



North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program 3rd Annual Farmer-Mentor Conference Proceedings

The Art & Business of On-Farm Mentoring

FEB 4-6, 2011
Rudolf Steiner College
Fair Oaks, California

North American Biodynamic
Apprenticeship Program
(NABDAP) 3rd Annual
Farmer-Mentor Conference

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our sponsors. Their generous
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The North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program (NABDAP), a program of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, is training the next generation of biodynamic farmers in the United States and Canada. NABDAP combines two years of structured on-farm training and mentoring with a course of classroom study, providing a comprehensive education and certification in biodynamic farming. For more information, please visit <http://www.biodynamics.com/nabdap>

Conference Overview

The 3rd annual NABDAP Farmer-Mentor Conference, "The Art & Business of On-Farm Mentoring" took place over the weekend of February 4-6, 2001, on the Rudolf Steiner College campus in Fair Oaks, California. The conference was hosted by the Biodynamic Association of Northern California (BDANC) and sponsored by BDANC, the Agriculture Section of the Anthroposophic Society, the Biodynamic Center at Rudolf Steiner College, and the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association.

The conference was a wonderful success, with 52 people in attendance, 20 of whom participated in presentations. In addition to farmer-mentors participating in NABDAP, there were farmers and past apprentices from as close as Steiner College's own Raphael Garden to as far as Pennsylvania, and people representing supportive organizations from California, Oregon, Washington, and Vermont. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, we were able to offer the conference at a low cost for participants and offer travel assistance to several farmers and presenters.

The main focus of the conference was the current "hot" issue of the legality of apprenticeships. Many of the farmers attending were finding out for the first time that they have been operating out of compliance with labor laws. Farmers nationwide have been devastated by this issue and it is almost impossible for them to find information or help in resolving it. A variety of organizations are attempting to address this gap, but many of them have been working independently and often without the input of these small farm educators.

People and organizations who had never met did so over the weekend. There was an outpouring of support and goodwill. Several connections were made that hold great promise for a resolution to the issues discussed, and there has been a subsequent flurry of activity as the participating organizations have begun working together on a legislative solution.

We hope that these proceedings of the conference will be helpful to those who participated and to the many farmers who were not able to attend. Websites of organizations presenting or referenced at the conference are included in the "Links and Resources" section at the end of this document, and materials distributed at the conference are included in the appendices.

Day One: Friday, February 4

Orientation to the North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program

The conference opened with a chance for farmers new to NABDAP¹ to get an overview of the program and ask questions of Steering Committee members. After several years in development by **the Agriculture Section of the Anthroposophical Society**², NABDAP was launched in 2009. The first seven graduates received their certificates at the National Biodynamic Conference in September 2010. There are currently over 30 participating mentor farms in the United States and Canada, and 15 enrolled apprentices, with more expected this spring. The program has received inquiries from over 200 prospective apprentices as well as numerous farms and other training programs. NABDAP is actively seeking more mentor farms. For more information or to request an application, please contact NABDAP's Central Coordinator, Thea Maria Carlson at nabdap@biodynamics.com.



From the Suburbs to Stella Natura: Sherry Wildfeuer on the importance of apprenticeship programs

Sherry Wildfeuer, editor of *Stella Natura Biodynamic Planting Calendar*³ and NABDAP's Regional Coordinator for Pennsylvania, set the tone for the weekend with her personal story. She related how she discovered and fell in love with nature, anthroposophy and biodynamic agriculture, highlighting key themes from her experiences that mentor farmers might consider in their work:

- It helps to meet farming (and nature) through someone you love and admire. Cultivate relationships.
- Many apprentices have stepped off the beaten path to pursue farming – quitting school, leaving more lucrative careers or going against what their parents wanted them to do. Recognize their courage in taking this step and have understanding for the challenges they face in doing so.
- We need to make it obvious to the people we're teaching that we have a deep relationship to what we do. We want to become someone that people want to emulate.
- Say the obvious. People come from different places and experiences, and may not know what you assume.
- It is important to come into a community of shared values.
- Gardening is art, and beauty is important.
- The standards we are held to come from the plants themselves. Our decisions and the quality of our work are physically reflected in the crops and soil.
- Farming and gardening are not just an outer vocation, but also an inner path.
- Biodynamics is the ripe fruit of the prior work of Rudolf Steiner. It is sourced in a whole spiritual worldview, and apprentices should be aware of that. Before attending his lectures on agriculture, Steiner required all the farmers were to read his books, *Theosophy*⁴ and *An Outline of Esoteric Science*⁵. Whether or not apprentices choose to explore those roots is up to them, but mentor farmers should let them know what is there to explore.
- Study needs shaping by practical minded people, and we need to put our ideas into practice.
- Initiative is essential. Allow apprentices to take initiative to do something they are not yet capable of.
- Fake it. At some point you just need to convince yourself and others that you are ready for responsibility. That responsibility leads to an intensive learning experience, which is the journeyman phase.
- You can't do it without community and friends.
- Carry questions and keep an open ear. The answers will come.
- Teachers need to be inspired by working together – apprentices will experience this community and want to join.



