

Space Is The Place*

a pre postmortem

Hindsight is 20-20 the saying goes. Our experience in Eatonville this summer is proof positive. In spite of it all, I'm more committed to "*Space Is The Place*" than ever before.

When I took WSU up on their generous offer to assist me in implementing a field trial of my design I took on the responsibility to make it happen. To me, a retired software guy, I was the de facto Project Manager. Looking back I dropped the ball.

- We got a late start without all of the seeds in hand.
- Hunter & Reich Farms have changed their business model. We were moved to a new plot, not returning to the field used the last 3 years. Silly me, I didn't go out and inspect the plot before planting day.
- The new area hasn't been farmed for years, no cover crop, no drip lines, starting from scratch.
- This year's plot lacks drip irrigation. A single sprinkler on a tripod covers half the field, the other half being dry farmed. Not ideal in the Age of Global Burning. "Climate Change" is past tense; it's already the new norm.
- I've learned that growing for data collection is different from growing for a flower harvest or bulk fiber. My original design was too granular and detailed for the scenario in Eatonville. Now I know.

The good news is that when Zachary at the USDA Hemp Germplasm Repository learned about "*Space Is The Place*" he shared all the growth data that has passed through the USDA. This means a.) I don't have to grow my own data and b.) we can begin building more hemp agronomic software tools right now.

Speaking of hemp tools, I'm building hemp harvest tools that I hope to use when we harvest. A partner in Ohio has worked from the other end of the workflow and built a break/decorticator. The video is impressive and I just mailed him hemp stalks to test with.

Over the last couple of months I've honed my hemp paper making skills much to the delight of every artist I've shared with. Textiles have always been high on my list and I recently had the opportunity to take hackled bast to a friend's house. Diane tried to spin bast into yarn with mixed results even when she blended it with wool or cotton. The yarn had too little internal integrity to be spun. On the drive home it occurred to me that I over processed the bast. There was a fork in the road I sped right past. I removed too much lignin and inadvertently some of the hemicellulose and cellulose as well. Paper making motivates me to deconstruct the bast as much as possible (pectin, lignin, hemicellulose, cellulose). From now on I'll be more selective about what I'm removing and how. There's one way for paper and another technique for textiles.

Parallel to the above, I've started playing with making hemp plastic. My first efforts were embarrassingly ugly but friends urged me to save the results. The LeBlanc CNE team has grown and I have a meeting with our resident chemist later today to discuss her approach to cellulose as a polymer building block.
#fingerscrossed

Lastly I've now had the pleasure of working with Neo, Carmagnolia, and generic CBD/CBG stems. Carmagnolia continues to impress me. Its fiber is naturally light color without bleaching resulting in beautiful paper. It's coarser than most bast I've played with and I have high hopes that when I process the last bit I have it will spin and weave. Surprise, surprise it also has this luxurious feel to it. The bast is like wool with the lanolin still in it.

I'm sorry but the Eatonville plot is a bust with regards to harvesting data à la "*Space Is The Place*". I hope the WSU plot(s) will yield data that I can fold into our data pool. I'd love to come over and see the WSU plots soon to get a visual on what "*Space Is The Place*" should look like.

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