

# Rancho Mastatal Updates

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## First Quarter 2013

*Wow, what a start to the year. The first quarter of 2013 was about as packed and full as any 3-month period we've ever had. The highlights are so plentiful that it makes it quite difficult to know where to even start. A quick glimpse had us hosting a wide array of instructors and students interested in and practicing renewable energy, natural building, tree climbing and trimming, wilderness medicine, biochar, agroforestry and a whole host of other skills. We've erected a new structure, added additions on to another, implemented a remarkable biochar program, started some 5,000 trees in our nursery (which are now working their way into our orchards with the first rains of the coming rainy season), gotten back deep in to building with earth, trained a new crew of incredible interns, overhauled our kitchen gardens, and made some solid structural improvements to our team that should catapult us well into 2014. The dry season saw the coming together of a veteran Ranch crew led up by RACHEL JACKSON, SCOTT, LAURA, NIC, WATSON, JULES, ROBIN, TIMO, SIMON and SUCIA. We're in the process of formalizing our relationship with some long-term individuals as we strive to find ways to create continuity in our gringo staff while being able to offer financial and other incentives that allow them to support themselves and live comfortably while in Mastatal. One way of achieving the former is by creating an array of teaching opportunities that continue to expand as we offer more and more in-house organized and taught workshops. We're beginning an exciting endeavor on May 1 with our month-long [Sustainability and Resiliency Course](#) and plan to add a number of more internally organized classes to our docket for 2014. The possibilities are endless though our ability to market and fill workshops using our limited marketing and promotional capabilities makes this a challenge. Thanks to all of you out there that have helped us to spread the word about our work and classes. The world of social media has our heads spinning and we have some reservations about using certain platforms. It becomes yet another full-time job keeping abreast of the nuances of the Twitters and Pinterests of the Cyberworld in a scenario where none of us need anything else added to our plates. We're doing our best to navigate the World Wide Web and all the opportunities and pitfalls that come with it and appreciate any sage advise out there. We'd like to send out special thanks to DAVE, ANDREA, ANNA and MARIA MCEVOY, IAN WOOFENDEN, JASON LERNER, SKIP DEWHIRST, LIZABETH MONIZ, LIZ JOHNDROW, FERNANDO GIACCAGLIA, TED MORRISON, MARTIN COTO, BRIAN ERICKSON, MARCOS GARCIA, PETER KRING, ART DONNELLY, ROBERT TOURNAY and all others that helped us with our instruction and courses throughout the dry season. It was a truly incredible year of learning and life-changing experiences for so many, not disincluding ourselves. It can at times seem that the more we learn the more there is to learn. Cheers to a life of perpetual edification, mind-expansion, and inspirtation. We can count on one hand the number of non-workshop days that we had since the new year started and look forward to a less hectic second quarter when we hope to focus on our teaching skills and curriculum development, planting of thousands of nitrogen-fixing and fruit trees, and finishing up the construction of our new outdoor kitchen and hangout space and the Honey Hut. While we're busy with all of that here, we trust that this finds you all engaged in your*

*meaningful and creative work and play wherever it is that you are. Thank you for being a part of growing and impassioned community of friends, family and followers. Lots of love coming your way.*

This month's update includes:

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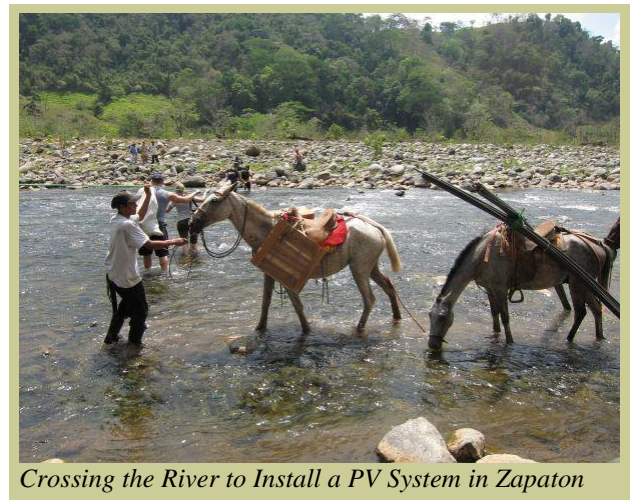
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## RM Program News

