



Juniper Gardens Training Farm -- A Project of Cultivate KC

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"The Urban Farmer As..."

Urban farmers are ready to fill gaps left by health care providers.

Over the next few issues of Urban Grown, I will be writing a series of articles focusing on the unique roles that a community-based, urban farmer can play. Roles such as community-based health educator &



Gibbs Road Farm Manager Alicia Ellingsworth (I) shares cooking how-to's with a customer at market.

advocate; gardening specialist & educator; and small business leader. These roles are not specific to urban farmers, of course, but over the years, I've seen some differences in the way urban farmers can perform these roles, perhaps because they live in the same community as their customers and are a more accessible and regular presence in their neighborhood.

By Katherine Kelly, Cultivate KC Executive Director

Here's what it says on the National Cancer Institute's website: "Serious diseases that are linked to what we eat kill an estimated three out of four Americans each year. These diseases include heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, some types of cancer, and diabetes. Eating a diet that contains 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day as part of a healthy, active lifestyle lowers the risk for all of these diseases."

Let's start discussing the urban farmer's role as health educator and advocate by asking a couple of questions

of those of you who are farmers. How often do you see your customers? Do you know which of your customers have or are recovering from cancer or diabetes or heart disease? How often do you have conversations about the nutritional value of your veggies?

And how often do you have a conversation that looks something like this:

Farmer (smiling big): "Hi, there! Is this your first time to the market?" **Customer** (looking hesitatingly at vegetables): "Yes, I've decided to try and eat healthier." **Farmer**: "Well, we've got some really tasty (insert vegetable)." **Customer** (looking terrified): "I don't even know what that vegetable is!"

These days, a lot of what is driving people to shop at farmers markets are health concerns. As farmers, if we pay attention and ask questions, we'll find opportunities to help people eat better that don't exist for some providers in the "real" health care system. For example:

Regularity: Our goal as farmers is to get the customers to come to market every single week. We want them to think of going to market a little bit like going to church--you go every week, you get motivated, and you head out into the world newly inspired. And when we have that relationship with them, we get to know something about our customers over the years and we begin to care about them. We become part of our customer's support network as they move, mouthful by mouthful, towards greater dietary health. How many health care professionals have that kind of a direct relationship with their patients?

A passion for good food: We want our customers to like--no, to love--the good food we grow. If they come back and say "Oh, those purple carrots were kind of tough," we respond with "You know, those carrots really are better cooked" and then we launch into a recipe. If we're growing a new vegetable, we introduce them "Customer, meet purple potato. Purple potato, meet customer," and help our customers try this unusual (and highly nutritious) spud. We get to know the customer's likes, dislikes, and cooking styles and we help them broaden their palates and their knowledge over time.

A network of support and enthusiasm: Most urban farmers understand that people want and need community. At the farmers' market we create activities that help people linger, chat, do a little dance to the live music. We set out tables, bring in chefs and encourage sampling. We turn one customer to another and invite them to share their favorite ways to cook this or that vegetable. We build community.

The plus to this is that, in no way, shape or form do these interactions resemble a doctor's clinic, a nutritional counseling session, or the basic uncomfortableness of being told to lose weight or eat better or cut back on the French fries while wearing nothing but a paper gown. In creating this kind of positive energy around eating more fruits and veggies, we are health advocates, helping people see that changing your diet doesn't mean deprivation and loneliness, it means good rich flavors and a nice community of people.

Here are some ways we as farmers can become better in our role as health educators and advocates: (1) Ask "What made you decide to change your diet?" when the new customer shows up. Open the door for a real conversation. (2) Grow a mix of vegetable colors and types and promote the heck out of them. Your customers' diets will be a lot more interesting (and healthy). (3) Help them eat more of the especially nutritious food. "Customer! Good to see you! I set aside some of the reddest red peppers for you. I just read that red peppers are higher in Vitamin C than oranges. Who knew?" (4) Care about their health struggles: "How is your treatment going? I was thinking about you yesterday when I was harvesting herbs. Let me give you some of this parsley--it'll make you hungry just smelling it." (5) take time to check out the current health news (what dietary advice is Doctor Oz giving?) and to grasp the basics of how fruits and vegetables offer specific health benefits (dark colors are good, eat a mix of colors, eat from different veggie families). We can pay attention, learn, and use our knowledge and experience to promote the simple practice of eating well and living healthier.

At the market, take a few seconds and look around at the life you've helped create in this space. Customers are smelling herbs, hefting a melon in their hands, talking to other customers. Farmers are

laughing, refilling empty baskets, squatting down eye to eye with the toddler who just grabbed the biggest carrot on the table.

