



# GREEN REVOLUTION

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## Sustainable Agriculture and Tax Policy By Artie Yeatman

Twenty years ago, Wes Jackson, a world renowned farmer, plant geneticist, and teacher, issued a call for a revolution in agriculture. He said the number one environmental problem, aside from nuclear war, is agriculture. Why? Till agriculture destroys the water-holding capacity of the soil and sends it seaward. Studies done in the corn belt states show that, on average, with a 2" soil loss, yield is reduced 15%, with a 6" soil loss, yield is reduced 30%, and with a 12" soil loss, yield is reduced 75%. The nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), & potassium (K) lost in soil erosion can be replaced, at considerable cost, but many of the trace elements will be severely lacking.

The story is as old as civilization. Two thousand years before Christ, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers of Mesopotamia watered an area so rich that early biblical scholars believed that somewhere in this area was the Garden of Eden. The area today is a desert of shifting sand. China's Yellow River is called yellow for good reason. Though its basin once supported countless rich and prosperous people, at flood stage now, soil accounts for 50%, by weight, of the rivers flow.

In this country we suffer in part from a history of early abundance and in part from the legacy we brought from western and northern Europe, where rains were so light that soil runoff was scarcely a problem. When our ancestors landed on the virgin woodlands and prairies of our young continent, they encountered thunderstorms and quick drenchings and then went on to plant such soil-exposing crops as corn, cotton, and tobacco. The age of fossil fuel has allowed erosion to accelerate at an even faster pace.

Our current agricultural system, which features monoculture annuals, is nearly opposite to the original prairie or forest which features mixtures of perennials. We are coasting on the sunlight trapped by florals long extinct. We pump it, process it, transport it over the countryside as chemicals, and inject it into our wasting fields as chemotherapy. The fields respond with great

vigor and we feel good to be feeding billions of people. However, although nature is very forgiving, we are surely discounting the future.

Monoculture means that botanical and microbial diversity, both in and above the soil, is absent. This invites epidemics of pathogens or epidemic grazing by insect populations which can spend most of their energy reproducing, eating and growing. Insects are better controlled if they are forced to spend a good portion of their energy buzzing and hunting among a mixture of many species for the plants they evolved to eat.

I think it is possible to return to a system that is self-renewing like the forest and the prairie were, and yet be capable of supporting the current human population. We have the opportunity to develop a truly sustainable agriculture based on mixtures of perennials. This would be an agriculture in which soil erosion is so small that it is detectable only by the most sophisticated equipment, an agriculture that is chemical-free or nearly so, and certainly an agriculture that is scarcely demanding of fossil fuel. Public awareness of the need to change our direction is increasing as more and more of our drinking water becomes polluted from chemical fertilizers. Demand for certified organic produce increases steadily every year. The National Academy of Sciences has recommended that children eat organic produce because pesticide residues build up to dangerous levels in relation to body size. An increasing number of farmers are making the transition to more sustainable practices such as composting their animal manures for fertilizing their soils rather than spreading raw manure on their fields. Organic farmers also gain fertility from diverse crop rotations and fertilizer supplements of kelp, rock phosphate, fish emulsion and other products which do not harm the microbial life in the soil or pollute ground water or streams.

Organic farmers control weeds and insects by using timely planting, shallow tillage, cover crops, beneficial insects, resistant varieties, and diverse crop rotations that disrupt weed and insect cycles. To achieve a system of

agriculture capable of saving our life sustaining soil, what must we do? I believe we must change our direction from more and more centralization of larger and larger corporate farms, back toward smaller family farm units where the farmers are also the owners who want to take care of their soil so that their children and grandchildren will have land capable of providing a livelihood.

Extensive studies done by both Mason Gaffney and Gene Wunderlich, indicate that smaller farms are the more efficient producers, getting much more product value in relation to land value than large farms. So, how does tax policy relate to helping agriculture be more sustainable? Smaller farms are more efficient largely because they have been better stewards of their soil by growing a greater diversity of crops in smaller fields, thus reducing the ill effects of monoculture.

