



Ramah Farmer's Market

Volume Number 1

Issue Number 2

Date July 2006

Ramah Farmer's Market Opens

The Ramah Farmers' Greens & Crafts Market opened two weeks early this season to an unexpectedly large turnout of both customers and vendors. 130 customers bought produce and purchased crafts and baked goods from the 15 local vendors and the Community Table. Six local growers sold spinach, lettuce, spring onions, rhubarb, arugula, asparagus, and sorrel, as well as strawberry, tomato, chili pepper, sweet pepper, and Brussels sprout plants. The second week saw the addition of fresh cut flowers, beet greens, mustard greens, Mizuna, and garlic.

All vendors reported that they did well the first two weeks of the Market and are looking forward to coming back. At the July 1 market a record may have been set with over 230 customers visiting the market.

Ramah Farmers' Market on Line!

You can read the newsletter and check out RFM flyers online by visiting the Timberlake Ranch web site www.trnews.info. The co-managers would like to thank Roger Irwin for providing this service to us.

All RFM Customers

Next time you're at the market make sure you sign up to receive the newsletter. You can also e-mail your name, email address, mailing address and phone number to ramahfarmersmkt@yahoo.com. If you give us your e-mail address we can send you the color version of this newsletter as well as any posters we put out. You can also mail us at RFM, HC 61 Box 816, Ramah, NM 87321.

1

The Trees of Ramah

On highway 53, between Zuni and Grants, lies the little oasis of Ramah, a country village established and settled by the Mormon pioneers. The first settlers came to the area in 1876 but did not stay; again others came in 1878 and also left due to disagreements with the Apaches. The year of 1882 is remembered as the official beginning of the Mormon colonization in this valley.¹ As was the habit of the Mormon people, the early settlers to the area planted trees and yellow roses along the irrigation ditches; the Lombardy poplars that can be seen in the village in front of the home now owned by the Harrington's were planted in the year 1882. The Carolina poplars west of the museum were planted in 1910.

Since the irrigation ditches were covered about a dozen years ago to control mosquitoes, many of the trees planted so long ago no longer get as much water as they once did. In addition, some trees, such as poplars, usually do not have as long of a life span as other types of trees. Poplars commonly live to be about 100 years old; therefore, many of these beautiful old trees are at the end of their normal life expectancy. Storms, high winds, and drought also take their toll. Unless, an effort is made now to replace the trees that will be lost, Ramah may one day have a very different appearance – it would not be the shady oasis that we now enjoy.

Seven years ago, I began a service-learning project with my UNM classes in Ramah called the Adopt-A-Tree program. Originally the project was meant to be a one-time effort to provide trees at low cost to the community to plant in individual yards. However, the response was so positive that I have continued the tree project on an annual basis for the past seven years. Each year the response of community members has been wonderful and the project has turned into a huge effort that has had to be divided into three separate mini-programs.

In the spring of each year, beginning in March, UNM students at Ramah High take orders for ornamental shrubs, shade trees, and fruit trees. The shrubs and shade trees are packaged and delivered about the first week of April; fruit trees are delivered two weeks later. Evergreen orders will be taken in the fall. All of the trees are sold at cost (including shipping) as the Adopt-A-Tree program is meant to be a way for students to provide service to the communities that have sheltered them.

This year the Ramah Adopt-A-Tree program has reached the 10,000-tree mark! Trees have now been placed in many communities including a few in Grants and Gallup; but, the majority of trees have been planted in the areas of Ramah, Timberlake, Zuni, and Pine Hill. If we continue to care for these trees, the shady lanes of Ramah will still be as beautiful and sheltering for the next generation as they are for us. In addition, other communities will now have an opportunity to create their own leafy havens.

Planting trees is a unique opportunity to make a lasting, valuable contribution to the lives of our children and grandchildren. My own life will end long before the lives of some of the trees that we are planting, and I may not see all of the final benefits of this effort. However, a hundred years from now, there will still be something left of me in the trees of Ramah.

Linda L. Burson

Ramah Farmers' Market Potluck Hugh Success

The First Ever Ramah Farmers' Market Buyer meets the Grower/ Craft maker Pot luck held on March 31 exceeded all expectations by attracting three times the participation anticipated by market volunteers. Almost 50 local growers and market patrons crammed into the small room next to the main dining room of the Enchanted Swiss Bakery. Market volunteers struggled with the poor acoustics, but were immensely gratified by the enthusiastic response of the community. Richard Martin provided lettuce and Cindy Anderson a beet dish from their gardens for the potluck, and the dishes provided by participants were, as usual, fabulous. Dave McNitt donated an Enchanted Swiss pizza, and Monika Gauderon provided one of the bakery's hazelnut cakes.

