

Frequently Asked Questions – RiverSong Village

• How did RiverSong Village get started?

The property was purchased in June, 2004 and we moved the Eden Botanicals business here from the Santa Cruz Mountains which is a ways south of San Francisco. We were looking for a place to move to that had great air and water quality, with lots of nature and a good climate (and elevation) for growing gardens. We were also interesting in living in an area with friendly people and a good overall vibration - which in Northern California means not too much pot growing and a welcoming local community. The land was purchased and is being paid off by using money generated by the Eden Botanicals business. We envisioned creating a small community and looked at several models of land ownership and decision making, etc. We are still in the developmental stages, and still refining our vision and mission. We see this as a ongoing project and are committed to living here long term and creating successful lifestyles, livelihood and community.

• What happened during the first couple of years?

Several people came who were looking for an alternative to the “normal” lifestyle (some found out about us through ic.org and some through other channels). As of May, 2006 all are still here except for one person who moved back to the UK. It is a great group of people, and yet in order to start and grow an intentional community people have to share a common vision and be willing to put in a lot of time and energy to help the vision to manifest. After a lot of interest, meetings and meals together (and after about a year of living here), most of the residents decided that they would rather not put in the time to co-create an intentional community simply because it is a lot of work and a lot of time and commitment is required. I also think that although people are striving for community we were all raised in a very individualistic society and have never really learned how to compromise and live together in an extended family. And while the idea of community is very appealing, the idea that we have to give up some of our personal “wants” for the good of the community is hard for most of us to come to grips with.

RiverSong Village was established with some very basic ideals but not a specific vision. We all know what really keeps intentional communities together and thriving is when the visions match up among the members. When a strong vision matches up for people they can put their hearts into it. The initial two years gathered people who were looking for a simple life who wanted to be out in nature. This was one commonality that everybody shared. Although beyond this, each had their own visions. About half of the residents were trying community life for the first time. The result was some group creations manifested and some activities are maintained but not that many.

• What is currently happening and what are your current plans?

This spring, summer and fall will see a pretty large turnover of people, and those who are staying are actively re-visioning who and what we are and who and what we want to become. It is an exciting time because the creative juices are flowing and we have already been able to take care of a lot of physical fixing and maintenance these past two years. Also we have had more time to get to know this place and the surrounding area. EB has also gotten settled here and is running smoothly after a lot of effort to create a functional space for running the business.

• What then is your current vision?

Please see our the pdf file which gives our Vision Statement and Statement of Goals.

• What is the expected time commitments for living at RSV?

As a community offering and as one way of putting our ideals and principles into practice residents are asked to put a total of 4 hours of work offering per week into the land for creation and manifesting beauty and sacredness. This is also a way to intentionally bring people together and to be creative and helpful to the entire community and all who live here. It is seen as a concrete way of making an offering to the greater whole.

Ideally it will be a practical and non-denominational way of offering to the land where we live and a way to connect with the land and each other. In addition this is something that we hope will be a source of joy and accomplishment rather than a burden, especially if one embraces the idea of creating sacred space and giving to the land. By giving time and energy to the land and to community projects, we envision that the land and community will give back to each of us, both in real ways (such as veggies and other garden items and enjoyment of facilities) and also in more subtle ways.

We envision this commitment in two parts:

1) Creation of Funds – In order to create funds so that RSV has money available for projects we ask residents to help with projects (that fit the nature of the individual). Two hours per week of each resident's time would go toward a project that directly benefits EB or RSV, and in turn EB or RSV will put \$12 per person, per week into a fund for projects that we wish to create. Community members together will decide on which projects they want to focus on. For those who have time constraints and would rather donate funds, they can opt to put \$12 per a week into the fund.

2) Creating Projects Together – an additional 2 hours per week per person is asked to go towards the actual creation of a project. We will try to corrdinate a time together once every two weeks (during spring, fall and summer) where (preferably) all the residents can get together and work on a project. Since everyone will have different schedules however, we want to remain flexible and these hours may be given at other times as well. The current group can decide when they would like to meet for working on projects and which projects they wish to work on. Flexibility in people's needs and schedules will be honored.

Some Potential Projects:

- Altar spaces
- An activity room
- A hottub/outdoor recreational area (currently in process)
- An offering for the welfare of the surrounding community
- A greenhouse (supplies are on hand)
- Garden maintenance
- Landscaping
- Beautifying an area

• What type of internet access do you have?

