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### **"The Urban Farmer As..."**

*Farmer as Small Business Owner (and Super Hero), Part One*

*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 and advocate; gardening specialist and educator; and small business leader.*



Bev Pender sells her produce at the KCK Greenmarket in Juniper Gardens. Photo by Ami Freeberg.

By Katherine Kelly, Cultivate KC Executive Director

I've seen and worked with a lot of people who have started small farm businesses. I have always been struck that nearly all of these new farm ventures have experienced a strong level of enthusiasm and support. Friends share their time, skills and even money to help the new farm succeed. Soon, a business develops that is metaphorically owned by a network of people. Why do people do this?

This dynamic has been so persistent and so powerful that I've tried to understand why people step forward to help make my farm, or someone else's farm, successful. Generosity is clearly one of the motivators. People are remarkable in their capacity to support and promote

someone else's success. But I've also come to believe there are other motivators. When we start an urban farm, we are starting and running a small business. There is something in that creative and practical reality of small business ownership that we need at this point in history.

In many ways, farming is the archetypal small business in US history. Our image as a nation founded by farmers is deeply imbedded in our national identity. In 1790, farmers made up 90% of our workforce, but today, farmers make up only 2% of our workforce. This puts our self image as a nation in a bit of a flux. Consider too that according to new numbers released from the U.S. Census Bureau, 81 percent of us live

in urban areas, so that means only two out of every 10 Americans are directly exposed to farming. Urban farm businesses bring us back to some of our core beliefs about ourselves as a nation.

Think where most people you know work, and chances are most of them are employees. And it is likely they are employees in very large establishments. Remarkably, 82% of us worked in establishments with more than 20 employees in 2009. For me, when you have more than 20 workers, you have a workplace where you can't really know your fellow workers and where you are no longer directly affected by the choices, successes, and struggles of that workplace. Working in large companies, we've lost some autonomy, some ownership of product and outcomes. We've lost the direct experience of taking risks, solving problems, and the intense emotional vitality that goes along with all that.

When we start a new farm business, we are acting outside the norm because we represent the 18% or less of us who work in small workplaces. We are in the even smaller group of people who have the chutzpah to take on the risks, challenges, and rewards of creating something new in the world. My sense is that our fellow community members support us because they want to be part of this process. They want to be to experience, even second hand, the autonomy, creative energy, and personal engagement inherent in owning a small business. They crave experiences not met in our roles as an employee.

Farm businesses that are part of the local food movement are almost always businesses that seek to be successful according to multiple bottom lines. We want to make a living for ourselves. We want to farm in a way that is good for the environment, the plants and the creatures above and below the soil. And, most urban farmers want to address some mix of specific social needs. We want to be a force for change in our neighborhood. We want to help our community eat real, healthy, good tasting food. We want to create jobs for neighborhood youth. We want to feed people who lack easy access to good food.

It seems it is this mix of business goals to make a living combined with social goals to do good that also motivates people to step forward and help our businesses. We are heroes right now in the popular imagination because we embody a greater need to believe that small businesses can still improve the world. Many of us are losing faith in the capacity of governments, non-profits, and corporations to bring about the change we need. But, unless we are independently wealthy, our farms won't last very long unless they succeed financially. We need to function like serious businesses and we need to grow into a real industry. We need to make budgets, keep our books, develop business plans, pay taxes and otherwise act like participants in a business sector.



Gibbs Road Farm Manager Alicia Ellingsworth sells produce at Brookside Farmers Market. Photo by Ami Freeberg.

This is a lot of responsibility for us as owners of start-up farm businesses growing in urban communities. We have to figure out how to do a pretty extraordinary balancing act. We can and should rise to this historical moment. Our friends, our community, and our society need us to be examples of hope, of action and risk-taking, of our society's capacity to make positive change through grassroots entrepreneurial activity. We need to let people help us. We need to ask them to volunteer, to use their skills and passion, and to help our businesses be successful. As much as we can, we need to give talks to school children, to the elderly, to neighborhood groups, and to anyone who'll listen to us. We need to reach out to other business sectors like health care, education and urban development and planning because they need us to help them deepen their understanding of the positive changes that can be created by small, urban farm businesses, farmers markets, and related businesses.

