



Bringing Home the Harvest

Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Newsletter

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Introducing *Bringing Home the Harvest* and the Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Task Force

Bringing Home the Harvest is a quarterly publication of the Inland Northwest Community Food Systems (INW CFS) Task Force. *Bringing Home the Harvest* shares the knowledge and experience of people working in community food systems and the opportunities and challenges facing small acreage farmers and market gardeners in the Inland Northwest. In addition to sharing information and resources, *Bringing Home the Harvest* helps make connections between producers and consumers in northern Idaho and eastern Washington, encourages sustainably produced local foods, and works to enhance the economic viability of small scale producers and the communities where they live.

The purpose of the Inland Northwest Food Systems Task Force is to create a network of people in the Inland Northwest interested or working in food and farming systems. Objectives of the task force are to:

- ✓ provide an opportunity for networking and partnership development among all segments of the food system to provide safe, nutritious, locally grown food to the Inland Northwest;
- ✓ provide educational opportunities to growers, direct marketers, and consumers;
- ✓ provide a "face" and a "voice" to locally produced foods so that policy makers, chambers of commerce, and citizens will support locally produced foods with their dollars and their decisions;
- ✓ enhance the economic viability of local growers and potential growers by identifying road blocks to their success (e.g. commercial kitchen, marketing information, new grower information, consumer education on uses of and value of locally grown food); and,
- ✓ inform segments of the food system about regional and national policies that may impact them directly, and teach them how to become active participants in the policy-making process.

Participation in the Task Force is open to all -- farmers, food and farming systems practitioners, educators, researchers, policy makers, community development practitioners, and other citizens -- interested in INW communities, food and farming. Sponsoring organizations for the INW CFS Task Force include *Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute*, the *University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System* and *Washington State University Cooperative Extension and Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources*. For more information on the Task Force and regional food and farm activities or to subscribe to the *Bringing Home the Harvest*, contact Colette DePhelps, 208/882-1444 or <dephelps@pcei.org>. Additional contact people for information related to the task force include: Vickie Parker-Clark, <vparkerclark@uidaho.edu>; Peggy Adams, <peggy931@uidaho.edu>; and Cinda Williams, <cindaw@uidaho.edu>.

What's Inside

Introducing *Bringing Home the Harvest* and the Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Task Force...page 1

What do CSA Customers *Really* Want?...page 2

CSA -- A First Year's Experience...page 2

CSA Resources...page 4

Taste Says It All ... page 6

Clearwater Valley Farm and Market Garden Tour ...page 7

Inland Northwest Food and Farming in Cyberspace... page 7

Coeur d'Alene Farm Tour Sporuts Greenhouse Project...page 8

Touring Kootenai and Spokane County Farms...page 8

Planning the Harvest...page 9

Inland Northwest Food and Farming Calendar...page 10



What do CSA Customers Really Want?

- ◆ Leslie Pelch, a graduate student at the University of Vermont Department of Community Development and Applied Economics interviewed Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) customers, ex-customers and potential customers. She found that CSA customers are more likely to recycle and compost and have more years of education than non-CSA customers. They already tend to buy organic food and understand the political, economic and social implications of their food choices.
- ◆ CSA members are, for the most part, very satisfied with most aspects of their CSA experience. Most CSA members gain satisfaction from the time spent picking up their share, but time putting away their produce is not so satisfying. People who end their membership tend to do so for reasons related to the type and quantities of produce provided and the inconvenience of the particular pickup system. People who have never heard of Community Supported Agriculture tend to be “convenience eaters” who see meal time as an opportunity to save time and energy. Based on her findings, Pelch makes these recommendations for CSA farms:
- ◆ Use word of mouth advertising to the fullest extent possible; reward members who bring in new members; ask members to invite friends to a CSA social/educational event; try to bring strength of word of mouth to other advertising media--personal statements on posters, have members go to stores, co-ops, events to give face-to-face information about the experience.

CSA -- A First Year's Experience

By Jim Bauermeister, Kamiak View Farm

I don't recall anybody ever mentioning how personally satisfying running a CSA is. Most descriptions of Community Supported Agriculture start off with a critique of the existing food system and more on to list the advantages for both the farmer and consumer--which of course are considerable--but are presented with all the warmth, emotion and humor of a Socialist-Workers manifesto.

The best part of doing a CSA was meeting and getting to know so many fine people. Agribusiness always brags that the American farmer feeds himself and 56 or 77 or 101 other people. Regardless of the fact most American farmers *don't* feed themselves (unless they are partial to wheat or corn or whatever few crops they grow), most don't know their customers from Adam's off ox. It was very satisfying to actually know the people I was helping to feed and to realize I was contributing to their health and well being. The basic premise of Community Supported Agriculture is that food is too important to be limited to the market place.

