



Photo by: Paul Schraub

Have you been to the farm yet this year?

If not, now is the perfect time to visit us and see first-hand all the marvelous work we're doing together to help people move out of homelessness and teach as many people as possible about the how-to's regarding sustainable forms of food production on the Central Coast. The black and white photos we have in this issue are lovely but seeing it all in as many colors as our eyes can distinguish makes a trip to Natural Bridges Farm a gorgeous fully sense-engaging experience! We have upgraded several of our facilities too, including our farm kitchen with funding from the Native Iris Fund at the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County. With thanks also to the volunteers who cook lunches Tuesday-Friday, we now have a great place to provide healthy meals and a chance to socialize over the ever-important act of sharing food.

The summer is always a busy time as many of us have more unscheduled time to learn new skills and enjoy the beautiful place in which we live. What with all the encouragement from plants appearing to spring up overnight if we just smile and give them the tiniest bit of attention, there is no better time than now to learn how to grow edible and ornamental plants. Staff and crew at NBF have been having great fun with the wide range of people who are coming out each week to volunteer and learn organic gardening. Everyone from school-aged children, through college-aged young adults, to seniors come together and make NBF a brilliant place to reconnect with each other and our environment. We hold a class every Wednesday morning usually on horticultural topics that is open to everyone who's interested. If you fancy learning something new, or refreshing your memory, please join us Wednesdays 9-10am at NBF on Shaffer Road off Delaware Avenue.

In recognition of the multiple programs we have developed over the years, I am pleased to announce Homeless Garden Project's new mission statement that was adopted at the July meeting of the Board of Directors. At our annual planning retreat in December 2005, we started the process of changing the statement so that it reflected the breadth of work that we do every week and the core values that will transfer to operations at our permanent site. After six months of discussion we agreed on the following and hope that it resonates with you too!

Our Mission:

- **Bring together** people from throughout the community in the beauty and security of our certified organic garden.
- **Practice** and teach principles of economic and ecological sustainability through classes and hands-on experience.
- **Provide** homeless men and women job training and transitional employment.

—Dawn Coppin, Executive Director of the Homeless Garden Project



Lavender bunches by Dana Keating

Drying shed by Dawn Coppin



Collaborations...

Just as the winter rains were finally tapering off, the spring participants in the Women Ventures Project of the Community Action Board came out and built a fabulous new drying shed. Not a moment too soon as the 2006 harvest is now in full swing— along with plantings of more quick growing vegetables. WVP provides intensive job training for low-income women in non-traditional areas like carpentry, plumbing, and electrics. This spring WVP's practical experience involved partnering with us in building a sturdy structure that has good ventilation, warmth, and dryness— all necessary features for the successful drying of flowers and herbs.

Our appreciation also goes to Women Helping Others Foundation and the Rotary Club of Santa Cruz for their funding. Many thanks for the in-kind donations from Battle Mountain Excavation, Comfort Tractor Service, Filer Home Design, Graniterock, Milrod Construction, Mora Doors, Olive Springs Quarry, Tom Santoro Transportation, and United Rentals.

Many businesses are generous in their support of our work and often will also match their employees' contributions whether financial or volunteer hours. Please check with your employer to see if such an opportunity exists for you too. Not including the in-kind gifts we receive, four percent of our annual budget comes from businesses and half of the grants we apply for are to corporate foundations. Our chance of success increases significantly when we can say that their employees believe in and support our mission, so please don't be shy about telling us who you work for.

Voices from the Fields...

Interview with *Sandy HGP trainee*

Q. Who are you? What matters most to you about your life?

A. I see myself— especially in relation to working at the HGP—as a person in transition. I'm in a transition related to aging, sort of from one chronological era to the next. I'm sorting out what I want to leave behind and what I want to reconnect with. I'm someone who recently developed some physical problems that I've never had before and I'm addressing it with healing; that feels good to me emotionally as well-to be addressing a problem and have a result.

It is important to me to find a professional direction and educate myself in it, fulfill it with a job and contribute to the larger community. That's really important to me. Even if I were able to be independently wealthy, I'd be unhappy not contributing to my community. Possibilities range from completing my medical assistant degree at Cabrillo to getting funding for an advanced degree in Education.

Q. How would you explain to someone who has never been to Natural Bridges Farm what it's like?

A. When I talk about the farm, I start out by telling people it's lovely. Then I'd say it's a gentle work environment with no pressure. We start out in the morning getting our assignments. Assignments range from planting, seeding, transplanting, bed



Dibbling by Dana Keating

preparation, watering, setting up irrigation lines, harvesting or other general chores. This is a working farm, so we have to prepare soil to receive plants. The soil that we put plants in, "beds," are about four feet wide and fifteen feet long and are slightly raised. We add compost and aged manure to provide nutrition for the plants. We usually roll out over the bed a sheet of cornstarch that looks like plastic to prevent growth of weeds.