Market volunteers brought market patrons up to date on Market goals, explaining the connection between locally grown food, the building of local cooking traditions, and participation by small back yard gardeners in the community table. The connection between the RFM and the EMAAC cookbook project was used as an example of developing a local food tradition.

What was especially gratifying was the interest by people from the outlying subdivisions of Candy Kitchen and El Morro Ranches. Growers were recruited for the community table from both these subdivisions. The RFM volunteers also made clear its support for any future commercial organic growers as well as back yard gardeners. The next RFM Potluck will be held at a larger facility – possible outside under the trees at the Market site - making it possible for growers and market patrons express their ideas for the market.

RFM receives Grant

On June 1 the New Mexico Farmers' Market Association informed the Ramah Farmers' Market that they had received a NMFMA Capacity Building Grant award of \$2000.00 – their maximum amount. The grants are intended to strengthen farmers' markets in New Mexico by building the capacity and sustainability of market organizations. The grants are awarded on a competitive basis among the 45 markets in existence in New Mexico in order to encourage farmers' markets to strive to improve their markets, and to leverage resources within their own communities. The grant money will be used to fund the new port-a-potty rental, the new shed, the new RFM newsletter, and gasoline for picking up produce from the community table. The money is paid out on a reimbursement basis. In the award letter the Capacity Building Grants Committee noted the strong community support for the Ramah Farmers' Market as indicated by the success of the community table and the attendance at the RFM Potluck in March.

What is "Organic" exactly?

In a recent article in AARP (May & June 2006) Steven Slon interviewed Samuel Fromartz, author of Organic, Inc. (Harcourt) about the organic food industry. Here are some useful excerpts:

Q: What does organic actually mean on a food label?

A: Organic farmers can't use toxic pesticides, chemical herbicides, or chemical fertilizers, and their farms must be certified every year.

Q: Does Organic Food actually taste better?

A: There's a perception that it tastes better. That's partly because a lot of organic food is produced locally at small farms.*

Q: So who buys organic food?

A: Not just yuppies [laughs]. Actually, older people are higher-than-average consumers of organic food. Concern for good health seems to be the prime motivator.

Q: Where do you get the biggest bang for your organic food buck?

A: Recent USDA data found that for conventionally grown produce the **highest** pesticide residue is in **apples, nectarines, peaches, pears, and strawberries**. Some of the **lowest** is in **broccoli and asparagus** (emphasis added, ed.).

Q: You say there are strict rules for labeling a food "organic". What does natural or all natural mean?

A: The USDA's definition of *natural* applies only to meat and means "minimally processed." *Free range* applies only to poultry, but it isn't defined. Bottom line: these words are meaningless on a label.

Q: Is organic food worth the extra cost?

A: It's a good value for personal health reasons alone. But the organic concept is bigger than that. It's about the farm, the animals, the people, and the environment. And in my view, the idea that your own health is connected to the world is a powerful idea.

* editor's note: Freshly picked organic food purchased at a farmer's market tastes better than packaged organic produce from the produce section in the grocery store because stored produce rapidly loses both flavor and nutritional value regardless of whether it is organic or not, as noted by USDA.

Why Buy Your Produce at a Farmers' Market?

Today 60% of America's produce is grown with chemical fertilizers and pesticides in California's Central Valley, sent to a box plant, then to a Distribution Center, then to your local supermarket. This process can take up to three weeks, which means the bag of lettuce you buy at the Gallup supermarket is often two weeks old. You can tell by the coded date at the top of the package. On Monday, July 3 we observed a bag of organic lettuce dated June 16 in a good local grocery store – this is normal. Yes, even **organic** produce is handled this way – it often comes from long distances. Customers at the RFM have commented how long spinach and lettuce lasts in their refrigerator. This is because RMF produce is picked within 24 HOURS of sale. Farmers' market produce is a completely different product than the bagged produce at the supermarket. When supermarkets brag about the "freshness" of their produce, it can be a little misleading. This is particularly true of large chains which have no provision for buying local produce, even if available.

