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India: Journeying full circle

By Ami Freeberg, communications and outreach manager

As long as I can remember, good food grown close to home has been an important part of my life. From terrorizing my mother’s gardens as a small child, to running a pop-up café at our local farmers market with my family, to “roll your own vegetarian sushi parties” as our family’s Christmas Eve tradition – food was at the heart of how I was raised. Another fundamental part of my upbringing was Transcendental Meditation (TM), a meditation technique for stress release founded by

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. My parents were both TM teachers and moved to Fairfield, Iowa to be part of a community that valued meditation and well-being. I attended the Maharishi School, where we learned Sanskrit as our foreign language, and meditation and yoga was part of the school day. So, as deep as food runs in my upbringing, I feel like Indian culture is as much a part of my heritage as is possible for a white kid from rural Iowa.



Ami explores the remains of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s ashram in Rishikesh, India. This adventure brought her cultural connection with India full circle. *Photo courtesy of Ami Freeberg*

In high school, I had the opportunity to participate in the World Food Prize Global Youth Institute, a three day event in which chosen

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Investing in farmers and food for the future



As we look ahead at who is going to feed us in the future, it will be important to invest in our future farmers!

Photo courtesy of Cultivate Kansas City

By Katherine Kelly, executive director

Over the past decade, we as a community have been eager and energetic about rebuilding our local food system. We’ve planted fields, harvested crops, started farmers markets, improved our diets, changed city policies, educated ourselves and each other, written articles

and books, organized events and made a significant impact on how the food industry works. Together, we have created an extraordinary amount of change in a very short period of time.

Looking forward, we have to ask ourselves – how do we make this pace of change, this passion for good health and

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Stop treating your soil like dirt

By Lydia Gibson, Missouri Organic Recycling

When Cultivate Kansas City asked me to write a short article about the soil food web, to be honest my first reaction was, "Ok, so what about it?" Then the answer came to me: if we want to increase the organic matter in our soil, it's time for us to stop treating our soil like dirt.

When we think about soil health, we're often caught up in the problems and look to the potions industry for solutions. But my understanding of the food soil web and why it matters

took a big jump last summer, thanks to workshop featuring Dr. Elaine Ingham sponsored by Elaine and Greg Judy of Green Pastures Farm. Dr. Ingham is an American soil biology researcher and founder of Soil Foodweb Inc. She is a leader in soil microbiology and research of the soil food web and author of the USDA's Soil Biology Primer.

Dr. Ingham emphasizes that soil is a living and breathing organism beneath our feet, whereas dirt is the dry dusty stuff you knock off your boots before coming inside. Every type

of soil on this planet has all of the ingredients to support life locked in its sand, silt, clay, and organic matter. The key principle of the soil food web centers on that last component – the organic matter. Organic matter is the starting point of any healthy, functioning soil ecosystem. Decaying roots and shoots feed through a buffet of carbons and sugars like cakes and cookies that bring bacteria and fungi to the table. Once the predators of these organisms catch a whiff of the feast and eat the bacteria and

fungi, the nutrients cycle through their bodies into plant available forms.



Lydia Gibson (left) with Dr. Elaine Ingham (right) during a workshop on the soil food web. Photo courtesy of Lydia Gibson

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Urban Grown Tour celebrates 10 years

By Ami Freeberg, communications and outreach manager

Farmers and gardeners from 30 sites that will be showcased on the 2015 Urban Grown Tour gathered in the Bluford Library in February to kick off their participation in this event. Two themes emerged among the group as each grower introduced themselves – passion and community.

These folks have passion for good food. Passion for sharing their knowledge about growing and eating good food. Passion for helping people reconnect with their food. Passion for growing community alongside the food crops.

Come enjoy this passion that drives Kansas City's

urban growers during the Urban Grown Tour June 27-28 and become part of the community working to build a sustainable, local food system. This self-guided tour of farms and gardens is your chance to visit folks who are feeding Kansas City; glean ideas for your home garden, learn about keeping chickens in your backyard, understand what it takes to run a farm business in the city, and get inspired by neighbors working together to feed each other.

The Urban Grown Tour is a family-friendly event offering adults and youth alike an opportunity to see how food is grown and reconnect with the people who are growing it. We're rekindling a connection that has been lost over the last cen-

tury as people migrated from the country to cities where food was no longer an integral part of the landscape.

