

## Preparations

Tuesday, January 25, 2011

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One thing I like about Rudolf Steiner's ideas on farming is that it doesn't cost much. The preparations I make are easy to do from free stuff. So everytime I turned compost piles I added more, using 32 units in all. The fields were sprinkled with horn manure, and barrel compost 18 times, and we used a lot of horn silica and horsetail later.

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A thousand pounds each of lime and rock phosphate were spread, along with a few hundred pounds of wood ashes. At the end of March we were spreading compost and planting potatoes. A wet spring delayed the main garden, but we managed to get the berries and some early vegetables planted in April.

By May Eric is here and we sow the gardens at the end of the month. I teach him hoeing and cultivating and he jumps in whole heartedly. By June we are giving CSA members their vegetables. Eric brings in woofers, old friends and new ones, and the garden becomes a community focal point. I apologize to Tom for starting a commune on his farm.

We mulch, stake, hoe and hoe somemore. By July they don't need me, it's all harvesting and keeping the weeds at bay. I visit socially a few times, and then help in August to get all the fall gardens planted. By the end of the year they've grossed \$25,000 and Bell's Bend vegetables are in three farmers markets every week.

The CSA had grown to 40, and the Tuesday pot lucks were a huge success. By fall they built a barn I had designed, and had a big square dance. Throughout the season hundreds of people wandered through the garden, and it was shown on TV and in the newspaper.

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I had discouraged selling at the usual markets, giving them an eloquent lecture on how commodity markets killed agriculture. When we farm correctly, food is free, and when food can't be bought and sold, starvation ends. We can help altruism and cooperation replace egoity and competition. But their need for public exposure was necessary in the effort to show that local farmland had other uses than urban development.

In September, Tyler showed me the Glen Leven property. He is one of my CSA members and a chef at a fancy restaurant. We examined a potential garden spot and a barn full of old manure. Soon I am spreading and plowing for a 2010 garden.

An acre and a year later, Tyler has grossed \$15,000 worth of vegetables from the garden and into his restaurant. Meanwhile the Bell's Bend gardens are

doing fine and making a name for themselves. Both Tyler and Eric have bought tractors and have a bad case of the farming itch.

They are very committed to using the biodynamic method. In January of 2011, we got together and made barrel compost. They are still using the compost preparations I make, but want to learn how to make them, too.

Urban farming is misunderstood. I've visited several urban education gardening sites that were simply appalling. Undigested organic matter on top of clay with sick plants teaches the wrong thing. We have to build a live soil humus, add the needed minerals and properly manage the tillage. Once a farmer gets this up front work done, then (and only then) can the beginners get in there to hoe, harvest and learn.

A lot of abandoned farmland exists in the same county as many of our major cities. There we can find good soil, young folks interested in gardening, and plenty of hungry people. Add 50 tons of biodynamic compost to the acre, insure the minerals are there, plow gently but thoroughly, and plant the right varieties at the right time. Then stand back and watch the community build. By the way, the Nashville City Council has put the bridge and Maytown Complex at Bell' Bend on hold.

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