

Conservation Watch

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The Dinner Table: A New Battleground for Conservation?

A Primer on American Food

"One of the more pleasing developments of the last decade has been the long-overdue beginning of a national conversation about food - not just the arcane techniques used to prepare it and the luxurious restaurants in which it is served, but much more important, how it is grown and produced."

Russ Parsons, Food Editor and Columnist, Los Angeles Times

GCA members have always been interested in agriculture and the food they eat. In 1916, three years after the founding of GCA, the President, Mrs. J. Willis Martin, summoned her "troops": "... America is at war and the GCA must assume what responsibility its name implies." "We stand or fall by our food supply," echoed another founder, Mrs. Walter S. Brewster. The U.S. President called on the GCA to encourage everyone to organize and plant vegetable gardens and the organization's Executive Committee passed the following resolution:



"Catskill Farm." Photo by James Duckworth - flickr

“That the Garden Club of America recommends to member clubs that the growing of vegetables,... be encouraged in every way: that the children of the towns and villages be stimulated to plant home gardens with vegetables as well as flowers.”

(The Conservation Committee History, 75 Years 1924-1999, The Garden Club of America, Mrs. David C. Pinkerton.)

As gardens have shrunk, paid gardening help has disappeared, and life has become complicated, our members do not all grow their own vegetables anymore. As we look at our choices of where to acquire the food we eat and what to eat, let us start with the optimal choice - growing our own. Nearly as perfect is buying produce and meat from farmers in our neighborhoods and farmers' markets. Beyond this best, local option we are deluged with innumerable choices - organic, natural, grown in a nearby state, grown in the U.S., or grown almost anywhere else in the world. It is crucial that we pay attention to how and where our food is grown for our own health and the health of the land on which it grows.

Thus begins our “conversation” about food in America in this special segment of *Conservation Watch*. Read on and learn the answers to many questions. Why is it best to eat locally grown food? What are the current problems with our meat supply in this country? How can we support sustainable farming? Should we be eating more fish and what kinds? How do we choose the types of fruits and vegetables we want to eat? How do we treat them when we get them home? How can we learn more and involve our garden clubs in the solutions to our food dilemma? Join us in this conversation about food.

*Susie Wilmerding, G.C. of Philadelphia (Zone V)
Chairman, GCA Conservation Committee*

News You Can Use! The Place of Food in our Lives: Local Food Systems

“Eating is an agricultural act,” Wendell Berry, one of America’s great men of letters and agrarian thinkers, is often quoted as saying. We all will live better with frequent reminders of this wisdom. Berry describes a sound local economy as one that is derived from producers and consumers who are neighbors, and that economy both nourishes and protects the earth. Industrialization offers many commodities, but these commodities do not deliver the satisfaction that comes with having respect for the things we buy and knowing their economic history and ecological costs. In an industrialized world, suppliers hide these histories from the consumer. Origins are distant and the processes of trade complicated. The disconnect between the consumer and the social and environmental consequences of the food being produced and eaten provides a cover behind which the real impacts of industrialization of our food supply can be hidden.



Credit: Google images.

In contrast, a local food system that values sustainability and balance is based on the concept of *connection*, the farmer to the land and animals, and the consumer to the farmer. Resources are not exploited; the emphasis is on systemic health. Farmers who focus on sustainability are concerned with the health of the entire food system, beginning with the soil, land and water, and ending with the health of the consumer. The vision of this system is “quality” and “high-value food,” as opposed to “efficiency” and “inexpensive food.”

The trend of “eating local” has surged into the mainstream in recent years. Consumers, returning to their hunter-gatherer roots, are seeking out farmers’ markets and farm stands and buying into community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms. Our member garden clubs are helping to lead the way. “The local foods movement is shaking up our perception of what is normal when it comes to food,” says Vermont author Bill McKibben, whose book *Deep Economy* makes the case for why local communities should produce more of their own food. We are questioning whether we want every bite to travel 1500 miles to our plate.



Credit: Google images.

Buying local gives us a chance to know the person who grew the food. When a high quality product is backed up by a farmer’s direct relationship to the consumer, an important bond has been created. The farmer raises the food to be the best it can be, with flavor always in mind. All aspects of the quality of the product are cared for, not just turning out a product that looks the way it is supposed to look. Eating becomes a different experience when you know how and who grew your food. It is about this relationship. Consider “Face, Place, and Taste. Who is your farmer?” a favorite phrase of Russell Libby, Director of Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners when searching for the best sources for your food. Reliable consumer demand gives farmers stability and allows them to get down to the business of sustainable farming. Search “Buy Fresh Buy Local” and your state to find what’s available in your area.

“No Farms, No Food” is a welcome bumper sticker to see. Most of the nation’s new real estate development has occurred on high quality farmland with the best consumer markets, which puts the majority of our fruit and vegetable and dairy production in development’s path. Constructing local food systems that connect to the land where the food is grown can counter the loss of this good farmland. Consumers are beginning to understand that when they buy produce from a farmer, that dollar is a strong dollar for agriculture and its attendant open space.



Freddy Serrano packs for an early morning delivery of artichokes from his family's farm in California. Credit: Mark Richards for *Time*

There is an exciting and diverse range of support for this growing segment of agriculture. In documentaries such as *Food Inc.* and *Fresh*, investigative journalists Eric Schlosser and Michael Pollan are awakening us to the uncomfortable realities of how we eat. Pollan’s most recent book is a new pocket guide to eating, *Food Rules: An Eater’s Manual*. At a time when expert advice has never been so confusing, this book is notable for its simplicity, besides Pollan’s trademark wit. Dan Barber, owner and chef of Blue Hill at the Stone Barn in the Hudson

Valley of New York, notes that chefs know that truly great cooking is based on the connection between good farming, a healthy environment, and good nutrition. Chefs are the first to admit the impossibly sweet, flavor-filled carrot has nothing to do with their work. Restaurants are looking for and featuring local seasonal produce and in some cases, growing it themselves.

An educated consumer can vote for change when they make their shopping list. Need help finding a CSA farm or a farmers market? Go to eatwild.com; localharvest.org, or csa.org – buy fresh, buy local. Pennsylvania’s pasafarming.org and Maine’s MOFGA.org both offer many resources. Edible Communities Publications has magazines for many cities and towns with news on local food. Your newspapers carry good recipes for seasonal foods. The USDA has started “Know your Farmer, Know Your Food” at USDA.gov. There is also support from the top. Michelle Obama has started an organic garden on the South Lawn of the White House that produced over 225 pounds of produce this past year. Ellen Davis’s op-ed in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on April 22, 2009 says that this garden is not an overtly political act. It actually highlights problems in the way we eat. Teaching children how to grow a vegetable in the heart of our nation’s capital is in the vein of Wendell Berry’s writings - an act of agricultural criticism.

Helen Elkins, *The Gardeners (PA)* – Zone V
GCA NAL Committee, Vice-Chair - Agriculture

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What's a **locavore?**

One who eats foods grown locally
whenever possible.

**Hazards of Industrialized Farming:
A Challenge for Today**



Poultry barn interior
Photo by fairandsquare.coop



Pig barn interior
Photo by blogs.myspace.com



Pig farm manure lagoon
Ecowatch.org



Crowded conditions in a beef cattle feedlot.
flickr

Since the mid 20th century farming has changed dramatically. Science and technology have enabled greater production at greater speed. High yield seeds, and now “Roundup Ready” seeds, which withstand Roundup application on the ground before and also once more after planting, mechanization of crop harvesting and storage as well as livestock feeding, and agrochemicals that enhance growth and control pests and weeds all mark significant developments. To produce cheaper food, production has been streamlined, monocultures cover vast acreage, and animals are reared in high-density populations. Farming, now agro-business, is a corporate management system, controlled from headquarters. The process (quantity) has taken priority over the product (nutritional and taste quality).

