



## EDITOR'S COLUMN

*"I can't think of a better opportunity for a small apple grower than in Marin County right now." - Paul Vossen, UCCE Specialty Crop Advisor Marin*

Paul Vossen is a pomologist. That means that he is an expert on apples, and most of what he tells you about apples is true, especially when you visit his garden and witness his skill and knowledge real time. Paul and I have been encouraging farmers and ranchers to plant apples here in Marin, and several have taken us up on the challenge. Seven or eight years ago, Mike and Sally Gale of Chileno Valley Ranch planted a few acres of heirloom apples and have done well with the orchard. Recently, Lou and Kaye Lee of Tomales put in a similar apple orchard, which is thriving. Rumor has it they plan to make cider.

Be sure to watch our website, [www.growninmarin.org](http://www.growninmarin.org), for information regarding the UCCE Marin workshops on apple and pear grafting and pruning. These workshops help to preserve antique and heirloom varieties by providing a grafting resource to the community.

Small farming operations continue to take hold all over the county. For the last ten years there has been steady growth in diversified



## Think about planting apples in West Marin

*"West Marin is a good place to grow apples," says Paul Vossen, Specialty Crop Advisor for UC Cooperative Extension. "The cooler climate and dry summers are perfect for a number of varieties. Of course, Sebastopol is known for its Gravenstein apples, and parts of Marin are climactically similar."*

Lou and Kaye Lee consulted with Paul and the Marin farm advisors with an idea to plant apples on their new homestead in Tomales. One hundred heirloom apple trees and some pear and plum trees were ordered from an antique apple nursery. Lou worked the ground up, discing, rototilling and adding compost and oyster shell to the acre or so orchard site. Working the ground well is a necessity on open land or pasture. Breaking up the sod and working it in captures the fertility, and deep ripping



*Lou Lee of Tomales preparing the ground for apple planting.*

disrupts the ever-present gopher population and their cycles. Lou added a seven foot deer fence, absolutely necessary for protecting the young trees from hungry deer.

The Lees chose apple varieties for early and midseason production. Our cool, steady

## APPLES IN WEST MARIN

*“Apples” continued from page 1*

and moderate springs and summers allow the fruit to ripen slowly, building in flavor and sugar, much like good wine grapes. The same conditions, though, are not especially good for late season apples, which require a more robust and longer autumn

period of ripening. As the late apples linger on the tree, they are open to “russetting,” collecting wax and a tougher skin than the early apples. *“Apples grown in this climate can produce excellent and subtle fruit flavors,”* notes Paul

Vossen. *“The slow ripening gives good color, and the light*

*irrigation or even the dry farming that goes on in Marin only increases the rich varietal characteristics.”*

Mike and Sally Gale of Chileno Valley Ranch are into their sixth year of growing heirloom apples. *“We are having great success with our orchard here. We have added more trees, and started a U-pick operation for summer and fall. People love the experience of coming to the farm and harvesting their own fruit,”* says Mike.

Mike and Sally also supply local specialty markets with organic apples. *“Marin is perfectly suited to market apples,”* states Paul. *“People here appreciate the special qualities of*

*these local products. It’s a good fit, these smaller quality operations and local markets.”*

Finding enough water in West Marin for irrigation challenges the small growing operation. Farmers have learned to use the condition to their advantage with dry-farming and mulching practices, which result in rich, flavorful apples that accentuate the varietal characteristics.

*Williams Pride apples at the Gale Ranch in Chileno Valley. Early and midseason apples do well in Marin’s cool climate.*

*“I think Marin has a future in apples,”* notes Paul. *“The small acreages and educated consumers are a great match. It would be absolutely fabulous if more people could do it.”*



*Kaye & Lou Lee one year later with an acre of certified-organic antique and heirloom apples in Tomales.*



## WHAT’S NEW

### ***New organic farm and garden beginning at Indian Valley College***

Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden is a new 5.8-acre certified organic demonstration farm and garden located at College of Marin’s Indian Valley campus. The Marin County Board of Supervisors provided \$30,000 in seed funding for the site design and resulting site plan in 2007. The idea for the center has its roots in the Education Farm and Garden Study completed in 2006 and drafted by Marin Agricultural and Education Alliance (MAEA). The new Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden will be instrumental in creating the next generation of green industry professionals, fostering countywide agricultural literacy and environmental sustainability, and providing graduates with the tools to find and create green jobs and businesses in horticulture, agriculture, and beyond. It will serve an estimated 2,000-3,000 college students, middle and high school youth, agricultural and horticultural professionals, and community residents each year through its many educational offerings, community projects, and public demonstration gardens.



The goals of the project are:

- ✦ Develop and sustain organic farm and garden practices, and robust local food systems;
- ✦ Design, construct, and maintain sustainable landscapes that promote individual and environmental health, and conserve water and natural resources;
- ✦ Accelerate the deployment of state-of-the-art irrigation and soil/water conservation strategies;
- ✦ and understand the interrelationship between food, the environment, health, and community well-being.

The project’s lead partners, Conservation Corps North Bay and the College of Marin, with assistance from UC Cooperative Extension, have completed the Organic Farm & Garden’s planning phase, conceptual site plan, and the installation of the main garden infrastructure—with the hope of officially launching the site and its educational programs in March 2009.

## Marin Agricultural Institute and Farm to Fork update!



When the Marin Agricultural Institute (MAI), formerly known as the Marin Center for Sustainable Agriculture, was started in 2005, it had a clear mission and focus: to create a permanent home for the Marin Farmers Markets that would serve as a center for education about local food, healthy eating, and farming in the local food shed including and surrounding Marin County. In fall 2008, a few years after MAI began envisioning a vibrant market place with a demonstration garden and culinary classroom, as well as other exciting elements like a café and place to buy local meats and dairy, the County of Marin released a Request for Proposals (RFP) to determine a partner with whom to create a permanent farmers marketplace. It's not hard to guess who was first in line!