Everyone looks glad to be alive. And, if that isn't health, what is?

Reach Katherine at katherine@cultivatekc.org.

A Farm Bill For The City?

Though urban ag hardly figures in massive farm and food legislation, some provisions do benefit urban farmers.



Mary Hendrickson, Ph.D.

By Mary Hendrickson, University of Missouri Extension

Every five years a ritual of the American political process occurs with few Americans paying any attention. Yet this process shapes a basic necessity of our life: What food gets produced, what food gets sold, what food gets distributed is influenced by this enormously important legislation. It provides farmers incentives to grow certain crops like corn, wheat or soybeans and, at least in the Midwest, discourages the planting and harvesting of others. It supplies nutritional assistance to one out of every five Americans. It encourages agricultural practices that conserve soil and protect biodiversity. What is this largely unknown, murky political process that has such an impact on our ability to lead healthy lives? It's the Farm Bill, of course, and it is getting more important for urban growers all the time.

The Farm Bill has moved through Congress – sometimes quickly, most times slowly, sometimes secretly, often contentiously but always regularly – since the first Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. That first Farm Bill stabilized Depression farm prices and kept farmers on the land. It created a historic partnership between farm state Congressmen and urban legislators seeking food assistance for their needy citizens. Today the Farm Bill consists of 15 separate titles that make possible everything from organic research and conservation farming to food stamps (now known as Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program or SNAP). However, over 90% of the spending goes to just four of the titles, Crop Insurance, Commodity Payments, Conservation and Nutrition Assistance. In fact the latter accounted for just over three-quarters of actual expenditures in 2010.

With figures like that, why are we still calling it a Farm Bill and not a Food Bill? And if less than one-quarter of spending goes toward farming, then what could possibly be in the Farm Bill for urban agriculture, especially since advocates for urban agriculture are almost always out-muscled by more traditional farming organizations trying to protect the interests of their members?

The good news is that a tiny portion of the money spent in the Farm Bill is doing great things for urban farmers. Since the 2008 Farm Bill passed, the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has provided financial assistance to farmers – rural or urban – to construct high-tunnels that can extend farmers' seasons and help their bottom line. Funded through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), farmers using high tunnels also protect the environment by reducing the energy used to provide fresh local produce. Furthermore, high tunnels can also improve soil and plant quality. Urban farmers in cities like Cleveland and Kansas City have received assistance to install high-tunnels.

The Farm Bill has also provided a big boost for urban growers by supporting farmers' markets through various programs. SNAP recipients provide sales to urban farmers markets, but accepting SNAP benefits requires that farmers have access to so-called EBT machines to process these benefits electronically. The [U.S. Department of Agriculture announced in May](#) this year it is making \$4 million in grant dollars available to markets across the country to help cover setup costs necessary to make SNAP transactions possible. In Missouri, dollars from the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, a Farm Bill program, helped markets purchase EBT machines and brought farmers new customers. In Kansas, the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides qualifying seniors special coupons to use only at farmers' markets. Another program, the Farmers' Market Promotion Program, helps fund projects to draw more customers to

farmers' markets. For example, it is being used in Columbia, MO, to subsidize a city bus route that services the farmers' market. In Kansas City, the [Beans&Greens](#) program matches SNAP benefits at some local markets, essentially doubling the amount of fresh food families can buy. These Farm Bill supported programs benefit urban growers by increasing the number of customers and the amount of money customers have to spend at urban markets.

Something you've probably noticed are the acronyms that are sprinkled throughout this article. Don't let this alphabet soup intimidate your participation in the important legislative process that is the Farm Bill. There's no better time to be involved in advocating for urban agriculture because the 2008 Farm Bill expires this year. The pieces of legislation that will make up the 2012 Farm Bill are currently moving through Congress. We may have a new Farm Bill before the elections, which is vitally important to keep critical Farm Bill programs operating smoothly.

It's easy to make your voice heard. First, check out the great resources that demystify the Farm Bill, like the [Farm Bill Visualizer](#) available from Johns Hopkins University, or the [Grassroots Guide to the Farm Bill](#) available from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. Then contact your Congressperson, write a letter to the editor and alert your friends to support Farm Bill programs that are important for urban agriculture. This way you can help make this a Farm Bill that supports urban agriculture.

Reach Mary at HendricksonM@missouri.edu.

Transforming Urban Ag Into Fertile Ground For Entrepreneurs

Some pieces have yet to fall into place for urban ag's potential to become reality.

