



# The Acorn

*Issue 2 Fall 2004, Wet Season*

A newsletter for members, friends and family of White Oak Farm

## Field Trips to the Farm

By Julia Schreiber & Eli Sarnat

White Oak Farm had the pleasure of hosting fourteen school group visits during spring and fall of 2004. Over a hundred students, teachers, and parents from two local elementary schools rode the bus to the farm for exciting hands-on experiences. The farm's gardens and natural habitats were transformed into outdoor classrooms that brought themes from their school curriculums to life. Patient observations of wasps, aphids, and ladybeetles interacting on a willow tree became lessons in animal behavior. Three garden beds of cover crop planted by fourth and fifth graders became a scientific experiment for investigating the affect of light on plant growth. Acorns gathered by the children became studies in ethnobotany before being propagated for future farm restoration projects.

One activity the students especially loved was spending time with the farm's honeybees. After handling the equipment used by beekeepers and learning about the importance of bees to our own lives, the stu-



*4th & 5th Grade Class from Sugarloaf Learning Center explore a hive of bees with Eli's assistance*

dents were ready for their first peak into the bustling hives. Inside they saw eggs, larvae, and pupae. They saw worker bees packing nectar and pollen. The lucky ones even had the honor of seeing her royal majesty, the queen bee herself! We ended the activity by each tasting a little honey from the frames and thanking the bees for all of their hard work.

For snack the students got crunchy carrots, celery, and apples all picked fresh from the organic gardens. Then, at the closing of each visit the students, teachers, and farmers joined together in a circle and passed around the "talking gourd," to share their favorite activities, garden treats, and special moments of the day. Many thanks to all of the kids, teachers, parents, and volunteers that helped to make each visit such a wonderful experience.

## The Shareholders Share

By Cressi and Robert Albee

Our family participated in White Oak Farm Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) for the 2004 season, where we really enjoyed the experience of receiving locally grown organic produce. We were enchanted by the weekly trips to the farm to pick up our produce and see the farm changing with the seasons. Strawberries, delightful salad greens and hearty fava beans greeted us in the spring. As the days lengthened into summer, tomatoes, fresh cilantro and peppers became delectable homemade salsa. As the fall came in, we brewed warm soups with potatoes, carrots and leeks. Being part of a CSA is a wonderful way to keep your family in touch with foods available seasonally and a great way to embellish you own garden's production or your weekly shopping.

Beyond the beauty of the delicious foods growing, we witnessed the weaving of a community and the creation of a dynamic and sustainable lifestyle. It has been amazing to watch the infrastructure develop around this piece of land: greenhouses, a pond, a cob oven and now a community building to house current and future dreams. We appreciate the opportunity to witness such graciousness and integrity as we see in the people who grow this food for us (you are what you eat). Lastly, we really had fun expanding our cooking knowledge with new produce, like celery, and we loved the recipes that were shared with us in the weekly CSA newsletter. We look forward to being CSA members next year.

# The Common House

By Taylor Starr

After eight intensive months of work on the Common House, the clear crisp days of fall find us finishing up the roof decking on an amazing structure. The dedicated crew includes Peter, Stacey, Tai, Rachel, Eli, Julia, Taylor, and numerous other helpers. Together we have felled trees, peeled, sanded, and stained poles, pulled nails, built forms and poured concrete, raised posts and beams, lifted rafters, and nailed decking, among other tasks big and small. The result is still in process, and with the framing and roof decking completed, it is more than we could've imagined. Next season we'll turn our attention to raising walls, completing the roof and sculpting interior features – hopefully finishing in time for a thanksgiving celebration November 2005.



*Common House roof decking nears completion - November, 2004*

To our knowledge the common house is the first permitted structure in Josephine County to incorporate cob walls, a living roof, or an earthen floor. We hope that its "firsts," will help to smooth the way for others in our county, state, and country to design and build natural homes with ecological integrity. The common house is a forty foot diameter oc-



*Tai Kim & Peter Gauss raise a roof-supporting post - August, 2004*

tagon that will enclose our staff and event kitchen, indoor classroom, meeting space, office, and a sleeping loft. It is a pole frame structure supporting a radial pole roof, built with locally harvested Douglas fir trees. The Common House will also feature straw bale walls, passive solar heating, and boards milled locally from dead trees. In its design and construction we have learned an incredible amount and had an opportunity to share a bit of what we've learned with others.

