

# MFSI's **Return to Your Roots** Newsletter

March, 2009

**March—Tasahcuce (Little Spring Month)**

www.mvskokefood.org

Volume 4, Issue 3

## The Benefits of Mulch in Your Garden

Mulching Oklahoma garden soils may be one of the most valuable cultural practices of gardening.

The use of organic materials for mulches can provide many beneficial effects. These include: the control of annual grasses and weeds; the elimination of the need for cultivation and the resulting damage to plant roots; the reduction of moisture evaporation; the increase of water absorption and retention; the decrease in runoff and soil erosion; and the regulation of soil temperature. Other

benefits are: cleaner, more easily harvested crops; the reduction of fruit rot; and easier movement through the garden during very wet periods.

Surface mulches will provide conditions for plant roots to develop throughout the surface inches of the soil to absorb water, nutrients, and oxygen. Luxuriant stem, leaf, flower, and fruit growth follows the development of vigorous, extensive root growth.

Most Oklahoma soils are high in mineral content, but low in organic matter. The

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## Get Ready for Okmulgee Farmer's Market!

The Okmulgee Farmers' Market will start during the **Okmulgee In Bloom Saturday May 2nd and continue to open every Friday 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM.** The location is the same...under the shade trees on the west lawn of the Creek Council House Museum in the middle of downtown Okmulgee. At this first market we expect to have (weather permitting) strawberries, lettuce, spinach, radishes, turnip greens, onions and other cool season crops. Also available, vegetable plants including herbs, tomatoes, peppers and others.

### We need more producers.

The vendor fee is only \$10 for the entire season. Contact Vicky at 918-470-3819 or Brenda at 758-1015.



## Return to Your Roots Sovereignty Symposium a Success!



Jeff Metoxen, Manager of the Oneida's Tsyunhehkwá program (left) and Kent Sanmann (Kiowa) a traditional corn specialist spoke at the Return to Your Roots Sovereignty Symposium March 20th and 21st.

The Return to Your Roots Sovereignty Symposium was a two-day adventure filled with helpful information on food sovereignty issues and historical facts on tribal food production. Also mixed in were speakers telling about their childhood memories of growing and preparing traditional foods.

Opening remarks were presented in the Mvskoke language by Amos McNac, Muscogee (Creek) Nation Supreme Court Justice.

Introduction speeches were made by Chief A.D. Ellis of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and Second Chief Alfred Berryhill. Chief Ellis spoke of his own gardening adventures as a farmer and how raising gourds connected him with the youth in his area. Second Chief Alfred Berryhill started with an old Christian hymn he sang in the Creek language.

Randall Ware (Kiowa) spoke about how he utilized a Heifer Projects International grant for the Kiowa tribal members in his area and inspired the audience to do the same by explaining how simple and helpful it was for hundreds of families in his area. He is credited for developing the Native American Indian Farming and Ranching Cooperative—the first of it's kind.

Rupert Nowlin, natural resources manager for the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes Economic Development agency spoke about raising grass-fed beef. He talked about the importance of burning the fields and that it was a traditional event of his people. He told how the buffalo would see the smoke in the horizon and journey toward

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## Mulching Your Garden

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use of organic mulches in the home garden and their incorporation into the soil at the close of each gardening season provides an opportunity to increase soil organic matter content, improve the physical condition of the soil, and add some nutrients.

### Mulching Materials

Many materials are available for mulching. The selection of a particular material depends upon the cost, availability, the season of the year, and the crop to be mulched.

Suitable organic mulch materials should decompose within a season and should not contain undesirable quantities of viable seeds and harmful disease organisms or pests.

The material should be

easily applied and remain in place. It should not pack down and should be effective for at least one season. Finally the mulch should be incorporated with the soil for further decomposition. It is a good practice to incorporate or compost garden refuse at the close of the gardening season. This eliminates protective quarters for insects to use in winter months.

### Application of the Mulch Growing Season Mulches

A mulch is frequently applied soon after the emergence of the crop seedlings or following transplanting.

