

by Margaret De Bona

Queers having been seeking refuge in agriculture since the first lavender menace packed her tool box and retreated to the woods, and though today's queer farmer's continue to proudly wave the flag of DIY they have something more than solitude in mind. Not to mention that some of them grow delicious vegetables without ever leaving the comforting glow of the neon lights. Queer farmers today are a large part of a greater movement of young people seeking to reconnect with their food, and their communities.

I started to take farming seriously in college when a group of students at my school convinced the administration to loan them two acres. With only a few hundred dollars and lots of volunteer hours, we started growing organic produce for local families. Jump forward seven years and I can't believe I am starting County Rail Farm, LLC with my partner in Dixon, MT. We will be growing two acres of vegetables for a CSA and the Clark Fork Market with help of a very supportive and queer farming community.

I have met so many queer farmers (not just in Missoula), and also so many writers and bloggers who focus on the new urban and local food movement, but surprisingly there is only one person focusing on the intersection of these two movements. Jonah Mossberg started the Queer Farmer Film Project about two years ago, and since then has filmed on about 30 farms around the U.S. and interviewed countless queer farmers about their experiences.

Jonah became interested in farming sort of by accident. While studying at Smith College in Northampton, MA he needed a summer job and started working as a farmhand at Red Fire Farm just

down river in Granby. Since then he's been working towards a better food system on various farms, and currently is an educator at Alice Waters' project The Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley, CA. The Schoolyard is a one-acre plot located at a local middle school. Students there learn about growing food by doing it themselves, and cooking delicious food with the fruits of their labor.

The Edible Schoolyard is just one of numerous urban food projects that involve queers like Mossberg. When I asked him why so many of us are involved in farming, both urban and rural he responded, "I think that farming provides a lot of room for self-expression. Growing food is fluid things are always cycling and changing. There are so many parallels between farming and queer identity. Here I am, an out transperson farming and working at a middle school." Mossberg also noted that queer farmers have the ability to make their farms a reflection of their own personalities. Montview Neighborhood Farm in Northampton "doesn't have straight rows. Its all permaculture, there are weeds, but they grow tons of good food for their neighbors, and they don't use any fossil fuels."

Mossberg pointed out that as queer individuals we are a marginalized population and therefore interested in helping other marginalized people who may not have access to healthy food, or the resources to have beautiful community spaces like gardens. Most of the farms visited by the Queer Farmer Film Project had a focus

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on social and food justice; at Mill Creek Urban Farm in West Philadelphia, a historically black neighborhood, they employ local youth to grow food for a farm stand. Not only does Mill Creek provide good food to its neighbors, it creates a lush green public space for neighbors to congregate and work together. It seems that urban farming is just as much about creating community as it is growing food.

All of the queer farmers Mossberg interviewed were practicing permaculture or Organic style farming, usually small scale, and without pesticides. Though he tried to reach out to conventional queer farmers he was unable to make that connection. He hopes to in the future. In the mean time Mossberg is busy teaching middle schoolers about farming and editing the footage he's collected. He hopes to present a finished film in Fall 2011. In the meantime you can meet some of the Project's farmers at queerfarmer.blogspot.com.

