2013)

What are Community Currencies
<http://qoin.org/community-currencies>
www.complementarycurrency.org
www.transaction.net/money/community
<http://reinventingmoney.com>
<http://ccmag.net>

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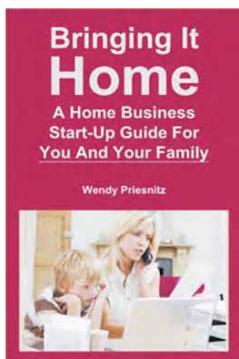
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Every Little Bite Helps

By Monika Carless

Locally grown fare is an ancient custom enjoying a modern revival. Maybe you're supporting the movement with your grocery dollar, are enjoying your own homegrown, or have researched its availability in your area, either through an organized CSA, farm gate sales, or a farmers market. You may have noticed that the people who raise and sell this food are what make local produce so interesting and viable. They are at the grassroots level of improving their community's economy and increasing local resilience against unpredictable world events, such as crop failures in far-away places, oil shortages, or drastic price increases of imported foodstuffs. They offer an alternative economy/way of life/way of experiencing life that is truly brave and far-sighted. It's not about the size of the enterprise of growing local, it's about taking the step towards a reasonable way of feeding ourselves and others. Meet some of the "who" and the "why."

Heritage Hill Farm, Shanty Bay, Ontario (non-certified, farmer verified produce and meat)

Not all dreams unfold at once. Shifting into who we will become and what role we will play in our community often begins with a step towards something quite ordinary. It's not often that we can see the whole road at the start of a journey. And maybe that is just as well, because otherwise who would buy a farm with class-6 soil (almost the poorest there is) and attempt to feed local families with whatever she could coax out of it?

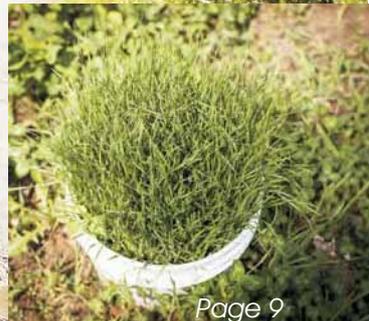
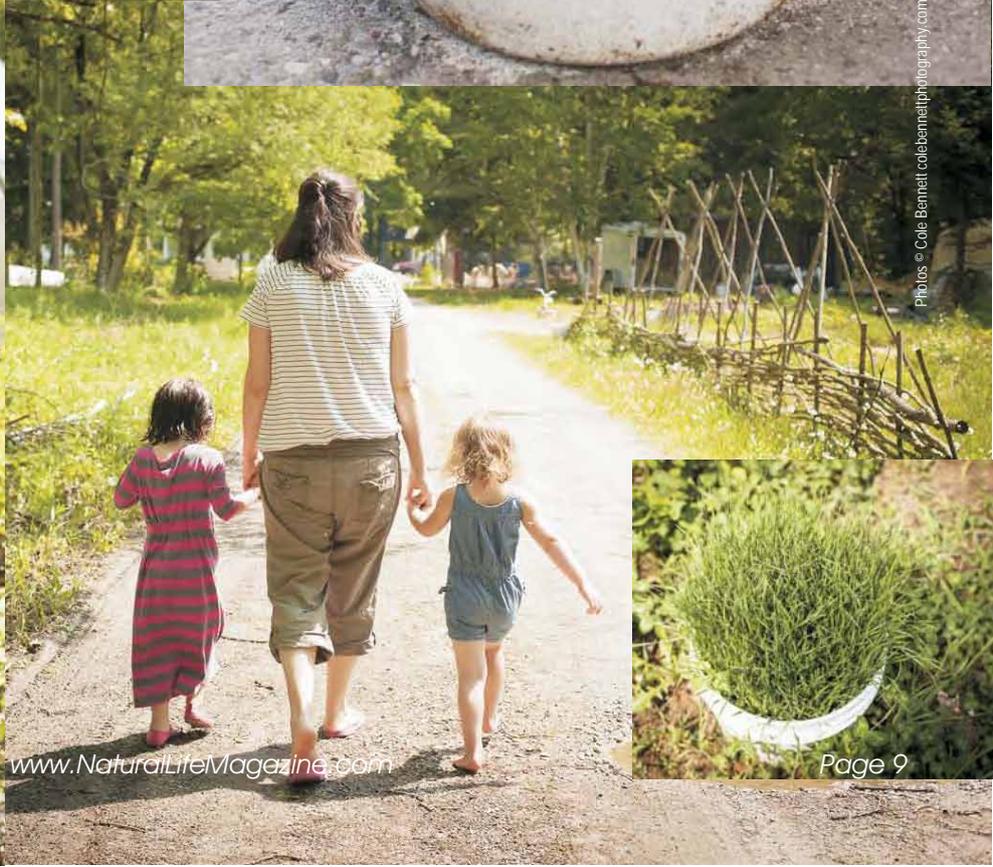
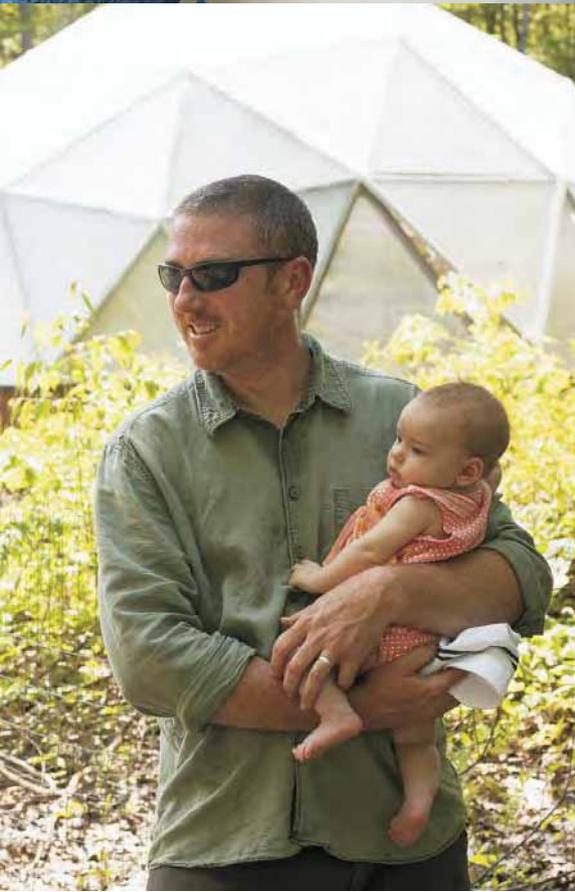
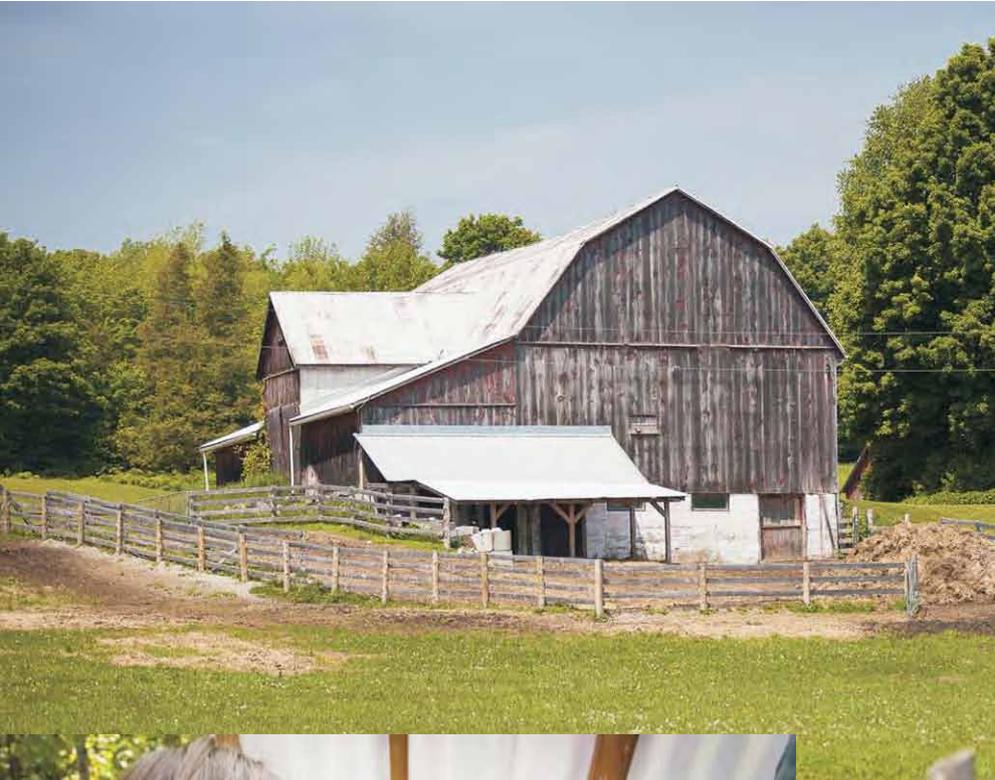
Heritage Hill Organics, run by Julie-ann Debruin, is an example of determination, love for the land, and sheer trust that each year will yield good food for seventeen or so appreciative families. At the start of the road, Julie and Hugh wanted to move from their village home to a farm so that they could garden and offer their children some of that good life. The idea was innocent enough – the seeds for a CSA were not yet planted, but rather were gestating within Julie's beliefs in sustainable living and environmental stewardship.

One day, a few fellow farmers in an adjoining township held a kitchen meeting for the Ecological Farmer's Association of Ontario and other assorted

farming aficionados. The guest speakers were Quaker farmers who were to share their CSA advice and their work with draft horses for ploughing. The kitchen overflowed with farmers and gardeners ranging from novice to expert, ideas were exchanged, along with, of course, some pretty spectacular baking and tea. It was one of those days that left you inspired and excited about local food production.