As the emphasis has moved to production, land stewardship has suffered. Monocultures deplete the soil of nutrients. Repeated plantings on the same soil absorb the same nutrients until none remain. The result is soil degradation. Huge amounts of chemical and synthetic fertilizers are then the antidote. The runoff of these pollutes our rivers and streams. Ecological diversity is largely compromised. The result is that disease and pests are more likely to proliferate, resulting in diseased or failed crops. Erosion is also more prevalent.

Across the country, the majority of our meat now comes from CAFOs (*concentrated animal feeding operations*). The total production, for domestic and export markets, approaches 10 billion head. To achieve these staggering numbers, animals are raised in large facilities in close quarters. According to EPA estimates in 2007, 13,358 of the 20,000 CAFOs in the US are large, generally holding enormous numbers of animals: 1000+ cattle; 2500 (55 lbs. & up) or 10,000 (under 55 lbs.) pigs; 30,000+ laying/broiler hens, or 125,000+ laying hens dependent upon whether waste systems are liquid or dry respectively. One hog CAFO in Utah raises 500,000 head. With these single-animal concentrations, disease and waste management are crucial. Huge inputs of antibiotics are added to animal feed to guard against an accelerated spread of disease, so possible where large numbers of animals are in close proximity. This non-therapeutic use of antibiotics has the added effect of enhancing weight gain, which affects market price. Slurry (cattle or pig waste mixed with water) is contained either in holding tanks or funneled to outdoor manure lagoons. This slurry is often sprayed onto the fields, with the double goal of eliminating excess and fertilizing cropland. Another impact of high-density livestock operations is the prodigious amount of greenhouse gases, especially methane, that is released. Agriculture accounts for 7.4% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the U.S. and 18% globally. Nitrous oxide, a GHG 296 times more potent than CO₂, is derived from manure via volatilization. Volatilization of ammonia from manure lagoons leads both to eutrophication* and acidification of water and soil, creating dead zones,

compromising ecosystems and contributing to acid rain. The high demand for agricultural water – for feed production, livestock watering, making of slurry, and cleaning - threatens aquifer levels.

It has been estimated that 70% of all drugs and antibiotics sold in the USA are for non-therapeutic use in animal feed. The fact that any of the antibiotics fed to our livestock are the very same ones administered to humans to counter serious disease is alarming. For example, tetracycline, one of the most common additives to animal feed, is a significant deterrent to human pandemics of malaria, plague, smallpox, and anthrax. Non-therapeutic use engenders antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Thus, the ramifications for human health are very serious. Further, in 2005 a University of Minnesota study found that antibiotics appeared in corn, scallions and cabbage planted in manure-treated soil.

Respiratory disease occurs more frequently in farming communities. Air-borne pathogens from manure lagoons can infect those up or down-wind. A University of Iowa study found that MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) is carried by 49% of pig farmers sampled as well as 49% of their hogs. By 2005 MRSA, according to a Center for Disease Control report, was killing 18,000 Americans per year.

The high inputs of fossil fuels used in industrialized farming for transporting fuel, fertilizers and synthetic chemicals, constitute additional environmental costs. And there are social impacts as well. Among these are air pollution (foul odors can also cause property devaluation), illness, and loss of economic viability within rural communities since CAFOs bring in their supplies and export their product, neither profiting the local community.

American agriculture is **BIG BUSINESS**. It is an integral part of our foreign policy and our trade. A pressing challenge for our country is to increase our food production. It is estimated that food production must increase 1% per year globally to cover world population growth. Many around the world depend upon our bounty. Can we attain that goal while also developing more sustainable, ecologically integrated means of production? That remains to be seen.

*Colles Larkin, St. Paul (MN) G.C. - Zone XI
GCA Conservation Committee - Vice-Chair, Agriculture*

[**eutrophication* – depletion of oxygen in water]

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What is Sustainability?

Sustainability means living today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

How many controversial issues become depoliticized and easier to discuss in a more balanced way when viewed through this lens? Energy, food, and water policies to name a few.

One easy place to start thinking about living sustainably is to take a hard look at the food we buy and where it comes from. Is the way we are eating sustainable?

What can garden clubs do to make a difference? Here are some examples. The Garden Club of Princeton's conservation project for the past year and a half has been to get to know local farmers who are striving to provide sustainable agriculture in the State of New Jersey.

The club has visited a turkey farm, two farms raising cattle and pigs, and a farm that uses milk from its cows to produce cheese, as well as one of our local farmer's markets. This year members shared recipes for Thanksgiving that use local produce so members could strive for a "locavore" feast. The next step is to produce a guide to our local food sources to distribute to the community. It is hoped that the "Central Jersey Food Trail Guide" will be available for the 2010 GCA Annual Meeting in New Jersey.

Several clubs have also become involved with "Sustainable Jersey." The brainchild of Garden Club of Princeton member and Mayor of Lawrenceville, New Jersey, Pam Mount, Sustainable Jersey is a certification program for municipalities in New Jersey that want to go green, control costs and save money - and take steps to sustain their quality of life over the long term. According to their website, "Sustainable Jersey encompasses issues such as global warming, pollution, biodiversity, land use, air and water quality, equity, buying local, local living economies and sustainable agriculture". Visit their website (www.sustainablejersey.com) to see if a similar program might work in your state.

And next time you want to speak about an environmental topic close to your heart – try framing it in the context of sustainability – it's a concept that is very hard to argue with.

*Sophie Glover, G.C. of Princeton (NJ)
GCA Zone IV Conservation/NAL Representative*

Seafood – It's Enough to Make Your Head Swim!

The choices we make when it comes to eating seafood are confusing, complicated and discouraging. We've heard of the benefits of eating fish. Unlike red meat, we're encouraged to add fish to our diet. But is eating seafood on a regular basis really a good thing?

We're told seafood is "brain food". It's a source of many nutrients, including the much-championed long chain omega-3 fatty acids. Seafood is known to play a crucial role in brain development *in utero* a



Photo credit: DC Traveler

infancy, and for its cardiovascular benefits in adults. For this reason, most health experts and the U.S. government's dietary guidelines encourage people to eat more seafood.

However, we're also told about the dire consequences of over-fishing. Our oceans can no longer provide us with fish (and fish oil) at the current level of demand. Only one quarter of U.S. fisheries are sustainably fished, and an estimated 80% of the world's fisheries are now either fully fished (i.e. - incapable of providing more) or over-exploited.

In addition to the problem of over-fishing, some seafood contains toxins that can pose serious health risks. Contaminants include heavy metals (e.g. - mercury which has been shown to affect brain development), industrial chemicals (e.g. - PCB's and dioxins, probable human carcinogens) and pesticides (e.g. - DDT, probable human carcinogen). These contaminants usually originate on land and settle in the ocean where they enter the food chain and concentrate in larger fish species.

Seafood is the primary source of dietary mercury. Mercury is toxic to the nervous system, especially in fetuses, babies and young children. The EPA and the FDA advise children and women of childbearing age to avoid shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish and to limit consumption of albacore tuna to one serving per week. Who would have dreamed Charlie Tuna could ever become the equivalent of Joe Camel? Detailed information on contaminants in seafood can be found at www.edf.org/seafoodhealth.

So what's a responsible GCA member to do?

