



Rural Training Center-Thailand

2010 RTC-TH Jun-Jul Update

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Community-based environmental education for the self-sufficiency and sustainability of small rural family farms

ชุมชนตามสิ่งแวดล้อมศึกษาเพื่อการพึ่งตัวเองและยั่งยืนชนบทขนาดเล็กครอบครัวฟาร์ม

You may post questions / comments to the Discussion area of our website

Rainy Season Starts 1 Month Late

The past hot/dry season was the driest in 30 years. The drought conditions covered most of SE Asia and parts of China. The warm/wet rainy season for northern Thailand began 1 month later than usual. And as the old saying goes, "when it rains, it pours."

For our area, it began with a day that brought 4 inches of rain. That was soon followed by a couple of days with 1 ½ inches each; with one of those days getting all the rain in a 2 hour period. There was little to no flooding in our area. But Pua, the district North of us had some flooding. 🌐



Water level of the Nan River at the highway bridge at Pua (next district north of Thawangpha a town near us).



Work crews in Pua using sand bags to contain the Nan River from overflowing into adjacent rice paddies.



The heavy rains announcing the arrival of the wet monsoon season flooding local streets in Pua

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2010 Rainfall Data

SE Asia and Thailand have been experiencing the worst drought in 30 years. There are rather technical definitions of drought, but a review of rainfall data for 2010 reveals some interesting numbers. We compared / contrasted 30 year climate averages of monthly rainfall with 2009 and available 2010 data.

From the table, in 2009, rainfall every month was below to 30 year climatic average. But for the first 3 months of 2010, rainfall was more than the 30 year average.

| | 30 year average | | 2009 | | 2010 | |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|
| | mm mo | acc total mm yr | mm mo | acc total mm yr | mm mo | acc total mm yr |
| Jan | 11 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 37.08 | 37.08 |
| Feb | 12.6 | 23.6 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 25.4 | 62.48 |
| Mar | 29.2 | 52.8 | 11.18 | 16.98 | 22.1 | 84.58 |
| Apr | 108 | 160.8 | 56.88 | 73.86 | 46.74 | 131.32 |
| May | 206.2 | 367 | 141.74 | 215.6 | 212.08 | 343.4 |
| Jun | 202.4 | 569.4 | 180.61 | 396.21 | 104.38 | 447.78 |
| Jul | 244.1 | 813.5 | 215.64 | 611.85 | 242.3 | 690.08 |
| Aug | 302.3 | 1115.8 | 286.5 | 898.35 | | |
| Sep | 176.6 | 1292.4 | 141.48 | 1039.83 | | |
| Oct | 80.4 | 1372.8 | 94.23 | 1134.06 | | |
| Nov | 22.7 | 1395.5 | 0.51 | 1134.57 | | |
| Dec | 5.9 | 1401.4 | 0 | 1134.57 | | |
| total (mm) | 1401.4 | | 1134.57 | | 690.08 | |

This shows the limitations of using average rainfall data in agriculture. The average annual precipitation number does not indicate WHEN the rain is available for crops. For farmers, the time and amounts need to coincide with their crop calendar (when planting, growing, and harvesting occur). *(Red numbers in table are tentative values pending official reports.)*



At the local level, terrain, surrounding surface conditions, vegetation, buildings, paved areas, and other variables create “micro climatic” conditions that affect weather data. So the government weather data may not be pertinent to a particular farm. This is why the RTC-TH started the G.R.O.W, (Getting Real On-Farm Weather) program. The data can be easily collected with home made equipment (e.g. PVC rain guage) or low cost items (e.g. magnetic compass and thermometer). Analysis uses basic elementary school math knowledge and skills. The key is to make regular and consistent observations. This enables young students to take an active part in using their knowledge to help with the family farm using RTC-TH P.A.L. (Practical Applied Lessons) to reinforce classroom activities linked to real world use. 🌐



Seasonal Changes in Water Levels



West fish pond near the farm house ~March 2010



West fish pond near the farm house ~July 2010



Middle fish pond ~March 2010



Middle fish pond ~July 2010



East fish pond ~ March 2010



East fish pond ~July 2010



Nam Yang looking west ~April 2010



Nam Yang looking west ~July 2010



Reservoir east of the farm~April 2010



Reservoir east of the farm ~July 2010



Reservoir west of the farm ~April 2010



Reservoir west of the farm ~July 2010

Green Returns with the Rains



Our recently planted rice paddies seen from the driveway



Our farm seen looking south from the paved road



Our pasture and rice paddies seen looking north from the berm between the middle and the east fish ponds.