Julie and so many others that day went home with a determination to begin growing organic or at least sustainably farmed food to distribute within the area. It's quite easy to be romantic and dreamy about it all in such a setting. Indeed, if the dream was not so dreamy, we might not begin at all. Or at least, we might not think too much about which class our soil fell into. That one kitchen meeting resulted in friendships forged, CSAs begun, farmers markets started, and the building of a strong network of resources for growers and customers.

Julies' CSA began with five chickens. She had always loved tomatoes so she started with those as a main crop; she grows three dozen heritage varieties each year. The



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Photo © Cole Bennett colebennetphotography.com

CSA farmer Julie-ann Debruin in her greenhouse at Heritage Hill Organics.

soil, rocky and sandy at best, truly needs the manure the animals produce, as well as copious amounts of manure tea and red wigglers. Luckily, Julie has an enthusiastic hoard of manure producers: angora goats for fiber, goats, Scottish Black Face sheep (traditionally for carpet fibers but they also are good for meat), ducks, turkeys, chickens, shorthorn cattle, a llama, an alpaca, and two horses. Recently, Julie added pigs, all pastured of course. Whew!

One of the best days at Julie's farm is in the spring when the ducklings run in a captivating line of yellow fuzz from one end of the barnyard to the other. If you dream of starting a CSA, you should go over on *that* day! You will also see a greenhouse full of seedlings and early crops, the animals grazing peacefully in the fields after the long days of winter in the barn, and Julie working the land and making room for chicks and newborn animals.

But the days that truly show Julie to be dedicated to a better planet are when it's hot and weedy, when she's harvesting at early dawn and greeting customers until dark, when it's twenty below zero and she's out in the dark feeding the livestock or pondering how to get the frozen water lines working. One year, Julie's CSA fed forty

families, but this proved to be a daunting task for a one-woman show. Volunteers are always welcome, especially at shearing time. Okay, anytime.

Recently, to make living off farm profits more achievable, the family invested in solar panels that feed into the grid, all part of the dream towards sustainability and local resilience. Hugh also grows organic hops and produces maple syrup; a diversified farm has a much better chance of surviving the harsh realities of today's economy.

Julie says that the customers who benefit most from a CSA scheme are those who love the experience of the farm visit, who bring their children or parents for the pick-up, and who share in the risk and losses due to weather. She has refunded here and there when crop failures were truly bad, but with the new meat basket on offer, she is confident that losses in the veg department can be made up.

There is definitely a balance between offering affordable/quality food and still paying yourself a wage. Farmers earn less than almost anyone else, and I have yet to meet one who can afford to say that they will do it strictly for the love of it. Our food has become so cheap that we



Solar panels at Heritage Hill Organics contribute to the farm's sustainability.

have lost an appreciation for what it takes to grow it. I don't mean food that is force-fed with chemical enemas and appears all robust and healthy. I mean food that took the labor of human hands and that is nutritionally dense, and not freakishly perfect.

Pick-your-own for kids is a proven hit at Julie's farm (such as pumpkins, cucumbers, beans, strawberries), as is the pick-your-own herb patch. Her customers often mention that they have learned so much about new veg from her, some never having had a zucchini! Chickens scratching in the garden are often cited as the biggest pleasure. Society is starved for the simple things, without a doubt.

New to the farm are Heartnut trees and Paw Paws. Julie would love to move into being a fiber/grain CSA, but that is a dream for tomorrow.

"I love this farm," she has often said to me, staring into the distance towards a favorite view of the back fields. "Have you ever been here at sunset?" And that pretty much sums it up. Julie loves her land, and the land loves her back. ▶

WHAT IS A CSA?

CSA means community shared agriculture.

What is shared? The dream of local food availability, all the benefits of shopping at the farm, as well as the risks presented by weather and crop failures.

How does it work? The consumer pre-pays for a share of the harvest, usually in the spring. This way the farmer is guaranteed a market for what she grows and has the resources needed to begin the spring work. Local families pick up field fresh produce/meat – which may be heirloom, organic, farmer verified, and/or sustainably raised – at a pre-determined spot, but usually at the farmgate.

What else might be offered? Other farm products such as honey, maple syrup, baking, dairy, prepared food such as sausages or preserves, flowers, products from other local farms, fruit, a harvest festival, a newsletter, an education into food production, and love of the soil/community.

What are some important questions I might ask of the farmer? Is all the produce from this farm, if not, from where? Is the feed you offer your animals GMO-free? What are the rules of this CSA? Can I volunteer here?

What is the best thing you can say to a local food producer? Thank You! I love the food you grow. (I'm just sayin'.....there might be tears. Farmers can be a sensitive lot. Some of them even write poetry on their pick-up bags.)



Photo © Cole Bennett colabennettphotography.com

Cindy Mackenzie checks out apple blossoms at her Copeland Creek Farm.

Cindy and Dave Mackenzie, Copeland Creek Farm, Penetanguishene, Ontario (certified organic produce and grass-fed beef)

Cindy Mackenzie was at that same kitchen meeting where I first met Julie. As time went on and other meetings cropped up, I got to know Cindy as a woman deeply devoted to her family farm and to the purpose she sees in what she does. Copeland Creek farm produces grass-fed beef, nine varieties of apples, and a veg CSA, in an idyllic hilly setting overlooking historic Penetanguishene harbor. It's truly one of the prettiest farms I have ever visited and holds a powerful energy that I attribute to Cindy's love for her home. I took some time deciding to interview Cindy because I respect that she lives and farms in a beautiful mix of privacy and quiet contemplation. In the end, I sent her some questions and have been truly moved by what we talked about in her kitchen a few weeks later. Here are a couple of my questions and Cindy's responses.

What motivates you to run a CSA and remain on your land?

"Food has always held my interest. Good nutritious food makes a difference in people's lives. I really believe

that you are what you eat. So if one is concerned for the fuel of their family, the ingredients, preparation and ritual of eating, then I am privileged to be a part of it."

What is the hope for the future in terms of preservation of your land, and what makes your farm distinct?

"In our area, almost every piece of arable land has been turned up for grain production. Our farm is a grass farm. We are not invasive and hopefully will remain so. Farmers need support to leave intact the biodiversity of their farms. We have so much food in North America, that food is now used for fuel – that really hurts the hungry.

"Our farm has been part of the local history, serving the logging industry, as was another neighboring farm. Early native settlements revealed the farm's value as a protective sanctuary. As a farm, it has re-connected food production with its biodiversity. By restoring forest and pasture edges for wildlife corridors and maintaining grasslands/wetlands, we have preserved the flavor of our community and enjoy abundant wildlife."

Cindy has cut down her regular CSA customers from thirty to ten families and enjoys meeting her customers at the local farmers market, finding it least stressful. Her CSA food basket often contains sweet, crunchy carrots and marvelous parsnips, garlic, onions, greens, etc. Cindy's produce is packed with flavor. That flavor comes from well-tended soil and a well-tended dream.

Her son Will continues the family tradition with his own efforts at raising organic beef, having been one of the first to graduate from Guelph University's Organic Agriculture program, and is cutting his own path by grow-

ing organic grain as a judicious addition to his herd's diet. Cindy finds that each customer has a distinct preference for either grain added or not.

The farm started with seven hundred apple trees and, over the years, Cindy has thinned the McIntosh apples, which were purchased as dwarf stock but grew to standard size. Trees came and went as the years went on, and now the farm grows about three hundred and fifty trees. She reminisces that there have been many unexpected losses but also great wonder with a life in an orchard.

Kim & Trish Mauriks – Northwest Bay Ranch, Nanoose Bay, B.C. (sustainably caught seafood, farmer verified beef and lamb)

Farmers face many challenges in bringing their crops to the local market; most often mentioned is sales and marketing. It seems like the least favorite aspect of growing food for many, involving determination, organization, some financial input and time. Trish and Kim Mauriks of Northwest Bay Ranch have shown me that approached with optimism, sales and marketing of their produce can be wildly successful.

A fishing family, Kim and Trish catch crab in local waters and supply eight grocery stores within a hundred mile radius, concentrating on quality and freshness. They sell their catch under the brand name Seafood4.Life. There is opportunity to supply more stores, but that would mean purchasing from others, and they could not guarantee the quality that they are committed to, and of course it would no longer be local. After investigating several markets and finding the term "local" used very loosely, it is truly inspiring to see this kind of integrity.

Trish also raises Dorper sheep, a meat breed, and the day I arrived at the ranch, I was greeted by a herd of very friendly lambs, which came running to the sound of Trish's call. We toured the ranch, stopping to see the horses. There is no doubt that this is a labor of love and that they enjoy where they live. There is a certain dynamic that happens between land and farmer once a person gives over their heart to their property. And it's in no short supply here.

