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– BfR’s newsletter!*



# The Garden Companion

## Biointensive for Russia's newsletter

Vol. 11, No. 1

Summer 2007

### RUSSIA/UKRAINE ECOTOUR, JULY 9-23, 2007

After working for many months to promote and plan our tour, we are far short of our goal of ten ecotourists. In fact, there may be only five of us traveling this summer. We had more confirmed signups, but for one reason or another, several sadly had to withdraw.

But we are excited about seeing our old friends in Russia, and meeting new friends in Ukraine, including teachers from the Chernobyl Centers. We also hope to see some of the Ukrainian environmentalists who visited here last September (see page 2)! It seems unlikely we'll try a similar tour to these countries in the next year or two, but we will invite you to join us if we succeed in obtaining funding for a workshop there. If you ever wish to set up your own tour, we and our partners will be here to help!

### EXCERPTS OF CAROL'S REMARKS AT THE KITKA/CHERNOBYL 20 BENEFIT AT ST. MARK'S

It's appropriate that we're celebrating Earth Day with the (Earthy) music of KITKA to raise funds for the GROW BIOINTENSIVE (GB) method of gardening that builds up the fertility of Earth (er, Soil!). In fact, in the case of Chernobyl radiation zone soils, the method helps to reduce the radionuclides in the harvest, rendering the earth more able to provide healthful food for the families that must grow their own there. Ask me later for reports on the experiments that show this.

Tonight we'll view a film on the consequences of the worst technological disaster in world history. Then we'll enjoy the music of KITKA, the Bay Area's beloved ensemble that performs the music of Balkan and East European village women. We have a real treat in store for us!

BfR is a project that supports GB Sustainable Mini-farming workshops and publications in Eurasia. Since 1993, when we sparked the publication in Russian of the authoritative text on GB in Moscow, we've held over a dozen workshops in ten cities of Russia and Uzbekistan. In turn, several participants have become partners, teaching their own seminars as well as college and high school classes. We estimate that well over 11,000 people have been taught, and by extension, hundreds of thousands of people and their soils have benefited.

See "Carol's Remarks at Kitka Event" on page 2

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### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we begin this newsletter, BfR's 2007 Culture Eco-Ag tour to Russia and Ukraine, July 9-23 is in its final planning stages. There is space for more travelers, so give us a call if at this late date you in fact could join us for what is sure to be an unforgettable experience! But if Samarkand's art and architecture, the majesty of the Tien Shan mountains, and yurt living attract you more, keep us in mind for the ecotour we are visualizing for late 2008 or 2009 in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

This spring we held the Kitka/Chernobyl-20 benefit evening; see photo above left and a report on page 3. We also helped plan a memorial for BfR supporter Larissa Keet; see page 2. The fundraiser netted \$1200; this amount along with another \$400 in BfR funds was sent to our Eurasia partners for work they are accomplishing this summer. Irina Kim, based in Chirchik, Uzbekistan, will travel to Shimkent, Kazakhstan, in July to teach for four days to follow up on the workshop she held there last October; see our Fall 2006 newsletter. And the NGO Viola is conducting experiments; see page 2.

Closer to home, with encouragement from those who may join us, we look forward to planning more events and tours locally and in Southern California, where BfR and I may relocate in the next few months!!! More details will be revealed once our plans take shape. *Carol Vesecky*

### MAJOR WORKSHOP GRANT TO BE SOUGHT

During our July ecotour we will visit the Educational Methods Center near Moscow in Novo-Sin'kovo, as a base for touring the Golden Ring cities. While there, Carol will study the proposal drafted by Evgeny Shmelev, Foreign Methods Lab Director at the Center (second from right below), for funding a major workshop in Spring 2008 at the Center. It will be taught by key GB teacher Steve Moore,



who presented a workshop there in 2002. Evgeny will submit the proposal to the Ford Foundation in Moscow, which accepts proposals only from Russian organizations.

In Novo-Sin'kovo we will be joined by Danielle Berman, a University of Wisconsin PhD candidate doing research in Rural Sociology in Moscow. Danielle has helped us write previous grant proposals.

We are still hoping for a smaller grant which would fund workshops in Kiev and Bryansk in Fall 2007. Attendees would include Chernobyl Centers teachers and representatives of associations whose leaders visited us on the Open World program organized by Larissa Keet in September 2006. Meantime, your donations will tide us over – so, please be generous! (See page 3 for how you can help.)

