



Johnny Ipil-Seed News

Woodcutting of John Chapman,
courtesy of J. L. Spitznagel Inc.

VOL. X, No. 4 - OUR FORTIETH ISSUE !!

WINTER, 2003

Reporting from Central America:

"MITCH" PLUS FIVE

The rains have been plentiful all over Central America this season, and at least temporarily, the crisis of potable water is resolved.

But the cost has been high, and the upland soils continue to wash away. In Honduras new dams, constructed over just the past three years, are already beginning to silt up. The Ulua River to the north runs thick with red mud, and people from all around Central America wishing to enjoy the clear waters of the northern beaches instead find the water the color of weak coffee.

This October was the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Mitch. While a disaster like that happens once in a century, the effect continues. The thousands of farm families of the more than 70 groups cooperating in the **TREES** program will always remember the nearly total devastation of their homes and hillside plots.

Before "Mitch" few realized the fragility of natural resources on which their livelihoods depended. And then, in just a few days, 70% of the food, all the potable water, all the country's roads and bridges, gone. Along with more than 10,000 people. Now the survivors work hard to make sure it won't come to their communities again.

Through your kindness, we've stayed busy these past five years, and the program has expanded into El Salvador and Nicaragua. From a regional office in San Pedro Sula, we've extended the program to more than 450 communities. We have developed close ties and helped train hundreds of Peace Corps volunteers and



Isabel and Maria of the Perla Del Ulua Institute working toward their environmental stewardship credits in the school nursery.

thousands of local leaders of other organizations. Throughout all that time we've sent a continuing message by local radio: "Trees can save your home and lands. We're here to help. Call us." And people have

Development Projects for Women and Youth

An especially gratifying result is the growing role in decision-making by women and organized youth groups. Rural women are especially hard hit by past deforestation and share in at least half the labor needed to run farms. But in the past, they have had little to say concerning management. The aftermath of Mitch changed that. People are learning. Families in a "slash-and-burn" community live, statistically, six years less than in villages where sustainable land use is practiced.

(Continued on page 3)

November 18, 2003

Dear Friends and Members,



We look back over a year of solid achievement. Our staff has increased with **Bedru Sultan** building a program in East Africa and **John Leary** carrying a double load; the West Africa program and coordinator of the **Loret Miller Ruppe Center**.

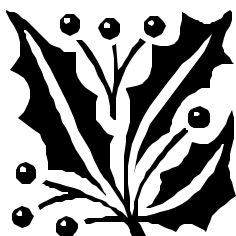
The Center is growing in technical capability to rapidly communicate ideas and technology for a growing worldwide demand for help. The technology for "opti-scanning" lets us store as much as 240 kb (520 lbs) of books on a single compact disc.

With that, our local representatives, now in four countries, are gaining credibility as more communities see the program working. **Chris** and **Dave** recently toured Central America, finding people who want to help expand both the El Salvador and Nicaragua programs. John now has a volunteer in Senegal, and **Gabby Mondragon's** program in the uplands of the northern Philippines is building a training center and gaining new partner organizations. In Haiti, **Benito Jasmin** has built a great program, and we're pleased to be providing much of the technical and planning support. In Belize, a Peace Corps volunteer, **Shannon Ruh**, is helping Thara and Frank. We hope to have additional PCVs assisting in the Philippines and Central America soon.

It's gratifying that so many individuals and groups now offer their services and "in-kind" gifts. **Agro-Forestry**, a business in Colorado, donated about 400,000 seeds of new and improved species. A family in Honduras gave us long-term use of their 5 acre farm near Lake Yojoa, in the center of our program area, as a seed production farm. **Harmony Farms**, a business in Ethiopia, offers their 700 acre farm as a research and training facility. The mayor of Addis Ababa, and the women's group there, are developing markets for tree seedlings and produce from the women of the villages we assist.

As a result, your program is assisting almost three times as many communities, planting three times as many trees, as it did just three years ago. We're determined to see it grow even faster in the year ahead. For example, we recently sent a letter to the new leadership of Liberia, in West Africa, offering to help restore their national ability to produce adequate food and potable water for their long-suffering people.