Trish runs a farm store that is open every Friday, and lucky customers can purchase (in season and as is available) chicken, beef, eggs, lamb, crab (all year), prawns, tuna, and ling cod (frozen at sea). The beef is pastured and also fed non-GMO barley to finish. They supply 3,500



Photo © Seafood4Life.com

Trish and Kim Mauriks crabbing.

local homes and families through farm store sales. I asked Trish, "How much of what you catch and produce is sold every week?" I thought I heard her say, "All of it." I'm sure I sat there looking silly and blank faced. "Oh," I replied. "Do you do a lot of marketing, advertising?" "No, we have signs at the end of the driveway, and if someone wants to get to Nanaimo or back they have to drive past our farm. A lot of it has been word of mouth; we've been very fortunate." "Oh," I said again with, I'm sure, the same look on my face. It's just that I rarely hear that response. Trish and Kim's produce is farmer verified as to the practices they use to raise their livestock. I can attest to the quality of the crab; I had some. They are also hosting a crab fest at the ranch this summer, which I'm positive will be a mouth-watering experience. ▶



Photo © Cole Bennett colebennettphotography.com

10 Fold Farm's dome is for growing greens and serving up gourmet meals.

Nathan and Melissa McCosker, 10 Fold Farm, Waubaushene, Ontario (farmer verified produce)

If you happen down the long laneway towards 10 Fold Farm, you will sight free-range, barefoot children and assorted poultry. To one side, Berkshire pigs root around in a forest paddock that will one day be turned over to one crop or another. Goats, in suitable arrangements, nibble on fresh cut branches from the woods, while Nathan and Melissa tend to their Hugelkultur veggie beds (see sidebar, right), or early crops in simple greenhouses. There is also a spectacular dome for growing greens and alternating to a serving area when the McCoskers join forces with a local chef to cook up their farm-grown gastronomical delicacies.

From April to December, the farm offers ingredients for a whole food diet, completely carved from a forest habitat. The Hugelkultur (see right) beds are an adapted lasagna garden design; first logs are laid down, and then piled with sand, then chicken/goat manure compost, with crags left open for small creatures and bugs to make their home and help the breakdown of the logs. Nathan says that the CSA will one day morph into a member's farm, and talks of agro-ecology (see right) as being something that drives his philosophies about farming.

Hugelkultur

The rough translation is *mound* or *hill culture*. Used for centuries in Eastern Europe, and especially in Germany, Hugelkultur is a sustainable form of building raised beds using logs and branches as the base, which are then piled with layers of sand/soil, compost, and manure as a growing medium. These mounds can start on top of the ground or be built in a trench. Especially good where digging is not allowed or possible, it makes good use of woody debris, which will decompose to provide a rich environment for crops. The rotting logs need the addition of compost to make up for the nitrogen used up in decomposing.

Hugelkultur fits well within permaculture principles and is gaining in popularity as a less invasive way of building and maintaining garden beds.

Agro-ecology

A multi system approach to farming and growing food for a hungry planet, agro-ecology is tolerant of many philosophies but focuses on natural systems found by example in Nature and permaculture principles. As each growing region has its own specific requirements, the focus remains on addressing these needs using as many resources as possible, including cultural and political systems of the region.

Together, Nathan and Melissa are passionate about a great many things to do with peak oil, eating a nutrient-dense diet, the real cost of farming and food, raising animals ethically, and so on. In speaking with them about their lives and their beliefs, I was consciously aware that the time they were graciously granting me for an interview meant lost productivity for the day. Yet, they shared with me as people who know the value of discussing ideas about the future of our species and planet. 10 Fold also grows Shitake and Oyster mushrooms, and offers workshops on creating your own mushroom log colonies.

On Saturdays, the farm store is open to CSA members and others, while Wednesdays sees a box drop-off at a restaurant in nearby Midland called *Ciboulette et Cie*, owned by Chef Andre Sanche who also purchases local-grown for his restaurant. Nathan and Melissa are working on extending their season with winter sprouts and greens, and naturally preserved food. The CSA runs on an email list, meat is offered in season and as available, plus whatever is going at the time in veg. This is a farm based on well thought out principles of living in co-operation with Nature, and fits well into its surroundings.

I hope you have enjoyed meeting these people who are at the grassroots level of improving their communities' economy and increasing local resilience against

unpredictable world events. They truly offer an alternative economy, way of life, and way of experiencing life that is brave and far-sighted.

Monika Carless lives and gardens in Ontario, Canada. She promotes sustainable living practices and local food production, currently sharing growing space on a friend's farm after moving from a smallholding. She hopes for a future where co-operative living is what we do instinctively, and that growing food will pass from the hands of the few to the hands of the many. Monika can be reached through her website www.wholeearthspirit.com.



Photo © Cole Bennett colebennettphotography.com

The McCosker family at their 10 Fold Farm.

Cover Photo: Eco-Lodge, Tofino Botanical Gardens, Clayoquot Sound, B.C.

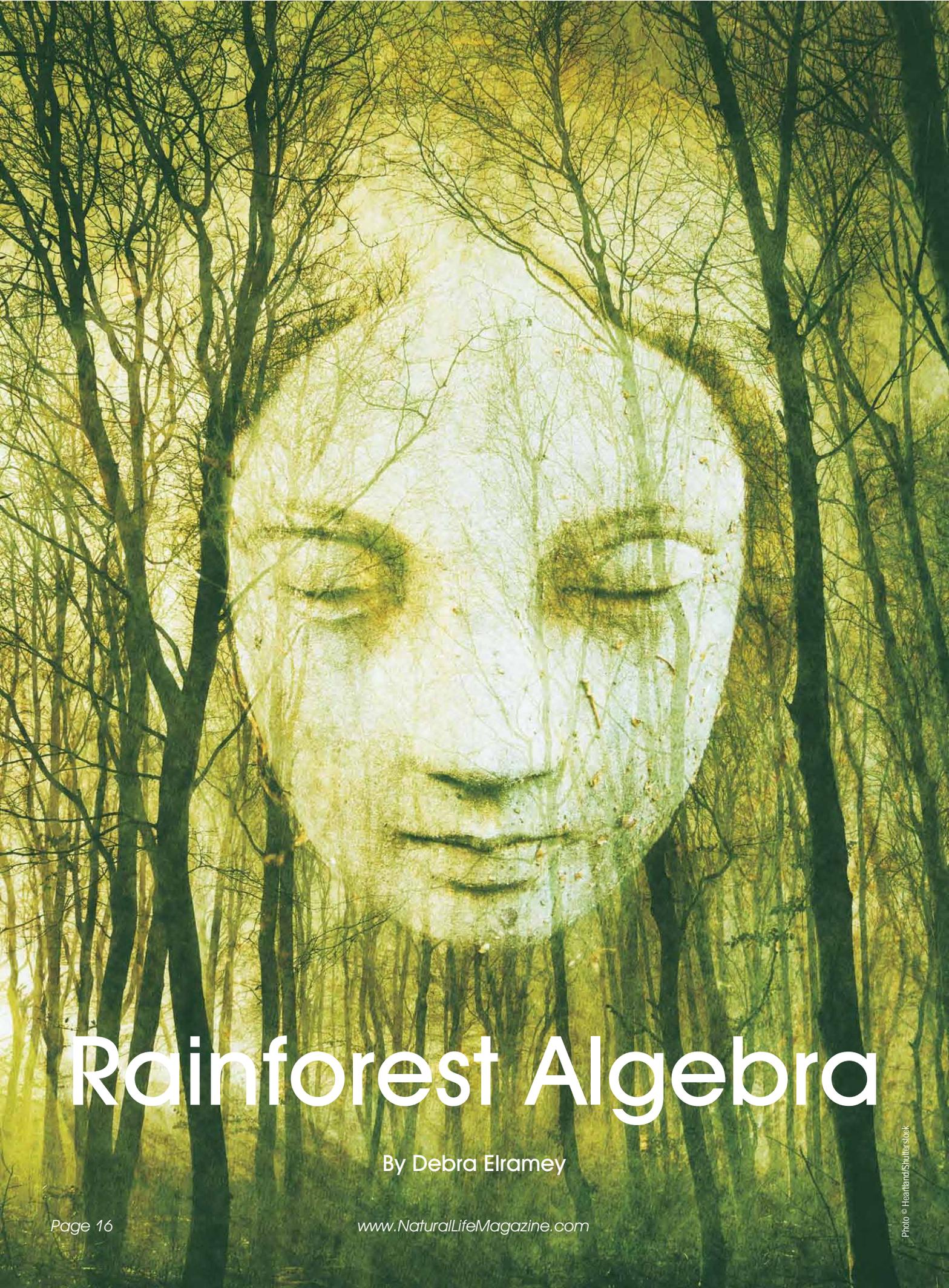
Where to stay and eat local food when touring the wild edge of the western world and interviewing the Mauriks of Nanoose Bay? My daughters and I sought out an Eco-Lodge, formerly a youth hostel, in Tofino's Botanical Gardens. In a mystical setting of mud-flats, forests, and gardens, we found an example of passion and intuitiveness towards the earth at work.

The mission of the Eco-Lodge and Gardens is to strengthen the bond between people of all ages and the natural world, focusing on learning, relaxing, and conversation. The food here is truly local; a few feet from the Garden's Darwin Café and the self-serve eco-lodge kitchen, one can pick their own herbs for supper or eat eggs gathered from the nearby coop. The lodge houses a three-hundred-volume Nature book library and the Darwin Collection of Natural History. Most inspiring to see in

the gardens was a gazebo built by Jan Jantzen, one of the great carpenter's and sculptors featured in the book *Builders of the Pacific Coast* by Lloyd Kahn.

Eating our eggs one morning, cooked perfectly by our host Phil, and then touring the gardens yet another time, I could see answers to the question of "how to live in an environment without diminishing it." Phil offered inspiring conversation regarding nourishing ourselves and also the planet, as I looked out the window to work being done in the raised beds. Growing our own food, or supporting locally grown, is what we can ask of ourselves as individuals, as part of the rehabilitation process after the destructiveness of the industrial age. And every little bite helps.

- NL -



Rainforest Algebra

By Debra Elramey

A mother analyzes her dream, which contains symbols pertaining to simplifying life and thinking self-reliantly, and to helping her teenage daughter find and follow her own authentic path, taking her time and recognizing that “soul work is more important than school work.”

