

# The Leaves of Twin Oaks

## NEWS OF THE OAKS

by Valerie

Springtime: creativity abounds! Not only are we producing copious daffodils and croci, but our members have been busy with their own creative pursuits. We hosted a “Spring Equinox Art and Craft Show” which featured quilts, knitting, ceramics, paintings, woodwork, gourd art and more, all hand-made here at the Oaks. This followed on the heels of “Miniature Literature”, a Six Word Story contest, with both General and Twin Oaks themed categories. And after the purchase of a new cargo van for transporting hammocks to the Crafts Fairs where we sell our products, we came up with a few clever naming possibilities and ultimately christened it “Van-ity Fair”.

We also ushered in Spring with our annual Passover Seder (complete with an orange on the seder plate) and a morning Equinox ritual. We were pretty happy to leave behind the plagues of the winter: first of all, our version of the Mayan apocalypse descended upon us in the form of the worst community flu season we've had in many years - many members were struck hard and out of commission for days and days. And then two different storms resulted in us losing power twice, once for a number of days. We were busy keeping the generators running, and rotating them for various community uses--keeping our well pump running so we'd have water, keeping our giant walk-in refrigerator and freezer going so we didn't lose months'-worth of processed food, and keeping our Sewage Treatment Plant operational so that....well, perhaps you get the idea. Speaking of which, one (not very) cheap thrill we got in early 2013 is that the community began purchasing two-ply toilet paper! Now we get to see how the \*other\* 99% lives....

gone over the years were there, and much merriment ensued. The celebration was a good counterpoint to Acorn's recent bad news—a fire burned one of their storage buildings, and they lost a significant amount of equipment and supplies. No one was hurt, and they have been busy counting their blessings while working on replacing what was lost.

Two final accomplishments of note: We had a cooperative (ie. non- competitive) 5K Run, with a number of Oakers showing off their strides. And in one week in April, we made 7 tons of tofu in one week! A number of tofu workers planned to be away visiting our sister community East Wind in Missouri the following week, and so we worked additional shifts the week before to build inventory. ❁



Pallets of Deluxe Toilet Tissue

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

Feminism at Twin Oaks?	2
Sunday Poem	2
Eating Seasonally	3
Putting Action into Words	4

In our most recent holiday revelry, most community members migrated en masse over to our sister community Acorn for their 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party. Many familiar faces that have come and

# Feminism at Twin Oaks? Maybe.

by Brittany

It is said that there are as many brands of feminism as there are feminists. With that in mind, in what ways is Twin Oaks a feminist community? By which of many standards do we measure ourselves? Perhaps opinions on the matter are as numerous as the communards who live here.

Our policies generally reflect feminist goals. For instance, all work is compensated, including domestic work and child care. We earn labor credits for these; they are not “unpaid” women’s work. We have a gender-blind nudity policy. When we take it seriously, it works toward de-shaming and de-sexualizing women’s breasts and checks male privilege. And because the community rewards us all equally with needs met and a small allowance, there’s no financial reason to land a man, and no disadvantage to dumping him. Elsewhere in the United States, women still earn significantly less than men and often stay in less-than-satisfactory (or abusive) relationships for financial security.

Then there’s our culture. Our neutral pronoun “co” has morphed into a replacement for “man” in words like “gingerbread co.” Some lament the bad grammar, but it still serves to create awareness of gendered language. Our culture of consent demands a positive “yes” for each acceleration of physical intimacy, including kissing. No one can make assumptions about a woman’s availability based on her clothing or sexual history, and creepy people are not welcome back. We also have some women working in the trades and with heavy machinery, and maybe they aren’t just tokens for mentioning in official literature. Maybe.

So is it policy or culture that defines how feminist we are? What percentage of us must be able to articulate feminist ideals, or must at least identify as feminist? Is it possible to be feminist passively, riding the systems that are in place? Which failures are truly deal-breakers? Big questions, these.

Perhaps it’s easier to hint at the female experience at Twin Oaks. Most women here feel safe from assault and harassment. Most women here don’t shave. Many openly express love and attraction for other women.



The ambiguity of progress, illustrated by a child’s shirt

Most of us feel no hesitation in helping ourselves to any job on the farm, even if it’s in a typically macho field. We don’t feel compelled to look nice, dress nice, smell nice, or act nice if we don’t want to. There’s no social censure for being this way, for being “unfeminine,” and it’s a liberated feeling that cannot be described. I take it as a sign that we are doing something right.

Interested in learning more about feminism? Try <http://finallyfeminism101.wordpress.com/the-faqs/faq-roundup/> for starters. Interested in learning more about feminism at Twin Oaks? Maybe it’s time for you to write that visitor letter. ❁

## Sunday Poem

By Tina

It was so still before the pond and sunlight filtered down across the water — the sauna — wooden cabin like — dream like — all of it — the stillness I remember when I was a little girl, alone in the woods by a pond — fully awake I was — little then — with her — little Anya — I thought — She’s just like me in her soul — singin’ nursery rhymes at age two — loving the stillness and the air of the world — I thought what a gift — her presence was — She brought me to stillness where I am myself — in awe — at peace in nature and the day — She stands often in awe of whatever is going on — The way I want to be — in awe of everything.