A delay in application of the mulch may be desirable if the soil has not warmed sufficiently during the spring season.

In the event of excessive soil moisture, crop plant roots may develop in the mulch layer where aeration is more favorable for root

growth at that time.

The depth of a mulch layer will be influenced by the texture of the mulch material since a primary objective is to prevent or greatly reduce the germination and growth of annual weeds and grasses.

The amount used might vary from 1 inch for sawdust, peat moss, cotton seed hulls, ground corn-cobs, compost, or similar density materials to 4 to 8 inches for straw, hay, corn stalks, or other coarse materials.

Another factor in determining the amount and type of mulch material used, is the need to provide protection to foliage, flowers, and fruits from soil-borne disease organisms that could splash upon the plant. Also, to prevent the development of fruit rots or leaf diseases.

Some plants that benefit from summer mulching include: tomato, pepper,

eggplant, okra, green beans, cucumbers, cantaloupe, squash, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, brussel sprouts, sweet corn, asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries, blackberries, dewberries, boysenberries, blueberries, and tree fruits. Also, chrysanthemums, columbine, roses, azaleas, asters, lilies, daylilies, perennial phlox, peonies, and many kinds of annual flowers benefit.

Generally, the semi-arid plants and most wild flowers, when grown in higher rainfall regions, should not be mulched.

Sweet potatoes do not benefit from summer mulching except in very sandy soils and in dry seasons.

Where sawdust is available it is commonly used as a summer mulch. The material, preferably partially decomposed, may be applied to a depth of 1 to 1 1/2 inches. This would require about 5

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## Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative Mission Statement

*Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative works to enable the Mvskoke people and their neighbors to provide for their food and health needs now and in the future, through sustainable agriculture, economic development, community involvement, cultural and educational programs*

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A majority of the Board, Advisory Committee and staff are Muscogee (Creek) citizens.

MVTO to Jesse Smith Noyes Foundation, USDA/CSREES, REACH Legacy Program, Seventh Generation Fund and our friends who have donated time and money to MFSI.

**If you have any questions about our upcoming events or programs that we have to offer, please call our offices and we would be glad to talk with you or set up an appointment to visit with you. Want to subscribe to this newsletter? It's free! Send us your info.** Office hours 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Monday through Friday except Thursday we are open until 7:00. Phone: (918) 756-5915 Fax: (918) 756-5918 Email: mvskokefood@gmail.com. Address: 208 West 6th Street, Okmulgee, Ok 74447.

# The Benefits of Mulch in Your Garden

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bushels of sawdust for a 10 ft. x 10 ft. plot. This amount of sawdust would, if dry, weigh approximately 50 pounds.

Before application, mix one pound of actual nitrogen per 5 bushels of sawdust to aid in further decomposition (1 lb. actual nitrogen would be 3 lbs. of ammonium nitrate or 5 lbs. of ammonium sulfate).

If no nitrogen were mixed with the sawdust some of the nitrogen in the soil would be used for sawdust decomposition after mulching. The result would be nitrogen starvation of the mulched crop. Such plants would have yellowish-green foliage and limited growth.

## Polyethylene Film and Other Sheet Forms of Mulching

The use of air-tight sheets of plastic are less desirable as mulching materials because of the lack of air movement into the soil surface during periods of soil drying. However, this may be offset by specific advantages of the practice. When attempting to garden in an area infested with perennial weeds or grasses the use of chemicals to control them may make gardening in that area undesirable for several months.

An alternative weed control program is cultivation of the area, and application of the needed fertilizers. Then cover the surface with black polyethylene, set plants or plant seeds in the soil through slits in the film. The result of this system will be the destruction of the perennial grasses or weeds if the covering remains over the soil throughout the growing season.

There may be small amounts of grass or weed growth through the slit openings and these plants may require physical removal at the close of the gardening season.