Farmers' Markets and Community Supported Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture started to keep track of farmers' markets in 1994 in the U.S. and, to date; the number of farmers' markets has doubled: In 2000 there were about 1700 markets, increasing to 4000+ markets in 2005. This number will grow even more as gas prices go higher. In a small community a farmers' market is the best way of getting fresh season's crops, grown in the area. Some communities now support **Community Supported Agriculture**. This is food-buying club where a small membership fee allows for a member to share in the local harvest. There are about **1,000** farms in this program in the nation.

Farmers' markets are where the community harvest is sold. The crops are picked that day, or the day before, and brought fresh to the market. A market is also a social place where you get to know the people that grow the food. Gardeners can get with other gardeners, as well as meet the consumers, find out what the people want, and get feedback. At today's supermarket, on the other hand, food is picked sometimes weeks before it gets to the consumers, and who knows what is used in the growing. Produce at most farmers' markets is organically grown and profit is not the main motivation. The Ramah community of local food producers is proud of their efforts and it shows in both the food and the crafts. From backyard gardens comes the best produce because the grower is a person that loves the growing of crops and the taste of ripened, on the vine, picked at the right moment perfection.

The Ramah Farmers' Market is just that kind of place where people can get together to check out that day's harvest, see neighbors, and sit and talk with the growers. It's a great way to find out what is going on in the community. For one day a week you have the chance to get the best, fresh picked, organically grown produce and also support the local agriculture. The Ramah Farmers' Market is in its 10th year and growing. With no commercial growers the Ramah Farmers' Market is all backyard growers. With the way things are it is hard to get fresh produce with out driving 50 or more miles: even a little saving on transportation helps.

Two programs that are in the works are a local senior nutrition program and a local low income voucher program. These will be Ramah Farmers' Market programs hopefully supported by the county; there are no state funds for these programs. These programs are community sponsored and when the infrastructure is in place, there will be a notice of time and place to apply.

What IS that stuff anyway?

(And how do I cook it?)

Growers receive many questions about the produce they grow and sell at the market: Here is a brief primer on some of the less familiar greens now available at the Market:

In his book *Four Season Harvest*, Eliot Coleman in Maine, and, like us, a "zone 5" gardener, describes how his visits to the Provence region in France enlightened him to the enormous variety of greens the French value as additions to their year round salads. He has this to say about mixed species salad greens:

"The best salads are patterns of mixed greenery. These (see below) enhance that mix by adding new shapes, textures and flavors... [The following...] are probably unfamiliar to many gardeners. If you are one of the unacquainted, give them a try. They are jewels of the winter garden. Once you try them, you will share our enthusiasm".

The following three greens from Coleman's list are offered at the Ramah Farmers' Market:

Arugula (*Eruca sativa*) "has long been a popular crop in Europe. ...when grown under cool conditions it has a mild but distinctive flavor. September plantings of its hardier wild relative 'Sylvetta' (*Diplotaxis tenuifolia*) (**Wild Arugula**) are harvestable through the winter months." Arugula is also known as "Rocket". Both do well in Ramah, with its cool summer nights.

Mizuna (*Brassica rapa*) "is a mild and delicate oriental plant with a slight mustard flavor. Its deeply fringed leaves are as lovely in a salad mix as they are delicious."

Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) "also called garden sorrel, shares the lemon piquancy and tang of the common weed from which it was developed, but it has larger leaves and is much more productive. Sorrel holds a unique place among salad greens because it is a perennial...Half a dozen plants ...will provide plenty of leaves for salads and classic sorrel soup..."

Classic Sorrel Soup (Kristi Davis)

Simmer very gently a few minutes until sufficiently wilted, 2 cups of **sorrel** leaves in 4 or 5 cups of chicken broth. Season to taste with garlic. Put into blender with whipping cream and puree. Serve.

Open Face Oyster Poor Boy (Kristi Davis)

Dredge raw oysters from a jar in flour, egg and bread crumbs. Sauté lightly in butter until done. Prepare French bread open face by spreading with garlic mayonnaise. Add fresh **sorrel** leaves and oysters. Voila.

Back Yard and "Hobby" Gardeners!