Day Two: Saturday, February 5

Managing Internships without Losing the Farm: Successfully managing the business and legal aspects of farm apprenticeships and employment

Attorney **Kenneth Miller** of **Law for Food**⁶ opened his session with two questions: “Does this really need to be a legal situation?” and “How are we limiting ourselves by viewing apprenticeships as a labor issue?” Kenneth argued that apprenticeships are really about relationships and partnerships, and we need to shift the thinking on this issue to properly address it. However, we need to remember that food safety and labor laws have been put into place for good reasons, to protect against a real history of abuses and exploitation. Unfortunately, the current laws have disproportionately negative effects on small farmers. While policy change may be necessary to level the playing field, it is also important for farmers to understand the current laws so that they have a plan to be in compliance. Kenneth's outline of current laws that relate to apprenticeships and farm employment is included in **Appendix A**.

Also joining us for this session was **Glen Forman** of the **California Division of Apprenticeship Standards**.⁷ Glen informed the group that his agency registers apprenticeship programs, puts training programs together and promotes apprenticeship. According to the agency, “Apprenticeship is a system of learning while earning, and

‘learning by doing.’ It combines training on the job with related and supplemental instruction at school.” The training period is between 1 and 6 years, depending on the trade. When people successfully complete a registered apprenticeship, they become a certified journeyman in their trade, and the certification is recognized at both the state and national level. About 80% of registered apprenticeships in California are in the building trades, but they are actively looking to broaden their offerings. Glen also shared some preliminary information about a new apprenticeship in organic farming that is under development, through a partnership with a commercial farm and a community college in Marin County. The details of that program are expected to be announced later this spring. Farmers who are interested in developing registered apprenticeships are welcome to contact the Division of Apprenticeship Standards.



Surviving Compliance: A panel of farmers and organizers discuss their experience in developing and operating different models of legal on-farm mentorships

Neil Howe of **Sunfield Farm and School**⁸ in Washington opened the session by outlining the **Jefferson County FIELD Internship Program**⁹ from Washington State. The program was developed by farmers in the Olympic peninsula area in collaboration with Washington State University Extension as a way to link farms together to train apprentices. The program is divided into 3-month sessions – spring, summer, and fall – and interns (or their host farms) pay \$100 per session to participate. Interns come together for one full day every week for a workshop taught by farms and community members, and each intern is based at a host farm where they participate in on-farm learning and complete an independent project that benefits the farm, such as greenhouse management, building a chicken coop, or conducting seed trials. The program is linked to both Washington State University and Evergreen State, allowing interns to earn credit towards a degree, or continuing education credits. Neil also mentioned the **Cultivating Success**¹⁰ program in Washington, which can work with farms to provide credit for farm internships and mentorship, and help farmer mentors with curriculum development and implementation.

Jim Sesby of **Heritage Farm**¹¹ in Washington State started out as a homesteader with his wife. With a raw dairy, chickens, pigs, horses and a market garden, the farm attracted many people who wanted to learn to grow food and live off the land. Although they offered room and board to people who came to work with them and began paying wages as soon as the farm started to make money, the farm was not completely in compliance with labor laws and received a number of fines. Heritage Farm is now participating in Washington State’s new **Small Farm Internship Pilot Program**.¹² Farms in two counties who have annual sales of less than \$250,000 per year are eligible to participate. To join, they must register with the state, and provide terms of the internship. They are exempt from minimum wage requirements, but must follow other health and safety regulations (such as workers compensation).

Dru Rivers of **Full Belly Farm**¹³ in Guinda, California shared the Internship Wage Agreement the farm has recently adopted for use with apprentices (included in **Appendix B**). Dru reflected that the farm has had interns for 25 of their 26 years in operation, and also have always had full-time year-round employees paid minimum wage. Though Full Belly’s internship program began very informally, over the years the caliber of people applying to become interns has increased – the farm now receives 300 applications for the 4 intern positions they offer each year, and many come with previous agricultural experience and a strong desire to pursue a career in farming. 47 of the farm’s 200 past apprentices are farming full time. Although they were already paying what seemed to be a generous stipend considering the educational benefits, Full Belly decided that they wanted to set a good example in terms of treatment of their apprentices, and come into full compliance with current labor laws. They now pay minimum wage to apprentices for 5, 10-hour days of work per week (which is around \$1700 per month), and then deduct room and board from earnings at the amounts allowed by the California Industrial Welfare Commission. As with all Full Belly’s employees, apprentices are also offered health insurance after 5 months of employment, and also receive paid sick leave. Dru views this as “moral compliance” – doing what you know is best for your employees. She recommends the **IRS Agricultural Employers Guide**¹⁴ as a reference for what you need to do to be in compliance.

