

The Green Prince

A panel of leading conservationists in Great Britain named Prince Charles of Wales "the most influential conservationist in the United Kingdom." The prize was presented by the BBC Wildlife magazine.

"Prince Charles takes a deep personal interest in environmental issues and when he speaks out, it is reported," said James Sair, the environmental editor for the BBC Wildlife magazine who was a member of the panel of judges.



Al Gore calls Prince Charles "a thought leader."

Good Care of the Land

Prince Charles has a real interest in farming that he gained when he was child tending a "small patch of tomatoes at Buckingham Palace." Today he has a 1,100 acre all organic demonstration farm called Home Farm. Quoting Wendell Berry, he says, "If nature does not thrive, farming can not thrive."

A rustic sign at the entrance to the farm says, "Free of Genetically Free Organisms."

He and his staff raise free-range cows, sheep, pigs and chickens, as well as

vegetables grown from heirloom seeds, which he sells through a box scheme to approximately 140 families. "Farmers from far and wide who come on our tours just don't believe our yields, and every year the levels increase," said Prince Charles.

He uses compost and natural fertilizers brewed from comfrey and sea weed to fertilize his fields.

Since the vegetable and flower gardens at Highgrove are organic, they are wildlife habitat with more birds, butterflies and bees that help keep down the number of slugs and other garden pests. One of his gardens is a wildflower meadow that provides habitat for endangered native plants and pollinators.

The prince, who says he even "dreams" about his gardens, said, "I try to express in physical form what I feel on an inner level. I think a garden should delight the eye, warm the heart and feed the soul. It's part of an act of worship of God."

One of the prince's hobbies is the traditional English craft of building hedgerows for his fields, which provide rich habitat for a diversity of species such as birds, butterflies and bats, which are pollinators that are rapidly declining in the U.K. Hedgerows also help keep wind and water from eroding the soil.

The prince, who is Patron of the National Hedgelaying Society, is very interested in keeping the ancient craft alive. In 2005, he held a competition at his farm to find the best hedge layer in all of Britain.

Prince Charles also discourages the use of hormones to increase the

milk production of dairy cows. In a speech to the British Soil Association, he said: "They horrify us, when we can bear to listen, by telling us that dairy cows -- with a natural life expectancy of 20 years or more -- are now quite literally milking themselves to death by the time they are six or seven, worn out by producing more than their own bodyweight in milk every month, and suffering from a lethal combination of distended udders, lameness, chronic mastitis or infertility."

Tireless Support for the Local Economy

Recognizing the difficulty UK farmers have in competing with mass food producers across the world, His Royal Highness gives speeches and interviews urging supermarkets, schools and consumers to purchase food from regional small organic farmers.

Buying food from small farmers is "vital" in order to preserve the English countryside and rural communities, he told BBC Radio.

In the interview at his farm, he promoted "food security," saying that it would be foolish to expect to be able to import everything from somewhere else and imagine that that was going to last forever.

In a similar vein, he decried "the globalization and industrialization of agriculture" in a speech to the Slow Food conference called Terra Madre (mother earth) in Turin Italy, Oct. 2004. He added that "small will always be beautiful," referring to the famous book by E.F. Schumacher called "Small is Beautiful."

Speaking to 5,000 vegetable farmers, cheesemakers and goat ranchers

attending the conference, he promoted the "culture of the family farm," and said, "I have always believed that agriculture is not only the oldest but also the most important of humanity's productive activities. It is the engine of rural employment and the foundation stone of culture, even of civilization."

Prince Charles provided a big boost to the incomes and stability of local farmers and craftsmen in his area in 1992 by founding a company in 1992 called Duchy Originals that sells 200 organic and natural products. Almost all of the ingredients for the products are purchased from regional organic farms or local businesses in his area.

He encouraged the formation of a small organic cooperative of 26 farms in Guyana that now provides chocolate for deserts for his company.

Duchy Originals, which is one of Britain's best-known and most successful organic and natural food and drink brands, sells bread, oaten biscuits, soup, drinks, cheese, yogurt, condiments, dressings, crisps, pies, flan and preserves -- all made without artificial ingredients -- as well as milk and free-range meats from his own farm. He also sells shampoos, lotions, organic soap, shower wash and conditioner made of natural plant extracts and pure organic essential oils so they are not harsh.

He hires local craft carpenters to make garden furniture and garden tools from sustainably harvested sweet chestnut wood. He sells fish pâtés that are made of local sustainably managed fish caught in drift nets that allow small fish to swim through. Fishermen are not allowed to trawl.

All of the profits from Duchy Originals, about \$2.4 million, go to his 1 charities.

Prince Charles says there should be a "link between the consumer and the land." His company published a book of 100 recipes, called the Duchy Originals Cookbook, that visits the local organic producers and farmers that either make products or grow ingredients for the 200 Duchy Original Company's products.

In the forward to the book, His Royal Highness, who is friends with Eric Schlosser, author of "Fast Food Nation," decried the "quality of the soulless, massproduced food that has come to dominate the modern diet."

