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## Community Update by Patrick

**S**pring is finally here, after a remarkably dry January and an even more amazingly wet February and March. The ground is just getting dry enough to start planting in the garden, and our energy is focused on preparing for the summer season of building, work traders, workshops and events.

2010 was a busy time for us and, I do believe that 2011 is going to be a busy time as well. Love, Laughter and Sweat. The joys of living with and on the land.

The Summer of 2010 started off with a celebration of Love. As a community, we celebrated May Day and held the Handfasting of Mika and Cassidy. Later this year, I am most delighted to report, we will be celebrating their Wedding. Ahhh. The kids grow up so fast. It will be a glorious time.



Michael graduated from Emerald Earth University this past September. Needless to say, things are different around here without him. Our new common house stands half finished, waiting for us to use all the natural building techniques he taught us.



Shortly after graduation, Michael and Cathy moved to Cathy's farm in Rumsey. In October, they were blessed to become the joyful parents to their amazing baby boy, Tomo. Their family is a beautiful thing to behold. I'm always open to a good excuse for a visit.



By the end of the official building season last year we still hadn't really finished building. Our "relaxing" Winter turned into a push to get ourselves comfortably into the new Common House, followed by the growing pains of settling into a new location.

Michael and Darryl will be returning this Summer to help with the construction of the Great Room and Entryway. This will be accomplished in-part by a Natural Building Intensive and month-long Natural Building Apprenticeship. For more details about the New CH, check out Brent's article on Page 3.

One thing that I felt very lucky to have when I first arrived here was a local source of raw organic cow milk. Sadly, we lost our local source back in December. What to do? What to do? Well, Liz and Abeja were already thinking along the lines of getting a dairy business together, so what followed next seemed like the natural course. I'll let Liz explain on Page 4. Let's just say that I now feel *very* lucky to have a *very* local source of raw organic cow milk.

Our goat scene expanded with the addition of two French Alpines named Zoey and Yasmin. All four of our goats kidded recently (2 each) and now we're all on the schedule to milk twice a day and bottle feed a rampaging hoard. Once the kids stop getting their share of the milk we're going to have more than we know what to do with. There's already cheese and yogurt production happening all the time.



After Tom's experiment with raising wild caught pigs last year, it seemed very doable to raise a few more this year. Luckily a local had an excess of piglets and Tom got a good deal on three, which have now taken up residency out past the animal barn. Now we have a good place to send all the whey we will have from our cheese production.

Cassidy is making use of her skills and passions and is starting the Little Earthlings Nature Program, a nature based pre-school program for our kids as well as the kids in the local community! For the summer sessions, the "classroom" will be a 20 foot diameter teepee in the shade of an oak tree. I'm planning on auditing her classes. I could certainly use the education.



Our resident member population is losing another member. Lisa is taking her leave of the land and is moving down into the Anderson Valley where she will focus on her health and creative work full time. Luckily she is just a stone's throw away, and if I ignored a few property boundaries, I could probably have a lovely cross-country walk to go visit her.

This year, with our smaller membership and focus on construction and animal husbandry, the gardens will be smaller than they have been in the past few years. We're feeling the burn from stretching ourselves out too thin these past couple of years and are trying to strike a better balance.

We hope to see you here soon, at a work party, event or workshop.

# Winter in the Sun House (or other name TBD)

by Brent

**W**hew! What a difference the sun makes! It took until late November, but the EE crew closed in enough of the new common house to enjoy a Winter home there. We have a make-shift kitchen, a cozy dining area, and a large living/meeting area, all within our future bathroom, guest room, and office, respectively. We also have a kid's room which is meant to keep the louder energy of the kids contained on those winter days when outside play doesn't seem right. And I emphasize, "is meant to".

The magnificent "January" weather really made clear the differences between the new common house and the old. We didn't need to fire up the wood stove for a month. Now when we do, we can also cook on it, as we've added a lovely old wood burning cook stove to our kitchen scene. It's easy to work with. Things are going well.

Well, I did say make-shift kitchen and cozy dining room. For the most part, the spaces work for our reduced Winter numbers, but they probably won't serve our expanded Summer crew and especially not events such as work parties. So we will have our kitchen on the shady side ready to go for times when space and flow are most needed. And since we are going to be doing some major work on the Sun House this year...which I am most excited to announce...it may be a good idea to move the kitchen scene out of harm's way.

The work is being planned in the form of a two-prong attack. First, Darryl is going to come up from Sebastopol and lead a couple of weekend "barn raisings" to do the majority of the framing that remains on the Sun House. If you have carpentry skills and would like to help, call us for details.

Following the barn raisings, he and I will be teaching a five-week natural building apprenticeship. The five weeks will be dedicated to getting most of the walls filled in, an earthen floor poured, and lots of earth plaster put on.