DSL is not available, we have satellite internet which is definitely way better than dial-up but not as good as DSL especially for uploading... The house and all the cabins may connect to our WIFI network for satellite internet access.

• Do you think Permaculture principles would be appropriate for your community?

Permaculture principles could definitely be used here. We are currently looking for a gardener/landscape/permaculture person to take care of and really improve the grounds. One resident here (Shekhar) also has studied Permaculture (in NZ with Bill Mollison). That was in the mid-eighty's, and this person also used to do a lot of gardening and was really into fruit trees. But he hasn't been deeply involved in this type of work for years and is engaged in other work. We would prefer to have someone else who takes that project on fully so that I could go to them to see what needs doing and where I could fit in instead of people coming to ask me... These permaculture and gardening skills are highly needed here...

• We are familiar with Northern California, but not Trinity county. Please tell us about the area.

You might not have been to this area, but it is very, very beautiful and peaceful. There will never be any chain stores or anything like it here. In fact the whole of Trinity county does not have a permanent stop light. There is one movie house in Weaverville with 2 screens. Weaverville has most things and is a 1.5 hour drive. The big cities are Redding to the east and Eureka to the west both are slightly more than 2 hours away, with Eureka being the better place but further to get to.

• In general, we want to live a low-tech off-the-grid lifestyle with small-scale farming (intensive gardening) based on Permaculture principles.

Right now, we are on-grid and not self-sufficient, except that some of us do not leave the valley often and take care of all our own needs. Work (with EB) is here on the property. We garden and so have fresh veggies year-round but not yet enough so that we do not require purchasing veggies. This property is 4 acres and could provide for all our own veggies, fruit, flowers and many herbs. Some animals could be incorporated such as chickens. There are also other families here who trade/barter/sell goods and services.

This property and building could become more self sufficient with time and energy. I have all these ideas and desires too, but I also realize that it is step by step, and that when the right people come or are present with the right skills and such that these projects will come into being.

• We would like to bring good energy, happy children, and healing arts to join with like-minded people.

I am all for that! EB is an essential oil business and so we have access to these medicines that can be used for many purposes.

• Thanks for your email, you gave us some good information to consider. It was very thoughtful of you to give a detailed picture with the children in mind. Generally, we were planning on home-schooling our kids and are not overly concerned about their social lives at this time. We're very close with our kids, having raised them together while both of us worked from home. I'd love to give them the opportunity to live in a vibrant ecosystem and show them the beauty and value of that lifestyle (before they hit puberty).

The ecosystem that we live in is very rich and diverse. The river brings a healing/cleansing energy through the valley. At 1300 feet elevation we have a nice blend of deciduous and evergreen forests/plants. Even though there used to be a lot of logging here, the mills closed early (70's and 80's) so the community has switched over to a non-lumber economy. No clearcuts are visible from this area. There are lots of interesting natural plant and animal species and areas here. The school is not so good (so I hear) but home schooling is a good option. Other kids and parents will also show up, and the kind population is growing in the valley (except that Steve and Teri and kinds are moving).

- **Our primary concerns are about sustainability and economics. Do you think your 4 acres could produce most or all of the food to sustain the community?**

On this 4 acres, yes I think all produce could be grown. Extra can be sold/shared/given away.

- **“Sustainability” has been our mantra for a while now and that’s the direction in which we’d like to move. [food, water, fuel, and shelter] How’s the soil? We’d really like to garden intensively.**

The soil is sandy/rocky. In some areas it helps to dig rocks out and to add soil and especially organic matter in. My degree is in environmental studies and I have wanted to live sustainably for a long time also. I have lived and worked with a master gardener in Sonoma county and have lived in various different communities. I used to graft fruit trees and would like to graft trees and start a mixed orchard here (already we have apple, pears and wild plums and blackberries). I have learned how to live with a lot of different people. In a community people need to learn to live and work together. It is always hard but these hard places are where the real growth can take place.

So a lot of food can be grown here as well as flowers herbs and other useful plants. Water is pretty endless here. We have 2 wells that are used and a shallow well for irrigation which is not currently being used. The water table in the shallow well is about 15 -18 feet even in the driest part of the year. Most of the roofs face south. Solar energy would be easy to collect, but the winters see a lot more clouds than sun, so ultimately another source is needed for winter months. We can not take water from the river or use it to generate power. We are surrounded by forests. Lumber or poles, etc. can be made or purchased locally from people who make it here on a home scale. There is plenty of hardwood for wood burning stoves. I see this area and this specific place as livable for the remainder of my life and beyond. And I see it being livable even if the larger society goes in crisis mode. If that ever happens this local community will survive quite nicely and here on this property we will too.