### *2013 Spring/Winter Internship*

Life has been busy and fulfilling here at Rancho Mastatal. Seeds are planted, trees are loved, and goats are milked daily. The Sustainable Living and Permaculture Internship is in full swing, with each intern's particular focus slowly unfolding as we fit ourselves into the diverse and ever changing lifestyle of the Ranch. One thing we are continually learning is to find the pace of nature, which, according to the North American naturalist Ralph Emerson, is patience. □



*Crossing the River to Install a PV System in Zapaton*

This season the intern crew consists of 11 people from all over the world. Each individual has brought with them an array of unique interests, a wide range of farming experience, and for the most part a bottle of Dr. Bronner's all-purpose soap. My preference is the Tea Tree blend, but Peppermint seems to be the most popular scent at the intern house. From North America, interns have traveled from as far northwest as Vancouver Island, BC, Canada, to the East Coast of Asbury Park, NJ. Our European contingent consists of one native of London, England, and a supremely experienced couple from Riga, Latvia. □

The focus of the internship program is to identify a particular area of interest and work toward implementing that into the culture of sustainability. Our areas of concentration gravitate around agroforestry, plant medicine & nutrition, animal husbandry, and natural building. In the Ranch's push for long-term food security via agroforestry we plan on planting 10,000 nitrogen fixing trees beginning in April. Prep work has been underway since the turn of the year as interns and veteran Ranch members gear up for a busy wet season. To ensure the health and well-being of everyone in the Ranch community a lot of energy has already been put into improving our food systems. More efficient methods of feeding our beloved goats and chickens are implemented regularly, and diverse

garden greens and herbal medicines are both en route to becoming dietary staples. □□

In addition to farm projects, Rancho interns help assure our many guests are comfortable and well fed. Thus far we have welcomed educational groups geared around solar energy, backcountry medicine, bio-char cooking technology, and natural building & timber framing. This has given all of the interns hands on experience preparing food with locally grown ingredients while using several alternative cooking techniques. The kitchen truly is the heart of Rancho Mastatal. In one way or another everyone helps ensure that our crew and guests are happy and healthy.

□□Speaking for all of the interns I can say without doubt that every day brings new lessons, fresh fruit and laughter. Tim, Robin and other Rancho experts have been generous and giving with their time and knowledge, helping make this a smooth two months as the interns begin taking a leadership role in Ranch life. Look forward to more updates to come and please continue getting to know the interns! Be well and buen provecho.

ALEX GARDNER aka “Mind Fox”

## Building Report

### *Ping Pong Palace*

The end of February/beginning of March was a busy construction period at the Ranch with two building workshops happening virtually back to back. First up was SKIP and LIZABETH's Timber Framing for the Tropics workshop. This year's crew must have been one of the most diverse ever to have participated in a Ranch workshop, with Canada, USA, UK, Costa Rica, Finland, Norway, Austria and Nicaragua all represented in a group of 12! The dynamic was fantastic and as always the duo of Skip and Lizabeth provided an excellent environment for learning and teaching with plenty of fun and games mixed in. The Honey Hut has now received its two timber frame additions which have provided a new food processing area and a hangout deck, although as always the use of the space will adapt and change to the needs of the Ranch. With all but the roofing being screwed down during the workshop, there was little extra work to do following the end of the class. The space is now ready to be designed and fitted. A smallish PV array was installed by the recent Solar Energy International workshop to meet the current requirements with the possibility of expansion at a later date depending on what is needed for food processing. Honey, fruit and possibly meat are all on the menu and the design possibilities and permutations are mouthwatering in every sense!