Dru also mentioned that Full Belly hosts international interns through **Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture (MESA)**¹⁵ and the **Japanese Agricultural Training Program (JATP)**.¹⁶ Both programs help people from outside the US interested in sustainable agriculture to find training opportunities with host farms and agricultural organizations. There is a cost to the farm to compensate for the intern's work, but these programs handle the logistics of visas, travel, orientation, etc.

Stu O'Neill is the director of **Rogue Farm Corps**¹⁷ in Oregon. Stu emphasized that we need to work to find solutions rather than trying to get around the laws, and make sure that anything we are calling education has real educational value. Rogue Farm Corps started with a small group of farmers in the Little Applegate Valley who all had their own interns, and received a grant to develop a classroom training program. Interns live and work full-time on a farm for a full season while participating in the **Farms Next Internship Program**, and come together for classes 2-3 times per month. Rogue Farm Corps is collaborating with **Oregon State University Extension**¹⁸, **Thrive**¹⁹, and **Friends of Family Farmers**²⁰ to create the **Southern Oregon Small Farm Incubator**, a 3-year program that combines training, business planning and land linking. They also created the **Farm Mentors' Guide to Complying with Employment Law in Oregon**²¹, which is available through the **National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service (ATTRA)**²². Rogue Farm Corps has built a partnership with the Rogue Community College and created a 1-year certificate program in organic agriculture which gives college credit for both classroom and farm time. The farm time is counted as Cooperative Work Experience (CWE) credits, and the college covers workers compensation. The program requires journaling and independent study, and participants are supervised by an academic advisor at the college. OSU extension will offer a course on teaching adults for farmers, which will give them certification as instructors for the program and help ensure that students are receiving quality instruction.



Adventure Stories from the Field: A panel of farmers and past apprentices relate the best and worst of creating and participating in an on-farm apprenticeship

Jared Clark is farm manager at **Soil Born Farms**²³, though he prefers the term “senior apprentice.” Soil Born Farms is a nonprofit urban agriculture and education project, focusing on organic food production, food education for elementary age children through adults, food access and food systems work, getting good food to underserved residents in the Sacramento area.

Before working at Soil Born, Jared apprenticed with Harald Hoven at Raphael Garden. He leapt into the apprenticeship with a certain set of expectations that weren't necessarily articulated, and believes that most conflicts and periods of low morale came about through lack of communication. During the beginning of his apprenticeship, Jared was working off the farm to earn money on the weekends, but he eventually realized that working and living off the farm does not give you a sense of place and commitment to the farm organism, and that building those relationships is essential to the experience.

After Jared went to work at Soil Born, the organization had the opportunity to expand their farming to a new 5-acre parcel. In their first year farming on the new site, Soil Born had a farm director, 2 managers, and 3 apprentices. Working with the new land and scaling up from their previous 1-acre farm presented lots of challenges. Without the farming infrastructure and systems in place, it was difficult for the farmers to hold to the educational expectations they had set with the apprentices at the beginning of the season. When the apprentices were asked to evaluate their experience, they all wrote multiple-page essays outlining how the apprenticeship could be improved. This gave Jared a clear sense of what was too much to take on at once, and helped match expectations to reality in future years.

Jared also related the story of the first time he buried cow horns to make the Biodynamic preparation 500. The horns were buried in the fall. He dug a pit in the middle of the field, covered up the horns, and marked the area with stakes. In the spring, he went out with the new apprentices to dig up the horns. They dug where they thought the horns would be, and found nothing. After several hours expanding the area they had dug, the horns were still missing. Later, Jared came out with the tractor, and continued to dig until the hole was of absurd proportions. But they never found the horns. Jared reflected that spending 5 more minutes making order by

carefully documenting the location of the horns when he buried them would have prevented hours of chaos in the spring.

Creating order is one of the principles Jared values from Malcolm Gardner's book, *Becoming a Biodynamic Farmer or Gardener*²⁴. Other principles that he works to implement are submitting completely to the task at hand, taking pleasure in the repetitive, and creating a sense of positivity at all costs. He also cultivates humility, knowing that he dropped out of college to start farming and some of the people he's training have graduate degrees. He tries to let go of the ego and being the one in charge; let people bring in all their knowledge and life experience and value them for that.

