



THE AGRARIAN URBANITE

the Manual for Regenerative Urban Agriculture



Volume 1 Issue 5

FRANK COOK: MORE THAN MASTER HERBALIST

BY TRACIE HELLWINCKEL

Frank Cook's dedication and love of the natural world affected thousands. Frank Cook died on August 19, 2009 at 47 years old. His passing is a great loss to the regenerative world. He will be greatly missed for his not only his amazing spirit, but also for vast contribution to the pool of human wisdom.

At first glance, Cook appears to come from the Earth. He looks like a mythical gentle giant. He is described by friends as the Banyan Tree. His brother, Ken said of him, "I think he saw us all as plant beings and he certainly was one himself."

In Frank's resume at www.wildroots.org he described himself in these words:

"Over the last ten years my passion for being a repository of plant knowledge has grown steadily. I have studied with Herbalists, Shamen, Vaidyas, Sangomas, Green Witches, Doctors, Professors, Medicine Men...around the country and world. They have initiated me into many ways of walking with plants. More and more there are opportunities to share what I have learned at workshops, conferences, and gatherings of all types around the country.

As an extensive traveler I have developed a deep-rooted network of people whose lives are consciously intermingled with plants, healing, and ways to create a better world. I lead a simple life communicating, teaching, reflecting, and



spending a lot of time with family and in the forests and gardens delving deeper into the mysteries of the plant kingdom and our place in the web of life."

Frank Cook was best known for his walks with plants. He took people on walks and

Continued on Page 5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Economic Swales</i>	2
<i>Time to Clean Up</i>	2
<i>Questions for The Agrarian</i>	3
<i>Don't Squish the Squash</i>	3
<i>Sad News From Green Man Farm</i>	4
<i>Seed Saving: The Benefit of Heirloom</i>	4
<i>Contact Information</i>	5

A FEW WORDS...

EDITOR'S NOTE

The equinox passed on September 22, and autumn is officially upon us as we enter October. The Harvest Moon is the full moon closest to the Equinox and falls on October 4 this year.

Due to the plane of the Earth's orbit around the sun during the autumn months, the moon in the evening makes a narrower angle with respect to the horizon of the

Earth eliminating any long period of darkness between sunset and moonrise. In times before man-made light, this feature of the autumn moons helped light the way so farmers could continue working and bring in the fall harvest by moonlight even after the sun had set.

During this time, folks take the energy of the harvest and turn it into preservation

and preparation for the coming winter season. The shortening days are evident as the fertility of summer fades to await the renewal of spring.

It is also the time to look inward at any regret, loss, or unhappiness that you harbor and cut any threads which bind you so you can personally ready yourself to pass through the death of winter and into spring's renewal.



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Comparing sheds*
- *Closing the Garden*
- *Garlic*
- *Winter Squash enlightens*
- *East Tennessee CSA farmer moves home*
- *Heirloom and Hybrid*

When thinking about the interconnectedness of the world and comparing seemingly unrelated systems, deep patterns come into view. Such a pattern emerges if we evaluate the way currency moves through the economy and compare it to the movement of water through a watershed. By establishing the notion of an “economic shed” we begin to see, that what is true of water—its conservation and the potential damage it could cause—is also true of wealth.

Imagine a watershed with little vegetation and much paving and other disturbances to the natural topography. Over time, erosion channels form. These carry the topsoil away. This process progresses exponentially—less topsoil, faster water movement, faster water movement, deeper erosion channels. Eventually the landscape is denuded of plant life and the soil that supports it. Such conditions occur everywhere from poorly managed agricultural land to small streams overburdened with urban storm runoff. An similar effect can be seen in the economy.

Global distribution of goods and services and the dominance of “big box retailers” are the erosion channels of the economy. As retailers centralize and consolidate, a two-fold economic erosion ensues. First, local business deteriorates due to uneven competition. Second, the demand for ever-cheaper labor and materials draws the natural and human resources away from areas. In both cases, economic resources are drained away from the communities where they originate. The effect on these communities is like that of places higher in the watershed described above—a progressive degeneration in the conditions that support life.

In a watershed, such problems can be mitigated with swales, retention ponds, and cisterns. Swales direct water into the subsoil. This slows the water as it makes its way down the shed and makes it available to plants through their roots. Retention ponds also slow the movement of water and making water freely available in dryer weather. Cisterns collect water from buildings and other hardscapes, slowing the overall movement of water and making it even

more readily available on sight.

Small business, local banks and co-ops, and personal savings, are the swales, ponds and cisterns of the economy. Small business allows the wealth of a community to be absorbed locally, making it available to the citizens. As plants use subsurface water to thrive and grow, so the citizen thrives and grows through enterprise. Small banks and other cooperative ventures collect the equity of the community as a whole as retention ponds collect water from the landscape. Finally, personal savings, in whatever form functions as a cistern for the economic resources generated at the household level.