## VIOLA'S OLEG ZAVARZIN TO ATTEND WILLITS WORKSHOP IN NOVEMBER *by Joanna Weichert*

A grant of \$750 from the Palo Alto Kiwanis Club, along with your contributions, will help us bring Oleg Zavarzin from Bryansk to Ecology Action's 3-Day Workshop in Willits, Nov. 2-4, 2007. Oleg is a member of the NGO Viola's Coordinating Council and principal of a high school where he, his students, and their parents created a model GB garden. Oleg attended GB workshops in Moscow in 2001-2002, and he has taught farmers, rural teachers, and villagers in Viola's GB training program ever since.

GB enables Oleg to grow abundant, healthful vegetables for his family safely and ecologically in his own garden. He has used GB since 2002 – double-digging, composting, close spacing, and companion planting. In 2005 Oleg participated in Viola's research expedition on the effects of radiation on the vegetable harvest. (Reports will be posted on BfR's website soon.) Since 2004, he has partnered with the Teacher Training Institute to organize and conduct lectures and practical training for rural teachers.

During his visit to California, Oleg will have time for a high school visit, so please contact us if you'd like to help schedule one. After returning home, Oleg will teach and research GB in Bryansk and the radiation zone.

**News Flash from Bryansk:** David Buckley, a Peninsula soils engineer who traveled to Bryansk with BfR in 2005, returned there in early June to work with Viola to study the

Plasticity Index of radiation-contaminated soils. The collaborators are seeking insight into soil restoration methods involving the capture of radioactive nuclides in clay. Pictured at right are David Buckley, Oleg Zavarzin, Ludmila Zhirina, farmer Armen Davtian, and their driver. *-Igor and Carol*



### ***Carol's Remarks at Kitka event, continued from p. 1***

The reason I'm involved is that I speak, read, write, and translate Russian and consider this work the best way to justify all the years of language study! We are affiliated with Ecology Action, a non-profit based in Willits, CA and directed since 1973 by master gardener and author John Jeavons.

There is literature on the table for you to peruse after the concert. You can also take classes at Common Ground Garden Supply and Educational Center right here in Palo Alto! GB is an organic method of the purest form, being manual and using no chemicals. Using only locally available inputs and simple techniques such as double-digging, composting, and transplanting, Biointensive gardeners get high yields of healthful produce, more sustainably.

*Carol Vesecky*

## In Memoriam: Larissa Keet

Larissa Keet, a deeply committed activist for the environment, peace, and women's rights, died Jan. 13 at age 65 after being hit by a bus in Nairobi, Kenya. She was in Kenya to attend the World Social Forum, a gathering championing peace and social justice that is annually co-sponsored by the Global Exchange organization in San Francisco. I quote from their website: "Larissa, a Palo Alto-area peace and environmental activist, had been on many Global Exchange tours and was known for creating the Compassionate Listening NGO, for her unrelenting kindness, and for her deep commitment to building another world.... The GX delegation honored Larissa's memory and her work by marching with banners of Larissa



into the opening ceremony of the WSF, held at Uhuru Park in Nairobi. The group also planted a tree in honor of her incredible life."

Among many, many other positive-change causes, BfR was supported by Larissa; in fact she was one of its earliest financial contributors. Over the years I brought many former Soviets to California to participate in Ecology Action's workshops on GROW BIOINTENSIVE Sustainable Mini-Farming, and as some readers will remember, the first was Larissa Avrorina from Novosibirsk, Siberia. Larissa K. graciously hosted Larissa A. to lunch at a restaurant during her second workshop visit. In 1997 Larissa A. became a strong proponent of Biointensive in Siberia and then a supporter of much nonprofit work as a grants manager in Novosibirsk and, now, Moscow.

Fast forward to July, 2006, which brought the visit of BfR's Russian partners, Dr. Ludmila Zhirina and Dr. Igor Prokofiev. The two have taught GB since 1999 in the Chernobyl radiation zone of Russia, near the border with Ukraine. Meantime, with my encouragement, Larissa Keet had agreed to coordinate the Open World visit of eight Ukrainian environmentalists, administered by the Center for Safe Energy.

