

PROFILE OF ONSEN FARM: WINTER GARDENS BUHL, ID

The Japanese word “Onsen” translates as “healing hot springs.” Onsen Winter Garden’s artisan 130 degree geothermal water is used for heating their greenhouses in the winter. The 5.5 acre farm, located in the Hagerman Valley, is owned and operated by James and Leslee Reed. They have a 3000 sq. ft. geothermal greenhouse that is now in it’s second winter of production. In August 2008 Leslee & James partnered with Kelley Weston to lease two more greenhouses from a neighboring property so that they now have 10,000 sq. ft. of greenhouses in which to grow greens and other vegetables. Their greenhouse manager (and artist), Scott Caruso, is working hard to help grow vegetables and utilize Permaculture practices in the development of the farm. Onsen Farm aims to acquire more greenhouses and to eventually have 60,000 sq. ft. in which to grow vegetables and fruit for Southern Idaho in the winter.

Onsen Farm: Winter Gardens is the first to use geo-thermally heated greenhouses for food production in southern Idaho, at least in recent history. The use of this resource makes winter vegetables possible in a local Southern Idaho food economy. Geo-thermal water is also very valuable for soaking bodies and souls. In addition to the geothermal water they also have beautiful 58 degree spring water for drinking and irrigating.



After testing the soil, then adding organic compost, worm castings, and other organic material, the folks at Onsen are happy with the results. They are starting to create good nutrient rich soil that creates healthy, nutrient rich vegetables. Even in the midst of winter there are bees, ladybugs and other beneficial insects flying around eating pests inside the greenhouses. They are not certified organic but strive to practice “beyond organic” methods.

Onsen Winter Gardens’ mission/vision is to create a permaculture based way of living using sustainable and ethical practices in raising healthy food for vibrant people. As this is Onsen’s first year, James and the gang are on a steep learning curve, and will be experimenting with various methods and a variety of vegetables. They are growing salad greens, tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers, carrots and a myriad of other vegetables which they sell online to local customers through Idaho’s Bounty.

Idaho’s Bounty will be having a greenhouse tour followed by a dinner in mid April. On the tour we will visit Onsen Farm: Winter Gardens, Ramblin Rose Ranch (citrus greenhouses) and Springs of Life. More info will be available online.

Imagine . . .

Knowing where your food comes from, who is producing it, and their ethics and farming practices

Working in support of the health of your local community food shed where energy stays local and supports our rural economy