A tax policy of shifting taxes off of both farm income and farm building values, and on to farm land values and all natural resource values, would have several benefits to a sustainable agriculture:

1. The price of farm land would come down making land affordable for family size farmers. When the annual rental value of the land is not taken by the community who created it, but rather allowed to be claimed by the landowner, who did not create it, then the more land value the owner holds, the larger his unearned benefit is, and therefore the larger his advantage is over the small scale farmer.
2. Money currently invested in site costs would be available for new technologies and practices which could improve soil retention and quality.
3. It would eliminate tax loss farming. Income tax payers can now reduce their taxable income from other sources by deducting losses from farming.

A 1996 study in NY state found that farm losses exceeded farm income by about 10 million dollars a year. Nearly all of the households with over \$100,000. in non-farm income, showed farm losses, while only 20% of households with less than \$5,000. of non-farm income showed farm losses. These pseudo-farmers do not have any incentive to use soil enhancing practices. Many, near a metropolis, are simply holding the land in speculation, to sell it later for development purposes. By eliminating the income tax on farming, tax loss farming would be eliminated, and efficient, profitable operations would be encouraged. By shifting the property tax from a tax on both improvement values and land values to land values only, small, family size, farms, will benefit, since they have a higher ratio of improvements to land than do large corporate farms.

This tax shift principle applies to the relationship between agricultural land and non-agricultural land also. The genuine farmers in Queensland, Australia, for example, wanted to switch to a two-rate property tax, higher on land value and lower on improvement value, because they found they were paying more than their share of the municipal costs to make up for the token payments from the owners of vast, undeveloped acreages. Site-value rating, as they call it, has now become the dominant system in Australia: being used in 92% of their municipalized area. Their farmers pay less with LVT than with other tax systems.

As population increases and technology advances, our need to utilize our natural resources in an environmentally sustainable way becomes more and more critical. A 3,300 head confinement hog farm in northeast Iowa, which pollutes French Creek with its manure, is economically feasible because of federal crop subsidies making feed cheap and because of an absence of a tax on the taking of water. Charging for the use and abuse of our common heritage would render the operation uneconomical. The inefficiency of transporting food thousands of miles would become apparent if all the costs of the environmental devaluation involved were included in the price of the product. Collecting the land rent from the owner of every natural resource used in the production and transportation of a product to the ultimate consumer, would result in higher prices for products using fossil fuels to transport them long distances.

To summarize, I would draw the following conclusions:

1. Preserving our soils and the many life forms in it and over it, is essential to our continued human existence on this planet.
2. Large scale farms growing huge acreages of a single crop must use chemicals for pest control and fertilizers which threaten the soils biological life.
3. Small scale farms tend to grow a diversity of crops for local markets. Crop diversity provides for pest control from the balance of hosts and predators found in nature.
4. Land Value Taxation will reduce the incentive to concentrate farm ownership into larger units, and will lower land prices making it more affordable for entry-level farmers.
5. Land Value Taxation will, therefore, have the positive effect of making our agriculture more sustainable.

Dancing with Words: Notes on a Dalliance with Notions from Bill Mollison

By: Paul Phillips and Will Pierson

The School of Living's Board of Directors convenes once each quarter, with most of the weekend's all-to-limited time committed to meetings of the board and to committee meetings. After supper on Saturday, however, we reserve the evening as a time to step away from the intense and necessary discussions and decisions; turning instead towards to the educational imperative of the School. The Saturday evening program brings us back to learning, in the words of our by-laws,

"the application of all the arts and sciences to helping families finance, manage, produce and create what is necessary to live securely and beautifully."

SOL's education committee began looking into ideas and suggestions for an evening program to accompany our July meeting at Julian Woods, in all the usual places. The Julian Woods Community, the alternative network, traditional academia, our own SOL folks, all afford such a wealth of wonderful talent, ideas, topics and opportunities. Where to turn? How can we possibly settle on just one? A'int no way! .....Not!.....in the end, of course, we did settle on something. We settled on a playful little dalliance with the some of the ideas Bill Mollison's put forward, of which more follows anon.