After the success of the timber framing workshop the ranch was delighted to welcome back some old friends in BRIAN ERICKSON and MARTIN COTO. Brian led a two-day session on bamboo furniture and MARTIN headed up the design and construction of a new bamboo structure. With the help of [EcoNest's](#) ROBERT LEPORTE, the class designed and raised a wonderfully ambitious scissor truss bamboo ping pong structure in merely 5 days!!! Replacing the old rickety and tico style low roof, the new structure could not be more of a polar opposite of its predecessor. With a

high ceiling and decorative japanese style bracing and trusses, the structure really stands out upon first entering the Ranch. With such a palacial structure we are looking to diversify its use to more than just a space to knock around a small plastic ball. Possibilities include a fermentation area, an outdoor kitchen, a smokehouse and a hangout space. We're looking forward to all of earth construction that will accompany this space in the coming weeks.

## Conservation Update

### *En Defensa de Nuestra Maiz*

There are 443.1 hectares in Costa Rica planted with GMO crops. The vast majority of this is cotton, followed by soy, pineapple, and banana. But to this day there does not exist one hectare of everyone's favorite GMO crop, *Zea mays* or Corn. In early November of 2012 Monsanto tried to change that. A Monsanto subsidiary, D&PL Semillas Ltda, requested permission to plant 1 to 2 hectares of "*transgenico*" corn. The request was approved by the *Comision Tecnica Nacional de Bioseguridad* under the argument that none of the seed or crop was for consumption or commercialization, only for export seed and research.



Of course this ignores one major fact about corn; it is open pollinated. This means that different varieties planted relatively close together can easily cross pollinate and produce a hybrid species. This is why farmers working with heirloom, creole cultivars of corn must be extra cognizant of seed selection; always facing the risk of losing generations of breeding.

Because pollination of corn, and most of other food crops, is controlled by the wind and insects, the grave fear surrounding GMO crops is that they will genetically drift into other varieties. Unfortunately this fear has been realized in India, Mexico, and elsewhere. It is too hard to say what the end result of this contamination will be, and this unknown is exactly why so many are fighting to keep Monsanto out of Costa Rica.

A few weeks ago I found myself in Santa Barbara, Guanacaste visiting the women of La Casa del Sol. They work promoting solar ovens, rescuing lost recipes and food processing techniques, and keeping alive heirloom seeds. As you walk into their small project, a giant sign clearly reads "MonSANTO is no SANTO", or Monsanto is no saint. They are in the heartland of the *Bloque Verde*, the movement *En Defensa de Nuestra Maiz*.

After Monsanto's request was approved a nationwide movement began in order to demonstrate that GMO seeds are unconstitutional. Arguing that releasing these seed into the country puts national food sovereignty at risk, as well as potentially endangering human and environmental health, organizations and leaders throughout the nation met on November 24th to begin protesting this decision. Even though the general awareness of *transgenicos* is low in Costa Rica, this movement took hold and quickly gathered steam. Leading biologist, educators, conservationists, farmers, and more took the lead and brought the issue back to the government.

On Feb 1st the Sala Constitutional suspended the permission granted to Monsanto to plant the GMO seeds of corn. They claimed that the previous decision was not carried before the general public, and that there requires more research before the claimed safety of these trails can be guaranteed. Needless to say this was a large victory for the *Bloque Verde*.

Still, there are rumors of loop holes, and Monsanto will naturally fight back dirty, but in the meantime the citizens of Costa Rica are starting to speak up. As of March 12th 51 municipalities and 62% of all *cantones* have been declared GMO free in Costa Rica. Our very own Puriscal passed a motion on February 12 declaring the canton a GMO free zone. It is worthwhile to read the whole motion here, <http://feconcr.org/muni/puriscal.pdf>, as it eloquently lays out the arguments successfully used against Monsanto.

We don't know where the next steps in this fight will lead. We can't expect Monsanto to walk away so easily. But we can recognize that there is a movement taking place, and despite most citizens' general ignorance about the food they eat, the large majority is opposed to planting GMO corn. Our great hope is that one day this will develop into a larger opposition to imported foods that are GMO, such as wheat and corn flour that dominate the market.