Jared advises mentor farmers to set a clear set of expectations, and check in on them regularly. The moment you get too busy for that, the educational experience dissolves. Figuring out the farm operations before incorporating education is also important, because farming and teaching are the two hardest jobs in the world. Jared says, "to be farming productively while successfully teaching adults – that's an art!"

Verity Howe and her husband Neil apprenticed at **Live Power Farm**²⁵, and then got hired as farmer educators at **Sunfield Farm and School** in Washington. The school is pre-K through 8th grade, and the students are with them 1 hr/day. There are also other young people coming to the farm to learn.

One of the key challenges to apprenticeship and mentorship that Verity has found is how to define boundaries and relationships. At Live Power, they were living with a family, and it felt in some ways like her family, but they were also not her family. It's hard to figure out what that relationship is. People have their own parents, but can bring their family challenges into the new relationships they develop on the farm, so being married and more mature, Verity felt in some ways like a mother figure to some of the other interns.

When Verity and Neil got to the school in March, everything was broken and there were no funds to fix it. The kids loved them, making them "rock stars in rain pants," but they desperately needed extra help with all the farm work. With no housing to offer, they hired the first potential interns that came their way – a girl who lived near the farm, and two guys who were ready to pitch their tents. Everyone was happy to get to work, and they all liked each other, so Verity and Neil found themselves opening their home to the interns, sharing their kitchen, and hanging out in the evenings. They enjoyed the friendship, but it backfired when they had to go back to being in charge.

One day the cows got out and the two guys went after them in the van. They got between the mom and the babies, and chaos ensued. Verity and Neil kept trying to tell them what to do, but the interns weren't interested in being "bossed around" by their friends. After that incident, the two guys left, and by the time spring was in full swing, the third intern was gone for similar reasons. They made it through the season with the help of some parent volunteers, but are still grappling with the question, "What did we do wrong?" Verity realizes that they are going to keep being reminded that they don't know everything, but they are going to start by setting better boundaries. And give themselves the freedom to make mistakes.

Kimberly Barnes is the garden manager at **Live Power Farm**, and former central coordinator of the North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program. She is in her second year at Live Power. She previously completed a two-year apprenticeship on a biodynamic farm in Connecticut, and spent a year running her own market garden. In reflecting on her time as an apprentice, Kim noted that there is an inner work that we have to do as farmers, which is a hard thing to teach and also a hard thing to come to. She found a journal entry from early on in her apprenticeship where she had copied a passage from Malcolm Gardner's book: "in addition to knowledge and skills, a farmer needs to develop...an inner quality...the strength of character..." Kim believes that farmers need to cultivate a meditative inner place when doing repetitive work, and that it is important to talk about this with apprentices as early as possible and revisit it often.

During the winter between her first and second season on the farm in Connecticut, Kim recalls being the only one caring for the animals, and having to spend so much time and effort every day cleaning stalls that she had just cleaned a day before. One day she was exhausted and completely frustrated with the work, and had something of a tantrum, throwing things and yelling. She looked up to see her mentor farmer standing in the doorway, and expected a scolding. Instead her mentor gave her a hug and told her, "Of course we all feel this. The more you can feel it and keep going the stronger you will be."

Kim believes structure is essential: discipline, clear goals and discussions about expectations. In her experience, this has not happened as much as it should have. Other apprentices she worked with came in expecting to learn something specific and were disappointed when that did not happen, souring their farming experience. Having clearly established rhythms and daily schedules is also very helpful – how you cook meals, when you take breaks – it is great to have apprentices just be able to step in and let that rhythm carry them.

According to Kim, all that apprentices really want is to climb inside the farmer's brain. So it is great to have mentors who are always talking about what is going on in their heads, what they are mulling over. The more insight, depth of explanation, and intellectual stimulation, the better. Mentors should endeavor to have their field plan, sowing schedules, and crop specifications organized and available to apprentices. Another route for intellectual stimulation Kim appreciated from her mentors was problem-solving exercises, asking over a morning of weeding, "How many bales of hay do we need to mulch this field? How many onions do we need to plant for the CSA next year?"

Like many others, Kim emphasized the importance of relationships, and figuring out how to have a friendship that also allows for the mentor-mentee relationship. She encourages mentors to have compassion for apprentices, and apprentices to have compassion for your mentors, as we all have our struggles.

Henning Sehmsdorf and his wife Elizabeth Simpson run **S & S Homestead Farm**²⁶, a 50-acre biodynamic farm on Lopez Island, Washington – the Northwest corner of the United States. Henning never did an apprenticeship or internship. He grew up when most farms were still small, sustainable, and biodynamic though they didn't know it. Henning points out that Rudolf Steiner didn't invent the principles of biodynamics. Rather, he reminded us and systematized it to make this form of farming conscious rather than instinctive.

