

*Please scroll down for page one
of the Fall 2008 “Garden Companion”
(BfR’s newsletter)!*



The Garden Companion

Biointensive for Russia's newsletter

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Fall 2008

OLEG ZAVARZIN'S VISIT IN 2007 *by Carol Vesecky*

Biointensive for Russia accompanied me to the Ojai Valley, soon after my move here in October 2007. Assisted financially by the Palo Alto Kiwanis and BfR, we hosted Oleg Zavarzin for 19 days in November, giving him the chance to attend Ecology Action's 3-Day Workshop in GROW BIOINTENSIVE (GB) Sustainable Mini-Farming in Willits. Oleg, a K-12 school principal, is a longtime active member of the NGO Viola in Bryansk, Russia. He is in line to direct the biology programs for the Bryansk *oblast'*.

After his arrival at LAX and before Oleg and I headed north to Willits at the beginning of November, we enjoyed visits to the Getty Center and the Huntington Gardens in the L.A. area, and to Meiners Oaks Elementary School, a California Distinguished School here in the Ojai Valley. Oleg also helped to plan my first veggie garden here and laid out double- and single-dug growing beds, into which I subsequently planted over-wintering compost crops.

En route to Willits, we picked up interpreter Darina Drapkin in the East Bay. She interpreted as splendidly as ever, helping Oleg at the workshop to assimilate the nuances of GB as presented by John Jeavons, Carol Cox, and apprentices Dan and Margo Royer-Miller. (See www.grow-biointensive.org for GB basics!)



Together we also helped Oleg bond with many of the workshop participants, including one hailing from as far away as Sri Lanka. Following the workshop, we enjoyed a day of wonderful tours organized by our excellent hosts Dave and Jenny Watts of Sanhedrin Nursery (www.sanhedrin-nursery.com):

continued on p. 6

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As described on page 2 of this newsletter, my move southward took place in October 2007, and I now own and inhabit Mulberry Haven, a small orchard in the Ojai Valley! My life has changed in some ways. I live closer to nature, with diverse fruit trees surrounding me at close range and a riverbed, nature conservancy, and national forest, populated by bears, cougars, and coyotes just beyond. My neighbors are more diverse: instead of computer programmers, devotees of the raw food diet live here on the property, and rather than Silicon Valley engineers, my neighbors on Oso Road include a fencebuilder, a retired policeman, a dentist, and a handyman. Orange groves, spiritual centers, art galleries, and healers abound not far off, instead of a world-renowned university.

So, what hasn't changed? I still have renters, but rather than sharing a roof, I share the property with several others, some paying their rent in labor; others in cash. I still attend the nearest Episcopal church, but now I sing in the choir and serve with the Earth Stewards committee. And I still work



continued on page 7

BfR GRANTWRITING UNDERWAY FOR 2009 .

After a long hiatus, we are back to writing letters of inquiry to foundations for funding for workshops, research projects, and publications in Eurasia. Two have been drafted, one of which has been submitted with the help of GB growers Erin and Doug Wood to a Virginia foundation, for funding for a workshop the NGO VIOLA could conduct. We hope that this workshop can be held in Bryansk as early as spring 2009. Ukrainian and Russian teachers will be invited to attend, including from: (a) the nine Ukrainian and Russian Chernobyl Centers supported by Friends of Chernobyl Centers-U.S. (FOCCUS), (b) agriculture colleges in the Russian Federation that are part of the Educational Methods Center (EMC) network, the networks of Ukrainian Open World (Library of Congress program) participants with whom we are acquainted, and (c) also, possibly, from Baku, Azerbaijan, where Irada Hasanova wants to establish a mini-farming center. Inna Gavriluk, a FOCCUS associate in Kiev, will help us communicate with

continued on p. 5

What's Inside:

- Our first GB presentation in the Ojai Valley 2
- The year at Mulberry Haven 2
- Irina Kim's workshop in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan . . . 3
- VIOLA's Earthworm Experiment 3
- The Food Growing Project in Africa 5
- Culture/Eco-Ag Tour of Russia & Ukraine '07 . . . 6
- How You Can Help 7
- Calendar of Upcoming Events 8

OJAI VALLEY GREEN COALITION'S FOOD & AG COMMITTEE LEARNS ABOUT BIOINTENSIVE

by Dale Hodges and Carol Vesecky

On Sunday, November 23, as part of a broad program to "green" Ojai Valley (see www.ojavalleygreencoalition.org), we offered a guided tour of the orchard at Mulberry Haven, then a brief introduction to GROW BIOINTENSIVE Sustainable Mini-Farming (GB), followed by a potluck meal. Food & Ag Committee members, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church parishioners, and others attended.

