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of the Late Fall 2003 “Garden Companion”
(BfR’s newsletter).*



The Garden Companion

(Biointensive for Russia's newsletter)

Vol. 7, No. 2

Late Fall 2003

ECO-FARM WELCOMES BfR; ZHIRINA, KIM & PROKOFIEV VISITS EARLY IN YEAR

BfR's year got off to an exciting start in January with the arrival of Irina Kim and Dr. Ludmila Zhirina, to participate in the annual Eco-Farm Conference (www.eco-farm.org) at Asilomar Conference Center, in Pacific Grove. Our dear friend Kate Stafford, one of Alan Chadwick's original apprentices and currently a nature photographer and teacher of BI gardening, arranged for our presentation of the two-hour workshop "Healing the Earth: Food Security Projects in Uzbekistan and Russia."

Ludmila offered a great, English-language, photo-filled PowerPoint presentation describing the agricultural and environmental scene in the Bryansk *oblast*, and reporting on the many seminars and experiments her NGO "Viola" has conducted over several years. Irina's talk, written in Russian and translated into English, was read by Darina Drapkin (who had co-presented the Uzbekistan seminars in 1998 and 1999 with Patrick Williams and Albie Miles), between interpreting Irina's self-introduction and the questions and answers at the end. Carol Vesecky offered BfR history, introductions, and a short slide show, as well as a longer slide show that evening. The workshop was well received by an audience of about 50, and we felt it justified Kate's confidence in us.

Irina's paper "Biointensive in Uzbekistan" and Ludmila's presentation "Development of Biointensive Sustainable Mini-farming in the Bryansk Region of Russia" are available as electronic attachments on request (Irina's paper is summarized on p.4), as is also Ludmila's write-up of the conference as a whole. Not only did we learn much about the organic movement, we also made good contacts and enjoyed three days of camaraderie with many of the 1400 organic farmers, activists, and supporters who attended this year's event. During their stay, the Live Oak ("Green") Grange in Santa Cruz (www.green-grange.org) hosted an evening fundraiser for Irina's and Ludmila's training work back in their home countries. Russian and Korean-Uzbek salads and Santa Cruzan vegan food were offered, and we gave brief talks on our work. We especially enjoyed meeting members of the Santa Cruz agroecological community. The fundraiser netted \$350, which was combined with other contributions to total \$1000 for Ludmila's and *cont. on page 3*

FROM THE DIRECTOR

December 2003 finds us contemplating another Eco-Ag Tour in 2004 — to the Russian Far East and Western Russia, with a view to Central Asia for 2005. All depends on funding opportunities and ecotourist interest. If there are areas in the Former Soviet Union you'd like to visit with us on a modestly priced tour, let us hear, and we'll discuss!

Meantime, we're actively raising funds and pursuing grants for two causes in particular: printing in Moscow of the Russian translation of *The Sustainable Vegetable Garden* by Jeavons and Cox (see below), and more Central Asian workshop tours by Irina Kim (see pp. 2&4) Other funding needs are listed on page 7 and elsewhere.



Some readers will remember Vladimir Loginov from previous visits. Vladimir returned for a sojourn of several months (not funded by BfR), after having built one straw-bale and one concrete-block house for himself and his mother,

after their homes near the Black Sea were made uninhabitable by a flood in 2002. He achieved all this, assisted by young men recently graduated from the local orphanage. Please get in touch if you'd like to invite him to a green-related activity, or hear about his Biointensive growing, green building, and/or teaching work.

Those of you new to this project may enjoy reading about our past fundraisers on page. 2. Please write to be included in our email list, for more timely notice of future events!

Peace,

Carol Vesecky

SECOND BOOK PRINTED IN NOVO-SIN'KOVO, FUNDS NEEDED FOR COMMERCIAL PUBLICATION

The Russian translation of *The Sustainable Vegetable Garden* by John Jeavons and Carol Cox, *Ekologicheskii Ogorod* (The Ecological Garden) was printed in Russia in late spring. This book, which includes the latest information on GROW BIOINTENSIVE techniques, is a vital component of Ecology Action's teaching program, emphasizing crop combinations that can help a gardener to maintain sustainable soil fertility without inputs from outside the garden plot.

Funded by Ecology Action, Evgeny Shmelev of the Educational Methods Center (EMC) of the Russian Ministry of Agriculture in Novo-Sin'kovo (near Moscow) printed 300 copies of the book from our PDF files. During the summer, he sent copies to our network as well as to the agricultural college instructors who attended the workshop taught by Steve Moore at the EMC in July 2002.

A commercial edition is being planned for publication by Elena Karpinskaya, chief editor of *Novyi Sadovod i Fermer* (New Gardener and Farmer), the Moscow quarterly journal supported by Rodale Press. The journal will work with us on final *continued on page 2*

What's Inside:

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BfR FUNDRAISERS IN PALO ALTO THIS YEAR

Alongside the gatherings mentioned elsewhere in this issue, we have offered two open house mini-fundraiser events this year benefitting Irina Kim's workshop tours in Uzbekistan. In May, we held a veggie seedling sale (including tomato plants of several heirloom varieties donated by Master Gardener Bekah Stratton), Spring Tea in the Garden, and a talk by Dr. Eric Van Dusen on agricultural biodiversity in Uzbekistan. In late August, we celebrated 10 years of existence with a hike, potluck picnic supper, and eco-farm tour with the Valley of Heart's Delight group at Hidden Villa. Liza Loop, Joan Spannagel, and Michael Eager were there to reminisce about BfR's pre-history: the Earthstewards-sponsored Kids-to-Kids exchange with Siberia in 1986 and the Russian book-publishing process in 1992-93, and BfR's formation in 1993.

