

In between the flurry of farm activities here, I slip into Davidson County and continue the fun. Twice we've taken our manure spreader there, and have about 150 tons of biodynamic compost spread over two acres on four different farms. One field is potatoes, one is sweet corn, one is melons and fruit, and the largest one is for the vegetable garden.

This is new land for me, new tractors, and new people, so I am definitely on a learning curve. The day I arrived to plant potatoes, George informed me that there was a wet weather spring in the back third of the field. But they already had the seed potatoes cut up, so we planted the whole patch. With the extra wet spring, that part of the field did not come up. So our potato crop, which is flowering and is hilled up, will be less than we planned on. But I planned on too much anyway, so we are about on target.

Ellen's melons and fruit farm is full of Johnson grass. So it is covered with a woven ground cloth and has blackberries and grapes planted. On the lower side we made hills with compost, and planted watermelons and cantaloupes. This was covered with black plastic, and holes a foot in diameter were cut over the hills. Lots of rocks and wood were laid on to help keep the plastic from flying away.

Three rows of tomatoes start out the Sulfer Creek garden, followed by alternating rows of vining plants and quick maturing crops. We'll harvest the latter about the time the vines take over. Two rows of pole beans will add visual flavor, along with a row each of zinnias and cosmos.

Part of what we're doing in this project is helping younger folks experience gardening. It drives me nuts. On a freshly plowed patch, five "apprentices" were tromping around pulling up crabgrass roots. They were in the wrong place, and I called them a herd of elephants, because each footprint sank down four inches in the fluffy soil. I wish I was nicer, but I hate packed garden soil.

As I watched them transplant lettuce, I knew I should teach them how to do it efficiently. They were going slow, planting too deep, and still tromping too much. So I get off the tractor and demonstrate, in my abrupt, egotistical manner. Smooth the soil evenly, someone hands me six plants, I set them and then shift myself forward and plant six more. I am so fast and good, I plant a hundred row feet in the time they could plant ten.

That's when I realized I'd planted the wrong furrow, and had to dig them all up and replant. How do people put up with me? Three rows of summer squash, three of beans and two of cucumbers will require help during harvest, so I hope I didn't scare anyone away. We finished the day planting the sweet corn patch, and it was a blessing to have eight extra hands. The biodynamic humus forming preparations were applied at sunset.

Horn silicia was sprinkled on in the morning, and the gardens were planted. We have ulterior motives there in Bell's Bend. Developers want to build a bridge across the Cumberland River and bring in another downtown there, and these folks don't want it. To "keep Bell's Bend country," they are fighting for their rural lifestyle in the country planning commissioners meetings. A visible presence of organic food production is my role.

A few thousand acres are at stake. It could be the breadbasket of Nashville, supplying fresh produce, creating local jobs, and preserving the environment. Or 50,000 people move in, high rise apartments and shopping centers go up, and the area is "developed." We hope to "develop" it, in organic farms and gardens instead.