The orchard tour was led by Kody Ryan, resident fruit expert, and his farming partner Gerald Ryan. They described



varieties, origins, fruit characteristics, and other details of more than 20 varieties of fruit trees that grow here.

Moving on, Carol introduced Dale Hodges, a longtime organic farmer and activist who recently completed a 3-Day Workshop in GB at Ecology Action's headquarters in Willits, CA (see www.growbiointensive.org for details). Dale stated that the essence of Biointensive work is the soil, quoting Carol Cox, John Jeavons' co-presenter at the workshop: "We grow soil, not plants." Ecology Action has designed a system to ensure a productive and sustainable garden. Given the proper attention, a person can provide his or her own needs, and those of the garden, in minutes each day (after perhaps six years of practice).

The eight essentials of GB can be found in the Bountiful Gardens catalog available from www.bountifulgardens.org. They are, in Dale's words:

- Double-dug beds to encourage aeration, root penetration, and moisture management
- Compost, which maintains and soil vigor, to provide high yields over time. Kitchen waste and other nitrogenous

BfR'S MOVE TO "SHANGRI-LA" by Carol Vesecky

As mentioned in the Director's Message, a major move has taken us southward, from scholarly Palo Alto to the idyllic Ojai Valley. Let me explain how this came about, stepwise: 1 My daughter Holly Vesecky, a floral designer in Los Angeles, was searching for a place where she would be able to grow organic flowers for her work. 2 Surfing the 'net, she discovered a small mulberry and fruit orchard with livable dwellings for owners, renters, and temporary fruit pickers in Ojai Valley that was being offered for sale on craigslist.com, and wrote suggesting we acquire the place and "farm it together!" 3 Holly drove north and I drove south to meet in Ojai, east of Santa Barbara and Ventura, then back out west together to the property which is in Ventura County, just beyond Meiners Oaks. It is an enchanting place, and that very evening we agreed that we should acquire it for my principal and her getaway abodes.

Easier said than done, however! After making the tour of Russia and Ukraine in July, and the Wisconsin High School

materials, high-carbon trimmings, and indigenous soil, when mixed properly and kept moist, will compost to maintain the biological cycles over time.

- Intensive Planting: in measured and calculated terms enables leaves to touch at maturity, providing the geometrics required for most efficient yields. A microclimate is created which protects soil microbes and moisture while preventing weeds.
- Companion Planting: Research has shown that some plants grown better near certain others and some can attract beneficial insects or repel pests or provide shade.
- Carbon Farming: Planting 60% of the area in dual-purpose seed and grain products to provide soil carbonaceous material via compost, plus edible grains.
- Calorie Farming: Growing root crops in 30% of the beds will provide much of your family's caloric needs. Potato, burdock, garlic, and parsnips will help.
- Open Pollinated Seeds: These seeds have been selected over millennia for their beneficial characteristics. These are *not* the hybrid seeds commonly available. Open pollinators preserve genetic diversity and are a linchpin of sustainable farming. .
- Whole Garden Method: Consideration for every component of the GB method is critical. *The sum is much greater than the parts!*

Dale continues to muse: If using 75% fewer capital dollars on food, double-digging garden beds as meditation or taking 50 years to "grow" as much topsoil as Mother Earth does in 3000 years, sounds like fun, you're in good company. People came from around the world to listen as John Jeavons described his solutions for Peak Oil, Peak Water, and Peak People, one more time. In the end, "we grow soil not plants" according to Carol Cox. According to me, "If you teach people to grow lettuce, you feed them a salad. If you teach people to grow soil, you feed generations!" ♦

reunion trip in August, I had to sell my Palo Alto home of 30 years. But it all transpired in due course, and by early October I had moved to Ojai. Fortunately I had help from friends including Sandy Harris (my realtor) and Holly, who drove the Budget truck while I drove my car to my new home, which we soon renamed "Mulberry Haven."

I'm fortunate to have Kody Ryan, our resident orchardist, living here in exchange for his expertise. Having assisted former owner Gordon Kennedy for five years, Kody understands the water, fertility, pruning, and harvesting requirements of the mulberry, carob, citrus, stone fruit, and other trees that thrive here. Kody worked every morning from December to February with another resident, Eugene McEnnis, to prune all the trees thoroughly.