We are slowly beginning to understand the value of good water management to the bioregion. By viewing economic activity as an organic process, constrained by the same principles as other organic processes, we may develop a proper understanding of it. Like in other areas of ecology, we may find that understanding and being in harmony with the flow of resources makes us not only richer, but better stewards. 🌱

TIME TO CLEAN UP

By TRACIE HELLWINCKEL

By the end of summer, the garden seems a little untamed as weeds and grasses have crept their way into every nook and cranny. As the weather cools and the crops drastically slow production, while the weather is nice, October is a good time to clean up the garden and prep it for winter crops or put it to rest till next spring.

Pick your final harvest and thank the plants and garden for its abundance and gifts. Pull plants. Put any diseased plants far away from the garden or compost so as not to spread or encourage further disease. Healthy plants can either go in the compost or used as a layer of sheet mulch (if not planting a winter bed).

Put down cardboard or some other easily biodegradable weed barrier like when sheet mulching. Amend the soil with rich compost, shredded leaves, the final grass clippings, mulch...whatever is on hand to build the soil. If planting a garden from seed, avoid using big bulky materials that will cause seeds to



fall too deep and prevent them from germinating. Some people cover the beds with clear plastic to cook the soil when not planting a winter garden, but this is not necessary. [For more information on sheet mulching, see Volume 1 Issue 2 July 2009 (page 2) of *The Agrarian Urbanite*.]

After you prepped the garden, you can plant crops like garlic (see *Questions for the Agrarian* this issue), greens and lettuces. Greens like kale, spinach, swiss chard, collards, and turnip greens tend to be cold hardy. They can survive light frosts. Lettuces are tender, but if you cover them up during the light frosts, they

can easily survive. First frost in Zone 7 falls around October 20th. To locate your hardiness zone, visit <http://www.arborday.org/treeinfo/zonelookup.cfm>

As greens grow, you can harvest leaves individually. There is no need to wait for the entire head to mature. You can harvest up to half the leaves of a plant leaving some leaves so the plant can continue to photosynthesize. The grazing or “eat as you go” method is also an easy way to thin greens.

As the weather cools and light frosts become heavier frosts, if you want to keep your garden alive, consider building a hot box or cold frame around your greens. During the coldest months, the hotbox keeps frost and snow off plants while the glass roof allows sun to penetrate and warm crops. You can get detailed instructions online, or wait till next month for further instructions. By building a structure around your plants, you can eat fresh greens all winter long. 🌱



QUESTIONS FOR *THE AGRARIAN*

Many have asked: When and how do you plant garlic?

The A.U.: Garlic or *Allium sativum*, a true gift from Earth, is said to have antibacterial qualities and is beneficial to the circulatory and respiratory systems. It may help in lowering blood pressure and cholesterol. When eaten raw, it can reduce nasal congestion and ease cold symptoms. The use of garlic can be traced back to Babylonia and was used by the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans.

Garlic is easy to grow, and we never seem to grow enough. There are two varieties: hardneck which grows better in colder climates and softneck for warmer climates.

Garlic is a bulb and is best planted in October or November when winter is in the air but before the ground freezes.

Start with healthy bulbs and break the heads into individual cloves. Prepare a sunny bed by clearing any weeds. Plant in deep fertile soil that is well drained and has plenty of organic matter. Stick individual cloves, pointy side up, about 3" deep and about 6" apart. Mulch.

Helpful hints: Garlic doesn't compete

well with weeds; keep the area free of weeds and grass. If you're rotating crops, don't plant garlic after onions. Don't plant garlic with beans or peas, but you can plant beets or lettuce between the rows (interplanting). They help keep the soil cool in the summer.

Once you have planted the bulbs, garlic has low watering needs. In spring, shoots will pop up. Keep the area free of weeds and as the season continues, add another light layer of mulch especially if you don't interplant. When flower buds appear snip them at the base. This focuses the plants energy to creating a larger bulb.

Harvest in the mid to late summer when the stalks begin to turn yellow and brown before the bulbs begin to separate. Use a garden fork to loosen the soil around the bulb then gently lift the bulb with the tines. Be careful not to pierce bulbs or bruise them. If you pull the first bulb out, and it doesn't look ready, put down a little mulch and wait a little



Freshly harvested garlic

longer for the other bulbs to mature.

You can use the cloves fresh but drying the bulbs, or curing, is the secret to long shelf life. *The A.U.* doesn't know if there is a real science to this. After reading several sources, each one has a different method. We have tied garlic by the stalk & hung it in a sunny well ventilated window in the house; layered the garlic in a criss-cross way then left it in a sunny window in the shed; and let it sit in a basket on the kitchen floor. All of these methods have worked successfully. The common denominators being light and the garlic having plenty of air circulation.

Curing takes about two weeks and is finished when the outer layers look dry and crinkled. Clip the stalks and store as you would normally store garlic. Remember to save a head or two for next year's garden if you like the variety.

Garlic sources:

www.territorialseed.com

www.garlicfarm.ca/

www.hoodrivergarlic.com/

www.seedsofchange.com

Check your local Farmer's Market or Food Cooperative for organic garlic, too.



DON'T SQUISH THE SQUASH

BY TRACIE HELLWINCKEL

The fall season brings a wonderful assortment of winter squashes like acorn, butternut, red kuri, and pumpkin. Winter squashes will keep all winter long if stored in a cool dry place. Cooked pumpkin also stores well in the freezer. Butternut and pumpkin make terrific creamy soups that warm the insides on cool fall and winter nights. Winter squashes can be used in muffins, cakes and breads. So, stock up on winter squashes while they're abundant to keep your food supply going all winter.

Stuffed Acorn Squash

2 acorn squash cut tops off (save tops)
1/2 lb of favorite meat (ground is best)
1-2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 small sweet onion, chopped

1 eggplant, chopped
1/2 chopped nuts
1/2 cup chopped sweet pepper
Salt, pepper and cumin to taste
Curry or cinnamon (optional)
1-2 Tbsp real maple syrup
1/2 cup apple or dried cranberries (optional)
Cooked brown rice or other cooked grain (optional or in lieu of ground meat)

Cooking Instructions:

Scoop the seeds from the squash.
Brown the meat with the garlic and onion till meat is cooked through.
Add the chopped eggplant, peppers, nuts and desired spices. Sauté for 10 minutes or until the vegetables begin to soften.

Turn off heat. Stir in maple syrup and apple or cranberries. Mix well.

Put mixture in hollowed out squash and put the top back on.

Place in a baking dish or sheet. Cook at 350 degrees for 35 -40 minutes or until the squash is tender.

Top with freshly grated parmesan or Romano cheese if desired.



SAD NEWS FROM GREEN MAN FARM



Eric Gibian, owner and farmer of Green Man Farm CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) posted on the Knoxville Permaculture Guild website that he and his family are returning to South Florida.

He wrote, *“This will be our last season at the Green Man Farm. By November I will put the garden to rest, cover cropping to protect and enrich the much-improved soil. Hopefully it will be for continued use by another ambitious farmer...I am grateful to have had this time to do exactly what it is I have always wanted to do, in exactly the spot that I have always wanted to do it...”*

In January (2009) it became clear that this was not the right long-term lifestyle for us as a family. We toyed with the idea of staying for two or three

more seasons but in the end we settled on one last great season on the farm.”

Eric explained that the decision was a hard one and that they were NOT leaving because of lack of business. He stated, *“For those of you concerned with the financial sustainability of small local organic agriculture please rest assured, because of you this farm is on sound financial footing.”* He went on to say that he was thrilled about the growth of the Market Square Farmer’s Market even in this year alone and that farming is viable here in East Tennessee


Eric reiterated, *“There were many personal factors that weighed upon our decision. In no way is this decision a reflection of a lack of community support. On the contrary, we have had no trouble selling our CSA memberships, baked goods, eggs, meat, and vegetables to an eager community. For that, I thank you. We will miss being part of such a wonderfully inspiring and growing local food movement. Knoxville is fortunate.”*

Eric plans to remain in East Tennessee through October while his wife, Nicole, and son, Gabriel, return to South Florida. Eric wants to finish this CSA season, but that they must begin marketing the farm to sell. They are mar-

keting the farm through http://www.landandfarm.com/properties/green_man_farm_csa_for_sale.asp and are searching *“preferably (for) someone willing and able to continue on with the mission of sustainable agriculture that we have set forth. My hope is to pass along the momentum to another farmer...This has been my hearts work for the last three years... Thank you all for your support. I look forward to the remainder of my time at the Green Man Farm.”*

For the full letter: <http://knoxvillepermacultureguild.ning.com/profiles/blogs/sad-news-from-green-man-farm>

The Agrarian Urbanite would like to thank Eric, Nicole and Gabriel for their commitment and contribution to agriculture in East Tennessee. We know that this was not an easy decision, and we wish you the best of the best. You’ll be missed. The Market won’t be the same without Gabriel scooting about and playing in the fountains. We hope that you return to say, “Hey.” You’re always welcomed. Stay active on the guild, and keep us updated to Urban Ag in South Florida.

Safe travels and happy journeys. 

