

Sizzling summer salutations to all you eco people and to all those who have not yet realized their ecological niche and our interdependent nature. Sit back for a moment and let the amazing systems of technological creation (i.e. your screen and all the many networks of wires, antennas, satellites, energy and people) show you a bit about what we've been doing at ECOSF and transmit to you some interesting and important pieces of information we'd like to share. For best results take a deep breath or two and put these contents in the context of your life, your community, and the conditions of life that exist for people around the world. Think about what you do as we share what we do in hopes that some day we can all do something together.

The fiery summer (or not so fiery depending on where you live) is rapidly blazing towards the more balanced fall season, and regardless of our immediate microclimate we should be grateful for the bounty of summer all around us. Gardening can be an immensely gratifying and enriching experience, and of course we highly recommend it, but if you cannot - or just do not - grow your own, thankfully, there is plenty of produce for all of us. A short walk through one of the many [Farmer's Markets in the City](#) (our favorite is the [Alemany Market](#) on Saturday) reveals big bunches of grapes, plump, palate-pleasing peaches, plums, and pluots, ripe red, green, yellow, and purple heirloom tomatoes, and so many other delicious and nutritious edible bursts of vitamins and energy, that you wish summer would never end. In fact you can enjoy the abundance of summer year round by canning and preserving all those summer treats into jams, sauces, salsas, juices, wines, dried delights, and whatever else you can think of. (Got any great ideas? Share them with us!) Buying bulk boxes from the market can really bring the price down and even if you have no money at all, you can still enjoy one of the finest jams around by '[picking blackberries](#)' from the many parks and open spaces in and around the Bay Area. Be sure to enjoy this last burst of fire before the sun retreats south to give our friends in the southern hemisphere their taste of summer (remember, there's only one sun and we all have to share).

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

So far, 2009 has been an action packed year of growing gardens and relationships, and building cob and community. With your help, we've planted over 2500 sq ft of vegetable gardens, fruit trees, and native habitat, and salvaged over 10 tons of subsoil and urbanite (sidewalk concrete) to build over 100 feet of cob benches, outdoor classroom space, and a beautiful earth oven. [Click here to see some photos of all this cob!](#) We have also engaged with the community at public events like SFSU's [Focus the Nation Day](#) and [Earth Day](#), 'The Outer Richmond Beneficiaries Block Party', an SF Public Library speaking event, and our very own Bakers Alley event which has brought hundreds of people together to learn and share sustainable living skills, local and home made cuisine, as well as live music and lively, thought provoking, conversation.

Since our first Bakers Alley event in November of 2008, we have been grateful to host several hands-on workshops including artisan baking with Tracey Wolf, hand made pottery with [Bea Bloom](#), fruit tree pruning and grafting with [Nik Dyer](#), vegan baking with [Alyssa Cox](#), home brewing with [Brennan and Max](#), food preservation and fermentation with [Erin](#), soap making and appropriate technology with [Davin](#), and knitting with [Annie Katz](#).

In June, we decided to take our show on the road and partnered with the beautiful people at Esperanza Garden and Sustainability Center in the Mission district who hosted us at their garden space on Florida St. Our most recent event in July, held at Double Rock Community Garden in the Bayview, brought together friends and family from as far as Modesto, CA to build an earth oven for the Alice Griffith community to use as well as creating a space for future Bakers Alley events. If you have an earth oven and would like to host a Bakers Alley event at your space, or have a skill or talent you would like to share with the community, please contact us [here](#).

After a year of monthly community gatherings at Monroe Elementary School, we have completed their outdoor classroom made of cob (sand, clay, and straw). As you can see in [this picture](#), we sculpted the top of the bench to reflect some of the hills and valleys of San Francisco and with the help of Nico Morris, and a design by Carolina Stankowich, we decorated the bench with a beautiful mosaic. If you'd like to see more photos of this outdoor classroom and from our celebration event upon its completion, click here. When not stomping and building with cob, we planted 15 varieties of fruit trees including apples, plums, and Asian pears, as well as low-chill blueberries, and a summer garden of heirloom tomatoes, potatoes, corn, squash, Yacon, lettuce and other greens. We also planted a soil building cover crop of oats, vetch, and bell beans in preparation for a winter garden and we hope to plant our first small patch of winter wheat this September.