Fruit trees along the drive way in the dry season.



Fruit trees along the drive way survived the dry season.



Community-based Environmental Education Salt Lake City Style

We welcome Christina Hayden's new website and efforts to implement the RTC-TH community-based education model in her efforts to improve the quality of life for her community and especially for the re-settled refugees. You may recall Christina visited us on the farm earlier this year in Thailand.



Re-settled refugees in one of the gardens.



Gardeners pay a small fee to cover irrigation costs.



Gardening brings back familiar ways for many.



Sod ding a new sport field is another group effort.



Christina coordinated the resources and people.



The finished result includes a sense of community.



Christina ready to go to another project site in SLC.

Christina whole heartedly embraced the RTC-TH's community-based education model. Following her Thailand visit, she took back many impressions and ideas to try to use community-based education methods in her work in Salt Lake City (SLC), UT.

In the typical collaborative spirit of the RTC-TH, we freely shared our PAL (Practical Applied Lesson) and PAGE (Phonics Acquisition in Grassroots Education), the Geographic Systems Model and composting lessons with her.



Christina and students learning outside the "box."



Apartment "porch" gardeners turn out in response.

In only a few months after her return to SLC, she taught these lessons several times each. Key components of community-based education are self-selection, relevance to local conditions, reconnecting family members to each other, to other families, to the community, and to nature using innovative non-traditional teaching methods outside the box of the classroom.



In a recent e-mail to us, Christina wrote, "Community based education is an integral part of my belief system, because I've seen it work. The common sense curriculum, real-life experiences, along with empowerment and teach-backs all are key to true understanding. Without the basic knowledge of life skills needed to become productive, students who are not native to the US or without the English language will never be successful." Visit their website at www.neighborhoodlink.com/Global_Butterfly 🌐

We're on **facebook.**

Social websites are so common place that many RTC-TH fans kept asking why we don't have a *Facebook* page. After much foot dragging and reluctance to take on more web work, an RTC-TH volunteer stepped up to the plate and offered to do the work for us.

Member "Nat88" as listed on the RTC-TH members page (aka Nata-Lee in our volunteer family) is a former student of Mr. Lee's GEOG 1 class. She became an avid supporter of community-based education, the Geographic Systems Model, and the educational methods used by the RTC-TH.



A Facebook presence gives us the potential to reach a larger audience. A *Facebook* page is readily accessible to all members. (Membership is free.) Getting to any particular page can be done via direct search or by interconnections of people you know who join or connect to the page leading you to that page.

Rather than re-invent the wheel, Nata-Lee cross links postings on the RTC-TH *Facebook* pages to the original articles and pages of the RTC-TH website. She hopes to post many more photos of the farm on *Facebook* as a means to create more interest among visitors. So if you already have a *Facebook* account, please join our page. If not, please consider getting a free *Facebook* membership. Also, please tell any of your friends and family to visit and join our *Facebook* page by either using the URL below or searching *Facebook* for us.



Visit our facebook page.



Half way around the world, "Nata-Lee" is an active RTC-TH volunteer administering the Facebook page

http://www.facebook.com/pages/Rural-Training-Center-Thailand-RTC-Thailand/187542674783?v=app_2347471856#!/pages/Rural-Training-Center-Thailand-RTC-Thailand/187542674783?v=wall

Cross-Cultural Cactus Chef



A normally thorny plant can be served as food!

Cactus is normally a plant to avoid. But when Jaime Aquilera (an RTC-TH volunteer) came to teach English in Thailand, he was delighted to find his favorite food waiting for him. He thought he would miss this traditional Mexican dish. So when he saw this cactus growing in our yard, he made plans to treat us to a new adventure.

Most of the time, we tended to keep away from this plant. But Jaime delighted us with a couple of ways to enjoy this delicious “new vegetable.” It can be diced and boiled with some garlic, the drained and cooled and mixed with onions, tomatoes and cilantro. Or it can be grilled with a little salt. 🌐



Removing the spines and washing is the start.



Slicing, dicing and boiling are one way to cook it.



Jaime and Saifon trying grilled cactus leaf...yummy!



A new cactus leaf vegetable side dish on our table