

Community Garden Roundtable Notes
Ecology Action Boardroom
Weds. August 19, 2009
Organized by NSEN and the Urban Garden Project-EAC

Agenda:

Introductions
Presentations
Bloomfield Tour
Discusson
Announcements & Closing

Discussion Questions:

1. What's happening?
2. What are barriers or challenges?
3. What would we like to see/what do we need?
4. What are our next steps?

Presentation Points & General Discussion:

Powerpoint presentation by Kathy Aldous, Program Coordinator, Dr. Arthur Hines Elementary School Garden in Summerville: <http://www.novanewsnow.com/article-i343946-Lifes-lessons-blossom-in-an-edible-garden.html>

Ecology Action Centre's Urban Garden Project – research will be conducted and presentations given this fall. Garity is introduced as a garden support staff for everyone and encourages folks to give her a call or drop by her office to let her know what you are up to, or ask for any support you may need. Ph: 442-1077 email: garity@ecologyaction.ca

She also encourages folks to use the Halifax Garden Network website to foster discussion, post garden events and new garden spaces throughout HRM. www.HalifaxGardenNetwork.com

Landshare Project, is an interactive, online map to help gardeners look for land to meet folks with land to spare! Find the map here: <http://www.ecologyaction.ca/content/halifax-landshare>

Goodness Grows, 26 Elliot St., Dartmouth, a new community garden at the Findlay Centre in Dartmouth. <http://www.halifaxnewsnet.ca/index.cfm?sid=257375&sc=608>

Healthy Schools Initiative and nutritionists want to promote school gardens

Peninsula Urban Garden Society (PUGS)
<http://pugs.chebucto.org/>

Ideas of things we'd like to see

- Garden blog and discussion forum
- Compost & soil factories or co-ops
- Greenhouse that is publicly accessible/available
- Tool lending library
- Seedling exchange to trade extra transplants
- Supportive bureaucracy
- Food storage systems and information, root cellars
- To know what are community garden best practices in other jurisdictions
- Better communication between garden projects and leaders
- Organizational support for community garden associations
- Funding database both provincial and federal
- Library administered tool lending system
- Access to farmers' markets and collective tables for small urban food producers
- Garden free store at the Halifax Farmers Market
- Metal working to repair and re-use tools
- Community garden at the mainland north site in Clayton Park
- A garden in every school
- Screenings of the film "The Garden"
- Community garden symposium
- Partnerships with the community colleges and agricultural college
- Vision to have a garden in every school
- Make sure that community garden work is accessible to everyone
- Water catchment systems, access to city water
- Access to compost
- Corporate donations of material

What's Next Ideas for Next Steps:

Summit meeting on Sept. 2 from 7-9pm at the Women's Council House (corner of South St. and Young St.)

Meeting on Sunday, Sept. 27 from 10am-12pm at Windhorse Farm with tour of incredible garden and luncheon with Minister of Environment (there is a charge for lunch)

Social marketing campaign to promote community gardens

Urban Farm Museum Harvest Fair on Sept. 13

Go North Tour (Halifax North End) with stops at the north end community gardens on Sept. 12

Acadia Community Garden Symposium on November 6 & 7: *The Farm in Education: Growing Food in Curriculum, Growing Curriculum in Food.*

Everyone needs food; everyone loves to eat it. Increasingly the food we are consuming is what Michael Pollan calls "edible food like substances." It has not always been that way - how do we get our real food back?

Food systems profoundly influence all facets of our lives, including the health, environment, economy and overall well-being of our communities and our ecologies. The recent industrialization of our food system has transformed the way we interact with our food. Despite the importance of decisions made about food and the vast implications associated with those decisions, how we choose to consume our food and what kinds of food we choose to consume are not often considered in an academic setting.

The potential to transform our relationships with our food exists. In fact, many would argue that transforming and strengthening these relationships is absolutely fundamental in order to create and sustain a healthy planet and society. We live in fluctuating, fragile ecologies and our current industrialized food system operates in ways that deny this reality. Consequently, a shift towards an ecologically aware learning - one that is grounded in practical wisdom - has become necessary. The potential for this kind of shift to happen is exciting because it represents an opportunity to challenge and transform the way we think about food and our current food system.

The North American University is well-suited for the task of restoring priority to ecological awareness in part because relationships between food and learning were once essential to institutional sustainability. As new Universities established themselves throughout North America during the 18th and 19th centuries, physical labor on a campus farm was an unquestioned component of every students' life: the fact that *food must be grown to feed ones' community* was an accepted reality. In other words, we academics used to be collaborators embedded in the production of our own food. Over time, we became separated from this particular spin on the pursuit of higher learning and today corporations orchestrate the cultivation of the foods that fill the bellies of University students. Food and farms have lost the centrality that used to be afforded to them as globalized production and distribution systems have rendered the campus farm obsolete. What better place to begin the shift back to an integrated agricultural and educational model than the space where it once had historical precedence: the university?

On a general level, this conference seeks to explore the ways in which connections can be formed between farming and education, and to investigate the potential for these connections to provide sites where our food systems can be reconsidered, as we believe it to be structurally weak, ecologically

unresponsive, and threatened by emergent conditions, such as climate change. Above all, this conference aims to consider ways that our food systems can be transformed into more resilient systems that nourish both social and ecological communities regarded as one.

On a more specific level, how can the University and the Farm interact and be transformed through their mutual encounter? Schools, colleges, universities, farms, community gardens, urban agricultural networks, markets, grocery stores, and the dinner table are all sites through which to consider these burgeoning links. How can rethinking these spaces in terms of adaptability, sustainability, reflexivity and community resilience better address the contemporary shortcomings of our modern food system?

We live in fluctuating, fragile ecologies and our nutritive and metabolic dependence on ecology must be seriously considered. What better way to do so, than through a deeper consideration of food, and what better way to deeply consider food, than to educate about food, by doing food?

We are seeking submissions of research and ideas for three specific workshop streams:

1) Curricular Integration - How can the study of food and food systems be incorporated into curriculum? How can educators and students better use their resources to promote a symbiotic relationship between the University and the Farm?

2) Research - In what ways can researchers cut into the overlapping sites of the University and the Farm? What are the different ways that researchers can consider and conceptualize food and food systems, so as to enable a more ecologically aware and socially responsible community model?

3) Building Community Capacity - What strategies and tactics can be employed within and between the University and the Farm to mobilize individuals and communities in order to initiate a dramatic transformation of our modern food system?