



The Carnies Come Home

Ben Martin Horst

Salem Harvest is a local group dedicated to connecting people in our community with fresh produce that would otherwise go to waste. The intentions are to alleviate hunger, build community and to promote sustainable lifestyles.

I had the opportunity to speak with Lisa Clark-Burnell, Project Manager, about their upcoming harvest season, their past year and their organization. Here at LifeSource we strongly encourage fostering the connection between those who grow food and those who eat food. This group does a wonderful job of just that and we think it a worthy story to tell.

The idea for Salem Harvest (SH) was conceived in the autumn of 2009, and by January 2010 they'd put a team together and begun preparations for the coming harvest season. The concept is brilliant: volunteer pickers harvest fruit and vegetables donated by farmers and gardeners. In turn those pickers donate half or more to the hungry and get to take home the rest for their own families and friends.

SH has a leadership team of 8 people and about 1300 registered adult pickers. Everyone is a volunteer. The eight members of the Leadership Team developed, created and implemented thorough procedures in order to ensure the safety and success of each harvest. In turn they have trained many others to be strong support staff. Last year volunteer pickers donated 2500 hours of their time and muscle. The leadership team donated that many hours as well, not only at harvests, but also aggregating information for harvests and distribution, creating the website and doing the myriad of small tasks that go into any successful enterprise.

Even though SH is a fully volunteer organization, that doesn't mean they don't have expenses. There is liability insurance and computer software, website expenses, paper and ink. Harvesting tools also need to get purchased – orchard ladders, clippers, buckets, signs to help pickers find the farm, tables and chairs for signing in the pickers. They don't have an office.

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I have tens of thousands of carnie girls living in my backyard. But contrary to what you might expect, none of them is tattooed, not a one of them breathes fire or juggles clubs, and none of them operates a ferris wheel. Thank goodness! I haven't got the room.

In fact, all my carnies are quiet, unobtrusive, and pretty low maintenance. They don't bother the neighbors. And they're pretty content living in a space 48 inches long by 15 inches wide. See, "carnie" is beekeeper slang for

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Summer brings us a plethora of fruits and vegetables. It is one of the best seasons for eating local, due to the abundance of regional foods that are being harvested. The foods that I like most from the summer season are stone fruits. You can find stone fruits from other parts of the world at other times of the year, but getting stone fruits from the Northwest is simply the best. Since they are being harvested much closer to home, they are picked a little less green, providing us the most flavor that we will get out of them all year. Cherries are a crop that prefers temperate climates and has a short growing season, therefore the Northwest is ideal for growing cherries.

My absolute favorite stone fruit has to be cherries. Most cherries that we see sold fresh are sweet cherries that are real tasty eaten just as they are. These cherries have a deep mahogany red color, are juicy, and tend to be larger than the sour/tart cherries that are used for cooking. Of the sweet red varieties we most commonly see Bings and Chelans.

Bings, a long time favorite, were developed in the 1870's by horticulturist Seth Lewelling and his Chinese foreman Ah Bing. The Chelan is a Northwest variety of cherry that ripens earlier than the Bing. The Chelan is a cross between the Stella and Beaulieu varieties, developed



in 1971 by a researcher at the University of Washington named Tom Toyama.

Rainier cherries are a sweet yellow variety that tend to be larger than their red cousins. They have a red blush complimenting their yellow skin, a delicate flavor, and tend to have much higher sugar levels than the sweet red varieties. Rainier cherries were developed in 1952 by Harold Fogel at Washington State University, who crossed a Bing with a Van cherry.



The cherries used for cooking are mostly a tart/sour cherry that may not have the flavor that most of us are looking for in a snack. Tart cherries, the key ingredient in desserts, jams, jellies, and beverages, are a bit harder to find fresh. They are usually sold canned, frozen or as juice. But it is worth looking for them fresh. We do have them come in from local growers, but it is often a small crop with limited availability.

Cherries are a good source of vitamin C, but the red varieties of cherries are known more for their antioxidant properties. Anthocyanins are known to be very powerful antioxidants and are present in many different foods that have a red to blue pigment.

Choose cherries that are firm and free of bruises. Be sure to select cherries that have vivid colors, and avoid them if they have a very dull color as this is a sign of age. Look for cherries that have a smooth appearance and are firm, and check to see if the cherry stem is flexible. A brittle stem is another sign that they might be a little old. Also, you want to select cherries that have the stem still attached to ensure that they will maintain their freshness for a longer period of time. Cherries are a delicate fruit, like all stone fruits, so handle them with care.

Keep cherries in a bag, and store in the refrigerator. Don't store cherries next to strong smelling foods because they can absorb strong aromas. If stored properly you can expect to keep them for up to a week easily. If you are preparing a recipe that calls for sour cherries and you are not able to find any fresh, you can use fresh sweet red cherries in their place with only minor adjustments: add the same amount of cherries, less sugar, and a little bit of lemon juice.