I was inspired to do a CSA by Bob and Bonnie Gregson's book, *Rebirth of the Small Family Farm*, the best resource I've seen on the topic (1). We had been selling produce at the Moscow, Idaho Farmers Market for five years but needed a mid-week market to unload the stuff that goes from too little to too big, or bolts, in the course of a week. A CSA also provides cash up front for operating and living expenses during the growing season. On the downside, more time is devoted to harvesting and transportation. And then there's always that damn CSA newsletter that needs to be done.

The CSA made me more disciplined and made me work harder. You can skip a farmers market occasionally but never a CSA delivery. I was pretty much confined to the farm all summer. There are convicted serial killers who get away with more than I did. Nonetheless, the CSA became--and will remain--the core of our operation. The farmers market was used to sell whatever didn't go to the Wednesday customers. Some weeks it wasn't much.

Publicity

I agonized like Hamlet all last winter, “Should I or should I not do a CSA?” (not that Hamlet ever grew beets for anyone). Agreeing to provide a family's food for them is a huge commitment. In March I plunged. I made up a brochure on the Word program, sent a press release out to the local media and sat back and waited. I received a lot of publicity--articles in the Moscow-Pullman *Daily News*, the Moscow Food Co-op newsletter and the local *Ad-Mart*. Despite the publicity there wasn't a mad rush to the phones. There were people who called and asked, “Is it too late to sign-up?” Not quite. It was a trickle, not a deluge.

Pullman *should* be an ideal CSA community. Home of Washington State University, it has a highly educated, fairly affluent population (if you exclude the students). These are people who should be into good food. The nearby Moscow Farmers Market is packed on Saturdays and attracts produce sellers from as far away as the Columbia Basin and Yakima Valley. Yet there are few local direct market farmers.

Most people, though, haven't heard of Community Supported Agriculture--yet. My effort was one of the first in the area. People who have heard of CSAs tend to be agriculture activists who have their own gardens. Another problem with Pullman is that it shrinks like a wet hide in the summer. Not only do the students leave town, so does much of the faculty.

- ◆ Focus on young families who live in town and have many years of education when targeting advertising efforts; educate and empower shoppers who don't fit the description of likely members--address their needs and lifestyles.
- ◆ Make information about CSA available in places where young professionals work and play; provide information about the food system and CSA to people who might not be likely to seek it out, and explain why they should consider choosing a less convenient option.
- ◆ Keep share prices low--even if it means smaller shares.
- ◆ Consider delivery or convenient drop off sites, flexibility in what people take home as their share each week, or make shares easy to pick up, perhaps pre-packaged. Provide lots of fast and easy recipes for fresh produce.
- ◆ Emphasize pick up time as a fun time, make it convenient so that members have time to enjoy it, but reduce the amount of time members must spend putting their share away once they bring it home by reducing the amount of processing and/or separating they have to do. *Source:* Jane M. Kolodinsky and Leslie L. Pelch, *Factors Influencing the Decision to Join a Community Supported Agriculture Farm.*

“For CSAs to be more than just another direct marketing scheme, the growers and eaters of the food need to work together to build an institution they share....In building our own little institutions...we are...transforming ourselves into people who can listen to one another and take cooperative action....Each new CSA is another piece of liberated territory and a step towards the sustainable world which is our only possible future.”

-Elizabeth Henderson

Originally I was going to offer only full shares, figuring there were sufficient families in town to empty my market garden. However, I soon bowed to popular demand and offered half shares to smaller households. The large brown paper grocery bag became the basis of the operation--a half-share was one bag, a full-share two. All bags contained more or less the same quantity of produce.

I cut the full share price from \$400 to \$360 because I started in June, not May as I had advertised. This year I don't think I'll plan on starting until June. I need the time in May to get the crops in the ground. And if I did start in May, there wouldn't be much variety for several weeks and customers might tire of picking up nothing but lettuce, greens, radishes and green onions until the peas, broccoli and other stuff come on. I offered a ten percent discount for starving university students and other low income people; sort of my way of tithing and negating the stigma of organic food as “yuppie chow.” Only two customers took advantage of the discount, although others probably could have.

I eventually signed up 20 customers, which, it turned out, was all I had time and water for. My customers included college professors, two lawyers, an elementary teacher, rancher, librarian, environmental activist, two community action agency administrators and the staff of the Wolf Education Center near Winchester, Idaho who drove more than an hour to pick up their order. I dealt mostly, of course, with the gatherers, not the hunters, of the family.

Problemas

Some nights early in the growing season I'd lie awake wondering, “What am I going to feed these people?” Yet I was always able to put together a credible order. A CSA calls for a slightly different planting strategy than the farmers market. I learned to plant a little every two weeks to supply the farmers market. The CSA requires planting a lot all at once to make sure there's enough peas or cucumbers or whatever to go in all the bags.