We need YOU For the RFM Community Table

Believe it or not, the backbone of the Ramah Farmers' Market is the small growers who contribute to the community table. It is through the generosity of these small, backyard or hobby gardeners who provide diversity of produce to the RFM. Yes, we do have serious growers that focus on consistently growing lettuce and spinach week after week, but it is the small gardeners who provide the diversity of produce being demanded by our regular customers. We routinely receive comments that there is not enough diversity of produce at the market – that is where the small gardeners of the community table come in: Last year small back yard gardeners provided the following to the market: asparagus, sweet corn, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, onions, tomatoes, kohlrabi, basil, sage, arugula, collards, eggplant, mustard, beets, beet greens, rhubarb, radishes, zucchini, pumpkin, acorn squash, hubbard squash, turnips, and more.

The Community Table is specifically designed for participation by small growers. This is how:

1. All we want is your LEFTOVER produce, herbs, cut flowers, and eggs. We know you are growing mostly for the joy of gardening, and for your own table. We are asking only for those vegetables that, even if you are canning and freezing, you have in enough abundance to share a little bit with the Farmers' Market Community. So, before you throw it to the chickens, give it to us to market.
2. This is the best part: **We will arrange to pick up your produce at your house!** Ideally all our growers would come to the market, but we know given the price of gasoline, the distance from market, and the fact it takes up an entire Saturday morning, it is not reasonable to expect gardeners to come, and set up a table to sell 5 bunches of onions, or a bundle of radishes. We, however, will arrange to pick it up, present it, market it, and then get the money back to you. And it will look great presented along with all the other produce.
3. No, you will not make tons of money. You will probably make about \$3.00 a week. But week to week, it adds up! We recommend that you set this small amount aside to purchase seed and soil amendments. There is no obligation to participate in the table every week. You make the decision to contribute from week to week, depending on your harvest. If you have only one surplus crop, you will probably participate in about three markets.

4. This is a great opportunity for your kids! Have your kids pick and prep the vegetables for the table – we'll pick it up and later pay them for the crop. Kids growing for the market are more than welcome to volunteer at the table. We will be happy to train them. This could be a part of a 4-H project.

5. For those of you unsure how best to choose and prepare crops for the table, we would be delighted to come out to visit your garden and make suggestions. Contact the co-managers.

5. If you live in El Morro Ranches, Candy Kitchen or Timberlake we already have volunteers lined up to transport your produce. If you live in Pine Meadows, Vanderwagon, Forest Road 50 or Grants we will work to arrange a rendezvous point for you to drive part of the way to drop off your produce until we arrange for a volunteer. It is always an option for you to drop off the produce at the market on Saturday Morning at 9:30 am.

6. For some of you more serious gardeners, it may interest you to know that this years community table growers (and ex community table growers now manning their own tables) are earning between 20.00 and 80.00 a week.

If you are ready to participate in the community table please call Jackie or Denis at 783-4440, or Kate at 783-4704. If you live in El Morro Ranches you can call Paula Tripodi at 783-4429.

Buying Produce "In Season"

In the "Old Days" people bought their produce locally, and "in season". What does "in season" mean? If you had a vegetable garden in your back yard the vegetables and fruits in your diet shifted through the year. In the spring you ate peas, greens and radishes. As summer came on there were turnips, early beets, more lettuce and spinach, beans. It was actually kind of exciting: The first head of broccoli, the first zucchini (but not the last!) the first ripe tomato – early cabbage, sweet peppers, chili peppers, beans, early potatoes. In the Fall, winter squash.

In New England, where I grew up, August was not complete without the appearance of roadside stands selling sweet corn. We never bought sweet corn in the store. If you were lucky enough to be growing sweet corn yourself, you first started a BIG pot of water on the stove, and then went out and picked it, shucked it and got it in the pot just as the water was starting to boil. Sometimes we would serve this with barbecued steak and homemade German potato salad. I was fortunate enough to work on a dairy farm that served it with blue crab caught the night before. Fresh sweet corn is absolutely spectacular with (fresh caught Atlantic) lobster. Sometimes we just ate corn for dinner – nothing else! It was a really special time.

Continued on page 9 "In Season"

A Plea for Sanity

I feel it is a grave travesty and a gross disservice to the citizens of New Mexico that Governor Richardson has vetoed the funding for the New Mexico Farmers' Market Association (NMFMA).

In an age when ill health due to poor nutrition from over processed, over preserved food is a stark reality; a local source of really fresh, wholesome food is of critical importance. Our health is our wealth. Also, the community co-operation and unity that centers on these markets is a wonderful healing agent for ills being experienced by our society in general. People getting together, exchanging ideas, becoming comfortable with differences – just having a chance to experience healthy social interchange - how many people have this precious opportunity today?