In February, Max Reed, our neighbor, expressed interest in having one of the mulberry trees transplanted to his property. He arrived with a backhoe, and successfully dug up and transplanted a mature, 30-year-old tree. Thus, we confirmed what *cont'd on page 6*

Our Eurasian Partners Write

IRINA KIM ON USES OF MULBERRIES

In response to news that I was having trouble sleeping, Irina wrote: Carol, how is your health? ... Our health is the most important thing! Your move, Holly's wedding, and work have obviously affected your health! Take care of yourself! I know how one feels when one is not well, especially in these last two years. Now I'm also trying to take better care of myself.

As regards your photos, they turned out rather well, so that I could see the individual large, black mulberries. Incidentally, they are very healthy. It's possible to make juice, jam, and preserves, and of course they are pleasant to eat in their fresh form, which is the healthiest way.

Their juice is a very strong dye, completely natural. The mulberry leaves are fodder for the mulberry silkworm. The wood is dense and good furniture and other objects can be made from it. Of course, it's not easy to gather the berries. We gather berries for drying; we do it this way: we spread fabric under the tree, then shake the branches, and the berries fall on the fabric. Then they're dried in the shade so their color and quality will not be lost. Thank you and your friends again.

IRINA'S REPORT ON THE BISHKEK WORKSHOP

My plans were to be at the Jalalabad State University in June, presenting a workshop for the BIOM Youth Ecological Movement in the capital city of Bishkek [Kyrgyzstan] in August. But at short notice some other activities were planned at Jalalabad University; therefore I decided to organize the seminar in Bishkek for June, when BIOM was prepared to host me.

I became acquainted with the colleagues from BIOM in May 2008 at an ecological seminar in Tashkent. We thereafter corresponded about ecological programs involving forest management and, of course, "Sustainable Organic Biointensive Mini-farming." The seminar was planned for August. But since, as I've mentioned, the seminar did not take place as planned at Jalalabad University, I decided to hold it in Bishkek, where they are quite interested in the Biointensive method.

Dmitriy Betoshkin, the deputy chairman

of BIOM, is an active, well-informed man, aged 25. He was instrumental in organizing our seminar, flying in and out for the event between June 11 and June 15.

continued on page 4



VIOLA EXPERIMENT TESTING EARTHWORMS' CAPACITY TO TAKE UP CESIUM-137

In Summer 2008, Dr. Ludmila Zhirina and Dr. Igor Prokofiev of the NGO VIOLA conducted an experiment in Klinty in the Chernobyl radiation zone of Bryansk oblast, testing the capacity of earthworms to take up Cesium-137. Collaboration and support came from David Buckley, who originally visited Bryansk in 2005 with BfR, and who presented VIOLA's report at a scientific conference in Houston in Sept. 2008. Here follows the report, as translated and abridged by Michael Chusid, BfR volunteer. -cbv

The area where this experiment was conducted is contaminated with radioactivity from the accident at the Chernobyl Atomic Power Plant in 1986. Unfortunately, people continue to inhabit this region. These are economically depressed areas, requiring governmental assistance. Local residents cannot afford to purchase uncontaminated food. Therefore, many continue to farm and grow vegetables for subsistence in contaminated soils.

Numerous studies have shown that the most dangerous and persistent contaminants are two radionuclides: Cesium-137 and Strontium-90, which were scattered over parts of the territories of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia as a result of the explosion and fire at the Chernobyl Atomic Power Plant. They are capable of migrating through food chains into ecological systems and accumulate in the human body, creating an internal source of radioactive radiation. This is the reason for the high mortality and disease rates among the residents living in the contaminated lands. Consumption of local food products (vegetables, bread, meat, and dairy) is the essential route through which the human body is contaminated by radionuclides.

Many methods of decreasing the intensity of absorption of Cs-137 and Sr-90 from the soil into plants have been discovered, but are expensive and can endanger human health. Therefore, the study of biological methods for purifying the soil and preventing the penetration of plants by radionuclides is important to a great many people living in the contaminated lands.

An important component of the soil community, earthworms can alter living quarters for themselves, as well as for other soil organisms. Thus, they are often called "engineers of the soil." Earthworms:

- transport organic and inorganic soil material in horizontal and vertical directions;
- help create the organic content of the soil;
- churn up the soil while building new passageways for themselves, rendering the soil more porous;
- increase the amount of nutrient mineral substances in a form palatable to plants;
- change the composition of the microbe community and even improve its health; and
- alter soil acidity, bringing it closer to neutral values.

continued on page 4

Earthworm Experiment, cont. from p. 3

Undoubtedly, this helps create beneficial conditions for the growth and development of plants. And since earthworms affect the soil significantly, they can have an influence on the migration of radionuclides and their accumulation in plants. Investigations carried out by scientists in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia indicate that these processes largely depend on the physico-chemical qualities of the soil. Therefore, the ecology of earthworms in radioactively contaminated zones needs to be studied closely with an eye to the goals of bioremediation.