Henning was born 2 years before WWII, in eastern Prussia. His family grew practically all their own food, even though his father was a lawyer and his mother was an artist. At 5 years old Henning was already weeding, feeding the animals, and harvesting. He remembers the farmers next door always took off their hats and said a prayer before working in the field – that there was a reverence associated with working the land. Later in his childhood, Henning went to boarding school. When there was no food, the students went out to the farms to work, doing anything that needed to be done – the trips were termed "harvest vacations." Henning knew how to put his hands in the soil, how to grow vegetables, how to deal with animals, what good food tasted like. He wanted to be a farmer, but his father put him in business apprenticeship, working with a company that produced cheese.

Though his apprenticeship was not in farming, it allowed Henning to learn the tradition of apprenticeship. The head technician took the time to teach him how to use hand tools, even though they had machines to do it. They sent him to lab to learn more about materials, methods, and technology. He also learned accounting and finance. One day an American came to the company and bought one of their machines. He told Henning that if he wanted to come to America he would give him a job, so at 19 Henning came to the US and was given a job in a meat factory. There, Henning learned "two things I didn't want to learn, but I learned them thoroughly. 1) The absolutely cruel and inhumane way that animals were treated, and 2) that the nutritional value of those processed foods coming out of that plant was awful – the food tasted awful."

Henning decided that if he was going to eat meat again, he would have to grow his own. But he had no idea how to be a farmer, so he went to school. He worked his way from undergraduate through a PhD at University of Chicago, studying biology and then philosophy of science, then modern and old languages. Then he went to Seattle to get a teaching job at the University of Washington. The first summer in Seattle, he drove around looking for land to grow food for his "theoretical family." He found 10 acres on Lopez Island for \$10,000, paid it off in 4 years, started building, and then met Elizabeth, his future wife. She grew up on a small farm in Oregon and took to the project easily. So for 28 years they grew all their food on Lopez Island while both were teaching college. Henning and Elizabeth conceived of the farm as a self-sustaining organism from the start, though they hadn't heard of biodynamics. Their philosophy was "feed yourself first, and sell the surplus to make money". When their youngest child turned 18, he told Henning "I can do fine on my own, so now you can farm full time, dad." And so they did.

Henning started a nonprofit, and began developing educational programs. One year someone came to ask for cow horns to make biodynamic preparations, assuming that S & S Homestead was a biodynamic farm, and that's how Henning found out he was farming biodynamically. Then he studied Steiner's lectures and learned how to make and use the preparations.

Since S & S Homestead is not a commercial farm, they focus on education and have curriculum-based interns. They have been working on finding the right balance between hands-on learning and study (reading, writing journals, doing research projects). All of their interns stay 3-6 months, and apprentices are at the farm for 6 months or more. Henning believes that if he had an apprentice stay 2 full years in one place, they could accomplish great things. So far, he hasn't managed to keep anyone that long. There have been some great independent projects from interns over the years – one intern measured the emergy (embodied energy) on the farm, and got a masters degree for that work. Another woman studied nutrient cycling on farm and got a research assistantship and Masters/PhD through the university. Henning says, “We haven't produced many farmers, but we've produced great people.”

Harald Hoven is director of **Raphael Garden** at the **Rudolf Steiner College**²⁷. After traveling the world as a young adult, he embarked on his first farm apprenticeship. At first, he says he was in totally over his head – he needed to come into his body to the school of life. The farmers were working very hard, and he saw them fall asleep watching TV every night. That apprenticeship lasted 6 months, and Harald experienced total culture shock. His friends didn't understand what he was doing – working so hard for no money! After the first apprenticeship, Harald took a year off. Then he met another farmer and asked to be his apprentice. The farmer would only accept him if Harald made a 2 year commitment, stating that otherwise it would not be worth the farmer's effort. The farm was at a psychiatric hospital that used garden therapy, and making that 2-year commitment was the hardest thing Harald did in his life. But he stuck it out.

Next, he went to work on a large farm with 10 other young people. In contrast to the other farms, everyone had a lot of energy, and treated farming as a race to do as much as possible. It was fun, though eventually they would get tired too!

After 4 years working on farms, Harald came to Sacramento and started the Raphael Garden -- for 4 years in one place, and then the location where the garden is now. A year after moving the garden, someone came to Harald and asked to be an apprentice, so he accepted him. As soon as the apprentice arrived, he asked about the nearest AA meeting, and Harald found out he had taken his last shot of heroin a week before coming. But the apprentice stayed for two years, and Harald learned how to be both an educator and a healer. The next apprentice had a PhD, and Harald had to figure out how to keep him entertained. And there have been a whole spectrum of others in between.

