



EN NUESTRAS MANOS  

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In Our Hands



### **'EN NUESTRAS MANOS' ('In Our Hands')**

is a documentary series about a movement to restore ecological farming around the world.

Filmmaker Matt Anderson ('Fall and Winter', 2013) traveled to over 40 farms and gardens in 7 countries to document the profound impact that the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method of food raising has had on communities; from rural Kenya to the Sacred Valley in Peru.



This 9-part series focuses on a close-knit network of farmers and teachers who've been busy training others in this timeless way of growing food.

GROW BIOINTENSIVE® is composed of sustainable farming principles collected from the wisdom of mankind's most successful civilizations. It uses few resources on very little land, requires no heavy machinery, no chemicals or poisons and generates its own compost while providing healthy, abundant food. This knowledge has passed from person to person, workshop after workshop and propelled a global open-source agricultural revolution which is now set to play a major role in mitigating climate change.



Come into the garden and uncover the fundamentals of growing a sustainable food system at a human scale. Meet these teachers who are inspiring farmers across the planet to regenerate not only their land, but also their lives. And empower yourself by learning the principles that will help you to grow your own food and turn scarcity into abundance.

The answers are beneath our feet. The future is in our hands.

*'En Nuestras Manos' ('In Our Hands') is a project of Ecology Action and was made possible by our generous funders, including Patagonia Works, The Warsh Mott Foundation and Cynthia Raiser Jeavons*

### **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:**

While living at the Jeavons Center from 2014-2016 I had the tremendous opportunity to farm and film with many talented and courageous people from around the world. The incredible stories that these farmers shared inspired me to find a way to visit them after they had returned home. I became intent to discover for myself the amazing Biointensive projects happening all over the planet - and share the findings through a film project.

John Jeavons and I wrote to Yvon Chouinard's Patagonia Works Foundation for a production grant. At the end of 2015 we received a check and I was on my way to several Latin American countries with a camera on my back. Speeding up dirt roads in the back of many pick-up trucks, I ran through countless fields and chased after farmers who graciously shared their world with me. It was dizzying and electrifying; I was astounded to find out just how profoundly the Biointensive method was changing people's lives.

Everywhere I went I saw land devastated from decades of petrochemical fertilizers, pesticides and other unsustainable practices. Many communities were now in dire straits, but again and again I was seeing the same pattern; those who had begun adopting the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method were regenerating soil microbiology and growing abundant food. This information was passing swiftly from farmer to farmer, providing a desperately needed path forward for small-scale food growers.

When I asked people the difference between the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method and that of their grandparents', I often got the same response: 'Not too much, but I use less space and get more food'. It became apparent that I was capturing the blossoming of an agricultural revolution; a rejection of destructive and resource-intensive practices and a return to ancestral and indigenous life-ways.





After traveling to Kenya, Mexico, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil I returned to Northern California and began trying to distill these experiences into a film series called **'En Nuestras Manos' ('In Our Hands')**. Inspired by the 'Farmers Handbook' by Margo Royer-Miller, I decided to tell these stories while also conveying the central concepts behind each of the 8 GROW BIOINTENSIVE® principles. While there are many great technical resources for people to begin growing food Biointensively, I feel there is still a need to better understand why these principles are important and how they interconnect. I hope that through these stories and experiences audiences can better comprehend how this profound method can improve both their garden and even their lives.

Having spent nearly 4 years crafting 9 episodes, I hope to honor this amazing, revolutionary work happening across the globe. I am deeply grateful to the many selfless people who helped me along this journey; I can't wait to share it with you all! And while I wish that this series had been ready sooner, I get a sense that this truly is the moment where we all must realize that the answers are under our feet and the future really is in our hands.

- Matt Anderson  
September 4, 2020



“It would be ridiculous to say  
that a gardener makes gardens.

He makes them by being made  
a gardener.”

-ALAN CHADWICK



A man wearing a wide-brimmed hat, a grey long-sleeved shirt, blue jeans, and black rubber boots is walking through a field of harvested corn stalks. He is wearing yellow gloves. The field is filled with tall, dry corn stalks, some of which are being used as mulch. In the background, there are several tall, thin trees and a small building. The sky is bright and overcast.

## EPISODE 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIOINTENSIVE METHOD

*Goal: Grow more using less*

In this introductory episode we will get acquainted with some of the concepts that will help you to grow food sustainably, and meet some of the leaders in the Biointensive farm movement. Together these visionaries have been responsible for training and inspiring many thousands of farmers; much of that across Latin America and Africa.

Travel to the pre-Columbian heart of Mexico City to the ancient aquatic farms of Xochimilco. Here we discover a farming culture that has thrived for well over 1000 years but now contends with land rendered barren by the chemical-industrial methods of the Green Revolution. In response, we find a small group who is using the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method to heal their land and return to a traditional path in harmony with the environment.





## **EPISODE 2: DEEP SOIL PREPARATION**

*Goal: Build soil and improve soil structure*

Inspired by Alan Chadwick's pioneering work with the Biodynamic and French Intensive methods, John Jeavons (Director of Ecology Action and author of 'How to Grow More Vegetables...') began experimenting with a small garden plot in an industrial park in California in 1972. Over the past 48 years, the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method that Jeavons developed has influenced farmers and gardeners everywhere.