The goal of our study is to examine the Cs-137 “soil-plant” migration and the influence of earthworm activity on this process. [Please write for the full report, sent electronically, including *Methods, Figures, Tables, Results, and Discussion*, to: Carol Vesecky <cvesecky@igc.org> or David Buckley <buckleyengr@hotmail.com>. -cbv]

Conclusions

1. Earthworms have an influence on Cs-137 radionuclide migration in the “soil-plant” uptake system. For some plants this migration is weakened, while for others the process of radionuclide accumulation intensifies. Therefore, this phenomenon deserves further study.
2. Earthworms can accumulate Cs-137 radionuclides in their bodies, which makes them useful in bioremediation.
3. Earthworm burrowing activity facilitates dispersal of Cs-137 radionuclides throughout the soil, lowering the likelihood of contact of radionuclides with plant roots.
4. Bioremediation using worms and plants should consist of the following stages:
 - i. Populating a plot with earthworms taken from uncontaminated locations. The species should be typical for the new locale. It is desirable to employ several species of earthworms with differing ecological characteristics. The number of earthworms per square meter should be no less than 500. Compost is an indispensable amendment to maintain diet and reproductive capacity.
 - ii. Phytoremediation of a contaminated plot using *Brassica oleracea var. capitata* should be done after earthworms have been introduced to the plot. At the end of the growing season, the plants should be removed from the plot with their roots and buried.
 - iii. Elimination of the maximum possible quantity of earthworms, as they have accumulated radionuclides. They should be captured with various traps and bait. (It is also possible to use an electrical method to collect earthworms.) ♣

Our colleague in Bryansk, Dr. Ludmila Zhirina, wrote us this fall more than once about her dear father's grave illness and her need to be by his side. Last week we learned the sad news that he passed away. We send the family BfR's condolences and our small memorial to him:

In Loving Memory
Stanislav Vasil'evich Fomin
Among the first officials in Bryansk to write
to President Gorbachev about the significance
of the Chernobyl radiation in 1986
One of the first Biointensive gardeners
in Bryansk
15 April 1928 – 1 December 2008

Irina Kim's Bishkek workshop, continued from page 3

The BIOM Organization: The BIOM Youth Ecological Movement, founded in 1993, is a nonprofit organization that brings together young volunteer specialists, staff scientists, and political leaders who take part in ecological decision-making in the Kirghiz Republic.

The mission of BIOM is to achieve positive change in the environment and in people's lives by involving large groups in the realization of the ideas of “sustainable development and preservation of natural ecosystems.”

“As BIOM, our position is: We, as citizens of the XXIst C., recognize the reality of the ecological crisis and are prepared to take active part in achieving harmonic interaction between man and nature.

“We, as young scholars, are convinced that the development of civilization and of all life on the planet is based on natural ecosystems. We recognize that sustainable development is possible only if these principles of an ecosystemic approach are realized....”

Taking part in the seminar were teachers, staff scientists, biologists, zoologists, NGO representatives, retirees, and members of social groups. During the practical exercises, they were attentive and made great efforts. All of the seminar participants expressed the view that much practice was called for in creating a sustainable Biointensive garden.

Participants received the following articles and booklets: “Cultivating Our Garden,” *The Sustainable Vegetable Garden*, the Ecology Action brochure translated into Russian, *A Study of Soil* by Dr. Henry D. Foth, and others.

The seminar participants heard full-length lectures on “Soil,” “Plant,” “Insects,” and “The Person” [The Role of the Gardener -ed.]. Thus, the participants themselves become at the same time subjects of discussion.

The seminar participants agreed unanimously that it is essential to continue seminars on “organic Biointensive mini-farms” and to implement the Biointensive method in their region. ♣

YES, WE CAN!

by Suzanne Freddie

Before I spoke on the phone with the Food Growing Project (FGP), I imagined that FGP traveled all over the globe to network, gather information and educate people about sustainable, organic food-growing. FGP identifies, develops and organizes Biointensive agriculture (BIA) materials and acts as a catalyst for BIA workshops. (BIA incorporates the latest in sustainable, organic mini-farming methods.) So I was surprised to learn that the work is done from a modest apartment in Palo Alto, CA, networking and researching using only a computer and phone. This is an example of how a little technology along with focus, passion and an open and inquiring mind can go a long way. For me, that's inspiring because maybe we ordinary humans can have an impact; we don't necessarily have to be rich and famous or experts.