This program, developed in-house by your very own SOL Education folks, grew out of several observations, on-going conversations and perceived desires. As program facilitators we sought to serve several motivations. We wanted an evening that shied away from the educational lecture or audience/presenter didactic model, relying more on participation, activity and

engagement. We also wanted something with a bit of a recreational flare, something that differed dramatically from the thought processes, interpersonal transactions, and gestalt in which we spent the majority of the weekend. We wanted something that involved concepts that were at one time both specific and broadly applicable. We wanted specific ideas that might find direct and immediate application. We wanted broadly applicable ideas so that could be more easily integrated across the diversity of our life experiences and styles.

Bill Mollison's work on the philosophy and practice of a culture conceived with a longer range view of permanence and sustainable relationships proved a rich source of such ideas. Mollison's writings express specific observations and experiences with durable relationships as they appear in most naturally occurring biological and physical systems. The same sense of enduring relationships can often be meaningfully extended beyond the context of the system in which they were originally observed. For "Dancing with Words" we selected six quotations from Introduction to Permaculture by Bill Mollison and Reny May Slay, Tagari Publications, c1991, second edition. By no means either a comprehensive, cohesive nor representative survey, these six were arbitrarily selected as providing reasonably succinct and complete ideas without being deeply rooted into a single context.

- 1) "Good design uses (*does not use*) incoming natural energies with those generated on site to ensure a complete energy cycle."
- 2) "By all means, use (*do not use*) what is available, use it for the best possible reasons, and develop alternative as fast as possible."
- 3) "Planning the design is (*is not*) the single most important thing we can do before putting anything in place. The overall

plan, if done thoroughly, will *(will not)* save time, energy and needless work."

- 4) Information is *(is not)* the most portable and flexible investment we can make in our lives; it represents the knowledge, experience, ideas and experimentation of thousands of people before us.
- 5) Productivity increases *(decreases)* at the boundaries between two ecologies (land/water; forest/grassland; estuary/ocean; crop/orchard) because the resources from both systems can be used *(can conflict)*.
- 6) So the importance of diversity is not *(is)* so much the number of elements in a system; rather it is *(is not)* the number of functional connections between these elements. It is not *(is)* the number of things, but *(not)* the number of ways in which things work.

We modelled the forum for the evening, after classic debate structure, with opposing teams arguing for and against each side, and a third team given an opportunity to pose questions to both the pro and con teams. The "opposing sides" debate created a forum very different from the consensus focused cooperative milieu of the day's meetings. While not suitable for the intense decision making required by the business of the board and the committees, the de-

bate suggested a good change if we could keep it in the realm of "no-consequences" play. By strictly timing the rotation of activities and sides, we moved away from the extended "complete-thought" development required during the day's meetings and decisions into a more spontaneous and rapid, first-thought, quick response, conversational pattern. In one departure from a classic debate we elected not to attempt judging winners and losers between the sides as we wanted this to be an opportunity to play with the ideas, and to have fun.

To begin the process of grounding and integrating these concepts into a more real practice, the facilitators planned for a more serious sharing after the debate and a break for dessert. Part of the debate style provokes looking at an idea from both, or many, sides, the one that seems to resonate with each individual experience and the counter-intuitive side. The latter half of the program, we hoped would promote a focus on the interpretation of Mollison's ideas that resonated most closely with our individual and personal experience. This, we hoped would enable each to envision ways that his ideas either did or could move us toward more "secure and beautiful" lives.

*fading out now to  
refocus into an  
early evening,  
sunset washed  
deck perched  
amongst the  
trees; and the  
story continues  
from one who  
was there:*

We divided ourselves into three groups, based on the colors we were wearing. We had the Red group, the Blue group, and the Brown group. Our instructions were to have fun with the exercise, so we didn't always stick to arguments that were entirely logical. But we certainly had a lot of fun with it -there was much laughter and joking and frivolity.