Over the years, Harald has found that the mentorship only works if apprentices can see his passion and what motivates him. “When they see it they get fired up and they go with me.” In 2000, he thinks he must have lost steam. He had 3 apprentices, and then slowly everyone disappeared by the middle of the summer. Harald realized he hadn't been paying enough attention to the garden. So began to pick up all the pieces and do everything on his own again, and then by the fall apprentices started arriving again. This past a year similar thing happened, and everyone left prematurely. Again, Harald had to look at what he was losing. Asking “Why am I here? Am I meant to do this?” Harald believes you have to change too. You get the people you deserve at the time, and they show you where you are.

One recent change Harald has made to his apprenticeship program is to limit the expectation of work to 8 hours a day. At first, his apprentices balked, saying there was too much to do for that schedule. But Harald believes it is better to have that as the expectation, and if there is more work to do, to agree to that at the time. In order to give the apprenticeship a clearer form, apprentices also have a contract, and set aside 2 hours a week of study time to do the learning they need to fully understand what they're doing in the garden. If there is a weekend trip or other special event, Harald makes sure the apprentices get at least ½ day off. This way, he remarks, “they give me more, they're happier, and I'm happier”. When new apprentices apply, he asks them to come to visit and asks the other apprentices to give input, because Harald believes there needs to be a resonance with the existing group.

Harald is always attempting to meet the individual where they are, and not just have a recipe for everyone. He tries to recognize each person's way of learning and getting into it, find how to connect with them and see what their contribution is. He notes that most training programs, if they are good, have about 25% of graduates continuing in that path, so he accepts that most of his apprentices will not become full time farmers. He says, “When I give them more challenges, and room for initiative, they are happier and it works better. Not too much micromanagement! I'm German, and we think we know how the world should work. Better to say, ‘try it this way, see how it works, and then if it doesn't work well you can do it another way.’”



Help is Out There: Support & Resources for Farmers

Susan Richman of **Belle Mare Farm** represented the **Small Farms Conservancy**,²⁸ based in Sisters, OR. The Small Farms Conservancy publishes the Small Farms Journal and works “to protect, sustain and inspire small farming”. They would like to hear from farmers what we need and how they can help. Their current focus areas include helping start-up farms and people who want to learn about farming. They are also working on a linking process to connect farmers with some experience to veteran craftspeople. They hope this will create an outlet for people who have a passion for farming but can’t work as hard as they used to. The Small Farms Conservancy is also working on group insurance for farmers.

Michael Greene, as well as **Michael Foley** of **Green Uprising Farm** represented the **California State Grange**²⁹. The Grange membership has been getting consistently older over the years, and in many areas has shifted more to community service than farmer-specific work. Recently in some areas of California (as well as elsewhere), there has been a return to the roots of the organization, and the grange has refocused on helping small farmers, including those who have been abandoned by the farm bureau. The Grange is 139 years old in California, and has the potential to have a lot of impact, but it needs more people (especially younger generations) to become members. Recently, the California State Grange adopted a resolution addressing the fining of small farms for labor violations related to internships and apprenticeships. The resolution asks the state government to 1) cease investigation of small farms by the labor department unless there is a specific complaint, 2) look at finding a way to make on-farm training legal, and 3) support specific exemption for farms grossing less than \$100,000 annually. The full resolution is included in **Appendix C**. The Grange is currently pursuing a legislative solution to this issue. Anyone interested in helping should contact Michael Greene or Michael Foley

Marisa Alcorta represented **ATTRA - National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service**, a project of **NCAT (the National Center for Appropriate Technology)**³⁰. ATTRA is a funded under a grant from the USDA to provide information and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers, educators, extension agents and others involved in sustainable agriculture. In the fall in 2009, Marisa started seeing articles about farms being fined for labor issues. Then farmers started asking to be taken off ATTRA’s list of **Sustainable Farming Internships and Apprenticeships**³¹ (one of the most comprehensive its type in the US) because they feared that they would be investigated for labor violations. Marisa started doing research about what was needed to be in compliance, and working to make ATTRA a resource for information on this issue. Right now, the fact sheet for Oregon compliance created with Rogue Farm Corps is available on ATTRA’s website (see resource list). Marisa is planning to make it more prominent, and make a similar checklist specific to California.

Last spring, Marisa talked with Reggie Knox of **California FarmLink** (see below) who had just published an article on this issue. Since then they have been working together to find models of legal internship and apprenticeship programs. They have found 5 or 6 so far, and shared their draft outline and additional resources for these models, included in **Appendix D**. Once this document is finalized, it will also be available on ATTRA’s website.

