KENTUCKY ORGANIC GROWERS

A new organization to assist tobacco and other farmers in expanding the opportunity for supplementary or alternative crop options has been born. Attorney Pam Clay left State Government in order to launch the Kentucky Organic Growers (KOG), using as a base the rapidly expanding list of certified organic growers in the Commonwealth. The Burley Growers Cooperative Association has shown immense good will and foresight and allowed the KOG to be housed in their building in Lexington and to use their organizational umbrella, as well as facilities. The initial KOG meeting in mid-December found a large number of potential produce customers for the summer and fall of 1994. Yet there is a scarcity of growers to fill those orders. We have the unusual phenomenon of a market but no one to supply it at this moment. Officials at some of the State Parks have expressed willingness to introduce organic vegetables into the popular salad bars in the coming summer.

We at ASPI have assisted this spawning group as much as we can. Our garden intern, Stacey Hubbs, is working with the KOG for half-time (non-growing months of November through February). She helps with a series of six organic technique workshops being scheduled for the spring and summer of 1994. We are also planning a town meeting during the summer on tobacco problems and alternatives and will be developing a backup report that will be discussed in the spring newsletter. We have always received excellent response from readership and so we appeal again. If you desire to grow vegetables and can raise them without chemical pesticides and fertilizers, join the KOG and take on some of the waiting orders for producing a whole variety of vegetables and herbs during the 1994 growing season. Contact Pam or Stacey at (606) 233-7845.

CALENDAR HAPPENINGS

We are sorry to report that Rev. Pat Brunner, wife of our celebrated photographer, Warren Brunner has been paralyzed by a rare disease and is undergoing rehabilitation at Cardinal Hill Hospital in Lexington, KY. Remember her in your prayers and good deeds that she may recover very soon.

The unique 1994 calendar theme, "Porches of Appalachia", very popular. Warren Brunner has chosen the theme for the '95 calendar as "Hands of Appalachia. The photos for this surprisingly diverse topic will include some of Warren's favorites. We hope to have the calendar for 1995 out by spring of 1994 to allow for more general advertisement. Our designer Mark Spencer is diligently putting finishing touches on this upcoming issue.

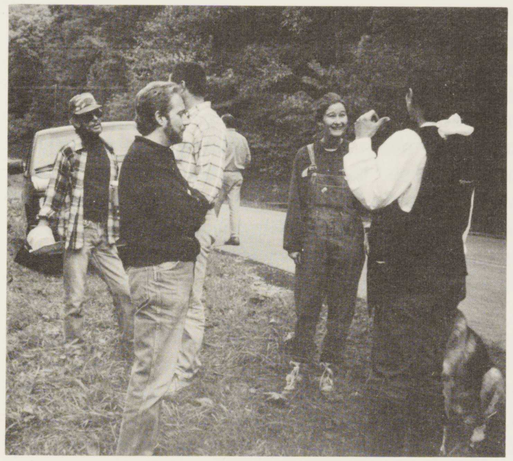
AWARDS (continued)

presented by famed Washington reporter Helen Thomas, at a Washington, DC ceremony on December 3rd. Among their many projects, the Simpsons have rehabbed over 150 houses in Harlan County with virtually no steady support system. Over 850 high school and college students assist them each year in one of the finest volunteer programs in the region.

Our RAS consultant Gary Watrous, a Louisville solar architect, won a monetary award from the National Renewable Energy Laboratories (NREL) in Golden, Colorado for his exemplary cost-effective, energy efficient housing. Congratulations to Gary, as well as Becky and Bobby.

QUOTE OF THE SEASON

"I don't expect the USDA to pay our hemp farmers a subsidy to grow the valuable crop, but I do expect them to publicize our efforts and do whatever they can to expedite its use as a paper source so as to enable our family farmers to survive the flood, the drought, and the unfair trade from other countries." Jack Frazier, Editor, *Solar Age Hemp Paper Report*, P.O. Box 610, Peterstown, WV 24963. Printed in "Acres, USA: A Voice for Eco-Agriculture, Volume 23, No. 10, October, 1993.



ASPI Garden Intern, Stacey Hubbs (center) with Visitors

Reader Comments

Our regular Alternatives readers will notice the change in format in this issue. We are always looking for ways to improve the newsletter and our efficiency in producing it. We welcome comments on the changes, as well as suggestions for other improvements. Just drop us a note here at ASPI.

LOW-COST HOUSING UPDATE

Slowly but surely our efforts at low-cost housing are developing into a program. A manual will be ready in the spring and we are busy making contacts with groups to assist in developing prototypes of these low cost buildings. Linda Comeaux introduced us to two wood products companies in Southeast Ohio who are willing to work with us in developing such buildings. The Vinton County housing people are also most cooperative, so we may have enough resources to see action in the coming months as Ernie Muhly develops his designs. Ernie spoke about our efforts at the large gathering of sustainable designers and architects at George Mason University in mid-November. We are also trying to interest other housing advocacy groups in Kentucky and other parts of the Appalachian region.

HERB GARDENING

In our commitment to alternatives for Appalachian farmers, ASPI is moving to give special attention to beverage and seasoning herb growing in 1994. Ilse Ackerman, a fall intern from Antioch College, worked with Lewis Van Winkle to develop plans for the herb garden, which will contain about thirty species of herbs. The garden will cover 500 square feet of specially designed beds. The types of herbs were selected based on their hardiness, ease of cultivation and harvesting, and their usefulness in tea and cooking. The plots were laid out with careful attention to the plants' individual preferences as far as moisture, fertility, sunlight, and pH level. One section in particular will contain only herbs native to Kentucky, such as dittany, white beebalm, and wild bergamot.

As mentioned in our Wish List we would welcome any contributions of seeds or cuttings from the gardeners among our readers. The particular species we plan to grow are agrimony, anise, basil, white beebalm, wild bergamot, betony, borage, caraway, catnip, chamomile, coriander, costmary, dill, dittany, fenugreek, horehound, anise hyssop, lemon balm, lovage, mint, mountain mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, savory, wild strawberry, thyme, and wintergreen.

We hope to gather information on the best of these to pass on to farm families seeking alternative cash crops. Perennial herbs do not require plowing or replanting each year, are resistant to insects and diseases, and provide their own weed control once established. The propagation, planting, and care of herb plants is not easily automated, so small farmers are not threatened by large agribusiness in this area. In addition, the processing of herbs largely necessitates hand labor, which can create jobs through local cottage industries.

Dittany, stone mint
(*Cunila origanoides*)