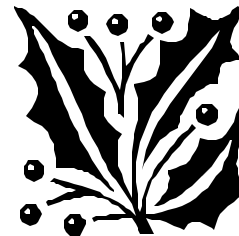
Your continuing help is critical if we are to achieve this. As we serve more villages, as people there begin to understand how much their lives can improve through sustainable land use, the need for appropriate technology, and the ability to deliver it to them, increases by the day. Please remember us with your generosity for the year ahead.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'John R. Moore'.

Dr. John R. Moore, Chairman



*We wish you a blessed and joyous Holiday Season -
Grace, Dave, Chris, Bedru, John, Jaime, Gabby, Frank, Thara, Gabby, Benito -
and the people planting your trees.*

(Continued from page 1)

Part of the reason is the food they grow and eat - more protein and a better balance of nutrients — and it tastes better.

The cooperatives formed after the hurricane were about as "macho" as in the past - about 5% women members. In many of the groups we support, that has now grown to as much as 45%. Better yet, they're picking up fast on appropriate technology and making many of the decisions.

Two women's cooperatives for environmental activities have now been formed in Honduras and **TREES** is helping both develop programs for environmentally sustainable livelihood projects. A group in Siguatepeque, COMIXMUL, has more than 10,000 members already and has expanded into other communities. In this first year they planted more than 50,000 seedlings and plan to expand this rapidly in the season ahead. Members are producing ornamental and medicinal plants in their *viveros* and selling them to city-dwellers.

Following Mitch, all college students were required to grow and transplant trees in order to graduate. In the



Leaders of the COMIXMUL women's co-op survey a 10,000 seedling nursery from which they distribute ornamentals, fruit trees, and multi-purpose trees to co-op members.

beginning, the program was enthusiastically supported by private business. Now the businesses have backed off - but not the students. Your program is providing seeds, bags, polypots, hand-tools and on-site technical support for school nurseries throughout Honduras.

A Seed Farm in Honduras

Thanks to the kindness of **Jaime Bustillo** and **Suyapa Dominguez** and their family, we have the opportunity to produce millions of high quality tree seeds directly in our project area in Central America.

They have offered us continued use of a 5 acre farm on Lake Yojoa, halfway between the capital and our headquarters in San Pedro



Sula. This area is close to many of the denuded coffee farms of Sta. Barbara where your program is expanding.

Plans are also underway to develop the land for use as a training center. Situated on the beautiful lake just a few miles from both Santa Barbara and Cerro Azul Meambar national parks, our farm is an ideal location for hands-on demonstrations ranging from seed production to aquaculture. This site will also be used as a demonstration Forest Garden that so many of you have been asking about (see *Forest Garden*, p. 5).



TREES representative, Jaime Bustillo, surveys the new seed farm and agroforestry demonstration site (above).
Lake Yojoa near the seed farm (right)

DESERTIFICATION AND FOOD SECURITY

Over the past thirty (30) years, agricultural production in Africa has fallen 16% while Western Europe's has increased by 70%. Much of this is attributed to a problem facing dry land farmers in Africa that grows by 40,000 km² every year: desertification.

Most people think of desertification as the southward advance of the Sahara. That being true, it also entails the absolute degradation of lands resulting in patches of completely unproductive soil – slowly becoming sandy desert.

Slash and burn agriculture is not the only culprit. It is more a combination of many poor land-use practices. The leading cause in Africa is over-grazing animals, who not only consume protective vegetation but also trample soil to death – the manure left in their footsteps does not make up for the damage they inflict. In these dry lands, water towers and other reservoirs are often a short term blessing but a long term nightmare. Though water sources allow gardens and fruit trees to flourish, they also wreak havoc on the local environment. As many as 20,000 head of livestock are often concentrated in a two mile radius around wells, far exceeding the local carrying capacity. Gardens must be protected by fences that must be rebuilt by cutting trees and bushes every two years (see picture below left), thereby depleting limited forest resources. This localized deforestation and the high traffic of thousands of thirsty animals convert wells and water towers into epicenters of desertification.