As we move into the second phase of building next spring, we will focus our efforts on raising straw bale and cob walls. This will give us the chance to share this project with the greater community and with folks from around the country with an interest in natural building. We are planning a week-long cob workshop, as well as shorter weekend courses on plastering, straw bale building, and earthen floors. Please let us know if you're interested in any of these workshops or if you just want to stop by the farm to check out our progress or lend a hand. In our experience so far, "the more the merrier!,"

## White Oak Farm Events for 2005

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| May 20-22      | Strawbale Building Workshop (adults)    |
| June 12-18     | Residential Farmstay I (ages 8-12)      |
| Jun 26 - Jul 2 | Residential Farmstay II (ages 8-12)     |
| July 16-23     | Intro to Cob Building Workshop (adults) |
| Aug 15-18      | Farm Daycamp (ages 5-7)                 |
| Sept 9-11      | Earthen Floors Workshop (adults)        |
| Sept 23-25     | Natural Plasters Workshop (adults)      |

*10% discount on adult workshops for members!!!*

## Board Of Directors

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## What's On Our Plate

By Stacey Denton

As I write this, the first hard frost of the fall is beginning to melt into the warmth of day outside. With these early days of fall, life on the farm starts to slow down a bit and our work transitions away from tending the annual vegetables whose care busies the spring and summer, to planting perennial herbs, bulbs, and trees in the garden, orchard, shelterbelts, and swales.

This December we will be developing the next segment of curriculum to support our children's education programs for grades 6-12. Once finished, this curriculum will become the backbone of summer farm camps, apprenticeships with teenagers and young adults, and a program that we are

developing in partnership with other local farmers and educators to provide a residential experience for teens interested in wilderness ethics and sustainable living.

As always, the winter months gives us time for researching and grant writing for our educational programs and green building projects. There is much yet to research in environmentally-friendly materials to secure for the Common House project. This we will undertake while continuing to work on building the Common House loft floor and window/door bucks. Bit by bit, pole by pole, the Common House grows larger and more complete.

Lastly, the fall and winter serve as a good time for reflection on the past year's efforts, and on what's to come for White Oak Farm, the non-profit, and for White Oak Farm, the community. We are looking for a donation of a yurt, dome or tipi to serve as staff housing for next year and will be erecting the structure in late winter. Also, we are looking for a natural builder and a gardener/educator to join the staff of White Oak Farm for next year. The arrangement of living and working together at the farm in intentional community keeps us discussing, reflecting, and learning about the process of creating community. To help guide us in that process, we will visit other intentional communities on the West Coast this winter. This is also a good time of year for folks to visit White Oak Farm, share in the work, the good food, and to experience what's on our plate.



## All You Have To Do

By Grace Thalmayer, age 11

*Composed during field trip to White Oak Farm; author pictured in the foreground preparing garden beds with friends*

As I sit down I listen  
As I sit down I look  
And if I am quiet  
One sweet bird sounds like so many

As I sit down mist seeps over a mountain  
As it comes down it reveals snow as white as clouds

The sky is shimmering in the distance  
Just like the sun sparkles on the ocean

Plants grow and die over time  
Life is amazing and it is all around you  
All you have to do is to listen and to look

## Become a White Oak Farm Member Today!

\$35 will purchase two heirloom fruit trees for the mother orchard.

\$100 will bring a 5-7 year-old to a week of Farm daycamp.

\$200 will bring an elementary school class to the Farm for a day.

\$500 will provide one week of Farmstay for



**White Oak Farm &  
Education Center**  
P.O. Box 450  
Williams, OR 97544  
website: [www.whiteoakfarmcsa.org](http://www.whiteoakfarmcsa.org)  
email: [info@whiteoakfarmcsa.org](mailto:info@whiteoakfarmcsa.org)  
(541) 846-0776

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## Celebrating White Oak Farm Members

With great thanks we want to acknowledge the generous contributions of WOF members. Over the course of 2004, our members have contributed over \$7,000 to support the work of the farm. Just to name a few of the ways we've allocated your donations: we have expanded our orchards, bought tools for our growing staff and programs, enhanced our irrigation systems, and purchased resources for curriculum development. Wow! Thanks to all who kindly made a contribution. If you have not yet become a member of WOF, or have not yet renewed your membership for 2005, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution. Or, if you have a friend who you think would support our work, please help us to send them one of our biannual newsletters.

We appreciate any contributions that you are able to make, including help on the farm with construction projects and gardening, graphic and website design, and in-kind donations of tools and equipment. As the Common House construction continues into its second year, we are especially interested in having members participate in our straw bale stacking and cob work parties in the spring and summer of 2005. Mark your calendars! Hope to see you on the farm soon and thank you again for your support.



### *Become a White Oak Farm Member Today!*

\$35       \$100       \$200       \$500       Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Mail this form along with your membership contribution to:*

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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**White Oak Farm**  
**P.O. Box 450**  
**Williams, OR 97544**