In March, we began a fruitful relationship with George Moscone Elementary School in the Mission district. Working with parents, teachers, and students, we replanted their veggie beds with spinach, lettuce, kale, chard, carrots, herbs and a sprinkling of native species to bring color, beneficial insects, and fertility to their garden. We brought in over 7 yards of wood chips from Bay View Green Waste, laid over cardboard to sheet mulch around the beds, and set up a drip irrigation system to water efficiently. We also set up a mobile garden of wine barrels on wheels for heirloom tomatoes and basil on a sunny balcony in their courtyard. Since then, Moscone's Site Nutrition Coordinator, Louise H, and other teachers have been able to bring their students out to the garden to harvest and prepare fresh salad fixings.

Soon after finishing the largest cob bench in San Francisco (that we know of) at Monroe, we began work on an even larger bench at Bret Harte Elementary School. What was originally planned to be another year long project at Bret Harte, took less than a month. Through a partnership with [Kaboom](#) and [California Volunteers](#), Bret Harte was host to a one day, school yard transformation extravaganza organized and facilitated by Kaboom, a national non-profit, and supported by California Volunteers and hundreds of volunteers from around the country who were convening for a volunteer conference nearby. A week before the big day, which was graced by the presence of first ladies Michelle Obama, and

Maria Shriver, we graded and prepared the site and materials towards the goal of building a [70 ft cob bench](#) in a single day. With over 25 local and national volunteers, Americorp members, and some dear friends from [SFUSD](#), we made 20 batches of cob to complete the rough shape and mass of a giant worm that will be available as an outdoor teaching space. In addition to our project, Kaboom organized over 200 more volunteers to construct a state-of-the-art play structure, redwood planter boxes, a greenhouse, hundreds of square feet of native habitat, a sundial, park benches, and a beautiful mural paying homage to the life and work of Cesar Chavez. It was truly a memorable day and could not have happened without the cooperative work of volunteers, community members, and the various organizations that participated.

By mid-July (after those huge cob projects) it was time to get out of the mud, as much as we love it, and back into the garden. This time it was not a school that would be the focus of our ecological handiwork, but the [St. Francis Square Cooperative Apartments](#) in the Western Addition that had been there since the 1960's. We designed and created for them a drought tolerant, low-to-no maintenance, native landscape filled with close to 100 plants and over 50 different species from [Coastal Sage Scrub](#) and [Chaparral](#) native plant communities. The community was fully engaged in the work effort and worked side by side with us hauling over 10 yards of mulch into the beds, setting up drip irrigation, planting the natives, and of course organizing two excellent potluck lunches. The enthusiastic community at St. Francis Square was filled with wisdom and history and made the project a pleasure for everyone involved. This project was also a great model for the use of medium to large scale native landscaping to revitalize spaces and conserve resources in residential and urban areas.

ACORNS: THE QUINTESSENTIAL WILD FOOD

Acorns, the fruit or nut of oak trees of the genus *Quercus*, are found throughout the world. To the benefit of those of us living in California, oak trees, as well as the fertile soil that has nurtured many several-hundred year old giant oaks as well as farms that have cropped up around oak woodlands, can be found throughout the state. There are currently over 13 million acres of oak woodlands throughout California. For that reason, as well as their high nutritional, acorns have been a staple food source for wildlife and native people of California for millennia. In her book, *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*, [M. Kat Anderson](#) explains that “acorns were second only to salt as the most popularly traded item of the indigenous people of California”.

One of the reasons nearly all, of the over 100 distinct tribes, of indigenous people did not practice large scale agriculture as is the convention today is that they didn't need to. Acorns, among other wild foods were just so abundant and nutritious. Additionally, Anderson relates that although diverse as they were, the people were “unified by a fundamental land use ethic: one must act respectfully with nature and coexist with all

life-forms”. If one reads through Lierre Keith’s new book, [The Vegetarian Myth](#), one might derive an understanding that our current agricultural systems, whether producing food for omnivorous or vegetarian diets, are not respectful of nature and do not seek to coexist with all life forms. Perhaps the native people of California had a much farther reaching lesson for future generations: to truly live in harmony and perpetual sustainability with nature, one should supply their needs from what an ecosystem will allow and not carve their desires from what an ecosystem can be controlled to produce.

In many cases this may mean increasing your reliance on wild foods. To that end, Anderson offers two overarching rules followed by native people: “*Leave some of what is gathered for the other animals*, and *Do not waste what you have harvested*”. With that ethic in mind, we encourage you to consider what wild foods are available to you in your area, and specifically, acorns – for they are incredibly nutritious. For a rather generic, but informative detail of acorns nutritional analysis, [click here](#).