Over the last decade, Cultivate Kansas City has reintroduced food to the urban landscape, with an emphasis on supporting entrepreneurial farm businesses. This tour celebrates 10 years of tremendous growth, while looking forward to the next decade.

To kick off Urban Grown activities, a group of leaders in our local food movement will discuss how Kan-



Bobby Wright (left) shares his stories and experience of converting a parking lot into a productive community farm during the 2013 Urban Grown Tour. Photo by Ami Freeberg

sas City's local food system has transformed in the last 10 years and how together we're building a vision for the next 10.

One major area of growth we're celebrating this year is the emergence of chefs bringing the fresh flavor of

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good communities, sustainable and lasting? How do we make sure that decades down the road we have good food being grown and eaten in our city?

The answer in many ways is simple. We invest in farmers.

We invest in farmers as the people who will feed us in our old age, feed our children in their youth, and feed the generations yet to come. We recognize that the challenges of our food system are, at heart, human-created challenges. We need to invest in the people who will address them in a manner to create a productive, sustainable, responsive and evolving food system

As farmers and future farmers, we need to invest in ourselves. We need to deepen our knowledge, diversify our agricultural experiences, and equip

ourselves to be successful farmers with every bit as much seriousness as we expect doctors, teachers, and skilled tradespeople to prepare for their working futures. That may mean we spend more time apprenticing and learning from other, more established farms and that we ease more slowly into starting our own operations. It may mean we leave this region to learn hands-on from other agricultural systems and find good practices to bring home. It may mean that we temper our passion for immediate success with an appreciation for long-term viability, and that we slow down our process to build our skills more fully. We need to look forward at the big picture and ask ourselves, "What kind of agricultural skills and capacities are going to be needed 30 years from now?" and then work our way back to, "How do I learn farming,

how do I farm today to set myself up for that future?"

As supporters, consumers, and community members looking forward to our future food needs we need to cultivate social patience and a long-term investment approach with our farmers. We need to demand and financially support intensive, hands-on, multi-year training and employment opportunities. We need to invest our money in the food system – not only through purchasing from local farmers, but by making loans to help farmers buy a new tractor, balance the cash-flow of their operations, or purchase new land. We need to donate to advocacy organizations and training programs that are growing the farmers of the future; we need to make gifts to farmers to help them attend workshops and conferences and to help them grow their skills and long-term capacity.

Our local food movement really took off over the last decade. The growth has been characterized by passion, entrepreneurial drive, and a can-do and we'll-figure-it-out approach. The challenge now is to evolve all that is good with this approach and combine it with a longer-term growth process. Cultivate Kansas City's 10-year anniversary presents us with a call to action. While we've grown and accomplished so much, we are asking ourselves "What are we doing in the next ten years? What changes will we make in the world by 2025?"

I invite our readers to ask your own questions. What would you like your food-world to look like in 10 years? In 20 years? For your grandchildren? Then, more importantly, what work can you do today to make that happen?

Friends of Cultivate Kansas City

Friends of Cultivate Kansas City provide support of \$250 or more a year. Become a Friend today and join a community of people that care about making healthy food available in Kansas City. You'll also enjoy invitations to special events and out-

ings. On March 22nd, Friends of Cultivate Kansas City are invited to join us at the Nelson-Atkins Museum from 2-4pm. With the purchase of an exhibition ticket (\$12) to Ferran Adrià: Notes on Creativity, you'll enjoy samplings of sheep's milk

cheeses with Sarah Hoffman of Green Dirt Farms and a lecture titled, Kansas City Creatives: The Vision Behind Great Food in KC. Join Cultivate Kansas City's development director, Hannah Hidaka (who holds an MA in Art History) for a tour of the

exhibition after the lecture. RSVP by 3/20 to Hannah@cultivatekc.org

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local farms into their restaurants. We encourage Kansas City to Eat Out Local on Thursday, June 25, to celebrate and support the incredible restaurants that value and support local farmers. The full list of participating restaurants will be available in June.

Meanwhile, the fun is just beginning.

What better a way to celebrate 10 years of cultivating Kansas City than having a picnic with all of you? Join us June 27 on the lawn of the Westport Middle School. Pack a basket, bring a blanket, and come enjoy the company of urban agriculture and local food enthusiasts. We'll bring the birthday cake,

music and surprise activities.