Every week I'd feature a vegetable in the newsletter, but the week I featured bok choy I discovered I only had 17 bunches ready to go. I learned to count before I wrote. Another week I published a recipe calling for a pound and a half of broccoli but only gave each half share one pound. The following week, though, they had more than enough. Summer weather didn't start until mid-July this year. The cool wet weather stunted the sweet corn. During cool weather corn plants produce fewer leaves during each growth stage and consequently produce smaller and fewer ears. Instead of doing succession planting, I planted early, mid and late season varieties on the same fateful day. Live and learn.

Mice slipped into my hoop house in early spring and devastated several flats of peppers and tomatoes I had started the first of March. I replanted in early April and transplanted the small seedlings in late May. I didn't have much tomato seed left so most of the plants were Viva Italia, a fine sauce tomato but a mediocre salad and slicing fruit. I did grow some Brandywine and an old German heirloom. These were big ugly, knobby and cracked, tomatoes that would've just sat on the table at the farmers market but wowed CSA customers with their exquisite flavor. The soft, almost squishy heirlooms need special handling to make it even the short distance to the CSA customers. This winter I'll be collecting small Styrofoam containers. In contrast to the hybrids, the heirlooms must be clipped off with a hand pruner. Grasshoppers seemed partial to the old varieties. I don't know if its because the large red fruit are easier to see or the 'hoppers really appreciate the difference in flavor. I had no significant disease problems with the heirlooms even though I'm in an area that suffers from curly top and verticillium.

CSA Resources

“Working Together Helps Build CSAs” *Growing for Market*, Vol. 4, No. 11, November 1995. PO Box 3747, Lawrence, KS 66046. Short article on farmer cooperative CSAs.

Bill Blake, et. al. *Community Supported Agriculture: Making the Connection*, UC Cooperative Extension Service, 11477 E Avenue; Auburn, CA 95603. Handbook for Farmers, includes information about getting started, designing CSAs, recruiting members, creating production and harvest plans, setting share prices and legal issues. Incorporates ideas and strategies of many successful CSAs. \$31.81 (make check payable to UC Regents).

Steve Gilman, et. al., *1996 CSA Farm Network*, A project of the Northeast Organic Farming Association, 130 Ruckytucks Road, Stillwater, NY 12170. Although this booklet is mostly a directory of northeast CSAs, it also includes many useful, and some esoteric, articles. \$7.50.

Bob and Bonnie Gregson, *Rebirth of the Small Family Farm: A Handbook for Starting a Successful Organic Farm Based on the Community Supported Agriculture Concept*, IMF Associates, PO Box 2542, Vashon Island, WA 98070, 1996. Based on actual experience, this is an indispensable publication for any farmer organizing a CSA. \$9.95 + .70 sales tax for WA residents.

Trauger M. Groh and Steven McFadden, *Farms of Tomorrow: Community Supported Farms, Farm Supported Communities*, BioDynamic Farming Associates, PO Box 550, Kimberton PA 19442. The first half of this book is highly philosophical; the second half is useful profiles of CSA farms. \$14.

Stephen E. Moore, “A CSA Production Planning Tool”, *Biodynamics*, September/October 1997, Issue 213, PO Box 550, Kimberton, PA 19442. How to use your computer spreadsheet to plan CSA production.

I probably should overcome my philosophical aversion to plastic even though I think the great hypocrisy of organic growers is to condemn the use of petrochemicals for fertilizer and pesticides and then cover acres of soil with plastic tunnels, mulch and row covers (not to mention our drip irrigation systems). Is this really sustainable agriculture? Nevertheless, had I used black plastic ground covers and/or clear plastic tunnels I would’ve had a decent and timely crop of peppers and eggplant and I might have beat the Lewiston growers to market with tomatoes even though they are more than 1500 feet lower in elevation. Farmers in the Snake River Canyon don’t feel much need for season extenders. The severe El Niño effect now taking hold in the Pacific will probably mean my 1998 customers will be overwhelmed with the warm season vegetables that were late and in short supply this past summer.

The cool early summer was great for spinach, coles, lettuce and strawberries. However, I did fall short of my goal of providing lettuce every week. Next year I’ll direct sow cutting lettuce every week rather than transplant a bed of seedlings every two weeks. Shade and mulch and early cutting may get me through August.

Most small farmers are incorrigible optimists. Things will always be better next year. As with the first model year for a new car or the first version of a software program, my CSA service will only improve with time.

Customer Satisfaction

Despite my failings and shortcomings, the CSA customers never complained (although one started asking, “Where’s the sweet corn?” in early July). Indeed, every week I received rave reviews on the previous delivery. On the end of the season survey every customer rated the quality of produce as “excellent.” Everyone felt the quantity was “just right” or “too much.” Yet, to my disappointment, only one customer thought the CSA was a bargain. Perhaps the service met, but did not exceed, their expectations. Or perhaps they thought I’d be encouraged to raise my prices if they admitted it was a bargain.

