

Creation of a Farmer: A New Agrarianism

Apeiron Society 2014 Annual Weekend Symposium

Creation of a Farmer: A New Agrarianism

- Introduction to Jeremie and his Farm.
- Defining the trend of professionals and college grads leaving, wholly or in part, city and career for agriculture.
- A New Agrarianism – the motivations behind the move, healing communities and the environment.
- Recognizing the Covenant with Creation – abad, shamar, and ecological hermeneutics – a motivating and sustaining factor in the Clyde's adoption of agrarianism.

Introduction – Clyde's and their Farm



What the Clyde's farm produces



Part 1 – New Farmers

- Farmer Boy – pages 366 – 370
- Professionals and college grads choosing agriculture wholly or in part for income and lifestyle – US recorded 456,000 beginning farmers in 2012 – farmers with less than 10 years experience
- More than 8,000 farmers' markets in US, a 38% increase over five years
- Learning to be a new farmer – course, youtube, social media
- The new farmer's farm... Organic, sustainable, innovative
 - Small mixed farms have greater production per acre through complexity and working with nature. As business they are more resilient than conventional farms (varied products and lower debt are major factors, as is soil health)
- New farms rely on: food forests, permaculture, perennials, planting guilds, companion planting, compost, SPIN farming, aquaponics, and CSA
- College grads, new farmers, and necessity of an education in critical thinking.

Part 1 – New Farmers



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Part 2 - A New Agrarianism

- "There is another way to live and think: it's called agrarianism. It is not so much a philosophy as a practice, an attitude, a loyalty and a passion – all based in close connection with the land. It results in a sound local economy in which producers and consumers are neighbors and in which nature herself becomes the standard for work and production." – *Wendell Berry*
- "The agricultural industrialists like to say that their agrarian opponents are merely sentimental defenders of ways of farming that are hopelessly old-fashioned, justly dying out, or they say that their opponents are the victims, as Richard Lewontin put it, of "a false nostalgia for a way of life that never existed." But these are not criticisms. They are insults. For agrarians, the correct response is not stand confidently on our fundamental premise, which is both democratic and ecological: The land is a gift to all the living in all time. To withhold it from some is finally to destroy it for all. For a few powerful people to own or control it all, or decide its fate, is wrong." *Wendell Berry Quivira Coalition Journal No. 34, June 2009, pg. 15*

Part 2 - A New Agrarianism

- "A New Agrarianism is an ecological economy centered on food and land health that builds resilience, encourages ethical relationships, and celebrates life." - *Courtney White*
- "Agrarianism, broadly conceived, reaches beyond food production and rural living to include a wide constellation of ideas, loyalties, sentiments, and hopes. It is a temperament and a moral orientation as well as a suite of economic practices, all arising out of the insistent truth that people everywhere are part of the land community, just as dependent as other life on the land's fertility and just as shaped by its mysteries and possibilities." – *Eric Freyfogle*

Part 2 - A New Agrarianism

1. What brought you to growing.
2. What do you value most in it.
3. What do you find hardest.
4. What would you tell a beginner.

Scot Weir – Growing Gardens (Poli Sci New Grad)

- I see it as important for local food production to be more than a novelty. The ties between food and community have been weakened if not broken over time and I believe growing, as farmers or as gardeners rebuilds those bonds.
- The community that builds around it, recognizes what you are doing and appreciates it.
- The insecurity of it. A 2 day heat wave, when you are relying on farming as your sole income, can send you into mental breakdowns from worry. Not just because of your economic security, but because you truly feel a sense of responsibility to the people you feed on a weekly basis.
- Start small. It's much more enjoyable that way :)



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Dennis Scanland – Dirt Boys (IT Professional)

- I've always really enjoyed gardening and many people asked me to build gardens for them. I thought that might be a good business plan but it is too seasonal. I read about SPIN Farming and thought that would help for the rest of the season. I really like the idea of being nourished by food that I grow, and now I have the opportunity to nourish others.
- I never anticipated being a local hero for food production and security. Its flattering and humbling at the same time. I love when people ask where the produce is grown and you are able to tell them it was just down the street. It is great to be part of the food security answer. Local food is something that we need to educate the masses on.
- Hardest is probably the financial side of things. It really is hard to make a living at urban farming. My hope is that YYC Growers will make the transition into Urban Farming easier, having market outlets and marketing already set up for folks. Weather is also worrisome. Long winters, hail, drought, rains, frostsetc. are always a concern.
- Go small, have a backup job your first year or two. Remember that Calgary growing season is short so have something planned for winter, whether it's another PT job or just taking it easy



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Dave Carlton – Leaf Ninjas (Permaculture Designer)