- **Do members keep independent finances? What is the financial structure? I know that Eden Botanicals is owned and operated by some members, but it sounds like that is independent of the community itself.**

Eden Botanicals is owned by one person and we have currently 6 employees. It is growing but I am also thinking of changing its nature a bit. Actually I am thinking of selling part of the business and focusing on only bulk essential oils. The money from selling part of it would go to paying off this property debt as I want to get out of that asap. I also want to make EB more streamlined and easy to run. I would like to free up more of my time and put it into the property. So, finances are separate. What we have done for the past 2 years is that people living here either do work exchange or pay rent. Rent for the cabins is \$450/month and rent for the house is \$675. This has included all utilities including hauling trash to the dump and recycling to the recycling center. It has also included satellite internet WIFI. Work exchange is 12 hours per week for a cabin and 18 hours per week for the house.

EB is independent in a way, and central in a way. I spend a lot of time there because it is the money maker and without it I cannot pay mortgage and debt. So, for me it comes first. Also, it provides employment for some who live here and also for some who do not live here. It is a good thing for the larger Hyampom community in many ways and I think that we have very good standing at EB and RSV with most people who live in Hyampom. The only thing some people are not happy about is that we are no longer renting cabins on an overnight basis. This used to be the “the hotel” and the cheapest place to stay in town. The other places are rental cabins and b&b cabins. So we just refer people to those places.

- **The remoteness of your location would probably make it very difficult for Colleen to continue her acupuncture/herb practice. She might be able to set up a part-time office in Redding or Hayfork, but that’s a**

long drive.

If you ever were to live here, Ram and I (and I am sure others) would be happy if Colleen could still keep her practice going, but realistically it would be much smaller. Weaverville is a good possibility for a part time practice. Hayfork probably won't work. Redding could definitely work but it is a very long ways away (2 hours+). I am not sure if Weaverville currently has an acupuncturist. I would be willing to discuss the possibility of having her available for the Hyampom community at some sort of sliding scale fee or donation and having it be part of a work exchange somehow. Again, I think that it would be a great service here. We have a doctor or 2 but they mostly go to Weaverville to work and are not available here, except of course for an emergency or for friends, but I think they try to keep that separate. Colleen has a great skill but one that will be hard to bring in much of an income from in this area, but not entirely impossible.

- Is there any major tourism in the area-snow sports, water sports?

The Trinity Alps wilderness is one of the premier wilderness areas in California. Most of the tourism is in Weaverville, Trinity Lake (also know on maps as Clair Engle Lake), and the wilderness area. Plus the Trinity River for Rafting and the like.

- **Is there enough traffic to support a craft shop in the area of either lakes or the mountains?**

Not in Hyampom, but in other areas of the County there are.

- **Describe the climate.**

Four seasons, but relatively mild. We are at 1300 feet elevation and so get very little snow. Usually, it will snow a couple of times in the winter but it melts right away. The surrounding mountains get snow. The rainfall is about perfect – about 40 o 45 inches per year. The winter low temps get down into the teens, the summer highs get up to 105. Spring and Fall are really ideal. In the winters the lawns, meadows, etc are green due to the rains and the mild temperatures. The summer weather is great for swimming in the river.

- **Is there somewhere that you can direct me for average monthly high and low temperatures?**

Go to: <http://www.worldclimate.com/cgi-bin/grid.pl?gr=N40W123>

For weather data. You can find temperature and rainfall data here for the local region. Hyampom only shows rainfall:

<http://www.worldclimate.com/cgi-bin/data.pl?ref=N40W123+2200+044191C>

But if you look at the temperature for Big Bar, you will be pretty close. Big Bar has a more similar elevation than Hayfork. So, I think Big Bar is better than Hayfork for temperature data.

- **Is San Francisco the closest major airport?**

Sacramento is closer (5 hour drive) but SF is more major airport. SF is about 6 hours away. There are United flights out of Redding, which is 2 hours away. Other options are Eureka or Medford for small airports.

- **What type of health care is available? Nearest hospital? Nearest doctor?**

There are a couple of doctors who live in Hyampom. But the nearest hospital is Weaverville. For \$30 a year you

can join to receive free medivac to a hospital in Redding. Most people have this, because in an emergency, an ambulance is a long ways off and expensive.

- As the owner what is your day like?