Yet researchers at the University of Massachusetts found that CSA shares are underpriced. Consumers save \$300-1000 per season by subscribing to a CSA and share prices may not adequately cover the farmers’ inputs, especially land costs. The researchers concluded, “These results suggest that CSA operations provide excellent value to the consumer and [the farmer] should be able to price shares to cover all production costs.” (2) I don’t expect all my customers to be back again next year. There were some chronic no-shows who thought CSA a good idea in theory but hard to put into practice. There are some others, I’m sure, who still had a lot of stuff left in the refrigerator Wednesday morning; people who know they should eat their vegetables, but don’t. If people actually ate five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, a CSA half share wouldn’t last a couple past Friday dinner. Figuring that a full share at \$400 represents only 6 percent of the \$6500 an average American family spends on food each year, and provides the most important component of the diet for five months, CSA is a genuine bargain, especially if it encourages consumers to eat more fresh vegetables and less processed products. The other day I actually looked at a supermarket produce section. I was surprised at how expensive and ugly most the stuff was. It didn’t even look very fresh. Of course most of it is days, perhaps even weeks, removed from the farm.

I noticed my wife, Louise, liked to get an unrequited CSA bag, even though all that stuff was less than 200 feet from the kitchen sink. She liked the element of surprise (she works full-time so doesn’t help put together the orders) and the challenge of using the vegetables in family meals. In fact there was one couple who bought a full share and thought the amount was “just right.”

Stephen E. Moore, "Tips for Building a Successful CSA", *Biodynamics*, May/June 1997, Issue 211, PO Box 550, Kimberton, PA 19442.

Rochelle Kelvin, *Community Supported Agriculture on the Urban Fringe: Case Study and Survey*, Rodale Institute Research Center, 611 Siegfriedale Rd; Kutztown, PA 19530. This study highlights some of the barriers and opportunities involved with marketing via a CSA. \$5.

Robyn Van En, *Basic Formula to Create Community Supported Agriculture*, CSANA, Indian Line Farm, Box 57, Jugend Road; Great Barrington, MA 01230. Manual for organizing a consumer-run CSA. \$10.

This newsletter is published jointly by the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension, the *Palouse-Clearwater* Environmental Institute and Washington State University Cooperative Extension.

Articles for publication and letters to the editors are welcome and must include the name and address of the author. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of UI, PCEI or WSU.

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One of the oft-stated purposes of Community Supported Agriculture is to reconnect people to the land. My CSA fell short here. Even though I extended an open invitation, only two customers visited the farm. I didn't require or even offer a working share because I figured few would want to drive 15 miles to put in their time. Then in September I met a woman from Montana who drives 45 miles to work on a CSA farm. Yet a survey by University of Vermont researchers (Community Supported Agriculture is starting to attract researchers like a manure pile attracts flies) found that most shareholders are primarily interested in obtaining fresh organic produce at a reasonable price. CSA customers want more cleaning and packaging of their produce so its easier to put away when they get home (3).

Local Economic Impacts

University of Wisconsin researchers estimate that a six acre, 100 customer, \$40,000 gross CSA farm has a multiplier effect on the local economy of \$240,000. This comes from farm and food dollars recirculating around town instead of being drained off to parts unknown. The researchers estimated that the CSA farm bought 93 percent of its inputs locally (4). This is much higher than I'm able to do. Few local stores have the seeds and supplies I need so I send my customers' money off to Albion, Maine and Grass Valley, California. Yet I would love to spend more money in town.

There are probably 5000-some households in Pullman, excluding students who live and eat on campus. If just a fifth of them joined a CSA, there'd be at least 20 new small farms in the area; enough to encourage the local Grange Supply Store or someone else, to offer bulk vegetable seeds, poly row covers, T-tape and most the other stuff I need.

CSA Organization

There seems to be four types of CSA organization:

- 1) **Farmer-driven.** The farmer organizes the CSA and makes all, or nearly all, management decisions. The consumer is largely a passive recipient of the weekly delivery. This is the model most prevalent on the west coast.
- 2) **Consumer-driven.** Consumers (or "eaters" as one publication calls them) organize the CSA, find some land, hire a farmer, decide what will be grown and participate materially in the labor and management of the organization. This is the type of CSA that originated in the Northeast.
- 3) **Farmer cooperative.** A variation of the farmer-driven CSA in which two or more farms pool their resources to supply customers. This has the advantage, to the farmers, of reducing the time devoted to promotion, preparation, transportation and distribution. It may also allow the CSA to offer a wider variety of products, i.e. tree fruits, eggs, meat, milk, etc. With such an arrangement a small farmer wouldn't have to devote space to land extensive, low value crops such as pumpkins or sweet corn and a larger farm wouldn't have to dedicate time to labor intensive crops like carrots or herbs. On the other hand, the larger organization may dilute the personal relationship between farmer and consumer that a CSA cultivates.
- 4) **Farmer-consumer cooperative.** The grower and consumer come together in a mutually beneficial relationship that may involve co-ownership of land and other resources. The farmer is not a servant and the customers aren't passive recipients.