In November, we held an event on food preservation during which Josh Salans demonstrated preparation of delicious pineapple guava jam, and Joanna Reynolds showed us her methods of steam canning (similar to pressure cooking, but not really the same) and drying various home-grown fruits and vegetables. That evening, Dr. Zoya Akulova-Barlow gave an illustrated talk on her visit to Karakalpakstan, where BfR presented workshops in 2000 and 2002 and where enthusiasts are still teaching and experimenting with Biointensive. Abstracts of Eric's and Zoya's talks are offered below. (Their photos are available to current BfR members upon request.)

Karakalpakia (Uzbekistan) and the Shrinking Aral Sea

by Zoya Akulova-Barlow, PhD Freeling Lab, UC Berkeley
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The purpose of my journey to Karakalpakia in September 2000 was to collect seeds of salt-tolerant grasses, especially *Setaria* species [foxtail millet, see photo], for the project directed by Prof. Michael Freeling of UC Berkeley and Prof. Jack Dekker of Iowa State University.

The Aral Sea is located in the middle of the Eurasian continent. It is surrounded by the vast Karakum and Kyzylkum deserts, and receives water from two huge rivers – the Amu-Daria and the Syr-Daria. The area has a sharply continental climate. The greatest rainfall occurs in spring; the summer is very hot and dry and brings strong winds and dust storms. The southern part of the Aral Sea belongs to Uzbekistan, the northern – to Kazakhstan.

The Aral ecological catastrophe began in the 1960s. Water from the rivers is used intensively for irrigation of agricultural land, so that the sea has received less and less water. The main crops in

Uzbekistan are cotton and rice; they require a great deal of water for optimum growth. The sea has been drying up, and a rapid process of desertification and salinization has taken place in its region. Over the past 40 years, the surface of the sea has diminished by 50%. The level of underground water rises, bringing salts up to the soil's surface. Evaporation of the water also leaves salt behind. The salt is distributed by wind over long distances, so that 60% of the soil in Uzbekistan is already salinized to some degree.

Karakalpakia is an autonomous republic of Uzbekistan, the region closest to the Aral Sea, and it has suffered the greatest damage. The sea formerly regulated the region's climate, but now its climate-modifying function has been lost. The climate has become more continental, i.e., hotter and drier, and the vegetative period has become shorter. Agricultural lands have been turned into saline desert. Runoff from pesticides in the fields has also contaminated the water.

The degradation of the ecosystems in the Aral Sea region is dramatic. Forty years ago, *tugai* forests with rich flora and fauna existed in the Amu-Daria delta. These forests have now almost disappeared; only a small area still remains. Thirty percent of the species have disappeared. The last *turan* tiger in the area was killed in 1972. The ecosystems have changed and plants have adapted to the desert conditions in various ways: they have become more xerophytic (adapted for life with little water) or have very short vegetative periods (ephemerals and ephemeroids). Only drought-resistant and salt-tolerant plants can survive.



The Aral Sea had a wealth of valuable fish in the past, and Muinak was a busy fishing port until 1982, when the commercial fishing industry collapsed. People are suffering due to lack of pure water, especially in Karakalpakia. An increase in disease has been noted – cholera, typhus, gastritis, asthma, kidney disorders, anemia, birth

defects, and high infant mortality.

While planning the trip, I joined an expedition from Moscow's Institute of Water Problems under *cont. on p. 6*

Ekologicheskii Ogorod can be published in 2004, with your help!

continued from page 1 editing and local publishing, but cannot fund the printing and paper cost of approximately \$4,000 for 5000 copies.

Biointensive for Russia is a non-profit project based in Palo Alto and supported by Ecology Action, a 501(c)3 organization. Founded in 1993 with the aid of LO*OP Center, Inc. to help promote Biointensive minifarming in the former Soviet Union, its goals include a two-way sharing of information on ecologically sound lifestyles. Carol Vesecky is director; our Web/IT team includes Berta Pires and Shoshana Billik. The mailing of this issue of the *Garden Companion* was made possible by member contributions. This issue of the *Garden Companion* was edited by Carol Vesecky and Jane Chai. Please visit <http://biointensiveforussia.igc.org> for more background.

Editing will include incorporating lists of Russian vegetable varieties and nurseries in the seed source chapter. Our network of workshop participants has been invited to nominate their favorites.

Once it is published, we plan to follow up by distributing copies to NGOs and schools in the 85 administrative divisions of Russia on Viola's list (to which Ludmila Zhirina has already been sending their curriculum materials), as well as to all 289 colleges in the Ministry of Agriculture network.

As Ludmila has written, "Russia needs Biointensive!!!" Please help us seek one or more foundations or private donors who would invest the \$4000 for printing, to start to enable us to get this important book to more Russian-literate agriculture teachers, so that they can pass on the life-giving, resource-conserving concepts to the next generation of students.

cont. from p. 1 Irina's projects. We are grateful to Grange Master Ken Dickerson, true friend Kate Stafford, Jered Lawson of the Santa Cruz branch of California Certified Organic Farmers (www.ccof.org), and Travis Sems, author of a good article in the Santa Cruz Sentinel, for the publicity and organization of the event.

