Next issue of Growing Green International  The Winter 2016/17 issue should be out in late January 2017. Main deadline for articles, letters, news, etc is the end of October, please email editor@veganorganic.net

Back issues of GGI are available to VON members in pdf form in the members forum on the VON website. A basic contents list of all the issues (you can use Control + F to search for any topic or author) is available for anyone to see, you’ll find a link at www.veganorganic.net/information-for-growers/growing-green-international

VON always needs help from enthusiastic and capable volunteers. If you’re interested in any of these tasks – general admin work, helping on VON stalls, giving talks, liaising with the press, visiting farms, fundraising, website development, leaflet design, social media, promoting VON’s ideas internationally, or anything you can think of – please email us at info@veganorganic.net or ring 0161 860 4869. We’d be very happy to hear from you!

Email newsletters These are sent out from time to time to members (and non members) who we have email addresses for. If you’re not already receiving these, and would like to, please email us at editor@veganorganic.net – there is an option to unsubscribe at any time.

VON on Facebook Our Facebook group currently has around 6,000 members. If you want to discuss ideas about stockfree organic farming and growing, or ask questions etc, it’s the place to go. (It’s free to join but you do have to be a Facebook member first.) www.facebook.com/groups/veganorganicnetwork
Jenny Hall and Iain Tolhurst in 2006 with copies of their book *Growing Green*. Celebrating 20 years of VON
See pages 8-11

Small stone barn at Barefoot Vegan Farm & Sanctuary in France, which will become guest accommodation
See page 19

VON supported the third Vegan Show in Moldova this year, organised by Tamara Schiopu, see pages 20-21

Hoeing keeps the weeds down – Jessica Wintrip on her allotment
See page 22

Tomato plants (above) with plenty of ventilation, in the polytunnel at Le Guerrat (below) in France
See pages 14-15
About VON

Registered Office
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Registered Charity 1080847
Company limited by guarantee 3869080

VON is run largely by unpaid volunteers, and overseen by a group of trustees. Please get in touch if you would like to become involved.

Trustees: David Graham, Jane Graham, and Graham Cole
Chair: David Graham
Events organisers: Dan Graham and Rachael Jane Harrison
GGI magazine editor: Malcolm Horne
Membership secretary: Jessica Wintrip
Farmers & growers listings: Maggi Taylor
Growing queries: John Curtis
Horticulture advisory panel: Maggi Taylor
Merchandise: John Curtis
Farm visits: John Read
Farming and certification: Jenny Hall and David Graham

Our purpose is to promote and research vegan organic horticulture and agriculture (also known as stockfree organic) and our ethos is non-violence, social justice, respect for all animals and environmental protection. Vegan organic (‘stockfree’) techniques uphold the principle of sustainability, avoiding artificial chemicals, GMOs, animal manures and animal remains from slaughterhouses and other processes.

Advice line (commercial and home growing): 0161 860 4869
or email advice@veganorganic.net

Stockfree Organic Standards for commercial growers. See our complementary website www.stockfreeorganic.net or contact David Graham c/o VON (details above).

Bursary fund for students of stockfree agriculture. Donations to the fund, or enquiries, to David Graham c/o VON (details above).

JOIN US! If you are not already a VON member, please join using the form on page 35 or via our website www.veganorganic.net/join-us (where you can also make donations).

Growing Green International
No 37 Summer/Autumn 2016

Our front cover photos show
La Ferme de l’Aube (Farm of First Light) in Québec, Canada, where Jimmy Videle and Mélanie Bernier live. See pages 12-13 for Jimmy’s article about setting up a small veganic farm.

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Jessica, Tony and Jon helping on the VON stall at Bristol VegFest in May
Help is always needed at VON stalls around the UK, see page 7
Vegan Organic information sheets

Our information sheets provide wide advice on vegan organic methods for home growers

1 Propagation and fertilisers
2 Growing beans for drying
3 Growing on clay soils
4 Growing – the basics
5 Fungi – FAQ
6 Gardening for wildlife
7 Growers guide to beetles
8 Green manures
9 Chipped branch wood
10 Composting

All the information sheets can be downloaded from VON’s website: www.veganorganic.net/information-for-growers/factsheets

They are also available in printed form, in return for a donation to cover printing and postage.

Volunteering with VON

If you’re able to help with any of the tasks below please email us at info@veganorganic.net or ring David Graham on 0161 860 4869.