Encouraging Gardening

Prince Charles often encourages others to do gardening. He says growing things and eating what you produce is an "important part of one's connection with the soil" and tastes "infinitely better".

In a documentary on the environment that he wrote and presented on the BBC in 1990 called *The Earth in Balance*, he mentioned how the monasteries in the order of Saint Benedict, the patron saint of Europe, "believed it was their duty to cultivate the land as partners of God." He added, "Reverence for nature obliges us to accept responsibility for the creative stewardship of the earth."

His company funds a project called "The Duchy Originals Garden Organic for Schools project" that has helped 1.800 schools across the U.K. set up small organic food gardens to teach children how to grow organic vegetables. In these schools,

the children grow, harvest, cook and eat their own fresh organic produce.

Schools receive a wealth of valuable resources, including seeds in the spring and lesson plan ideas. The teachers have access to a hotline they can call to get horticulture advice.

Many of the seeds the schools receive are from the Heritage Seed Library, such as yellow carrots, stripy beetroots and purple French beans.

Prince Charles and Camilla even made a trip to Berkeley, Calif., to call attention to the Edible School Yard where 350 children aged 12 to 14 have lessons each week on how to grow vegetables, look after chickens and prepare their own food. He was greeted there by Maria Shriver, the wife of California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

A Sustainable Community

Another area Prince Charles has been involved in is promoting timeless and ecological ways of building through his Foundation for the Built Environment.

One of his projects was to develop a human-scale walkable village, called Poundbury. It is a mixed-use settlement in that homes and apartments are interspersed with new factories, offices and shops rather than isolated in their own zone. This allows many to work and take care of their daily needs without driving.

"It shouldn't take two liters of petrol to drive to buy one liter of milk," said the Prince.

There are even spaces for workshops that allow some of the residents to work from home.

Poundbury, an urban extension to the ancient market town of Dorchester, is attracting international interest. "The demand to visit Poundbury and use it as a teaching laboratory has been so great that my Foundation has had to base staff of its own in the town!" said His Royal Highness.

The buildings, designed by a celebrated New Urbanist theorist, architect Leon Krier, demonstrate how a densely populated society can build compactly so that the countryside is not destroyed. The settlement has front doors that open straight onto the street, small private gardens and garages in the back and narrow, winding streets that encourage drivers to move slowly.

The buildings fit in with the historic architecture of the region and feature many different building styles, in contrast to many developments that often look as though they were cut out with a cookie cutter. They are built with traditional materials rather than petroleum products.

A few of the homes were built to be eco friendly with rainwater harvesting and dual flush toilets that reduce water usage by 50 percent, sheep wool loft ventilation, extra thick walls and highly insulated floors. Locally sourced building materials were used where possible and there is natural lighting in all rooms. Solar photovoltaic panels on the roof provide electricity and there is solar hot water heating, while solid block construction ensures that homes have thermal mass so they are cool rather than overheated in the summer and warm in the winter.

An Eco-Friendly Lifestyle

Prince Charles takes great care to live sustainably. He is concerned about what he calls "the flush and forget mentality" where sewage treatment plants pour effluent into rivers that is high in nutrients, such as nitrates, phosphates and ammonia. The nutrients stimulate the growth of algae, which rots, filling the water with bacteria that deprive the water of oxygen, killing fish.

Thus, the sewage on his Highgrove home is purified in what he calls "my sewage garden." Human waste pours into a concrete tank filled with bark that traps the solids and allows them to be composted. After a safe interval, this compost is used on his fields. The liquid that passes through the bark-filled pit is pumped into a tank filled with sand, gravel and stone that is planted with Norfolk reeds. The roots of these reeds contain a web of micro-organisms that take up and use nutrients. The water then passes through marshy ground planted with basket willows that take up even more nutrients. From there, the water enters a pit then makes its way into a pond as clean recycled water to be used in the gardens.

Prince Charles also harvests rainwater from his roof that he uses to flush toilets and water his gardens. His lawn is never watered and he puts bricks in his commode tanks so they use less water.

He used a variety of strategies to achieve a carbon neutral household. The stables at Home Farm are heated with solar photovoltaic panels and have solar hot water. Their Royal Highnesses' home at Highgrove is heated by a wood-chip boiler that provides heat and hot water. There are plans to do the same at Birkhall, their

home in Scotland.

He converted his royal Jaguar and Land Rover to run 100 percent on biodiesel made from organic cooking oil. Plans are being discussed to convert the royal train to biodiesel fuel.

He reduced the number of plane and helicopter trips he takes and takes more train trips.

He provided his staff with bicycles they can use to go to meetings around London and when they take a taxi, they call a company that uses Toyota Priuses, which emit less than half the carbon dioxide as other vehicles.

He has planted thousands of trees on his land, and offsets his carbon emissions by investing in an organization called "Climate Care," which in turn invests in projects such as rainforest restoration, wind energy, bioenergy etc.

He also uses florescent rather than incandescent light bulbs and energy efficient appliances. He recycles, prints on recycled paper and uses soy-based ink.

In solving our ecological crisis, he says we need to "rediscover a sense of the sacred in our dealings with the natural world."