In the meantime please visit <http://bloqueverde.blogspot.com> to stay informed and lend your support however you can. In the next couple of years we hope to begin our own trails with native landrace varieties of corn, and we are counting on that seed being available.



## Farm Facts

### *Carbon Pirates*

“Carbon pirates bury black gold...so future generations will be richer.” - John Rogers.

You all know about the carbon cycle right? Ok, really quick, a review. Plants breathe in carbon dioxide, and use the carbon during photosynthesis to produce sugars, proteins, amino acids (organic compounds) and other things they need. Eventually plants are eaten by insects and animals, all of which respire carbon and eventually die and are decomposed by decomposers. Depending on

environmental conditions, the carbon is either released during the mineralization of organic compounds to inorganic compounds, or it becomes trapped and buried as fossils and eventually fossil fuels. Simplified of course.

This is arguably a closed loop system when humans stay out of the way. But as soon as we stick our big paws in there, the results are climate change and degraded ecosystems.

For those of us working in tropical agriculture we feel the results of this every day. In a climate with high ambient temperatures and little yearly change in daily temperature this process is sped up even greater. This is evident when one puts down a heavy layer of carbon rich mulch over a garden bed, only to realize it has all but vanished a month or so latter. In fact, in our effort to keep the soil

protected and covered, mimicking the nutrient cycling systems of the forest, this becomes one of our biggest agricultural fertility principles. The problem is it keeps cycling so quickly that it can be hard to keep up once you have created the initial anthropogenic disturbance. It is almost like you need a pause button, a way to slow motion the carbon cycle and consequently the nutrient cycle.

You could try and keep your high carbon mulch dryer, or use dense materials that take longer to breakdown, but in the end nature will take its course. Recently though we have begun experimenting with a slightly different tool that adds a healthy kink in the carbon cycle: Biochar.

Biochar is simply the creation of charcoal for the intent of using as a soil amendment. In order to learn more about this process and its application we invited ART DONNELLY of [SeaChar](#) and PETER KRING of [Finca La Isla](#) to come and teach an intensive 3-day workshop at the Ranch this past January.

The growing interest in the field of Biochar was demonstrated by attendees from Nicaragua, Puerto Rica, the United States, and Ecuador. The first day of the workshop was devoted to creating an efficient cooking stove, called the Estufa Finca, the second day we built a 55-gallon kiln specifically for creating Biochar, and the final day focused on the application and use of Biochar in tropical agroforestry systems.

Biochar is a relatively young field, and one that certainly has its detractors and is quick to stir up controversy. For our purposes though it appears to be another tool in our tool box of sustainable agricultural techniques, especially when combined with microorganism cultivation and biomass creation.

Basically to create Biochar we must burn organic material, e.g. biomass, in a high temperature, low oxygen environment. Burned in specific kilns or ovens designed to create this environment, pyrolysis will occur, and the end result will be partially combusted biomass, black as night all the way through. Without going into details about gasification and the burning off of volatiles, this final product is mostly fixed matter (recalcitrant carbon) with some mobile matter (trace minerals and nutrients) left over from the initial biomass that failed to burn off. The mobile matter is consumed by microorganisms, thereby increasing the surface area of the Biochar and increasing its absorption and adsorption qualities. This final in soil product is nearly all recalcitrant carbon. If we would have let this biomass fall on the ground and decompose, most of it would have been consumed by microorganisms and ended back up in the carbon cycle rapidly; and if we would have burned it entirely, leaving a final product of ash, the carbon would have burned off into the atmosphere. Instead we now have a piece of carbon which allows us to do a few advantageous things.

First, by burying Biochar back in the soil, instead of allowing it to be released into the atmosphere, we are reducing our carbon emissions.

Second, because Biochar is highly recalcitrant, e.g. it does not break down or decompose easily, it can remain in the soil for hundreds of years.

And finally, because of the characteristics of Biochar, it is highly absorbent and adsorbent; it

creates a wonderful host site for microorganisms and binds strongly to nutrients, meaning they avoid being leached out of the soil.