I have been into depth psychology since my firstborn was breastfeeding. I remember sitting in the rocker back in the day, nursing my son and reading Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Then, in the mid-1990s, I graduated to Jung and found his writings more compatible. Subsequently, I taught my youngest daughter, Abi, born in 1995, to honor her dreams by recording them in a journal and discussing them. It's nothing unusual for her to crawl into bed with me and say, "I had the strangest dream last night...." Mornings find us sharing our night visions and exploring their meanings first thing.

Recently I dreamt the following:

Scene one: I'm in a city, an old stomping ground that has burgeoned into a metropolis. A city so huge that I've lost my way and have to ask directions to a certain place. The guy of whom I ask directions says, "It's complicated; why don't you just follow me there?"

Scene two: I'm at auditions. Near the casting directors sits a girl in a blue cashmere sweater, jeans, and boots. Ironically she isn't even there for the auditions, but is talking to the directors in a Brooklyn accent. They look at each other, the directors, as if to say she's a natural.

Scene three: It's late in the day and I'm now driving out of the city limits. My daughter Abi and I are hungry and in search of a quiet place to eat. Some café off the beaten path would be nice. We keep traveling further and further from civilization. Finally we stop in the middle of nowhere and off Abi runs to an opening in the woods. I park the jeep by the roadside and follow her into the "rainforest." Yep, that's what she is calling it: a rainforest. Next thing I know she's up in a tree sitting on a branch and embracing a little monkey.

Then they're all around me, small chattering monkeys. I reach down and grab one and yell up at my daughter, "Hey, look at this one!"

A man comes out of nowhere and greets us, a native. He is both indigenous and modern. His soul is native but he's wearing a red plaid shirt, a straw hat and round-lens eyeglasses like Gandhi's. He welcomes us to his rainforest. I tell him we were in search of food when we happened upon these woods. Abi is too excited to leave the forest and asks, "Can we eat here?" Yes, says the man. They have a little grill and can serve hamburgers and French fries. I ask if we could we get cheeseburgers.

Symbols and Interpretation

The end of the dream is starting to sound like a Jimmy Buffet song (Cheeseburger in Paradise). And what of the pure and beautiful rainforest juxtaposed with the greasy spoon grill? I can only surmise. Perhaps the part of me that longs to escape civilization's demands and hassles, to get off the grid and be self-sufficient again, is in conflict with that part that still enjoys modern convenience, of staying in a place where I can run out and grab a bite at the spur of the moment. Maybe I just want the best of both worlds. At any rate, I reached a happy medium in the dream.

Abi and I discuss all the dream symbols – far more fascinating to both of us than working algebraic problems (as required for college entry). We don't often consult dictionaries that are full of generalizations, but go inward for answers. We look at the outer circumstances surrounding our lives, our personal struggles, tensions,

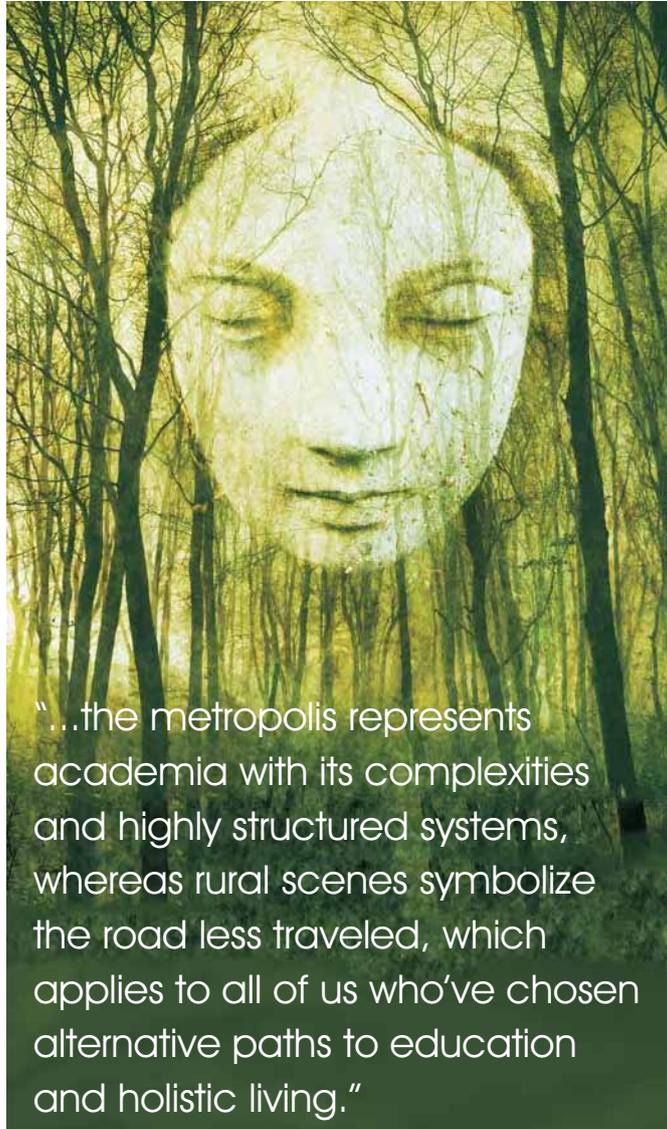
fears, et al. We ask the questions, “Why did I have this dream? What is my unconscious trying to convey by integrating external conditions and producing this internal drama?”

The metropolis represents the masses, the beaten path, heavy traffic...that which is artificial: pavement, crowded buildings – the very opposite of earthy, natural, idyllic, and pure. I know my own symbols. Large cities aren’t comfort zones for me since I was born and raised on a farm by parents who grew all their food and were totally self-sufficient. My mother even made my clothes. And even though our own children were brought up in the city I’ve never been an urbanite at heart – and neither has my youngest daughter,

since she never got that coveted horse. Often in my dreams I find myself traveling these back roads.

In a more figurative sense, the metropolis represents academia with its complexities and highly structured systems, whereas rural scenes symbolize the road less traveled, which applies to all of us who’ve chosen alternative paths to education and holistic living. A life priority for me has been to “simplify, simplify” and, as Thoreau put it, “... to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” That’s the polar opposite of mainstream education with its laborious constructs and mental obstacle courses.

The guy in the dream who said, “It’s complicated, why don’t you just follow me there?” represents the worldview that we all need to follow the experts to reach our destination. Around the time I had the dream, I was skimming through an algebra book we had on hand, and my feeling of being lost in the convoluted world of academia was profound. I shared it with my husband who



“...the metropolis represents academia with its complexities and highly structured systems, whereas rural scenes symbolize the road less traveled, which applies to all of us who’ve chosen alternative paths to education and holistic living.”

stated, “I’ve never known anyone who said, ‘I’m so glad I studied algebra and geometry in school; they have really helped me in life.’ ” In real life, we make it fine on our own, with or without the algebra. But no, the experts require us to jump those hoops to get there.

In waking reality, we are struggling to reconcile what we know to be true and what society expects of us. Abi is seventeen years old and thinking of going to college soon, although she doesn’t have a clue what she wants to study. All she knows is that her friends are there, or planning to go next year, and she feels that since everyone in the world is going, she probably should too. But what I know to be true is that academia will never fuel her creative spirit. The man-

datory tests won’t reveal her innate aptitudes and natural talents. (Imagine students being required to master Clementi’s sonatas or Chopin’s etudes – and why are the sciences deemed more important than the arts and humanities anyway?) Like her parents, Abi has never shown a penchant for math or science, but she can play Chopin and Clementi and Bach and Beethoven and Yiruma without missing a beat. She can sing and dance and has performed in over a dozen dramas and musicals. Which leads me to the auditions....

Apparently the girl in the blue cashmere sweater appeared in my dream because she symbolizes the authentic self. She wasn’t at the auditions to play a role; she was just sitting there being herself and as a result was “discovered.” That simple. She wasn’t sweating it. This scene revealed the irony that the harder one tries to be someone else the less chance of genuine success or fulfillment. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.” ▶

Finally, the rainforest scene symbolizes the pure life. The man with the Gandhi glasses represents primitive wisdom, something western civilization has usurped with its overemphasis on the rational and the material at the expense of the instinctual and spiritual. The monkeys embody the soul (anima, breath) and symbolize the true self – as opposed to the masks we wear every day to appease the world. As for the tree branch on which Abi sat holding the monkey, I did look that up in a dream dictionary. The tree branch depicts our abilities, aspirations, directions, and many facets we develop in life. I know my daughter's talents better than the educational system does. I know what fuels her creative fire because I've lived with her for seventeen years. The system only understands collective standards, not individual aptitudes.

Exiting the Main Highway

Everywhere we turn someone asks, "Where are you going to college Abi? And what are you planning on studying?" The cultural assumption is that all high school graduates are heading straight to university. It's the conventional way to "better yourself." Never mind that fifty-three percent of college graduates are jobless or underemployed and still swimming in debt (via a report in *The Atlantic*, April, 2012). The collective unconscious is a powerful force that few have the courage to challenge, but the Jungian concept of individuation is about self realization and breaking free from collective ideals and norms. It's about finding your own unique purpose and path in life, which can only be found by exiting the main highway.

William Blake conveys the heart of individuation best when he says:

"I must create a system
Or be enslaved by another man's
I will not reason and compare
My business is to create."

This is why soul work is far more important than school work. There are no comparative standards, for the path of individuation is simply to "Know Thyself," as Socrates put it. On the contrary, institutional settings focus solely on distracting minds from the inner life and setting students on the road of the unexamined life. There is always so much busy work that the individual hardly has time to reflect on existential matters.

At any rate, Abi is free to go to college if she so desires, but her reason for doing so should be because she knows what she wants out of it, not because that's just what everyone does. I remind her that John Taylor Gatto had it right: We need adventure more than we need algebra (in

Life Learning Magazine, January/February 2013) – and that includes our dream adventures. (Have you ever noticed that there's never a dull moment in dreams? They come to guide and instruct and reveal who we are.)

