I finally got a job, and it's right up my alley. I'm managing three new biodynamic gardens in the Bell's Bend neighborhood, near Nashville. A tight-knit group of conscientious folks have banded together in an effort to keep their community rural and clean, and their next step is to feed themselves. We're going to grow a few acres of vegetables. The first farm is at Georges, and this is where you can see Whooping Cranes. Two of less than 400 of the known wild ones make their nest on his farm. The soil is plowed and we've put on horn manure and barrel compost, along with compost tea. Forty tones of biodynamic compost sits next to it, and this will fertilize 2/4 of an acre of potatoes and onions. We call it the Whooping Crane garden.

George's niece, Ellen, lives in the old family farmhouse nearby, and really wants a garden, too. The soil looks great, except for one problem, Johnson grass. I begged off; it would be too much to take on a garden infested by this pesky weed. She protested; implored and prevailed. I agreed to grow watermelons on black plastic there, along with starting a berry patch. It will be ¼ of an acre and is affectionately called Ellen's melons.

The main community garden is at Tom's sulfer creel farm. It is an acre, divided into two sections. Next weekend a fence raising will happen, to keep the deer out. We're planning a garden shed, too. But I have my head buried in the soil.

Glen brought many dump truck loads of halfway rotted manure and bedding to the site. Other neighbors donated more finished manure-composts. I put biodynamic preparation in it at once. Bill donated a pile of five-year-old chips that were well on the way to becoming humus. I decided to mix it all up.

Tom's tractor is small, without power steering. I am slowly making the compost piles when neighbor Zach brings a load of old manure from next door, which I had added preparation to about a month earlier. I get off the tractor to thank him. "That medicine really seemed to help the manure rot" he said. I offered to put some in the fresh pile he had made. But I couldn't visit, I had way more work to do than time to do it. Back on the tractor, imagine my surprise, and joy, when he comes back, unasked, with a big back hoe. He saved me four hours of work, if not six.

The next morning, after putting preparation in over 100 tons of compost (plus Zach's pile), we had a meeting. George is the only farmer in the gang, and we both agreed it was the day to chisel plow and garden. We have to expose the Bermuda grass to some freezing weather. So we talked a while, and George simply gets up and leaves. When he comes by with the tractor I help him hook up and he is off. After plowing lengthwise, we decide to hit it crossways, too.

Joe is disappointed we aren't going on his land. Glen offers manure, so we'll plow and plant a corn patch there. We stir more horn manure and put it out with more compost tea. I want our vegetables to grow in a live soil humus, so there is a lot of focus on compost and tea right now.

What a community spirit! Alan, who runs over CSA distribution, noticed it right away. These folks all know each other and help each other out. He offered his help. Jim's taking pictures to document the garden, Kathlene is taking notes and organizing, Eric and Louisa are ready to help hoe and harvest.

With daylight slipping fast, I get ready to drive the tractor to a different farm. I don't really have time, but I needed to make compost over there. Devinder pulls up, and I'm too busy to visit. Next thing you know we are in his truck, getting a trailer, pulling the tractor to the other farm, and I finish the piles by 6:30. Everyone wants to help. We'll see who's out there when the rows of cuecumbers, beans and tomatoes need picking.