## Yard Trash - A Valuable Resource

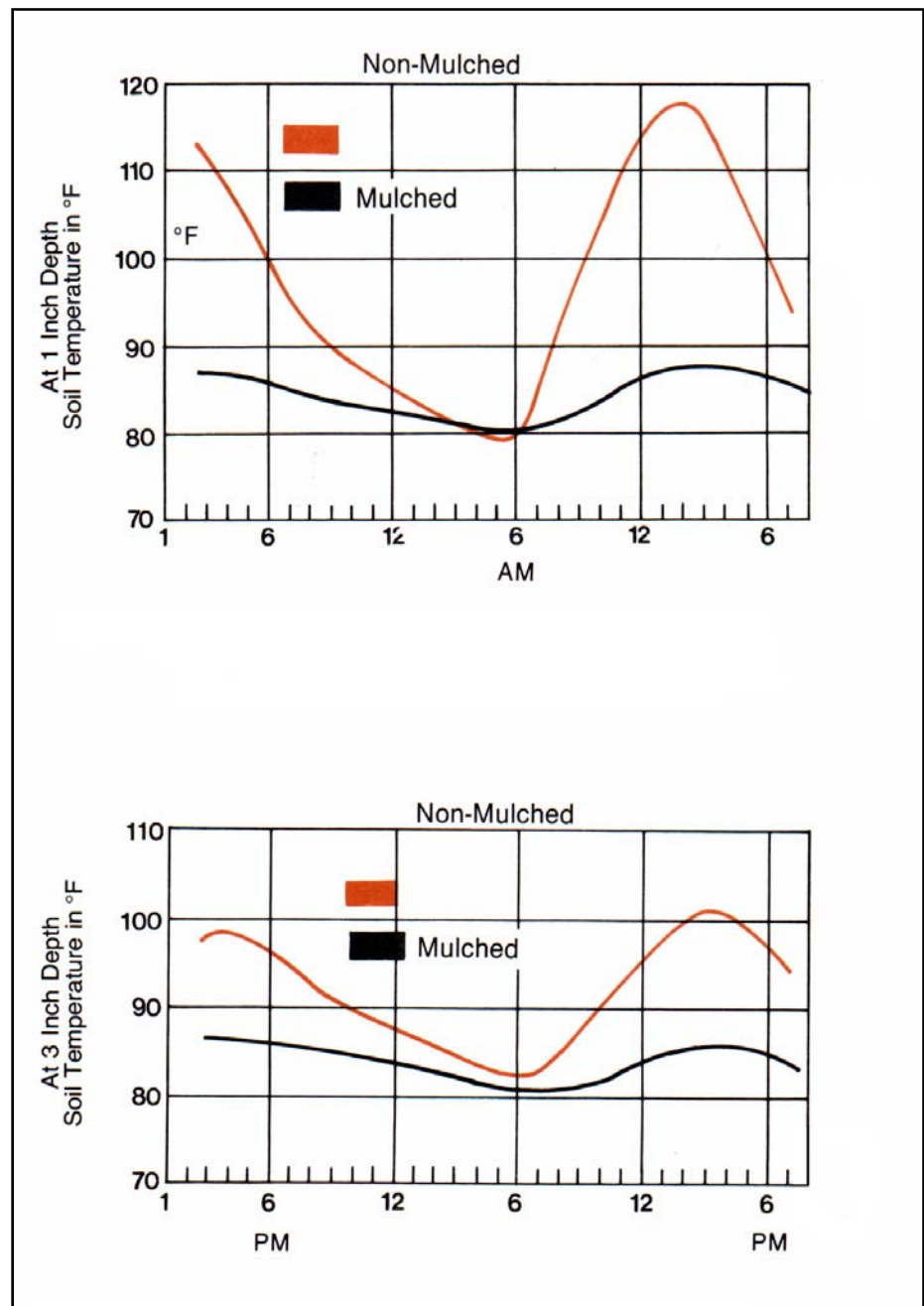
Yard trash such as lawn clippings, leaves, pine needles are an inexpensive and valuable resource for your vegetable garden and landscape. Try recycling

yard trash instead of sending it to the landfill. Yard trash can be transported to your compost pile and used later for mulch and/or soil conditioning. Leaves, twigs, and other larger pieces should be shredded to aid in speed of decomposition.