The Red group went first, arguing the PRO side of number 2: "By all means, use what is available, use it for the best possible reasons, and develop alternative as fast as possible." This group had a lot of fun with their preparation, and when it came time to present their argument, they merely stated (trying to control their laughter and be as serious as possible) that "it is impossible to use what is not available". The Blue team took the CON side of the debate, urging the Red team not to use up all of the available resources. The Brown group asked about using resources at a distance, especially when those at a distance might need more economic help than the locals.

The Blue team then argued the PRO side of number 4: "Information is the most portable and flexible investment we can make in our lives; it represents the knowledge, experience, ideas and experimentation of thousands of people before us." They said that information is part of each individual and therefore as portable as the individual is, and it's flexible because of the possible combinations of many pieces of information and the synthesis of many perspectives. The Brown team countered that information is not portable because data storage can take up warehouses and large computers and libraries full of paper. They also questioned the value of facts versus intuition. The Red team probably had some good questions, but we were having such a good time that I lost track of what they were.

The Brown team argued the PRO side of number 6: "So the importance of diversity is not so much the number of elements in a system; rather it is the number of functional connections between these elements. It is not the number of things, but the number of ways in which things work." They used a brilliant example of billiard balls and pointed out that you couldn't sink the 8 ball without a few collisions.

The Red group was right with them, though, objecting to the violence and pain created by all those collisions. The game is altogether too frustrating, Red said, since it mostly results in the stick missing the cue ball and scratching the felt. And then the Blues had to throw in their two cents, questioning the value judgment that increased numbers are better. They asked "why not keep it simple (stupid)", pointing out that more complexity is like mixing paint colors until you get the color of mud. That didn't phase the Brown team - they just said that mud is good for growing things.

After a break we regrouped for a more serious discussion of number 5 in terms of visioning about SOL's interactions with other groups. Number 5 is: "Productivity increases at the boundaries between two ecologies (land/water; forest/grassland; estuary/ocean; crop/orchard) because the resources from both systems can be used." Seeing boundaries between groups of people, we talked about cross pollination, networking, and teaching others and allowing ourselves to learn at the same time. We noticed that we are a pretty homogeneous group which is not that different from white middle class suburban yuppie folks, and we voiced our desire to interact with inner city blacks, Hispanics, blue collars, and others, giving and receiving. We talked about expanding boundaries, beyond the boundary of the SOL meeting times, to working between meetings via phone, email, and even on higher planes of consciousness (this might require a coordinator). We talked about being a network of communities, where affiliation with any one community gives you a tie to the greater network.

## Birthright Community Report

When last we published the goings on of Birthright community, the community was no more than a vision. In an analogy of birth, it had conceived but not yet born. As of this writing, we are in our toddlerhood. Beautiful in our potential but often going bump.

As many new communities do we are learning how to work together. Embracing the idea of anarchy we have tried to let things flow and see how they turn out. Some times they don't as in shared housework and cooking. We have worked out a cooking scheme and realize that something needs to be done about housework, but haven't quite figured out what.

Similarly we are excited about gardening. Arty did his beautiful productive garden that he has always done and has fed us well. Maureen planted an overflowing abundant garden then was unable to keep up with it due to the birth of Irie. Others hadn't planned to garden this first year as they tackled the process of transitioning to community. Hopefully this winter we can work out a plan to share the work as we have shared the bounty and next year our gardens will be a source of joy to all.

We know that an important part of community is heartsong and we are finding ways to share. We have begun full moon fire circles that have been great fun and a way to do outreach to the larger community. We have also discussed having new moon meditation circles but haven't made them a reality yet. Maybe putting the idea into writing here will bring them to manifestation.

We are also planning a Permaculture Design Course for this spring. School of Living's own Dawn Shiner of Dancing Green has agreed to guide us, excited by the potential of an entire community undertaking a design course together. We are confident that the intensity of a design course will bring us together helping us to see the patterns between each other and learn to work with them while we learn to see the patterns in the landscape and work with them in our relationship with the land.

-RGH

Dear Editor;

Enjoyed another fine issue of Green Revolution. Shiner's article about local scrip raises a question. She said scrip is backed by goods, Federal Reserve Notes by debt. Yet is that the real distinction? If scrip can be redeemed, then the redeemers owe new goods or services to the holders of the notes. Owing new output can fairly be called a debt.

