

Barking Frogs Permaculture Center

Yankee Permaculture

Elfin Permaculture

PO Box 52

Sparr FL 32192-0052 USA

BarkingFrogsPC@aol.com



<http://barkingfrogsperc.tripod.com/frames.html>

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Greetings from Barking Frogs Permaculture Center. Each year, we report on our projects and progress to our friends concerned with the state of the environment. This year we have a lot to report, so the style of our annual letter will be more terse and formal than usual.

Baldcypress Project

Good winter rains finally ended the four-year drought, replenishing the canal. So, in February, Dan's son, Thor, transplanted about 500 baldcypress trees that we had potted until soil conditions improved. This brings our baldcypress "forest" to substantially more than 600 trees. A few hundred more still in nursery and pots await volunteers. We expect good transplanting conditions at least into late fall.

Chinampas Project

We made small progress toward building a second major chinampa bed. The first bed, made with canal muck, was tremendously productive over a year of use. Since canal muck is harder to access under water, the adjacent bed will be built with ordinary sand and soil. This will give us a direct comparison of the two approaches. See last year's letter for some chinampa construction details.

Agroforestry Program

Our little "forest garden" continues to develop with more fruit trees, mostly mulberry and loquats. Our blueberry-to-farkleberry grafts bore heavily this year, far outproducing blueberries on their own roots, and with much less maintenance. Combined production of mulberries, peaches, and blueberries continuously yielded more fruit than we could eat over 3½ months. In five years or so, we expect to approach our goal of continuous fruit year round. In a year or two, citrus, figs and loquats, now lightly bearing, should extend the continuous fruit season to about 8 months.

To that end, we made the 175-mile trip to Just Fruits near Tallahassee in May to load hard-to-find varieties of cold-hardy citrus and other fruits into our van. Together with trees bought locally and via mail order, these constitute a small container nursery readying to go into the ground at a rate consistent with our ability to irrigate. We have also arranged from several sources to obtain scion wood of preferred varieties of loquat, persimmon, and paw paw for grafting next February. The paw paw will be grafted to the local dwarf species, *Asimina parviflora*, and the persimmon to American persimmons, both adequately abundant here. Again, we expect to show benefits from using locally adapted, well-established rootstock.

We also reinforced our pecan plantings this year both with grafted varieties and trees started *in-situ* from seed. The new pecans are growing well.

Bamboo Project

All previously purchased species of bamboo are now in the ground and thriving. Our bamboo shelterbelts function with increasing efficiency. As with our mulberries and peaches, we have moved from buying new varieties to propagation from existing plantings. We expect to soon harvest bamboo for small crafts projects and for components of outbuildings in the coming few years. Some species are already abundant enough to shred for mulch.

Fuelwood Design

A small cookstove purchased this year adequately heated our residence, though not ideally. We get enough wood from windfalls and minor clearing for the time being. We have designated as a fuelwood site an area where a local species of cherry grows rampantly. We began some black locust from seed this spring and these will be set out also as a fuel planting. With windfalls, etc., these sources will sustain our fuelwood indefinitely.

Cynthia proposed adding a small "Florida room" summer kitchen to our dwelling where we can cook with wood year-round. At present, we use propane in the warmer months.

Water Catchment Design

Our design for water catchment continues to evolve. We bought five 1000 liter containers, formerly used for vinegar. These will be installed as an array of roof catchment cisterns under the planned Florida room, which will be elevated. A ground level swimming pool will also be installed for rain water storage at the residence. We have already purchased an above ground pool for installation at the permaculture center, but the time and energy to assemble that system haven't happened yet.

Dan has further designed the trial rice paddy to include a pond at one end where surplus catchment and greywater will mix and await use in paddy flooding. We bought 13 ducklings this year to gain experience with them, in preparation for experiments with the rice/duck system developed in Japan. We also purchased a trash pump as fire control and for flooding paddies. Paddies are dug adjacent to chinampa beds to supply soil layers, and a freestanding paddy is designed for a low area nearby.

Site Development

Cynthia and Thor erected a hoop shed in February to provide additional storage. This will support construction projects, as poorly stored materials block building of rational storage in our main buildings. Very little progress was made on other building renovation this year.

Dan continues progress in clearing scrub areas for plantings, shed construction, etc.

Livestock

Our Guinea fowl refused to be trained to stay out of the garden. (Chickens learn this.) As a fence was no barrier for them, we ate them. The ducks now occupy the space given to Guineas, and much more tractably so far. We purchased replacement chicks again this year, but will soon put our new mechanical brooder into operation.

Our rabbits have hit full production stride, reducing the number of chickens we need raise for meat. We will build new rabbit cages to allow ample room for live storage of meat animals, a third breeding doe, and flexibility in introducing or selecting new breeding stock. A fringe benefit of the increased rabbit production has been a great increase in manure available for the garden, with obvious improvements in vegetable production. Since we feed rabbits a lot of weeds, our garden is a bit less weedy as well.

Teaching Permaculture

The six-month online course continues to be our main teaching venue. Cycle 8 of the annual course begins Sept. 28, 2003, with room still available as of this writing. We plan to announce a new program allowing students to produce their designs over a longer period when necessary. The student design project represents the main test and application of what the student learns in the course.

The new course CD-ROM worked very well in cycle 7. Volunteers and barter students converted much of the course reading material to electronic form and these materials are being edited and added to the CD in an ongoing basis. The CD has been sold in two basic versions, one for registered course students and one for self-study students. We now offer free registration as a monitor of the online course when buying the self-study version. As I write this letter, we begin offering an economy version of the CD for people who want only the instructional materials without any of the "outside" reading and references usually included.

Volunteer and online student Mountain Nelson has begun work to produce an index of all course materials. Dan has substantially enriched the instructional "posts" since the beta-version of the CD.

We taught no live programs, this year, consistent with Dan's goal of spending more time implementing his own permaculture design.

Publications

We released no new print publications this year. However, we began to offer many of our publications on CD-ROM. See our order form for details.

Jeni Nelson, online student and volunteer, has begun assisting with TRIP (*The Resources of International Permaculture*), our directory. We expect that this help will enable us to better keep the directory up to date and to include many more suitable listings.

Web Site

Tim Packer, who as volunteer webmaster has done a great job getting much of our material onto our web site, has had to scale back participation. We are looking for one or two volunteers to work with Tim to keep our site up to date and growing.

Interns and Volunteers

At present, we can accept one or two interns. Internships that occur while we offer our online course feature free tuition during that period. Consider such internships as permaculture boot camp. We also can offer meaningful work to local people wishing to set up a volunteer schedule. Please read to our intern FAQs on our website before inquiring. Potential on-site volunteers should also consult the FAQs, as many of the considerations are the same.

Almost everyone receiving this letter also works to heal Mother Earth and her people. Thank you for your part in the combined effort worldwide. To support our work, or to provide information to yourself or others, please consider purchasing our publications or CD-ROMs for yourself or as gifts. We also have a Tree-Tithe program, Scholarship Funds, and "Third World" publication donations for which we gratefully accept money.

For Mother Earth,
Dan Hemenway

Cynthia Hemenway