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Semilla Besada in transition

The last Newsletter reported that SB had been sold to Martin and Juliet. However when approaching completion they were unfortunately not able to proceed further and so had to pull out of their purchase of Semilla Besada.

Since that time, after several viewings and many email enquiries from many nationalities, a Belgian couple, Bastian and Inge have decided that Semilla Besada is part of their dream for the next stage of their lives.

They are very interested in Permaculture, amongst other things,

and are planning on continuing SB with the same spirit as it has previously been run by Aspen and David, adding their own 'flavour' and new developments.

We are beginning a process of transition with Bastian, Inge and family, coming to SB to work alongside David to learn how and why SB functions the way it does. We are hoping that the final completion will be about the end of August.

It is an exciting time for us all, new relationships, new ideas and new possibilities.

*One rainy day!**Natural Dryland Gardening*

Before Aspen sadly passed away she was working on a book entitled Natural Dryland Gardening.

It was not completed, nor does it contain any diagrams, but I feel that it shows clearly Aspens' deep desire to live in harmony with nature and the way in which her ideas were developing. I have therefore decide to allow others to access it as it is.

Please [follow this link](#) to the bookshop and scroll down to find the appropriate section.

I would be very interested in hearing your views and you can contact me via [the contact page](#) on the website.

A comment from one reader....

Some very interesting and important ideas, the importance of brittleness, the understanding of the cycles and relationships in nature, taking into account what your neighbours want in the process of decision making..... the idea of aiming at the feelings you want to create in your garden rather than what things you want to have, this is a very Aspen's idea

"This book is dedicated to both you and your garden, your health and your happiness"

Aspen Edge.



Vino de Casa!

This year our small developing vineyard has been more productive than ever before.

With the help of our good friends, Richard, Kiersten and James of '[Spanishhighs](#)', we collected and generated 50 litres of grape juice. This has been fermented and racked off once and is awaiting bottling. A few tastings have elicited comments such as: 'much

better than expected!' And 'I've certainly had a lot worse' - so I guess we're making some headway!

The vineyard was pruned by the sheep earlier this year and although not quite as tidy as human hands they obviously did a good job!



First ever gosling at SB

Earlier this year, in July Semilla

Besada was delighted to welcome the first ever gosling to successfully hatch here. The mother had only been sitting on 2 eggs, the others having mysteriously disappeared (dogs?). The proud parents were extremely protective and caring towards their new offspring and it took David nearly 2 weeks before he could approach close enough for a photo!



New gosling enjoying a swim!

We now understand the expression of being a 'mother goose' to describe someone who is extremely protective! The youngster rapidly grew and now, at age 6 months is hardly distinguishable from the other adults.

We have recently heard that geese often only become good mothers after 3 years and that the gander often needs 4 years to mate successfully. So fingers crossed for this 5th year!

a goose is one of those animals like cows which is named after the female of the species!

Chinese Persimmons

This autumn we have had an extremely good harvest of Chinese persimmons (*Diospyros kaki*). These are the latest fruits of the year for us and have lasted on the tree until late December.

The fruit has a high [tannin](#) content which makes the

immature fruit astringent and bitter. The tannin levels are reduced as the fruit matures. Most Persimmons must be completely ripened before consumption. When ripe, this fruit comprises thick pulpy jelly encased in a waxy thin skinned shell. Delicious!



Sweet corn harvest

This year our sweet corn crop was very successful and generated lots of wonderfully sweet cobs for us to eat and plenty for seed for future years. It is an organic variety called golden Bantam and seems to work well in our climate.

We have often failed with our sweet corn and have in the past lost all, maybe 600 plants, to rats. They take them just

before they are fully ripe. We are not prepared to use poisons and have found traps rarely effective. We have changed our land management to support a greater snake population which I believe is the best control. They can go into their nests which are often behind our terrace walls and hunt out the youngsters. We are lucky to not have any venomous

snakes at our altitude so this is a good option. We don't have cats because they take out all the smaller lizards and young birds.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain non-genetically modified sweet corn seed so this year was a real plus.



Jujube crop



This last autumn we had a very good crop of Jujube, or Chinese Dates (*Zizyphus jujuba*).

They have a taste somewhere between apples and dates and are

extensively used in Chinese medicinal preparations.

They can also be used fresh, dried or used as ingredients in desserts.

The fruits range in size from about 2-4cm in length and the trees can reach a size of over 10m, although this is unlikely here at Semilla Besada.

The tree tolerates a wide range of

temperatures and rainfall, though it requires hot summers and sufficient water for acceptable fruiting. Unlike most of the other species in the genus, it tolerates fairly cold winters, surviving temperatures down to about -15°C . This enables the jujube to grow in desert habitats, provided there is access to underground water through the summer. Virtually no temperature seems to be too high in summertime.

"If man cheats the earth, the earth will cheat man."...Chinese proverb

Sale of sheep



I have sadly decided to sell our milk sheep. Our idea was always to build up a small herd and to produce a cheese for several months of the year. However now that I am alone here, I have decided the work load would be too great and have thus decided to 'change tack' and to let them go.

I am delighted to have found a new home for them grazing on

a local orange grove.

I still believe that having grazing animals at Semilla Besada are very appropriate and would buy a few sheep of a smaller meat breed, 'segureño', in the future. The effect of having had a few grazing animals on our dryland small holding has been very beneficial to the health of the land, and their presence is already being missed.

Semilla Besada Companions shaping the future

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Closing thought....

*Living is no laughing matter:
You must live it with great seriousness,
Like a squirrel, for example -
I mean without looking for something beyond and above
living,
I mean living must be your whole occupation.*

...

*I mean, you must take living so seriously
that even at seventy, for example, you'll plant olive trees -
and not for your children, either,
but because although you fear death you don't believe it,
because living, I mean, weighs heavier.*

Nazim Hikmet, Turkish poet, 1901-63

Semilla Besada is a 12 hectare family farm, set in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains in southern Spain.



The focus of the farm is 'triple bottom line' health, where all decisions are tested for long-term social, environmental and economic sustainability. These decisions are then monitored to ensure that we take timely remedial action when we go off course.

We provided the only working model of Holistic Management in mainland Europe, and offered educational opportunities to the local and international community.

A personal note from David

I should apologise for the very! late release of this newsletter, it would never have happened with Aspen around! , but I kept waiting until several decisions were made. I hope it was worth it!

The last few weeks, here in southern Spain, have been very wet, unusually so for this time of year. I have noticed the change in my views... previously I would have been complaining about all the water, but now, 12 years on, I can join the locals and wholeheartedly agree that it's 'good for the Campo'! Rain at our elevation, 1300m, implies more snow on the higher mountains, which is our summer irrigation water. So all should be made easier for the next season. It's a good feeling, akin to a full woodstore, or plenty of produce safely stored away. Much more 'real' than money in the bank!

As always I would be pleased to receive any suggestions or other feedback.

I wish you all nurturing relationships, healthy animals, delicious fruit and vegetables, copious water supplies and a deep sense of appreciation for all of Nature's bounty.

David