



SBALT supporters attended the 2nd annual Farm Tour and Reception at Phil Foster Ranch in October. Photo by Bob Connolly.

SBALT NEWS

Members enjoy on-farm learning, tasty bites at annual event

By Meghan Knowles

SBALT Administrative Assistant

Phil Foster walks with a shovel on his property in San Juan Bautista. Following him is a group of SBALT supporters (donors and volunteers), eager to learn about the sustainable practices he has employed for three decades. Phil stops at the intersection of a row of apple trees, row crops, and a hedgerow. He digs into the soil of the apple orchard and row crops to show visitors the difference in soil color and composition between the two. The group is noticeably impressed.

Soils on Phil Foster Ranch, also known as Pinnacle Organically Grown, are improved with cover crops, compost, manure from local sources, and varying degrees of tillage. On the western edge of the farm is a dense hedgerow comprised of a variety of native shrubs and trees selected by regional experts. Native plants require little water and attract a diversity of beneficial insects that provide natural pest control and increase pollination. The hedgerow also provides wind protection. In fact, Phil explains, one foot in vertical height can provide ten linear feet of wind protection.

Tour participants were also surprised to learn that the farm produces more than 40 different fruits and vegetables. As Phil talked to the group, it was clear that all decisions are made carefully and with sustainability in mind to produce high quality produce.

After the farm tour, attendees were treated to a reception catered by Katherine Foster and friends. Recently retired from teaching at Hollister High School, Katherine

San Benito Agricultural



excels at the culinary arts. She prepared beautiful savory appetizers and delicious sweet treats for the group – all made with farm-fresh ingredients.

The gathering was joyous as fellow SBALT members socialized over wine and appetizers, discussing their connection to the land. SBALT Executive Director, Lynn Overtree, provided a re-cap of the Land Trust's recent accomplishments, and Phil Foster spoke to the group about his experience working with SBALT to place a permanent conservation easement on his ranch.

Would you like to attend an SBALT member event? Consider joining one of our monthly Ranch Days, volunteering on a committee, or making a donation. Visit our website to learn more: www.sanbenitolandtrust.org. ■



Guests enjoyed a lovely reception on the patio of the Fosters' home. Photo by Bob Connolly.