Think of what those monkeys symbolize, those creatures representing the creative life force. Think how energetic and playful they naturally are, how curious and full of wonderment. This part of ourselves we never want to lose touch with. I tell Abi to consider Dr. Seuss's words: "Why fit in when you were born to stand out?" I encourage her to take some time. Life is not an emergency. She could take Howard Thurman's advice: "Don't ask what

"The Jungian concept of individuation is about self realization and breaking free from collective ideals and norms. It's about finding your own unique purpose and path in life, which can only be found by exiting the main highway."

the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

In a former life, Debra Elramey taught in public and private schools, a school for the deaf, and community college. Her past work in educational systems taught her what not to do. Now she is an autodidact and life learning advocate, memoirist, poet, writing coach, contemplative, and lover of the simple life. You can connect with Debra on Facebook at www.facebook.com/debra.elramey, on Twitter at @elramey, or by reading her blog at <http://debrasblogpureandsimple.blogspot.com> . - NL -

Learn More

Dreams by C.G. Jung (Routledge, 2001)

Man and His Symbols by C.G. Jung (Dell, 1968)

Don't Worry About College: A Letter to My Granddaughter by John Taylor Gatto in *Life Learning Magazine*, March/April 2008 http://www.lifelearningmagazine.com/0804/dont_worry_about_college_by_John_Taylor_Gatto.htm

Create

Journaling about something you love in Nature with your family will help foster strong bonds with both.

A Nature Journal

By Cheri Isgreen

Getting in touch with Nature soothes the soul, promotes relaxation, and heals our whole self: the physical body, the thinking mind, and the feeling heart. The idea that communing with Nature is both necessary and beneficial abounds in anecdotes, poetry, and art. It is also supported by a strong body of research, leading Howard Frumkin, the Director of the National Center for Environmental Health and Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods, Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, to conclude that “land conservation can now be viewed as a public health strategy.” Iso, Steven, and Rachel Kaplan of the University of Michigan, along with many other researchers, provide a wealth of studies demonstrating a strong link between Nature and relaxation, restoration of health, stress reduction, improved mental clarity, and an increased sense of well-being.

This article will describe strategies to use Nature journaling to foster the benefits described above. The journaling activities will create stronger bonds with your family and connections with Nature. The journaling process fosters discovery of your own true nature by connecting with Nature.

Trees are good harbingers of the seasons. They reflect the effects of significant weather, as well as subtleties of the season, such as temperature and length of day. As the Earth’s keystone species, trees are essential to the survival of most terrestrial life forms. Trees provide shelter, food, oxygen, shade, wind breaks, and medicine. They improve air quality, ameliorate climate, conserve water, preserve soil, and support wildlife. They are critical for ensuring the health of the Earth. That is why, in this journal process, I suggest that each member of your family “adopt” a tree for observation, reflection, and inspiration. This can provide everyone with a better understanding and appreciation of the role trees play in the comfort of humans, as well as the survival of all species.

Starting Your Tree Journal

Buy or make a journal for each member of your family. Although a simple spiral notebook will do, heavier paper will allow you to better capture your impressions. A well-made journal will invite notation, and the entries will be protected in a quality book. By making your own journal, you will be able to customize its features to suit your needs. An eighty- to ninety-pound watercolor paper will stand up to paint washes, while being light enough to

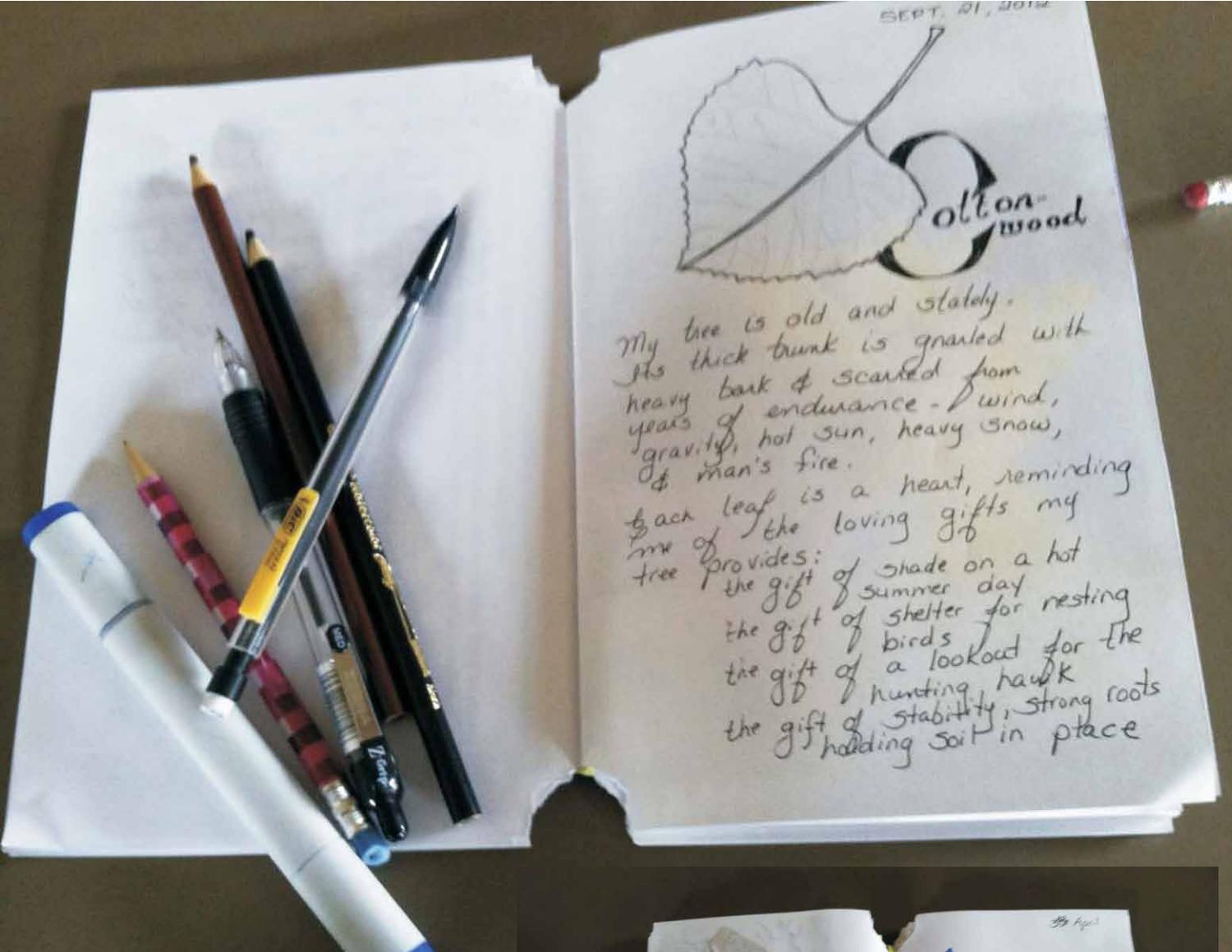


Photo © PT Images/Shutterstock

The words journal and journey have the same root, “jour,” which means “day.” In Middle English, “journee” was the word for “day.” Today, “journey” can also be a form of passage. The daily entries of a journal define one’s passage in life. The journal experience described in this article provides ways to connect to Nature through the observation of a chosen tree. Through targeted journal entries, a greater awareness of trees will develop. Through observation and reflection, your family’s “adopted” trees will provide you with a better understanding of the critical role trees play in ensuring the health of the environment as our Earth’s keystone species. The tree, as companion and teacher, will provide sources to inspire and reveal important life lessons for the keeper of the journal.

bind. Attach small clear bags or envelopes to include samples you will find. There are many sources on the Internet to guide you in creating your perfect Tree journals, including *Natural Life Magazine’s* Crafting for a Greener World column by Robyn Coburn. You can find it at www.naturallifemagazine.com/handmade/crafting-for-a-greener-world-June2012.htm.

Even the youngest child can keep a journal. Although young children don’t yet write formally, the marks they make have meaning. You will foster a sense of literacy in your child if you encourage her to read and discuss what she has written and drawn. A child’s earliest writing will be scribbles, then drawing, and then picture-symbols, all of which are appropriate in this journal. Take the time to



SEPT. 21, 2012

My tree is old and stately.
 Its thick trunk is gnarled with
 heavy bark & scarred from
 years of endurance - wind,
 gravity, hot sun, heavy snow,
 & man's fire.

Each leaf is a heart, reminding
 me of the loving gifts my
 tree provides:

- the gift of shade on a hot
 summer day
- the gift of shelter for nesting
 birds
- the gift of a lookout for the
 hunting hawk
- the gift of stability, strong roots
 holding soil in place

Some sample pages from the author's Tree Journal. In the photo to the right, collected flowers from her "adopted" tree are taped to the page, along with some research about them. The following page has a pen and ink drawing that she made of a flower from the tree.



FLOWERS
COTTONWOOD

TREES CAN BE MALE OR
FEMALE

female - produce cotton-covered
seed - late spring

male - produce pollen - early spring

DISCOVER SEX IN LATE
SPRING - LOOK FOR COTTON

"Cottonwood Flowers"

Photos © Cheryl Isgreen

listen as your child reads journal entries to you, and discuss what she has written.

To build interest for this family activity, share the poem *Advice from a Tree* by Ilan Shamir. You can find the poem here: www.yourtruenature.com/downloadable-

screensavers (scroll down to the bottom of the page). As a family, discuss the poem, making personal connections between trees and your lives. In your journals, record your connections.