Along with basic instruction on 'double digging' from John Jeavons, we meet Lupe Chávez and Fredy Armengol Méndez in Oaxaca, Mexico. This young couple was searching for a new way to farm and found the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method. After training intensively at Ecology Action in California they returned home and began a successful farm business and training center called AgroSano. This was only the beginning of a radical transformation which began with deep soil preparation. In loosening compacted soil, we unearth a world of possibility.



### **EPISODE 3: COMPOSTING**

*Goal: Maximize compost quality, quantity and microbial diversity*

Fleeing from wide-spread violence in Kenya, Samuel Nderitu and Peris Wanjiru arrived in an abandoned field and founded G-BIACK (GROW BIOINTENSIVE® Agricultural Center of Kenya). Determined to tackle hunger and poverty, they began teaching others in the Biointensive method with barely any resources. Now, several years later they have directly and indirectly trained thousands, improved social conditions in the surrounding area and proven that this method works regardless of what you start with. Join Samuel, Peris and Agustín Medina Macías (of El Mezquite Biointensivo) in learning to build your own compost and experience the magic of improving the fertility of your land.



#### **EPISODE 4: INTENSIVE PLANTING**

*Goal: Create a canopy, protect the soil, conserve water, increase yields*

After hurricane Mitch devastated Nicaragua in 1998, the scope of the climate crisis has become increasingly apparent to Franck Tondeur. For 30 years Franck has been utilizing the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method to safeguard his small farm from increasingly severe weather; from torrential downpours to extreme drought. By densely packing a diverse array of crops and trees into his one-acre plot he has achieved food security and protected his land from uncertain conditions. Learn the basic principle of intensive planting from master farmer Karla Arroyo Rizo of Las Cañadas and witness how Franck's strategies have helped him to thrive in the midst of a turbulent and unprecedented crisis.



### **EPISODE 5: COMPANION PLANTING**

*Goal: Use specific plants and plant pairings to improve health, yields, fertility, attract beneficial insects and repel non-beneficial ones*

Like much of the world, Ecuador has been ravaged by widespread agrochemical use. In response to this, the Vibrant Village Foundation has been teaching the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method to farmers and gardeners to help recuperate their depleted soil. Illustrating the importance of companion planting has been key to improving nutrition and returning invigorating forces back into peoples' gardens. Growing a diversity of the right crops not only provides a balanced diet, but also returns nitrogen and fertility to the soil, improving yields and inviting beneficial insects. This has eliminated the need for synthetic fertilizers and toxic pesticides and offered a meaningful solution to an entire region.



## **EPISODE 6: CARBON FARMING**

*Goal: Grow carbon rich crops to support closed-system sustainable soil fertility*

In this episode we travel to the Sacred Valley of Peru to examine the importance of growing carbon-rich crops. Julio Nina shows us the vast corn fields in his home valley of Saclo which has been farmed since before the time of the Incas. Together with Ecology Action instructor Rachel Britten, we explore the massive potential of growing crops that maximize our compost material while gathering carbon from the atmosphere and sequestering it in the soil. This exciting potential allows each one of us to play a role in mitigating climate change while increasing the closed-loop potential of our farms and gardens.



## **EPISODE 7: CALORIE FARMING**

*Goal: Grow a complete diet in the smallest area possible*

We return to Peru in this episode and join Yesica Nina of EcoHuella farm as she trains indigenous farmers (campesinos) to maximize the potential of their food growing area. Crucial to this has been the principle of growing 'calorie crops' (like potatoes) which has been a staple to Peruvians for millenia. Yesica's passion for ensuring that farmers are able to improve their yields, their nutrition and attain food security has now impacted thousands of farmers throughout the Sacred Valley.



### **EPISODE 8: OPEN-POLLINATED SEEDS**

*Goal: Reduce dependence on seed companies, encourage seed saving, biodiversity and climate resilience*

Matt Drewno of Victory Gardens for Peace has been busy setting up an open-pollinated seed bank in Mendocino, California. For over 5 years Matt has worked with other local seed initiatives in preparation for the uncertain times we all now face.

Meanwhile at G-BIACK (GROW BIOINTENSIVE® Agriculture Center of Kenya), we find Samuel Nderitu and Peris Wanjiru dealing directly with a range of seed-related issues in Thika, Kenya. In this context we can glimpse the vulnerability that farmers are facing from both multi-national seed companies and climate instability. For Samuel, Peris and the farmers they serve, open-pollinated seed banks have been crucial to their food sovereignty and their survival.



### **EPISODE 9: WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH**

*Goal: Integrate all the principles into your garden to ensure sustainability*

Las Cañadas is a farming cooperative in Veracruz, Mexico that utilizes all 8 principles of the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method to achieve sustainability. They grow their own food and maintain a closed-loop agricultural system which provides the foundation for a wealth of other practices and projects. Visit Las Cañadas in this episode and discover how founders Tania De Alba and Ricardo Romero converted a denuded landscape into paradise. Their daughter Aya concludes the series with some wise reflections.



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For more information on the GROW BIOINTENSIVE® method, please refer to the 'Farmers Handbook', available for free at [GROWBIOINTENSIVE.org](https://www.growbiointensive.org)

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