After teaching the Natural Building Intensive with Michael last year, I'm thrilled to be following it up this year with a longer program that will leave students with a better grasp of the materials and processes. The course will be July 9 - Aug 12 and cost \$2250. We've had students from all over the world, so if you know anyone who might be a fit, don't let geography rule them out, send them to our website [emeraldearth.org](http://emeraldearth.org).

## Mushroom Mania

by Tom

**I**t was a stellar year for Chanterelles at Emerald Earth. They started appearing in mid-November and lasted into March! Over those 5 months we gathered over 150 pounds. This abundance led me to explore lots of new territory on EE and our neighbors' land where I discovered many new patches.

It was a decent year for Matsutakes, but the mushrooms we expect to show up in early fall (Boletes and Coccoras) were an utter flop. The Shrimp Russulas were late, but some large patches ended up blooming nicely.

Black trumpets started to appear in late December. Four-year-old Garnet is very proud of spotting the first ones. They were blooming nicely in early January and then we had nearly a month of dry weather that kept them diminutive. Luckily, rains came in time to produce a fine crop for the mid-February mushroom foraging workshop. There has been about 50 pounds collected so far.

I did well at the winter farmer's market this season, topping \$100 three times including trades for vegetables. At one market I sold 7 varieties of mushrooms: White Chanterelles, Golden Chanterelles, Matsutakes, Blewits, Shrimp Russulas, Oysters and Coccoras.

*(continued next page)*



The three mushroom foraging workshops I led were a profound experience for me. Faced with the prospect of imparting to others what I had been doing intuitively, I began making myself aware of what my thinking and feeling process was as I hunted for mushrooms.

For the past 2 seasons I have been carrying a notebook with me as I gather. When a thought process becomes clear, I stop, dig it out and write. I began noticing how I was building an intimate relationship with each species of mushroom. Patterns in the landscape started coming into focus. I realized that the land was communicating with me in a variety of modes: sensing the amount of light in an area, hearing the crunch of the leaf litter under my feet, smelling the dankness in the air. Sometimes I arrive at a spot and suddenly intuit that mushrooms are there. Upon looking more closely, I then notice the mushrooms that I would have missed had I been relying entirely on my physical senses.



When I think about the relationship I've built with the land through mushroom hunting, I feel a vibration in my core. This resonance with the earth must be re-gained in all of us for there to be any hope of human survival on this planet.

It is gratifying to both see people get so turned on about being in nature and to know that I can kindle that spark into a burning desire. Through mushroom hunting, I offer people a taste of oneness with all life - tapping into our innate ability to know how to have a healthy relationship with our environment. It is difficult to express these ideas without saying words like "nature" and "environment."

These words imply a separation between humans and the natural environment that I believe we need to get beyond in order to fully redeem ourselves as a species. The challenge of our time is to kindle a sense of partnership with our planet.

## Cow Country by Liz

**F**or years we have enjoyed getting raw milk through a herd share with our farmer friend in town. Sadly, he had to move off the land he had been farming and his Milking Shorthorn cows needed a new home. Wanting to maintain a reasonably priced source of quality raw milk here in the valley, Abeja and I bought the cows (Tulip and Lula) along with the milking equipment and started our own herd share operation here at Emerald Earth.

Back in December, we had a vet do a pregnancy check. He claimed that they would calf between March and May, giving us the time we needed to set up operations. They both calfed in late January! All the preparations at the dairy barn began after we started milking. Needless to say, we were scrambling for bit there. Things are settling down some now.

We were also challenged by an especially wet Winter and Spring season. For a couple weeks in March we kept the cows at the barn because the ground was too saturated at the pastures. Now the grass is really growing and the ground



is starting to dry out. It's the grazing season and we are doing our best to practice an intensive rotational grazing regime. We work with electric fencing and we are always looking for a better techniques for coiling up the electric fencing rope.

We have sold close to forty shares of our herd and share about 20 gallons a week with friends throughout Mendocino County. We are thrilled to be sharing this good food but are still left with more than fifty gallons a week to process into butter, cheese, crème fraiche and other products. We wouldn't mind sharing a little more of it. Spread the word.



# Permissive Burn Day

by Liz

Last May we invited Dennis Martinez to teach a workshop on the Native Californian's use of fire in land management. We were inspired by his experience and knowledge and agreed that controlled burns would serve the land and help to regenerate some of the grasslands.



After a very wet December and a dry January, we decided we had good conditions to do a safe burn. We chose an early morning and we started small with an area of about 300 square feet. Once we were comfortable with the movement and pace of the fire, we chose another day to do a larger burn, which was performed in three controlled stages. In the end, the test patch that we burned was about an acre.



With the cold wet spring, the area is growing slowly, as are most of the grassy areas. We are excited to see what differences may show up on the land that was burned.