This may, or may not, be exactly what you signed up for when you decided to become an urban farm business owner! On any given day, you may not be able to fill all, or any, of those roles. In Kansas City, we are fortunate to have a growing number of urban farm businesses, so we can rely on each other to fulfill these responsibilities. We can help each other develop our individual capacities. And, if there is any group of people who can function in the immediate, practical reality while keeping true to a hope for the future, it is growers.

*The Farmer as Small Business Owner, Part Two, will appear in an upcoming issue. Reach Katherine at [katherine@cultivatekc.org](mailto:katherine@cultivatekc.org).*

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## **Goodbye and Hello to New Beginnings**

*Cultivate KC Co-founder Daniel Dermitzel resigns*



Co-Founder Daniel Dermitzel at the Food Forest project. Photo by Ami Freeberg.

By Katherine Kelly, Cultivate KC Executive Director

Many of you have heard by now that Daniel has left Cultivate Kansas City in pursuit of other ways to fulfill his passions for agriculture, urban communities, and sustainability. We want to recognize the powerful role he has played in our organization and in our community over the last years and share just some of what Daniel has accomplished with us.

In 2005, Daniel and I each shut down our individual farm businesses to create the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture

(now Cultivate Kansas City). We hoped to work more broadly and help Kansas City more fully reap the benefits of urban agriculture. With Daniel's background in urban planning, my experience in non-profit management, and both of our experience as small farm business owners, we were able to establish this organization that grows urban food, urban farmers, and urban communities.

Daniel's contributions to this process have been many and varied. He is an excellent teacher who is full of the knowledge and passion that educates and engages. As co-farmer with me, and eventual supervisor of the farm manager and the farm, he was instrumental in the growth of our farm sales from some \$75,000 in 2005 to an anticipated \$106,000 in 2012. His establishment of the Food Forest over the last two years has been an amazing thing to watch. He delved deeply into a specific body of knowledge and then integrated that knowledge into a plan. He then tackled the work of planting and maintaining the forest itself. Truly this is a demonstration of a special and rare set of skills. Daniel created Urban Grown as our organizational newsletter. He nurtured it into a nationally respected publication that covers urban agriculture trends and activities in Kansas City, the US, and around the world..

Over the years, we've been fortunate to work with an incredibly diverse and talented group of people including other farmers, board members, volunteers, staff, donors, and supporters. Their involvement and the growing social understanding of the need for urban agriculture has helped this organization become more than something that "Katherine and Daniel" are doing. They have helped it become a vital and contributing organization that will continue to grow and evolve many years down the road.

Our approach to the work we do has always been systems-based. We believe that a healthy farm (and a healthy organization and community) creates diversity, fills niches, and relies on a constant exchange of energy and resources. As people who have been part of our organization move along, we know they are expanding the eco system we've begun to create here.

We will miss Daniel as part of our daily work, and we truly look forward to the ways Daniel will continue to grow our urban agriculture system.

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**Field News From The Gibbs Road Farm**

*Sharing and cooperation provide hope for all farmers*



Tomatoes harvested from Gibbs Road Farm. Photo by Evangeline Ellingsworth.

By Alicia Ellingsworth, Gibbs Road Farm Manager

***You must take back the Earth, peacefully, one piece at a time. Plant seeds, and water them, and make the Earth beautiful again." --Hopi***

At market and through emails, I hear updates about many of the transplants we started back in January that have found their way into hundreds of backyards and community gardens throughout the city. We grow our transplants in the Quell-Davis Community Greenhouse at Gibbs Road Farm, which is 6,000 square feet. Because of its size, we are able to share the space with other market farmers. We start additional transplants for urban gardeners as we cooperatively grow the local food movement in Kansas City.

These gardeners seek me out to thank us and to share their gardening stories. I hear about tomato plants thriving, cucumbers gone wild, pests and diseases, and always about squirrels and their voracious appetites. This year people are asking how to keep plants alive through the heat and share their disappointment in how the weather has been so hard on their crops. Their stories remind me how much mutual support and cooperation contributes to the success of producing food in a city.