Edwin Marty has studied ethnobotany, is the former assistant garden editor for Southern Living magazine and current executive director of the [Hampstead Institute](#) in Montgomery, AL. An experienced urban farmer, Marty has recently co-authored Breaking Through Concrete, a look at successful urban farming programs around the country. Marty will visit Kansas City later this month to talk about his book (see the event listing in the Calendar section below for details). In this special contribution to Urban Grown, Marty puts the urban agriculture movement in perspective and suggests that profitability is now the key to its further expansion.



Growing vegetables in American cities, once a necessity, is again gaining in popularity, but will it generate enough profits to sustain itself?

By Edwin Marty, Hampstead Institute

Sprawling urban farms cover acres of rooftops across Germany. Cities in Africa are seeing sustainable farm projects muscle their way into the urban fabric. In Asia urban agriculture is seen as one of the only viable mechanisms for long-term food security. And here in America, urban farming has gained tremendous popularity in the last few years. However, the roots of this movement are actually as deep as the history of cities themselves.

Before the advent of modern transportation and refrigeration, the vast majority of fresh food was produced on urban farms. It really wasn't until the mid-1900's that farmers had the opportunity to move their farms away from cities, utilizing railroads to ship their products more than the 25 miles a day previously available with the use of horse-drawn carts. Farmers quickly took advantage of this technology and began searching for cheap fertile land with access to water. They were no longer directly tied to a local market and therefore could prioritize farming on land with better growing conditions instead of proximity to a dense population center. The advantage to farmers was obvious and in a short

time urban farms were a thing of the past. By the 1950's, farms in American cities had all but disappeared, with only a handful of community gardens left behind to provide direct food access for lower-income communities.

A similar shift occurred in Europe during this time-frame with one notable exception. Instead of completely abandoning their agricultural heritage, most European cities developed green space circling the urban core that provided residents with space for personal food production. Called allotment gardens in England, these spaces became institutionalized and have withstood the transformation of the modern food system. Conversely in America, urban farms and community gardens have been only viewed as short-term solutions to social crises, such as economic depressions or war. As soon as the social unrest passed, the urban gardens were abandoned in favor of more urban development. This process is well documented in Laura Lawson's book *City Bountiful* and provides a clear picture of the ebb and flow of interest in urban farming in America over the last 150 years.

Fortunately for the modern American urban farming movement, a couple of notable trends are pushing cities to embrace a more holistic and sustainable approach to the development of urban farming. While there can be no argument that the modern food system has provided Americans with the cheapest most abundant food in the world, this access has been completely built upon cheap fossil fuels. As we grapple with the realities of a future without cheap fuel, it's widely agreed that 're-localizing' our food system must be part of the answer. And urban farming is clearly a perfect answer. Simultaneously, there is clear recognition that we are in the midst of a dietary-related disease epidemic in America. Much of this has its roots in the increased consumption of processed foods. Urban farms directly increase the availability of fresh healthy food to the urban population and again provide a clear solution to this health issue.

With the increased awareness of the long-term advantages of a sustained and institutionalized urban farming movement, a couple of pieces must still fall into place for the movement's potential to become a reality. The last decade has seen an explosion of interest in urban farming, but the vast majority of the projects have been in the non-profit realm. This was perhaps essential for the development of the movement, providing urban farm projects with access to start-up capital from non-profit foundations. But to move forward and for the impact to actually be felt in the average American home, there must be an increase in for-profit urban farms with a clear opportunity for people to make money. Three basic issues need to be addressed to create the foundation for this transition.

Access to capital

Traditional farms use their land as leverage to buy equipment and cover annual operating costs. Urban farmers rarely own their own land and are therefore not able to use it to capitalize a farm. Across America, urban farms are 'under-capitalized' and often not able to buy appropriate technology or scale-up to achieve profitability. Non-traditional systems for providing monetary resources to start-up urban farms must appear.

Access to technical urban farm knowledge

With the disappearance of vocational education in most secondary schools, there is not a clear avenue for potential urban farmers to learn the trade. Additionally, only a handful of two-year colleges provide any urban farm training. Degree tracks in urban agriculture are needed in secondary and post-secondary education.

Access to knowledge about urban farm business models

While money and the technical skills to produce crops are essential for an urban farm to succeed, they will only become sustained components of our communities if they are financially successful. There are currently only a handful of replicable business models for urban agriculture. Small Space Intensive agriculture (SPIN) is a good start but needs to be complemented with a wide range of scalable options.

If these issues are addressed, the landscape of our urban areas could be quickly transformed into fertile ground for the next generation of American entrepreneurs. And there are good examples for us to follow. Havana, Cuba, reportedly produces 80 percent of the fresh fruits and vegetables consumed in Havana.

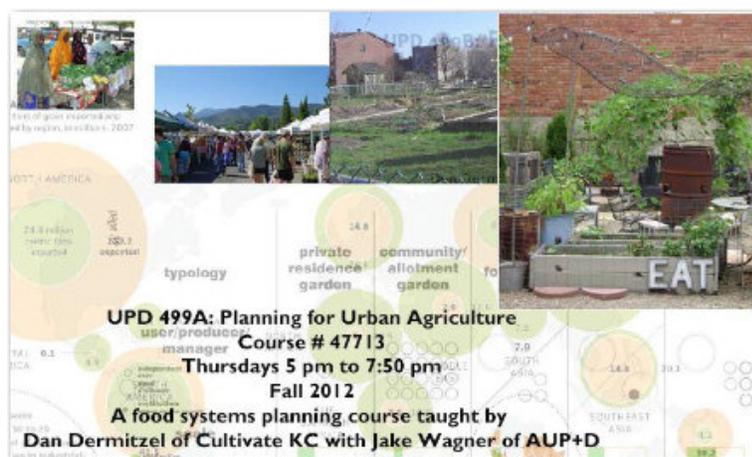
Imagine what a city in America would look like if it produced even a small percentage of that much food? But can these changes happen without a catastrophe forcing urban areas to embrace them, like what happened with the Cuban embargo? The pieces are all waiting to be arranged. With increased demand for urban-produced products and more support from public policy-makers, this urban farm movement can make the future a healthier place for all.

Reach Edwin at edwin@hampsteadinstitute.org.

UMKC To Offer *Planning for Urban Agriculture* Again In Fall 2012

Course introduces students to the policy and design of urban agriculture.

The UMKC Department of Architecture, Urban Planning and Design seeks to educate young leaders who can address the urban challenge of the 21st Century. Through partnerships with community organizations, such as Cultivate Kansas City, the department seeks to support local nonprofits and promote a healthier and more sustainable region. Every semester department faculty and students engage with neighborhoods and communities. Over the past ten years they have completed more than 40 community-based projects in urban planning, architecture, and urban design. Cultivate KC is grateful to the department for its continuing support of urban agriculture and its commitment to educating the urban planning and design community on this subject.



By Jake Wagner, University of Missouri, Kansas City

This fall Cultivate KC's Daniel Dermitzel will join me for the third time to offer the course "Planning for Urban Agriculture" in UMKC's Department of Architecture, Urban Planning and Design. The course provides an introduction to food systems planning and design for students in a variety of academic disciplines. The goal of the course is to train a new generation of leaders who can advocate for urban agriculture and a more sustainable food system in Kansas City and beyond.

Food systems are increasingly recognized as a necessary and vital component of regional planning. The notion that agricultural land uses should be segregated to fields well beyond the city limits is seen by many as obsolete. How exactly to re-introduce food production into the fabric of our cities, however, remains a challenge for cities everywhere.

Planners and urban designers can play important roles in urban food systems development. Planners can work to change city codes to better address and support small-scale food production in the urban context. Landscape architects, architects and urban designers can work to design site-specific food system interventions. Community planners can provide important research and analysis in support of long-term, systematic changes that will make cities more amenable to an alternative food system. Environmental planners can integrate food production with natural resource conservation and watershed planning to address water and soil quality as well as run-off retention. Transportation planners can help by analyzing where people live and how they can access fresh food with public transportation.

In the past decade, research publications focused on urban planning and food systems have grown exponentially across many fields of urban studies. This blossoming of research is evidence of the emerging alternative food system and the need to re-tool public policies to better address urban and peri-urban food production. The course explores this rapidly growing area of research in an effort to build a broad cohort of graduates who understand and promote urban agriculture. Students who have taken the

class have gone on to work in the local food system with a more holistic sense of the challenges for urban food production.

UPD 499A: Planning for Urban Agriculture will be taught Thursday evenings at UMKC. Students will investigate all aspects of food systems planning using the concept of a pattern language for urban agriculture. Supplementing the curriculum will be a group of guest lecturers from various disciplines. In past years this group included among others Dr. Mary Hendrickson of the University of Missouri, Kevin Anderson of Missouri Organic, Beth Low of the Greater KC Food Policy Coalition and Laura Adams of Black and Veatch.