What makes FRNs unique is they're backed by the force of the state (whether in debt or out); they're the only notes that the state accepts for payment of taxes. The problem is not that our central bank (the Fed) issues new notes. The problem is that it's the only one issuing new notes. Without competition from local banks (as in the last century) and cooperative currencies (scrip), the Fed gets away with buying the bonds of spendthrift states and charging a monopolistic interest rate. If scrip's could legally compete, and be used for paying one's land dues to one's community (assuming Borsodi's vision of zero taxation will be realized), then FRNs would become honest money or fall out of use, replaced by scrip.

SMITH, Jeffery J.  
Portland, Oregon, USA  
President, the Geonomy Society  
[www.progress.org/geonomy](http://www.progress.org/geonomy)  
Sharing nature's rent lets us prosper and conserve

Dear Jeff,

While owing new output could be called a debt, it is a debt between individuals. It is a debt with products and skills behind it, not just created on a ledger sheet and is not subject to usury. Therefore there is a distinction.

We also agree with you that the fact that the Fed is the only one issuing new notes is a problem, and that is why scrip is part of the solution. We hope that sometime in the future scrip could be used to pay taxes, just as we hope that we will be paying our land rent, not income tax, and receiving our share of the citizens dividend. But the beauty of scrip is that we can reap some of its rewards today even if we can't have the ideal situation of being able to pay our taxes with it.

The good thing about scrip is that communities can do it now. We can empower ourselves now and keep our resources local. We can add ethics to our spending and recognize that when we do business we are forming relationships.

I hope the School of Living can keep working to spread the ideas of Henry George and Land Based taxation. For FNR's to be replaced by local scrip would be glorious thing.

-RGH

## Your Heathcote Poem By Dana Bloomfield

Your poem took more nails than you expected.  
Trips to the barn, the plywood wheelbarrow,  
The plexiglas, the greenhouse blueprint,  
The revisions. Constructive criticism.

And the budget, and the dump runs,  
And the workshop registration...

Your poems took all season,  
Two hours every morning  
To charm the buds from their beds,  
To nurture tall pride in the crocus,  
Muster stout cabbages from  
Windowsill beginnings.

And the raking, and the plucking,  
With an editor's consultation.

In the kitchen,  
Couplets and quatrains  
Would clank and boil  
In kettle and colander  
As your conductors' spoon  
Traced the seismograph  
Of your inventor's abandon.

And the shopping, and the canning,  
And the food co-op printout...

So when my printed pages with  
Pampered phrases come sailing onto  
Bulletin boards like paper airplanes,  
Not like you masterpieces—  
Pounding out, digging up,  
steaming tender  
The touchable spectre of Justice-  
    The roof patched...  
    The bill paid...  
My snowflake cutouts garner  
Only your strange patience,  
The tolerance of gardeners.

## Mel's Story: A Personal Calling By Mel Leasure

My story starts in 1933 when, at the age of 12, at the bottom of the Great Depression, my mother joined a buying club to buy a month of bulk groceries at wholesale. I learned that we could do better by joining with others in a co-operative to help ourselves.

At about the same time we started a back yard vegetable garden and fertilized it by composting all the leaves, grass clippings and garbage from the neighborhood that we could collect. I learned what food should taste like when grown organically, as compared to store bought. I still garden after 65 years and am now a member of five coops, the most important being a coop community.

With my wife, Lois, and our four children, we joined a housing coop in 1952 called Coop Homesteads, five miles north of Detroit, on a 180 acre farm. We bought two acres at \$450 per acre. Yes, we developed a big garden and yes, we joined a buying coop.

We moved into a two-car garage for three years while we built a 1500 square foot cinder-block home. We moved in with sheets hanging from the studding for walls and a fireplace for a furnace. We never did quite finish all the interior molding.