- First, educate yourself so that you can make informed seafood choices. The Monterey Bay Aquarium's "Super Green" list is a terrific resource. It lists seafood that is good for human health and is not harmful to the ocean. The list highlights fish that are low in environmental

contaminants and are good sources of long-chain omega-3 fatty acids.
www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/cr_seafoodwatch/sfw_health.aspx

- Get, use and share a Sustainable Seafood Pocket Guide, available at www.montereybayaquarium.org/seafoodwatch. Every time you purchase seafood, your choices affect the oceans. Always ask where your seafood comes from and whether it's wild-caught or farmed. Check the pocket guide about wild or farmed for various species.
- Buy MSC-Certified Seafood Products. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) was established to develop standards for sustainably managed, wild-caught seafood.
- Eat local and seasonal seafood. Purchase local seafood that is listed on the “best choice” or “good alternative” lists whenever possible. It reduces the carbon footprint resulting from shipping and packaging.
- Eat lower on the food chain. The oceans are only capable of producing so many large, long-lived fish (tuna, cod swordfish). By expanding our choices to include shellfish and smaller fish (anchovies, sardines, squid), we can reduce the ecological footprint of seafood in our diet.
- Support sustainable seafood companies. Look for companies that have made a commitment to source environmentally responsible seafood.
- Be an advocate for responsible ocean policies. Strong policies that increase the level of environmental protections for the oceans are critical to restoring healthy marine ecosystems. Letting your elected officials know the importance of ocean preservation may be the single most powerful action you can take.

*Jennifer Fain, Hancock Park G.C. (CA) – Zone XII
GCA Conservation & NAL Committees - Vice-Chair, Oceans*

What Do Those Stickers Mean?

Food labeling is an issue that constantly changes. As consumers become more health-conscious, the demand for food safety, origin, content and method of growth are desired and, eventually, required. Most fruits and vegetables, but not all, have stickers with 4 or 5 digit numbers. Currently the numbers begin with 3, 4, 8 or 9. This is what they mean:

3 or 4 – You get much more.

Produce with codes beginning with 3 or 4 are

“conventionally” grown with pesticides, herbicides and anything else used to maintain the health and attractive appearance of the food. Although some produce may be peeled and the skin removed, some sprays may have been applied or entered systemically.



Image by Justin Taylor for energyfanatics.com.

9 is fine.

Stick with 9 – it's **organic**. You get to support farmers that are NOT using any “___-cides” or genetically modified foods – and odds are, they are your local farmers.

8 – Please wait!

Produce with labels beginning with 8 are **genetically modified**. Since there have been no long-term studies on the health or environmental effects of consuming GM foods – you are eating at your own risk. Additionally, the majority of these foods are modified for herbicide and pesticide resistance. That means that these crops are regularly sprayed with herbicides and pesticides. Everything else around it dies, while the crop remains. The idea is to create less work for the farmer, but contrary to corporate advertisement, genetic modification *does not* reduce the use of any ___-cides (records show increased use), crop yield is *not* increased, GM fields *do* cross-pollinate with other crops/plants and cause permanent genetic changes in surrounding areas (collateral damage). So, with 8, *please wait!* At least, until studies are done, and corporations change the effects these crops have on us and the environment.

[Also, see article titled, "More About GMO's . . ." on page 20 of this issue.]

Heidi Ho Conjugacion, G.C. of Honolulu (HI)
GCA Zone XII Conservation/NAL Representative

What is On Our Fruits and Vegetables? Why and How Should We Wash Them?

Did you ever eat a grape from the produce shelf in the supermarket shelf before you bought it? We know we shouldn't do it because, as our mothers said, it's stealing and we have to wash it first! I never could eat that grape, less because it was stealing, and more because it wasn't washed. Having a farm and being an apple grower, I have spent a good part of my life learning what pests and funguses to spray for. Trying to sell apples in the fall, I know how much easier it is to sell perfect, large red apples than somewhat spotty, little misshapen ones that taste perfectly good or better.



Photo credit: Flickr from Yahoo.

What apples or potatoes or oranges do you pick up in the grocery store? Let's face it. We always pick the best looking ones; we can't help it. So, growers are going to produce good-looking fruits and vegetables. Otherwise we won't buy them. The chemical companies have been experimenting and working to find the best products to produce perfect fruit since the early 20th century. The Cornell Junior Extension Bulletin of June, 1919, in discussing potatoes, states "*Cultivate the plant frequently, and spray the plant with Bordeaux mixture and arsenate of lead (beginning early) to combat blight and potato beetles.*" For the past three years we have grown our apples using only organic sprays. I've had good advice for a well-organized spraying program from North Carolina State University. I no longer have to avoid entering the orchard for three days after spraying. Now I can spray within thirty days of harvest. The first two years we had a drought - and we still had good-looking fruit. This year it

rained and the apples looked terrible - sooty blotch, fly speck, a little scab. Inside they were okay, but it's hard to sell them to the public.

Let's talk about washing fruits and vegetables. We should. Spray residue and bacteria from handling can be reduced or removed by washing. Even fruit that's peeled should be washed because the residue can get on your hands and be transferred to the fruit inside. The best way to wash fruits and vegetables is with plain tap water. You can use distilled water if you don't trust your tap water.

Check out: http://food.thefuntimesguide.com/2009/04/how_to_wash_vegetables.php.

Some growers and packers use a chlorine solution to wash fruit. However, the chlorine can seep through the skin and contaminate the fruit, according to the University of Maine Extension Service, so this is not recommended.

A newer threat to the public is *e-coli* contamination of vegetables and fruits - fresh spinach in 2006, salsa in 2008, apple cider some years earlier. You can cook meat well to guard against *e-coli*. Washing raw fruits and vegetables will remove 90% of contaminants, but that's not enough. The real answer to the *e-coli* problem is better agricultural practices. *E-coli* shouldn't be in the manure of properly fed animals.

As the world grows smaller, we increasingly have the opportunity to buy raspberries from Chile in January (What do they spray those with? The local ones won't last two days in the refrigerator?), kiwi from New Zealand, and grapes from Israel. We should prepare these fruits carefully. The best way to insure our health, once again, is to buy food locally and in season.

*Annie Ager, French Broad River G.C. (NC) – Zone VII
GCA Conservation Committee – Vice-Chair, Air Quality/Toxic Substances*

What Clubs Can Do

Clubs across the country are getting involved in the "conversation." Some have formed book clubs to research the latest food expose book. Others are promoting Farmers' Markets in their areas. Flower shows often reflect interest in using locally grown plants and flowers. Members are passing out handy food safety guides or the Monterey Bay Aquarium pocket guide for seafood purchases. A listing of what the fruit and vegetable labels mean can be distributed at meetings.

Entire programs can be structured around the principles of better eating. Here's an example of what one club did recently. The **Columbine Garden Club** of Phoenix, Arizona held their recent club meeting at Maya's Farm at South Mountain in the Phoenix area. The theme of the meeting was "How to Enjoy Slow Food." The chef-owner of a Scottsdale restaurant discussed her love of cooking and demonstrated uses for the produce grown at the farm. Maya's is a "Certified Naturally Grown" farm. Members learned about sustainable production of food using organic methods. The group was taught the benefits of eating seasonal food picked at its peak and eaten fresh. The garden club members were encouraged to have personal knowledge of their food's producers and to recognize the costs involved in the production of high quality food. Owner Maya Dailey supplies produce for farmers' markets in Phoenix and Scottsdale.

Want to Know More?

What we choose to eat has both personal and social significance. We hope this issue of *Conservation Watch* will influence the way you think about food from now on and influence what you choose to put on your plate.

