

Biogaian Meeting Notes

February 24, 2026, 7pm, Living room

Laura Facilitating

Marlin Scribe

Present: Laura, Fen, Helen, Kendall, West, Holly, Patricia, Anita, Marlin, Brent, Barb, Brian

1) West: Herbalism course

Check in: Journeys will have a herbalism course on April 4, by Rachael Witt. Wildness Within, focusing on spring wild edibles in the forest, but also wants access to the Songaia Garden. Not harvesting anything cultivated. Will be on www.riteofpassagejourneys.org in a few days.

- Laura: they could do some with the cultivated herbs if they wish.
- Later, Kendall confirmed with Anita and Patricia the details above.
- Patricia says they can also harvest from the native plant garden.

(West exits.)

2) Marilyn's soil return.

Brian: Planning session a few days ago. Ceremony discussed; request to know if Biogaians are wanting soil.

Will arrive in canvas burlap bags.

Current plans are memorial garden near Chuck's window, and the Serpentine garden. Ceremonial amount of soil: Fred's Tree, Stan's, Jeans, Edith's bench, other memorial spots.

Ceremony finishes in the native forest garden.

Are there other places Biogaians want her soil.

March 14. Soil here a couple days before. Largely by the native forest garden.

Lark is working on the specific day. Thursday or Friday of that week. Details to follow.

(Anita arrives.)

3) Biogaian's barn storage area.

Needs cleaning and reorganization / work party.

Patricia wanted to participate and is back on the 2nd.

Sunday March 15 is suggested.

Laura, Anita & Patricia to be co-thinkers.

Helen will manage pot washing as a needed activity with lower physical impact.

Fen & Kendall to help with cleanup (making sure the final put-away is done).

Everyone bring snacks.

4) MD discussion of 2025 landcare coordination experiment

— See below for the extensive writeup by MD —

A dozen projects were completed. The coordination work seems to multiply effort, and MD and the team learned more about how to organize that coordination.

A TEK MIL lightening round / feedback:

MD: As a self-critique, has a hard time with time. Thanks to Barb & Helen for doing extra checking of spreadsheets. In the end, though, people got paid on time. Would have appreciated more support around conflict, but overall thankful for the support.

Helen: Thought there was to be one last mow for Crestmont; disappointed around that, but now understands the situation. Appreciates the astonishing amount of work that did get done.

Barb: Appreciated there being a set schedule for a paycheck every two weeks. A bit of a pinch/slow down between submission and approval might help.

Anita: Critique: noticed that tools would not be put away in an appropriate spot. The play barn is protected, but not the right spot where others can find them. Self-critique is that I didn't say anything at the time.

Brian: self-critique is I didn't work follow-up with this, and realizing he had an interest in how things were going. Critique: wondering how the work was going to be spread between peoples doing love-offering vs paid offering. Would be important to have a known and good strategy for selecting individuals for paid work. Would like to hear what strategies were tried. Appreciates the write-up. Appreciated paying attention to keeping work here and in the community.

Marlin: self-critique: skeptical when I first heard the idea but didn't follow up on the implementation. Now enlightened and delighted with the results.

Brent: appreciative of notetakers. Observer of this landcare work. Appreciative of the incredible amount of work that got done, and the removal of blackberries.

Patricia: Wonderful to see work getting done, having a structured, and (in the end) straightforward way for work to get done. Appreciated being able to help set up the structure. Self criticism: never checked back on some items.

Laura: Wow! Amazement over so many projects getting down. Thinks this was a successful experiment, even if it was painful at times.

Barb: Glad the power dynamics issue got brought up, wondering what venue to use for further discussion. Question is how to look at the issue when it's active and happening.

MD: would be good to strategize on how to engage more people.
Laura suggests having another meeting to follow up. MD will ping people.

ALL: A round of Thank yous to MD for all of the thinking on this.