We made a presentation at the Foundation for Global Community in Palo Alto hosted by Valley of Heart's Delight Director Susan Stansbury, and traveled to UC Davis to visit the Children's Organic Garden and Student Farm. Coordinated by Mary Carpenter Dalsin at the Land, Air and Water Resources Department of UC Davis, Irina also presented a lunchtime seminar on her research on restoration of stability to eroded mountain slopes by fruit and nut trees in the Tien-Shan mountains north of Tashkent.

The following story provides a heartwarming sequel to our visit to Davis. Dr. Pablo Guzman, director of the California Crop Improvement Association, got in touch after Irina's seminar to ask if she could carry used AYSO soccer uniforms back to Uzbekistan. In the end, the uniforms were transported by a Winrock volunteer, and the result can be seen on our new Uzbekistan photo page on our Web site. The village of Uhum in Nuratau now has a young team with the name "Pablo" sporting AYSO uniforms! Soccer families may wish to visit www.davisayso.net/internat.htm, where we expect soon to see Uzbekistan listed.

Hosted by Kate Stafford, Albie Miles, and Ingrid Mednis, we spent an afternoon at the UC Santa Cruz Agroecology Project, and also visited John and Cynthia Jeavons and Carol Cox in Willits for lunch and a tour of the Ecology Action Mini-farm. Rounding out Irina's and Ludmila's nearly month-long visits, several social events and tours were hosted and organized by Ninel Kushchenko, Evgeny Solodov, Candice Yu Simon, and others.

March brought a two-week visit by Igor Prokofiev, Executive Director of the NGO Viola in Bryansk, Russia, the organization of which Ludmila Zhirina (see above) is President. The purpose of Igor's visit was two-fold: participation in the Ecology Action 3-Day Workshop in Willits (leading to basic-level GROW BIOINTENSIVESM teacher certification) and initiation of our efforts to co-author the grant proposal for joint activities in the Russian Far East (RFE), which was due in early May. Igor was also treated to tours of San Francisco and the Agroecology Program and the GIS laboratory at UCSC, and spoke to a group that gathered here in BfR's living room. Igor found the 3-Day Workshop to be extremely worthwhile, despite his having studied Ecology Action's books extensively, taught BI seminars for years, and even authored BI curriculum materials for Russian schools.

Igor is not only a teacher and an activist, but also a scholar, and is close to completing his dissertation on oil spill remediation for his *kandidat* (Ph.D.) degree in ecology. It was a rewarding experience to be able to host him and get to know him better!

RECENT REPORT FROM BRYANSK, RUSSIA by NGO Viola co-coordinators Ludmila Zhirina and Igor Prokofiev

At NGO Viola we have been maintaining GROW BIOINTENSIVE demonstration gardens since 2001 – small plots in Bryansk and in the Chernobyl radiation zone where we have been conducting scientific experiments since 2002. We have a network of mini-farmers in our region, and have begun to extend our teaching work throughout Russia.

The seminars must continue, and the soil also requires ongoing attention. Every year, we conduct three seminars and four garden tours for teachers, students, our volunteers, and small farmers from the Bryansk region. We follow the advice in Ecology Action's books carefully, year-round, in our demonstration gardens. The garden soil has improved steadily over the past three years, which is exciting to see.

We are especially interested in the experiments we're conducting in the radiation zone. Some of the Biointensive techniques, in particular double-digging, help our vegetables to be clean, without radionuclides! We have the dream of writing an interesting booklet on our results. Many people who live in the radiation zone also hope to see this happen, and want to see Biointensive plots in every garden.

In 2002, we wrote two curriculum programs for schools following the book *Kak vyraschivat' bol'she ovoschei* and sent them to 49 regions of Russia. This year we received many letters with questions, and answered many of them by phone. Viola members who participated in BfR's seminars in Novo-Sinkovo in 2001 and 2002 now have their own Biointensive plots, which NGO Viola also uses for tours. They are Igor Prokofiev, Albina Samsonova, Katya Kuzenkova, *cont. on p. 6*



RUSSIAN FAR EAST PLANS POSTPONED

by Carol Vesecky

Alas, after spending months in a collective grant-writing process, we (comprised of BfR/Ecology Action, the Taiga Rangers in Komsomolsk-on-Amur, and NGO Viola in Bryansk) did *not* win a major grant that we applied for to work in the Russian Far East (RFE). But we do remain committed to working there and will attempt to find other ways to fund the GROW BIOINTENSIVE and organic produce marketing workshops, support centers, Web site, a newsletter, consultation service, and promotion of organics that had been planned in our proposal.

The year-long program of activities — conceived by Igor Prokofiev during his visit here in March — could give dacha gardeners and other mini-farmers in four areas of the Russian Far East a wonderful start in using the Biointensive method, and also aid those interested in earning income from small areas in getting a start

in marketing their organic produce. The grantmaking organization is the Foundation for Russian American Economic Cooperation (FRAEC), based in Seattle and Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk (Sakhalin Island, RFE) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development. Among its goals are the improvement of mutual ties and of prospects for economic cooperation between the Russian Far East and the US West Coast.

FRAEC will help us seek other funding sources, and we're looking forward to resubmitting in the new year. Prospective activities will begin with a late fall workshop tour, during which Steve Moore and Igor Prokofiev will present workshops on GROW BIOINTENSIVE (GB) and passive solar greenhouse design in two RFE locations, and an early spring workshop tour, with Michael Olson presenting small-scale agribusiness workshops in two more RFE locations. (Readers will remember Steve from last summer's *continued on page 5*

BIOINTENSIVE IN UZBEKISTAN

Here follows a summary by Connie Vilhauer of the paper Irina Kim presented at the Eco-Farm Conference. Write to Carol for the full text in English or Russian, or to Irina with questions: kim_irina2001@yahoo.com

At the Eco-Farm Conference at Asilomar in Pacific Grove, California in January 2003, Irina Kim, Director of the Agrocenter in Chirchik, Uzbekistan, addressed the environmental problems in arid regions of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Kim identified the causes and extent of land degradation and the steps necessary to reverse the continuing devastation.

Among the major contributors to soil degradation in these Central Asian republics are the excessive use of land for pastures; poor irrigation practices resulting in soil salinization, swamps, and water erosion; the flooding of large amounts of land for water preservation; and pollution caused by the improper use of agricultural chemicals.

At the heart of the problem of soil reclamation is the lack of public knowledge and appreciation for the need to preserve and restore soil fertility. This must be corrected by means of a massive promotional campaign reaching, first, those who hold and utilize the land, to convince them to participate personally in the preservation and restoration of soil fertility. Furthermore, rather than continuing to view the soil as a simple formulaic mixture, states must act to establish a legal basis for the soil that will ensure its restoration, preservation, and protection as a living organism of wild nature, and as part of the nation's natural and cultural heritage.

Key new approaches to resolving these problems begin with the creation of a new social layer of private farmers who have a direct interest in increasing productivity while preserving and increasing soil health. These farmers need informational, educational, and legal assistance. Next, highly qualified local experts need to be trained in sustainable agriculture and, in particular, Ecology Action's GROW BIOINTENSIVE (GB) mini-farming methods. Young people must be tapped for the maximum, long-term effectiveness of this second measure.

Irina Kim has made substantial progress toward realizing these goals since her initial work in 1991, when she created educational programs in agroecology in state-sponsored secondary schools in Tashkent and Chirchik, Uzbekistan. In 1994 and 1995 she founded "Ecopolis" to further environmental education among the young, receiving support from the Institute for Social Action and Renewal in Eurasia (ISAR) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for Ecopolis' projects. In December 1995, Kim's "Ecopolis" founded the "Agrocenter" agroecology resource center to educate young and old in Bio-intensive sustainable mini-farming based upon Jeavons' methods, detailed in the Russian translation of his book which had been presented to Kim in 1994 by a Russian colleague.

The Agrocenter initiated its work in the industrial city of Chirchik, where 80% of the 220,000 residents have rural garden plots. The center established the new occupation of "Mini-farmer" at Chirchik's Vocational School No. 3, and for eight years has been training adults and youth in the GB method. So far, 765 high school students have been trained, and 164 students have graduated with a three-year "Mini-Farming" course of study as their major subject. Establishing the "Mini-Farmer" profession is important in the effort to compel governments to establish a legal status for the soil. The center has also created eight demonstration sites and has trained 25 student trainers in its "Mini-Farmer" school club. These students conduct training seminars on the GB

method in various regions of Uzbekistan, where 384 village high school students and 365 adults have passed the initial training level.

Agrocenter activities have been based upon a three-stage concept. Stage 1 "Self-Help," conducted from 1995 to 1997, resulted in the people beginning to appreciate the necessity of growing food. During Stage 2 "Seeds of Self-Help," from 1998 to 2002, numerous Bio-intensive mini-farming instructors were trained, and Bio-intensive dacha gardener associations, village networks, and "Mini-Farmer" school clubs were established. Projects in various regions of Uzbekistan include a Bio-intensive nut and fruit orchard to reforest the slopes of mountains north of Tashkent near the Charvakskoye reservoir, created in conjunction with forestry farm employees. Measurements of the results of Agrocenter projects indicate remarkable success rates in sapling "take" percentages (90 to 100%), reduction of water use (by half); the improvement of soil structure and fertility through proper composting; reduction of crop disease and weed growth; and an increase in crop yields by a factor of 1.5 to two.

Stage 3 began in 2002 and has the slogan "The More We Help Others, the More We Help Ourselves." These ongoing activities promote Bio-intensive throughout Uzbekistan, and include the establishment of a "Mini-Ag Center for Central Asia" in Chirchik to spread Bio-intensive to all the Central Asian republics. Key emphasis is on training and particularly on developing a more extensive educational program to train high-level experts in cooperation with Bio-intensive for Russia and Ecology Action. The Agrocenter also offers free assistance to the disabled and pensioners on their mini-farms, and has offered special creative programs for young children.

Irina Kim and her colleagues have proven the importance and promise of GROW BIOINTENSIVE in the arid conditions of Uzbekistan. It is hoped that the methodology will henceforth be broadly disseminated to the entire territory of Central Asia.

TEACHER TESTIMONIAL FROM NURATAU

Below are comments on his use of GROW BIOINTENSIVE by one of the first gardeners to be taught the method by Irina Kim in the Nuratau Nature Reserve. Similar statements have come from Uhum math and physics teachers Husanboy Zaripov and Mardoboi Dekhanov, as well as from Norgul Bekmuratova and Bakhtiyar Kayumov of the desert villages Ottakurgan and Yangi-Kishlak; they are available on request. Erin Wood and Connie Vilhauer translated their reports.

Oct. 9, 2003

My name is Bagrom Kasimov, and I am a native of the village of Uhum, in the Farish region of the Dzhizak *oblast*. Previously I was chief inspector of the Nuratau Nature Reserve. Currently I work as a market gardener.

Irina Kim came to our village with her student trainers in June of 1998. During that year I began the study and practice of the Bio-intensive method in my own garden.

I have been using Bio-intensive ever since that time, from 1998 to 2003. We have grown many vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, cabbage, pumpkins), herbs (dill, parsley, cilantro), compost crops (corn, wheat, clover, alfalfa), and calorie crops (potatoes, onions).

This method, I believe, is very useful for our region. The harvest in the areas I have observed increased by 25-30%. I noted in particular increased yields of cucumbers, tomatoes, potatoes, and corn. I would also like to say that the soil in my plot has become more fertile. I have begun to save *see next page*

seeds from the tomato, cucumber, pepper, and corn crops grown using Biointensive methods. I distribute the extra seeds to neighbors who want to start gardening.

I truly believe that the Biointensive method can be very useful to our people, and that it can be easily learned by them. I understand well that the use of compost is very important for the nourishment of the soil, as it creates the necessary conditions for an organic harvest. For that reason I believe that training and practice in Biointensive should be continued and extended among the people here. It should be mentioned that this water-saving method is good for our region, also, since water is so scarce here.

After Irina Kim tested me, she determined that I am ready to teach a beginner's course on the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method to others.

Best wishes, *Bagrom Kasimov* (seen above with turnip crop)



IRINA'S REPORT ON HER FALL 2003 TOUR

Based on the results and analyses of the tour to Nuratau from Sept. 20 to Oct. 12, I can conclude that I have succeeded in establishing a very close rapport with the local people and have involved them in learning and putting into practice the GROW BIOINTENSIVE (GB) mini-farming method. The local population understands how important GB is for their region, under conditions of water shortages and poor soil, and also because this method does not require much expense. Most importantly, the local population has learned to work independently to a high degree. However, at the same time, they must receive continuing support.

I am very happy that I have been able in each village to find student trainers who are initiators among the teachers and researchers, and who in the future can practice and teach GB independently. I believe that it is very important that the local school in each village collaborates. Education is the primary building block for future success.

It is very important that the agricultural college in Yangi-Kishlak become a partner. I am planning for this college to become the main mini-farming center in the Naratau Nature Reserve region. A Mini-Farmer department will be opened as a branch of the center in Chirchik. (Up to now, only oral agreements have been made with the college administration.)

At this time, I believe that the basic and beginning course of GB training can be taught by Bagrom Kasimov, Bakhtiyor Kayumov, and Norgul Bekmuratova. For the future, I see great potential in Husanboy Zaripov. But it is essential to maintain continuing contact with them — by letter, telegraph, and telephone, as well as periodically to pay them visits to offer consultations and informational support.

Carol, I believe that it is also important to conduct GROW BIOINTENSIVE training and practice in the Khorezm, Bokhara, and Navoi *oblasts* of Uzbekistan, and I am planning for this. In these regions the soil is poor and salinized, and there are shortages of water. I consider this to be very important and that it would be beneficial in these regions. What do you think?

Love, *Irina*

Email Fundraising Report: We've asked our email list this fall to help with the \$1944 cost of Irina's Nuratau and Brichmulla tours. Inspired by an appeal "How Much Can One Woman Do?" by writer Jill Clay (recently posted on our site), donations have come in totaling \$1122, including our November fundraiser (see p. 2), a Trunk Show offered by DFG Apparel (consignment business recently started by longtime supporter Jacky Hood) and two Palo Alto Music Boosters flea market stalls organized by old friend Deborah Honig.

Another Trunk Show and flea market are planned for tomorrow as of this writing. It is our fervent hope that this mailing and tomorrow's events will bring in the remaining \$922 on the \$1944, plus the copying and mailing costs of roughly \$300 needed to reimburse our anonymous lender.

Truly, this is a way we as Americans can personally offer a helping hand and say Assalam Aleikum! (We greet you in peace!) to poor rural Muslims (mostly ethnic Tajiks) in a country that is also dealing with the issue of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. Please be generous!

-Carol Vesecky

Russian Far East, continued from p. 3 Culture/Eco-Ag tour — see our site and also Ecology Action's article on his greenhouse work www.growbiointensive.org/newsletter/passive-solar.html. For an introduction to Michael, visit his site www.metrofarm.com and listen to his "Food Chain" radio show via Real Player!

Next, we will organize a Web site and print newsletter to disseminate information on GB small-scale mini-farm marketing. GB demonstration gardens and GB and small-scale agribusiness support centers will be established in four locations, and consultation services will be offered by Ecology Action and the NGO Viola. Finally, to encourage interest in an organic market for the RFE, funding will be sought for a future conference, and organic certification systems researched.

Our main partner in the RFE will be the Taiga Rangers, a young, energetic NGO that conducts environmental education projects and monitoring of illegal logging of the forests in the Khabarovsk Krai. (If you read Russian, visit www.taiga.khv.ru — there are photos!) Also taking part in all activities will be the Agroecology Laboratory of the Academy of Sciences in Yakutsk; Muraviovsky Park, a bird refuge (and the Russian base for the International Crane Foundation) near the Chinese border in the Amur *oblast* that has also established an organic farm, see www.savingcranes.org/abouticf/friends.asp; and Kedrovyy Posad, a partnership planning an ecovillage near Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk on Sakhalin Island.

Ludmila Churikova (Taiga Rangers), Igor Prokofiev (NGO Viola), and I worked together via email in Russian and English, including during Igor's trips to Paris, Kiev, and Brussels (the European Parliament) to advise on forest and GMO issues, and during Churikova's intensive work coordinating environmental education activities. We received great ongoing advice from Peter Heffron, John Jeavons, Ludmila Vodopyanov, and others. Several weeks after submission, our proposal was deemed "technically and pro-grammatically eligible" and revisions were requested in late July, which we submitted in due course.

Although we received encouragement from FRAEC toward the end, we were ultimately denied the grant. Basically, we can blame this on our failure to make the case that income-producing farms would be created in the short term. We're sorry not to be receiving the grant, but glad that we now have a proposal that can easily be adapted for sending to other funding organizations.

continued from page 2 the leadership of Nina Novikova. The expedition was sponsored by a NATO project, "Geographical Information System for optimization of land and water use in Amu-Daria delta." I visited the Karakalpak capital city Nukus, the former fishing port Muinak, the area of the dry Aral Sea bottom on the sea's southwestern shore in Karakalpakia, and the ancient city Khiva and Uzbek capital Tashkent in Uzbekistan.

The area now known as Uzbekistan flourished in antiquity because it is located along the Great Silk Road that linked China to Europe. The ancient land of Khorezm covered the part of its territory near the Aral Sea as early as 2500 years ago; like other areas in the Silk Road, it became home to many ethnicities. An early religion was Zoroastrianism; Christianity and Islam came later, and with the Arab conquest in the 8th century, Islam became more dominant. Later, in the 13th century, Genghis Khan occupied much territory. His empire collapsed after his death, but was revived in the 14th century under the rule of Tamerlane.

Russian exploration of Khorezm began in the 1930's under the leadership of the archeologist S.P. Tolstov. He rediscovered an entire lost ancient land, previously known only from fragmentary Greek, Persian and Chinese texts.

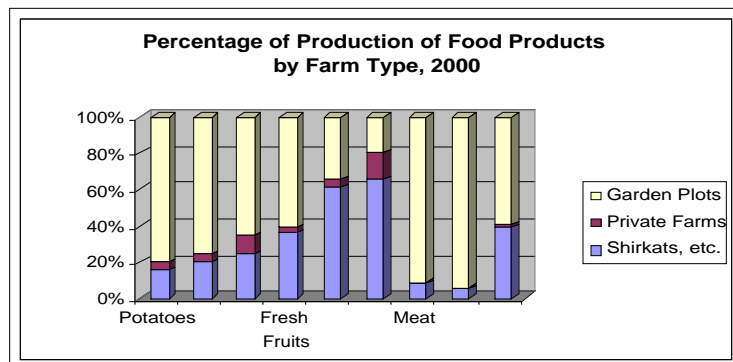
The Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity in Uzbekistan: the Impacts of the Land Reform Process

by Eric Van Dusen, Ph.D. UC Berkeley ericvd@are.berkeley.edu

Central Asia is one of the most important centers of biological diversity for crop plants in the world, especially for tree crops of fruits and nuts. This paper reports on an ongoing research effort among an international conservation network and Uzbek scientists that studies the socioeconomic processes impacting local farmer conservation.

A specific focus is the land reform process, the creation of new forms of land tenure to replace the collective farms from the Soviet period, and the impacts that new tenure regimes may have on conservation. The paper will cover the development of new methodology, an empirical description of the environmental problem, and a map for future research.

Uzbekistan is a breeding ground of great cultural and agrobiodiversity. Over sixty distinct cultural and linguistic groups exist in Uzbekistan alone, and over 40 crops — including apple, peach, plum, almond, walnut, pistachio, grape, and such horticultural crops as garlic, melon, and spinach — originated there. Due to the changes in land tenure since independence in 1991, efforts are



being made to explore the links between institutions and local agrobiodiversity management, including furthering our understanding of biodiversity's contribution to livelihoods. There have also been changes in the organization of production, especially the provision of inputs and the purchase of harvests, that will continue to affect which crops, and which varieties of these crops, are grown.

The Soviet agricultural research system was well developed, and Soviet botanists actually pioneered the study of wild and farmer varieties of crop plants. The network of Vavilov Institute experiment stations in each republic and Shreder field station in each province have a long history of collection and conservation of agricultural biodiversity. However, as the state sector contracted in the 1990s, these research stations have been faced with diminished funding, and have largely been obliged to limit their activities, despite the huge benefits to local farmers. These experiment stations actually play a dual role, collecting and conserving traditional varieties, but also making selections and providing both improved and local genetic materials for planting.

In some ways it is surprising that the wealth of agricultural biological resources was able to survive the collectivization of agriculture and the hegemony of cotton in Uzbek agriculture. However, it has long been known that most tree crops and fruits and vegetables were actually produced in the small plots allocated to each household as gardens. The recent and ongoing land reform process is following two main tracks. On the garden level, almost all rural households have been able to expand their

home garden, or *tamorka*, by a small amount. On the commercial level, collective farms are being divided up into plots of 5-10 hectares, and distributed to the wealthier and more connected farmers — a new type of capitalist farmer called *firmer*. The intermediary group of *dehkan* farmers is a key sector for agrobiodiversity management, producing on garden plots but oriented towards marketing some portion of their production.

A goal of ongoing fieldwork in Uzbekistan is to compare across the various tenure regimes in their access and utilization of genetic resources, with a view to both conservation and development imperatives.

Bryansk report, continued from p. 3 and Oleg Zavarzin. They grow vegetables, flowers, and medicinal herbs [see Viola's herbalists — BI squash, dressed as medics for the annual harvest festival — in the photo on p. 3 -Ed].