ConWatch has reviewed many books of interest on this topic in the last couple of years, including:

Harvest for Hope: A Guide to Mindful Eating by Jane Goodall

Omnivore's Dilemma by Michael Pollan

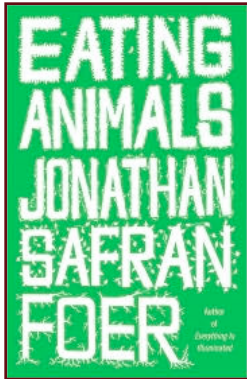
Animal, Vegetable, Miracle by Barbara Kingsolver

Righteous Porkchop by Nicolette Hahn Niman

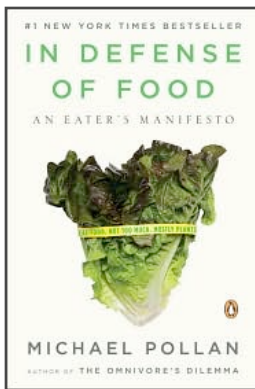
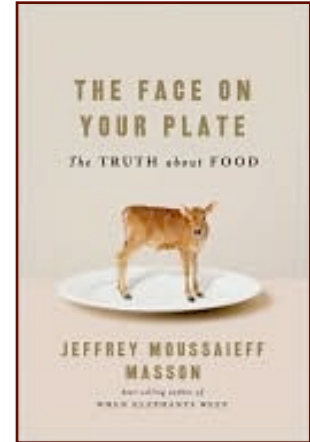
Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer by Novella Carpenter

FRESH (DVD)

You can find reviews for all of these on the GCA website in past *ConWatch* issues.



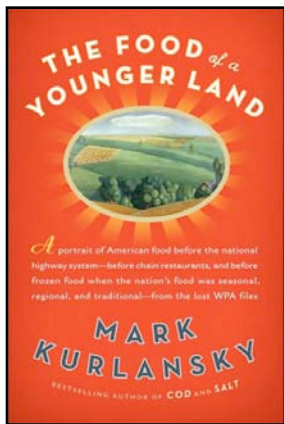
This past year brought us many more thought-provoking books. They'd make ideal gifts for anyone you know who is interested in making well considered choices about what to eat. They'd also make excellent topics for garden club conservation committees or book clubs to discuss. For vegans and vegetarians, there's Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals*. It encourages us to take moral inventory of our eating habits. A similar theme is found in Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson's *The Face on Your Plate: The Truth about Food*. Mr. Masson advocates for a strict vegan diet. (See Colles Larkin's article, "Hazards of Industrialized Farming," on page 4 of this issue for reasons why.)



Frequent food author Michael Pollan's book, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*, is now available in paperback. A companion volume to his *Omnivore's Dilemma*, this book encourages enjoying the simple but delicious flavors of real food. His message boils down to seven simple and liberating words: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

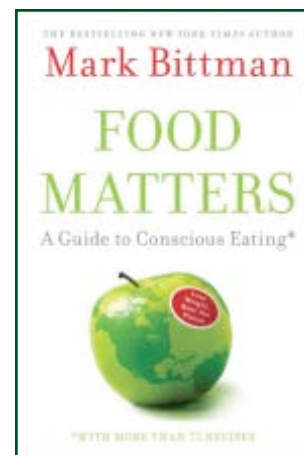
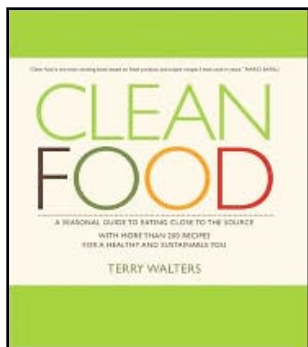
Food Inc.: A Participant Guide: How Industrial Food is Making Us Sicker, Fatter, and Poorer - And What You Can Do About It edited by Karl B. Weber goes along with the documentary of the same name. This series of essays is designed to pick up where the film leaves off, encouraging us to learn more about the problems in our food industry and what we can do to help.





Locavores and anyone interested in American culinary roots will appreciate *The Food of a Younger Land: A portrait of American food - before the national highway system, before chain restaurants, and before frozen food, when the nation's food was seasonal, regional, and traditional.* This book by Mark Kurlansky discusses our fast-food nation and reminds us of our all-but-lost rural and regional foods.

After a trip to the Farmer's Market, you'll need a copy of *Clean Food: A Seasonal Guide to Eating Close to the Source* by Terry Walters. More than just a cookbook, this one helps us understand the benefits of choosing the rich nutritional profile of the best and freshest locally grown foods. Ms. Walters includes how to shop for and prepare food to make a huge difference in how you eat – and how you feel. While on the topic of cooking, check out Mark Bittman's new book, *Food Matters: A Guide to Conscious Eating*. This book is part eating theory and part recipes to tempt you. His message is that meat over-consumption hurts the planet. He also warns against junk food and super-refined carbohydrates. Mr. Bittman feels that cookbook authors can influence how people eat in America. He says, "If we could get people to cook, they would eat more sanely. Just getting people to make themselves oatmeal in the morning – I think that's a pretty noble goal."



Maybe your gift of one of these books - to a friend, family member, or to yourself – will spark a lively debate. If nothing else, it will make them and you stop and think about what you eat. And, as we know, it's the thought that counts!

“The Ethical Epicurean”

Conservation and Technology

Computer Skills – Necessary for Garden Club

More and more we find that our communications in our garden clubs are handled electronically. Our club newsletters are online publications now, for the most part. Over sixty of our clubs have their own websites (accessible from the GCA website), often with our own passwords to access them as members. Many of our GCA publications, like *The Real Dirt*, *Focus*, and *Conservation Watch*, are available free to our members online. And just recently we've seen the unveiling of the new bimonthly GCA e-News, sent to our individual email addresses (Jan., 2010, Vol. 1, No. 1). It is jam-packed with timely information like a

listing of this year's finalists for the Founders Fund Award, an update on our Centennial Celebration in 2013, and a link to our national speaker list. And, we can now send those photos of the arrangements in our flower shows to everyone via our digital cameras and computers. What would we do without our computers?

We're all saving enormous amounts of time and money by communicating this way. Think of all the stamps your club would have used if every meeting announcement, club minutes, or invitation were sent by "snail mail!" And we hope that every club is saving tons of paper by not mailing or printing out everything we receive via our computers. For most of us just the most basic of computer skills are necessary in order to participate in this way. We suggest that you remind members at your meetings to be checking the GCA website regularly, turn on that computer to check for club announcements, and to help those less skilled to keep abreast and improve their skills. When we say someone is *computer literate*, what do we mean? Generally, we are referring to a person's capacity to use computer applications. It connotes little more than the ability to use specific applications like word processing, an Internet browser, sending and receiving emails. It can be as basic as that – and change your world, literally.

Since you are reading this publication online in all likelihood, you are already among the majority of our members who use their computers on a daily basis – and couldn't imagine life without them! This special "technology" section of this issue of *ConWatch* will provide you with some suggestions for ways to use your computer skills and promote our efforts in the name of the environment. While this just skims the surface of what is available out there in the cyber world, it may prompt you to do some exploring while you are "surfing the net."
Editor

The iPhone as a Tool for Conservation

The *New York Times* calls it the "Swiss Army knife of the digital age" and with over 100,000 available downloadable applications, the iTunes "App Store" is becoming a cultural phenomenon. However, beyond the games and social networking applications, there is real potential for the iPhone and the sure-to-follow crop of hand-held computers with cameras and GPSs to become valuable tools for environmentalists.