August is a word that invokes dread in many a Midwestern grower's heart and the month has become synonymous with heat, drought and fatigue. August, it seems, started about six weeks ago this year. As more of us are growing food and closely observing the seasons' temperatures year to year, we search for ways to get through August and early September to the fall's cooling relief. We've been experiencing extreme summer temperatures for three years in a row now; like farmers and gardeners across our region, we're working on strategies to work with and around our changing climate.

At Gibbs Road Farm, we started many crops early this year. We planted eight roots beds in March. These beds have provided a constant supply of beets and carrots for our customers. We got our tomatoes in early along with several bean beds. We mulch with straw. We use drip irrigation. We use a succession planting schedule to keep us looking ahead and to keep us moving with hope. We're using more shade cloth, watering seeds in more carefully, paying attention to what varieties are handling the weather stress more successfully.

While these technical adjustments have kept the vegetables coming, I feel there is something more profound that helps us learn and adjust and keep on growing.

It is community and knowing that we are all partners in growing food and feeding ourselves and each other. As eating local moves beyond the trendy stage of a new movement and begins to be a regular part of our lives, we're realizing that the strengths that got us started. Cooperation, sharing, and experimentation are the ones that will help ensure the food movement thrives even in the face of heat, drought, and climate change. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is one cooperative arrangement that supports the movement and gives us needed support as we adapt to our changing climate. At the Gibbs Road Farm, our CSA members eat first. Our CSA members believed in us and took a financial risk with us as we started the season way back in January. They paid it forward hoping for food all summer and their support through the heat and drought has helped me and our crew keep getting out and doing our best. Another solution is sharing. I grow food and a friend cans it for me. Sharing this way gets us both what we need and helps us cope better with what the weather and the season gives us.

As more unpredictable weather patterns continue in Kansas City, we need to draw on our human ingenuity and our desire for connection to help us through those changes. We deepen our understanding with each experience. As more people grow their own food and look for locally grown food, we begin to grow the types of communities that feed us best. We help to grow communities of relationship, cooperation and interconnectedness. Together we learn what one means and we become it.

Reach Alicia at [alicia@cultivatekc.org](mailto:alicia@cultivatekc.org).

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## Volunteers Cooking Up More Interest in Veggies

*Farmers Markets get help to make food more accessible*



Cooking Core volunteers Lisa Farmer (l) and Evelyn Welk (r) demonstrate cooking vegetables at Urbavore's Farm Stand on opening day. Photo by Jenn Brockman.

By Ami Freeberg, Cultivate KC Program Assistant

Farmers' markets are popping up in neighborhoods all over the Kansas City metropolitan area. The metro area is now home to over 50 farmers' markets, up from 15 in 2005. However, the idea "If you build it, they will come," has not always proven true with new markets.

While many of these new markets are providing critical access to food in neighborhoods that lack access to fresh fruits and vegetables, affordability and education are two significant barriers that make market success in low income neighborhoods more challenging. .

In 2010, Menorah Legacy Foundation and Cultivate KC launched Beans&Greens to address affordability. The program doubles the value of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food

Stamps) at select farmers' markets, up to \$25 each week. Beans&Greens is a partnership with several local organizations dedicated to bringing innovative approaches to our community to improve the health of Kansas City residents. Beans&Greens helped many farmers' markets, particularly those in low income neighborhoods, offer produce that is more affordable to low income families. The program also benefits local farmers by bringing new customers. In 2011, the program expanded to include a mobile market, which further created affordable and accessible options for healthy food in food desert neighborhoods.

At every market, regardless of the income levels of their customers, too many people do not know what to do with fresh, whole fruits and vegetables. Over a few short generations of people being raised on processed foods, along with the rise of fast food, a basic knowledge of cooking has been lost. According to a survey by the Institute of Food Technologists in 2006, "less than a third of Americans are cooking their evening dinners from scratch." Data from the survey indicated a seven percent reduction of cooking from scratch over two years. That trend is starting to be reversed nationally thanks to efforts of organizations working to provide education about cooking. A study of 1,500 low-income families released by Cooking Matters in February 2012 indicates that the numbers of people cooking at home are on the rise. According to the study, 61 percent of families are making dinner from scratch most days of the week. A new program in Kansas City, known as Cooking Core, seeks to help our community move in the same direction.

