

AROUND THE PLACE

July - August 2012

Summer's long days have given us cool morning and evening hours to work outside and hot days full of sunshine to encourage orchard and garden growth, then gentle nights that provide us a time to rest.

The orchard is about a month ahead of normal in terms of fruit, and the trees are heavy with crabapples, apples, plums, and pears. Windfall apples have attracted several families of deer, and we have watched the fawns grow, losing their spotted coats and becoming young adults as the months have passed. The deer, though wary, have no fear of us. Early mornings and later afternoons are their preferred browsing times, and during the heat of the day, several have chosen to rest in the shadows of our more secluded buildings. They watch us as we walk by, but often don't even bother to stand up.

Their "Thumper" friends, the cottontails and jackrabbits, have experienced a population explosion this year. We have, literally, dozens and dozens of rabbits. The lawns and fields sometimes swarm with rabbit activity. In fact, the rabbits have been so plentiful that our lawns have not needed mowing since mid-May, due to the daily munching of these rabbit hordes.

In years past, coyotes have helped keep the rabbit population in check but this summer we seem to have no coyotes to help balance the numbers of rabbits. Late last winter when the sheep were herded through this area, trappers hunted coyotes throughout the valley from airplanes, and they appear to have done a thorough job. We miss hearing the coyotes call to one another, and we daily see evidence of the imbalance caused by eliminating so many of them.

One of the projects we have discussed for several years involved cleaning out the drainage ditch that runs from north to south behind the Main House and South Unit. Over time this ditch has filled in, both from the slippage of the hillside to the west and also the erosion of the ditch banks themselves. This has resulted in snowmelt and spring water seeping through the cinderblock wall into the basement in early springtime.

A generous friend in the valley loaned us his backhoe for the month of July, and Dan Hathaway took on the ditch project, using the backhoe to loosen the dirt along the 100 yards of ditch, and then using his tractors to carry the dirt out to the area in front of the south unit. The result is a cleared ditch from behind the Main House all the way down to the road, and a redesigned topography to the south and east of the guest unit. We are hopeful that all this work will eliminate drainage problems for another fifty years.

Along with most of the rest of the nation, we have received only a fraction of our normal rainfall this year. However, the water system installed five years ago has done a wonderful job of keeping our orchards, lawns, and gardens irrigated, even in this year of severe drought. Our irrigation sprinklers run constantly, and we move them daily to insure coverage of each area on a regular basis. Summertime water flow from the new spring system is about 150 gallons per minute, which means that we have not had any water shortages since the system was installed. What a difference from the original spring system, where the flow in summer was 7-10 gallons per minute.

Midsummer's long hot days are just the kind of weather that encourages garden growth. The community gardeners have regularly weeded, watered, and harvested. In return, the garden has given back luxuriant lettuce, spinach, beets, onions, and chard, and even some snap peas.

By the week of our summer seminar, we had green beans to pick, along with lovely large heads of broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbages. Although the spring greens had finally bolted in the heat, the beets and kohlrabi were ready to pick, and our garlic expert harvested most of the garlic bulbs. There are now dozens of bulbs of several garlic varieties drying in one of the outbuildings. We hope to begin picking tomatoes and corn in the next few days, along with some squash, peppers and herbs.

Experiencing the Universe Through the Garden: From Vegetables and Flowers to Inner Wisdom

As I write this, we have just completed a truly amazing seminar week. We had an intellectually and spiritually stimulating week of classes that included practical exercises, hands-on experiments and activities, helpful garden information, and wonderful discussions with fellow attendees.

We enjoyed classes inside and outside, along with singing, dancing, bodywork, breathwork, and meditation.

The correlation of the garden with the energy world into which we are all integrated was carried

throughout the week in meaningful and sometimes startling ways. One of the cumulative effects of the week's classes was to help us perceive multiple

aspects of our world with 'new' eyes and deeper understanding. By week's end we felt vibrantly the energy systems that we are and that we are integrated into.

One of our attendees was from Hawaii, where she teaches Hawaiian culture (hula, language, survival skills, etc.) Her comments and classes helped us filter our perspective through a different culture, as well as giving us a fascinating insight into another way of perceiving our world.

The Denver participants brought with them personal and spiritual support that enriched our week immeasurably.

And Mike Schneider, as our lead teacher this year, was the 'glue' that held it all together thematically and content-wise. I expect that most of us will look at gardens from now on with new understanding as well as new respect for the complex, intricate, and awe-inspiring patterns in nature...and in ourselves. As Vitvan put it, "You do not function any differently than a rose."

Vitvan's closing in Lesson 4 of Cosmology seems an apt closing for "Around the Place": "May peace and joy attend [our] efforts."

Susan Wetmore
August, 2012

Snake Valley Calendar for 2013

Snake Valley is still fighting to keep its own water out of the hands of Las Vegas. As a fund raiser for The Snake Valley Festival this year, residents of the valley brought together beautiful photos to create a stunning calendar. You can help support the legal battles by purchasing your own calendars through the school. Enjoy the vistas surrounding the school's headquarters year 'round. All proceeds will go to the Great Basin Water Network. Find out more at <http://www.greatbasinwater.net/> Calendars are \$15 each or 2 for \$25 plus S&H

Call 775-234-7304 or email sno@sno.org to order
