



Mainhouse Flower Garden

Sangha Update - August 2009

Hello Sangha Friends,

This spring and early summer we've seen a boon of rain and a plague of mosquitoes. The valley is lush as it's ever been, songbirds sing morning and night, and the ponderosa east of the zendo is sending green shoots out in all directions.

In May and June, during the six week "work intensive," we brought a number of projects to completion. Thanks to a volunteer carpenter, and with almost no additional cost, we finally finished the renovation of Young Pine Hut, our beloved Head Monk's cabin that flooded two years ago. Now protected by last year's addition of a thick birm, a French drain, and waterproof sheeting, we're confident that our new tile floor, new walls, and custom bed will stand the test of time. We also stained the studio, shop, fire shed, and storage shed a deep brown, making the buildings look ten years younger and

We've begun a monthly fire training class with the captain of our local volunteer fire department. The curriculum he designed, for 12 once-a-month, one-day meetings, brings us through everything we need to know about evacuation, shelter in place, CPR and First Aid, communication with local agencies, fighting the flame front, and more. He intends to repeat the same curriculum with us each year so that we will gradually master the thinking and application of fire fighting through the monthly classroom time and regular drills. It is actually not easy to get it all down and embodied. And the training and information has to be 'embodied' if we are going to function quickly in the pressure of an emergency. In addition, the CMZC staff took a sixteen-hour class in the safe and effective use of chain saws.

In other news, Sophie Dillo joined our community full time after completing her graduate studies in painting. She and Christian, who married at Crestone last spring, are overseeing the extension and renovation of Staff House 1, adding a third more square footage and a bathroom to the building. Many thanks to Mike and Pam

Dixon, Sophie's parents, who made this project possible with their generous donation.

Two months into our Summer Guest Season, we're experiencing more vacancies than usual. Several of our most regular groups have cancelled due to a decrease in their own registrations. And the groups who are coming, expect less participants. This leaves us in a difficult financial bind. In response so far, we've cut our grocery budget by 25%, cut the two staff stipends by a third, cancelled telephone lines, and instituted a spending freeze on all expenditures not deemed absolutely essential. Even so, we expect to run out of money in the fall, and there is no more room left on our credit cards (which are in Dan's and Mark's names).

Still, all is well on the mountain. The gardens are growing – spinach and romaine, columbines and apple blossoms. The campus is well cared for and our spirits are surprisingly high.

We send you our best wishes from the wilderness.

Seisho Craig Hase
and the residents of Crestone Mountain Zen Center