John Jeavons, author of *How to Grow More Vegetables*, originally inspired and continues to support the FGP project. Jeavons has warned that we're headed for serious trouble because of dwindling resources such as arable soil and clean water, coupled with rising human population. This isn't just about growing gardens; it's also about building community, and in the process perhaps helping to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Working with Earth's natural resources in a respectful, intelligent, harmonious way, we can ensure environmental sustainability.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai of Kenya comes to mind. The simple act of planting trees serves as a way not only of healing the land and conserving water but also of building community and self esteem among community members. These projects could lead to a transformation of world peace and wealth, because people will begin to realize that their survival in these times depends on cooperation rather than on competition. Such a change also depends upon the realization that we're all connected: the mineral, plant, animal and human kingdoms.

The FGP project is aimed towards people all over the world who depend on their own manual labor in food cultivation to feed themselves and their families and who are not aware of the latest BIA methods. The current goal

is to enlist the aid of Scout, 4-H/4-K and Young Farmers clubs, and other youth organizations worldwide. The idea is to train the young people in the latest BIA methods so that they can travel to outlying communities in their countries, to teach through demonstrations and hands-on activities.

The first BIA workshop for training Scouts coordinated by FGP was with the National Scout Association of Guinea in West Africa. FGP has grown to the point where it has attracted graduates of the BIA program at Manor House Agricultural Center (MHAC) in Kitale, Kenya. Current activities include four graduates living in the Kitale area who are planning to include Scouts and 4-K members in their school and farmer training programs, so that the young people can multiply efforts of spreading the BIA method. Part of the FGP plan is to develop larger youth training sites into permanent training, research and demonstration centers. Time, talent, materials and funds are donated and contributions are welcomed.

So what has all this to do with us in the western world? Don't we have everything here – large food store chains where we can shop at our convenience and find just about everything? But then again, lots of this food is contaminated with pesticides and herbicides and is not cheap, if one considers its true costs. This food lacks proper nutrients because it's been harvested in factory farms that contaminate the environment and deplete the soil of minerals and nutrients. And we, the consumers, are at the mercy of the huge corporations.

Perhaps it's time to imagine a world without factory farms and not ruled by the corporate food industry, including companies like Monsanto. Perhaps it's time to envision that we take back control over the food we eat, air we breathe and water we drink. And like the Scouts in Africa, channel the energy and creativity of our youth into learning about sustainable organic farming and teaching communities rather than let this consumer culture in the west feed off of that precious, youthful resource.

We can start in our own communities: Learn from the FGP and the Scouts in Africa and support farmers' markets. Learn from those who are turning their lawns into gardens and create our own community gardens. Pool our resources; do research. Yes, we can! ♣

Grantwriting, continued from page 1 the Chernobyl Center directors to find seminar participants.

During our Culture/Eco-Ag Tour in 2007, a meeting was held in Novo-Sin'kovo with two EMC administrators: new



Executive Director Vladyslav Ivanovich Antiushin and Evgeny Petrovich Shmelev (seen with his blackcurrants), Director of the EMC's Foreign Methods lab. They agreed to collaborate in grantwriting, initially to the Ford Foundation-Moscow.

Evgeny has promised to work with me in writing the letter of inquiry and subsequent grant proposal.

The major activity to be supported under a grant of at least \$20,000 would be an Ecology Action-approved GROW BIOINTENSIVE workshop presented by Steve Moore in January, 2010 in Novo-Sin'kovo. Fifty Russian, Ukrainian, and Central Asian university and high school agriculture and biology teachers from the various groups named on page 1 will be invited to participate..

Beyond the two workshops mentioned, we will also ask for funding for the translations in our wish list on page 7, hoping to get as many as possible prepared in time to distribute at the workshops. We're also hoping to fund experiments testing the GROW BIOINTENSIVE method in the areas where workshops are being given. ♣

RUSSIA-UKRAINE ECO-AG TOUR, JULY 2007

We had planned on a group of eight or more to finance a Biointensive seminar. But in the end, only four of us set out on the trip: Joe Jedeikin (an attorney from San Francisco), Tamara Kowalski and Shoshane Billik (both long-time BfR volunteers), and myself. With such a small group the trip was not stressful, and the weather and our Russian and Ukrainian hosts cooperated beautifully to ensure enjoyable visits with our partners as well as rich cultural/sightseeing experiences.