*(continued on p. 4)*

Biointensive for Russia is a project based in Palo Alto and supported by Ecology Action. Founded in 1993 with the aid of the Learning Options Center to help promote Biointensive mini-farming in the former Soviet Union, its current goals include a two-way sharing of information on ecologically sound lifestyles. Carol Vesecky is the director; our Web master is Tex Houston. The mailing of this issue of the *Garden Companion* was made possible by member contributions. This issue of the *Companion* was edited by Carol Vesecky and Joanna Weichert. Please visit <http://biointensiveforrussia.igc.org> for more information.



## KITKA/CHERNOBYL20 BENEFIT IN PALO ALTO; BOOK & FILM AVAILABLE

"An Evening with Kitka and Filmmaker Yelena Zmushko to Benefit Ecogardening in Eurasia" took place on April 21 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Palo Alto. With an audience of 75, about \$1200 was raised to be sent to BfR partners in Eurasia. BfR volunteer Joanna Weichert offers this account:

In the dry church out of the evening drizzle, the audience gathered to hear Emcee Tom Anderson tell about the adoption of Mark and Molly, now age five, from Siberia about 3 years ago. He and his wife made two trips to Krasnoyarsk, one to meet the twins and one to bring them home. Then Tom introduced Carol Vesecky, who spoke briefly about BfR's work training teachers in the GROW BIOINTENSIVE organic gardening method to provide training in Eurasia. She also spoke about BfR's July Culture/Eco-Ag Tour to Russia and Ukraine.

Next, Yelena Zmushko introduced her film, "Chernobyl 20" and we were transported to Belarus, seeing the people and landscape that endured the nuclear accident. The interviews with the residents in denial, those who are angry, the sick children at the Cancer Hospital, the grave markers of men who died too young, the scientists who



Yelena Zmushko with admirer Rosemary after the concert

deny the effects of radiation and those who grant that it had and continues to have a terrible impact – all were very moving. Zmushko's commitment to the radiation zone and its people was apparent, and she and her film made a real connection with the audience. Stirred by the film, many asked questions and made encouraging comments, for which Zmushko was very grateful.

After a brief break, the Oakland-based Kitka Women's Vocal Ensemble took the floor to sing their polyphonic songs from Eastern Europe. Wearing exotic silks and satins, they looked lovely as they made compelling sounds – some joyful, some mournful; some were even "screams" in high register to reach the spirit world.

Many songs were sung in varying combinations, not all singers participating in every one. Several of the women addressed the audience to introduce the next selection, and they were delightful to listen to in speech as well as song. Many of the songs involved nature and living things: oak, eagle, apple tree, white rose. The ethereal music was healing after the somber film about radioactivity. After a standing ovation and an encore, we happily tucked into delicious Slavic-inspired refreshments: eggplant "caviar", deviled eggs, Russian tea cakes, *kievskiy tort*, etc.

Many in the audience stayed and socialized for some time. I think a good time was had by all. -Joanna Weichert

## How You Can Help!

Our partners' work, with our current and planned support, includes the following projects:

### NGO Viola in Bryansk, Russia

- For the fifth year, Ludmila Zhirina and Igor Prokofiev are continuing their *experiments* conducted by 6 families in the radiation zone of Bryansk oblast', the province that received more radiation than any other in Russia, at a current cost to BfR of \$1000.
- Igor Prokofiev has begun to update BfR's *website in Russian* with \$500 of BfR funds for a year's work.
- GROW BIOINTENSIVE *workshops* are currently being scheduled for the fall in Bryansk, Russia and Kiev, Ukraine for teachers from the towns designated as Chernobyl Centers by the United Nations and now supported informationally and financially by Friends of Chernobyl Centers-US, a group with bases in WI and MD. We should know soon if we'll receive a grant that would support these workshops at a cost of \$2200.
- Oleg Zavarzin, a HS principal active in Viola, will come to California for Ecology Action's **3-Day Workshop**, Nov. 2-4 in Willits. The Palo Alto Kiwanis are supporting his visit with a grant of \$750; we will need to raise another \$1250 for his travel and visa.

### Ecopolis/Agrocenter in Chirchik, Uzbekistan

- Irina Kim will conduct a follow-up 4-day *workshop* at the People's Friendship University in Kazakhstan in July, which we supported with \$900 from the Kitka evening.
- Irina will conduct similar at Jalalabad University in Kyrgyzstan in August with \$1100 in BfR support.

