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Thomas Jefferson loved gardening. I got a copy of his Garden Book 20 years ago, which details the work at the 2 acre garden plantings and 8 acre orchard at Monticello. Know that democracy could only survive in a nation of small farms and small businesses. Last week I finally visited Monticello.

Hugh Lovel, an agricultural consultant from Australia, accompanied me, so the ride was full of farm talk. I gave a daylong gardening workshop, did a bit of consulting and lecturing the next day. Then we climbed the little mountain and admired the beautiful grounds of Jefferson Home.

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He experimented with 330 varieties of vegetables, growing 20 different kinds of beans and 15 of peas. There are squashes and broccoli from Italy, Figs from France, peppers from Mexico, and Italian beans brought back from the Lewis and Clark expedition. For the past 30 years, dedicated gardeners have attempted to recreate the glory of the gardens.

An orchardist was pruning, and I quickly ran down the hill to visit. E gave me some scion wood of some old time apples for grating. Called the Friverty, Jefferson cultivated 400 varieties there, along with vineyards and berry patches. I saw the nursery beds where he propagated plants he collected from around the world.

A stonewall facing South, creates a warmer spot when figs and strawberries are grown. On top of this terrace are the garden beds, which he didn't allow to be stepped on. Jefferson recorded first and last frosts, yields, planting distances and variety trials extensively. He wanted to select one or two of the best varieties of every garden vegetable. He instigated a pea contest with his neighbors to see who could produce the earliest pea. His garden was divided into three sections; leaf crops, root crops and fruit crops. He was an early advocate of crop rotation and fruit crops. Of crop rotation and contour plowing.

Five satellite farms grew the field crops and livestock. He loved to use a lot of rotted manure. "We will try this winter to cover our garden with a heavy coating of manure. When earth is rich it bids defiance to droughts, yields in abundance, and of the best quality. I suspect that the insects

which have harassed you have been encouraged by the feebleness of your plants; and that has been produced by they lean state of the soil.”

I couldn't agree more. Lean soil grows feeble plants which encourages insects, and manure enriches to soil for drought tolerance and abundant yields of the best quality. That's been my experience too.

The gardeners gave us a private tour and some seeds of Jefferson's favorites. The garden organically there. One story of his grandson's fruit fights reminded me of getting in trouble in my dad's orchard for a similar transgression, but it is fun for kids to get in trees and throw unripe apples at each other. I haven't done it since.

We can't be free if we are dependant on others to grow our food. The USDA's policies of “get big or get out of farming” flies in the face of Jefferson's dreams. Repopulating rural America with self-sustaining farms will alleviate the economic, environmental, healthcare and social problems we face today.

Jefferson's ideal, the decentralization of power, were opposed by the centralists, whose leader was Alexander Hamilton. Monticello is full of paintings and busts of Jefferson's heroes; Newton, Locke, Bacon, Voltaire and, oddly enough, Hamilton. It says a lot of this man that he so respected those with different opinions than himself.

But he'd roll over in his grave if he saw the concentration of power in America today. He predicted another revolution every 200 years. As we regain control of our food supply from the giant agribusiness corporations by the simple act of supporting small, local farms, we can feel the spirit of Thomas Jefferson in this peaceful, garden revolution.