To sum up, it allows us to mitigate carbon emissions, balancing back out the carbon cycle, all while slowing nutrient leaching which makes it so challenging to maintain a sustainable agriculture in the tropics.

Naturally it is not that simple or easy. One must be extremely cognizant of what type of biomass is being burned, where it is being sourced, and how controlled and clean the burn is. But we believe that by growing biomass onsite and using byproducts of a multilayered agroforestry system, these first two concerns can be, as Wendell Barry put it, “solved by pattern.” The final concern requires a well-engineered stove. We turned to the folks of SeaChar and Estufa Finca for that. Our 55-gallon TLUD barrel system is designed to completely and cleanly burn off all volatiles which are escaping through the gasification process.

Again it is worth emphasizing that there are many myths, detractors, and arguments surrounding the world of Biochar. We do not believe it is a silver bullet. We do believe it is part of sustainable agriculture in the humid tropics.

We highly encourage folks to explore the technology of Biochar on the [SeaChar webpage](#) and support the important work they are doing with the Indigenous Bribri group of the Talamanca. Keep an eye out for a similar workshop in 2014!

## Community Stories

### *Cycling around Costa Rica*

It was hard to leave Mastatal. In general, because of the amazing friends, pregnant goats, and rapidly growing tree crops we were leaving behind. And more specifically, because my bike rim was broken. We had made it all the way to San Miguel (3k?) when it happened. Luckily I managed to drag myself in to Parrita where a slightly crazy man walked by and fixed my rim with a drill and some old washers.

Then we were off for real. Me, Scotty so Hotty, and our good friend Simon, aka Captain Permaculture. Off for real on an epic bike journey through the wild roads of Costa Rica in search of plants and people who grow them.

Our first stop was Finca La Familia, the home and farm of Brendon, Sarah, and their wonderful children Sole, Avi, y Julian. Simon was immediately kicked by a small pony, while Scott and I scampered around checking out root crops. Then we were off on a whirlwind tour of the property, horse rides around town, harvesting ñampi, and slaughtering chickens for dinner. Finally I learned how to properly remove chicken lungs! We had a blast processing Ecuadorian vine nuts with Brendon’s neighbor Francisco, and I was thrilled to trade chicha recipes with Francisco’s lovely wife. Highlights and Life Lessons; 1. Seeing a true example of medium scale agroforestry crops;



*Simon, Laura, and Scott prepare to leave on their bike trip*

2. Learning about cultivating wild bees; 3. Appreciating the value of truly masterful master planning.

Our next stop was actually back at the Ranch for a three day Biochar Workshop with Art Donnelly and Peter Kring. During the workshop we learned how to make biochar burners out of 55 gallon drums as well as transportable biochar cooking stoves. Highlights and life lessons; 1. Strengthening the web of friends and colleagues who work towards sustainability in Costa Rica and beyond 2. Adding another kick'ass propane free cooking stove to our growing repertoire; 3. Going carbon positive, heck yeah!

After the course we basically followed Peter Kring home to Puerto Viejo, where he and his lovely partner Ancel graciously fattened us up on jack fruit and homemade chocolate. There we were finally able to see Peter's legendary Black Pepper, Salak, and Vanilla groves, and learned what mature fruit trees actually look like. Highlights and life lessons; 1. Catching Marang fruits on a downhill slope with Peter, his son, and his dog Ducoo. 2. Seeing some of Costa Rica's best small batch chocolate get processed right under our noses. (And smelling it all through the night!) 3. Learning new tropical fruit recipes with Ancel.

That weekend Peter put on his official Rancho Mastatal T shirt and escorted us by lancha to another legendary farm—Steven Brooks' Punta Mona. There we went on another whirlwind tour of trees trees trees chiampas and trees. His Mamey Sapote was pumping! Highlights and life lessons; 1. Like I said, the Mamey Sapotes were pumping! 2. Tree tour and clay bath with Steven. 3. Seeing a mature fruit forest.