SEED SAVING: THE BENEFIT OF HEIRLOOM

BY TRACIE HELLWINCKEL

It’s that time of year that as the crops slow, we put away seed for next year’s crops. Seed saving is an essential part of the gardening cycle and aids in garden sustainability.

Each seed has a different process for saving. www.seedsave.org (free online) features 27 common vegetables with easy to follow instructions. Printed copies are available for \$5.95. Store seeds in labeled glass jars, pill containers or little envelopes in a cool, dry place. Mix in a little wood ash to prevent mildew growth.

If you plan to seed save, it is absolutely necessary to begin with heirloom seeds or plants.

Heirloom seeds have been passed down over time. Why is this such a big deal? Because when you use an heirloom seed, you are guaranteed the

same vegetable or fruit plant year after year. Some seeds (like the Blue Podded Pea) date back hundreds of years.

Hybrid seeds do not produce the same plant the following year because offspring of hybrid saved seeds usually show unpredictable characteristics from the grandparent plants instead of being similar to the parent.

You may have heard of Thomas Jefferson’s vegetable garden. Some folks painstakingly take time each year to recreate this garden. Imagine eating tomatoes that were grown from the same seed as Thomas Jefferson used? You are, in essence, eating the same tomato. (Okay, soil quality effects the taste of the food, but we aren’t discussing that right now.) When a person plants an heirloom seed (or plant) and produces food from it, that person can also *save seed* from that plant and be assured to grow the same food the

following year. That’s how our ancestors did it.

Hybrids are hand-pollinated crossed plants. They have benefits such as higher yields and better tolerance or maybe resistance to splitting (as with tomatoes), but hybrid seeds cannot be saved from year to year. It’s a labor intensive non-sustainable process to assure the same hybrid plant year after year.

If you want to be sustainable in your gardening practices, buy heirloom otherwise you’ll need to return to the garden center spring after spring wasting precious time and money?

Heirloom sources:

www.rareseeds.com

www.southernexposure.com

<http://www.seed savers.org>

<http://victoryseeds.com/> 



showed them the abundant edible plants of the wood. Frank spent about 4 months a year walking Earth to fulfill his personal goal to meet the 5000 plant genera of the world. Upon his death, he met at least 70% of them.

In memory of Frank Cook, Tim Toben of the Pickards Mountain Eco-Institute (www.pickardsmountain.org) embraced Frank's relationship with plants with these words:

"When he met plants, it was not to learn their name and move on. It was to become intimate with them, to know them deeply. He observed them in the context of their neighbors. He understood them in what Thomas Berry called a "communion of subjects, rather than a collection of objects." He touched, smelled, and tasted them. He learned their medicine and their nutritive values. And he got a sense of their vibration and spirit. He had great respect for the plant beings, and because they fed him and healed him and gave him life, he saw himself as a plant being.

He brought that respect to his teaching. "When you know someone intimately, you want to learn everything about them,"

he said. This man had the mental, spiritual, and physical capacity to know thousands of plant beings intimately. And he was willing to share his love and knowledge with others, with great reverence."

At Eat Weeds A Forager's Wild Food Guide to the Edible Plants of Britain (www.eatweeds.co.uk/in-memory-of-frank-cook), Tim writes:

"The meals between walks were just as vibrant. Reminding us that most Americans eat just 25 species of plants a year, he'd make fresh bread and soup with at least 25 species gathered during his walk. The flavors and energy in his food were life giving. He'd make teas by day and meads at night, always sharing a batch from last year in a pass-around bottle. Frank's blueberry and sumac meads were my favorite. His gatherings built benevolent communities — families with native knowledge and skills."

Frank Cook will be missed by many. Frank worked for donations, which paid for his trips and for that we can be thankful. Due to his simple life and lack of greed, thousands became educated and

his knowledge doesn't die with him. He planted a seed in each student he met.

Frank Cook's dissertation entitled "*Emerging Planetary Medicine*" is available at: www.plantsandhealers.com/dissertation.php

And his recommended reading list at: <http://store.amazon.com/frankcook-20>

In closing and in the words of Tim Toben:

*Be Mindful
Stretch beyond your comfort zone
Live in the sacred
Earth is Mother*

Happy Trails, Frank.



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The Agrarian Urbanite welcomes and encourages your regenerative questions, letters, & submissions.

Contact us at

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The Agrarian Urbanite is a monthly grassroots publication dedicated to providing practical agricultural education focused on sustainable, regenerative and organic techniques.

The Agrarian Urbanite is a guide for creating balanced, healthier and sustainable communities & neighborhoods.

The Agrarian Urbanite hopes to restore Spirit, Humankind and Earth by being a catalyst for folks to think beyond the garden, building foundations of knowledge & inspiring action.

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