In Boston, city officials are soon to debut the city's first official iPhone application. Called **Citizen Connect** it is the first and certainly not the last of its kind in the country. It works like this: a citizen spots a broken water main or downed tree and rather than making a phone call, they take a photo with their iPhone and using this application, send it to City Hall. The city then has all the information, including GPS coordinates from the phone, to repair the damage. Is the Christmas Day Audubon Bird Count far behind?



Photo credit: Yahoo

Applications for the iPhone are available on the iTunes website. Many are free of charge; some cost 99 cents. Others are more, depending on the complexity. The Monterey Bay Aquarium* has **Seafood Watch** which uses the GPS function to determine where the viewer is located and lists both seafood and sushi. It rates them based on how they were obtained (farmed or fished, scarcity etc.) and offers alternatives. Atlantic Cod, for example, is listed as "Avoid" because of the overfishing; scrod and whitefish are suggested. In addition to the eating recommendations, a brief history of each fish is provided. **Go Organic** finds organic grocery stores near you based on the zip code entered. **3rdWhaleMobile** is a location-based application that connects to the green businesses in a given area. Users are offered six categories of search depending upon whether traveling by car, foot or bicycle.

Many applications use the iPhone for data storage and as a computer. There are a number of apps to keep track of automobile fuel and power usage. **GreenMeter, MyMPG, Carticipate, AccuFuel** and **MyHybrid** all track fuel efficiency. In the same vein, there are applications that calculate CO₂ emissions. **GreenCalculator, 350, CO₂Tracker, MyCarbon** and **GreenGenie** all offer a variety of information on climate change. **Green Genie** is created in collaboration with **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)** and offers a collection of green products and resources.

There are also a variety of generic green applications that are as simple as whale calls (**Whalesong**) or as intriguing as Greenpeace's **TissueFreeGuide**, which has a guide on how to save on toilet paper. **iRecycleFree** lists 100,000 recycling locations for 200 materials as does **EcoFinder**. For general feel-good information there is **GreenLemur, Get Green, GreenNewsReader, Go Green Free,** and **Good Guide**.

Ecobee controls your home's ecobee Smart Thermostat even when you're away. Adjust the temperature right from your phone so you can make sure you conserve energy costs and still come home to a cozy house. **Green Outlet** runs a more eco-friendly home. Enter which appliances you use and how often each day. This app will help you identify where you can save energy – and money.

The next few years will see an explosion of applications as new uses are created. Other phones such as the new Motorola "Droid," are increasing their list of available apps as well. Such useful things as locating invasive or endangered species are a logical use of this great technology. In my search for applications, a Help Wanted notice from the National Park Service popped up. The organization is looking for someone to do an iPhone application for the NPS. It will be the first of many, I'm sure.

*Diane Stoner, Litchfield G.C. (Zone II)
GCA Conservation Committee - Vice-Chair, Climate Change*

[*See article on page 7 for more about the Monterey Bay Aquarium's offerings, in "Seafood: It's Enough to Make Your Head Swim! by Jennifer Fain.]

How to Spread the Word in the Technology Age

The Junior Ladies Garden Club in Athens, Georgia recently added more information to the Conservation page of their website, <http://www.juniorladiesgc.org/conservation.html>. In an effort to use less paper at meetings, and also because of the wealth of information about conservation topics on the web, the webpage was designed to inspire members to learn more about conservation. The page includes a list of links to different websites or blogs that deal with conservation issues. Some of these links direct members to local websites, such as water saving tips provided by the local county government, called "Think at the Sink." Other links are to national or international sources. A booklist and other suggested sources for members to learn more about conservation are also listed.



The page also includes simple conservation tips written by former club Conservation Chair Lili Outz that were taken from back issues of the club's newsletters. Here are some of Lili's tips:

After you've figured out where water runs off on your property, try to stop it from leaving your property. A rain garden is a good way. A rain

garden is a shallow hole in the ground that collects and holds the water until it can drain away naturally into the soil. It can be lined with rocks and planted with plants that can take wet or dry conditions.

Need your car washed? Go to a car wash where the water is recycled.

Leave grass clippings on the lawn. This is called “grasscycling.”

These enhancements to the club's website are not only small steps towards helping the planet, but also a way to help members learn about conservation on their own time, outside of club activities. The website can be accessed by anyone at anytime, so members have the freedom to approach the topic of conservation one step, or one link, at a time. Check it out!

*Rinne Allen Smith, Conservation Committee Chair
Junior Ladies G.C. (GA) – Zone VIII*

Seattle Club’s New Path to Conservation News

Last year, the **Seattle Garden Club’s** website underwent a transformation made possible by one of it’s newest members. This member encouraged me, as Conservation Chair, to start a blog. I thought a blog might be a bit ambitious considering that we as a club are in the beginning stages of becoming internet savvy. Nevertheless, I decided to give it a try. In November of last year, our website gave birth to a baby conservation blog, which we promptly named “Green Thumbs”. As the proud parent to this blog, I look for concise and timely tidbits of information that might be of interest to conservation-minded people in general and Seattle Garden Club members in particular. While the blog is on the ‘public’ part of our website and thus accessible to all, we find it worthwhile to add regional and local stories as well as topics that may pertain to almost anyone, no matter where they live. Some of the best ideas and revelations can come from discovering what is happening elsewhere in the world. Our hope is to keep the conservation discussion going amongst members, and to provide helpful and interesting information in an easily accessible way. We invite you to join in the discussion! Take a look at the public page on our website: seattlegardenclub.org and click on the link to the blog (click on ‘Green Thumbs’). You’ll find items such as a Guide to Safe Drinking Water and learn how to participate in Washington State’s Environmental Lobby Day. Readers can then add comments about the topics on the blog. We can’t wait to hear what you think!



SGC blog logo.

*Juliet Romano, Conservation Committee Chair
Seattle G.C. (WA) – Zone XII*

Blog – A frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and web links. A blog is often a mixture of what is happening in a person’s life and what is happening on the Web, a kind of hybrid diary/guide site.

Conservation Websites - Examples

My Emissions Exchange (www.myemissionsexchange.com) is a new website that lets you earn money for reducing your home energy use. For drastically reducing the electricity you use in your home, this site certifies your personal emissions reductions and brokers those credits to companies looking to burnish their green reputations. You're rewarded in two ways if you bring down your personal emissions. You pay less in utility bills and then you generate carbon credits that can be sold. The website also includes a "blog" readers can participate in.

Excerpted from the Conservation Corner in "Gatherings," October, 2009

Newsletter for the Columbine G.C. (AZ) – Zone XII

Edited by Kathy Van Arsdale

Are you looking for conservation information for your meetings or newsletters? Check out the website for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). That website is:

www.epa.gov

Answers to many of your conservation questions can be found on the website and provide you with valuable information to share with your members. Here's some examples of what can be found there. How do I find the greenest vehicle? Answers are in the Green Vehicle Guide. How are buildings certified as green in the U.S.? Found out all about green buildings on the website. How serious is a warming of the earth by a few degrees? Look under the Climate Change section on the website for information. How do you properly dispose of unused medications? Yes, it's on the website, under Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products. The answers to many of our questions are just a click away!

Editor

More Conservation Topics

Stormwater Runoff

"They Paved Paradise and Put Up a Parking Lot"

The Problem

Have you noticed the oil rainbows that occur on paved surfaces after a rainfall, or wondered what happens to the pesticides in the fertilizers we put on our lawns, or what about the soapy water residue from washing our cars? They all pollute our rivers and streams.