I typically work from 10 am to 5:30 or 6:00 pm in the EB office. And I usually spend a few hours on the week-ends catching up. I like to go for a swim (in the summer) or a walk or bike ride after work. At work I am busy with emails, phone calls, and all the details of running the business. I exercise everyday (yoga and tai chi) and spend time each morning and evening in sitting meditation.

- You have owned EB and RSV for 6 years?

I have owned EB for 7 years (since August 1, 1999) and RSV for 2 years (since June 25, 2004).

- It sounds like you are not off-grid for electric service, correct?

Correct. Electrical is provided by Trintiy Public Utilities district.

Verizon is the service provider here. It is dependable and we have 4 business lines to both offices. Two lines for EB, 1 line for RSV and 1 fax line.

We have satalite internet connection and a separate radio and antennae which broadcasts the signal to the entire property. The hardware has been purchased for this entire system. The monthly fees to the satalite company is \$60/month. We have 7 computers that use this wireless internet system.

- What is the condition of the main house? Have there been remodels or updates?

We remodeled the bedroom, bathroom, living and dining areas, kitchen, and the front office. (In this case we did not completely remodel, but definitely made each room more livable and functional It is much better now! But still more could be done. We also re-roofed one section. It is a functional house, but not a great house.

- Describe the earthquake activity?

I have lived in California all my life and earthquakes do happen, here and elsewhere. The San Andreas fault actually runs out into the ocean a ways southwest of here, and so it in at least not on the major fault zone that much of the populated portions of the state are on.

- Describe the seasons?

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- **Number of sunny days?**

I do not know. Summers are sunny for sure. In the Spring and Fall, there can be cloudy mornings with sunny afternoons. In Winter it depends on if there is a storm or not. I like this area because further to the coast, it can get foggy. The coastal fog does not reach us here.

- **Describe schools, elementary and high school?**

Hyampom has a preschool through 8th grade. Hayfork has a high school. The Hyampom school is very small with about 11 student this year, not including preschool. There is a bus that goes to Hayfork everyday for school kids. I don't know much more than that.

- **Describe Hayfork and Weaverville as a resident?**

Hayfork is a small, rural town of about 2,500 people, I think. The county fairgrounds are located there. There is a small health food store that has been there a long time. Bayley Lumber is there and they will deliver to Hyampom. It is not an exciting town, but there are some nice people that live there.

Weaverville is a bit of a mountain tourist town. We go there for food shopping, although we also order food wholesale through Mountain Peoples Warehouse once a month. They have a good health food store, plus there is a supermarket that also carries organic produce, bulk food, dairy products, etc. Weaverville is the county seat and a pretty nice town.

- **How long does it take you to get to Hayfork? (time, not miles...)**

45 minutes.

Weaverville?

1.5 hours

- **Redding?**

2 hours

- **How much snow do you get? Does the road to Hayfork ever need plowing? Is it always open for travel?**

Hyampom valley gets a couple of dustings a year. Last year there was one storm that brought a very little bit of snow that stuck for a day. Most years will get an inch or 2 in a couple of different storms but again it melts in a day or two.

The Hyampom road to Hayfork, and Hwy 3 between Hayfork and Hwy 299 gets snow, but the county keeps it

plowed. If it is snowing hard it can pile up and it is possible for the Hyampom Road to Hayfork to be passible for a day, but it is not usual. There is a county road dept. in Hyampom and they go out everyday to work on the road(s). I think we had one day when UPS didn't make it in last winter. So the road is always open for travel, except in the biggest storms and then only until they can get a handle on it.

• **How dependable is the satilite internet?**

We have a satalite unit for internet and it is way better than dial up, and yet it fluctuates. We have a separate an-tannaie that sends a wireless signal from the RSV office at the front of the house, out to the cabins, shop and EB office. It has been very dependable yet it sometimes goes down or gets slow for one reason or another.

• **What kind of phone service doe you have? Is it dependable? Ever been out?**

Verizon is the service provider here. It is dependable and we have 4 business lines to both offices. Two lines for EB, 1 line for RSV and 1 fax line.

• **What about electricity? Are you on some independant source? On city electric?**

Trinity County Public Utilities District is the provider. They do a good job, however, like anywhere, it some-times goes down.

• **Do you cook with gas/propane?**

There is currently propane to the house for cooking and wanter heating. The cabins use electric.

• **Any problems with your water supply, or gallons per minute use?**

Water is excellent. There are 2 wells with pressure tanks, they are about 100 feet deep and the water is endless. We are in the valley right next to the river. One well is for the house and front landscape, and the 2nd well is for the cabins and back landscape. With the cabins full and irrigation going, there is still no lack of pressure. There is a 3rd well that is about 35 feet deep. The water table is at about 15-18 feet. This is a shallow irrigation well, but there is no pump for it, but if you wanted to use it for irrigation it would be ideal.

• **Are there any restrictions to the amount of water you can use?**

No restrictions. The water is endless here. It is one of the beauties of the property.

• **Is the land next to you held privately? BLM?**

The land adjacent is private, but the back side borders the river channel and is public access. An awesome swimming hole on the river is a short walk out back. Also it is a great place for birds of all sorts.

• **Any nearby creeks, rivers, lakes? (for fishing)**

The river is right here. There are lots of creeks, but no lake that is super close. Ruth lake, Trinity lake, lewiston resevoir and Whiskey Town lake are all within a couple of hours drive. Fishing is retriected in the river except for a short fall season. I believe that they restricted fishing in the river to try to help the Salmon and Steelhead come back.

• **How much gardening has been done? Organic?**

There is a nice size garden out back that is fenced. We used about 1/2 of the space this year - all organic. Previous owners were probably not organic but the sandy soils will have leached everything out. They didn't garden the last couple of years. We put in a cover crop and then dug it in before planting. There is a lot of space for gardening, a lot of water, good sun and it is not too cold to winter garden things like carrots, beets, brassicas, etc.

• **What fruit/ nut trees are already there? Berries?**

Lots of apples, 3 nice pear trees, black walnuts, a damson plum, black berries, green grapes, purple grapes. The apple trees need attention to them, and they will do better.

• **Is all the housing insulated? Can be lived in year round?**

All of the housing is insulated, but not very well. The house is pretty good, the shop is well insulated, but the cabins could definitely use more, especially the ceilings. But, we do live in them year round and they are pretty comfortable.

• **How is the housing heated? Cost?**

The house, the shop and 1 cabin has wood stoves. Wood here is as good as it gets. You can have 1 cord of all madrone, perfectly dried and then stacked for \$140 per cord. Oak is also available but madrone is the finest wood to burn and leaves next to no ashes. The rest of the cabins have electric heat. Not very efficient, but everything can be upgraded, it just takes time and money. The electric utility cost for the entire property ranges from \$300 to a max of \$800 in the winter. Electric use slowly goes up as the winter progresses, then it peaks in January/February and then goes back down.

• **Is a master permaculture plan in place?**

I made a plot plan so that can be used as a starting point. I studied permaculture with Bill Mollison in New Zealand in 1984. A permaculture plan is a great idea to do for the property. There is a lot that can be done here.

• **How long is your growing season? Do you need a green house?**

We built a cold frame and a simple pvc hoop green house. A green house would be great. And we are just waiting for the time to open up to build it. We have many of the materials already. Growing season (frost free) is late April/may to halloween. It is a good long season. Lots of stuff will go in winter, kales, broccoli and other brassicas, chinese greens and lettuce in cold frames, carrots, beets, etc.

• **Do the temperatures usually get below 25 degrees regularly in winter? Occasionally? Get that low often enough so plants requiring above that temperature can not grow?**

It gets below 25 degrees enough so that plants that require a temperature about 25 degrees will be harmed. I think the lowest it got was in the teens last winter. But mid 20's was relatively common in January/February.

We are at only 1300' elevation, about as low as it gets in Trinity County and have about the best weather in the county. The surrounding mountains get snow and quite a bit colder.

• **Nearest Gasoline?**

There is a gas pump at the Hyampom general store. It is expensive but it is there. Hayfork is 24 mile away and

has a 24 hour station and the best prices.

• You mentioned neighbors... can you see them or are they isolated?

The perimeter of the property is pretty well ringed with trees and that helps with privacy. The neighbors on the east do not live there. The owner lives a mile away, and uses the property to fix up old, classic cars. He is usually there on Saturdays, and sometimes during the week. He doesn't have equipment so there is no noise and he does not have an auto shop; he just works on his own collector cars.

The neighbor on the west side is an older woman who actually grew up in the house on our property and is a great source of history for the local area. Her house is also pretty well blocked by trees.

• You mentioned summer temps up to 100+... do you have air conditioning in any of the facilities? How long does it stay that hot?

The cabins all have air conditioners. But for the office we took out the air conditioner and put in a swamp cooler which works well and is much more economical and environmental friendly. The house and office also has a swamp cooler.