For many of them, you do not need to be in the UK. (For volunteering on farms see page 30)

- Helping with the magazine and/or with e-newsletters
- Helping at events (see page 7)
- Website help (WordPress)
- Social media help, including Facebook and Twitter
- Leaflet and brochure design/wording
- Treasurer or financial advice
- Speakers – can you give a talk on vegan organics?
- Press Officer to promote VON
- Promoting VON’s ideas internationally

... or anything you think we should be doing, and are able to help with yourself

VON noticeboard

VON on Facebook (see also page 39). Our Facebook group currently has around 6,000 members. It is complementary to the magazine, and if you want to discuss ideas about stockfree organic farming and growing, or ask questions etc, it’s the place to go.

www.facebook.com/groups/veganorganicnetwork

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VON working group Meetings to discuss VON’s present and future plans take place in Manchester two or three times a year – all members welcome. Agenda and minutes available to members on request. For more info phone 0161 860 4869 or email david.graham330@googlemail.com

End of year VON Accounts & Directors Report These too are available to members on request.

Visits to stockfree farms, allotments and gardens

See our website www.veganorganic.net/upcoming-events for details of any visits (most take place during summer or early autumn). If anyone wishes to offer a visit please email John Read at visits@veganorganic.net – don’t worry if you don’t have a ‘showcase’ plot as visitors are always glad just to meet other vegan organic growers.

Shumei Natural Agriculture in Wiltshire (see Pippa Rosen’s article in GGI 36 about her visit to Shumei) are holding open days on both 6th & 27th August. Farm tour from 11am, also introduction to Japanese culture. Advance booking essential. Tel: 01672 539457. www.shumei.eu/yatesbury

4th Squash & Pumpkin Festival at Tolhurst Organic near Reading on Sunday 2nd October (11am-5pm). Food and craft stalls, live music and entertainment. Photo below is from last year’s event. www.tolhurstorganic.co.uk/events
Establishing the Barefoot Vegan Farm & Animal Sanctuary in the south of France
by Emma Letessier

During the summer of 2015 my husband Christian and I took two weeks off to go camping in the south of France, with the intention of finding a piece of land to purchase. After doing a lot of research, we made a list of exactly what we wanted in a property; an abundance of water sources, gentle slope, established fruit and nut trees and woodland. We made only one appointment with a real estate agent to view a single property. It turned out it wasn’t at all suitable, and so he convinced us to come with him to another that was much more than we intended to spend, but as we had no other plans we agreed as it would help us get to know the area better.

We arrived at the “fermette” as it was described by the agent and we fell instantly in love. Nestled amongst the breathtaking peaks of the French Pyrenees were 14 lush green acres (six hectares) that ticked all the boxes. Not only did it have everything we asked for, there was also a little mosaic in the concrete outside the old farm house that said “1984” – the year of my birth. We took this as a sign from the universe that we had found our place!

In early June 2016 we finally moved to the property, and started work on our project to establish the Barefoot Vegan Farm & Animal Sanctuary. Stage one of the project includes a total renovation and extension of the existing farm house, using eco-building materials and practices.

Plans for the animal sanctuary
The sanctuary will be incorporated into the permaculture design of the land, and we hope that we will be able to start rescuing animals in the latter half of this year, but of course this will be dependent on the financial resources we have available. We want the animals to be able to be as independent as possible, and to be able to participate in their natural behaviours in a way that is also beneficial for the land. The idea is to develop miniature ecosystems that are harmonised as much as possible, with the animals given safe places to just be themselves. I think that, due to the amount of land we have, we will be setting up more of a micro sanctuary with smaller animals like ducks, geese, chickens, pigs, goats and sheep.

As well as the animal sanctuary, we also plan to have a small vegan campsite and guest accommodation so that people can come and relax and make friends, or they can learn skills like vegan cooking, wild food foraging, eco-building techniques, looking after animals and veganic permaculture.

Outreach in our local community and region is also important to us. We are in the heart of France’s foie gras region. We want Barefoot Vegan Farm & Sanctuary to be a shining example of how we can live full, abundant and happy lives without having to exploit and inflict harm and suffering on any sentient being. Part of this outreach and community building will include the encouragement of a hybrid resource-based economy.

In April 2015, I launched a bi-monthly, digital magazine called Barefoot Vegan. It’s always been important to me that the magazine is a platform to showcase the work of other inspiring people and projects that are working to make powerful and positive change, not just on a global level but also on a community level.

This idea of rebuilding community, and empowering people through cultivating skills such as food production and sharing of resources, is something that is very close to our hearts, and is reflected in both the content of the magazine and with what we aim to do with the farm sanctuary.

The magazine and the farm sanctuary are both part of the same vision, and we hope that through people subscribing to the magazine we will be able to support the work we intend to do in our community and beyond.

For more information visit www.BarefootVeganFarm.com and we welcome any volunteers who are interested in coming to learn and share skills.

The old farm house (left) and large stone barn (right) will become part of the house and guest accommodation

See page 2 for another photo
Another growing season is upon us and I have been thinking about crops that give maximum gain for minimum effort. Everyone who has watched VON’s DVD Grow your own Fruit and Veg with Graham Cole (see details page 18) will know what a great crop raspberries are to grow. I particularly like to grow an autumn variety, which in mild weather has seen me picking fruit up until the end of October. They can be added to smoothies, fruit salads and muesli, or put into cakes, made into jam or just eaten as they are.