Diseconomies of Scale

Some larger farms have seen the profit possibilities of Community Supported Agriculture and have tried to supply 100 or more CSA customers. Yet there comes a point where personal service and quality suffer, probably where the farm relies extensively on hired labor. Bob and Bonnie Gregson contend a couple can make a good living on two acres serving some 50 full-share CSA customers plus farmers markets and a roadside stand. But don't expect to drive a new Mercedes to Mazatlan every winter from a CSA income. If money is important to you, there are a lot better ways to get rich than actually working for a living.



Taste Says It All

Kootenai County farmers and University of Idaho Cooperative Extension have begun a **Taste of the Harvest** project. The goal of the Taste is to determine which locally grown products have the best all around appeal and to encourage the use of locally grown foods. Products are judged by a local panel of ten individuals including a local grower, restaurant owners, a culinary arts instructor and master gardeners.

A recent Taste featured Barbara Arnold's **Nothing But Herbs** teas. Favorites were Peppermint, Peppermint and Chamomile, Healthy Tea (Echinacea, yarrow, elderberry, peppermint), Holy Basil, Ginger, and Anise Hyssop. The tasting panel especially liked the Peppermint and Chamomile combination. Surprisingly, the least liked was Lemon Mint.

The next Tasting experience will be salad greens and radishes. The panel would love to hear from local growers which varieties they have grown successfully. To share your successes and favorites, contact Katherine Wallenhaupt, University of Idaho Cooperative Extension, 208/667-6426 or kwallenhaupt@uidaho.edu.

However, if a Right Livelihood is what matters to you there is no more righteous calling than growing good food for people. One of my customers told my wife I had changed her family's lives. "For better or worse?" I asked. "For the better," Louise replied, "She says they've never eaten so well." Like an old family doctor, CSA farmers watch their customers grow and mature in good health from their efforts. What work could be more satisfying? *If you'd like copies of my brochure, newsletter and end of season survey send a self-addressed stamped envelope to **Kamiak View Farm**, 9032 S. Palouse River Road, Colfax, WA 99111; 509-397-2787.*

1. Bob and Bonnie Gregson, *Rebirth of the Small Family Farm: A Handbook for Starting a Successful Organic Farm Based on the Community Supported Agriculture Concept*, IMF Associates, Vashon Island, WA, 1996.
2. Daniel A. Lass, et. al. Community Supported Agriculture: Research and Education for Enhanced Viability and Potential in the Northeast, *Northeast SARE Project LNE95-63*.
3. Jane M. Kolodinsky and Leslie L. Pelch, *Factors Influencing the Decision to Join a Community Supported Agriculture Farm (CSA)*.
4. Verna Kragnes, et. al. Sustainable Community Values Project, *North Central SARE Project LNC-61*.

Clearwater Valley Farm and Market Garden Tour: Lewiston, Clarkston, and Lapwai; October 18, 1997

by Cinda Williams, Univ. of Idaho Cooperative Extension, Sustainable Agriculture

The delightful aroma of fresh baked bread and herbal tea greeted us as we entered the home of **Veggies, Inc.** owners, Deloris Jungert Davisson and David Denham. Veggies, Inc. is an incredible venture - they are entering their second season and going strong all the way. Two creative, talented and driven people turned a field of puncture vine into a garden of great diversity and beauty in a very short time. Of course, they are not beginners to organic gardening. For many years, Deloris gardened organically for market in Indiana and has marketed through a CSA. David has provided his share of good ideas and back breaking hard work, while maintaining a full time job. Tour participants handouts about Veggies, the CSA they are starting in the 1998 season, and an article describing their personal philosophy about sustainability and local, organic food production. Some of Deloris and David's concerns include: insurance coverage for selling produce at the local Farmer's Market; consumer expectations for cheap, cosmetically perfect food; lack of other growers (in their area) who are educating the public and encouraging purchase of locally grown produce at a slightly higher price; high initial investment; and weeds!! They shared some of their ideas and tips: consumer education is the key; weed control is a matter of effective competition; diluted soap sprays work wonders on all kinds of pests; CSA will help sustain their business, success in building the soil with green manures like ryegrass and buckwheat; companion planting works; avoid hybrids; use heirloom varieties; and practice diversity.