A lawn mower or mulching attachment can also be used to shred the leaves during the fall season. Yard

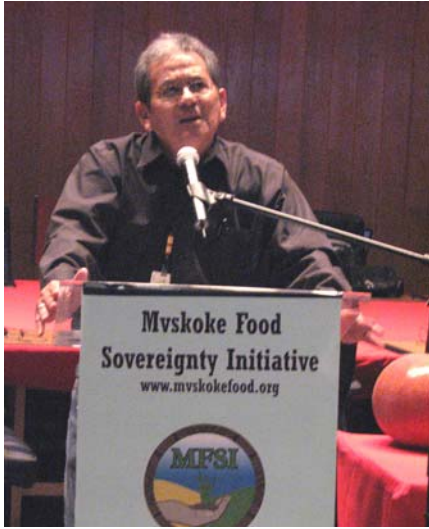
trash can be directly utilized as mulch also, but if not fully decomposed, may compete with nutrients for the plants. Supplemental nutrients may

**This article was provided by Steven H. Dobbs**, Extension Consumer Horticulturist, OSU, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

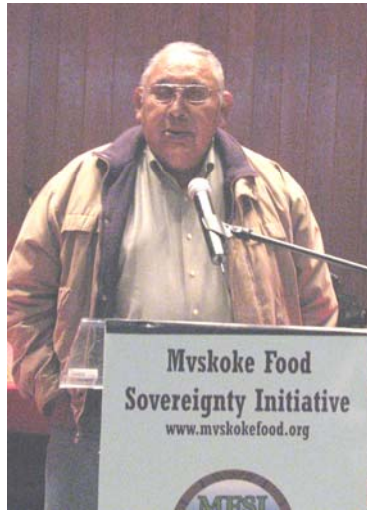


**Figure 2. Mid-Summer Temperature Differences between Non-Mulched and Mulched Plots Measured 3 Inches Deep in the Soil. [OSU, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.]**

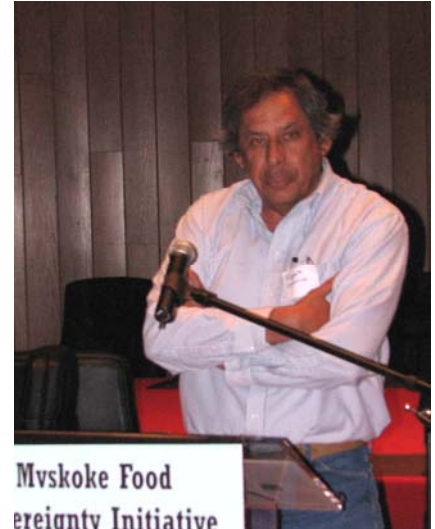
# Return to Your Roots Sovereignty Symposium a Success



Muscogee (Creek) Nation Chief A.D. Ellis



Second Chief Alfred Berryhill



Rupert Nowlin, Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes



Randall Ware, (Kiowa) Langston Univ.



Lilian Hill, Hopi Tutskwa Permaculture.



Terrie Anderson, Okmulgee District Council Representative

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the smoke because they knew fresh, green grasses would grow after the burn off. This was one way the Cheyenne and Arapaho hunted the buffalo.

Lillian Hill, (Hopi) with Hopi Tutskwa Permaculture spoke of the many successes she is having with the community food and youth programs she has developed and is working with. The challenge of the growing conditions of Arizona hasn't stopped her people from growing their traditional corn, planting a fruit tree orchard and bringing the community together to develop the programs.

Pati Martison (Lakota) from the Taos County Economic Development Corporation spoke of the opportunity to maintain quality of life through the gardening experiences and to pursue economic development that is culturally and historically appropriate.

Jeff Metoxen (Oneida) manager of Tsyunhehkw, a culturally based program for the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, spoke of the traditional food systems for their organization and how they have managed it over the years.