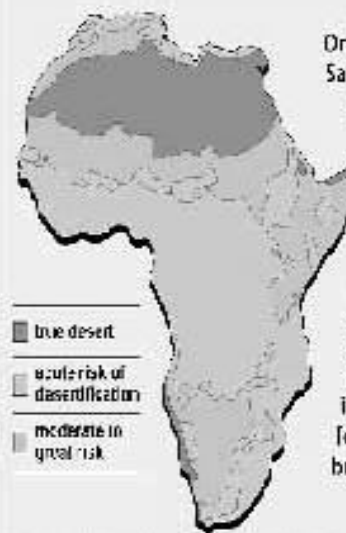
Farmers' traditional practice of burning field crop residue, and brush fires caused by hunting and untrained honey collectors, both scorch the topsoil annually.

Worst of all, in attempts to replace lost tree cover, farmers plant the wrong species doing more harm than good. Eucalyptus trees, for example, are often planted because of their straight poles and high survival rate, but Eucalyptus is the Trojan horse of tree species. Its effect in the Sahel is devastating to soil quality, neighboring vegetation, and ground water supplies.

TREES is working to save and restore lands threatened by desertification. We train farmers like Hassan Diouf in Senegal to establish multipurpose live fences like the one pictured on the right. It is comprised of *Ziziphus mauritiana*, the Jujube, and ten other species, which will form an impenetrable thorny barrier to animals and also produce fuelwood, poles for light construction, and Jujube berries for sale. One of these other species is the one-year-old *Leucaena* seedling seen in the foreground.

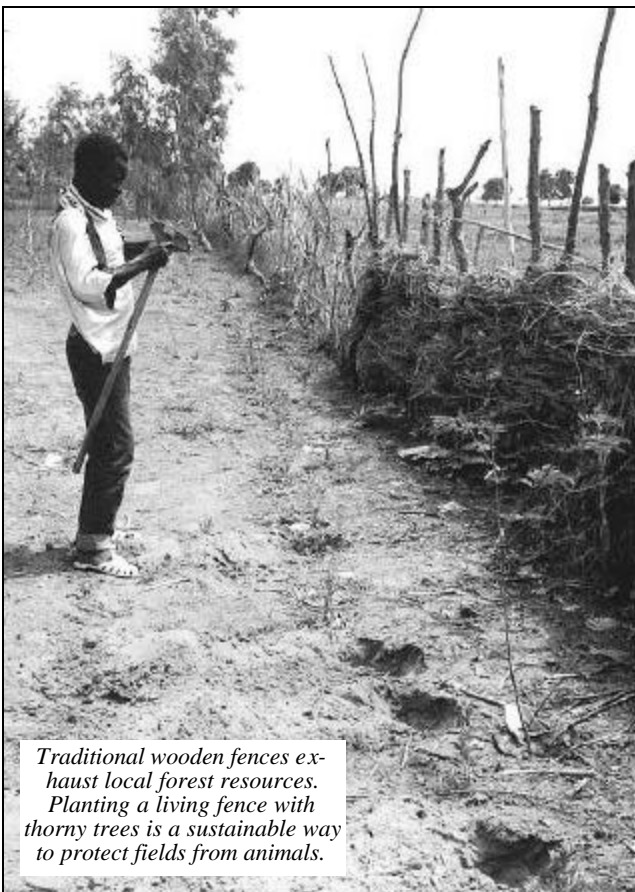
Hassan's multipurpose live fence and the forest garden explained on the following page, are two technologies vital for *sustainable agriculture* and *food security*. With trainings for other technologies such as woodlots, windbreaks, and confinement rearing of animals, TREES is showing farmers how to institute more sustainable land-use practices in both the dry and humid tropics.