Our visit to **Osborn's Vineyards and Gardens** was like stepping into a garden of Eden in the Lewiston valley. Our host, Anabelle Osborn is an interesting and knowledgeable lady who has 'lived' much of the history of this place. My guess is that people come here as much to chat with Anabelle amidst the exotic and beautiful gardens, as to buy plants. Anabelle says the site boasts the first winery in Idaho, but says Lewiston is more suited to edible grape varieties. She sells cuttings of edible grapes, bamboo and many other plants. Cantaloupe is her best money maker and raspberries are her best selling crop. She also has cucumbers, tomatoes, and other vegetables. Her more unusual plants for the area are 'Celeste' fig trees, Princess Tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*) and Chinese jujuba (*Ziziphus jujuba*). Anabelle shared some of her growing tips: she uses black plastic and drip irrigation for superb cantaloupe crops; 'Candise' grapes are excellent for this area; she uses drip irrigation on grapes, and uses bamboo for all kinds of trellises.



Inland Northwest Food and Farming in Cyberspace

The Inland Northwest Community Food System Task Force hosts an email discussion list called INWFS-LIST. INWFS-LIST serves as an open forum for discussion of the opportunities and challenges facing small acreage farmers and market gardeners in the Inland Northwest. This email based listserv, initiated in March 1998, is intended to be a comfortable place for participants to share ideas, expertise, or information on topics which relate to small-scale farming such as: sustainable and organic production practices, marketing strategies, connections to community economic development and national/state/local regulatory policies.

All interested persons are invited to participate. To 'join' the listserv send a message to: majordomo@uidaho.edu. Leave the subject line blank. In the body of the message type: subscribe inwfs-list. After you subscribe you will receive a message from majordomo that welcomes you to the listserv. To post messages to the group, send your message to: inwfs-list@uidaho.edu. Vickie Parker-Clark administers the list and specific questions regarding operation of the listserv should be directed to her at vparkerclark@uidaho.edu.

Our next visit was to the **Nez Perce National Historical Park** where Gwen Carter, Nez Perce tribal member, shared interesting stories about her family's history of gathering and cooking traditional native foods. Native foods are a significant aspect of the Clearwater Valley food system. In fact, the tribe's food gathering and distribution traditions clearly demonstrate the origins of a true 'community food system.' Gwen's family has been doing the gathering and preparing of foods for generations. In the past, different plants and other materials needed for food preparation were gathered in different locations, at certain times of the year, as the seasons progressed. Enough was gathered and prepared for long term storage by drying or cooking.

Gwen's family is still involved in the gathering and preparation of native foods which are used mostly for big celebrations and special occasions. She is happy to see that the children in the tribe are now more interested in preserving their traditions of using native foods. Tribal members have traditional, specific locations around the area in which certain plants are still known to be abundant. However, Gwen shared her concerns that many of the native plants they use for foods and other purposes have become scarce due to farming, grazing and logging.

Marigolds and nasturtiums bloomed profusely at our next stop to visit the **Lapwai Community Demonstration Garden**. The garden was started three years ago as a cooperative program between the Nez Perce Tribe and the UI Nez Perce County Cooperative Extension. The garden is located on the reservation in Lapwai, directly in front of the Nez Perce Food Distribution Center. Initially, the garden was a community garden with plots for individual Nez Perce families to raise their own food and learn sustainable gardening methods. Interest of individual families declined and now the garden is maintained by Extension as a demonstration garden, with the food going to the food distribution center for families on the reservation. Although it may not be functioning as a true 'community garden' it has certainly been significant as a demonstration garden for sustainable and organic gardening methods. Over the past three years, approximately 200 people have participated in demonstration field days featuring integrated pest management techniques such as mineral oil on corn for corn ear worms, row covers, companion planting, trap crops, landscape fabric and straw mulches.

The canyon of the Clearwater River provided the perfect backdrop for our next tour stop at **Clearwater Valley Farms**. The view alone might be worth all the hard work that Don and Delta Simpson have put into the development of this farm over the past ten years. The Simpsons grow 5 acres of organic (non-certified) vegetables in a beautiful setting along the Clearwater River about 10 miles from Lewiston, Idaho. They have most of their acreage in corn, but have a great variety of other crops (about a 50 item mix including their orchard). They are always experimenting with new varieties to meet customer demands and keep things more interesting. They have continued to clear out more rocks and expand their productive acreage over the years. Don plows and disks their land before planting. Crops are consistently rotated into different areas. They use rye as a cover crop to help build the soil, but don't use fertilizers. They haven't needed to use insecticides and have had very few problems except for the squash bug. Being on the river has advantages of a high water table which keeps the ground moist and they can irrigate directly from the river. They market their produce weekly at the Moscow Farmers' Market. It is a longer drive than going to Lewiston, but Moscow has a more successful market, with a larger customer base. They pick produce fresh the night before their trip to the market. They are not growing 'certified' organic because of the tax to certify organic produce in Idaho. They contend that consumers don't want to pay more for 'certified' organic; most customers just want fresh, healthy food. Don and Delta include their daughter in all phases of the farm, she grows her own patch of flowers and gourds, which she sells at the farmers' market.