## 2011 Calendar of Events and Courses

The following is a brief outline of courses and events open to the public. Our work parties are a great way to learn hands-on skills, contribute to building and gardening projects, and get a feel for working in our community.

Please see our website [www.emeraldearth.org](http://www.emeraldearth.org) for detailed course descriptions, instructor bios and registration info.

### Work Shops

- May 15 - *Birding Class w/ Kyle Keegan*
- July 2 - *Living in Tribe Workshop w/ Mika Smith*
- July 9- 16 - *Natural Building Intensive w/ Michael G. Smith, Darryl Berlin & Brent Levin*
- July 18-Aug 12 - *Natural Building Apprenticeship w/ Darryl Berlin and Brent Levin*
- October 15 - *Permaculture Gathering*
- November 6 - *Acorns as Food Workshop w/ Cassidy Geppert & Corine Pearce*
- December 10 - *Mushroom Foraging Workshop w/ Tom Shaver*

### Work Parties

- April 23-24
  - August 6-7
  - September 10-11
  - October 22-23
- Please call us at **707-972-3096** or email us at [community@emeraldearth.org](mailto:community@emeraldearth.org) if you have any questions or to just let us know you are coming. Blessings.

## Wish List

### *Material Needs*

- ~ Buckets
- ~ Wide-Mouth Canning Jars
- ~ Electric Vehicle
- ~ Livestock Panels
- ~ Plywood
- ~ Air Compressor
- ~ T-Posts
- ~ Sturdy Playground Equipment
- ~ Giant Wok
- ~ Woodstoves
- ~ Energy Efficient or Propane Fridge
- ~ Power or Hand Tools
- ~ Garden Carts
- ~ Light Fixtures
- ~ 1 and 2 Burner Propane Stoves
- ~ Big Cooking Pots
- ~ Ceramic Crocks for Fermenting
- ~ Windows, doors, bricks and other building materials
- ~ Solar Panels
- ~ Sealable Plastic Bins

### *Skilled Assistance*

- ~ Design Help with EE Logo
- ~ Fundraising Help
- ~ Pond Engineering
- ~ Grass Species Identification

# Reflections of the Land

Channeled by Abeja

**Y**ou should understand, time does not feel the same to the Earth as it does to you. To me (the land around what you call Parkinson's Gulch), the twenty-plus years since the gentle feet of the Emerald Earth Laughing and Drumming Society first began wearing pathways onto my face has felt short and pleasant. Different from the years before that...the logging, the hunting, the grazing, the homesteading. Yes, different, but not completely so. You too have built buildings



from my soil and my trees and my gravel. You too have brought your machines to repair roads and flatten my land for your building sites. But although you have cut and milled my trees, you have carefully selected younger ones to allow older trees to grow larger and stronger. Your gentler presence is also known to me through how you sit on me, around a fire, in a sweat lodge, in the sacred redwood grove, and all around the land, praying and singing in your language and other tongues. This does feel good!

Last fall, as the acorns were falling from the trees, I was surprised, after such a long absence, to hear the traditional Pomo acorn gathering song. It fell over me like water after a drought. After over 150 years, Barbara Pearce, a Pomo elder from my sister valley in Ukiah, sang the beautiful words. They were slightly different from the ones sung by my Pdateya Pomo Villagers who came here every fall from the valley below to hunt and collect acorns on my sunny hillsides, but I knew them and they brought happiness to my heart.. The Pomo language is of this place, just as the trees and the soil and the animals are. My oak trees need that song, just as they need water and sunlight, to thrive.

The Pomo also possessed the knowledge of how to use fire to cleanse me. Since the Pdateya village was moved from the Boonville area to the Round Valley Reservation in 1856, the gentle fires have no longer swept clean my hillsides, reinvigorating the trees and meadows. This spring, your kind little village lit small, controlled burns on my meadows. Thank you! It was as if an itch was being scratched on my skin! Please do more!

With your burns, your animals, the thinning and clearing around the oaks, as well as your prayers and songs, my native perennial grasses can compete with those annual grasses brought in by the ranchers. I am coming back into balance.

You Emerald Earthlings do not share the language nor the long history of being a part of my ecosystem as my people, the Pomo, did. You came to me after years of abuse by unaware farmers, loggers, and hunters. But do know that I do feel your care. Though you sometimes make mistakes, your careful observation, your gentle work, and your reverence for this land are slowly healing me, just as they are healing you.

***Want to see the Dirt in COLOR? Want to see more pictures of our wonderful community?***

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**Send us an email: [community@emeraldearth.org](mailto:community@emeraldearth.org)**

**Stay up-to-date with news from the land at our Blog: [dirtfromtheearth.blogspot.com](http://dirtfromtheearth.blogspot.com)**

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