We use a tool to create a series of properly spaced holes through the cornstarch and plant the seedlings through those holes. Usually people work in couples so that we can accomplish the task effectively. One of the benefits of this is we have lots of social interaction. Sometimes I feel I am the supportive person listening to other people's troubles or happinesses and sometimes people listen to me.

I think that this interaction is what makes it possible for people from so many different backgrounds to find a way to communicate and be supportive of each other. People come here from different social classes. Yet our interactions at the Garden aren't based on class.

I think we make connections to resources more during lunch than any other time—someone knows someone who knows someone who has a connection. For example, a volunteer had to decide before the week was over whether to do Peace Corps in Nicaragua or Peru, and Vanessa knew someone who'd been a Peace Corps volunteer in Nicaragua, and connected them. I think that kind of thing is rare in life and it happens a lot at the garden.

Q. How do the work and training programs fit into your future?

A. That's a good question. It varies. Sometimes I think of including horticulture classes and really learning more. Sometimes I think of working here as really just a healing time because I have lots of projects on the back burner, for example, my medical assisting. I think I can use a lot of plant knowledge in any future medical care I do—both medicinal plants and aromatherapy plants and I'd like to know more about that.

Q. In your experience, what are the causes of and solutions to homelessness?

A. I think one of the problems with understanding homelessness is we tend to think in terms of generalities and most of the people that are homeless I've met don't fit traditional stereotypes. Here in Santa Cruz, not only do we need more low income housing for families, which is a fundable project, but we also need it for single male and female individuals. I think we need more employment opportunities for older and disabled individuals in Santa Cruz County. Presently, low income housing waiting lists are closed and have been for over a year, so solving the problem of housing for low income individuals becomes almost an impossibility. ♦

Voices from the Fields...

Holy Harvest!

Benefiting the Project

Patti Sirenes and five other writers will hold a poetry reading on Wednesday, August 30 to benefit the Homeless Garden Project. The event titled "Holy Harvest!" begins at 7:30 pm at the Hide Gallery, 131B Front St., in Santa Cruz. Entrance fee is a \$5 to \$10 donation.



Images from the Garden — Dana Keating and Dawn Coppin

Voices from the Fields...

Making *Poverty Personal*

Small, vibrant, and easy to overlook, strawberries are a peculiar fruit. But while the strawberries at the Homeless Garden Project are quite possibly the most juicy, flavorful and best tasting I have ever had (seriously), they weren't the rumor that drew me to check out what's going on down at the Homeless Garden Project. I came out to meet the people. And I found more than I ever expected.

I admit that I am a little frustrated (in a good way) because I have seen a glimpse of beauty that words cannot express. I have seen new colors, new sounds, new tastes... but the lives of the people who come out on any given day to work the Garden are what I have found the most beautiful. And, although you may encounter some of us outside the Garden, we might also be people easy to overlook. I reassure you, there is a vibrant happening in the lives being cultivated, and a peculiar happening going on that is more than you might know to expect. I didn't.

In the few weeks that I have been out there, I have been hesitant to ask or assume that anyone out here at the Garden is, or has been, homeless—I am excited about making friends and not interested in "homeless" being a label or a factor in how I treat people. But the reality is that homelessness exists. I come to the Garden with an attitude that acknowledges that I am pretty ignorant about the ugly poverty of homelessness, but I am hopeful that I can learn how I can help.

Downtown where I live, I find myself in the tension between boldly wanting to understand the poor, but at other moments hesitant to really want to understand what poverty is like. Honestly, at this point I have a lot of questions—more so than answers. But since I have been coming to the Garden, I have discovered seeds of courage sprouting in the garden of my life—watered by the people that I have met, and nourished by the similar questions that they are also asking, questions that, for one reason or another, seem to intersect my life.

There is so much exciting life happening at the Garden that I don't have time to share here, so I decided to just extend an invitation to come and see, and I, among others, will gladly share from the overflow of good things growing in the garden.

PS. A new friend at the Garden, Clarice, upon my observation that she was holding some beautiful flowers, graciously gave me one of the arrangements she was holding. In turn, I was able to share the home-grown flowers with some friends in town—a tangible glimpse of the beautiful life happening out at the Garden, an abundance of life they've only heard rumors of... the rumors are true! Please, come... see...

— Wes Thomson currently works as a social worker, helping the community work towards eliminating the word "exclusion" from our lifestyle vocabulary in Santa Cruz, CA.



New this Year!

**Pick your own
CSA Shares
It's fun and saves
you money!**

Where: *Natural Bridges Farm*

When: *Schedule a regular time during our work hours—Tues-Fri, 9-2;*

Cost: *Week of Aug 21-Week of Oct 23 is \$150 Call for prorated cost.*

More information can be found in our CSA brochure, available at www.homelessgardenproject.org

An Abundance of Vegetables and Fruits for our Friends!

