



THE DIRT

SEPT 2009

NEWS FROM THE OCCIDENTAL BOHEMIAN FARMERS MARKET

WWW.OCCIDENTALFARMERSMARKET.COM

farmer profile

STAR MOUNTAIN GARDENS

BY SARAH HADLER

STAR MOUNTAIN
GARDENS
21000 COLEMAN VALLEY
OCCIDENTAL CA

distance from market:
COLEMAN VALLEY
GARDENS—3.8 MILES
AND 6 MILES

SEBASTOPOL
GARDEN—7.8 MILES

Phyllis Hughes, the one woman wonder show who runs Star Mountain Gardens, remembers her first farmer's market in Occidental, three years ago: "I made \$86 and I was so excited to find that people wanted to buy the stuff I grew!" A self-described "back to the land hippie of the 70s," Phyllis moved out to California from the east coast. She grew her own food for a while, then took a long hiatus from it, travelled the world, went back to school, and taught for awhile. She found herself back in California thirteen years ago, married her old sweetheart, and slowly got back into working with the earth. Phyllis started out planting the land around her home and has expanded over the years to two more locations; she works the land and the landowners get as many veggies, flowers, fruits and herbs as they want—a sweet exchange, indeed. She sells a wide array of gorgeous cut flowers and a dizzying assortment of fruits, herbs and vegetables at the Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market. We are her one and only farmer's market.

I spent two memorable afternoons with Phyllis. In Sebastopol, we chatted as we harvested for the next day's market. I couldn't help but sample as I picked, and the ripe pole beans were buttery and sweet, the carrots, crisp and earthy. When Phyllis started here, the land was covered in poison oak and blackberry bushes. She cleared it all, put up a fence to keep the deer out, augmented the soil with horse manure and got to planting. Phyllis inspires her neighbors to plant gardens; she is diligent, friendly, and generous. On that first afternoon, she sent me home with squash, tomatoes, carrots, beans, cucumbers, onions, and peppers. My saddle bags were full to bursting!

As I stood with Phyllis admiring her field on Coleman Valley Road, drivers and bicyclists would slow down, mouths agape, to take a closer look at the tall, healthy green cornstalks and the abundant, yellow sunflowers. The field is in a little valley and is sunny and not too windy—the perfect spot. Pests aren't a big problem because there is natural predation; the birds eat a lot of the insects that would eat the plants, and the fence keeps other animals at bay (although she does battle with the gophers at times). A philosophy Phyllis holds dear is that "nothing goes to waste." When she has leftovers from the market, she takes them to the low-income seniors at Burbank Housing in Sebastopol, and if there are veggies past their prime, they go right to the neighbors' pigs who snort their appreciation loudly.

I threw my bike into the back of Phyllis' unique flat bed pick-up truck; true to her nature, she designed the side gates on her truck so they can be raised and lowered depending on her load. We drove a couple more miles down Coleman Valley Road to her home on Star Mountain, a forested hilltop that resembles a star on geological maps. This is where it all began, and the land is so well taken care of, so well loved, it is just beautiful

**"I WAS SO EXCITED TO FIND THAT PEOPLE
WANTED TO BUY THE STUFF I GREW!"**

—phyllis hughes



CONTINUED ON REVERSE

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

to behold. Phyllis' husband Tom built several greenhouses that are scattered about and are home to a few varieties of tomatoes and basil, as well as other vegetables and herbs that require warmth. There are fruit trees, including a Kafir Lime tree whose leaves are used in many Thai recipes, a dahlia and gladiola garden that would make my grandmother weep, and fragrant herbs that she plants near her house, the mingling scents floating in the air. These are only a few of the many wonders to be found. Phyllis puts her heart, mind, soul, and muscles into her gardens. It is evident in everything she touches; there are delights around every corner. *More info: www.starmountaingardens.com*

Thanks to our generous sponsors, without whom the Market could not thrive.

BLOOM LEVEL

- Bistro des Copains
- Harmony Farm Supply & Nursery
- Inn at Occidental
- Occidental Arts & Ecology Center
- Occidental Community Council
- Renga Arts
- West County Herb Co.

SEED LEVEL

- Freestone Vineyards
- Occidental Veterinary Clinic

AS THE SOIL TURNS

news & notes from the market

KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR CHILDREN!

We want to make sure that the OBFM remains a safe place for the community—please be sure that your children are supervised. **Bikes and scooters are not to be ridden through the market**, and no running along the boardwalk!

SWITCH & STITCH

This monthly DIY celebration of clothing reuse will convene just two more times this season: **September 18th & October 16th**. To participate, bring old/unused (and clean!) clothes/fabric/lace/ribbons/etc and donate them to the pile; then dive in to find new-to-you items that you want to modify, shorten, spice-up, embellish, or otherwise customize. Craft and sewing enthusiasts are on hand to help you bring your ideas to life!

LIVE MUSIC AT THE MARKET

From the very beginning, we've always believed that live music is an important part of the market atmosphere and love how it brings people together. This year, local radio station KOWS volunteered to organize entertainment for the season, and features many of the artists on air. If you like what you hear, be sure to let the folks at the KOWS table know.

5TH ANNUAL HARVEST MARKET FESTIVAL

We're starting to gear up for our annual end-of-season celebration, taking place at our last market of the year on October 30th. If you have suggestions about things you'd like to see this year or would like to participate in our fall festival, drop us a line!

Got news to share? Email us at info@occidentalfarmersmarket.com.

YES, I'm pleased to sponsor the Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market. I know my contribution will help support our local economy and connect our community members to the food they consume.

- \$50 SEED LEVEL
- \$100 BLOOM LEVEL
- \$250 HARVEST LEVEL
- \$ _____

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

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Please make checks payable to Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market, and mail to PO Box 782, Occidental CA 95465. The Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market is a non-profit mutual benefit corporation registered with the State of California.

MARKET VENDORS

Farmers

- Armstrong Valley Farm
- Blasi Ranch
- Bloomfield Bees
- Bohemian Farmers' Collective
- Fifteen Gates
- First Light Farm
- French Garden Farm
- Hands Full Farm
- Mudpie Farm
- Nelsen Ranch
- Rainbow's End
- Singing Frogs Farm
- Smiling Sun Farms
- Star Mountain Gardens
- Strong Arm Farm
- Twin Peaks Orchard
- Vine Hill Farm

Prepared Foods

- Albondigas
- Canary Crepes
- Gerard's Paella
- Kashaya's Brick Oven Pizza
- Lata's Indian Cuisine
- Mommy's Yammys
- Paul's Smoked Salmon
- Sister Pie
- Sonoma Chocolatiers

Crafters

Varies

Services

Relax Systems Massage

Community

- KOWS Radio
- Master Gardeners
- Occidental Center for the Arts

Please email to confirm attendance by vendors on any given week: info@occidentalfarmersmarket.com.