Our next destination was CATIE (Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza). CATIE is one of Costa Rica's most prestigious agricultural schools and research facilities. We spent a couple days wandering the enormous botanical gardens and checking in at the nursery for a sneak preview of the nut crops we ordered. Highlights and life lessons; 1. Um, miles and miles of fruit trees. 2. Getting a tutorial on book binding at the CATIE library. 3. Jack fruits the size of young pigs.

When we finally tore Scott away from the library, Brian Erickson's bamboo studio was next on the list. Brian generously let us camp in his yard and gave us an incredible tour of his spectacular workshop. Highlights and life lessons; 1. The fusion of tropical forestry, art, and function incarnate. 2. Learning to shape bamboo with tires. 3. Brian's savvy recommendation for an affordable nudist hotel near our next destination.

Last but not least we made our way to EARTH University to visit our friend Joaquin Viquez who teaches courses in Waste Management at EARTH and courses on biodigestor installation here at the Ranch. We got to sit in on a Compost Class as well as spend a day with the students at EARTH's own organic farm. Highlights and life lessons; 1. Seeing a whole school full of people excited about sustainable agriculture! 2. The array of educational installations, including an urban farm, renewable energy lab, sustainable banana farm, medicinal gardens and more. 3. Watching Juakin tear it up on the basketball floor.

After we checked out of the nudist hotel, (highlights and life lessons; Just go there if you really



want to know.) We began the recreational portion of our journey. Simon biked off into the sunrise en route to the pacific coast, while Scotty so Hotty and I looped up around Arenal lake, camped in a skate park and drank microbrews, and wound our way down the coast and back home to the Ranch. There we found the goats were still pregnant, the trees still growing, and a whole lot of friends were there to greet us.

## **Intern/Guest Gossip**

### ***Rocket Stove Man*** □

This song was written and share by recent renewable energy student DOUG WILLSON. Thanks so much Doug!

(sung to the tune of Elton John's "Rocket Man")

Rolled out of bed last night, first light  
zero hour: 6 am  
and I said I'm gonna try-y-y t'have coffee for them

I love the Earth so much, it's a way of life  
oil and gas are out of place  
with such a timeless light

And I think it's gonna be a long long time  
even with the alcohol to prime  
I'm not the stove they like to use at home  
Oh no no no  
I'm a rocket stove  
Rocket stove burning biofuel down here alone  
(Repeat)

Propane ain't the kind of way to cook your food  
In fact it's old as hell  
and you can't be carbon neutral, if you did

And all the science, I don't understand  
it's just my job 8 days a week  
A rocket stoo-oo-oo-ooove  
Rocket stove

(Chorus)

And I think it's gonna be a long long time (repeat to fade out)

□□ *Following are the words from the original song.*



*Sunset High Five*

*Rocket Man (Elton John)*

*She packed my bags last night preflight  
zero hour: 9 am  
and I'm gonna be high as a kite by then*

*I miss the Earth so much, I miss my wife  
It's lonely out in space  
on such a timeless flight*

*And I think it's gonna be a long long time  
'til touchdown brings me round again to find  
I'm not the man they think I am at home  
Oh no no no  
I'm a rocket man  
Rocket man burning out his fuse up here alone  
(Repeat)*

*Mars ain't the kind of place to raise your kids  
in fact it's cold as hell  
and there's no one there to raise them if you did*

*And all the science, I don't understand  
it's just my job 5 days a week  
A rocket maa-aaa-aa-aan  
Rocket man*

*(Chorus)*

*And I think it's gonna be a long long time (repeat to fade out)*

## Comida Corner

### *Nixtamalized Corn*

The process of nixtamalization is simple. The corn is soaked, and then cooked with lime (the alkaline substance, not the citrus fruit) or wood ash, then rinsed. This alkalizing process greatly enhances the nutritional quality of corn. Specifically, it alters the ratio of available amino acids, rendering nixtamalized corn a complete protein, and making niacin in the corn more available to humans. “So superior is nixtamalized maize to the unprocessed kind that it is tempting to see the rise of Mesoamerican civilization as a consequence of this invention,” writes historian Sophie D. Coe. Europeans imported maize, but not the nixtamalization process, and maize-dependent cultures that developed outside the Americas consistently developed widespread pellagra, a niacin deficiency disease, and kwashiorkor, a protein deficiency disease, which are rare where nixtamalization is practiced.