Many of you quickly responded with gifts to our CSA Scholarship Program this year allowing us to provide more than 17 CSA shares to our scholarship recipients! Thank you!

But you may wonder if the fruit and vegetables earmarked for the Santa Cruz AIDS Project were left abandoned. Just a few days before the first harvest pickup, SCAP informed us that they were ending their food box delivery program immediately because of lack of funding. Working with our contacts at SCAP and with other community members, we decided to reroute their shares to the Walnut Avenue Women's Center.

Walnut Avenue Women's Center provides services that empower and inform women, their children and their families, enabling those they serve to realize their potential in all aspects of their lives. Their programs include Domestic Violence Services, Family Literacy Programs, and Early Childhood Education. You can visit their [website at www.wawc.org](http://www.wawc.org).

Our second recipient, The Live Oak Family Resource Center, distributes their shares to low-income and mid-county Latino families working with their Home Visiting and Information and Referral Programs.

Please know that your support of our CSA Scholarship Program reached out beyond our farm to families throughout Santa Cruz. We appreciate your support!



Images from the Garden — Dana Keating

A tribute Gift to the Project is

a great way to show your support of our programs while honoring the generous people in your life!

We'll acknowledge your gift promptly by mailing a beautiful card of our organic flower farm to the individual, family, or organization that you are honoring or remembering. (Please remember to send their addresses!)

For gifts of \$50 or more, we'll also send your tribute person a pair of 10" handmade beeswax candles created in our workshop program. The gift amount is not included with the card or candle. You'll receive our grateful confirmation of your gift for tax purposes.

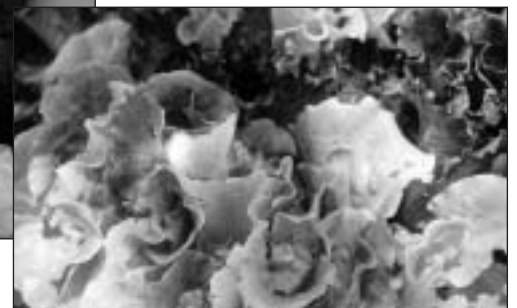
Recent tribute gifts made to the Homeless Garden Project:

In Memory Of:

- The F.O.G.
- Joseph Matheny
- Ted Kack
- Margaret & Donald Fitzgerald
- Beth Manteuffel
- Patricia Skala
- Mr. & Mrs. Mohammed Momin
- Dave & Joni Hentges

In Honor Of:

- Natalie Bridgeman's efforts with the Project
- Anonymous
- Jesus & Esther De La Torre's wedding anniversary
- Laurence Laubscher
- Robert Imlay for Father's Day
- Robin Imlay & Jeffrey Hing
- Ron Perez
- Laurence Laubscher
- Muriel Salmansohn
- Pete Salmansohn
- Sara Segal for Mother's Day
- Patricia Skala
- Dorothy Skala for Mother's Day
- Patricia Skala
- Patrick Williams
- Peter Szydłowski



The Homeless Garden Project

P.O. Box 617 • Santa Cruz, California • 95061

See our Web Site: www.homelessgardenproject.org
or call us at: **(831) 426-3609**

Be an active supporter:

- _____ \$1,000. Friend of the Garden
_____ \$ 500. Cultivator of the Garden
_____ \$ 250. Sower of the Garden
_____ \$ 100. Supporter of the Garden

My Donation is enclosed Bill Me

Bill My Visa Master Card

Card No. _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

Daytime Telephone _____

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Mark Your Calendar & *Bon Appétit!*

Our Partners-in-Dining donate a portion of your entire bill to the Project during the listed dates. Invite a friend and enjoy a great meal while showing your support of our programs!

Monday, September 25: Café La Vie,
421 Front St., Santa Cruz Tel. 429-6746
web: www.lavie.us

**Upcoming in November/December:
Shadowbrook Restaurant**
1750 Wharf Rd., Capitola Tel. 475-1511
web: www.shadowbrook-capitola.com

**Tuesday, January 16:
Bittersweet Bistro**
787 Rio Del Mar Blvd., Aptos Tel. 662-9799 web:
www.bittersweetbistro.com

We are looking for a few *good volunteers*

- **To make jam from our organic strawberries.**

This is a fun project that can be done by you and a friend or with other volunteers at a certified kitchen. It takes about 3 hours to do 36 half-pints of jam including set-up and clean-up. Jam making experience is helpful but not necessary. Call Dawn Coppin at 426-3609 ext 1# if you're interested.

- **Design a Label Contest.**

Our organic strawberry jam needs a label.

The winning entry for a half-pint jar label will receive a year's supply of our jam. Entries due by Sept. 19 to PO Box 617, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.

For more info, call Dawn Coppin at 426-3609 ext 1#