Coeur d'Alene Farm Tour Sprouts Greenhouse Project

by Vickie Parker-Clark, University of Idaho, Kootenai County Cooperative Extension

Those of you who attended the Coeur d'Alene/Spokane small farm tour in September will remember Stephanie Bennett, the **Project CDA** teacher who shared information about the youth garden at the school. Stephanie and her students planned, planted, and nurtured the beautiful flower and vegetable garden we toured, and shared their hopes for future expansion with tour participants.

Stephanie reports that while attending a local rotary club's "student of the month" meeting recently, she talked about the school's involvement in the farm tour. As a result, members of the rotary club offered to work with students to build a greenhouse. The rotary club will furnish building materials, tools, and expertise for the project. They will offer hands-on training to students in construction techniques. Stephanie says the greenhouse will be a great addition to the youth garden, and invites us to come see them again after the greenhouse is built. Congratulations, Stephanie and students of Project CDA! For more information, contact Stephanie Bennett, Project Coeur d'Alene, 208/667-7460.

Our last stop was at the **Idaho Foodbank Warehouse** - a huge metal building in east Lewiston. Although the warehouse was quite a visual contrast to Clearwater Farms, this stop was a very interesting part of the tour and a significant part of any food distribution system. The Idaho Food Bank is a non-profit, statewide organization, not a federal agency. They are a food collection and distribution center for local agencies (Community Action Agency, etc.) who provide food to their 'low income' clientele. They get the majority of their food through Second Harvest, a national food collection organization. The Lewiston warehouse distributes to 23 agencies in five northern Idaho counties and Asotin county, Washington. Fern Wilman, the Idaho Foodbank's Northern Director, led our tour and told us about a relatively new program for the Foodbank called Grow-A-Row. The Lewiston operation began the Grow-A-Row program in 1996, to invite farmers and others backyard gardeners to donate extra fresh produce to the food bank. The first year they only had one grower; in 1997 they had 5 growers. As the vans pulled away from the food bank warehouse and the tour came to a close, participants were energized but exhausted and looking forward to eating lots of fresh, local produce in the very near future.

Touring Kootenai and Spokane County Farms

by Vickie Parker-Clark, University of Idaho, Kootenai County Cooperative Extension

Forty people from Idaho, Washington, and British Columbia attended the Coeur d'Alene -Spokane Small Farm tour in September. Our tour began at **Nothing But Herbs**, a 5 acre farm in Hayden where owner Barbara Arnold showed us annual and perennial herbs. Barbara markets her culinary, medicinal, and ornamental herbs as nursery plants, and as value-added products such as wreaths, vinegars, teas, and packaged herbs. She sells through the local farmers' market, and has wholesale and retail customers.

Our next stop, just a mile down the road, was **Parent's Pastures**, a market garden that is intensively managed. Owners Dennis and Jennifer Pasture started the garden as a family project and to subsidize their children's college fund. The Parents have a variety of fruits and vegetables that they market through the local farmers' market and as U-pick. They have developed a computer program that enables them to keep track of costs on a per-square-foot basis.

Next stop was an isolated tree fruit/small fruit farm called the **Jam Patch**. Owner Carol Olson uses the Sandpoint commercial kitchen to make wonderful jams that she sells through the farmers' market and through local businesses. She also supplies her delicious jams to a nearby bed and breakfast. Since the farm is off the beaten path, Carol concentrates on marketing her jams rather than fresh produce.

Crossing from Idaho into Washington, we were allowed to swarm through the fields of Lisa and "Pepper Dave" Kenyon at their vegetable farm in Otis Orchards. Dave and Lisa grow numerous varieties of vegetables and sell them through their farm stand, **Fresh Start Produce**. Lisa shared the challenges of finding reliable labor, selling unknown varieties, and trying to reduce waste by sharing extra produce with food banks in the area.

Lunch was served at **Huckleberry's Fresh Market** in the Spokane Valley. Store coordinator Allen Shepard and his head chef served us a variety of colorful, great tasting, locally grown and organic foods. Allen shared marketing information with the group from the wholesale buyer's point of view. Quality, quantity, and reliability of delivery were some of important points he stressed.



Planning the Harvest...

The Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Task Force, *Palouse-Clearwater* Environmental Institute and the University of Idaho are planning the following regional programs. If you would like to be involved in these activities, please let the program coordinator know!

