

Last year, before your editor went to visit Sepp Holzer's Krameterhof Permaculture Center in Austria, a seminar group from the Ukraine had been there enjoying a lengthy seminar stay at this amazing nature and food-growing paradise. Oksana Inte, a participant of the group, took great care to thoroughly document all aspects of their wonderful impressions and experiences. While we cannot print her lovely letter here in its entirety, it is available unabridged on the Ringing Cedars of Russia website (www.ringingcedarsofrussia.org). They also undertook the lengthy translation to make this great information available to all of us. We reprint parts of Oksana's letter here, with gratitude to Sepp, Veronika and Josef Holzer, Ringing Cedars of Russia and Oksana along with the wonderful group of intrepid Ukrainian gardeners in search of paradise. They clearly DID find it. Once you have read the following, you will understand why your dear editor decided to share this group-experience rather than her own lovely but singular visit. Group experiences are so very empowering and our energies, networks and all other connections do multiply through interactions with each other.

A Visit to Sepp Holzer's Krameterhof



Oksana Inte

Greetings to all, dear friends!

Our group consisted of 25 persons—basically the leaders of regional Organic Farming Clubs from Ukraine and at Holzer's we were joined by two families from Germany, one from Poland, and one from Hungary.

Holzer's farmstead lies at an elevation of 1800 meters above sea level. To our surprise, there was still snow in spots, the vegetation had just started to bloom. Finally, here we were before the gates of the long-awaited paradise. The meeting with the owner of the estate was warm and joyful. At Holzer's, at an elevation of 1100 to 1500 meters above sea level, the rhododendrons, a multitude of other flowers, and fruit bushes and trees were already in full bloom, with an average annual temperature of +4°C. All this is thanks to a microclimate which he created using a system of lakes, rocks, and high ridges, consisting of the trunks and branches of trees, covered with earth taken out of a trench (with a width of the bucket of an excavator, a depth of 0.5 to 1 meter, and arbitrary length). These are the so-called heat traps.

So, the **first** and most important thing I took from Holzer's teachings was that, when restoring a natural landscape, you must provide



the area with an open source of water. He said that there is water everywhere, one only must learn to find it. At first he invited specialist water-dowsers, but with time he mastered this skill himself.

The **second** thing is to shield the parcel from the blowing wind by creating a hedge and high ridges.

Third, create a variety of plant and animal life (including poisonous plants). From the entire neighborhood he dragged sacks of wood ants to his parcel, since he considers them to be the healers of the forest. Holzer is creating, as he expresses it, "edible" forests, where fruit trees and bushes grow in symbiosis with coniferous, deciduous, and decorative plants. He believes that the future of the planet depends on these types of forests, since apart from producing healthy air and renewing the soil, they will be able to eliminate the problem of hunger.

Fourth, the greater in size the parcel of land, the less work there is. Holzer no longer has to do anything, and the income from the estate will grow spontaneously, because nature is generous. The value of each plant planted ten years ago has grown a hundred-fold (and sometimes a thousand-fold). Moreover, it has reproduced itself many times without the help of man, augmenting his passive income yearly in increasing progression.

Fifth, his motto: "minimum work, maximum effect." Today his estate is a self-sufficient, self-developing system. I cannot parade the amount of his annual income without his consent, but, believe me, it is impressive, as is the general value of his entire estate. He lives off the sale of saplings, plant seeds, fish, crawfish, mushrooms, nuts, fruit, berries, and vegetables, and now seminars

as well. What's more, he does not need to do much harvest work. There are always enough people willing to gather his wholesome, ecologically pure crops, and in doing so, they pay 18 to 20 times more for the products than in the usual commercial networks.

Sixth, try as much as possible to plant all plants using seeds, creating beforehand conditions close to natural conditions: stratification in a freezer or snow. He planted very many trees this way, showed us the most wonderful 15-year-old fir grown from a seed. A cedar forest is growing on his land (Siberian cedars and some other type of cedar, which has much larger nuts). By the way, I gave him a cedar seed cone, which made him sincerely happy. He recommended planting seedlings in poor soil, under no circumstances in humus, since plants grown in more favorable conditions find it more difficult to adapt to a natural environment and fall sick.

Seventh, do not trim fruit trees. He believes that this is unnecessary work, and he does not like to do unnecessary work. In addition, they get accustomed to this procedure and become dependent on the intervention of man, become weak and less vigorous. He only trims in the case of a tree disease.