While acorns are normally harvested in the fall, we thought we’d help get you prepared ahead of time so you don’t miss an opportunity to try this wonderful wild food this year. We will be having a basic workshop on acorn harvesting, preparation, leaching, and cooking at our upcoming Bakers Alley event at Double Rock Community Garden this month. See below for details! Here is all you really need to know:

- Find a healthy oak tree with acorns on it and thank the tree for working so hard to produce this food for you to share with others.
- Harvest acorns when they are ripe (mostly/totally brown in color), either from the ground or gently removed or knocked from the branches with a stick.
- As soon as possible, crack the shell with a small rock or hammer to remove the white colored nut. Compost any nuts with mold or weevils in them. Alternatively, you can dry them in the shell as soon as possible in the sun or a low heat oven, and store in jars for years.
- Grind fleshy nuts in blender with 1 part acorns to 1 part water to make a coarse mush.
- Soak mush in a mason jar with 1 part acorns to 3 or 4 parts water.
- Each day for 7-10 days, shake the jar, let it sit for 24+ hours, then pour off the water and refill. This is the simplest leaching process.
- The mush should not be bitter at this point and if so, continue leaching for a couple more days. If ready, you can cook as is like oatmeal for 20-30 minutes, or you can dry and store in the freezer for several months, or grind into finer flour for breads and to use in other dishes.

Some other things to know about acorns:

In California, [Quercus agrifolia](#) (Coast Live Oak) and [Lithocarpus densiflorus](#) (Tanbark oak – not a true oak but still bears large edible acorns) are dying at epidemic levels from *Phytophthora ramorum*, an organism related to brown algae. [The California Oak Mortality Task Force](#) describes the ecological threats of *P. ramorum*, as “a change in species composition in infested forests and therefore, in ecosystem functioning; loss of food sources for wildlife; a change in fire frequency or intensity; and decreased water

quality due to an increase in exposed soil surfaces”. Their website, www.suddenoakdeath.org, provides nearly everything you need to know about this pathogen and how to help prevent its spread throughout uninfected areas. If you go camping or hiking anywhere in California, you should know about this and be careful what invisible traces you may be leaving behind. [The California Oaks Foundation](#) has recently published a study: *Oaks 2040: The Status and Future of Oaks in California*, which can be found [here](#). You can also check out their informative handout on oak tree care should you have one on your land, by [clicking here](#). Lastly, for a lovely and informative homemade website about acorns and other wild foods and homesteading [check this out](#). To get your hands on some acorns and some acorn food in your mouth, come out to Bakers Alley this month. If you can't make it, but want to know everything you possibly can about acorns as food (much more than we can offer in the span of a short workshop) – check out David A. Bainbridge's book [Use of Acorns for Food in California: Past, Present, Future](#). In it, Bainbridge explains that “for many of the native Californians acorns made up half of the diet and the annual harvest probably exceeded the current California sweet corn harvest, of 60,000 tons”. Makes you wonder.

AN EASTERN EXPLORATION

In August Davin, Sam and ECOSF compadre Rene Powers embraced an American tradition and caught the train across the country from Emeryville to Boston. 4 days and maybe a few hours of sleep later the train pulled into Boston after passing through the High Sierra, deserts of Nevada, rock formations in Utah, river gorges and the Rockies in Colorado, and lots of corn fields and soybeans in Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, and New York. Let's restate that: hundreds of miles of corn and soybeans. Thank your legislators for passing a phenomenal Farm Bill with several billion in subsidies. [Click here](#) for more info. Along the way there were farmers, Mennonites, families and Rastafarians to pass the time with. Shortly after touring Boston, swimming in the Atlantic Ocean, gathering some [Red Oak](#) acorns from the Boston Commons, and visiting with Jerome Mace, ECOSF's very own master carpenter in training, Davin and Sam continued their Amtrak journey to Baltimore, to visit family, via a grueling nine hour redeye on a considerably more cramped train than the relatively regal [California Zephyr](#), Amtrak's premier rail service.

Baltimore had a surprising amount of eco-activity for such an urban center struggling with the typical blend of poverty and economic depression. Davin and Sam saw a thriving community garden and 4-H farm in the suburbs growing lots of melons, peppers, tomatoes and okra, and raising cows, chickens, sheep, goats, ducks, turkeys and pigs, as well as several vacant lots in the heart of downtown Baltimore that had been transformed into community green spaces by an organization called [Civic Works](#). After meeting with some of the staff of the organization they also shared plans for their recent project which

involved building 20 large high tunnel greenhouses on 4-6 acres of city park land that would be used to grow food for the neighborhood, schools and local restaurants while creating jobs and educational opportunities in the community. Another community garden outside of Washington D.C, called the Master Peace garden was alive with okra, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and more, plus they were selling home brewed Bio-diesel!