Jenn Brockman of Beans&Greens shared, "Since the beginning of Beans&Greens, we have been talking about using cooking demos and sampling to engage new customers with farmers' markets." At the same time, the University of Missouri's Extension had started doing cooking demos at a few of the larger farmers markets around the city. Beginning in 2010, Cultivate Kansas City set up a partnership with Kansas State University Extension and The Family Conservancy to create and train the "Healthy Food Team," comprised of neighborhood residents, to give cooking demonstrations at the KCK Greenmarket at Juniper Gardens. All of the pieces came together this spring with the launch of the collaborative Farmers' Market Nutrition Education Training Program, more commonly known as the Cooking Core. Menorah Legacy Foundation funded the program to "leverage the expertise of Extension to train volunteers to add value to Beans&Greens markets," according to Brockman. The grant is managed by the University of Missouri's Jackson County Extension.

Cooking Core is coordinated by Lisa Farmer, a nutritionist and cooking educator, who has recruited and coordinated a team of seventeen volunteers to host cooking demonstrations and provide samples at ten different farmers' markets this season. The volunteers prepare a different recipe each week, based on what's in season and available at the markets. Cooking Core performs three to five demonstrations a week, rotating through the different farmers' markets. Lisa chooses the recipes, looking for recipes with few ingredients, and using as many fresh ingredients from the farmers' markets as possible. "I always try to mix in an ingredient that people might not be familiar with, like quinoa, or to use a vegetable in a different way, such as the watermelon salsa we made," says Lisa.

One of Lisa's favorite stories from the Cooking Core happened in early July at the KCK Greenmarket at Strawberry Hill. After sampling the watermelon salsa that Cooking Core volunteers had prepared, an elderly lady took the recipe card and went over to the next booth to purchase a watermelon. She told the volunteers that her grandkids were coming to visit and she was very excited to prepare the salsa recipe with them. This is the goal of Cooking Core – sharing healthy recipes and empowering people to spend time in the kitchen preparing healthy recipes, and especially to get them teaching the younger generations to feel at home in the kitchen.

Cooking Core Volunteer, Lacy Stephens, joined the team because she wanted to pull together her background in agriculture with her current pursuit of a dietetics degree. "Cooking Core brings together all the things I am passionate about – there is a really strong connection in my mind between growing food and a healthier lifestyle. I want to help other people understand and experience that," shared Stephens. After spending several Sundays at the Rosedale Farmers' Market, Stephens relayed a story about one gentleman who is determined to lose weight by eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. He has lost four pounds each week for the last six weeks. "We're helping him try new veggies and keeping him going with different recipes. We can really help change people's lives," says Stephens.

I volunteer with the Cooking Core to share my passion for cooking and my love of fresh vegetables with others. When I heard about Cooking Core, I decided to participate to learn more about nutrition, and to be part of a team that is changing the way people think about food. I have brought recipes and knowledge back to Cultivate KC's own Healthy Food Team to share with customers at the KCK Greenmarket at Juniper Gardens. If you would like to join the Cooking Core for the 2013 market season, please contact Lisa Farmer at [farmere@missouri.edu](mailto:farmere@missouri.edu).



Chef Renee Kelly volunteered at the 2011 Urban Farms and Gardens Tour. She is one of three chefs cooking for Dig In, KC! on Sept. 23. Photo by Steve Wilson.

Reach Ami Freeberg at [ami@cultivatekc.org](mailto:ami@cultivatekc.org).

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### **Hungry for Change? Dig In, KC!**

*Enjoy local food, meet farmers and support urban agriculture during an evening of fun!*

By Jill Erickson, Cultivate KC Development & Communications Director

Be sure to make time to come and meet some of Kansas City's finest chefs and urban farmers at Dig In,

KC! a dinner with farmers and friends on September 23, 2012. Taking place at the City Market, this event will feature dinner made with local produce by some of the most impressive chefs in town: Michael Foust, Renee Kelly and Charles d'Ablaing.

"I have always wanted to be a chef," says Michael Foust, owner and chef for the Farmhouse Restaurant. "I wanted to start my restaurant here in Kansas City because I grew up here."