Euneika Rogers-Sipp, Resi-

dency Sustainability Director of the Black Freedmen's Living Historical Farm for Children in Furman, Alabama spoke of the self-sufficiency methods of African Americans during the mid 1800's through the 21st Century.

The traditional lunch, which was prepared by Muscogee (Creek) Nation volunteers, consisted of wonderful, traditional foods such as Hominy and Pork Soup, Blue Dumplings, Sour Corn Bread, fresh wild onions and much more!

Chamona Deere (Muscogee) spoke during the lunch about her

# Return to Your Roots Sovereignty Symposium a Success



Pati Martinson, (Lakota) Taos County Economic Development Corp.



Melissa Harjo-Moffer, Mvskoke Traditional Cook



Susie Harjo, Mvskoke Farmer



E.C. Hessum, MCN Farm Manager



Burton Williams, Wilson Indian Community



Thalia Miller, Chickasaw Nation Agriculture Project

memories of preparing traditional foods as a child. She talked about how they would smoke the catfish over an open fire. It was her responsibility to keep the fire going at a certain height—not too tall and not too short—and turn the catfish over and over until they were done. “It was a lot of hard work,” she explained. “But rewarding.”

Terrie Anderson, Okmulgee District Council Representative, who authored the bill to support the conference, spoke of how appreciative she was to be a part of the conference and around such talented people. Her goal

of promoting traditional foods for the Muscogee (Creek) people is one of her main objectives.

Melissa Harjo-Moffer spoke of how to prepare traditional dishes of the Muscogee people. She spoke of how although they didn't have much money, they always had plenty of food to go around because they grew and prepared their own food.

E.C. Hessom, MCN Farm Manager, spoke of the success of production of watermelons at Hanna and plans to produce \$100,000 in produce this summer.

Susie Harjo from Hanna spoke

about her family farm and plans to grow traditional foods and local favorites for the community.

Special thanks to our other speakers who were not mentioned who brought very helpful information to the audience. We would also like to thank the Muscogee (Creek) Nation for their generous donation that made the conference possible. Special thanks to our other supporters who generously donated to the cause: Eufaula Indian Community, Duck Creek Indian Community and Fox Cartridge World.



## Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative

208 West 6th Street  
Okmulgee, OK 74447

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### Community Calendar of Events

**April 3—Producers Meeting for Okmulgee Farmers Market.** Guest speaker: Justin Whitmore, Oklahoma Dept of Agriculture. Subject: EBT cards and WIC usage at farmer's markets. Location: MFSI office, 208 W. 6th Street. Okmulgee, OK 918-756-5915.

**April 11—Container Planting & Cool Weather Crop Planting.** Speaker: George Driever, Area Pest Management Specialist from OSU Extension Service. Class at 10:30 AM in Okmulgee, OK at the Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative, 208 W. 6th Street, Okmulgee, OK. 918-756-5915.

**April 18—Youth Gardening Symposium on Saturday.** Hosted by Newsome Community Farms at Alcott Elementary School (525 East 46th Street North), Tulsa, OK. Info in developing gardens for children and methods for teaching gardening to children. The cost is \$25. Preregistration begins at 9:00 a.m. and the symposium runs from 9:30 til 3:00 with lunch included and provided by local farmers. For more information on the symposium see below, or call Demalda Newsome at 918-955-8559.

**April 30—Oklahoma City Capitol rotunda** (4th floor)  
From 11-1 The Frontier and Green Country chapters of the

Oklahoma Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign, along with the Oklahoma Food Co-op, will be serving up spring salad greens in the 4th floor Capitol rotunda. Various other Oklahoma groups will be serving up other items to round out the meal.

**May 2—Okmulgee Farmers Market. Want to sell your produce or buy fresh from local farmers? (See page 1 for details)**

### MFSI's new logo!

We are proud to present to you Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative's new logo. The logo represents our number one issue here at MFSI which is teaching and helping people become more self-sustaining by placing the ability to raise one's own foods in the hands of the people.

