

knowledge ... (from) how we grow food, to policy, to culture and society as a whole. Every aspect of my life has been touched by my time here.”

One of AVI’s programs, the Urban Farm School, trains people of all ages and experience levels to become food independent (an important skill in the face of GMOs, food insecurity, obesity, and urban food deserts). Students learn to grow food; but more importantly, they learn to build resilient food systems in urban environments and beyond.

This 25-week program is an intentional, community collaboration, bringing together 50 experts in each field, both local and global leaders, who guide hands-on projects that benefit the city of Asheville. “The city is our campus, and the projects help to make it a real, integrative living village,” continues Janelle.

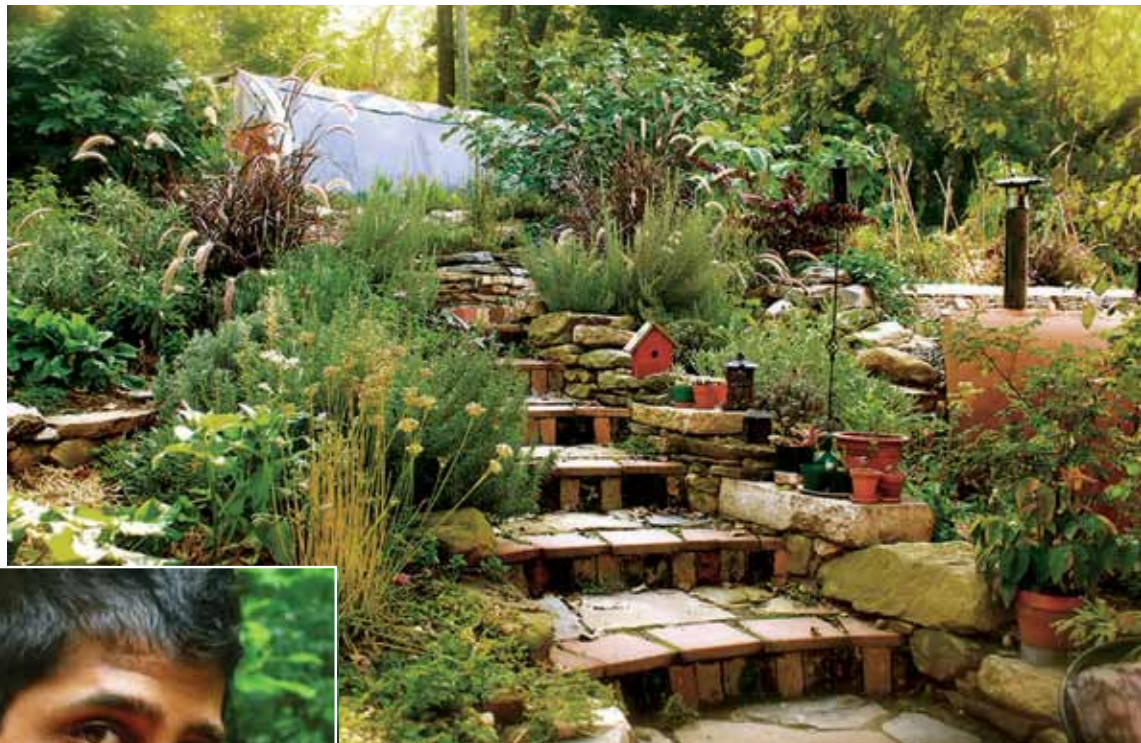
One part of the Urban Farm School, as well as a stand-alone program, is the Wise Water School. As communities face floods, drought, pollution, storm-water runoff, and other water-related issues, the school is a resource for those wanting to contribute to creating replicable, scalable, healthy freshwater systems in their communities.

One great example of this program is in AVI’s own backyard. Originally a crack house and junkyard located in downtown Asheville, it is now a thriving, living system, with food, beauty, and a 30,000-gallon, gravity-fed rainwater pond system. “It inspires people to do things like this in their own backyard,” Janelle says. She goes on to talk about “greening the campus” programs in which universities and schools, some of the biggest landowners in the United States, implement similar water systems on a larger scale.

AVI recently hosted the Whole Earth Summit, a first-time gathering of extraordinary activists and on-the-

ground leaders. It included Bill McKibben, Ocean Robbins, founders of the Pachamama Alliance, Bioneers, Small Planet Institute, and 42 other global leaders sharing what they are up to, why it is important, and how individuals can contribute to important issues such as food, water, community, regenerative living, and social transformation. Part of the Summit’s purpose was to “inspire people so they can rock it out locally,” says Janelle, “to be empowered in designing and choosing lives that are more connected to the natural world.”

Another opportunity to get involved in this growing



sustainability movement is AVI’s Natural Building Extravaganza (NBX) that will be held July 26–August 2. It offers a smorgasbord of hands-on workshops, classes, and presentations on how to make beautiful,

affordable, natural dwellings using local clay, sand, straw, bamboo, and other abundant and salvaged materials.

“While not everyone will end up building a mud house,” says Janelle, “these workshops bring together international visionaries, local teachers, and participants to inspire community and home projects while fostering stronger communities.”

*For more information about NBX, Whole Earth Summit, the Urban Farm School, and other programs visit [ashevillage.org](http://ashevillage.org).*