

The Sierra Club called and asked if they could come out for a visit, and of course I said yes. Folks routinely drop in to see the pretty gardens that have been on TV over the years.

They asked about lunch, and I told them I'd take care of that, expecting a carload or two.

A week before the visit, the telephone rang again. "32 people wanted to come, is that too many? "Bring them on!"

Two days before the phone call said 53 people had signed up. I called Mary and said, "Help!"

On Friday night a cherry-rhubarb crisp was coming out of the oven as the cornbread went in. Crock-pots full of homegrown beans, beef and pork were bubbling. Butternuts from last fall filled a few baking dishes too.

Morning saw a few more pies appear, a big pot of rice boiling, and a salad-making frenzy. I managed a few deep breaths before 10, when the driveway became alive. A wonderful array of gardeners soon swarmed the front yard, mingling and pointing at plants.

Down at the garden I explained our operation. By juggling cattle and hay around, the farm is able to export 50,000 pounds of produce annually without bringing in fertilizers. A group of folks in Nashville cover the farm's budget in exchange for the farm's production, minus what my friends and neighbors can eat. All questions will be answered with the word "compost".

Then the questions started coming. Gardener's are great. With enthusiasm, they want to learn everything. We talked, toured and tasted, enjoying a walk despite the heat. A couple of hours disappeared, and dinner was ready.

After grace, plates and bowls were filled and devoured, as dish after dish kept appearing from the magical kitchen. Lovely chatter and laughter rind around the tables as we informally get to know each other a little.

A request for an heirloom tomato plant led a bunch to the cold frame, where I dug out pinks, yellows, big reds and past plums for all who wanted them. I offered kale seed too, and a tour of the other farm.

Three carloads followed me to a big potato field, but the midday sun sent us to the creek. After a dip, all but two went home. A visit to the orchard found ripe cherries galore, but didn't I have work to do? Well, yes.

So we finished day light planting a quarter acre garden with silver queen sweet corn. A heavenly float in the pond, lit up by starlight, ended with farewell to new friends. A big thank you to all who came, and to the ever-helpful, Long Hungry crew.