Coop Homesteads grew to thirteen houses built and twenty-two households when we were stopped. The township became the City of Madison Heights and the health department outlawed septic tanks in our heavy blue clay. We were grandfathered in, but we got no more building permits. They stipulated that we would have to install city water and sewer and have paved streets. This proved to be five times the value of our homes. We were stuck. As the city grew up around us and fifteen miles beyond, we became a farm oasis. When the price of land went to \$1,000 an acre (from the original cost of \$450) there began to be talk of selling out. When the price of land reached \$7,000 an acre, some members hired

a lawyer to see how to break our By Law policy of never selling the land. They found that state law over-rides corporate policy, so all they needed was a majority vote. We were interested in community, not the money, but we lost the vote at \$11,000 an acre in 1979. The property sold again three years ago to a grocery chain for a super-store mall, for over \$20,000 per acre.

We all got rich, relatively, and some moved to Florida, but though my share of the money was in my name, I felt I had done nothing to earn it. I thought, ethically and morally, how could this be? I set out to learn how this could happen.

After talking to a couple of professors at Wayne State University in the fields of politics and economy and a couple of lawyers, I was lead to read the book "Progress and Poverty", by Henry George. This book was the worldwide best seller, next to the Bible, for about twenty years at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was Henry George who explained how it is that the private ownership of land is a major cause of how the rich get richer and the poor get poorer by the land rent. Land does not meet the requirements of supply and demand as a commodity because land is finite, e.g. scarce. Land, when privately owned, becomes a local monopoly to exploit those without land for the benefit of those who already have more than they can use.

You see, the basic requirements of life: food, clothing and shelter, can only be supplied from the land. People will pay whatever is needed to survive. But nature did not give land to the powerful to exploit others, but gave it to all people, to all life equally to live on. Historically, conquering armies captured land, as we whites did from the Native Americans, and politicians passed laws, which are enforced by the police on all of us to pay rent to owners who have title to it. The key words are: "have title".

But what is it that caused the land I bought for \$450 an acre in 1952 to rise to \$11,000 in 1979, a rise of twenty-four and a half times in twenty-seven years? Certainly not me! I did nothing to earn it. It became obvious to me, once Henry George pointed it out, that all of society causes the rise of land value and that this value rightly belongs to all.

Henry George pointed something else out. The rich don't sell land - they only buy it. What for? To be able to accumulate the ever increasing rise in rent. What did they do to earn this rent? Nothing but own the title.

So how big is this problem? Well, the 1987 Agricultural Year Book says that ninety-five percent of the private land in the U. S. is owned by only three percent of the people. What a shock this was, and is, to me! Henry George tried to solve this problem politically, but died of a heart attack five days before being elected mayor of New York City and almost nothing more publicly has been heard about it since.

So, what could I do? In reading further, an economist, Ralph Borsodi, came to my attention. In 1934 he established the School of Living to test the idea of a Community Land Trust to collect land rent for social purposes by acquiring title to land and using the land rent to establish capitol as a kind of revolving loan fund to establish more land trust land. Accumulating land rent will buy the equivalent of that land in about thirty years. We bought forty-seven acres (now eighty) in 1980 in Rockbridge County and gave it away to the School of Living as a perpetual lease contract and called our community, Common Ground.

The contract with School of Living stipulates that the land can be sold only by a unanimous vote of Common Ground members plus a unanimous vote of the School of Living Board. Even then the money must be placed in a capitol account to be used only to buy land for the Land Trust. This is the best we could come up with to eliminate the temptation to sell out for private profit for those who own the land they live on.

The first four small intentional communities of the School of Living failed but now there are six successful communities in the School of Living regional Community Land Trust. I became president of the School of Living for a few years before resigning to take care of my wife, Lois, who died of Alzheimer's. My

daughter, Rita Jane, has now been president for six years and we have learned that the economic problem of rent is comparatively easy to solve, in that small intentional communities fail most often because of: 1. inability to resolve conflicts without violence; 2. to make fair consensus decisions, and ; 3. to practice gender partnership decentralized governing instead of hierarchy. We owe a debt of gratitude to Quakers for helping us solve these three basic problems. Perhaps we can reciprocate by teaching Quakers about the land rent problem and how to solve it. The goal of life should be "Quality of Living" and not "Standard of Living" to be happy and peaceful.