# Eating Seasonally and Locally

by Ali

When you live in the Mid-Atlantic and grow most of your own food, winter can feel a little long. Twin Oaks produces about 60% of its own food, and between canning, pickling, cellaring, freezing & fermenting, we are fairly well stocked throughout the winter. We also have a 30' x 96' hoop house (like a greenhouse) that keeps us in leafy greens all winter. That being said, winter cooking can get a little boring, and there are a lot of things with the same mushy consistency: beans, potatoes, squash, soups. We try not to buy much produce in the winter and this along with cool temperatures preserving unrefrigerated food, leads to it being "dumpster season." We have a strong culture of "dumpstering" food at Twin Oaks; rescuing food from the trash. People in town on errands check out the dumpsters of local grocery stores and take food that is fine and safe to eat but not sellable. This adds variety and the element of surprise to a cooking shift because sometimes produce can arrive at the beginning of a shift and completely change the trajectory of a meal. This winter I made kumquat-glazed sweet potatoes, lemon meringue pie, cucumber tomato salad, avocado dressing, and mango pad thai with dumpstered ingredients.

Though the bounty of summer in full-swing is the best time to cook, there is something special about the first sneak peaks of spring. The sweet tender peas, bright red radishes & garlic scapes poking through the wet soil. We have had 5 calves born within the last month, so we have a bounty of spring milk that is turning into cheese, butter, yogurt, cream sauces & desserts. Even though we had a snowstorm that knocked out the power, spring is trying hard to arrive and I got to see a calf born on the morning of the Spring Equinox, the same day that the willow tree started budding. The frisbee games are getting fuller, agricultural work is picking up and the roosters are crowing earlier and earlier. Pretty soon, the flavors and textures of winter will be replaced with brightly-colored, crisp, crunchy delights – and from the kitchen to the dining room, I think everyone will be grateful.

With all the spring milk, I find myself wanting to make creamy things in the kitchen. Here is a quick-and-easy soft cheese recipe: Gently heat 2 quarts of milk, 1 cup

of heavy cream & ½ teaspoon salt to 190°F in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Remove from heat and stir in 3 tablespoons of lemon juice. Leave it alone for about 15 minutes then strain through cheesecloth until it is the desired thickness. About an hour will produce thick, creamy cheese. Stir in some honey and chopped fresh thyme for a sweet-savory treat to spread on bread, or add chopped garlic to put in lasagna. ❁

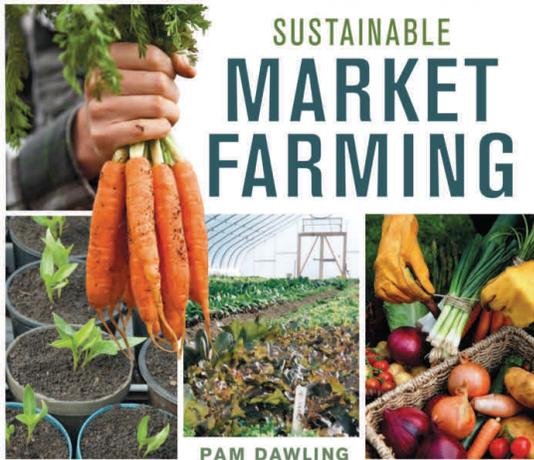


# Putting Action Into Words: Writing About Growing Food

by Pam

I have been living at Twin Oaks since 1991. I'm the manager of the vegetable gardens where we grow food on three and a half acres to feed our 100 members year round. To make best use of every space in the garden, I started to keep crop records and research better methods, varieties and timing. I wrote up what I learned as monthly articles for Growing for Market magazine. After six years of articles, I started work on a book in June 2009. It was published by New Society in February this year.

## INTENSIVE VEGETABLE PRODUCTION ON A FEW ACRES



PAM DAWLING

As a Twin Oaks income area, the book gets a loose labor budget decided by the Community Planners. For 2012 and 2013 it is 500 hours per year. It took a lot of time and energy to write the book, and having written the thing, I realize it'd be a shame not to do a reasonable amount of marketing and publicity, so I'm still working at that.

Sustainable Market Farming provides detailed practical information for small-scale sustainable vegetable growers, covering crop production, planning and organization. It promotes biological farming as a sustainable livelihood, providing good food locally, conserving resources and contributing to social, environmental and financial responsibility. At the end of the book is a

chapter by Southern Exposure Seed Exchange in Mineral, about growing seed crops for sale, a very thorough Resources listing and a concise index by the Twin Oaks Indexing business.

I've been giving workshop presentations since September. About one a month since then. It no longer terrifies me to speak in public and handle microphones and power-points, but I'd still rather be weeding carrots!

I'm selling books at events I speak at, and via my website. The cover price is \$34.95, and shipping adds \$5.50. I've sold about 100 so far. This is the best deal for us financially - a much better deal than royalties. The publisher has sold about 1900, so that's 2000 sold out of 5000 in the first two months!

My website ([www.sustainablemarketfarming.com](http://www.sustainablemarketfarming.com)) is going well. I write blog posts once or twice a week. I have a Facebook page for the book ([facebook.com/SustainableMarketFarming](https://facebook.com/SustainableMarketFarming)), and although I was dragged there like a stubborn donkey, it is now going well, and all my blog posts go there.

For Jan, Feb and March I netted about \$3.73 per hour! It should only get better! The publisher sells to the trade, which accrues royalties for us. We won't get any royalties till after we've earned the \$7000 advance, which will take sales of at least 4000 books. 🌱



Pam hard at work