Foust began his culinary career in Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Portland, Oregon. He continued his study of French culinary technique cooking in Lyon, France, for a year, then traveling the country working in restaurants before returning to Kansas City to open his restaurant, The Farmhouse. The Farmhouse serves up Midwestern comfort food with a French twist, prepared with as many local and seasonal products as possible.

For his restaurant, Michael serves a paper menu and a chalkboard menu, both easy to adapt with the changing seasonal produce. He composts food scraps and works with more than 38 local growers to source food for his menu. He is actively working with local hog farmers and practices a "tip to tail" philosophy in his restaurant.



"Nothing is wasted," he explains. The menu for Sept. 23 will include pigs raised locally with support by Michael Foust.

Michael wanted to share the spotlight for this community dinner, so he reached out to fellow chefs who share his values about local food, Renee Kelly and Charles d'Ablaing.

Every dish Chef Renee Kelly creates is prepared according to a strict code of culinary conduct. "I use only locally grown, farm-fresh foods, organic if possible," she says. "I never buy in bulk. Each ingredient is

purchased for immediate use."

Renee apprenticed at the Gibbs Road Farm last year to really see where her food is coming from. An active CSA member and volunteer, she often rides her bike to the farm. On Thursdays she picks up her fresh produce for newly opened Harvest, a farm to table restaurant celebrating the local and regional community.

Charles emphasizes on quality, locally sourced ingredients, proper seasoning and precise cooking technique. As the Executive Chef at the Chaz, his signature items include fried green tomatoes, shrimp and grits, and a hand-cut, wet-aged prime beef tenderloin that advances Kansas City's beef reputation. Chef d'Ablaing was featured at the James Beard House in 2009 and has been prominent in local charitable events and competitions.

At Dig In, KC! the dinner will be served family style and will include all produce from local farms, including Gibbs Road Farm, a program of Cultivate Kansas City.

"We want this to be an elegant dinner, but with a feeling of intimacy that is missing nowadays in our community," explained co-chair Tiffany Lynch. "We want our guests to reconnect not only with the chefs, and the farmers but with one another, too."

Don't miss your opportunity to experience local produce prepared by the best chefs Kansas City offers. [Reserve your tickets online](#) to enjoy the harvest of urban farming!

*For more information about how to get involved please contact Jill Erickson at 913-601-5005 or [jill@cultivatekc.org](mailto:jill@cultivatekc.org).*

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**Shopping Mall Face Lift Revitalizing Community**  
*Community developers and farmers work together*



In Holland, MI, a developer cut up asphalt and carted in fresh soil for Eighth Day Farm to grow. Photo courtesy Eighth Day Farm.

By John Vanderheide, Cultivate KC Intern

Imagine 175 acres of oak trees grown on vacant lots in Detroit; picture vegetable gardens tucked into neighborhoods in New York, and visualize community orchards springing up on public land here in Kansas City. These are all current examples of how agriculture is infiltrating urban cores around the country.

While these projects are exciting for many reasons, not the least of which is the food or lumber that they produce, they are providing another service to cities. These urban agriculture projects are helping cities and neighborhoods redesign themselves. As reported on the Huffington Post the aim of such projects is “to revitalize and legitimize the parts of a city often neglected, abandoned, in some cases even demolished – and revitalize the city as a whole.” (Hufington Post 6/8/12)

One example of a neglected landscape that we have all seen is an old urban mall standing mostly vacant and underutilized. Often, many of the store fronts are empty, while those that remain have too few customers and struggle to make ends meet. The parking lot may be old, with faded lines and pot holes you could get lost in. Most often these sites will change ownership frequently while they decline. Meanwhile new malls get built further out into the suburbs, using open space and often times farm land in the process.

That is not happening in Holland, MI. Instead, an insightful developer is working to breathe new life into an old mall by returning it to its farming past. Sugar Oak Holdings has asked [Eighth Day Farm](#) to take up residence in the middle of the parking lot of the Holland Town Center Outlet Mall. The mall was built in the 1980’s and had been struggling for quite a while when it was taken over by Sugar Oak.

“Their plan is to include more community and green businesses to make it a mixed use development,” says Michele Zeilinger, board member at Eighth Day Farm.

The new farm plot is 1.3 acres in the middle of the parking lot. Sugar Oak cut up the asphalt, removed 2ft of sub soil, and carted in fresh topsoil for Eighth Day Farm to grow on. Most of the produce grown at that site is combined with produce from Eighth Day Farm’s other location, half of an acre in the former playground of a preschool. The food is sold to 50 Community Support Agriculture (CSA) customers. Production has increased and they are planning to open farm stands at the farm sites to sell the extra produce.

“We have a great relationship with the developer [Sugar Oak,]” says Zeilinger. “They have been really excited about the increased traffic flow that the farm has brought.”

In fact, the farm has had to install educational materials at the new site to accommodate interested people who drive by to see the farm. The increased traffic has been good for the local businesses as well, increasing their visibility and flow of customers. Bringing the community together like this is a major part of Eighth Day Farms mission and plan for their farm, which is good because it generates volunteers and donations, including spent grain from New Holland Brewery and coffee grounds from Lemonjello’s coffee shop to use in composting.

Similar exciting work is being done in Kansas City, MO at E 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, just South on Paseo. Conception Community Farm is located two miles east of the Country Club Plaza. There Bobby Wright and an intrepid group of volunteers and community members are turning an unused church parking lot into a farm. These

young folks came here to purposefully live in a neighborhood noted for high violence and crime. Their group is working alongside the New Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church and their Pastor Dr. James A. Howard.

“We hope to work alongside our neighbors with a mission of promoting peace, reconciliation, and love,” says Bobby Wright, community member and farmer.

They are removing asphalt from parking lots to increase growing space, researching ways to grow food in small spaces and farming as thriftily as possible by using non-traditional resources found scattered throughout the neighborhood. They are working to build relationships with neighbors.

There are so many abandoned places in Kansas City where this could happen. I look forward to seeing what develops in the next few years as more success stories begin to come to the surface.

You can reach John at [john@cultivatekc.org](mailto:john@cultivatekc.org).

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## Access to Water—Impact and Implications on Local Food Production

*Get Growing KC class explores tip of iceberg of water issues*



Frost free hydrants commonly provide water access for urban farmers and community gardeners. Photo courtesy Tarvin Plumbing.

By Teresa Kelly, Get Growing KC Team

Reliance on water is one common denominator among all food producers large and small, urban and rural. The severe drought this summer underlines the importance of access to water for growing food. Thirty five people who grow food in our community gathered on August 6 at the Kansas City Community Gardens for a Get Growing KC class about water. Many in the group attended to find solutions to their high costs of water. Others wanted to learn about new ideas to catch, store and access water in the city.

The Get Growing KC Team works year round, one-on-one with urban farmers, community and home gardeners. We work to solve problems and find resources to support successful harvests. We listen carefully to urban growers and we are recognizing that water is an issue where we can help build our collective knowledge and strategies for water

access, cost management, and reliability.

When Get Growing KC teammate Bobby Wright and I began planning for our class and began to discuss rainwater catchment systems, we got some disparaging looks and comments, “What are we going to catch?” people asked, looking up at the cloudless sky.

One of the strategies we’re beginning to understand is the necessity of planning and implementing a diverse, integrated plan to deliver water in all kinds of conditions. A diverse plan should include agricultural practices that conserve every molecule of water you can in the soil because “a rain barrel is a drop in the bucket compared to what the soil can hold.” (*ecologia design*, 2012) It should also look towards capturing rain when it comes, for later in the season when we need it. And, if funds are available, it should include access to city water; this year, for example, it would have been pretty much impossible to capture and save all the water needed to get our crops through this drought.

A good water plan should also focus on efficient use of water and directing water directly to the root systems of crops. Heavy mulching and intensive planting can be very effective at deterring evaporation. Keeping on top of weeding keeps the weeds from stealing water from your crops. Working with the lay of the land to create swales to catch and direct runoff helps keep the water in your soil, instead of spilling

out onto pavement or the neighbor's yard. You can also plan and group crops based on the water needs of those crops, so you aren't overwatering some crops or under watering others.

Water catchment systems can be small or large to include multiple large tanks or cisterns to catch rain and the related runoff. There are systems you can buy off the shelf for water catchment, there are also plans for cheaper systems that will require a little more ingenuity and work on your part. One thing we've become aware of as we've researched water catchment strategies is that there is a shortage of farms and gardens in Kansas City that are really experimenting with and developing new approaches. The Get Growing team is working on how to build a stronger network of designers, growers, and innovators to come up with systems that can be replicated across the wide variety of gardens and farms in our cities.