Adopt a Tree

Next, plan an outing to visit some trees. If a forest is not nearby, find trees in the neighborhood or a local park or greenbelt. Each member of your family will “adopt” one tree to which he or she feels a connection.

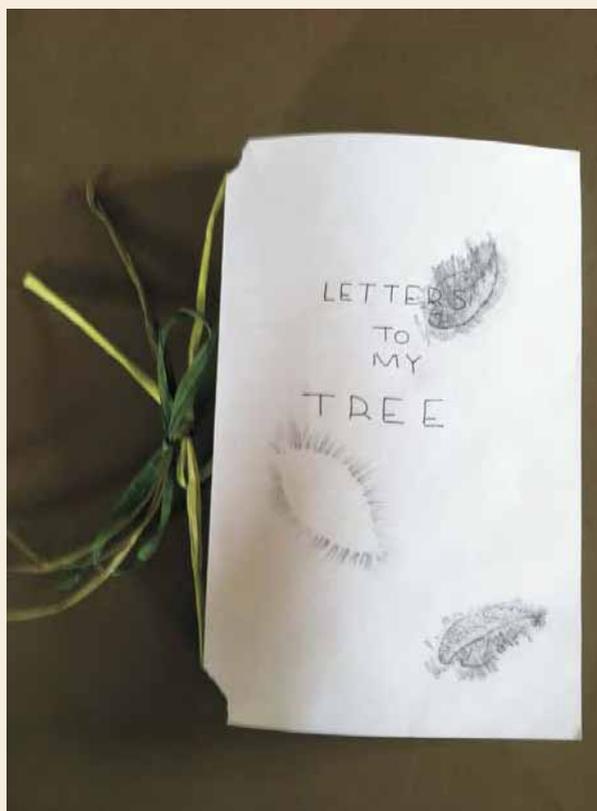
Make regular visits to observe the adopted trees. Through quiet, open introspection, allow inspiration from the trees to guide your journal entries. Note impressions, record data, and make scientific and/or impressionistic drawings. Collect samples to add to journal entries using clear, wide tape or clear bags fastened to your journal pages. After each tree visit, take time for each family member to share their journal entries. Elaborate on each visit through family discussion.

Write a Letter to Your Tree

Throughout the course of an entire year, your family will experience the seasons and the effects of Nature with and through their trees. Near the end of the journal, (save a few more pages), write letters to the adopted trees based on journal notes, observational drawings, and sample collections. Set aside a special time for family members to share their letters with each other. Copy the letters on nice stationery and address the envelopes to each adopted trees. Attach a ribbon to each envelope. Plan a special day, such as Arbor Day, (the last Friday in April), Earth Day, (April 22), or New Year’s Day, for family members to read and deliver their letters. Gather the family for a journal reading around each adopted tree; then use the ribbon to tie the envelope to a tree branch. If there is family interest, send “Dear Tree” letters to the local newspaper, Attention: Letters to the Editor. Plan to send the letters around Arbor Day.

As a final journal entry, each family member can write an *Advice From My Tree* poem, based on inspiration taken from your year-long tree journal experience and Ilan Shamir’s poem *Advice from a Tree*.

Cheri Isgreen is the Education Specialist for Your True Nature – www.YourTrueNature.com. Retired after twenty-three years in public education, she taught art education for fifteen years and elementary education before that. She continues to serve as a Regional Coordinator in Teacher Education for Western State Colorado University. Cheri is also a watercolor artist, specializing in equine subjects, and a fiber artist, exploring multi-shaft complex weave structures. She lives in western Colorado with her family: her husband, daughter, two horses, and three cats. She enjoys gardening, reading, and making entries in her sketchbook, especially when traveling. - NL -



The Author’s “Letter to My Tree”

26 April, 2013
Arbor Day

Dear Woody,

I’ve enjoyed getting better acquainted with you this past year. Spending time in quiet reflection through each season soothes my soul. I look at your mighty trunk and marvel at the storms you have weathered. Your quiet stoicism gives me strength. You provide habitat for nesting birds and asparagus, my annual spring treat. You are the lookout point for sentinel hawks. Your south-facing limbs bear scars of a lightning strike. Though they stand bare against the sky, your main branches cloak themselves in a leafy array of quivering green. I bless you for providing a cool respite on a hot summer day. Most of all, I thank you for inspiring me with rebirth and hope, season after season.

Gratefully,

Cheri

Your Sustainable Home

By Rolf Priesnitz

Demonstrating Restorative Building

If you've been reading this column for a while now, you'll have noticed that some parts of the building industry are pushing the boundaries of sustainable design and construction. The number of green building programs and certifications is growing quickly, from PassivHaus and LEED, to the Living Building Challenge and Life Cycle Assessment. The best of these initiatives are restorative at heart – not just reducing harm, but making things right for the future. They also inspire and are replicable.

One such project under construction is the Green Solution House conference center, part of the "Bright Green Island" strategy for the small Danish island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea – www.brightgreenisland.com. Bornholm functions as an international test bed for green technologies and is planning for a one hundred percent green future.

The Green Solution House conference center will be an innovative Cradle2Cradle-inspired laboratory for green materials and appropriate green technologies. (Cradle2Cradle considers Material Health, Material Reutilization, Renewable Energy and Carbon Management, Water Stewardship, and Social Fairness – www.c2ccertified.org.) The 4,500-square meter (14,750-square foot) facility uses a wholistic design approach to demonstrate solutions that increase biodiversity, use safe materials in closed loops, generate renewable energy, are waste-free, and maintain a healthy water cycle.

When completed next year, it will contain an auditorium, meeting rooms, offices, hotel rooms, and a restaurant/kitchen facility.

As I've written in previous columns, there are many strategies that can increase the efficiency of an ecosystem and this project utilizes most of them. They include wetlands, which are natural filters that clean water and increase biodiversity. Bioswales direct rainwater and help prevent flooding. Deep-rooted native plants and grasses build soil structure and allow water to infiltrate into the ground.

The site also includes orchards and a vegetable garden that will yield food for use in the kitchen. Garden and kitchen waste will be processed using Bokashi composting.

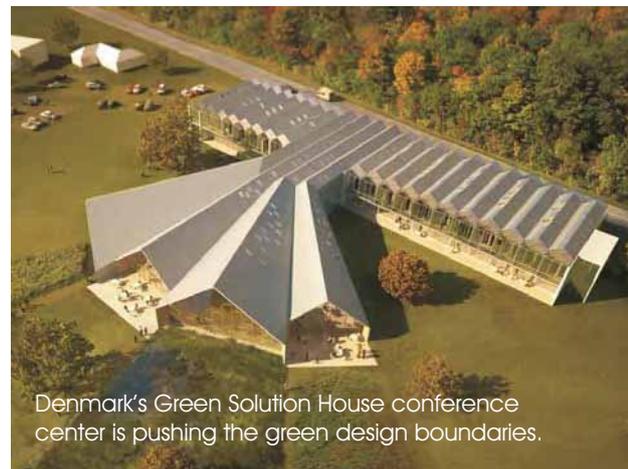
Each hotel room will be equipped with its own "winter garden," a private greenhouse oasis where guests will be able to relax and enjoy Nature. This private greenhouse will also be a producer, benefitting the hotel financially and aesthetically, and helping to offset its carbon footprint. The building will also utilize green walls, both indoors and outside.

Other green aspects of the facility will be three kinds of solar systems, light shafts and light gardens, LED lighting, permeable parking, electric vehicle recharging stations and bike rentals, and a "living machine," which we've also written about in

this magazine. It's a form of ecological wastewater treatment designed to mimic the cleansing functions of wetlands and results in water that can be reused for toilets, garden irrigation, cooling towers, etc.

Guests will be able to observe their onsite energy use via a "Personal Monitoring System."

The Green Solution House was designed by GXN, the innovation unit of 3XN architects. It has been selected as one of a hundred projects in an annual guide to innovative and sustainable solutions from around the world called *Sustainia100*, produced by a Copenhagen-based inter-



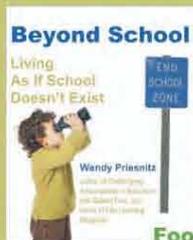
Denmark's Green Solution House conference center is pushing the green design boundaries.

national alliance of NGOs, companies, and individuals called Sustainia – www.sustainia.me. With a focus on readily-available green solutions, Sustainia's activities aim to make sustainability more tangible by sharing functional solutions from different sectors: Education, Energy, Health, Smart Cities, Resources, Buildings, Food, Fashion, Transportation, and Information Technology. The Sustainia Award is given annually to one of the hundred solutions featured in the guide.

Rolf Priesnitz is the founder and Publisher of Natural Life Magazine. He has over forty-five years experience in the construction industry. -NL-

Books to change your world

from the publishers of Natural Life Magazine



Beyond School: Living As If School Doesn't Exist

by Wendy Priesnitz

How families and individuals can live and learn without coercion or struggle, and with trust, respect, and dignity. An impassioned but well reasoned case for a different way of helping children learn about today's world while becoming equipped to live in tomorrows. PDF digital format only.



Food and Fellowship: Projects and Recipes to Feed a Community

by Andrea Belcham

Save money, eat well, have fun, build community. Save the cost of the book many times over by starting a food buying club and a batch cooking group. Includes detailed instructions and tips; 100 vegan recipes for your batch cook-ins; helpful tips for bulk buying, recruiting, and more.



Natural Life Magazine's Green and Healthy Homes

by Wendy Priesnitz

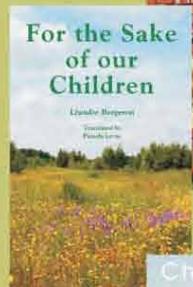
Make your home greener and healthier, and save money too. Includes avoiding dangerous household chemicals; making your own cleaning supplies; green renos and energy retrofits; water conservation; avoiding mold, radon, and plastic; eco gardening; organic textiles; and more.