This type of pollution is significant because, unlike the water that goes down a sink or toilet in your home, stormwater is untreated and flows directly into a lake, river, or the ocean. Anything dumped or dropped on the ground or in the gutter can end up in the nearest body of water. Stormwater pollution results from materials and chemicals washed into the storm drains from streets, gutters, neighborhoods, industrial sites, parking lots and construction sites.

While we're used to associating water pollution with heavy industry, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) now calls runoff, "the leading remaining cause of water-quality problems" in the United States. And unlike those industrial discharges, runoff is produced by every one of us. When rain falls or snow starts to melt, the water moves over the ground, picking up the chemicals we leave behind: oil from our cars; fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides from our lawns, gardens and farmland; pet and livestock wastes laden with bacteria and nutrients; contamination from faulty septic systems; and countless other byproducts of human activity. The problem has become so severe that EPA estimates American households improperly dump the equivalent of the Exxon Valdez oil spill every month. It's just not as noticeable.

**“Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got till it's gone?”**
(from “Big Yellow Taxi” performed by Joni Mitchell)

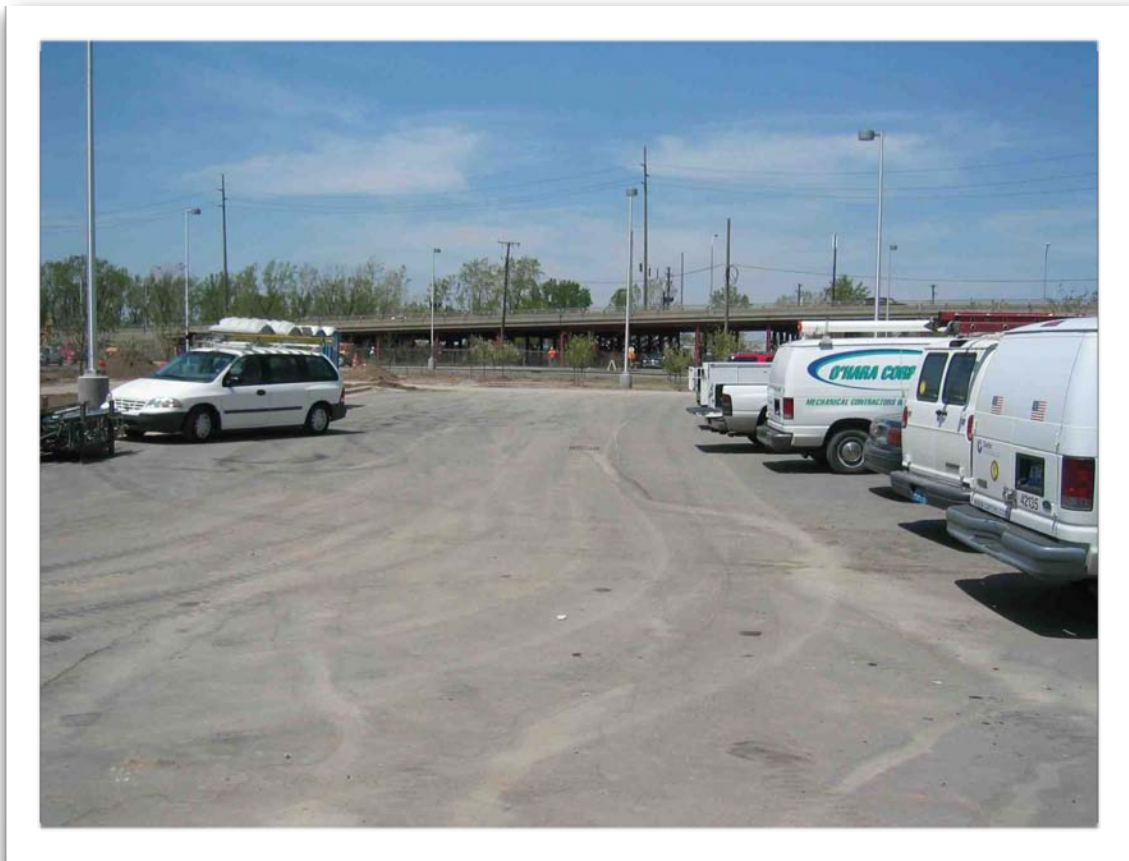


Photo by Gretchen Downs.

Urban settings exacerbate the problem because of the large amount of impervious surface, such as asphalt or concrete. When rain lands on a forested area, it filters down through the forest canopy, through the soil and moves slowly through the groundwater to emerge clean in streams and rivers. If that forested area is developed, the rainwater lands instead on pavement, rooftop or other impervious surface. It moves across that surface more quickly and at a higher volume, therefore the pollutants are not filtered out.

What You Can Do

1. Maintain your car or and recycle used oil, antifreeze and other fluids. Fix oil leaks in your vehicles.
2. Wash your car at a commercial car wash.
3. Cut down on fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. If you use these chemicals, follow directions and use them sparingly. Don't fertilize before a rainstorm.
4. Replace part of your lawn with native, drought-resistant plants.
5. Pick up after your pets and properly dispose of it.
6. Reduce impervious surfaces at home and increase the vegetated land cover of your property.
7. Reduce rooftop runoff by directing your downspouts to vegetated areas, and not to the storm drain on your street. Use rain barrels to collect and store water for later use.

8. Consider putting in permeable paving or patterns of cement and brick that allow water to filter through your driveways and patios.

Gretchen Downs, Country G.C. (OH) – Zone X
GCA Conservation Committee – Vice-Chair, Water/Wetlands/Great Lakes

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Endangered Species Day May 21, 2010 Celebrating America's Wildlife Legacy

Your garden club can celebrate this day in a variety of ways. Organize an event at a local park, wildlife refuge, zoo, aquarium, or botanical garden. Plan a display at your library, a local school, or community center. Plan a field trip or a community clean-up. View a film on a conservation topic. Plan an educational activity with local children. Protecting America's wildlife and plants today is a legacy we leave our children and grandchildren. Help all Americans experience the rich variety of native species that define our nation.

Asian Carp Threaten the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes of Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario form the largest surface freshwater system on Earth. Over the last two centuries, invasive aquatic plant and animal species, estimated in the thousands, have significantly changed the wildlife habitat of the Great Lakes Basin. Today, two species of Asian carp (Bighead and Silver) threaten to invade Lake Michigan causing harm to the natural ecosystem of the Great Lakes, the \$7 billion fishing industry and the recreational areas Americans cherish. Southern fish farmers first imported Asian carp to kill parasites in their ponds. Consuming up to 40 percent of their body weight daily, Asian carp can easily overtake smaller and less aggressive competitors. Bighead carp can grow to 4 feet in length and weigh 100 pounds while Silver carp are known for dangerously leaping out of the water with the sound of approaching boats. The floods and hurricanes of the 1980s and 1990s enabled the carp to escape into the Mississippi River. They've been making their way northward ever since.

In November of last year, the Army Corps of Engineers reported Asian carp DNA from fish feces in a river south of Chicago beyond the electric barrier constructed to repel the carp with a non-lethal jolt. In December, Illinois officials released rotenone (a natural toxin that does not pose a threat to humans, animals or other aquatic wildlife) into the six-mile Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to get rid of any carp while the barrier was turned off for maintenance. The next day one 22-inch Asian carp was found among the thousands of fish scooped up during this kill operation.

President Obama's request for the new \$475 million EPA-led Great Lakes Restoration Initiative addressing invasive aquatic species, pollution and habitat degradation was included in the 2010



Asian Silver carp photo by Jason Lindsey for prairierivers.com.

Appropriations Act signed into law in October. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson has allocated \$13 million of that money to halt the advancement of Asian carp into the Great Lakes. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed a ban on fertile Asian carp, allowing fish farmers to import only sterile carp for parasitic control. Congressional legislation has been introduced to prohibit the importation of certain species of Asian carp.