Fresh cherries are very flavorful and good for you as well. They are one of my favorite snack foods. Take advantage of the season and enjoy some cherries! 🍒

This is my favorite cherry cobbler (recipe by Annette Liebhardt), and it's really easy and super delicious!! The fresh organic cherries and berries are beautiful right now, making this the perfect time to enjoy them. Add vanilla ice cream for a stellar summer dessert!
— Roxanne Magnuson

Cherry Blueberry Cobbler

2 cups fresh pitted cherries
2 cups fresh blueberries
2 cups unbleached flour
2 cups whole cane sugar
1 tsp. salt
2 eggs
1 stick butter

Mix the blueberries and the cherries and place them into a 9 x 13 glass baking dish. Mix together flour, sugar and salt. Whip up the eggs in a separate bowl. Fold them into the flour mixture. It will be chunky and lumpy and thick. Dollop it all over the berries. Melt the butter and drizzle it over the top. Bake at 375 degrees until bubbly, about 45 minutes.

The eight Leadership Team members work from their homes to coordinate the pickers with the farmers and the harvests.

The farmers seem to be very open and responsive to Salem Harvest's requests. Once they see the enthusiasm of the volunteer pickers, sometimes as many as 150 of them, they are truly excited. It's rewarding to know that the food they've grown won't rot in the field and instead will help nourish so many. Family farmers grow food not only to make a living, but also because they know that the food they provide is valuable. Often farmers will donate a few acres to Salem Harvest, who then organize their pickers for a harvest party. The farmers who donated some of their crops had farms ranging from 5 acres to 1000 acres.

Salem Harvest will also pick from backyard orchards and gardens. Such a variety results – plums, grapes, apples, cherries, pears, prunes, beans and other garden delights. A healthy backyard apple orchard can provide up to 600 pounds of fruit.

Volunteer pickers are enthusiastic, too. Pickers get a chance to be out in the fresh air, working to gather fresh fruits and vegetables; they learn about where their food originates, how it's harvested, and join in the community spirit of the traditional harvest party. They get to help reduce waste by picking food that the farmer might not have been able to harvest or to sell. And they also get the wonderfully rewarding feeling, the sense of quiet dignity, that comes from being able to help themselves while also helping others.

SH is great for kids, too. They are able to learn about food, from seed to mouth. In this age of disconnect, or screen-connect, that's an important thing to learn. They also get a chance to be of service and learn the sense of dignity and satisfaction that comes from working hard and then sharing the rewards.

Salem Harvest is not a gleaning group. As it turns out, gleaning groups must pay a fee to do their work. Community harvest groups don't. Sometimes the rules we've made for ourselves seems silly, as in this case, but it's true. Last year SH volunteers picked 53,012 lbs. of produce. They donated 29,000 lbs. to Marion Polk Food Share and it's partner direct service charities, such as Hope and Help to Others, and The Salvation Army.

Time is of the essence in this organization! When it's time to harvest, it's time. Near the end of the growing period the crop needs to be checked frequently to be sure

it's not 'left-on-the-vine' too long, nor picked before full ripeness is achieved. These crops aren't designed to be shipped cross country and stored in a warehouse until they're ripe. They're for eating and distributing now. To that end, SH works closely with Marion Polk Food Share to coordinate when they'll harvest so a truck may be available. 7000 pounds of blueberries aren't transported in someone's pick up truck.



These volunteers seem to be amazing! In their largest harvest they picked 10,000 lb of food. One time they picked 8,515 lbs. of onions in two hours! The farmer couldn't get to that last ¾ acre field because a heavy rain had made the earth too muddy for his harvesting equipment. Another time a blueberry farm was for sale, the farmers couldn't harvest before the new owners came in, but Salem Harvest volunteers could! They donated 7,000 pounds of blueberries from that harvest.

Lisa said that she's heard as many as five different languages being spoken at a harvest: English, Russian, Japanese, Chinese and Spanish. It's a diversified community brought together by the promise of fresh produce, free for the picking. What a grand idea!

If you're not up for picking, volunteers are needed for a variety of other tasks, such as registering volunteers at harvests, being a traffic director, matching properties to harvests and neighborhood coordinators.

Our urban and agricultural interface is so close here in the mid-Willamette valley that SH was able to donate significantly more produce than its similar counterparts in Portland, Corvallis and Ashland. One doesn't have to travel far from Salem to get to farm country. We're lucky that way! To share your harvest, become a picker or simply to learn more, visit Salem Harvest's website at SalemHarvest.org.





I am back from Peru with lots of stories to tell. I went with the good folks from Equal Exchange to visit some of their co-op's small, remote coffee farms. Spending time with the farmers that benefit from Fair Trade has opened my eyes to the importance of fair pay for small farmers. Look for my upcoming newsletter article to read all about it. — Marie

Have You Tried... ... Quorn?

The Quorn products are delicious, healthy meat alternatives. The product is low in fat, high in protein, soy free, and boasts a very “meaty” texture! There are several different options from which to choose; the Chik’n Tenders and Beef Style Grounds come to mind due to their versatility in many traditional meat recipes, but there are many more! This product is a favorite among the LifeSource staff! You’ll find these yummy delights in the freezer section.



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“Carniolan,” a variety of honeybee originally from southeastern Europe. I wrote about my intent to install a colony of bees a couple months back (see the May 2011 LifeSource newsletter), and since early April, these bees have been quietly buzzing about my yard and beyond, pollinating cherry blossoms and kale flowers. Not only did they decide that the hive I built for them -- an odd-looking Kenyan topbar design -- was acceptable, but they have been thriving, building comb after comb of beautiful wax filled with larvae and pupae (baby bees) and, increasingly, honey. I’m also glad to report that they’ve only stung four times.

I can’t blame them for the first three stings. They came home with me on a cold afternoon in early April, enclosed in a screened cage. I asked my ever-patient and beloved wife to document the event with her camera.

“How far away should I stand?”

“They should be pretty gentle right now. You can get pretty close.”

Then came the challenge: how to get the bees from the cage into their new hive. General practice is to slam the cage on the ground so that the bees lose their grip on the walls, then pour them into the hive, so that’s what I tried. About half of the bees came out. I slammed the cage again. About half of the remaining bees poured out into the hive. Slam. A few more came out. Slam. A few more.

You’ve probably guessed by now that slamming a bunch of bees around is a pretty good way of ticking them off. My wife was the first of us to notice. She



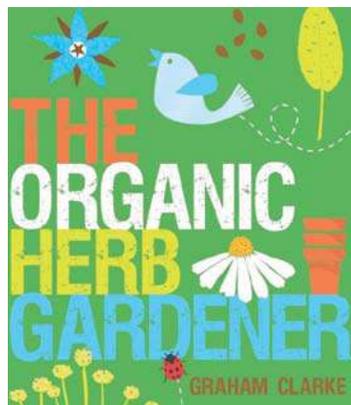
yelped. Then I got stung. And stung again. By this time most of them were in the hive, so I closed it up and hoped the stragglers would find their way in on their own. Did I mention my wife’s patience? Her forgiving nature?

A few days later when I checked on the bees I got stung again. But since then I’ve learned an old Japanese beekeeping trick. I suck on mint candy while I work with them. For good measure I’ve been rubbing mint leaves on my hands as well. Works like a charm. I haven’t had to use smoke on the bees at all. Maybe it’s the mint. Maybe these bees are just particularly gentle. I won’t know until I get a couple more hives to compare them with.



The Organic Herb Gardener

by Graham Clarke



I once read that “to create a garden is to search for a better world.” The season for gardens is upon us—the moment for building or rebuilding your “better world” has arrived—finally! Maybe you would like to venture into a different type of gardening, or maybe you are a newbie to the garden experience altogether. Either way, if you are eager to throw your big straw hat into the wheelbarrow, this month’s featured book is worth a gander.

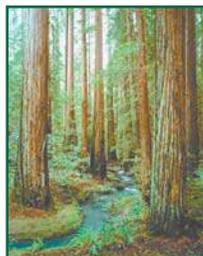
No matter your previous garden experience, consider digging into Graham Clarke’s absolutely gorgeous new book, *The Organic Herb Gardener*. Let me begin by sharing that I would buy this book for its unabashedly joyful cover and its copious inspiring photographs alone!

Beyond its aesthetic appeal, however, this great resource offers page after page of useful and creative information for the aspiring herb gardener. Mr. Clarke, a well established authority in the gardening world, reveals the ease and the joy of herb cultivation (in contrast to the traditional vegetable garden) in a well organized, easy to understand format. He begins with

a clear explanation of the pluses inherent in choosing herbs for your garden and moves through sections such as propagating, buying, caring for, and harvesting your herbs; each one engaging and rich in usable information.

His chapter on creative ways to plant your herbs was one of my favorites as it bends the mind with unusual and delightful ideas for any garden, from the clay pot to the acre lot. Clarke’s book ends with an A-Z herb directory wherein the reader will find, in addition to other pertinent information, the ornamental appeal, culinary, cosmetic, medicinal, and household uses for each individual herb.

I found *The Organic Herb Gardener* not only a wealth of impressive instruction, but a fun read! Come in, take a look, and remember, Anita can order one for you if we’ve sold out to the early birds. 🌿



Save the Trees

Save paper
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e-mail by signing up on our web
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editor@LifeSourceNaturalFoods.com



If you’ve been at LifeSource since June 6th, you’ll have seen the beautiful timbers that are part of our new entryway. These timbers are seeing a new life: they were reclaimed from a warehouse in the Eugene area that was torn down.

Recycling at its best!

LifeSourceNaturalFoods.com

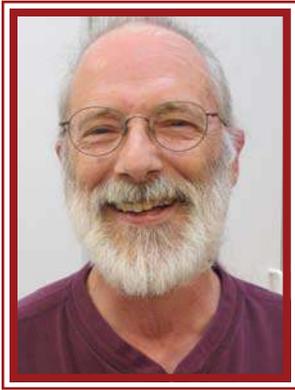
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