A final project is assigned that encourages students to conduct original research and explore food system planning and design. Students will visit the Cultivate KC farm at Gibbs Road and participate in at least one work session at a local farm. Farmers who are interested in working with the UMKC students this fall should contact Daniel Dermitzel at Cultivate KC (daniel@cultivatekc.org). People who are interested in taking the course are encouraged to call me at 816-235-6053 to discuss enrollment options.

Reach Jake at wagnerjaco@umkc.edu.

Field News From The Gibbs Road Farm

Farming is plan and plant, then study, revise, plan again and plant again.



Fillet beans ready for harvest at Gibbs Road Farm.

By Alicia Ellingsworth, Gibbs Road Farm Manager

On a production farm, our work is all about planning, practice, refinement and diligence. I've written about some of the essential tools for planning in previous editions of *Urban Grown*, like the production plan and field map. This time I write specifically examining the importance of succession plantings.

Having a continual supply of lettuce, roots, beans, summer squash--and sometimes even tomatoes--to sell depends on careful planning. The importance of succession planning becomes strongly self evident when we have such variability in our seasons as we have had this spring. Without careful succession planning we

would not have harvested our first fillet beans on May 25 this year. Good planning includes studying the experts, observing other local growers' habits and watching the weather patterns.

The early-harvested fillet beans were seeded into the field on March 29, which is about three weeks before the last frost date. Planting early is risky with a tender crop, but it is rewarding should you get lucky. Last year we recorded that planting beans early proved successful and so we planned for an early planting again this year. This early planting will provide a good harvest for about a month. About the time the early planting is finished, the next planting seeded on April 20 should be producing, thus preventing gaps in production. We will follow this succession pattern throughout the season until we seed our last two bean beds. Remembering last autumn's beautiful weather, we expect the first frost might come a little late again this year, so we plan to seed in late August and will hope for more luck.

We record and compare observations for future reference. Refinement is important as we compare year to year. As the weather fluctuates, we take notice. As we put the production plan together in January, we wade through budget expectations as well as piles of notes and memories, and lists of harvest records and first market dates. Record keeping aids our refinement as do practice, gut-feeling and conversations

with other growers.

As you think about your field or garden, think of it in not only in the traditional three dimensions of space, but add to your thinking the fourth dimension of time. Think about your early crops and the space they hold as well as the duration of time they hold that space. Clearing away a finished crop provides space and when you till it in right away you also free up that space sooner and get additional use from the bed. For example, at the Gibbs Road Farm the spinach we seeded on March 19 has been tilled in to provide room for a new planting of summer squash the last week of May. The squash will produce until it gives way to one of the last bean beds in late August.

Carefully planned succession plantings can yield tremendous amounts of food on your market table if you stick to your plans. By studying the days to harvest in seed catalogs and by recording your own harvest dates, you will begin to refine your own plan for succession plantings. Begin to think not only about planting dates, but think about harvest dates. When you put a plan together for your garden, remember to account for all of the dimensions of the cycle of life. Remember to take the time to account for the depth and complexity of the season as you think about what might come next. It is never too late to begin planning to plant that seed. Your attention to these details will prove rewarding and fruitful.

Reach Alicia at alicia@cultivatekc.org.

Sharing The Language That Activates, Changes And Transforms Society

Photo exhibit aims to define principles of sustainable food system.



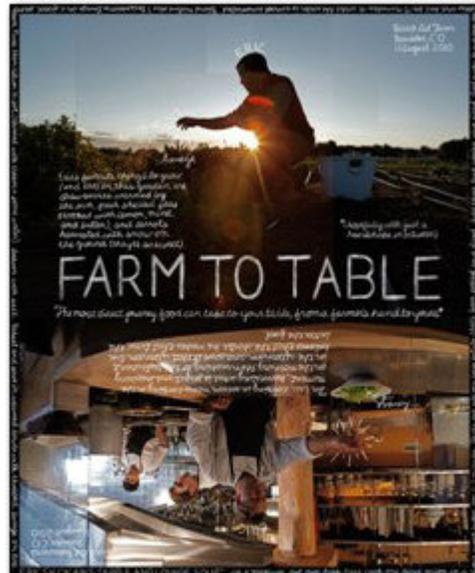
Novella Brown epitomizes the “urban farmer”, a term found in the Lexicon photo exhibit.

By Ami Freeberg, Cultivate KC Program Assistant

When I first saw the *Lexicon of Sustainability* at the Community Food Security Coalition's annual conference last fall, I was hooked. The images have remained in my mind and I knew I wanted to bring the work to Kansas City. I followed up online and applied for Cultivate Kansas City to curate its own "pop-up art show."