Similar but less glamorous is rhubarb. It more or less looks after itself and can provide a great food crop through spring and early summer, and can be turned into rhubarb fool, crumble, or a drink of rhubarb shrub.

Success with homemade compost
I am having success with producing more homemade compost, using it to increase the workability of the soil. I have three bins on each of my allotments and two bins at home. This allows me to have compost at various stages of readiness. At home we definitely have rats, but I find they do a great job of aerating the compost and it is usually ready quicker than the compost on my allotments. Have others found the same?

When you mention gardening to others they often think of weeding which, oddly, I do enjoy. However, even more satisfying is the wonderful ability of plants to self-seed. As well as flowers such as marigolds self-seeding on the allotment, I also have some salad greens growing out of the side of one of my compost bins: a wonderful sight and so easy to pick.

Thinking of greens, another VON member gave me some Jack-by-the-Hedge, a wild garlic mustard plant. I now have patches at the allotment that have self-seeded, are easy to pick and are included in my diet. By becoming familiar with just one new wild plant, including it in our diet and encouraging it in our gardens and allotments, we can then have conversations with others about where our food comes from – which can lead to discussions about a stockfree plant-based diet, which could be available to all.

My aim for this growing season is to engage more about stockfree principles with others at my allotment. I have to admit that I have been reluctant to do this, in case they compare the size of my brassicas with theirs and don’t think much of mine! But I know I have a productive allotment, eat lots of fresh stockfree grown food and have fewer food miles than many – all things to celebrate.

Membership
If you are keen to support VON there is one simple and quick thing that many of you could do – please would all members who pay by cash or cheque consider changing how they pay their subs, and pay by standing order or PayPal instead. These options are much easier for us to administer. Why not spread the word this summer too, and encourage a friend or grower to join VON? ✦

Jessica is VON’s membership secretary
VEGAN ORGANIC NETWORK

SUPPORT US – JOIN US!

VON welcomes support from all who are concerned with ethical cultivation and social justice. Supporters receive our magazine, details of events and access to growing advice.

Choose your method of payment:
- Standing order, monthly or annually, complete the form and mandate below
- Online: do not fill in this form, go to www.veganorganic.net/join-us
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Donations

Donation to VON General Fund

Donation to VON Bursary Fund*

Total £

* The Bursary Fund enables VON to assist students to study stockfree / vegan organic farming and attend other relevant courses.

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Make your donations worth 25% more to us at no extra cost to you

I am a UK taxpayer and wish VON to treat all membership fees and donations I make now and in the future, and have made in the last four years, as gift aid donations until I notify you otherwise.

I understand that I must pay an amount of UK income tax, and/or capital gains tax for each year that is at least equal to the amount of tax that VON and any other charities or community amateur sports clubs I donate to reclaim. (NB: Council tax and VAT do not count.)

Signed (UK taxpayers only) Date

Please send a ‘Grow Your Own’ DVD (free to members, donation for P&P gratefully received) – see page 18

Please send this completed form to:

Jessica Wintrip, VON Membership Secretary,
1 Park Close, Trull, Taunton, Somerset TA3 7HL, England
Email: membership@veganorganic.net

VON: the only organisation solely dedicated to Green, Clean, Cruelty-free Farming and Growing

GII 37 Summer/Autumn 2016 www.veganorganic.net 35
Ploughing the internet

There are a good number of vegan organic (or aspiring vegan organic) projects that we don’t hear much about – but many have a presence on the internet, with Facebook pages and sometimes websites.

Here are a few of them, and if you’re aware of any others then please let us know.

Lazy Millennial Farms (USA)
www.lazymillennialfarms.com

Recently certified stockfree by VON, the Lazy Millennials in California are husband and wife team Matthew and Brittany Loisel who are “gaining momentum in breaking veganic into the cultural consciousness”.

They are “a couple of 1990s kids who decided to leave their jobs to become farmers. Fuelled by a passion for nutrition, health, the environment and social justice, they grow certified organic and veganic produce in the beautiful Salinas Valley.”

Featherview Banana Farm (Australia)
www.facebook.com/Featherview-308021809221720

Featherview is a nine hectare eco-farm in New South Wales, overlooking Byron Bay. They currently have three hectares of lady finger bananas and plan to diversify with other horticultural crops, eventually using a permaculture layout.

Garry Fetherston (photo above) describes himself as a hippie banana farmer. “My parents bought our special piece of paradise over 30 years ago when land was cheap. We immediately went about restoring the degraded, weed infested natural bushland, which includes koala habitat and threatened ecosystems ... I love rainforests and can identify most species in the local area and can recognise local birds from their calls.”

“Half of the property is natural bushland with pockets of rainforest and there are walks and lookouts to enjoy it fully. There are many rare and threatened species like koalas, birds, frogs and echidnas. We also have wallabies, possums, snakes and many other creatures too. Every day we have a new surprise visitor from the natural world.”

“The core philosophy at Featherview is harmlessness. We deal with pests and pathogens with microbial diversity and applications of purposely cultured beneficial microbes. By adding more life to the farming system a balance is created, and harmful organisms are suppressed rather than specifically targeted. Nothing is intentionally killed or harmed in the day to day running of the farm. Our aim is to sow the seeds of harmony as we sow fruit and vegetable seeds. With harmlessness as the guiding principle in all our management decisions we hope to create a food producing paradise that enhances the beautiful landscape.”

Holiday accommodation on the farm (in a two bedroom cabin with ocean views) is available too. Details at www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/819991

Working Group on Veganic Farming (USA)
www.facebook.com/WGveganic

The Working Group on Veganic Farming (who hosted a visit to the Lazy Millennials in June) are “a group of activists and farmers who promote veganic farming and gardening as a basis for our food systems”.

The group is coordinated by Seed the Commons / Millahcayotl (www.millahcayotl.org) – a San Francisco based association that works to create sustainable and just food systems that are independent of animal exploitation.

‘Millahcayotl’ (from the Nahuatl [Aztec] words milpa and yotl) can be translated as ‘the way of the milpa’. Milpa is a traditional form of Mesoamerican agriculture in which corn, beans and squash are cultivated in an integrated manner.
Bietenrood: a new veganic farm  
(Netherlands)  
www.bietenrood.nl

Very early days, but Yvo Kouwenhoven (photo above) posted on VON’s Facebook group to say that a veganic farm in the Netherlands is starting up in August.

“My partner Suzette and I have found a place to start our veganic farm! It’s in Rossum, Overijssel, really close to the German border. We’re taking over a biodynamic farm that has been running for 35 years. The place is beautiful, great ground and great soil. So so so excited! We start on little over one hectare, plus four greenhouses. We will work with direct distribution through the farm store and vegetable boxes.”

Rowdy Girl Sanctuary (USA)  
www.rowdygirlsanctuary.org

Rowdy Girl in Texas is an animal sanctuary, but as recently as 2014 it was a cattle ranch. “As a former beef cattle ranch that is now caring for farm animals and living a total vegan lifestyle, our farm has taken on a radical new dimension. We are starting a veganic farm and creating fundraisers as a way to take care of the farm animals. We have 35 cows, four horses, three pigs, a turkey and six chickens.”

Renee King-Sonnen lives with her husband Tommy on the 96 acre farm and, greatly moved by the plight of the animals, she convinced him to pursue this new direction. Renee was named ‘Rookie Activist of the Year’ for 2015 by VegNews Magazine.

Although primarily an animal sanctuary, they are in the stages of planning and fundraising for the first phase of a veganic farm and nursery. “So much has happened in the last few months with our veganic garden. We have a small greenhouse, a few raised beds, and veganic soil from Farm Dirt that is the most amazing soil ever, you can get it in Houston. We are in the research and development mode so any and all volunteer help, if familiar with gardening (especially veganic), is so needed.” (March 2016)

VON (and others) on Facebook

Many projects have Facebook groups/pages these days and they are often the best place to go to see photos. There is a ‘search’ panel at the top of Facebook groups and, if you type in a keyword or phrase (eg ‘compost’), it will usually bring up relevant posts and comments.

Vegan Organic Network
● www.facebook.com/groups/veganorganicnetwork  
VON’s Facebook group is complementary to this magazine, allowing a quick exchange of news, ideas and discussion (plus events, reviews, videos, etc). It has almost 6,000 members at present and is free to join.

Vegan Forest Gardening
● www.facebook.com/groups/317145845149766  
“A group dedicated to Vegan Forest Gardening, inspired by all of our ancestors who have created forest gardens in the past from all countries and cultures. Also modern forest gardeners such as Robert Hart, Kathleen Jannaway and Richard St Barbe Baker.”

Vegan Organic Gardening
● www.facebook.com/groups/176862412339363
“This group stresses the difference between conventional organic (highly animal exploitative and abundant use of environmentally damaging organic pesticides, eg rotenone) and vegan organic/veganic (no animal inputs and pesticide free). This is not an anti-GMO, ‘Monsanto is the devil’, ‘Frankenfood’, etc group.”

Veganic Food Growers Australia
● www.facebook.com/groups/1404729003126291
“We ... have no issue with people using rescue animal poop, it is about not exploiting animals, but we do hope to show methods here that demonstrate fertility without the use of such, as a way of reducing the normalization that animal manures are necessary for growing food. There are many vegan organic systems already demonstrating this. Our Files section has a large collection of useful documents to get you started! As well as seed planting guides.”