

Mike & Roxie's Vegetable Paradise

Adventures in Kansas City Gardening

Props to the Get Growing KC campaign

April 8, 2012 by roxiemike

The local food movement continues to gain momentum. People who've never grown their own fruits and vegetables want to get their hands in the dirt. And who can blame them with this weather we've been having.

Trouble is, many of them don't know how to go about it.

That was the idea behind "Mike and Roxie's Vegetable Paradise," the book project that was the genesis for this blog. But while our handy how-to was aimed at the individual home gardeners, we didn't address the ins and outs of starting a community garden. Nor did it occur to us to write a handbook on how to set up a full-scale urban farm — maybe because we don't have that kind of experience to pass on.

However, this week I stumbled upon a fairly new organization in metro Kansas City that specializes in helping folks start community gardens and urban farms called Get Growing KC.



Not exactly stumbled upon. They sent a press release to my work email at The Star announcing the 15 projects that would be receiving the second-round of grants from Get Growing KC. Among them, \$3,000 so an urban farm operating in the Marlborough neighborhood can buy a

used tractor and \$450 to a community garden that wants to install a drip irrigation system.

The grants are funded by the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City, which is doing a lot of great things around town. The next deadline for applications is in August and...well, that's getting ahead of ourselves. Before one could even begin to apply for a grant to improve the availability of fresh produce in urban food deserts (one of the group's main aims) it might be helpful to know a little bit about growing food.

That's the part I wanted to pass along, since Roxie and I run into a number of people thinking about setting up a community garden.

I followed up on the press release and learned that Get Growing KC is a two-year campaign that grew out of a partnership between Kansas City Community Gardens, Lincoln University Extension and Cultivate Kansas City, formerly the Center for Urban Agriculture.

Team members from the various groups put on workshops aimed at helping gardeners/farmers start and manage their spreads. A 3-hour workshop on setting up and managing a community garden covers everything from site selection and construction to day-to-day management.

The one on urban farming is broken into two sessions (not sure how long) and covers the gamut: planning, planting, harvesting, as well marketing and business management.

More important to those of us who are already off and running, as it were, is they're another resource that we can call or email when we need advice or questions answered on garden-related matters.

For questions about sick tomato plants and what to spray for this bug or that, the Master Gardener's hotline is still your best bet. But these folks advertise themselves as being more about the bigger picture.

So whether you're part of a church or community group that wants to set up a combination garden/farmer's market, or just want to set up a garden in your back yard, you can call them at 816-226-7979, or email at info@getgrowingkc.org.