We draw people from a 60 mile radius who come back time and again – mainly to visit and experience a feeling of well being. Governor Richardson, if you think this may be important – please – reconsider your actions.

Jesse Lee Grey, Ramah Farmers' Market

We Could Really Use Your Help...

Recently the Ramah Farmers' Market received a \$2000.00 Capacity Building Grant from The New Mexico Farmers' Market Association for assistance in community building. This may be the last year RFM will get any funding from this organization as Governor Richardson has vetoed funding for this most excellent organization (see pp. 6-7). It is of the utmost importance that the NMFMA make it back into the state legislative budget at the end of this year. You can help by contacting Governor Richardson (see below) and letting him know how important the Ramah Farmers' Market is to our community. Governor Richardson gave no explanation for his last minute veto of either the NMFMA or the Senior Nutrition pilot program. Recently, on his televised political ads, he bragged about cutting "waste" out of the state legislative budget. It remains unclear why the governor has such contempt for farmers' markets and elderly nutrition programs. You can help by doing the following:

----CALL THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE at 505-827-3000 and ask for CONSTITUANT RELATIONS. Let the governor know you are disappointed that he did not support these bills which help small farmers across the state, as well as the people who purchase locally grown produce at farmer's markets.

-----WRITE A LETTER OF SUPPORT for the work of the NMFMA and the Ramah Farmer's Market and your disappointment with his vetoes, and send it to: Constituent Relations, State Capitol, Suite 400, Santa Fe, NM.

-----PICK UP A POSTAGE PAID preaddressed postcard addressed to the Governor's office from the Market Managers during the Ramah Farmers' Market on Saturdays.

Call for Produce

The Market co-managers have received comments that the Market is great – but not enough variety of produce for people to buy! Customers want tomatoes! – but remember - it is still **very early** in the year for the 7000 foot elevation gardens of the greater Ramah area. And all the produce at the Ramah Farmers' Market is **LOCALLY GROWN**. This is the time of year when lettuce, spinach, radishes, spring onions, mustards, specialty greens, beet greens, kale and perennial herbs are **IN SEASON**. Please be patient! Tomatoes are not in season yet! Coming in July we should have (flea beetles willing) beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, collards, chard, kohlrabi, potatoes, peas, turnips as well as spinach, lettuce and other greens.

Contest

Roger Irwin informs me that we can't call the *Ramah Farmers' Market Newsletter*, well, the *Ramah Farmers' Market Newsletter*. The newsletter needs a *name*. For example, it could be called the *Ramah Farmers' Market Artichoke* (Roger's suggestion). To that end, we would like to announce a contest to name the RFM newsletter. Send in your suggestions to RFM Contest, HC 61 Box 816, Ramah, NM 87321, or e-mail ramahfarmersmkt@yahoo.com, or write down your suggestion and drop it off to one of the co-managers at the market. The winner receives a free Farmers' Market apron like you see at the market and the Enchanted Swiss Café. The winner will be announced at the August 3 Market.

Ramah Farmers' Market

First Ever Fundraiser

Special Event Flea Market

Bring Anything

Bring it all

Set up a Table next to the RFM

\$5.00 Space Fee

Saturday, August 5, 10:00am -1:00pm

Set up time 9:00 am

Call 783-4440 for info

Governor Vetoes Funds for New Mexico Farmers' Markets

Santa Fe-- Small-scale farmers and low-income senior citizens will be losing financial support during the coming agricultural season as a result of two of Governor Richardson's recent line item legislative vetoes. The bills were slated to fund projects supported by the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association, the non-profit which advocates for New Mexico's farmers' markets.

Sponsored by Senator Cisco McSorley (D-Bernalillo) and Representative Jeanette Wallace (R-Los Alamos), the Association's "Promotion & Development" bill would have provided \$75,000 of operating funds, most of which are distributed to statewide markets through grants, educational opportunities and technical services, as it has for the past several years.

The \$60,000 "Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Pilot" bill would have helped feed low-income senior citizens in six counties — Socorro, Valencia, San Juan, Rio Arriba, Clovis, and Portales—by providing them with vouchers to buy fresh food at their local farmers' markets.

"I was absolutely shocked when I learned of the Governor's veto," said Representative Wallace who has successfully sponsored the bill for years. "This money helps small farmers throughout New Mexico, and these markets bring an important sense of community, health and vitality to all of our rural and urban areas."

Representative Don Tripp (R-Socorro), sponsor of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Pilot bill said, "It is really a shame that the Governor vetoed this relatively small budget item that could have helped nearly 3,000 seniors who often do not have the means or access to healthy, fresh food. This veto hurts the elderly poor and small farmers who both stood to benefit from the program. I am personally disappointed with the Governor's decision."

This Senior Farmers' Market state-funded pilot would have also potentially helped New Mexico earn future federal funding under the USDA's Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program from which it currently is excluded.

While funding for several site-specific farmers' markets made it through the legislative session under capital outlay expenditures, these physical location projects are completely unrelated to the statewide operational funds vetoed by the Governor. As Espanola Market Manager Sabra Moore (who's Espanola Market received funding for a permanent site) said, "While I'm absolutely thrilled we received capital outlay funding, I can't touch that money for operating the market. All I have in my farmers' market bank account for the coming season is \$10. What now?" That is the question that farmers' markets around the state are asking themselves as spring announces the new growing season.

In 2005, gross sales at New Mexico's farmer's markets totaled more than \$3.3 million dollars, helping more than 1,000 small-scale farmers earn a living while providing fresh, locally grown food to their communities.

Citizens who are interested in learning more about this situation can visit the Association's website at www.farmersmarketsnm.org

The New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association is committed to supporting our state's 45 farmers' markets. The markets are the most important survival line for small farmers, offering them direct access to consumers which enable them to make a profit and stay on their farms. The Association also works to ensure that those less fortunate, such as low-income women, infant and children, have access to fresh, locally produced food through the federally-funded WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

Help us out -

The newsletter is looking for growing techniques that work in the Ramah area. For example, what crops grow best in a backyard garden? What can you do about bugs, gophers and all the other things that go wrong? If you have something that works we would like to hear about it, so we can tell others (and put it in the newsletter.)

Some Helpful Hints

Check the ph of the water you use in your garden every so often: this will help you know if the nutrients are available for the plants to take up, as well as any changes that may have taken place that will affect what you use to feed your garden.

Rabbits (cottontails and jacks) can cause real damage. If you have a house cat and use a litter box, the old litter spread by the fence line will keep the rabbits out. Reapply after it rains.

Gophers don't like a old coffee grounds, marigolds, or manure tea made from chicken manure. (Of course, there are always some exceptions) .

Flea beetles are those little tiny shiny black bugs that take out very young, barely sprouted turnips and brassicas. Watch your just sprouted or newly transplanted turnips, broccoli, cabbage, arugula, cress and mustards every day as they are very susceptible to flea beetles at this age. The moment you start seeing flea beetles or flea beetle damage spray with organic rotenone or rotenone/pyrethrin combination. Keep observing every day and repeat as necessary. Wait too long to spray and these small plants will not recover.

If you have a tried and true helpful hint send it to **RFM Helpful Hints, HC 61 Box 816, Ramah N.M. 87321** , or email ramahfarmersmkt@yahoo.com, or tell us at the Market. We would like to hear any ideas.

Wanted: Writers!

The Ramah Farmer's Market is looking for writers for the RFM **newsletter** promoting locally based agriculture as practiced by both back yard gardeners and commercial market crop growers. Articles will be written by local growers and feature articles on organic soil improvement, soil amendments, produce handling, growing for the Market, integrating the family garden with the Market, children growing and selling crops, 4-H, season extenders, green houses, cold frames, orchards, honey bees, solving local garden problems, gophers, etc. The newsletter will also feature articles of a more theoretical bent, such as the alternative agriculture movement, vanguard agriculture, food security issues, the art of gardening, and gardening as an artistic and spiritual experience. If you are interested in writing an article for the newsletter contact Jackie or Denis, 783-4440.

Crude Produce

A Visit with Richard Martin, RFM Grower



One of RFM mission objectives is encouraging all greater Ramah area residents to grow their own food in their own backyards. We will be interviewing successful and innovative gardeners as a way to instruct, motivate and inspire local residents to grow and/or consume locally grown produce. You can meet Richard yourself and taste his fine harvest at the RFM at his "Crude Produce" table.