Growers I have met who are successfully weathering this dry storm have a plan and they are very "tuned into" their land. They have good records for reference; they know when to plant, what to plant and where. For example, many growers took a chance in this unseasonably early spring and planted before typical planting dates, their plants were well established with good root systems prior to this long dry spell. They have carefully observed water requirements for their farms and gardens. They use mulching to conserve the water in the soil and use crop rotations. Successful growers have shared that being connected and observant of their land helps know what to do about insects, disease and particularly helpful this season--drought.

It can be very expensive to provide water to your farm business or garden plot. One farmer we work with uses best production practices and intensive growing and has gross sales of about \$15,000 a year. When you look at that scale of an annual budget, and then look at typical costs for water installation of between \$3,000 and \$8,100 to connect to the local municipal water services and install a frost free on-site hydrant, it makes it clear that we both need to work with utility companies and plumbers to figure out how to make those costs more affordable. We need to focus on other strategies for keeping our crops watered. Monthly utility bills, once the utility connection is made, are not cheap either; for one grower, on a quarter-acre vegetable plot in Kansas City, KS, the monthly water bill was \$139.51. This bill was for \$69.45 for 22.3 ccf registered on the meter and \$70 just for fees, storm water, taxes, and other Unified Government direct costs. Clearly, there is a lot of work we need together to sort out water usage, costs, and the likelihood of future droughts and lowering water reservoirs.

Today, there are many resources for growers to help with the costs of water. [The Kansas City Board of Public Utilities](#) (BPU) offers grants for qualified applicants to help offset costs of water access in Kansas City, KS. Across the state line, Kansas City, MO, [Water Services](#) offers tiered water rates based on usage in order to conserve water. If you meet criteria showing you are not contributing to storm water runoff on the storm water portion, you can make a request to have your rates lowered. On both sides of the state line, the [Get Growing KC](#) team offers mini grants to qualified applicants for infrastructure investments to help provide more local food in areas with little or no access. The Get Growing team offers free technical assistance to help growers design a workable system for their individual watering needs.

This class and this article are just hitting the tip of the water iceberg. We'll continue to research strategies and options, and we will be bringing people together to develop a community discussion and problem solving conversation to help us all access and use water more effectively.

Reach Teresa at [teresa@cultivatekc.org](mailto:teresa@cultivatekc.org)

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## Calendar Of Events

*Get Growing KC Fall Workshop Series.* August – November. Various locations around the Kansas City metro area. Workshops will cover water catchment options, season extension, community garden management, fall planning, starting transplants, and end of season evaluation and goal setting. For event details visit [http://getgrowingkc.org/?page\\_id=88](http://getgrowingkc.org/?page_id=88) or email [info@getgrowingkc.org](mailto:info@getgrowingkc.org).

*Growing Power Conference.* September 7 – 9. Milwaukee, WI. Growing Power will host its second national conference to share ideas for building healthy and resilient community-based food systems. The

conference is diverse in every sense, with participants including farmers, aspiring farmers, renewable energy experts, urban planners, corporate executives, politicians, academics, chefs, microbiologists, and people from countless other walks of life. One of the great outcomes of the conference is the cultivation of new relationships, and the sharing of knowledge. In 2012, Growing Power is planning breakaway sessions, speakers, and tours. They are anticipating over 3,000 participants will attend, and 200 of the nation's most well-known food-system experts will share their knowledge. For more information visit <http://www.growingpowerfarmconference.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. Buy tickets now 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, Chef Rennee Kelly of Harvest and Charles D'Ablaing of Chaz will prepare dinner featuring all locally grown foods. Many thanks to our Cultivating Kansas City sponsors Service Management Group, SPACES magazine and Blacktop Creative. Tickets are \$75 and can be purchased online at <http://www.cultivatekc.org/digin>. For more information email Jill Erickson at [jill@cultivatekc.org](mailto:jill@cultivatekc.org).

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To subscribe please send an email to [info@cultivatekc.org](mailto:info@cultivatekc.org).  
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