We were joined by two American academics, Melissa Crawford and Danielle Berman, as well as by BfR colleague Vladimir Loginov, for excursions to Abramtsevo, Sergiev Posad, and Rostov the Great in the Golden Ring area north of Moscow. Several of our colleagues and their family and friends from Viola in Bryansk joined us to travel to Smolensk and Talashkino. And in Kiev we met with ecologists, some of whom I had met in the past, as well as new contacts, thus improving our prospects for Biointensive seminars in Ukraine in the future!

We were pleased to be hosted again by our longtime friends Dr. Ludmila Zhirina and Dr. Igor Prokofiev. They enabled us to revisit the schools in Bryansk and Domashevo where we had been hosted during the 2005 ecotour – our Viola's Oleg Zavarzin and Natalya Karyagina, also Biointensive teachers, being the school principals.

We also paid another visit to the impressive arboretum in Bryansk, in support of which the 2005 ecotourist group had previously sent a letter urging that the trees be maintained for future generations and protected from commercial development. If you are interested in reading more on the trip in English, please visit our website <http://biointensiveforrussia.igc.org> for a detailed travelogue by Joe Jedeikin. (His photos are no longer on the 'net, so you'll have to catch me if you'd like to see them on my MacBook in iPhoto!).♦

BfR's Move, continued from page 2 Gordon had repeatedly maintained: that the mulberry is simply an Asiatic weed tree, and that transplanting it poses no particular problems. He said that mulberries can survive even in poor soil, and that it should be possible to sell them to orchard owners who would enjoy their delicious berries. This is a welcome prospect, since the orchard is now overcrowded, and the remaining trees will have higher yields if more light and soil is available to them.

I began selling our fruit soon after my arrival at Mulberry Haven. Gordon and Kody had picked and left me a goodly amount of carob pods (*Certonia siliqua*), of which I sold three bags to friends and an organic food store.

The pomegranates and persimmons ripened during October and November. We picked enough pomegranates to satisfy Holly's needs (she has a passion for their seeds), and packed up two boxes for friends in Los Angeles and Palo Alto. Very few persimmons hung on the trees in 2007, but this year's harvest was bountiful and we sold Fuyus to several customers including our nearby

Oleg Zavarzin's workshop visit, continued from page 1

- Jason Bradford's home- and school-based sustainable food-growing and canning models in Willits (see http://globalpublicmedia.com/people/jason_bradford and www.metroactive.com/papers/sonoma/08.10.05/willits-0532.html for Jason's amazing story),
- the Willits High School with Principal Gordon Aslund, including a session with a Russian-born student interpreting for the Ecology class, and
- the lovely, secluded Emandal "Farm on a River" where Environmental Education and Family camps are held, and cabins are available for rentals to private parties.

Oleg and I also spent an extra day at Ecology Action receiving a special consultation for Oleg on soils with John Jeavons, recordkeeping with Carol Cox, and garden research from Dan and Margo Royer-Miller. John encouraged Oleg to commit to training three more teachers in the Bryansk *oblast'* to teach at the basic level at which he himself is teaching, in the next two years.

En route back to Ojai, we stayed in Palo Alto for several days as guests of Elisabeth Seaman. Our activities included Oleg sharing his Biointensive experience in the Bryansk *oblast'* (certain Biointensive techniques have been shown to diminish the radiation in vegetables grown there) and his knowledge of global biodiversity as affected by climate change with my Russian Language & Culture group, the Midtown Growing Circle, and St. Mark's Environment Commission groups. We visited Hidden Villa (www.hiddenvilla.org) with Ninel and Kolya Kushchenko, and the Agroecology Program at UC Santa Cruz (<http://casfs.ucsc.edu>) with Mark and Romie Georgia. A highlight was our afternoon at the Green Festival (www.greenfestivals.org) in San Francisco and reunion dinner in Chinatown with Joe Jedeikin and Tamara Kowalski. (Both had been hosted by Oleg at his school in Bryansk during our July 2007 ecotour.)