5) Garden system streams

Brian: Special March 10 Biogaian meeting

Thinking about garden system in a different way.

Intergenerational shift, the labor that's required. Helen, Laura aren't going to be able to carry the loads that they have in the past. Streams is labor is waining.

Willow center: established with a baseline program as an internship program and apprenticeship program.

Garden-to-Table established as a social club.

Yield in vegetable crops has been going down, though fruits and berries have been going strong

Garden has been tended in this current spot for a very long time (longer than Anita's chronological age).

Has been with garden manager/garden steward, but there are a lot of unhealed spots in people's behaviors.

Needs to have more structure for the internship program. Structures to have a clear and easy exit.

The way the internship has been interacted with, difficult to be sustainable.

Something needed to change for the next season.

Garden Steward Stewards had and are having more detailed conversations on the garden steward role. Helen, Diane, Brian, Laura, [one other?] Anita; met 3-4 times to figure out a sustainable plan.

Upshot is, the internship program is on pause. Focus will be on soil building, physically and metaphorically. Includes the surrounding program: steward, program in general, roles.

Anita's role would shift into a soil-building component. Conversation around what's happening . Soil testing, different ways to interact with it, different roles for garden steward.

Move garden intern to willow center; move garden manager to willow center. Support and structure.

Anita: realizing burnout, knowing that will impact capacity in the coming season. Needs something different in order to recover. Wants to be in reciprocity with the Gardeners and the garden.

Helen: won't be as much of the garden in production this year.

Dian & G2T officers.

6) Flowers!

Holly: In a survey mode about needs and wants around flower workshops.

Motivation is delight around being with a group of people who also have a love of land and plants. This is an opportunity to bring talents and enjoyment together.

7) Plant Amnesty, March 7

Brian: This is an organization that focuses on pruning, particularly fruit trees.

March 7 event is here from 10-3. Typically they bring five instructors for 5 pods; each pod focuses on 2-3 trees with 4-9 students per pod.

It would be great to have a resident in each pod.

They've been here to survey trees to work on, but not sure yet which specific ones.

Anita: Anything in South Orchard would be welcome.

Songaia provides lunch.

8) Leaning Tree

Laura: Kendall wants to straighten the leaning tree, propped up by the trailhead.

Anita: Mary says this is a good time to do this work.

Discussion of the T bars and the mechanics.

Patricia: Nartano has a come-along that can pull it up. Suggestion is to make a date with him and get some people to secure it.

9) Next meeting

Next meeting is March 10

Patricia will be scribe, Brian to be facilitator.

2025 LandCare Coordination Experiment and Review

- **Scope of the project**
 - in 2026 MD Coordinated paid Landcare projects from April-Nov
 - For this labor, they received \$250 per month (about \$30/hr) **totaling \$2000** from the Biogaian budget (Landscaping line 220)
 - 2 hrs per week / 8 hrs per month / 8 months total
 - Saturn, Sombra, and MD were the primary workers
 - total funds paid to workers: = **roughly \$3,400**
 - Barb. Helen, Patricia, Nartano, David, and others others (many one-off conversations with Songaians) gave their labor as love-offerings to support me with various components of this experiment

- **Work Completed**
 - 12 Projects in total!
 - Crestsong Food Forest mowed and tidy all year (mowed every other week during growing season)
 - Deep trench along west side of the garden dug and some boards installed furthering the project
 - Digging out and repairing one spot in the irrigation in the south orchard
 - Mowing the strip of songaia property on 39th
 - Mowing the south orchard
 - Clearing the upper septic field and removing debris
 - More irrigation digging and repair
 - Mowing and clearing the swales and drains in order to pass city inspection (we passed!)
 - Blackberry removal and burlaping along large stretch of Lost Lake Road
 - Ivy removal from trees in cathedral
 - Pruning two beloved plum trees