SPREADING DESERTS THREATEN AFRICA



On the southern edge of the Sahara, an area the size of Somalia has become desert over the past 50 years. The same fate now threatens more than one-third of the African continent. The main cause of desertification is not drought but mismanagement of land, including overgrazing and felling of trees and brushwood for fuel.

Source: The Conservation and Development of African Jungles (FAO 1980)



Traditional wooden fences exhaust local forest resources. Planting a living fence with thorny trees is a sustainable way to protect fields from animals.

THE FOREST GARDEN

When the TREES program began in the early 1970's we planted just one or two species to address specific needs: Erosion protection, livestock forage, fuel or wood production.

We soon began to notice that farmers were planting other crops around their trees. And that these crops, such as cassava or yams, often yielded much more, and of better quality, than the same crop planted in nearby fields.

Then the idea began to form that as diversity increased, the total productivity of the land increased even faster. And that, in almost every case, the flavor and quality of the harvest was also noticeably higher.

Many groups we contacted were discovering the same thing. Soon we were integrating as many as 30 tree species, incorporated with dozens of food/cash crops, on comparatively small plots of land.

The initial trees planted, with characteristics that rebuild poor soils, provide partial shade, and cool the area by producing high tonnages of leaves as organic matter, also sustainably provide wood and other marketable products.

Some combinations didn't work: not all crops grow well under such conditions. But it cost almost nothing to try and we soon had thousands of farmers working, different kinds of land all around the world, comparing results and offering ideas. Soon, the projects were planting valuable hardwoods in the mix, then poultry and small animals raised in the cool shade. Eventually, orchids and other tropical flowers, traditional medicines and other high-value crops were incorporated.

For people in developing countries, any land is terribly expensive and tilling it is even more limiting if all you have are simple hand tools. The question soon became: **how many families can earn a high sustained income from a very limited area of land?** In this system, people were farming vertically instead of horizontally, producing crops ranging from yams deep in the soil to timber, hundreds of feet in



Ampalaya, or bitter gourd, grows particularly well under the shade of the Forest Garden overstory.

the air. And at all levels in between.

Other advantages soon became evident: when Hurricane Mitch devastated the uplands of Honduras in 1998, there were areas along its path where the hillsides remained deep green, with almost no soil erosion. These were the "forest gardens" started only a few years earlier by planting shade trees to improve the coffee crop, then expanded through the inventiveness of the farmers.

These projects also showed that upland farmers can produce all their needs, year-after-year, sustainably and right near their homes. No more need for machetes to clear the fragile uplands. No more deadly smoke from the burning season.

More important still, this idea quickly restores the area, with cool air, shade, and moisture, as it had once been when a forest stood there. These soils still hold viable seeds of those trees of the past, just waiting for the right conditions to come back. Now there is a natural rapid return of past diversity. Not a forest, not a garden, but a completely new system that provides the best for both the environment and the people of the land.

The idea works for a single household, for a community association, or for a major reforestation project. **It offers an attractive opportunity to investors wanting to help people and the environment:** Every day hundreds of thousands of acres are degraded and abandoned land. All of us benefit from a program with the proven ability to bring these lands back to life.



Organic bananas from the forest garden

Reporting from Haiti:

Your program is making a difference in Haiti. We are working with Partners of the Americas, over fifteen (15) Peace Corps Volunteers, and twice as many environmental organizations to execute projects in tree planting, ecotourism, animal raising, and honey production. Through Benito Jasmin and on-site technicians such as Gaby Papouloute and Tracy Henderson, both mentioned below, we continue to reach deep into remote communities.

Agricultural Cooperative to Save Sodo Mouvman Kooperativ Agricol pou Sove Sodo (MKASS)

-by Haiti Peace Corps Volunteer Megan Affrunti

On February 18, 2003, MKASS was formed by **Gabrielle Papouloute** (pictured on right), a local Haitian interested in the reforestation, and **Megan Affrunti**, a Peace Corps Volunteer in Sodo. Although this rural, mountain community situated in the Central Plateau region of Haiti is significantly more forested than other regions, the zone suffers from deforestation and massive erosion.