With support from the Global Fund for Women, we carried out the "Economic Opportunity Initiative" project to train rural women in the Bryansk region in the basics of small business and computer and Internet use, and to create the conditions for their economic independence. Rural women in our region are dependent on husbands who must go to big cities to earn family income. There are many social and economic problems in Russian villages. After the collapse of the Soviet-era collective farms, private farms

have not been re-established, and many rural people have neither the desire nor the ability to organize a small farm. As a result, there is high unemployment in the Bryansk region's villages.

In our seminars, we encouraged rural women to start their own small business that can also increase family income. We also described the Biointensive mini-farming method that can help to increase vegetable yields for both family and market without using fertilizers and chemicals. As a result of the project, we have created an active network of rural women's groups, through which women can exchange knowledge, experience, seeds, and harvests. The same network will promote development of small rural business in the Bryansk region.

OUR SUPPORTERS HAVE BEEN GENEROUS! (TALLY FOR 2001, 2002 and 2003)

Workshop Funders: Anonymous • Shoshana Billik • Andrew and Jane Crowley • The Crail-Johnson Foundation • John & Cynthia Vesecky • Abigail Youngblood **Supporters:** Stuart & Sandy Harris • Hans & Nancy Samelson • David Vick • Cindie White **Contributors:** Arthur and Rene Lynch • Joe Bikulcius • Barbara Brown • Gene & Rita Fisher • Sheri Furman • Jo Glickman • Jim & Joyce Harris • Lois Crozier Hogle • Jolene Hsu • Larissa Keet • Jury & Carolyn Lewizky • Frank & Louise Mudrak • Gail Schubert • Tracy Strom • Daniel & Amber Vallotton **Donors:** Bruce & Bonnie Benedict • Lois Benedict • David Buckley • Bill & Audrey Cutler • Marcia Fein • Shan March • Mike & Terry McMahan • Larry & Celinda Miller • Vladimir Motalygo • Helen Pickering • Caroline Wyss **Members:** Fran Adams • Danielle Berman • Abigail Breuer • Marlene Broemer • Pat Broemser • George and Ruth Chippendale • Jill Clay • Sushil & Purnima Das Gupta • Al Davis • Ken Dickerson • Judy & Don Fo • Ernest Goitein • Margaret & Peter Green • Elizabeth Hamilton & Mick McCarthy • Roberta Harvey • Virginia Herbert • Dorothy Hinze • Deborah Honig • Jacky Hood • Tom Jaworowski • Valerie Kockelman • Ruby Kueffer • David & Paulette Lambertson • Louise Lee • Bill Leland • Christine Lemor-Drance • Peter Madsen • Austin Marx • Celinda & Larry Miller • Virginia Moseley • Debbie Mytels • Hugh Roberts • Deborah Rose • Jan Secor • Luda Shuster • Judy & John Sisk • Catherine Siskron • Jill Slocum • Karen Smallwood • Joan Spannagel • Stan Stratton • Judith Sykes • Paul & Prabha Tedrow • Bruce & Mary Beth Train • Lynn Visson • David & Jennifer Watts • Bruce & Elinor Wilner • Velma Young

How You Can Help!

Network with foundations and major donors to help us find funding for:

- our entire FRAEC-inspired Russian Far East grant program (see page 3) of GROW BIOINTENSIVE and small-scale produce marketing workshops, support centers, newsletters, and Web sites — \$100,000, or part thereof, as agreed,
- a mini-ag center for Central Asia directed by Irina Kim — \$20,000-\$80,000 depending on scale,
- new translations by the NGO Viola of Ecology Action books such as John Beeby's *Test Your Soil With Plants* — \$3000-\$20,000,
- a workshop tour with Steve Moore or Michael Olson to teach GROW BIOINTENSIVE or small-scale produce marketing — \$1000-\$10,000, depending on ecotour proceeds (total cost \$10,000 per international tour).

Contribute financially to help sponsor:

- printing and paper for *Ekologicheskii Ogorod (The Sustainable Vegetable Garden)* — \$4000 will pay for 5000 copies, smaller amounts can go into a fund),
- a much-needed Russian-language Web site on GROW BIOINTENSIVE to be designed and maintained by Igor Prokofiev and others in Bryansk — \$1000 for one year,
- workshop tours by Igor Prokofiev or Ludmila Zhirina of Viola in Russia or Ukraine, or by Aleksandr Avrorin in Russia including Siberia and the Russian Far East, or by Irina Kim in Central Asia: \$800-\$2000 per tour,
- One month of BfR's current Internet costs — \$45.

Volunteer your time:

- networking for grants & donations: help us find groups or individuals who could take an interest in our work. Carol will be happy to present a program!
- hosting, organizing, and/or publicizing events,
- office organization, database, and filing help in three-hour stints,
- newsletter layout and writing assistance.

Contact Carol at 650 856-9751 or cvesecky@igc.org

UZBEKISTAN PHOTOS UPLOADED TO BfR WEB SITE

BfR's Web master Berta Pires (pronounced as "Perez") and Director Carol Vesecky (veh-SESS-kee) have been working steadily this fall to prepare a full page of photos of Uzbekistan for our site. These were chosen from: (1) snapshots sent by Irina Kim from the GROW BIOINTENSIVE workshop tours that she and her student trainers have undertaken to Brichmulla Forest Farm in the Tien Shan mountains north of Tashkent and to the Nuratau Nature Reserve north of Samarkand, and (2) our collection of photos from the three Farmer-to-Farmer tours in 1998, 1999 and 2000, during which BfR conducted workshops in Chirchik (near Tashkent) and Nukus (in Karakalpakia, near the ecologically challenged Aral Sea).