The *Lexicon of Sustainability* is a photography show being exhibited around the country. The show includes a series of 24 photos captured by Douglas Gayeton. Each image is overlaid with handwritten notes defining some of the basic principles in the emerging conversation about sustainable food.

For the past three years, photographers Douglas Gayeton and Laura Howard-Gayeton traveled all over the US to collect and learn this new language of sustainability from prominent leaders in food and farming. They wanted to meet the people who are leading the movement. They spoke with Alice Waters on edible schoolyards, Joel Salatin on embracing the value of saner farming practices, Vandana Shiva on the global imperative of protecting seeds, Will Allen on food security, and with nearly 200 others.



Photographers Douglas Gayeton and Laura Howard-Gayeton traveled all over the US to collect terms to include in their Lexicon of Sustainability.

“We are the first generation to realize that ours is not a world of infinite resources,” writes Douglas Gayeton, “And if we’re not careful, we’ll lose what we do have forever.”

The photographers translated the insights from their encounters into large-format photo collages, illustrating the vocabulary of sustainable agriculture with images of sustainable agriculture. They say they hope the *Lexicon of Sustainability* will serve to educate, engage and activate people to pay closer attention to how they eat, what they buy, and to where their responsibility begins for creating a healthier, safer food system.



Brookside Market customers enjoy a pop-up show hosted by Cultivate KC on May 5.

The collages are powerful and intriguing. When looking at the image of Novella Carpenter, urban farmer and author of *Farm City*, my eyes wander over the details: Carpenter, who’s run Ghost Town Farm in Oakland, CA, for more than ten years is surrounded by very industrial looking buildings on all sides and yet Gayeton definitely captures her defiant and organic spirit. The accompanying text raises the question of whether sustainability will be reserved for the well-to-do or can be inclusive of all. “Fifty percent of people,” Carpenter is quoted, “live in cities in places like my neighborhood. They’re never going to be able to afford local, organic, sustainably raised food.”

In another example, Gayeton joins two images to define the term “Farm to Table”. The top shows Eric of Black Cat Farm in Boulder, CO, harvesting lovage in the early morning sunlight. Flip the image over and you see Eric in a chef’s coat and apron tossing lovage on a salad at Black Cat Restaurant, also in Boulder. Scrawled across the photo Gayeton writes, “For Eric, cooking in season means cooking in the moment, harvesting what is perfect and inspiring in the morning then rushing to the restaurant in the afternoon and serve it that afternoon. Eric believes the shorter you make that time, the better the food.”

In another example, Gayeton joins two images to define the term “Farm to Table”. The top shows Eric of Black Cat Farm in Boulder, CO, harvesting

Cultivate KC hosted a first pop-up art show at the Brookside Farmers’ Market in May. Dozens of people stopped to engage with the photos, talk about them, point at them or turn their heads to read the text that outlines each image. One visitor, a physician, enjoyed the show so much that she asked how she could get a copy of the images to display in her waiting room. “I am constantly telling my patients to eat healthier food and these images might help get the message across,” she said.

Douglas Gayeton describes his work as sharing “a new symphony of voices, people with ideas that will change the way we think and live as we learn the *Lexicon of Sustainability*.”

Cultivate KC would like to share the *Lexicon of Sustainability* with more people in Kansas City this year. If you are interested in sharing this exhibit at your next event or in your community space, please contact me at the email below.

Reach Ami Freeberg at ami@cultivatekc.org.

First Annual Food Event Celebrates Local Food And Farming

Come support urban agriculture during an evening of local food, farmers and fun!



Event co-chairs Allison Harding (left) and Tiffany Lynch invite us to Dig In, KC! on Sept. 23, 2012

By Jill Erickson, Cultivate KC Development & Communications Director

Save the date! Cultivate Kansas City is hosting its first annual **Dig In, KC!** *A Dinner with Farmers & Friends*, on September 23, 2012 at the City Market. **Dig In, KC!** will be a celebration of the work Cultivate Kansas City does year round supporting food, farms and community for healthy lives, a strong local economy and a more sustainable future.

“In my heart I believe one of the biggest issues facing our nation is a lack of access for all people to locally grown healthy food,” shared long-time supporter and event co-chair Tiffany Lynch. “Cultivate KC works every day to close this gap. I am honored to help with this exciting event!”

Dig In, KC! will feature locally grown produce, live music, a farmers market and drinks and appetizers under the stars. The Farmhouse Executive Chef and General Manager Michael Foust along with other local chefs will prepare a family-style dinner using fresh, locally grown food. Prior to dinner, guests will have the unique experience of browsing local produce at the City Market at sunset while engaging

with the farmers that make it all happen.

“Connecting Kansas Citians with the farmers who grow their food is one of the most exciting aspects of this dinner,” explained Gwen Wurst, Chair of Cultivate Kansas City’s Board of Directors. “Attendees will be able to share a meal with farmers, sitting side by side, learning each farmer’s story.”

In addition to local food, farmers and chefs, the event will provide a unique opportunity for culinary students to work with farm to table chefs like Michael Foust to create and prepare the appetizers for the event. Tickets will be \$75 and will go on sale in mid-June.

“When I was introduced to Cultivate Kansas City, I realized that growing local, organic food has not only an impact on the health of local Kansas Citians, but a huge impact both environmentally and economically on our community,” said event co-chair Allison Harding. “Cultivate Kansas City is improving the lives for those in our city neighborhoods and making our community a more sustainable healthy place to live.”

Cultivate Kansas City would like to thank all of its sponsors--especially Service Management Group--who are helping to host this exciting community event.

“Kansas City is blessed with an extremely diverse group of urban farmers who have chosen to farm in our city for a variety of reasons from health, to environment to income,” said Wurst, adding that “each story is fascinating and part of the robust entrepreneurial spirit that makes Kansas City a wonderful place to live and eat!”

For more information about how to get involved please contact Jill Erickson at 913-601-5005 or jill@cultivatekc.org.

Refugees Start Urban Farm Businesses After Attending "Farm School"

Determination, skill and spirit pay for four women forced to leave everything behind.



New brands created by graduate farmers Dena Tu (top) Lay Htoo (left) and Beh Paw Gaw and Pay Lay (right).

By Rachel Pollock, New Roots for Refugees Program Manager

This spring, four refugee farmers moved off their 1/4 acre plots at the Juniper Gardens Training Farm in Kansas City, KS, and onto their own neighborhood farms. The farmers are the first "graduates" of the New Roots for Refugees program which began in 2008. The program is a collaboration between Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas and Cultivate Kansas City. Its goal is to support and train refugee growers to operate small farm businesses.

Running a small farm is complicated and it can take years to develop a reliable income stream. It is a constant dance with nature and with the changing forces of supply and demand. Additionally, refugee farmers face many other barriers to success, including learning a new language, mastering financial literacy, and finding transportation.

Farmer Lay Htoo graduated after only two years at the Juniper Gardens Training Farm and was recently able to purchase a home with land to farm. She chose the name "Karen Fresh Garden" for her new enterprise. Karen is the ethnic group from Burma to which Lay Htoo belongs. The logo she helped design features the sun of the Karen flag shining on green garden beds—two things that are very important to Lay Htoo. So far, she has tilled up more than a half acre for this season. She plans to sell her produce at the KCK Greenmarket at Juniper Gardens in 2012, and will likely return to the Overland Park Farmers' Market in 2013.

Sisters Beh Paw Gaw and Pay Lay graduated after spending three and four years respectively at the Juniper Gardens Training Farm. They, too, are new landowners, having purchased a 2.5 acre parcel in Kansas City, KS. There they are busy developing "Ki Koko Farms," which means "Two Sisters Farms" in Karen. Their logo has the face of the drum from the Karen flag along with vegetables popular in their homeland and in the US. They hope to grow a wide range of vegetables and plan to revive the apple trees on their site. In 2012 Pay Lay will be selling at the Brookside Farmers' Market and Beh Paw Gaw will be selling at the Overland Park Farmers' Market (both on Saturdays). The two sisters will also be selling at the KCK Greenmarket at Juniper Gardens this season.



Pay Lay building raised beds at the site of her new farm.

The fourth graduate is also Burmese Karen. Her name is Dena Tu and she graduated from the Juniper Gardens Training Farm after four years. In April she closed on a home that has a little over an acre of land for her to farm. She has branded her new farm business as "Mama Tu's Family Farm." She has been busy trimming trees and preparing her soil for planting this season. She will be selling at the Brookside Farmers' Market and the KCK Greenmarket at Juniper Gardens in 2012.

New Roots staff will continue to provide support to the graduate farmers during their first season. After that we hope the graduates will stay connected to the program and return to the Training Farm to teach and mentor new farmers who are just getting started. I am so proud of the New Roots farmers who have believed in a dream for a new beginning in the US. They have worked tirelessly towards that dream.