*Kattia with Nixtamalized Corn Tortillas*

--Wild Fermentation pg. 111

#### Ingredients:

- 2 pounds whole dry corn
- 1 tablespoon hydrated lime (calcium hydroxide)

#### Instructions:

##### DAY 1

1. Rinse the corn thoroughly in water.
2. Cover liberally with water and let soak 12-24 hours in a covered pot.

##### DAY 2

1. Rinse the corn thoroughly and cover liberally with fresh water. Dissolve the lime in a cup of water and pour through a strainer into the corn. Mix well.
2. Put the corn and lime mixture on the stove and bring to a boil.
3. Continue to boil for one hour, or until the corn is sufficiently soft and clear skins are separating from the kernels.
4. Cover and let sit overnight.

##### DAY 3

1. Drain the corn into a sturdy colander. Rub the kernels between your hands and/or against the holes in the colander to remove all lime and the clear kernel skins. Continue to rinse and wash until the water runs completely clean. Once the corn is thoroughly rinsed and cleaned, it is called nixtamal.

Uses:

Nixtamal can be used whole in soups, casseroles, salsas, and side dishes; it can be ground for tortillas, corn crusts, and arepas, or made into polenta or atole. The whole nixtamal will keep for several days in the fridge, but once ground should be used within a day.



## **Futbol Follies**

***Bridges Between Cultures and Just a Little Short***  
Community development is an integral part of what goes on at Rancho Mastatal. From gathering funds for and helping build the town's first ever library, to encouraging chocolate production at a farm just down the way, interacting with our surrounding microcosms is a daily practice. One way in particular I have come to know the community is through soccer, which will be referred to as football

throughout the rest of this piece.

Several times throughout the busy Mastatal week, members from various farms, businesses and families will meet up at the centrally located field to engage in the ritual of sport. Mahenga, Costa Rican for scrimmage, is actually the first Spanish word I learned here. I was tamping bags in the nursery and SCOTT, a long-termer at the Ranch, was telling me about the diversity of these kick-arounds, where anyone from young children to a respected elders is liable to show up. For me, a foreigner who speaks very little Spanish, the mahenga emphasizes that friendship can transcend language, and that football is dubbed the Beautiful Game because of its ability to form bridges between cultures.

In addition to getting to know the local community on a more personal basis, football has given me a reason to see other areas of Costa Rica. On one of my few weekends away from the Ranch I visited the port town of Puntarenas with Rancho cohort "UNCLE" AL and employee ALEX to attend a professional contest between Puntarenas and league champions La Liga de Alajuela. Puntarenas does not hold the ascetic majesty of Mastatal, but the fans were passionate and there is no better excuse for a weekend getaway than a football match.

Pages and pages can be written about the influence that football, and sport in general, has on Rancho Mastatal. I will say that personally it provides a time to step back from responsibilities and bath in the act of playing, to meet new people, and to strengthen existing friendships. The work done here at the Ranch comes in many forms, and while playing football in the afternoon might seem like fruitless recreation, it is a staple that creates lasting ties between our working farm and the extended community which helps support it.

In other news, Galactico players JUNIOR, ALEX, MIND FOX, TIMO and CHRISTIAN have been playing with the Guarumal team for the past 2 months in a regional tournament in Gamolotillo. After an exciting group stage that saw Guarumal sneak into the semis with a strong tie in their final group game, "Los Amarillos" won convincingly 3-0 against Vista del Mar to find their way into the finals against the home and host team. Unfortunately, the team came up a

bit short in a 4-3 loss in the finals which had many discussing some questionable substitutions and referring but alas, that's life in rural Costa Rican futbol. Los Galacticos will begin play in another regional tournament this weekend which will hopefully see another final though with more positive results. Viva Galacticos.



*View from the Road to Zapaton*

## **Inspirational Impressions**

*Emerson*

"The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson