

[RECOVERY AND REGENERATION PROJECT FOR 2021 SEASON]

ORGANIZED BY ERWIN KARL

At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, we embarked upon a Recovery and Regeneration Project that addressed our ‘new reality’ which underscored the failings in large-scale agriculture and food production that have diminished health throughout the populace. In view of that, we worked on planting and harvesting more foods and medicines based on local, healthy plants and fungus and on building up the capacity of the farm to be more productive and thus counter food and financial insecurity and contribute to human health.

2020 Initiatives:

Although the uncertainty of the pandemic strictly limited the number of visitors here, we did build up the soil tilth on more of the fallow pastures on the farm, and established permaculture plots that will provide soil, fungi, fruit, and herbs for many seasons to come. Some of the highlights of those efforts:

Mushroom Cultivation - Addition of nameko logs and stropharia wood chip beds, pest control, maintenance and harvesting of existing shitake, wine cap, oyster cultivation. Propagation of new species using spores, tissue and liquid cultures, new grow media.

Seed sharing/starting – we built cold frames, hot frames, raised beds, and hay bail gardens. We also received donations of starter plants, seeds and tree seedlings from allied groups.

Expanded perennial herb garden, disseminated existing Jerusalem artichokes, hops, horseradish, comfrey and asparagus at CycleX and shared with others.

Recovered pasture land in new radial garden plot by building swales on side hill and setting up a hub for top soil, manure and mulch uphill. Set up various composters.

Riparian buffer garden. Featuring native aquatic plants, bordered by clones of elderberries and aronia berry. Selectively weeded to encourage plants and herbs in existing wetland zones including bittercress, willow, and mint.

Orchard extension – in addition to 20 mature heirloom variety apple trees in deer fencing, half a dozen free range apples, plum and pear trees, we have planted nut trees and grafted new apple trees.

Berry patch –acquired black currant, raspberry and strawberry plants as well as gooseberry and jostaberry. Selectively weeded or pruned to increase productivity in white raspberry, grape vines, blackberry and black raspberries already growing here.

Wildcrafting, canning – harvested and preserved cultivated foods including shitakes, asparagus, apples, berries and hops through canning, dehydration and fermentation, and shared manual apple presses with visitors working outdoors. Also collected wild plants and fungi from the property and adjacent public lands for preservation.

Biochar, Compost – Built two prototype retort kilns and inoculation/ compost tea systems.

Planted cover crops, companion planting for orchards and produce beds and added to supply of woodchips, composted manures, mulch hay, and topsoil from local sources.

2021 Season Plans:

The efforts last year with minimal help produced visually modest results but in preparing the farm for the 2021 season, we have observed that the cover crops, compost and hugelkultur piles have resulted in a significantly larger amount of beds that are ready to nurture more plants and fungi. We have many opportunities for folks who wish to learn about agriculture and take home plants and produce. To ‘grow out’ the projects initiated last year, we can use hands to plant, weed, and move materials, as well as build, repair machinery and engage in information exchanges.

New Initiatives:

Outdoor kitchen- a living structure incorporating existing metal sculpture has been proposed that would include fast growing woody plants, a living roof and rain catchment system.

Humanure composter- a simple inexpensive system using portable privies, sawdust and a composter utilizing recycled wood pallets, hay or straw and a rain catchment system. Will be adjacent to mini greenhouse which may be a ‘saltbox’ house with upcycled windows or a hoop house.

Outdoor camping – tent platforms, lean-tos and shelters using living structures or locally harvested rough-sawn lumber.

Mushroom cultivation – free, outdoor workshop providing instruction on growing culinary and medicinal mushrooms on logs, straw and woodchips. Participants will be sent home with mushroom kits to grow.