Life Learning - Lessons from The Educational Frontier

Edited by Wendy Priesnitz

Thirty essays about life without school, by academics, parents, and young people. How and why people learn without being taught, and the transformative intellectual and social benefits of a self-directed education. A great introduction to unschooling and a reassuring resource.



For the Sake of Our Children

by Léandre Bergeron Translated by Pamela Levac, Foreword by John Taylor Gatto

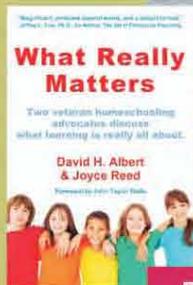
Trusting children to grow and learn with respect and without coercion. Home birth, natural parenting, and unschooling woven through a series of journal entries describing a year in the life of a family living and learning on a small farm. "The best of its breed," says John Taylor Gatto.



Challenging Assumptions in Education

by Wendy Priesnitz

A passionate challenge to the most common assumptions about conventional schooling. Why and how we need to stop warehousing children and free them to learn, unschooled, in their families and communities. John Taylor Gatto says, "I heartily recommend this book!"



What Really Matters

by David H. Albert & Joyce Reed Foreword by John Taylor Gatto

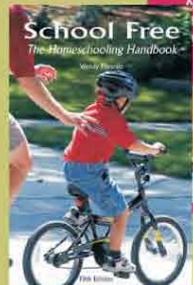
In a conversational style, two veteran homeschool advocates play off each other's experiences with and ruminations about society, schools, children, and learning to provide an engaging, enlightening, and thought-provoking look at homeschooling and parenting.



Bringing it Home: A Home Business Start-Up Guide for You & Your Family

by Wendy Priesnitz

How to make money at home. Hundreds of tips on how to research, start and run a family-friendly home business, including integrating family and working lives. By Natural Life Magazine's editor, co-founder, and owner. New revised e-book version now available.



School Free - The Home Schooling Handbook

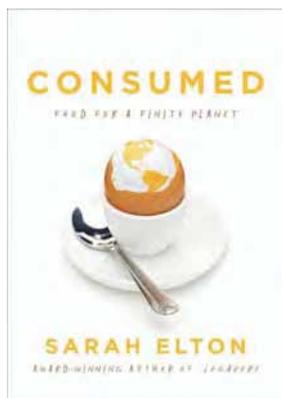
by Wendy Priesnitz

Answering all your questions about home-based education: socialization, how to avoid using curriculum, adjusting to school after learning at home, dealing with relatives, assessment (or not), and much more. Priesnitz is a pioneering advocate for independent learning, with over forty years of experience advising life learning families. New revised e-book version now available.

www.NaturalLifeBooks.com

The Media Beat

Editor Wendy Priesnitz shares sources of green information and inspiration



Fixing Our Food

I often marvel (and cringe) at how our food supply seems to be making less and less sense while becoming less and less safe. One solution is to localize production – whether that means growing our own or buying from local farmers – so we know where our food comes from. But sometimes, that seems like such a small, futile effort in the face of global monsters like Monsanto and Nestlé. It turns out that even though this food revolution is a quiet one so far, it is thriving and growing exponentially. Canadian journalist Sarah Elton (whose book *Locavore* I reviewed here when it came out in 2011) has traveled the world to tell its story.

In her ambitious and optimistic new book *Consumed: Food for a Finite Planet* (HarperCollins in Canada; University of Chicago Press in US, UK, AU, 2013), she reports on the efforts of people – in cities and on farms, from downtown Detroit, rural France and Quebec, to India and Africa – who are repairing the damage done by pesticides, monocultures,

declining biodiversity, and climate change. These small farmers and activists are part of the effort to use both ancient methods and modern technology to feed the world sustainably and healthfully.

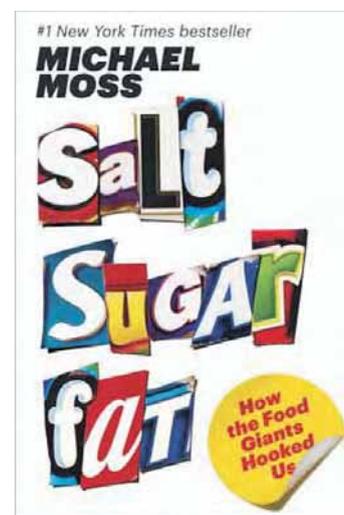
The book is well-researched and provides a strong argument against those who claim that local eating is elitist and simplistic, and that the rejection of agri-business will lead to large-scale starvation. Elton details the problems, the risks, and the potential, and comes out on the hopeful side.

Her optimism is tempered by realism as the book attempts to answer the question, “How will we feed ourselves by 2050?” That, she writes, “is the year when all our environmental debts come knocking at our door, asking us to pay up.”

Although I don’t know if she’s predicted the correct year, I do know that we need to do more than grow the locavore movement in order to save ourselves. We need to tackle climate change in a way that isn’t currently happening; we need to fix the world’s broken financial system and energy policies. But tapping back into traditional ways of feeding ourselves is a strong start. And *Consumed* shares some good news stories, which I, for one, badly need these days.

The Junk in Junk Food

Every year, the average American eats thirty-three pounds of cheese (triple that of 1970), and sev-



enty pounds of sugar (about twenty-two teaspoons a day). Every day, they ingest nine thousand milligrams of salt a day, double the recommended amount. And virtually all of it is from processed food, which in the U.S. accounts for one trillion dollars a year in sales.

In *Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us*, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Michael Moss (Random House, 2013) puts flesh on the skeleton of those facts and shows how we have become addicted to all this salt, sugar, and fat – and the “foods” containing them. Featuring examples from some of the most recognizable (and profitable) companies and brands of the last half century – including Kraft, Coca-Cola, Nestlé, Kellogg, Lunchables, Oreos, Cargill, Capri Sun, and many more – Moss’s explosive, empowering narrative is grounded in meticulous research.

He takes us inside the labs where food scientists use cutting-edge technology to calculate the “bliss point” of sugary beverages and enhance the “mouthfeel” of fat by manipulating its chemical structure. He unearths marketing campaigns designed – in a technique adapted from tobacco companies – to redirect concerns about the health risks of their products as “fat-free” or

“low-salt,” when they really are no such thing.

Moss details his conversations with concerned executives who confess that they could never produce truly healthy alternatives to their products even if serious regulation became a reality. Simply put: The industry itself would cease to exist without salt, sugar, and fat. Just as millions of “heavy users” – as the companies refer to their best customers – are addicted to this seductive trio, so too are the companies that peddle them. However, Moss discloses that many of those same executives told him they “go out of their way” to avoid eating their own products. Clearly, they know something the rest of us do not.

Salt, Sugar, Fat is a consumer manifesto and a must-read if you have any doubt about the hazards of

eating processed food or the lengths corporations will go to sell their products.

Eating Whole

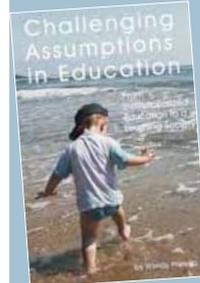
Dr. T. Colin Campbell’s popular 2005 book *The China Study* answered the question, “What is the most healthful diet?” with the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken. Its conclusion that a whole food, plant-based diet is the best eating plan to aid health and longevity is now widely accepted and is often praised by U.S. President Bill Clinton.

And in Campbell’s new book *Whole: Rethinking the Science of Nutrition* (BenBella, 2013), he takes the argument further, showing why this nutritional program works best. To do so, he examines the workings of

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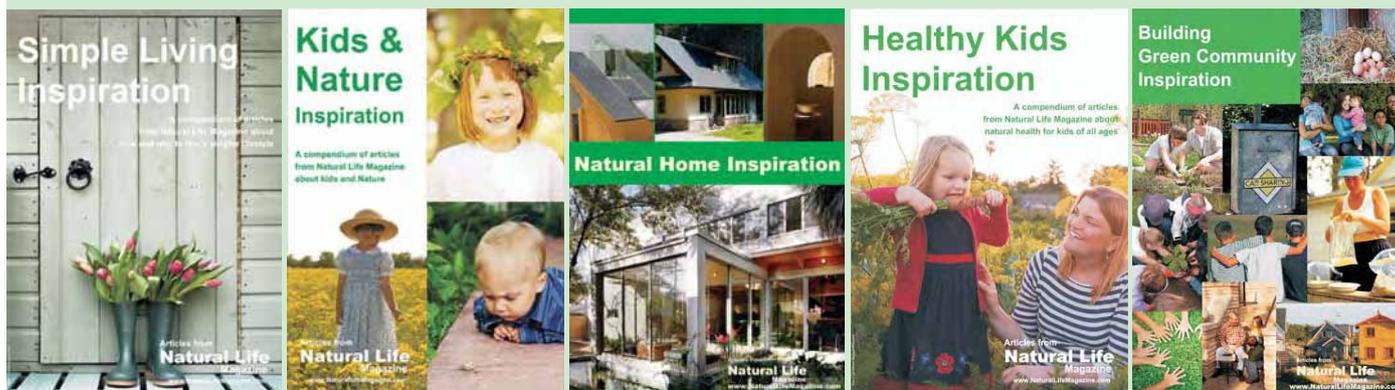


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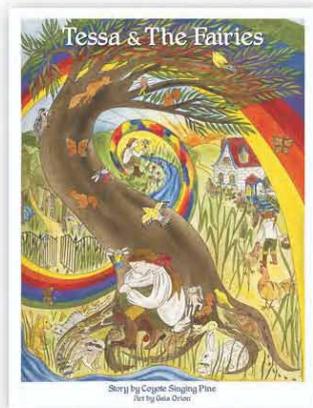
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Wellie Wednesday
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A series of delightful short stories following the environmentally and consciously aware adventures of a little girl named Tessa, and her fairie friend, Lucinda. Each story includes earth friendly tips for the young and young at heart.