Let me try to summarize all of the above into it's essence. What nature provides should be shared equally by all. Land is a social value. It is primarily land, but includes all natural resources. It is done primarily by collecting the land rent, but includes the values of all moveable land resources sold for private purposes. Collecting all this value socially would eliminate the need to collect any taxes and have enough left over to provide every person with a variable annual stipend. Since this cannot be done now politically, Community Land Trusts are a private way to start establishing this social concept. Notice that this concept recognizes that the equity in all private efforts, e.g. homes, business, music, art, etc. should be owned privately and that none of this equity should be conscripted by way of taxes for social purposes.

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The School of Living, founded in 1934 by Ralph Borsodi, is dedicated to the learning and teaching of personal responsibility and right living. It aims to foster self governing communities, which are democratic, humane, globally conscious and ecologically sound. All of its resources, especially the land it holds in trust, are held in responsible stewardship for all living creatures. We are happy to receive your comments and suggestions. Articles for publication are welcomed and greatly appreciated.

Comments and Articles can be sent to [GreenRev@s-o-l.org](mailto:GreenRev@s-o-l.org) or the below address.

School of Living membership is \$20 annually and includes a subscription to *Green Revolution*.

Visit our website at [www.s-o-l.org](http://www.s-o-l.org)

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# AN HERBEL EXPERANCE

by Brad Dawson

I made a journey of 1000 miles to a festival of the plants to discover all they had to offer. Last year the experience changed forever the way I perceive the plant beings around us and how we interact with them.

Herbfest, held annually in Norway, Iowa, hosted by Frontier Natural Products co-op on their 60-acre farm, was a true celebration of the herbal spirit. This weekend long event was an educational conference for herb-  
alists and novis alike.

In addition to the twenty speakers, forty classes, intensives and herb, weed, farm and prairie walks I had to choose from, there was volleyball, basketball, frisbee, yoga, tai chi, bonfires with drumming, singing and dancing, an herbal bazaar on Saturday afternoon and a live band that night. There was also totfest, childfest and teenfest with plenty of activities to keep those kids busy so mom and dad could give their full attention to the classes. Throughout the duration of the weekend 6 healthful vegetarian meals were served and after nine pm there was excellent locally made beer (light & dark) being served.

Speakers included: Tim Blakley, Eaglesong, Rosemary Gladstar, Christopher Hobbs, William Mitchell, Susun Weed, Feather Jones, Mindy Green, Kathleen Harrison, Kahla Wheeler, Terry Willard, and Matthew Wood

Topics being discussed included: Menopause, Emotional Balance, Cherokee Medicine, Doctrine of Signatures, Edible Weeds, Gardening, Medicine Making, Aromatherapy, Pharmacognosy, Allergies, Aphrodisiacs, Medicinal Mushrooms, Wise Women Ways, Ethno botany, Ceremony & Plants, Liver Health, Phytotherapy, Herb Quality, ADD/AADHD, Chinese Culinary Tonic Herbs, Hyperactivity, Dyeing with Herbs

There were also specific talks on herbs like Garlic, Saw Palmetto and Black Cohosh.

The worst part about this celebration was deciding what to do. I learned enough that weekend to keep me busy till next year.

One crucial ingredient that was not left out of herbfest, for which I am quite thankful, was fun. The Frontier folks were all about ensuring everyone had a great time. Weather it be standing around sucking back beers, exerting yourself playing volleyball, meditating around the bonfire, dancing to the rumbling beat of the drums or just meeting new people, fun was had by all.

The amount of dedication to herbs was great. There was so much quality, pro-herb information and paraphernalia that one has no choice but to leave herbfest believing in the power of herbs, the standing nation, as Dr. William Mitchell spoke of them. I could feel the deep respect, love and awareness for herbs. They are not to be trifled with.

Do not despair herbfest will be around again next year with new speakers and new topics so mark your calendars for third weekend in August. See you there! Frontier can be reached at (800) 669-3275 or email [www.frontiercoop.com](http://www.frontiercoop.com) for information.

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