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Urban Development threatens Bell's Bens 10,000 acres of farmland across the Cumberland River from Nashville, Tennessee. A new bridge and the Maytown complex would bring in 50,000 people and a second downtown into a community of 150 folks. I was hired to develop biodynamic, community supported farms there in an effort to influence future development in a different direction, i.e. towards local food production.

Our farm's mission is to grow high quality produce and help others do the same, so this project fit into my parameters. They wanted awe inspiring public gardens on a major highway, Old Hickory Blvd. The fields hadn't been plowed in 40 years and were in Bermuda grass. We agreed on this list of beliefs and values at our first meeting in late January.

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1. The welfare of a community is enhanced when local organic farms and gardens help supply its needs.
2. A farm is healthiest which produces its own foods and fertility.
3. Such a farm's compost builds a stable humus, capable of growing high quality produce.
4. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) offers people both the freshest produce possible and a healthy way to sustain such farms.
5. Farms can be enjoyable, productive and beautiful, while providing meaningful jobs, raising environmental, raising environmental awareness, and sustaining community.
6. Farms have an inspirational value as well, and can be shared with children, neighbors and guests.

We also agreed on this list of goals for 2009.

1. ½ acre of potatoes at George's

2. ¼ acre of melons and berries at Ellen's
3. ¼ acre of sweet corn at Joe's
4. An acre vegetable garden at Tom's
5. Community development with CSA, weekly potlucks and a newsletter

George, a retired farmer, didn't have much to say and snuck out of the meeting. When I heard his tractor, we adjourned and hooked up the chisel plow. I criss-crossed the fields several times in the next few months to expose the Bermuda grass roots. A neighborhood kid, Eric, was soon to graduate college and wanted to learn gardening. Glynn owned a dump truck and agreed to haul manure for us. Everyone wanted to help.

A month earlier I'd found manure piles at the farms of Tom, George and another neighbor, Zach, and put into them the preparations I make with yarrow, chamomile, nettle, oak bark, dandelion, valerian and horsetail. 60 tons of half-rotted manure from a cattle farm were delivered, along with several tons each of totally rotted wood chips, barn dirt, old manure, and granite meal.

As I was slowly making compost piles with Tom's small Kubota, Zach delivered a load. I got off the tractor to thank him and he said "That medicine really helped the rot." I offered to put more in the new piles he'd made, but I couldn't visit as I had a full day's work ahead of me. He goes home and, unasked, comes back with a backhoe and saves me several hours of work.

Besides 100 tons of compost, I also needed a fence to keep the king's deer out. (Land owners nationwide are required to graze the state's deer, virtually putting American horticulture to an end). We took the property line fence down between Tom and George, and built the deer fence around both fields, with the line going right through the garden. Many neighbors donated posts and helped in the fence, and a sign at the garden entrance read, "Good neighbors make good fences."

Before their project, Tom, George, Zach and many of the neighbors didn't know each other very well. I spent time visiting folks and shooting the breeze at the local diner. Long lasting friendships were kindled, and the community building was extremely rewarding for everyone involved, although nobody thought I'd be able to grow anything in those fields of Bermuda grass.