Working in close partnership with the Marin Farmers Markets Board of Directors, MAI itself has an outstanding Board of Directors, with representatives from local agricultural organizations including Marin Agricultural Land Trust, Marin County Farm Bureau, Marin Organic, County of Marin Agricultural Commissioner, UC Cooperative Extension, Kaiser Permanente, Left Bank Restaurant Group, and farmers including Dennis Dierks (Paradise Valley Produce), Ed Pearson (Woodside Farms), and Kevin Lunny (Drake's Bay Oysters), as well as our local Assemblyman Jared Huffman's aide Jenny Callaway, who is very well prepared to become the County's partner.

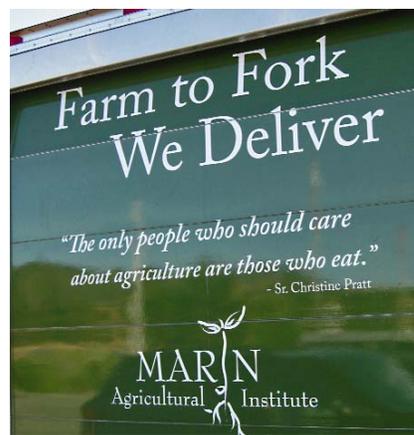
MAI is currently working with an ecological design team led by Sym Van der Ryn of Eco Design Collaborative and Paul Roberts of Paul Roberts and Partners, Inc. Michael Straus of Straus Communications is helping us communicate the message of this project, and Shelley Hamilton of MarinSpace is assisting with overall development of the project, including program design and business planning. Also involved with this project are two other key people:

*Continued in next column*

Mark Riesenfeld of MRA Consultants, who is helping us to work with the County of Marin, and Elliot Levin of The Partnership Resources Group, who is assisting with capital campaign planning.

This talented and visionary consultant team, combined with the internal team that is made up of MAI staff and board members, has brought the project to this point and has positioned MAI extremely well for undertaking this exciting project.

MAI submitted a proposal to the County of Marin on Oct 16, 2008, with the intention of being the County's partner in creating a permanent home for the farmers market and educational center. Many letters of support were submitted from farmers, ranchers, agricultural organizations, and health organizations in support



of MAI being the County's partner. These letters express an enthusiastic support for a project which aims to raise the visibility, value, and viability of a local and sustainable food system.

Not only is this project-in-the-making exciting and evolving, but another of MAI's programs is already taking off. In its second year, the Farm to Fork Program has 34 customers (26 regulars) and contributes to about 50 farmers' incomes. So far in 2008, the program has generated nearly \$200,000. To date, the project has brought nearly \$300,000 in revenue to local producers. We are very excited to continue to connect local schools, non-profits, café's caterers, businesses, and restaurants with outstanding fresh and local food. Our new Farm to Fork truck wrap shows Marin Roots Farms with a fork stuck into the lettuce growing in the field. This is how direct we want the experience of local eaters to be!

Finally, two new websites are up and running! Check out information on the Marin Farmers Markets by going to [www.marinfarmersmarkets.org](http://www.marinfarmersmarkets.org), and to learn more about the Marin Agricultural Institute, [www.marinagriculturalinstitute.org](http://www.marinagriculturalinstitute.org).

Farm to Fork is generously supported by Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, Marin Community Foundation, Kaiser Permanente and Gaia Fund - Leah Smith

*"Editor" continued from page 1*

agricultural operations, and with the continued push towards a sustainable local food supply we should expect more of the same. What we need now is farmers. With that goal in mind, UCCE, Indian Valley College, and the Conservation Corps NorthBay have partnered up to get the "Farm & Garden Teaching Farm" going this spring at the Indian Valley College campus in Novato. The project has drawn immediate interest and support with a generous donation of tunnel greenhouses from Warren Weber of Star Route Farms, site work and grading by Lunny Construction, and a deer fence funded by the Marin Community Foundation. The project is being championed by Nanda Schorske, Dean of Workforce Training at Indian Valley College, Marilee Eckert of the Conservation Corps NorthBay, and Ellie Rilla, Farm Advisor and County Director of UCCE Marin.

The initial plan was guided by a hardworking advisory committee and there are at least 50 individuals who provided their advice, expertise, and materials to get the project going. You know who you are!

What an amazing place! Just when you think that things are settling down on our agricultural horizon, something new emerges! Watch this new fully-accredited farming and gardening program grow, and become yet another link in the incredible journey to a sustainable and thriving agricultural community.

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## UCCE Spring Workshops

### Annual Pruning Grafting Workshop - Apples & Pears, Tuesday, February 10, 2009 -

The second annual UCCE Marin Grafting & Pruning Workshop will be held February 10 from 9 am to 2 pm at the Chileno Valley Ranch in Petaluma. Please be ready for a scion exchange! Plenty of semi-dwarf and dwarf rootstock of both pear and apple will be available for grafting and trading. An apple pruning demonstration will also take place. This a great opportunity to share varieties and see what other apple enthusiasts are up to. For details and to register, please go to our website, [www.growninmarin.org](http://www.growninmarin.org). Registration is required!



### Backyard Chicken Workshop, TBA in March -

The backyard victory garden should include a few laying hens. UCCE Marin will present a half-day workshop on starting your own chicken flock, including a short tour of coops in the Point Reyes Station area. **Please watch the website, [www.growninmarin.org](http://www.growninmarin.org), for time and place details!**



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