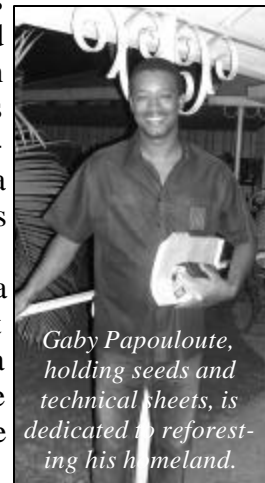


The waterfall at Sodo.

The 80 members of MKASS are interested in attempting to create better irrigation systems and correcting the environmental degradation that has taken place around the hundred foot (100 ft) sacred waterfall after which their community *Saut d'Eau* (written *Sodo* in Creole) is named. The waterfall is a very spiritual area that attracts about 10,000 visitors yearly. A well-known story in Haitian history says that the Virgin Mary appeared above the waterfall and blessed its waters.

Historically, Catholic and voodoo pilgrims, as well as international tourists, come to bathe in its curative waters and pray to various spirits. MKASS members fear that without an immediate effort, this once green, beautiful area will lose its value as a tourist attraction and spiritual mecca. A loss of tourists would be devastating to the economy of Sodo as they are a major source of income for restaurants, hotels, discos, churches and vendors.

MKASS has begun a tree nursery consisting of Moringa and Leucaena seeds donated by TREES. We seek to plant about 10,000 trees to combat the erosion that is plaguing the area and to beautify the zone. Using techniques learned by TREES and other technicians, we are dedicated to reversing the effects of deforestation around the waterfall. We would like to thank TREES for their seeds and wonderful support in helping us to "Sove Sodo."



Gaby Papouloute, holding seeds and technical sheets, is dedicated to reforesting his homeland.

The Tarna Project in Dondon, Haiti

Here in Dondon in northern Haiti, we are working with TREES not just to plant trees, but to protect the ones we have. The main goal is to preserve the inherent value of what must be Haiti's largest mahogany plantation. Our beautiful forest contains thousands of mature trees, and we understand our responsibility to conserve them. Besides starting a community nursery and training site to address fuelwood, hillside erosion, and to increase coffee production, the Tarna Project is developing ecotourism and aquaculture to improve the economy and environment of local communities.



Tracy Henderson, Nesley St Croix, TREES technician John Leary, and Max standing in front of the mahogany forest.

Interestingly enough, we find the Tarna Project addressing numerous health issues as well. We are looking to address iron deficiency, manifested in the orange tips in local girls' hair, by not only introducing leaves of the Moringa tree in local diet (a great tip from TREES), but also by distributing iron supplements. The Tarna Project has also been asked to help equip a new hospital in Cap-Haitien, for which we are actively seeking equipment donations. Visit the Tarna Project web page under 'Links' at www.treesftf.org.



Opinion:

More About Those SUV's

Our Fall, 2003 edition introduced an idea we call the "Cool Car Certificate". This is a way for people concerned about auto emissions and their effect on the global climate to plant enough trees (300 or more) to sequester all the carbon dioxide gas an automobile emits.

And we've been hearing from you about it. We're proud that you, our members, are quick to respond, to make your ideas known. Our program succeeds in large part, I believe, because of the guidance all of you offer. So I was caught a bit off guard when the first three comments from members were **loudly** against issuing these certificates. It gave all of us here cause to ponder.

Then, just as suddenly, the tide of opinion changed. We have been receiving congratulations, not just from our members but from others, including some environmental groups, who had heard of the idea. The *Washington Post* ran a feature article about the certificates in their Montgomery County Section. And the sale of these certificates is running high.

This is not to say that those who hold the opposite view are wrong or should be ignored. We constantly ask ourselves: "Are these trees actually taking that much CO₂ out of the atmosphere?" "And keeping it out?" and "Are we making real progress or is this just a 'band-aid' we've put on the problem?"