Eighth, do not water the trees when transplanting, plant them in the poorest soil with no fertilizers. Holzer uses an interesting method for transplanting adult deciduous trees and bushes: he wraps the roots of the dug-up plant in sacking, leaves them in the shade, and places the crown in the sun. When the tree loses its foliage, it is ready for planting. They take root one hundred percent of the time.

Ninth, make maximum use of

the abilities of animals to help in the farming. Thus, he uses the ability of pigs to dig up the earth in order to prepare beds for planting, scattering their favorite peas and corn on the area he needs.

Tenth, do not copy anyone blindly, including him. Use your own head to think and observe nature. His words: "My university is nature." All his experience is taken from nature. He very often repeats, "Man cannot perfect that which is already perfect, we must simply learn to manage nature wisely." For that reason, when a problem arises with the plants, animals, or soil, he enters into the state of this being, imagines being it, and listens to his feelings, whether he is comfortable in this spot, what is bothering him, what is lacking, what he would like. And the answer comes, and what is very important—it is always right. And if the diagnosis is made correctly, then the treatment will be effective.

Sepp Holzer is also convinced that each person has the right to a parcel of land, a vital space, and that only by living in harmony with nature can the world be changed for the better and all social problems of our sick society be solved.

Now he has been recognized both in his own country and others. He is invited to lecture at many universities. The academic elite of Austria has united around Holzer's ideas and, in his name and on the basis of his interviews, has drawn up a document—an appeal to the governments of the countries of the world and the inhabitants of our planet with proposals how to surmount the ecological and economic crisis.

One prevailing thing was that the materials at hand were used everywhere, with minimal financial and labor expenditures.

We parted singing the Ukrainian song "Be healthy, live well, we are setting off for home, to our little hut," with both hosts and guests most pleased.

That evening at the hotel a woman from the German group approached us. It turned out that she was a follower of Anastasia. She works in the deployment of computer technologies in Berlin. And again there was a flurry of delight and emotions and an exchange of addresses. It turned out that over the entire period of offering seminars, already 170



Sepp Holzer and his son Josef

thousand Germans have visited the Holzer's.

But I must also tell you about the family who are the publishers of Holzer's book and its Russian translators. They are the Russian-Germans Edward and Angelika Scheck, and their four children. Edward had been the interpreter at our seminar as well. The family is very interesting. The children are supporters of the idea of the creation of Kin's settlements. They bought a parcel of land for a Kin's estate in Germany, approximately one half of a hectare for the time being, but they plan to enlarge this to at least a hectare. They have been acquainted with the Holzers for a long time and were the ones who first brought the film *Permaculture in the Alps* to Russia and translated it into Russian. They use permaculture methods on their own land as well. Now they are digging a lake. Angelika shared with us some of her experience in "sensible" farming.

For example, she plants potatoes in the following manner: since a lot of earth is being obtained in digging the lake, Angelika places the potatoes directly on the flattened grass and covers it with a bucket of earth. On this little mound in a circle she plants about five strawberry plants, in the middle it is possible to stick a couple of kernels of corn. When they are ripe, the potatoes come out, while the strawberries continue to grow.

In addition, having experienced much suffering with the birth of her first two children at a maternity home and having undergone eight operations, Angelika, with the support of

her husband, gave birth to her next two children on her own at home. Now she teaches and prepares other families for home births. She receives calls from all corners of Germany, and she travels throughout the country to help with the appearance of a new person in this world painlessly and under natural conditions.

Angelika dreams of visiting the Kiev-Pechersky Monastery, and I invited all of them to visit me, including a visit to Lubscoe, and told them of my dream to conduct seminars in Lubscoe according to the program of the "Settler's school." Angelika answered that she would be able to organize tours for these seminars. It turns out that

there are many people in Germany who would like to take this type of training.

This family is now working on the translation of Holzer's second book, which provides a more detailed description of permaculture methods.

At the session, I was especially touched by the words of Petr Trofimenko, the founder of the Organic Farming Club movement. Petr said that the time had come to broaden the functions in the activities of the Organic Farming Clubs and, together with the creation of clubs, it was necessary to support the initiatives of people, active members of the movement, in their creation of practical educational centers on the basis of their farmsteads, where each interested person, together with theory, could obtain practical skills as well.

Petr put my own thoughts into words. And I shared my plans for the near future with everyone. Since the prerequisites for the founding of this type of practical educational center had already long ago been created at my place in Lubscoe, I was planning in June of this year to go through with the formalization of this matter in earnest. Petr Trofimenko and Yura Goncharuk promised to support my initiative.

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