Next leg was back to Chicago after a brief stop in D.C. which included checking out the [National Museum of the American Indian](#) and admiring their impressive landscape of corn, beans, and squash, tobacco and other plants of ethnobotanical use as well as some cool sculptures built with clay, sand and straw, and of course collect some more acorns from the Mall grounds. This 18 hour trip was not as grueling and afforded the chance to meet some more people including a 90 year old WWII vet named Leon Carter from Philadelphia with more pep in his step than either of the two weary ECOSF travelers.

Ultimately the destination was Lexington, KY to see more family but the travel plan called for driving from Chicago through Indiana, which offered a great opportunity to camp out in [Brown County State Park](#) adjacent to the [Hoosier National Forest](#) and take in some breathtaking views of the mixed-hardwood forest. After stopping in Lexington long enough to find out that there were some pretty cool, open minded 'progressives' down there as well as a food co-op that rivals anything here in S.F. (for real though), it was back to Chicago and on the afternoon Zephyr back home.

The 2-½ day ride was a piece of cake at that point; just a blur of corn fields, coal cars (freight trains rule the rails and coal is a big commodity) and buffalo herds. The camaraderie on the train reached a climax on the last night as Davin and Sam provided some musical entertainment with guitar and drum for a group of about 10 people who now seemed more like close friends than the complete strangers they were 2 days before. Try that on an airplane!

The pace of the train is comforting, the sights are spectacular and the people are fascinating. It's a unique educational and social experience and, although at times the lack of investment and attention is apparent, the rail system in the U.S. is still kicking and given the superior energy efficiency and practicality of the 'old school' but solid form of transportation, it may still emerge through uncertain energy futures as the most sustainable way to move things, people, and ideas, across the country.

Though we often feel San Francisco, the Bay Area, or California for that matter, are beacons of progress and 'green' ideas, it is important to remember that, there are people and communities across the country, that are working together towards a more ecological society and in many cases, we can learn a thing or two from them. **To see photos of our trip, [click here](#).**

NOTES FROM THE VILLAGE - a letter from tori jacobs

hi everyone~

i am hoping that you have had a beautiful summer and that you have made time for yourself to spend time growing your awareness and relationship with nature~~~

~ in august i moved to sebastopol~~~ several events and opportunities pushed me in this direction~~ while living in san francisco i had the chance to share my backyard space with three lovely hens – frieda, nina, and joni. unfortunately the dept. of health in sf requires that chicken coops be placed a minimum of twenty feet from a occupied building. for small backyards like mine, that was impossible to do, but the importance of supporting a local food system based on personal self reliance seemed to outweigh the supposed benefit of the current regulations which many agree are too restrictive to encourage city dwellers to become urban homesteaders. when a disgruntled neighbor called the health dept rather than speaking to me directly to work out or differences, the ‘girls’ were the ones who were going to suffer and be evicted from my backyard. in order to make sure they lived happy and meaningful lives, I needed to relocate them, and myself to a place where we wouldn’t be victims of oppressive regulations which – while attempting to protect individuals safety (and acknowledging there is some good in that) actually hinder the progress necessary to protect community and global safety by relying on factory farmed eggs and ‘products’ that are more likely to - and have - spread disease around the world. the second event stemmed from difficulty with a neighbor who had problems with lots of people coming to the space for bakers alley events ~~~

one of the opportunities that came from this was a 6 month mentorship on a small 2 acre property in sebastopol with a vegetable garden, green house and orchard ~ the five main areas of the mentorship will be: composting, soil growing and amendment, water catchment and greywater, seed saving and propagation, growing vegetables, and orchard care~ pruning and grafting~ through this mentorship i hope to embrace a deeper understanding of caring for and healing the land ~ ...how can we as humans live in balance with nature instead of taking her for granted and taking from her?

i will also be organizing workshops at green valley village, a growing intentional community outside sebastopol~ the workshops will focus on building simple, small, shelters using natural materials~~ techniques from around the world will be used~~~ a small scale "village" will be built one small dwelling at a time~ each dwelling will be no larger than 100 square feet~~~ no permits will be required! ...there will be no 5,000 square foot mc-mansions here~~~~~ live lightly and leave no trace~~~~~

our first workshop will be september 19-20~ we will take a weekend to build an earth oven~~ everyone is invited~~~ please [click here](#) for the details~~~

i look forward to continuing my community work through eco-sf and will be in the city 2-3 times a week~~ we have a lot of meaningful work ahead of us and many exciting and wonderful opportunities to make positive changes in our communities and in our culture~~~ i am looking forward to seeing you at our next bakers alley this coming

september 26th at doublerock community garden in bay view hunters point~~~

with respect~ love for life, relationships and community~~~

sincerely~ tori

UPCOMING ECOSF EVENTS

Sept. 26th – Saturday – 11am-5pm: **Bakers Alley at Double Rock Community Garden**

- **Acorn as Food Workshop** – Come learn about how to harvest, prepare, and enjoy the nutritious and delicious acorn. We'll have a sample of different, local acorn dishes included acorns from Coast Live Oaks, Black Oaks, and Tanbark Oaks. As well as let you prepare your own by learning how to leach the tannins out.