- I wanted to be able to take care of myself, to be able to feed my friends and family, to have an incredible basic need (not) to share, trade and bring to a community of incredible help. I wanted to take control of my diet, to save money, to make money to be able to gift. The idea of self sufficiency. To build my lifestyle around being outside, around a healthy way to live, a honest way to live.
- To be able to connect with so many people, we all need food (unless you're a sun-gazer), so what better to build community then around food. It's taught me the value of hard work, delicate work, extreme love for a living growing plant. I believe it will help me become a great father and partner for the care and love you put into your crops. It has pushed me past my known limits, created new ones, new skills, new passions. Growing has introduced me to a wide community of people feel deeply connected with and want to be around. Being part of a growing culture wanting to see clean food, we are in a very exciting time. The connections with other farmers, restaurants, community members, and neighbors. It's amazing what happens when you plant a garden the people you will meet.
- Seeing a crop fail has been hard when you put so much time and energy into it. Having the stress around making a living off food rather than a lifestyle. To bring our produce to market all the customers no appreciate value for understand what it takes to grow quality food. Weeding in the heat of mosquitto season. Hail. Squirrels eating seeds. Short growing season. Water food.
- I prefer to work with someone with a brown thumb. It shows me they're actually in the soil working their butt off to learn how to grow. Don't give up, I've already killed more plants than you likely ever will. I never planted a garden in my life before I started a commercial SPIN farm. You can do it! Find a mentor, volunteer, keep trying, think about it and do research. And have fun, lots of fun, and grow someone you love a sunflower.



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Rod Olson – Leaf & Lyre (Singer, Refuge Support Baptist Church)

- I have always been growing, house plants and gardening on the family farm. The opportunity make this a business was something I wanted to see if it was possible.
- I value the soil and am convinced that healing the soil one yard at a time is going to eventually heal the globe. Seeing plants grow is one of the most satisfying things and plants will tell you if they need something and that dictates what our job is. Plants become my boss. I like that.
- Farming is never done. I am still working out what work life balance looks like.
- You must. Anything you do for the sake of growing will create a better world. One that is kinder and full of life. Grow something, anything!



Jennifer Miller – Hillhurst Micro Greens
(Planner City of Calgary, Grad Student)

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- I grew up in the garden, so it feels unnatural not to grow food.
- I'm a kinesthetic person and I love the zen flow of prepping, planting and harvesting
- I worry about not generating enough income to build a sustainable business.
- Do as much research and hands on learning as you can. There are a variety of resources - engage with them (The Business Link, YYC Growers, Momentum Calgary, SPIN Farming Forums, Permaculture Groups, Community Garden Resource Network, Alberta Agriculture, Seedy Saturday talks and vendors, REAP Calgary, Calgary Food Committee, John Jeavons and Eliot Coleman's Books, WWOOFing etc.) Don't be afraid to experiment and ask questions.

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Jonathan Wright – Thompson Small Farm (Biologist)

- My partner Andrea Thompson and I began Thompson Small Farm eight years ago out of a desire to pursue "right livelihood." To see if we could cultivate a lifestyle that not only reflected our own values, but would work towards achieving a larger good. To this end, we wanted to be involved in a process that helped repair the damage industrial society has done to virtually every facet of life on earth, human and wild. We wanted to strike at the root of the issue of right livelihood out of the realization that humanity is not going to find salvation applying band-aids to symptoms. We must all eat, and so it is that one of the ways to strike at the root of the problems that beset us today is to attempt to bring about a renaissance in the way we produce our food. To work towards farming sustainably, for if we cannot farm and live sustainably, nothing else we do will be of any lasting effect.
- What I like best about farming is that while I have had a number of very interesting careers, this is the only one that is truly three-dimensional, that is the distillation of life itself. It is not important because it is a trend, it is not important because people say it is in the media, it is not important because it is lucrative or not, it is intrinsically important. You never need ask, "What really is this about?" It is about life, it is life, right down at the core. Farming is not a job, it is life itself.



Part 3 – Recognizing the Covenant with Creation

- abad, shamar, (Gen. 2:15) and ecological hermeneutics – a motivating and sustaining factor in the Clyde's adoption of agrarianism
- Dealing with Christian legacy of "stewardship" and Genesis 1: 26-28, the mandate to dominate. Difficulty between grey and green texts.
- Grey texts – anthropocentric, used to justify harm
- Green texts – affirming Earth, creation having a covenant with God, separate from humans, Earth community having intrinsic value
- Earth voices – reject dualism, creation has agency in scripture, groaning of nature (Rom 8:17-27)
- Justice and the environment, PWRDF, A Rocha
- Farming and agrarianism as participation in creation

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- Thank you for your time.
- Questions?
- For further questions, comments, and opportunities to get your hands dirty and eat real food e-mail me at:
 - jeremie@gmail.com OR jyclayde@ucalgary.ca