The first thing you see when you take the last curve on the road to Richard Martin's house are hundreds of translucent streamers blowing in the wind, shimmering like aspen leaves in the sun, arranged around a 6 foot high rectangular structure. The pulsating effect is weird, otherworldly. Another Candy Kitchen UFO sighting? No, it's Richard Martin's garden. The translucent streamers? Four inch wide strips of plastic sheeting, hung around the perimeter of Richard's garden like Halloween ghosts, to protect it from elk. Does it work? The garden's raised beds of lettuce took a bad hit from a discerning cow elk gourmand less than two days before opening market day this June. Now, Richard reports, elk get no closer than 10 feet to his homemade "ghost fence". "They still come to take a look at it". He observes, "Its spooky – Its psychological- I think of them (the plastic strips) as the spirits of all the lettuce the elk ate." This is just one example of Richard's many successful, low cost garden innovations.

I first saw Richard's garden on April 1, the day after the Ramah Farmers' Market Potluck. At the potluck Richard and Jesse Grey invited local growers and market customers to a workshop at his home in Candy Kitchen. The informal workshop featured the use of a low cost "make it yourself" green house and "low tunnel" cold frames to get an early start on the gardening season. I was very impressed to find that Richard was already feasting on full size heads of lettuce, grown outside in his garden, while the rest of us were thumbing through seed catalogs.

One of the keys to fresh tasty greens in March is a green house. By capitalizing on the warmth of the earth itself, Richard built a greenhouse for the price of a roll of plastic. He comments, "I had nothing but the earth itself." Richard proceeded to dig a 3 and a half foot deep pit, 4 feet wide and 7 feet long. Steps are cut into one end of the pit, and oak sapling hoops are curved over the pit and then covered with a double layer of 4 ml plastic stretched over and fastened with wire. Thermal mass was added by two water filled barrels set on the floor of the pit. (For pictures of Richard's garden

and green house see the RFM button on www.trnews.info.)

Richard's original motivation for gardening is a common one for many aspiring homesteaders who have moved to this area – the desire for self-sufficiency. Richard decided to find out how early in the year he could start gardening. Plants were started the **last week of January** inside the house in a sunny window. The plants were then transplanted the **3rd week of February** into the green house. The plants were set at ground level on the shelf formed between the double plastic wall and the edge of the pit, which puts them at waist height to the gardener standing in the pit. Placing the bulk of the greenhouse's air space down into the earth makes for a much warmer situation than a freestanding green house.

Around **March 1st** the plants were transplanted a second time into raised beds in the garden, covered by low tunnel cold frames. Richard's 18 "low tunnels" are constructed of 4 ml plastic stretched over hoops made of wire, pvc pipe or saplings. The plastic was held down at the edges with soil to make them air tight during the cold March nights. Richard believes that raised beds are important, especially under the cold frames, - "It gives the cold air a place to go." He is currently experimenting with lining the beds with flat stones in order to cut down on evaporative water loss (see photo).

With this combination of greenhouse and low tunnels Richard grows eight varieties of lettuce, three varieties of spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, bok choy, Osaka mustard, sweet peppers, chili peppers, and tomatoes.

Richard grows organically. He says, "Nature gives you everything". For soil amendments he uses forest duff, horse manure and compost, materials either found on his land or contributed by friends. This year he used seed left over from the Oso Vista seed exchange that took place last October. Richard's garden is truly a community event!

Richard has been "servicing parties" with fresh greens out of his green house since March. He has been harvesting from the garden since **April 1**. He refuses to charge for his produce – instead, he accepts donations. Currently he has five regular customers whom he "gifts" with produce. He figures he gives away 85% of his crop. "I'm moving all the stuff I can grow", he says proudly.

I asked Richard why he refers to his greens and vegetables as "Crude Produce": He responded, "I looked up "organic" in the dictionary, and one of the synonyms was "crude". I don't like calling myself "organic", because for me the word has been politicized, bastardized. It's been turned into a capitalistic marketing ploy. I grow my garden using basic things given to me by my land, with sticks and mud and string. So it's crude. I'm not interested in becoming registered or certified "organic". Its too political – I don't need to be validated in that way." He continues, "I love the feeling of connectedness to the life force of the earth – it's a high. I have individual, personal dealings with each plant. You get to know them individually, which makes it tough at thinning time. It's a cosmic connection."

