

Green Teen an Example for All



Seventeen-year-old Boulder resident Claire Anderson is already learning to be a sustainable farmer

By Jane T. Palmer

Goat tending, herb growing and beekeeping aren't the activities that typically make up your average teenagers day. But then seventeen-year-old Boulder resident Claire Anderson is not your average teenager. With a passion for sustainable agriculture and preservation of the environment, Claire is doing all that it takes to pursue her ultimate dream; own her own zero-waste small organic farm.

"I definitely remember from a really young age wanting a farm," said Claire. "I just loved seeing things grow and then being around animals; especially farm animals. I just love the land."

And Claire has been anything but tardy in pursuing her goal. Four years ago she took herself out of the conventional schooling system and designed her own curriculum: one that focused on learning the theory and practicalities of sustainable farming and the preservation of ecosystem dynamics.

"I had all these interests that I wanted to explore but I wasn't able to because I was in the school system," said Claire, "It is so much easier to do what you really want to do."

In addition to studying, Claire spends time each week volunteering at local farms like Earthstar, a biodynamic herb farm, and Cure, a small organic farm east of Boulder where she has helped to grow and harvest fruit and vegetables that are sold at local farmer's markets.

Her first real job was at Haystack Goat Farm where she helped tend goats for four years prior to its closure in October. "It was so much fun getting to know all about goats and what cool creatures they are," said Claire.

And last year, once she learned about the plight of the bees and the devastating effect of bee die-offs on the ecosystem, she started to keep bees under the mentorship of local beekeepers Corwin Bell and Karen Sadenwater. Her delight with her bees is palpable.

“They are so sweet and gentle,” she said. “I don’t know anybody that couldn’t like bees once they have been around them.”

A key theme in Claire’s daily life is sustainability and she makes every effort to grow what she can, support local farms, conserve water and eat locally.

“It’s so easy just to have a pot of mint or a pot of rosemary or whatever. It is so easy to grow just a little piece of local stuff so you don’t just have to import it,” she said.

Next summer she plans to learn the art of food preserving, canning and drying, so that she can extend her ability to eat locally into the wintertime. And one long-term project is to build a greenhouse using window panes from ReSource (ReSourceYard.org), a local nonprofit retail store that accepts and resells reclaimed building materials at pennies on the dollar, so that she can grow vegetables year round.

Ultimately though, Claire thrives on her relationship with the land and its animals. She describes a time when she once used the milk from Vermeer (one of the goats) to make yogurt that she then sweetened with honey from her hive.

"It felt so nourishing and satisfying throughout the whole process, as I knew both the goat and the bees that were feeding me," she said.

“It's such a wonderful feeling to be connected with the earth through local food.”

If, like Claire, you have interest in weaving sustainability into your day-to-day life, the local nonprofit Center for ReSource Conservation (CRC) can help. For more information or to enroll in one of its programs targeted at step-by-step action to green your home in practical and effective ways, visit the CRC’s website at www.ConservationCenter.org, or call (303) 999-3820.