According to Marisa, the bottom line is that if there’s going to be production on the farm, you need to be in compliance with labor laws. For people who haven’t been an employer before, she is working on a document to lay out what is required, such as the EIN, I-9’s, payroll taxes, and minimum wage. If farmers provide meals and lodging, those amounts do not count as cash wages, so it reduces how much money you pay to apprentices and reduces taxes for the apprentice. In California there must be a written agreement between the employer and employee in order to deduct meals and lodging. Workers compensation is calculated based on gross wages, while federal income tax, social security, and Medicare taxes are based on cash wages (gross wages minus meals and lodging). In California, income tax is based on cash wages, but social security, employment training tax and unemployment calculated on gross wages. A final note is that nonprofits are the only organizations that are allowed to have volunteers. If you pay a stipend, it is subject to hourly wage laws (even if you are a nonprofit). To be in compliance, you should either pay nothing or minimum wage.

Reggie Knox represented **California FarmLink**³². Reggie has been an advocate of small farms for 22 years, including doing some farming after college in Santa Cruz. He has been with FarmLink for 7 years. California FarmLink has been around for 12 years, and is based on models developed in the east coast like the New England Small Farm Institute. They have three offices in the state, in Sonoma, Santa Cruz, and Modesto. Reggie pointed out that in the United States, farmers age 65 and over outnumber farmers under 35 by 9 to 1! He has been looking into the agriculture census data, and the number of farms in the country was consistently going down until 2002, but by 2007 that number started climbing back up. All of that growth has been in the categories 1-9 acre and 10-40 acre farms, with an average of 680 new farms per year that are 1-9 acres in size, and 190 new 10-40 acre farms per year.

California FarmLink finds and facilitates land opportunities for farmers, helping young and new farmers move towards building their own businesses. They provide an online listing of properties available, and work with landowners and aspiring farmers to craft lease agreements. FarmLink also offers workshops and speaks at conferences around the state about land tenure, business planning, farm financing, land trusts, and facilitating farm ownership for younger farmers. In addition to the research on potential models for farm apprenticeship programs that FarmLink has been working on with ATTRA, Reggie is excited about creating more online mentorship networks – where young farmers and experienced farmer mentors can ask and answer farming questions – based on a model that has been created in Santa Cruz out of the UCSC Farm and Garden program.



Day Three: Sunday, February 6

Overcoming Barriers in the Adult Learning Process, and the Heart as a Gateway for Perception in Education

Bodo Langen, a teacher at the **Santa Cruz Waldorf School**³³, led two sessions on the art of mentoring. In the first session, he opened with a quote from Steiner: “What we do with our hands in this life becomes the foundation of our brain in the next life.” Bodo believes the effects are also felt much more immediately – that physical and artistic work both stimulate the brain and feed the soul. Including the arts in biodynamic training helps to sensitize perception, which in turn improves a person’s ability to farm well.

Bodo also talked about the importance of working with biography in mentoring. As we learn more about each person that we are mentoring and the history and experience they bring, we can better tailor the teaching and find a bridge to reach that person. The essential questions to get at are “Who are you? What are your soul’s gifts? What makes you tick?” This is personal information that some people will not easily share, so we need to cultivate the art of drawing that out slowly, through a variety of means. Build trust and mutual understanding, and share a little at a time. We need to create a safe space for revealing, and have patience.

When we experience conflict in teaching and mentoring, he advises to immediately look to ourselves, asking, “Where am I not developed? What do I need to do to meet this person?” As Harald Hoven spoke to earlier, as mentors and teachers we receive the people we need, and they tell us many things about ourselves as we work with them.

Creating a sense of reverence and wonder in their apprentices or students is something many mentor farms strive to do. Bodo asserts that gardens are a physical expression of the people who create them, so as you cultivate that sense in yourself, it will be naturally expressed in the garden and felt by people who work in it. That is an example of the idea that “it’s not what you teach, it’s who you are.” So to improve as mentors our work is to grow on both a personal and professional level.

One of the great challenges of being a mentor farmer is that we can be pursuing two goals and pedagogical programs at once: production farming skills for some, and a transformative, life changing experience for others. We should not assume we know why someone is training with us, or whether they will go on to pursue the vocation we are training them for. Instead, we must learn how to recognize why each person shows up and whether we can meet their needs at that time. We also need to craft an experience that is valuable whether or not our mentees choose to become farmers. For those with a production focus, there still needs to be inner

development, and vice versa. Farms can emphasize one of these aspects or the other, but they should both be present in some way.

In the second session, Bodo led participants in an exercise using clay, first making a ball and then dividing and shaping it using the fingers. Bodo demonstrated several ways to use this exercise to draw out different qualities in adults or children we work with. This can be one creative way to work with biography as well as build relationships.



Bodo also explained the connection between farming and clay, noting that good farming requires attention to form (e.g. well-shaped beds and compost piles), and that working with clay can help develop that sensitivity in a playful context. Many apprentices will also appreciate having artistic outlets and opportunities on the farm, whether through sign-painting, garden design, or other projects.