In late December, fearing an imminent Asian carp invasion into Lake Michigan, the State of Michigan (joined by Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Ontario, Canada) filed a lawsuit against the State of Illinois asking the Supreme Court to stop the flow of water from carp-infested rivers into Lake Michigan by closing the lock system. Illinois State countered that closing the locks would cripple the local shipping industry and expose parts of Chicago to flooding. Illinois, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Chicago control the canals and waterways that empty into Lake Michigan.

On January 19, the Supreme Court rejected Michigan's request, but did not rule out further litigation over the Chicago Diversion Plan that had been challenged in 1925 when the course of the Chicago River was diverted to move water pollution away from Lake Michigan and connect the Great Lakes with the Mississippi River. Also on January 19, more Asian carp DNA was reported in three different areas along the Chicago River north of Chicago.

As a result of the lawsuit, Congressional hearings on the threat of Asian carp to the Great Lakes have been scheduled for this February. The governors of Michigan and Wisconsin are calling for an emergency conference to address what they believe could be a catastrophic influx of the carp. Halting the spread of Asian carp into the freshwater habitat of the Great Lakes and protecting the economic stability of Chicago and the states bordering the Great Lakes will be a major challenge for governments and conservation groups in 2010.

*Kathy Jones, Lake Minnetonka G.C. (MN) – Zone XI
GCA NAL Committee - Vice-Chair, Endangered and Invasive Species*

More About GMO's . . .

After three losses in the appellate courts, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to consider the Monsanto Company's challenge to a 2007 injunction barring farmers from planting the company's Roundup Ready seed until the federal government completed a study of whether the seed's use would affect conventional and organic alfalfa crops.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, has never done a study on the long term effects of genetically modified foods on human, animal or environmental health. Yet, the USDA cleared the use of the

genetically engineered alfalfa by Monsanto. A lower court said the government did not properly study potential environmental impacts, and this was confirmed twice more by other courts.

Critics said the use of the Roundup Ready alfalfa could contaminate alfalfa that is not genetically engineered. Monsanto said contamination was highly unlikely, despite proof that Monsanto's Roundup Ready GM corn, soy, canola and other crops have cross-pollinated and genetically contaminated non-GM crops, up to miles away.

The USDA issued a draft environmental impact statement on Monsanto's seed in November, 2009 and has again recommended that farmers be allowed to plant it. The agency is accepting public comments on its proposal and a final action on the issue is expected later this year.

The Court's ruling in this case could have an impact on a similar dispute involving Roundup Ready sugar beets, from which much of the nation's sugar is derived. A federal judge ruled in September the USDA did not conduct an appropriate environmental impact study on the herbicide-tolerant plant. The judge has not decided on how to remedy the violation.

Does anyone else wonder why our government (i.e. - we the people) must fund studies for these multi-billion dollar corporations? Drug companies must fund their own research and prove the safety of their products before they are allowed for human consumption. Shouldn't genetically modified foods be held to the same standard?

Here's what you can do. Google Monsanto, genetic modification, GM foods, and the 1986 Coordinated Framework for Regulation of Biotechnology. Then send your comments to the USDA, your Congressmen and the President. Let them know that long-term environmental impact, human impact, and animal impact studies should be done before the release of these GM crops and that legislation specific to GMO's should be passed.

*Heidi Ho Conjugacion, G.C. of Honolulu (HI)
GCA Zone XII Conservation/NAL Representative*

[Note: The last issue of *Conservation Watch* (Fall, 2009) contained an article by the same author about GMO's. This issue is still available online on the GCA website. Go to "Members Only." Click on "Publications," then "ConWatch." You will find the Fall, '09 issue listed. The article, "Have You Ever Eaten a Fishberry," is on page 3.]

Following the Flow: The Everglades Journey for 2010

***"There are no other Everglades in the world.
They are . . . one of the unique regions of the earth;
remote, never wholly known. Nothing anywhere else is like them."***

Marjory Stoneman Douglas

In September of 2008, the GCA Conservation and National Affairs and Legislation Committees, after an intense study of the proposed full restoration plan of the greater Everglades ecosystem, spent five days exploring the Florida Everglades - by airboat, tram, and on foot. [See *Conservation Watch*, Nov. 2008 "Everglades – Special Edition" still available on the GCA website under "Publications", "ConWatch."]

What is happening now?

The wetlands that define the fragile Everglades bionetwork are in extreme distress. The estuaries on both coasts are critically damaged, imperiling the vast diverse species of wildlife and plant life. Today, despite the federal legislation passage a decade ago, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) in

2000 that created the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Act (CERP), and many millions of dollars spent to implement the Everglades portion of it, little progress has been made. The U.S. government, the State of Florida, Tribal Indians, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), and local and environmental partners working with the Army Corps of Engineers have been unable to solve many of the problems of unacceptable water quality, blocked sheetflow,* and inadequate storage. This Florida watershed in the lower Everglades includes the Tamiami Trail, east and west Spreader Canals, Biscayne Bay and Old Florida Bay coastal wetlands, water preserve areas, reservoirs, and the Ten Thousand Islands. More than 30% less water flow over several decades makes it virtually impossible for the Everglades to sustain its ecological health and support the variety of species that inhabit this inimitable and fascinating ecosystem.



Photo credit: google images.

Things are about to change. Help is on the way. But progress is burdened by delays and heated debates. Gov. Charlie Crist's controversial \$536 million deal to buy 73,000 acres from U.S. Sugar (to reestablish water flow areas) has been challenged in court by other "Big Sugar" interests and the Mikosukee Indian Tribe, although the plan has been approved by the SFWMD.

This would be the first part of water flow restoration. Individual Florida GCA Clubs (Palm Beach, Grass River, and Jupiter) were asked to testify for the State. The Obama Administration pledged nearly a half billion dollars in an impressive funding package for restoration projects, including the Indian River Lagoon, the St. Lucie Estuary, the Caloosahatchee River Estuary, Tamiami Trail, Herbert Hoover Dike, the Picayune Strand, the 130-mile Kississimee River watershed that feeds Lake Okeechobee, and the sheetflow through the Everglades to Biscayne Bay and Old Florida Bay.

The Tamiami Trail, built in 1920 to connect Miami and Tampa, was identified as one of the most serious environmental threats to the “River of Grass.” The Everglades, once a slow-moving, broad, shallow sheet of water, was dammed and ditched until it became a series of reservoirs; only the Everglades National Park remained free flowing. The Tamiami Trail effectively blocked natural freshwater flow southward, and became one of the most formidable barriers to sheetflow. These barriers and other impediments must be removed.

It’s all about sheetflow. The Everglades cannot be restored without restoring sheetflow. The St. Lucie and the Caloosahatchee estuaries cannot be protected without restoring sheetflow. Fresh-water flows to Florida Bay cannot be reestablished without restoring sheetflow.

A jubilant celebration on December 4, 2009 greeted Everglades supporters at the Tamiami Trail, as U.S. Dept. of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and the Army Corps of Engineers unveiled their 2010 Tamiami Trail Project. It includes building a one-mile bridge to replace a flood portion of the Trail, reviving wetland habitat for more than 65 threatened and endangered species. As the waterflow north of Tamiami Trail increases, the National Park Service is considering constructing up to six additional miles of the bridge in the future. On January 7, 2010, the Picayune Strand Restoration broke ground, restoring and protecting 55,000 acres in Collier County as a valuable habitat for the endangered Florida panther. **These are major, bold steps - two vital projects in 2010 that will help in restoring the natural flow of the Everglades.**

*Sharon Stewart Neri – G.C. of Palm Beach (FL)
GCA Zone VIII Conservation/NAL Representative 2006-08*

[*sheetflow - An overland flow or downslope movement of water taking the form of a thin, continuous film over relatively smooth soil or rock surfaces and not concentrated into channels larger than rills.]