Richard's garden has returned his support in kind. He figures he has spent \$35.00 this year in supplies – mostly plastic and gasoline for his generator to run the submersible

pump in his well. His garden has brought in about 450.00 this year so far – enough for him to be able to stay home and garden. He reflects, “I was doing carpentry before, and I like carpentry, but I was never here – I only saw the place in the evenings. I was getting too stressed. Now I stay home. Now if I need something, I make it, or I do without. Doing without is easier.

I asked Richard if he had any advice for anyone preparing to make gardening a bigger part of their lives. He responded “You have to be able to let it all go – that’s what the elk taught me. The elk reminded me of an important lesson of life: Just let it go.” He added, “Don’t burden yourself with expectations (about the garden). Don’t stress yourself. Keep it small. Keep it simple. Keep having fun. *J.Y.R*

RFM will be organizing free, informal “workshops” at market grower gardens for both gardeners and market customers, and members of the community. Stay tuned.



Still Looking...

We are still looking for small scale back yard gardeners to participate in the Community Table (see p. 4). Briefly, we are interested in the very small amount of produce you have left over from growing for yourself and your family and friends. We are hoping to get RFM volunteers are prepared to market this small amount of produce for you so you do not have to sit at a table at the market for three hours with your three turnips.

In Season *continued from page 4*

My mother, who was born in 1918 and grew up during the Great Depression on a dairy farm, described what it was like literally living out of vegetable garden: Whatever was ready to pick that day that was what you ate. If green beans were ready that’s what you ate – all week. Maybe two weeks. My mother is convinced her excellent health is attributed to her eating out of the garden in this way. What you didn’t eat, you canned or froze. Over the whole year, your diet got balanced. And it was always best quality fresh. Today, because of the tremendous amount of (now expensive) energy put into agricultural transport you can get any type of produce any time of the year. But is the loss in quality and flavor, and the loss of that sense of a vegetable being in its season for where you are living, is it really an improvement? Me, I still love going back to Connecticut in August and waiting for the sweet corn.

J.Y.R.

Crafts Market

For the home crafters it is hard to know if what you enjoy making is also going to sell. This stops some artists from trying – after all – is everything luck or not? Or even if the crafts market is good, sometimes it’s just not the right day for that craft.

The Ramah Farmers’ Market has some very different crafts, - homemade pastry, trinkets, fabric arts, pottery, - an eclectic mix. All this is created from the love of making a personal contribution to the arts. Some crafts will be kept as a reminder of a place, or time, or be given as a way of showing thoughtfulness or caring.

When the craftsperson loves what he or she makes, - this will sell. The thoughtfulness of the craft making makes for quality and uniqueness. It also helps if the craft is easy to use, or is pleasing to the eye. The buyer feels good about paying a proper price. Get to know the craftsperson that makes what you like, and they will make what you want.

There is a craft in all of us. If you want to find the love of crafting then come down the Ramah Farmers’ Market and see what is being made. Who knows, you could find something you like, or something you do that others would like. You can ask the youngest of the Ramah crafters how she does so well, at 12 years old, with just a string of seed beads.

Come up and sit in the shade of the old trees - enjoy the three hours, talk to the people, get to know the grower of the produce, and the crafts people. You’ll find that you have a great community - sometimes the craft is in the people you meet.

Bodhiarts

Ramah Farmers' Market

*First Ever
Fundraiser*

Special Event Flea Market

*Bring Anything
Bring it all
Set up a Table next to the RFM
\$5.00 Space Fee*

Saturday, August 5, 10:00am -1:00pm

Set up time 9:00 am

Contents

The Trees of Ramah - Linda Burson	1
Market News	1-2
Community Supported Agriculture	3
Community Table	4
Governor Richardson Veto	6-7
A Visit with Richard Martin	8
What is Organic?	2
Recipes	3
Buying Produce in Season	4
Helpful Hints	6
Crafts Market	9

Editors & Writers: Denis Black, Linda Burson,
Jackie Rossignol, Kate Wilson
Contact the co-managers: Jackie Rossignol 783-4440,
jacqueblack17@yahoo.com; Kate Wilson 783-4704
HC 61 Box 816, Ramah NM 87321

Ramah Farmers' Market

First Ever

Fundraiser

Special Event Flea Market

Bring Anything

Bring it all

Set up a Table next to the RFM

\$5.00 Space Fee

Saturday, August 5, 10:00am -1:00am

Set up time 9:00 am

Call 783-4440 for info

Ramah Farmers' Market
HC 61 Box 816
Ramah, NM 87321



Wooland Design 7-20-07