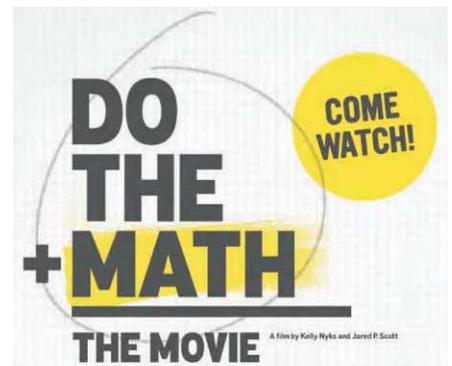
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nutrition from the cellular level to the wholistic level of the body. Along the way, he explains how nutritional orthodoxy and corporate-funded research have led us astray.

Campbell continues to believe that “the ideal human diet looks like this: Consume plant-based foods in forms as close to their natural state as possible...eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, raw nuts and seeds, beans and legumes, and whole grains.”

Whole makes a passionate, scientific, calm, and convincing case for that ideal diet. There are no diet tips or recipes, just solid information explaining how our body works, and how food, rather than pills, can solve health issues. If you are already a healthy eater, this book could be a life-changer for someone you care about.



Changing the Climate Change Math

Many of us believe that the fossil fuel industry is killing us, and that left to their own devices, those companies will push us past the brink of cataclysmic disaster. A variety of organizations, including climate crusader Bill McKibben’s 350.org are fighting back.

A new forty-two minute documentary called *Do The Math* chronicles McKibben’s efforts to change the math of the climate crisis and challenge the fossil fuel industry. The film follows McKibben and others who are putting their bodies on the line to stop the Keystone XL Pipeline and leading universities and institutions to divest in the corporate polluters that burn fossil fuels.

The film also features a veritable who’s who of the climate movement including Dr. James Hansen (former Director, NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies), Naomi Klein (author, *The Shock Doctrine*), Lester Brown (President, Earth Policy Institute), Michael Brune (Executive Director, Sierra Club), Majora Carter (founder, Sustainable South Bronx), Jessy Tolkman (Co-Executive Director of Citizen Engagement Laboratory), Phil Radford (Executive Director of Greenpeace), James Gustave Speth (co-Founder of Natural Resources Defense Council), Mike Tidwell (Executive Director, CCAN), Van Jones (CNN correspondent and author,



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The Green Collar Economy), Bobby Kennedy Jr. (President, Waterkeeper Alliance), among others.

While it is set in the United States, the math the film outlines applies globally. It is in English with the option of subtitles in French, German, Portuguese, or Spanish. You can watch *Do the Math* online and/or arrange for a local screening. Visit www.350.org/math for more information.

A Sharing Society

We've published many articles in *Natural Life Magazine* about creating a sharing society to save money, green our lives, meet people, have fun, and generally create a better world. In fact, sharing may be one of a new generation's antidotes to their parents' legacy of limitless consumption, reckless economics, and disregard for the environment.

The non-profit San Francisco-based website www.shareable.net is a resource for those wanting to create a sharing society. It's full of people, projects, and how-to information about things like car sharing, clothing swaps, childcare co-ops, potlucks, coworking spaces, and cohousing projects.

The website functions like a sharing community. There are lots of ways to participate beyond just reading and getting inspired. Spend a bit of time there and you just might agree that a new world is emerging where the more you share the more respect you get, and where life works because everyone helps each other. I'm convinced that the collaborative economy is, indeed, the way of the future....and maybe even the way to the future. -NL-

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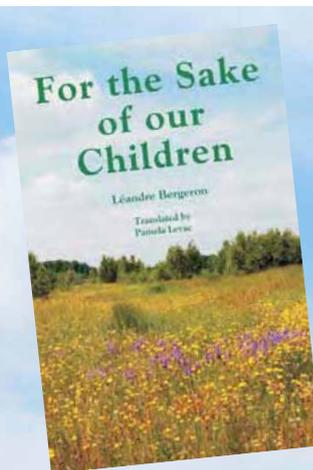
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For the Sake of our Children

By Léandre Bergeron

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Sun-Dried Tomatoes From Your Garden

Sun-dried tomatoes can add a gourmet touch and great summer flavor year 'round to many dishes and salads. But they can be very expensive, and most brands contain the preservative sulfite, to which many people react negatively. Fortunately, it's easy to make your own organic sun-dried tomatoes at home.

Preparation

You can dry any variety of tomato, even grape and cherry varieties. Many people prefer to dry Roma (paste) tomatoes because they have fewer seeds and less moisture. Be sure not to use over-ripe, mushy, or rotten tomatoes, and cut away any bruised or soft spots, as well as the part around the stem. Some people like to remove the skins by dousing them in a pot of boiling water for thirty seconds and then into a bowl of ice water. But the dried tomatoes you buy usually have their skins intact.

Next, slice the tomatoes into pieces of equal size so they'll dry evenly, remembering that they will shrink to more than a quarter of their original size. With Roma tomatoes, you can cut them in half lengthwise, then in half again.

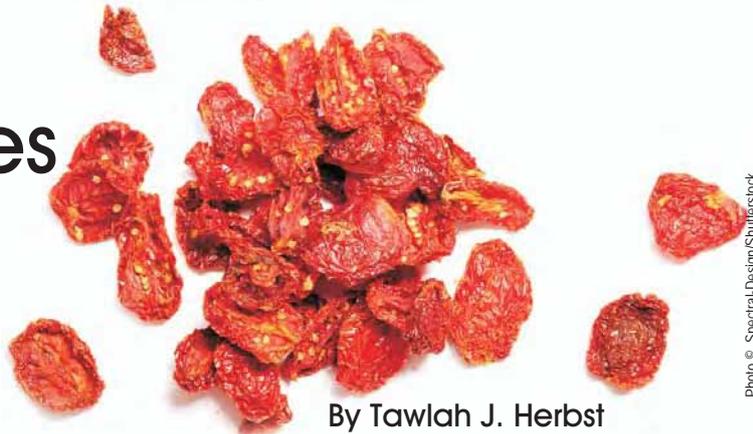
Yields will vary, depending upon the moisture content of the tomatoes and the heat and humidity. As a rough guide, you can plan on two cups of dried tomatoes for each five pounds of fresh.

Drying in the Sun

Simply place the pieces on dehydrator screens or old window screens still in their frames; whatever you use, it's important that air can circulate underneath as well as above. Sprinkle with herbs if desired, and cover with cheesecloth, raised so it doesn't touch the tomatoes. Place the screens in the hot sun until the tomatoes are dry. Depending on your weather conditions, this could take anywhere from four days to two weeks. Remember to take the screens inside during the night or when it rains.

Drying Indoors

If the old-fashioned method is too fiddly or time-consuming, or your summer weather isn't suitable, you can achieve the same results faster using a food dehydrator



By Tawlah J. Herbst

or your oven. Prepare as above, sprinkle with herbs if desired,

If you have a dehydrator, arrange the pieces on the racks so that air can circulate, preferably with the pieces not touching each other. If your food drier has a thermostat, set it for 140 degrees F and wait between three and eight hours, depending on the moisture content and the size of the pieces.

To use your oven, preheat it to 150 degrees F (65 degrees C or gas mark 1), or the lowest setting possible. Arrange the tomatoes on cake racks or cookie sheets, not touching each other. If you use cookie sheets, you'll have to turn over the tomato pieces a few times and rotate the pans. This method will require between ten and twenty hours (less with a convection oven).

Are They Done Yet?

When properly dried, the tomatoes should be flexible, like a raisin, not brittle or crispy, but with no inner moisture left.

Let the tomatoes cool to room temperature, then place them in Ziploc® (or similar) bags. Don't overfill the bags, and try to squeeze out all the air to lessen the rate of spoilage and preserve the flavor. A vacuum food sealer is great for this purpose.

Store the bags in the refrigerator or a very cool, dry place like a fruit cellar, checking within the first week for condensation (if you find any, they'll need to be dried longer) and occasionally thereafter for mold. You can also freeze them, where color and flavor will be retained for up to a year.

Oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes with fresh herbs or garlic added must be refrigerated and should be eaten quickly.

Unless they are already packed in oil, sun-dried tomatoes will need to be reconstituted before use. Just let them soak in warm water, wine, broth, or other cooking liquid for thirty minutes until soft and pliable, drain, and use. Use the liquid in your recipe or to add flavor to stocks and sauces.

- NL -

Natural Life Magazine's Green and Healthy Homes

by Natural Life's Editor Wendy Priesnitz

Make your home greener and healthier, and save money too. Includes tips on making your own cleaning supplies, advice about green renovations and energy retrofits, how to avoid and clean up mold and radon, water conservation tips, sorting out the plastic controversy, avoiding dangerous household chemicals, using organic cotton and hemp textiles to decorate your home, eco gardening, and much more.

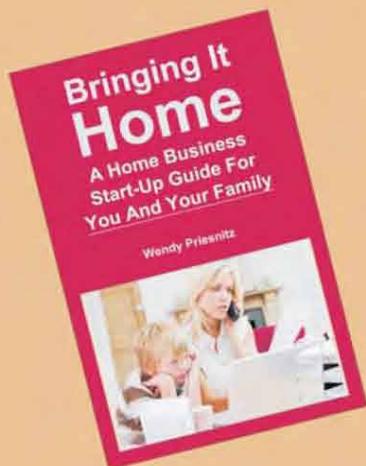


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