I have had the privilege of working with the Juniper Gardens Training Farm since its inception and have often secretly questioned the reality of our claims. I have wondered if we really will succeed in helping these women who have so many hurdles to overcome to start new lives here. Every milestone in the program's development has felt simultaneously unfamiliar and impossible, exciting, and real. As an organization, we have been pushed by the challenges of this work. We have learned and developed alongside the farmers. We have been privileged to learn from refugees who bring with them to the US a unique care for and connection to soil and plants. They have also brought a network of supportive family and extended family willing to pitch in and do hard work. Perhaps most importantly, I have witnessed their unending spirit that refuses to give up. These attributes, which so many native English speakers want to acquire, come naturally to people who are used to living from the land, wherever that land may be.

So this season, we celebrate the success of four graduates, but of course, there is still so much work to be done. We hope that this graduation is just the beginning of many more to come. We look forward to the start of many new farms in our city and the start of many new beginnings.

Reach Rachel at rpollock@catholiccharitiesks.org.

Calendar Of Events

Introduction to Small Fruit Production--A Growing Growers Workshop. Saturday, June 23, 8:30AM to 4:00PM. Powell Gardens - Heartland Harvest Garden, 1609 NW U.S. HWY 50, Kingsville, MO 64061. Looking for a way to complement your market offerings throughout the season? Small fruit is one of the best ways to diversify and increase profitability for market producers. This workshop is designed to cover basic principles of production for a variety of small fruit including: Blueberries, Raspberries, Blackberries, Strawberries, and Grapes. Hear from producers and Extension educators about these crops to see if you want to add one or all to your production system. More info and registration [here](#) or call (816) 270-2141.

Breaking Through Concrete: Stories from the American Urban Farm. Tuesday, June 26, 6:00PM to 9:00PM. Central Library, 14 West 10th Street, Kansas City, MO, 64105. Join author, photographer and farmer Edwin Marty for a reception and presentation about his recently published book. *Breaking Through Concrete* is a look at successful urban farm programs, from backyard food swaps to a restaurant supply garden on a Brooklyn rooftop. Marty chronicles changing attitudes and offers advice on keeping livestock in the city, decontaminating toxic soil, and even changing zoning laws. Marty has studied ethnobotany, is the former assistant garden editor for *Southern Living* magazine and the executive director of the [Hampstead Institute](#) in Montgomery, AL. He is also an experienced urban farmer. Reservations are encouraged at the Kansas City Library's [events listing](#). For more information email Jill Erickson at jill@cultivatekc.org. Co-sponsored by Chipotle Mexican Grille and Kansas City Public Library. Reception is free and open to public.

Food Forest Design Workshop. August 4 & 5. Lawrence, KS. In collaboration with four experienced permaculture designers, Kaw Permaculture is pleased to announce a two-day workshop in Edible Forest Garden Design. More details and the location of the course will be available soon by visiting the Kaw Permaculture Collaborative's website at www.kawpermaculture.org/category/training or by contacting Steve Moring at moringse@gmail.com.

2012 Urban Agriculture Summit. August 15 to 18. Toronto, Canada. From bee-keeping to community and school gardens; from aquaculture to rooftop farming, urban agriculture is becoming an essential element of food security, improving access to healthy, affordable food in a rapidly urbanizing world. Urban agriculture can also generate much-needed skills development and local employment while improving local environmental and community health. The first Urban Agriculture Summit in Toronto will be action-oriented: attendees will learn new tools to advance urban agriculture in their own communities. Together participants will explore urban agriculture's current role and future potential in 21st century city-building. Details at <http://urbanagsummit.org/>.

Dig In, KC! A dinner with farmers and friends. Sunday, September 23, 6:00PM to 9:00PM. City Market, 20 E. 5th Street, Kansas City, MO 64106. Save the date for Cultivate Kansas City's first annual dinner featuring local chefs, culinary students and farmers. Enjoy strolling through a farmers market under the stars while enjoying live music, appetizers and drinks. Chef Michael Foust of The Farmhouse will prepare dinner featuring all locally grown foods. Interested in volunteering? For more information email Jill Erickson at jill@cultivatekc.org. Many thanks to our Cultivating Kansas City sponsor Service Management Group. Tickets are \$75 and will go on sale in mid-June.

To subscribe please send an email to info@cultivatekc.org.
For editorial comments please contact *Urban Grown* editor Daniel Dermitzel at daniel@cultivatekc.org.
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