- **Observations and Learnings**
 - **Relationality and Power Dynamics**
 - The collaborative/ "people-care" aspect of the coordination work is very important and if it is to be successful, it cannot be overlooked.
 - Many of us come from contexts where a boss is in charge and we simply follow orders -- dampening our ability to take self-directed action.
 - Strategy: Begin each project by surveying the land together and leave room for observations, input and ideas for strategy from workers
 - For some, the coordinator position can easily be experienced as a boss or manger like position that holds power over the individual. The Landcare Coordinator should strive to function as a coordinator and collaborator, not manager. However, cannot be overlooked that the creation of this position shifts the power dynamics within Biogaians and on the land in general. Land

coordinators should take this trust as sacred and strive to work in ways that are as collaborative as possible.

- There was 1 person on the land who was unwilling to collaborate with me and the Landcare coordination experiment
 - Observation: Because we live and work together, we bring all our past conflicts into our attempts to collaborate
- Strategy: Frequent feedback circles (tekml) as a small group to give and receive feedback which builds a collaborative culture, supports addressing minor conflict before they escalate, and creates opportunity to address power imbalances

○ **Paid Labor vs Love Offerings**

- The LandCare Coordinator work requires skillful holding of the balance of paid work and the love-offering-work that is essential to the functions of Songaia. Barb has illuminated this reality for me.
 - Strategy: the landcare coordinator should facilitate this conversation with workers. Asking them to consider what type of work they are willing and able to give as a love-offering to community in addition to the work that they are paid to do
 - Philosophy for allocating labor: the paid work is prioritized to songaians who need income support and friends of songaia who are part of our greater community web of connections

○ **Deviation from the Plan**

- At first, I worked with a subgroup of several biogaiaans. The plan was that I would receive direction from the piglets at the weekly tuesday meeting. The tuesday meetings were canceled, so the majority of my direction and focus came from meetings with Helen and Patricia
- There were some biogaiaans with differing opinions on land projects who did not have a place/time to voice their concerns or ideas for focus

○ **Spreadsheets, Hours, Logging, and Reporting**

- Personal reflection: Managing spreadsheets and operating on a biweekly pay system were major growing areas for me. I struggled with the timely aspect of processing the payments. I sometimes failed to catch spreadsheet errors. The google spreadsheet used for each individual worker's hours was cumbersome and updating it was time consuming for me as the coordinator. I would like to rework this part of the system a little bit and am in communication with Barb the Bookkeeper
- At the beginning, Saturn and Sombra input hours into their own spreadsheet, but it became clear over time that there are too many components, like the many budget categories, that make the system too cumbersome for the individual worker to accurately fill out the timesheet
 - Strategy: If we continue using a spreadsheet to log hours, its imperative that the coordinator fill out the sheet for workers

• **Challenges and Losses**

- Spreadsheet errors and timing for processing payment
 - as elaborated on above, this was challenging and I am assessing what changes need to be made in order for me to work more skillfully in this area
- Sombra starting a new job and no longer available regularly
- Unresolved conflict over general land work and over the role of the Labor Coordinator with Miranda
 - My direct requests for conflict resolution with a mediator were delayed and ignored
 - The requests I made to others for support with holding this conflict were not heard or acted on
- Impact of interpersonal harm on work
 - MD not willing to work one on one with Miranda
 - Saturn asked to step back
- **Successes**
 - So much Blackberry removed!
 - More land-tenders supporting the care of the grounds!
 - A large swath of the embankment along Lost Lake Road has been cleared of Blackberry and is available for planting shade loving plants
 - So much learning about collaboration, power, songaia systems, and what it takes to care for the land here
 - MD and others feeling more empowered to use tools and machines available, and more empowered to loop in friends and other land tenders who can support in myriad ways
- **Ideas for future**
 - expand the coordinator role to coordinate *some* love-offering labor on the land like stewarding parties, or individuals who dont need income support but would like to work on land projects
 - build a secret sauna in the amphitheater area ;)