Rounding out Oleg's sojourn, we visited the La Brea tar pits and Page Museum, guided by my future son-in-law Josh Beckman, an exhibit designer at L.A.'s Natural History Museum. We heard later from Ludmila Zhirina that Oleg spent three hours reporting and showing his photos to Viola members, back in Bryansk. The visit was a big success not only for the future of BfR, but also for the geography and biology programs that Oleg directs. Oleg shared that he is slated to move on to become director of the biology teaching program for the entire Bryansk *oblast'* (2 million population), so the future of GROW BIOINTENSIVE trainings there appears bright! ♦

market,"The Farmer and the Cook."

In December the lime fruits ripened on our one Bearss lime tree. The avocados followed in January (we have six trees – Bacon, Mexicole, and Hass), along with the pomelos (three trees), this being a large citrus fruit, an ancestor of the grapefruit. The blood oranges (six trees), which are quite popular, were ready to be picked in February and March. One encounters them less (continued on p. 8)

For many years in the past in Palo Alto, Bio-intensive for Russia held mini-fundraisers locally on sustainable growing and lifestyles topics. Now we plan to organize GROW BIO-INTENSIVE and other workshops in the Ojai Valley. If you live locally and you're not already on our email or postcard announcement lists, be sure to write <cvesecky@igc.org> or call to sign up!

Director's message, cont'd from page 1
to disseminate GROW BIOINTENSIVE (GB) techniques in Eurasia — as well as here in Ojai Valley, more than I did back in Palo Alto (due to the current economic crisis and the fact that we have no Common Ground Center here!).

Despite not having time to send out a fundraising letter in the spring, we managed to support minimally, with modest grants, Irina Kim's first GB workshop in Bishkek and a second workshop in Jalalabad, Kyrgyzstan. In Bryansk, Russia we funded a potato experiment by the NGO Viola. Preparation work for workshops, publications, and experiments had to be postponed due to the move and to our holding Holly's wedding here in May (!!! - see www.flickr.com/photos/10383100@N00/, sorry they're in reverse chronological order!). But we are now back to spending several hours each day on correspondence, this newsletter, event planning, and grant proposal development.

While resuming my correspondence with friends in Eurasia in August, it was distressing to watch the unfolding events - a war! - between Georgia and Russia. Reading articles and correspondence,

we understood that fault could be laid at the doors of both parties. I followed the events especially closely as my nephew was in Tbilisi at the outbreak of hostilities. (He travels as a Winrock International consultant, advising villagers on how to construct small wood stoves which are very fuel-efficient.) Fortunately, Mark was successfully evacuated to Armenia and then to his home in Ames, Iowa.

I then corresponded with my friend Anya Kucharev, who was intensively involved in the 1980s and 1990s in the work of Esalen Institute, facilitating meetings between Soviet and American intellectuals. We agreed that it is necessary to continue our consensus-building work, but regret that it will never be completed. Anya compared our task with that of Sisyphus, who was fated to push a boulder uphill, only to have it roll back down to the bottom for eternity, and I agreed with her analogy.

Of course, our tasks are much more pleasant than that of Sisyphus - planning meetings and seminars on peaceful topics with our Eurasian partners. I have my mini-farming exchange work, while Anya has her project of compiling an archive of materials on the early years of citizen diplomacy. May we find in ourselves the strength to continue! ♦

How You Can Help!

Purchase a book! We now have copies of the Russian editions of *How to Grow More Vegetables* and *The Sustainable Vegetable Garden* here at BfR for sale at \$20 and \$12 respectively, plus postage. Write Carol for details. See www.bountifulgardens.org for GB books in English and other languages.

Contribute financially to help sponsor:

- a workshop to be presented by the NGO VIOLA's **Igor Prokofiev, Ludmila Zhirina, Oleg Zavarzin, Natasha Karagina, and/or Ludmila Kuzenkova** to various groups in Bryansk: \$2000 - \$5000
- workshop tours by **Irina Kim** in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan: \$1000-\$2000 per tour
- editing and printing of Michael Chusid's new translation of Ecology Action's *Test Your Soil With Plants* by John Beeby: \$3,000
- editing and printing of the **GROW BIOINTENSIVE Basic-Level Training Manual**: \$800 or more
- printing and paper to publish *Ekologicheskii Ogorod* (Russian translation of *The Sustainable Vegetable Garden*): \$4000 will pay for 5000 copies, smaller amounts for smaller editions

Network with foundations and major donors to help us find funding for programs to include one, some, or all of the above activities (write or call Carol to discuss priorities)

Volunteer your time:

- hosting, organizing, and/or publicizing events
- co-developing a future Eco-Ag tour to the region of your interest: the Russian Far East? Siberia? Central Asia? Help research tourist attractions: nature, celebrations, concerts, museums and galleries, local sights, travel costs

OUR SUPPORTERS HAVE BEEN GENEROUS!