I'm convinced the certificate provides the means to build a program with proven results and that we should keep on offering them. But I also think the issue rates further discussion, so I offer the following:

First, the program- your program- does work. The trees are getting planted, almost 35 million of them since you first offered your support. In addition to the important benefits they bring, every year these trees remove almost a million tons of CO₂ from the global atmosphere. That carbon goes back into the soil as humus and eventually results in things people can use.

We point out also that your trees are being planted in the most cost-effective program you're ever likely to find. And it will stay that way: the numbers of trees planted, of families assisted, of acres of degraded land restored, *and of tons of carbon sequestered*, keep increasing much faster than our costs.

But is it really necessary to concern ourselves with

the global climate? Is the threat real or just "bad science"? If it's a threat, is there a better way to meet it? Once again, the people who plant your trees, some of the poorest people on earth, don't do so as their civic duty, or to allow us to drive our cars emission-free.

They plant trees for their very survival, so that they, and their children, can continue to live in dignity on their fragile lands with hope for a future. Now if, at the same time, those trees also help the rest of us avoid a disaster to the global climate, that's good too.



TREES member, John Kyle, displays his "Global Cooling Vehicle" and a certificate of tree planting for his adopted project in Honduras.

It does sometimes seem that, within the environmentally-concerned community, there are those who see it as their duty to punish the evildoers. To extract some flesh for every mishap our planet's environment suffers.

So, where does that stop? Do we close the power plant? Do we shut down the airport? Do we stop people from jogging in the park because they breath in oxygen and expel carbon dioxide? If so, we might remember the famous words in Walt Kelly's comic strip, *Pogo*: "*We have met the enemy, and they is us!*" Considering the mess the global atmosphere is in, there's plenty of guilt to go around.

It seems better to agree that all of us are in the same mess, that it will probably not get any better until we end our addiction to fossil fuels and find better answers. We work together to find those answers. For now, our "Cool Car" Certificates are proving there are practical ways in which all of us can help save the atmosphere we all share.



Loret Miller Ruppe Center
P.O. Box 7027
Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

Presorted
First Class Mail
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit # 7651
Silver Spring MD

Address Service Requested

Address change ?
Duplicate Mailing?
 Change as shown
 Remove from List
Mail Changes or Call
800-643-0001

**In This Issue:
"Mitch" Plus Five
Women and Youth
Saving Sodo
Desertification
The Forest Garden
More About SUVs**

SOME FUN WAYS TO PLANT TREES THIS SEASON:



Our "Global Cooling Vehicle" certificate will plant enough trees to sequester all of your car's CO₂ emissions, helping to cool our planet.

A subscription of your favorite fair-trade, organic, shade grown coffee plants over 20 life-giving trees monthly.



Plant a grove of trees in a loved one's honor. 500 or 1,000 trees is the gift of life, health and happiness. Better yet, adopt an entire village.

To order your certificate or gift item please see our website at www.treesfff.org

-or-

Attach a note to the enclosed envelope

-or-

you can always order by phone: (800) 643-0001
HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!

Johnny Ipil-Seed News is a quarterly newsletter of **TREES FOR THE FUTURE, Inc.**, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping people of developing countries begin environmentally beneficial, self-help projects.

This newsletter is sent to all supporting members to inform them of recent events, plans, financial matters and how their support is helping people. If you wish to receive this newsletter, or would like more information, please contact:

TREES FOR THE FUTURE
The Loret Miller Ruppe Center
for Sustainable Development
9000 16th Street, P.O. Box 7027
Silver Spring, MD 20907
Toll Free: 1.800.643.0001
Ph: 301.565.0630 Fax: 1.301.565.5012
info@treesfff.org, www.treesfff.org

Dr. John R. Moore, Chairman
Dave and Grace Deppner, Founders
Bedru Sultan, East Africa Program
John Leary, Ruppe Center Coordinator
Chris Wells, Asia Program Coordinator
Gabriel Mondragon, Asia/Pacific Program
Jaime Bustillo, Central America Program
Thara G. Blanco, Belize Program
Della Berhanu, Research Assistant