Taste of the Palouse Dinners Summer 1998

Contact: Peggy Adams, 208/882-1444,
peggy931@uidaho.edu

INW Farm and Market Garden Tours July/August 1998

Contact: Colette DePhelps, 208/882-1444,
dephelps@pcei.org

Nez Perce Tribal Integrated Pest Management Education Program June 1998 to March 1999

Colette DePhelps or Julie Simpson,
208/843-7375, julies@nezperce.org

Small Acreage Farming/Market Gardening Course September to November 1998

Contact: Vickie Parker-Clark, 208/667-
6426, vparkerclark@uidaho.edu

INW Small Farms Conference March 1999

Contact: Vickie Parker-Clark, 208/667-
6426, vparkerclark@uidaho.edu or Colette
DePhelps, 208/882-1444,
dephelps@pcei.org

Developing Marketing Cooperatives

Contact: Vickie Parker-Clark

Shared Kitchen Networks

Contact: Vickie Parker-Clark or Colette
DePhelps

After lunch we travel to Green Bluff where Gordon Beck, **Harvest House and Orchard**, talked about entertainment farming. Gordon and Marilyn have worked hard at promoting their orchard and market as a family destination. "People come for the experience," Gordon said. "Always have music," he advised, "because when the music starts, people buy."

Our final stop in Washington was **Greenbluff Country Inn and Orchard**, which is a bed & breakfast. The orchard is not a working orchard currently, but owners Tom and Charlene Hansen utilize Green Bluff grown produce for their breakfasts and visitor treats. Charlene's visitors love the ambiance of the farming country of Green Bluff.

Our final stop was back in Coeur d'Alene at the alternative high school, **Project CDA**. We listened to Stephanie Bennett, Environmental Education teacher, and her students talk about their flower and vegetable garden on the school grounds. Students said they learned "a lot" while planning and growing the garden, and were planning for expansion. Discussion with students and tour participants included an invitation to consider selling at the farmers' market.

Mike Wall, **Kootenai County Juvenile Detention**, also spoke about the garden project he developed in which kids work in a garden, located at the University of Idaho Extension office, in lieu of being placed in detention. The kids in the program are just starting to get into trouble. Mike talked about the impact the garden has had on some of the kids - increased self-esteem, learning responsibility, feeling a connection to something. He said some of the kids who no longer are required to be in the program visit the garden "just to see how things are doing."

Tour participants indicated they enjoyed the tour. Comments included "I liked the diversity of places visited; emphasis on various marketing/outreach strategies," "I liked interaction with others in the group, getting a flavor of local production activities." They also indicated that they would likely increase their consumption of local products and buy organic products.



**Palouse-Clearwater
Environmental Institute**

 **University of Idaho
Cooperative Extension System**

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
**Washington State
University**



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Inland Northwest Food and Farming Calendar

April 25 Garden Fair and Home Show, Beasley Coliseum, WSU, Pullman

Contact: Abbey Lee, 509/336-0267

May 2 Moscow Farmers' Market opens, Friendship Square, Moscow, ID

Contact: Mary Blythe, 208/883-7036

May 2 Farmers' Market at Sandpoint opens, Sandpoint, ID

Contact: Kim Spencer, 208/263-6483

May 9 Kootenai County Farmers' Market opens, Coeur d'Alene, ID Contact:

Dalene Travers, Market Manager, 208/772-9127.

May 12 Rathdrum Farmers' Market opens, Rathdrum, ID

Contact: Cindy dePaulis 208/687-2274.

May 16 Koppel Farm Community Garden Fair, Koppel Farm, Pullman, WA,

Contact: Liza Rognas, 509/335-3916

June 4-5 Insect Identification, Panhandle Environmental Horticulture Training,

Sandpoint, ID, Contact: Vickie Parker-Clark, 208/667-6426

June 2 Main Street Market opens, Lewiston, ID

Contact: Dr. Ron Sheahan, 208/743-3582

June 6 Pullman Public Market opens, Pullman, WA

Contact: Cheri Yost, 509/334-1111

June 10 Lewiston Farmers' Market opens, Lewiston, ID

Contact: Dian McKnight, 208/276-7752

June 13 Kendrick Community Market opens, Kendrick, ID

Contact: Phyllis Berg, 208/289-5302

June 17-18 Weed Identification, Panhandle Environmental Horticulture Training,

Coeur d'Alene, ID, Contact: Vickie Parker-Clark, 208/667-6426

June 24-25 Disease Identification, Panhandle Environmental Horticulture Training,

Coeur d'Alene, ID, Contact: Vickie Parker-Clark, 208/667-6426

July 1 Koppel Farm Wednesday Evening Farmers' Market opens, Pullman, WA,

Contact: Liza Rognas, 509/335-3916

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