Finally, Bodo suggested that all farms try to have a beehive. From Steiner's lectures, we learn that bees are "sun beings," and the whole hive is an organism. The bees take nectar and pollen, the highest expression of the sun, and do amazing things with them. The hive is also an example of working together toward collective wellbeing. Bodo believes working with and observing bees can teach us many things, cultivate sensibility, and help us see new solutions.



Closing Reflections: Comments and key takeaways from conference participants

- There is a dichotomy between having to pay apprentices and focus on production and getting vegetables out of the field, and the perhaps opposing approach of focusing on mentorship and education for people who want the experience of living and working on a farm. We need to find new ways to navigate that.
- We should be talking about co-mentoring – it's give and take, not a one-way relationship.
- We need to find a model that's about relationship, not just labor.
- In Norway, farmers get a base salary, and what they produce is on top of that income. Farmers are viewed as cultural workers.
- The apprenticeship has always been about an exchange of value. How do we quantify that value if it has to be monetary?
- It would be great if the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association could help in creating a "farm school" model to address this question of valuing the training.
- The California Grange is preparing to get a hearing with agriculture committees in the legislature, and would like more people to join their committee.

Links for Farms, Organizations and Other Resources:

- ¹ North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program: <http://www.biodynamics.com/nabdap>
- ² Anthroposophical Society: <http://www.anthroposophy.org/>
- ³ *Stella Natura Biodynamic Planting Calendar*, Edited by Sherry Wildfeuer:
<http://www.biodynamics.com/node/485>
- ⁴ *Theosophy*, by Rudolf Steiner: <http://biodynamics.com/node/143>
- ⁵ *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, by Rudolf Steiner: <http://biodynamics.com/catalog/outline-of-esoteric-science-steiner>
- ⁶ Law for Food: <http://www.lawforfood.com/>
- ⁷ California Division of Apprenticeship Standards <http://www.dir.ca.gov/das/das.html>
- ⁸ Sunfield Farm and School: <http://www.sunfieldfarm.org/>
- ⁹ Jefferson County FIELD Internship Program (WA): <http://www.springrainfarmandorchard.com/FIELD/>
- ¹⁰ Cultivating Success (WA and Idaho): <http://www.cultivatinguccess.org/>
- ¹¹ Heritage Farm <http://heritagefarmcsa.blogspot.com/>
- ¹² Small Farm Internship Pilot Program: <http://wsffn.org/small-farm-internship-pilot-program/small-farm-internship-pilot-program>
- ¹³ Full Belly Farm: <http://www.fullbellyfarm.com/>
- ¹⁴ Agricultural Employer's Tax Guide: <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p51/index.html>
- ¹⁵ Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture (MESA): <http://www.mesaprogram.org>
- ¹⁶ Japanese Agricultural Training Program (JATP):
[http://academics.bigbend.edu/programs/internationalstudents/Pages/JapaneseAgriculturalTrainingProgram\(JATP\).aspx](http://academics.bigbend.edu/programs/internationalstudents/Pages/JapaneseAgriculturalTrainingProgram(JATP).aspx)
- ¹⁷ Rogue Farm Corps: <http://www.roguefarmcorps.org/>
- ¹⁸ Oregon State University Extension Small Farms Program: <http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/>
- ¹⁹ Thrive: <http://www.buylocalrogue.org/>
- ²⁰ Friends of Family Farmers: <http://www.friendsoffamilyfarmers.org/>
- ²¹ Farm Mentors' Guide to Complying with Employment Law in Oregon:
http://attra.ncat.org/intern_handbook/oregon_checklist.html
- ²² ATTRA - National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service: <http://attra.ncat.org/>
- ²³ Soil Born Farms: <http://www.soilborn.org/>
- ²⁴ *Becoming a Biodynamic Farmer or Gardener: A Handbook for Prospective Trainees*, by Malcolm and Susan Gardner: <http://www.biodynamics.com/catalog/becoming-a-biodynamic-farmer-gardner>
- ²⁵ Live Power Farm: <http://www.livepower.org/>
- ²⁶ S & S Homestead Farm: <http://www.sshomestead.org/>
- ²⁷ Rudolf Steiner College: <http://steinercollege.edu/>
- ²⁸ Small Farms Conservancy: <http://smallfarmsconservancy.org/>
- ²⁹ California State Grange: <http://www.californiagrango.org/>
- ³⁰ National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT): <http://www.ncat.org/>
- ³¹ ATTRA Sustainable Farming Internships and Apprenticeships directory: <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/internships/>
- ³² California FarmLink: <http://www.californiafarmlink.org/>
- ³³ Santa Cruz Waldorf School: <http://www.scwaldorf.org/>