-Join us for the first fire of our new Earth Oven at the Double Rock Community Garden. Bring something to bake or a dish to share for the potluck & please bring your own dishware if you have it.

- As always, Annie Katz will be there for 'Living Room Knitting'.

- For more information, click here.

Other Events to Check Out this Month:

Sept.16th - Wed.- 6:00-8:30pm: **Launch Party: Community Resilience Toolkit**

-The toolkit is a workshop facilitation guide for leading groups to think holistically about how to build ecological, economic, and social resilience in their communities. It includes Bay Area specific fact sheets, resources, and actions in key sectors such as food, water, energy, transportation, jobs and civic services.

- Launch party will include dynamic speakers, interactive sessions, performances, and of course tempting local food and drink

Location: Women's Building 3543 18th St. between Valencia and Guerrero

Please RSVP to rsvp@baylocalize.org call (510) 834-0420 for more information

Sept 18th – All Day: **PARK(ing) Day**

-**PARK(ing) Day** is a one-day, global event centered in San Francisco where artists, activists, and citizens collaborate to temporarily transform metered parking spots into "PARK(ing)" spaces: temporary public parks.

-Anyone can participate by simply setting up a "park" in a metered parking spot (just remember to feed the meter).

- Check out our friends at the school district's sustainability department (yes, they do have one) and other school gardening folks who will be "parking" at Civic Center across the street from the Bill Graham Auditorium.

-For more info visit: www.parkingday.org

Sept. 19-20th – Sat.-Sun. – 10am- : **Earth Oven Building Workshop in Sebastopol**

- Join Nico Morris and tori jacobs for a ‘family friendly’ exciting weekend of natural building and cultural revitalization: Learn how to source materials, design, and build an earth oven from local and reused materials to bake and roast for you and your community! Come one or both days, and camping on premises is encouraged.
- This event is free to attend and meals are available for a small contribution.
- Evenings will be spent with music and stories around a fire.
- Located at 13024 Green Valley Rd in Sebastopol, For more info, [click here](#)
- RSVP required for meals: (707) 823-2213 or torijacobs@gmail.com

Sept. 29th – Tues.- 7:30 pm: **The Sharing Solution: How to Save Money, Simplify Your Life & Build Community (Author Talk)**

- Come hear authors Janelle Orsi and Emily Doskow discuss ways we can live more sustainably by sharing resources of all kinds - sharing a car with a neighbor, sharing yard space for food cultivation, starting a tool lending library, forming cohousing, childcare co-ops, community-supported agriculture programs, and more.
- This talk will include a fun cartoon presentation depicting how sharing will save the planet!

Location: Books, Inc. 2251 Chestnut St. (Marina District) www.booksinc.net

WHATS GROWING IN YER GARDEN?

The weather here in the City has been provided some wonderfully hot and sunny days along with the typical fogged in summer weather San Francisco is known for. Despite these peculiar ups and downs our climate graces us with a long growing season, and if you get your seeds sown and transplants planted now you can reap a winter harvest of broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, lettuce, sugar snap peas, carrots, radishes, beets and more. This is also about the time to plant your onions, garlic, and potatoes, which can over winter and be harvested before summer next year. If you were not planning on growing a winter crop, maybe you'd like to grow a cover crop that can over winter and then be mulched into the soil to add fertility and organic matter for some new veggie beds for spring. A good "green manure" mix of 50% Bell beans, 30% 'Magnus' peas, and 20% Common Vetch can compete against the weeds that come with our winter rains and add lots of organic matter and nitrogen for your spring crop. While not generally available at local nurseries, larger farm and garden supply centers like [Peaceful Valley Farm and Garden Supply](#) can ship it to your door.

As always, ECOSF is dedicated to provided information, education, and services of an ecological nature to San Francisco. If you haven't become a member, please [consider making a contribution](#) to these efforts and help create a cooperative community. If you have any projects, ideas, or suggestions, please let us know. We'd love to hear from you!

Remember, summer favorite fruits and tomatoes are in season for a couple more weeks so you might want to stock up and can em' while you can.

Thank you for your support!

Davin, Sam, & tori