

Sai Lom Ruduraun

A Warm Summer Breeze from Thailand

The Whispering Seed's newsletter issue 2, End of April 2003

The Whispering Seed is a village based community learning center and home for orphaned and abused children focusing on finding the joy in serving others through cross-cultural exchanges and sustainable living practices.

Greetings all from the sweltering heat of Thailand!! We are slowly winding down from a fun filled, water drenched Songkran Festival, the Thai New Year. We just returned from a trip to Isan which brought us along the Mekong (River) and into Laos. The past few months here in Thailand have been exciting and challenging in many ways. During this time, we have been focusing on two things; searching for land to be the home of the Whispering Seed and visiting several educational and sustainable living communities. The most exciting news is that we have finally settled on a beautiful piece of land here in Pittsanulok, a 30 acre farm heavily forested with ancient native mango trees.

Here is the story of what has been happening for us in Thailand and some of the projects we have planned for the future.

“Searching for land to be home of the Whispering Seed”

Struggles in the Village: A fire and clearcut

Our journey for the land has spanned over a year and half and has been incredible, allowing us to meet many exciting and fascinating people and projects all over Thailand. We traveled to 25 Provinces, looking at over 25 pieces of land. Almost all of the land that we had been looking at was going to be donated to us and was all ranging from 10 to 40 acres.

Over a month ago, we decided on a piece of land to be the home of the Whispering Seed. The land that we started on is about 11 acres, located on an island situated along a gigantic river here in Pittsanulok in Northern Thailand.

For several weeks, we had been working on the land, clearing some of the grasses and thick bush. In the process, we uncovered 15 jackfruit trees, tamarind, lemon, mango, banana and pineapples. It was exhausting work, going out on the land early in the early morning and working with a machete until it was too hot.

Then we decided to take a four day break and travel to south to visit a children's project called the Nature School. We returned to the land a few days later to find that it had been burned and a large part of the land had all of the trees cut on it. The villagers who lived next door had started a fire to clear their fields to prepare for planting taro when the fire got out of control. Unfortunately, they also were confused about the boundary of the land and cleared a large area. After several meetings and trying to sort things out, we felt concerned about starting on this land that was devastated by fire and cutting and also a hesitancy to start a children's project next to this group of people. This left us completely confused and not sure what direction to go and somewhat ready to give up. With some hesitancy to start the search for land, yet again, we set out to find another place to start the project.

Finding Hibiscus Lane

Meanwhile, we found another piece land just across the river from the land that burned. Nao and I both fell in love with this land and it was the first land that we both felt really spoke to us to be the home of the Whispering Seed. The land is like a lush grove along the river, with 30 acres of ancient

native mango orchards. Coconut, palm trees and giant stands of bamboo dot the land along with many fruit trees and flowers including; jackfruit, papayas, bananas, pomelo, pineapples, lam yai, durian, maprang, roseapple, tamarind, and many types of flowers including hibiscus, lanthom (frangipani), bougainvillea and much more. The catch was that the land was extremely expensive. However, the owner of the land offered us to rent the land on a year basis for an inexpensive price. Along the way, we will talk with her about the option to buy the land and continue to look at other pieces of land. But the wonderful news is that we have an incredible piece of land to begin working on. We are finishing the final details over the next few days.

The entrance to the land takes you under the canopy of a wonderful ancient mango grove and then you emerge onto a path lined with salmon colored hibiscus, lanthom (frangipani), palms, papayas and white flowers. The lanthom tree we found and the hibiscus which are our favorite types of flowers.

Because this land is directly across the river from the land that burned we will be able to work on both pieces of land. Our aim with the land that burned is to put in an organic rice paddy with the help of women from a local village that we have been studying weaving with and also to plant organic brown cotton, which we have been learning how to process by hand in a traditional manner and then to hand spin into yarn. We will also work to reforest and plant lots of trees where the fire was.

Over the next three to four weeks we will move out onto the land to build a bamboo hut and start to clear parts of the land and begin to plant things before the heavy monsoon rains come. We have several projects during the next year that we need to begin to get the land ready for. We have been invited to travel to the Isan again to pick up several beehives to bring back on the land for honey and beeswax, which we hope to do before we leave.

“Beginning projects of The Whispering Seed”

6 Week Permaculture and Natural Building Intensive Training November 6-December 18th 2003

One of the first big projects that we will host on the land will be a 6 week intensive training course in Permaculture and natural building. We will be working closely with Janell Kapoor of Kleiwerks from the states and with several groups here in Thailand. We will have spaces for 15 foreigners to join and we will have 15 spaces for Thai participants. We are hoping to work with Wongsanit Ashram to bring at least one leader from Burma for the training and we will hold several spaces for Thai youth to take the training. The rest of the spaces will be for Thai people who are community leaders and activists from around Thailand.

The purpose of this will be to sustainably develop the land of the Whispering Seed and to offer a Permaculture training course in Thailand. The natural buildings workshop will focus on building a main house for the children’s project. Other work will include: creating organic gardens, orchards, composting toilets, bamboo and mud houses, learning how and where to plant so that functions and energy from each plant serve multiple purpose with the intention of creating a self-reliant system. We also hope to do some work with the rice paddy and cotton fields and do restorative planting on the land that was burned.

This will be one of the first trainings like this in Thailand and we will bring a foreign pc trainer and one from Thailand. We will also hopefully be working with some of the main baan din (mud house) people here in Thailand, a group that has been working non-stop for over a year, building a mud house at least every 10days, all over Thailand. We will be sending more information out in the near future about this training.

**4th Global Community Gathering
and Thai Trip for Foreign Students
(February-March 2004)**

Because of the location of the land, we would like host part of the 4th Global Community Gathering on the land of the Whispering Seed next year.

Again this year we are planning to offer trips for students to come to Thailand. The program will for students from other countries to spend time learning, volunteering and visiting projects in Thailand. It will begin this year with the 4th Global Gathering and last about a month- 8 weeks. More information will be out soon.

Women Weaving 's village

Organic Cotton : Spinning, Weaving & Natural Dye

We have been working with a group of women from Muang Hom (the smell of purple) village near the Whispering Seed Home located. There are 3 generations of women who are teaching us how to process cotton from when it is harvested all the way through to learning how to spin it into cotton. They are excited to help us with planting cotton when the time is right and they have wonderful seeds for an organic brown cotton.

The women in Muang Hom also have knowledge of natural dyeing and they current do a type of weaving with silk called Ikat, where they tie and dye the silk and then weave with it to create intricate patterns.

(One day we took a break from spinning and came with a group of women and children from Muang Hom to the farm to collect mot dang khai, red ant eggs. These are extremely large, aggressive, biting red ants which make enormous nets in the trees by glueing leaves together. They split the nests open and shake out the eggs. Then comes the task of separating the biting ants from their eggs. Once the eggs are separated, they are enjoyed as a delicacy either cooked or raw.)

Because of our friendship with the women in this village and all the other weaving projects we have been in contact with, we plan to host a spinning, weaving and natural dye workshop in the near future at The Whispering Seed.

More Ideas and Projects

We are continuing to make contact with several projects within Thailand working with orphaned and abused children. We hope to be able to start taking children in within the next year.

Because of our close proximity to a rural elementary school, we plan to work with them and open the Whispering Seed for several youth projects and trainings and possibly a youth leadership training for Thai youth in the future.