We are thrilled to be able to share with you these fascinating images, in the hopes that you will enjoy the computer-chair traveler experience and also get a better sense of the soul-restoring nature of our work. The direct link is <http://biointensiveforrussia.igc.org/photos/uzbek/>, but the page is now also easily accessible from the home page, via an Index page. (Incidentally, the home page has a new look also, with a map updated by Stanford cartographer Meredith Williams.) Write to Berta at hippobean@hotmail.com with any comments!

Here's my tax-deductible contribution to Ecology Action for a membership in Biointensive for Russia:

- \$20 Regular Member \$50 Donor Other
 \$100 Contributor: \$250 Supporter *

*Will receive the 2nd Russian or 6th English edition of

How to Grow More Vegetables (Check box if

- \$1000 Workshop Sponsor desired)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Ph/fax: _____ E-mail _____

Mail to: BfR, 831 Marshall Drive
Palo Alto, CA 94303-3614

Be sure to write your check to "Ecology Action" for tax deduction!

Upcoming Events:

Jan. 13, Feb. 18, etc. (3rd Wed. of every month), 7-9 pm
Regular Russian-language practice session at 831 Marshall
Drive in Palo Alto. Contact Carol Vesecky for details.

Vegetable gardening classes in Palo Alto:

Sat., Jan. 24, 10:30 am -12 Noon & 2:00-3:30 pm. Intro to
GROW BIOINTENSIVE & Seed Propagation. David
Basile, \$17 each class

Sat., Jan. 31, 10:30 am-12:30 pm & 2:00-4:00 pm
Complete-Diet Mini-Farming & GROW BIOINTENSIVE
Economic Mini-Farming (growing for market). John
Jeavons, \$19 each class

Classes held at Common Ground Organic Garden Supply
and Education Center, 559 College Avenue, Palo Alto,
CA 94306. Pre-register 650 493-6072
www.commongroundinpaloalto.org

Wed.-Sat., Jan. 21-24, Eco-Farm Conference at Asilomar,
Pacific Grove. Cost to attend one day, \$95. Visit
www.eco-farm.org, click "Eco-Farm Conference" for info.

Fri.-Sun., Jan. 30-Feb. 1, Russian Festival, Russian Center,
2460 Sutter Street in San Francisco. Visit www.russiancentersf.com (in January). BfR's display will be near the
vodka-tasting bar. Help us staff it if you're able! (Call
Carol)

Fri., Jan. 16 6:30 to 9 pm, EarthSave monthly vegan dinner.
catered by "The Fresh Chef," Matthew DuTrumble, free
lecture at 7:30 by Kirk Hamilton, "Common Medical
Issues for Vegetarians" at Foundation for Global Com-
munity, 222 High Street, P.A. Dinner \$12 for members,
\$15 non-members if preregistered, \$20 at door. 408 380-
1214 bayarea@earthsave.org <http://bayarea.earthsave.org>

Date TBA (to stay informed, join our email list by writing
Carol if you're not already on it!), program on our
Culture/Eco-Ag tour plan for next fall and Vladimir
Loginov's straw-bale building experience in Russia..

Late Winter, date TBA, visit Ken Foster's home garden and
the Alan Chadwick Garden at UC Santa Cruz.

March or April, date TBA, Evening of Eurasian Culture at St.
Mark's Episcopal Church. Co-sponsored by St. Mark's
Outreach Committee. (Contact Carol for info.)

VISIT TO THE OBRUCH FAMILY IN KARELIA

After our 2002 BfR workshop tour to Moscow and its region,
Novgorod, and St. Petersburg was over in early August, and the
workshop presenter and one ecotourist had returned home, SF art
photographer Elena Gogoleva, Abby Youngblood, and her friend
Kseniya, and I found our way to for a visit to the Obruch family in
Nevo-Ecoville. The ecovillage, now home to 30 residents, lies at
the north end of Lake Ladoga, adjacent to the proposed Ladoga
Skerries National Park, and near Sortavala and the Finnish border.

Andrei and Elena Obruch, with their three children and
Andrei's mother Rimma, gave up their urban careers to move from
the city to the Kitez Children's Community, 300 km south of
Moscow in the Kaluga region. In keeping with the community's



philosophy, they
adopted four more
children there and
also after moving
in 1998 to Nevo-
Ecoville.

The ten-member
family leads a re-
markably natural
lifestyle, growing
most of their food
and all of their
honey, carrying

water from a nearby well, and using herbs that they gather for their
health, culinary, and grooming needs. Visiting ecotourists bring
food and clothing, supplies such as greenhouse polyethylene, and
cash gifts in exchange for a healing experience.

Write to Carol for a more on our visit, including walks in the
forest through a "shaman gate" and dips in the lake (I spotted
water lilies!), attempts at wielding a Russian scythe to cut hay,
chats with Andrei and Elena and their Finnish friend Heikki Attila
scrambling on lichen-lined granite outcrops, Abby's visit to Sorta-
vala and the Transfiguration Monastery on renowned Valaam
Island, and more. Perhaps you, too, will be fortunate enough to
visit the Obruch family. before the children are all grown....

To get in touch quickly, contact:

Carol Vesecky, Director, Biointensive for Russia
650 856-9751 • cvesecky@igc.org

For info, visit: <http://biointensiveforrussia.igc.org>

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