### Educational Methods Center in Novo-Sin'kovo, Russia

- Evgeny Shmelev will apply for a major *grant* for a follow-up workshop by Steve Moore in Spring 2008.
- The EMC will print the Russian *translation* of *The Sustainable Vegetable Garden* with \$1000 from the grant that will also support Viola's workshops, if approved.

*Here's my tax-deductible contribution to Ecology Action, "for BfR" for membership in Biointensive for Russia:*

☐ \$1000 Workshop Sponsor\* ☐ \$250 Supporter\* ☐ \$100 Contributor\* ☐ \$50 Donor ☐ \$20 Member ☐ Other

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Ph/fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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

**\*\*\*Be sure to make your check payable to "Ecology Action" for tax deductibility!\*\*\***

### **Upcoming Events in 2007:**

July 9-23 Culture / Eco-Ag Tour of Russia and Ukraine, including Moscow and Golden Ring, Bryansk, Smolensk, and Kiev.

May-Sept Irina Kim to teach GB workshops in Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan; GB experiments in Bryansk oblast'.

August 4 Ecology Action Research Mini-Farm/Garden Tour, Willits, CA. Write or call if interested!

October, dates TBA GROW BIOINTENSIVE Sustainable Mini-Farming Workshops in Kiev, Ukraine and Bryansk, Russia.

Nov 2-4 3-Day Ecology Action GROW BIOINTENSIVE<sup>SM</sup> Sustainable Mini-Farming Workshop, Willits, CA. Oleg Zavarzin will fly here from Bryansk to participate. Get in touch to assist with planning his visit; see the workshop description at [www.growbiointensive.org](http://www.growbiointensive.org) and consider signing up yourself!

**Spring 2008 (pending funding):** GROW BIOINTENSIVE<sup>SM</sup> workshop to be presented by Steve Moore at the Educational Methods Center in Novo-Sinkovo.

*(continued from page 2)* I wrote about this in the Fall 2007 *Companion*.

Being a faithful BfR supporter, Larissa searched for a way to allow the two visits to interact for some positive outcome and suggested that we record Ludmila and Igor telling about their work in the radiation zone, for the Ukrainians to hear. So, one evening we four had dinner together at my home and, using my long-unused equipment, recorded Ludmila and Igor describing (1) their respect for the GB method, its productivity and sustainability, (2) how they had taught the method throughout their oblast', including in the areas contaminated by Chernobyl radiation, and (3) how they had conducted tests showing that two of the method's components, use of Biointensive



Ukrainians with Dave Muffy after his tree restoration tour at Stanford

compost and double-digging, can reduce the amount of radiation in the vegetable harvest by up to 30%.

Later I distributed my transcript of the tape in Russian to the Ukrainian environmentalists. Now I plan to invite them to a workshop in the GB method that we're planning for the fall in Kiev, fulfilling Larissa's vision.

Following are condolences from some of the environmental leaders, sent to Enid, Fran, and Tamara of the Center for Safe Energy:

*Having known her for only a few days, we knew that this was a fantastic, irreplaceable person. Perfectly radiant, she offered us an example of enthusiasm for a cause. -Vladimir Berezin and his "Bakhmat" EcoCenter, Artemivsk, Donetsk Region (Missions: protection of salt mines from radioactive wastes, eco-tourism, citizen involvement in local government decisions)*

*Larissa was a truly wonderful person; this was apparent after a very short acquaintance. She was an open person who loved life and energized all who surrounded her. May the earth welcome her home! With grief and respect. Aleksei Khabtyuik, Senior Specialist, Agency for Rational Energy Use and Ecology, Kiev (Projects on power plant efficiency, heating systems, energy conservation, and greenhouse gas audits)*

*We were in shock after hearing the news. We share the pain of loss and grieve deeply along with you. Larissa will always be in our hearts and will join us in our work from the heavens. -Galina Oliynykova and all the staff at MAMA-86 in Artemovsk, Donetsk Region (Sustainable development, environmental health, civil rights)*

*Thank you for letting us know what unfortunately is very sad news. It's terrible that Larissa's life was cut short so unexpectedly and tragically. My condolences go to her family and friends. With respect, Yulia Semenchenko (Interpreter for the group)*

**To contact us quickly, write or phone:**

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