TALLY FOR DECEMBER 2005 TO DECEMBER 2008:

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

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

*May receive the 2nd Russian or 7th English edition of **How to Grow More Vegetables** (Check box)

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Ojai, CA 93023-9514

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

Upcoming Events:

One-Day GB Workshop and Orchard Tour at Mulberry Haven, Winter 2009: do sign up for BfR's email announcements

Saturday a.m. gardening classes at Common Ground Center in Palo Alto: see www.commongroundinpaloalto.org

KITKA and KEDRY perform Slavic music and dance, Campbell Hall, Stanford; host Izaly Zemtsovsky, Jan. 21, 2009, 8 pm,

Eco-Farm Conference, Asilomar, Pacific Grove, CA, Jan. 21-24, 2009, see www.eco-farm.org (BfR will have a table in the Exhibitor Tent!)

The Russian Festival, 2450 Sutter Street, SF, Feb. 20, 21 and 22, see russiancentersf.com (we'll have a table)

GB Sustainable Mini-Farming Workshop, Willits, CA, Feb. 27-Mar 1, see www.growbiointensive.org for details

ECOLOGISTS PROTEST OLYMPIC CONSTRUCTION IN NORTH CAUCASUS



BfR's associate Vladimir Loginov is a longtime active member of the Northern Caucasus Environmental Watch and participates in its monitoring activities. The Watch has influenced some state decisions reversing a laissez-faire attitude toward development of pristine natural areas in preparation for the prospective 2014 Winter Olympics.

But the struggle continues. He reported recently that in November, 2008 a road was being illegally built, leading to the biathlon complex, along the Mzymta River valley. The site of the biathlon complex and its approach were chosen



by the Olymstroi Company in violation of a decision of UNESCO's World Heritage committee, which recommended that Russia not allow construction on the Grushev Ridge, adjacent to the Western Caucasus World Nature Heritage Park. ♣

(BfR's Move, continued from p. 6) frequently here in America than in Europe, including in Sicily, where they are grown extensively.

At about the time of Holly's wedding in May, the "Oscar" mulberries, of which we have 36 trees, began to ripen. Normally, a team of pickers is needed to gather all the berries. Gordon Kennedy, the former owner, had converted a barn to house the young pickers. Sometimes up to six were needed to gather the berries in the month of June in previous years. This year we had just four pickers living here, gathering berries for 2-3 hours each weekday morning.

But this year's crop was significantly smaller, perhaps due to the pruning of many branches over the winter, perhaps for other reasons. Nonetheless, there was much produce to sell to local stores, families, and restaurants. The mulberries are extraordinary – there are those who regard them as absolutely the most delicious berry. In my view, raspberries are a close second, but the taste of the mulberry is not as pungent, so one can eat more of them over a shorter period of time!

We have various varieties of plums (six trees), of which we picked and sold the prune plum in August, as well as the delicious Black Mission fig. We won't be able to get rich and bountifully support BfR through the sale of fruit – the profits after water and other expenses will be marginal. But I am happy that Holly and I are able to maintain an organic farm for the future, and, of course, it is delightful to live here! The summer temperatures can be hot, but generally it is pleasant, the people around here are friendly and interesting, and there are theater, music, and other festivals. The surrounding mountains are lovely, and the ocean is not far. Please get in touch if you'd like to visit! ♣

To get in touch, contact: Carol Vesecky, Director
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For info, visit: <http://biointensiveforrussia.igc.org>
or (in Russian) <http://www.biointensive.newmail.ru>

Biointensive for Russia is a non-profit project fiscally supported by Ecology Action, a California 501(c)(3) organization. Its mission is to share information between the US and Eurasia on environmentally sound lifestyles, including GROW BIOINTENSIVE Sustainable Mini-Farming. Carol Vesecky is Director and newsletter editor; our Advisory Board members are David Buckley, Sylvia Ehrhardt, Anya Kucharev, Larry Symonds, and Erin & Doug Wood. Our webmasters are Berta Pires, Tamara Kowalski, and Shoshana Billik. The mailing of this issue of the *Garden Companion* was made possible by member donations. Contributors, translators, and proofreaders include Suzanne Freddie, Michael Chusid, Dale Hodges, Gillian Dale, and Clare Dune. Do visit our Web site or write to Carol for more info!

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