A Florida Victory

Work by a local grassroots community organization has come to fruition – The Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway (State Route 40) has been designated a National Scenic Byway, linking people to the land. This 126 miles stretch, going from Silver Springs to Ormond Beach, crosses four counties. It traverses some of Florida’s most pristine ecosystems, centered on the Big Scrub, the world’s largest scrub forest. Providing access to a wide array of public lands, including the Ocala National Forest, the scenic byway runs through the heart of Florida black bear habitat. This bear, an iconic symbol of the region, is a threatened subspecies endemic to Florida.

Now, with federal recognition, the state will be able to acquire grants for environmental, historic, and tourism projects. A wide variety of regional improvements are proposed. These projects include: a trailhead designation, creation of a bike trail, information kiosks, and a wildlife crossing to prevent bears from being hit by vehicles. The Pioneer Settlement for the Creative Arts is partnering with the corridor management entity to build an interpretative center in an historic settlement.



Credit: floridablackbearsenicbyway.org

Since 1992, the U.S. Dept. of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration has funded almost 3000 projects through the byways program. As part of a grassroots collaborative effort, the *goal is to recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the U.S.* Do you have a bypass in your state that needs enhancement based on archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, or scenic qualities? You, too, could bask in the victory that Florida citizens have achieved.

Jane Hermann, Diggers G.C. (CA) – Zone XII
GCA NAL Committee - Vice-Chair, Transportation Corridors

“Green Spaces/Historic Places” – Zone VI Meeting

The theme of the GCA Zone VI Meeting in October, 2009, hosted by the **Garden Club of Chevy Chase** (MD) and the **Georgetown Garden Club** (DC), was “Green Spaces/Historical Places.” Conservation issues were highlighted throughout the many facets of the meeting, with outstanding tours, speakers, exhibits, and a GCA flower show.

The speaker panel for “Green Spaces/Historic Places Past and Present” featured four outstanding, nationally known experts. Richard Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, discussed the importance of preventing suburban sprawl by restoring existing buildings instead of destroying rural land for new development. John McBride, Board member of the LEED Platinum certified Sidwell Friends School described the evolution of decisions and implementation of their new green building. Gilbert Grosvenor, Board Chair of the National Geographic Society, presented the history of incorporating green features in the National Geographic building. And, Patrick Noonan, Chairman of the Conservation Fund, discussed the importance of the health of the Chesapeake Bay and the historic role of the GCA in conservation issues.

The flower show, *Pathways to a Greener Tomorrow*, extended the green theme of the meeting. The schedule focused on energy sources – both sustainable and non-renewable. The descriptions of the classes raised awareness of sustainable sources, such as biomass, nuclear, wind and solar. Our most widely used and unsustainable energy source, fossil fuel, was interpreted in one class. Several Horticulture classes enhanced the green theme by focusing on trees. The Plant Exchange classes encouraged growing native trees from seed. With over 200 entries in the show, green awareness was widespread.

The participants enjoyed tours of the newly restored Lincoln Cottage and historic Meridian Hill Park. Additional tours of Sidwell Friends School new green building and the All Hallows Amphitheater and Olmsted Woods at the National Cathedral underscored the conservation theme of the meeting. The Olmstead Woods, a five-acre forest at the National Cathedral, is the last vestige of an extensive oak and beech forest. These woods had been very degraded over the years from overuse, erosion, and invasives. In 1995 an extensive woods restoration project was started which also included restoring All Hallows



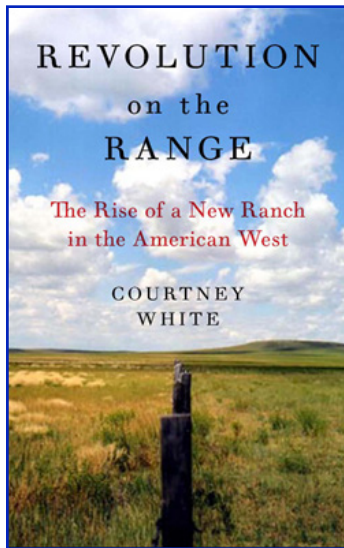
Best in Show and Puckett Creativity Award winner in the Solar Class was won by Sandy Yellott of St. George's G.C., interpreting solar panels and green roofs.

Amphitheater, adjacent to the woods. The project included eliminating thousands of exotic, invasive plants. Twelve hundred native trees and shrubs as well as native ground covers and wildflowers were planted. The Washington Post referred to the project as "Washington's natural cathedral."

There were two award-winning exhibits at the meeting. The conservation exhibit focused on the importance of reusable bags with many examples of bags distributed by GCA clubs and the need to reduce plastic bag use. The other, a horticulture exhibit on the American Elm Tree, designed by Georgetown G.C.'s Dede Petri, was both beautiful and educational. As part of that effort, all attendees received a 3-foot disease-resistant elm tree to plant at home. Attendees went back to their own clubs with renewed enthusiasm for conservation.

Brenda Moorman, Georgetown G.C. (DC)
GCA Zone VI Conservation/NAL Representative

Media Reviews



Revolution on the Range: The Rise of a New Ranch in the American West

by Courtney White

Courtney White is the co-founder and longtime Executive Director of the Quivira Coalition, a nonprofit dedicated to building bridges between ranchers and environmentalists. In *Revolution on the Range*, White tells how new cooperative efforts are replacing the old conflicts between environmentalists and landowners. The book details visits to several ranches where concepts such as working wildernesses and ranching for wildlife are changing the landscape.

Editor

Numen: The Nature of Plants DVD



Produced by Terrence Youk and Ann Armbrecht (daughter of former GCA Conservation Committee Chair Calvert Armbrecht)

Featured at numerous US film festivals this past year, this exciting DVD is a depiction of the healing essence of plants. The filmmakers include beautiful time-lapse photography in capturing the magic and beauty of plants and their importance as herbal medicines. To quote Kenny Ausubel, Founder of *Bioneers*, "Especially in a time of radical flux and . . . climate change, our relationship with . . . plants and our knowledge of those plants is perhaps the most important collective heritage we have. That knowledge is ultimately what is going to sustain us." Purchase the DVD at: www.numenfilm.co. Your club will enjoy a showing.

[*numen* - a spirit believed to inhabit an object or preside over a place]

Editor

Contacts

Susie Wilmerding, Chairman
Conservation Committee
Garden Club of Philadelphia (PA) - Zone V
260 Booth Lane
Haverford, PA 19041-1717
(610) 642-5537
(610) 642-2947 (fax)
swilmerding@yahoo.com

Nancy McKlveen, Chairman
National Affairs and Legislation Committee
Des Moines Founders Garden Club (IA) - Zone XI
5803 North Waterbury Road
Des Moines, IA 50312-1339
(515) 279-2116
nancymck@earthlink.net

Elva Busch, Editor
Santa Fe Garden Club (NM) - Zone XII
20 Windridge Circle
Santa Fe, NM 87506
(505) 982-4435
(505) 982-4437 (fax)
elvabusch@comcast.net

Anne O'Brien, Assistant Editor
Columbine Garden Club (AZ) - Zone XII
6018 East Cholla Lane
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253
(480) 874-3323
(480) 970-8328 (fax)
annie39@cox.net

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Elva Busch, Editor



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