The same passion and community that filled the room this winter will be in full bloom come June.

Urban Grown Event Overview

June 24 | Urban Grown Kick Off | Kansas City Public Library

June 25 | Eat Out Local | Participating Restaurants June 27-28 | Urban Grown Tour | 30 Farms and Gardens around Kansas City June 27 | Cultivate Celebrates 10 Years | Westport Middle School

More details to follow. Go to www.cultivatekc.org/urbangrowntour for more information.

Field notes from Gibbs Road Farm

By Josh Smith, farm manager, Gibbs Road Farm

The winter season has brought a lot of change at Cultivate Kansas City's Gibbs Road Farm. Alicia Ellingsworth, who managed this farm for the past six years, has moved to our Juniper Garden Training Farm to mentor farmers in the New Roots for Refugees program. She will be missed here, but her legacy of beautiful harvests and care for the earth on this urban farm remain.

With spring fast approaching, the hoop houses are in full production with overwintered spinach and newly seeded beds of lettuce, carrots, and beets to feed the 40 members of our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, which begins in just two weeks. In the greenhouse we continue to grow our microgreens for restaurant customers, and the remaining benches are filling quickly with new seedlings.

We have started onions, leeks, scallions, brassicas, lettuce, Pac choi and many others for our transplant sales in April. As the field

soil freezes and thaws, the fungi and microbes are recharging the beds for early spring plantings. We have also taken advantage of the last few weeks to organize our toolshed, sharpen our hand tools, and inventory our equipment.

In February, myself and Justin Mitchell, who is in his third year working on the Gibbs Road Farm, welcomed two new crew members on to our team this season – Ania Wiatr and Neil Rudisill.

Ania, who was born in Poland, has been involved in farming since she was a child when, helping her grandparents every summer. Ania's passion for growing food is paralleled by her love of music, which she studied in college before working as a sound engineer for five years. Her life path led her to London where she reconnected with her passion for gardening and shifted her career goals. Ania went back to school and studied horticulture at Opel Manor College while interning at the Garden Museum of London. She then worked with

British garden designers as a head gardener at Central London Park surrounding the Imperial War Museum.

Last year, Ania and her partner, Emily, moved to Kansas City to fulfill their dream of starting a small urban organic

farm and becoming part of our blossoming community of organic farmers and growers.

We're excited to have Ania on our team as well as Neil.

Neil is a self-proclaimed "built environmentalist" who was drawn to Cultivate Kansas City to better understand productive growing on small scale spaces in urban settings. In addition to working with our Gibbs Road Farm crew, he is a nursing student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, a member of the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council, and an activist with Stand Up KC.



Ania (left), Justin (right), and Josh (back left) plant pac choi in one of the Gibbs Road Farm's high tunnels to feed CSA members.
Photo by Ami Freeberg

Neil believes to achieve a healthy built environment, a community must prioritize access to healthcare, housing, and nutrient-rich food. He looks forward to taking his experience with urban agriculture and applying it into his neighborhood's built environment.

All of us here at the farm are excited for the new season and look forward to connecting with you this spring. Please stop by and see us at the Kansas City Food Circle Expos, the Gibbs Road Farm's transplant sales or the Brookside Farmer's Market starting in April.

Looking back, looking forward: 10 years of local food

By Emily Akins, Kansas City Food Circle

This year will be my 10th season with my Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm, which was my first step down a long and winding path of amazing people, delicious local and organic food, and incredible connections.

Along that path I found out about the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture, which was renamed Cultivate Kansas City in 2011. I signed up to take a class at Whole Foods, taught in part by Katherine Kelly, co-founder of Cultivate Kansas City, which included a farm tour of what is now called the Gibbs Road Farm. By then I had already begun working as a volunteer for the KC Food Circle, a non-profit that connects eaters with local, organic, and free-range farmers and was beginning to find my way around the great resources available in Kansas City. And I had already learned to appreciate where my food comes from.

When I heard about KCCUA's Urban Farms and Gardens Tour I decided to sign up to help. It was winter.

The days were short and the vegetable crispers in my fridge were empty, but I began meeting regularly

with the amazing volunteers who were planning and preparing the 2009 Urban Farms and Gardens Tour. Before I knew it, it was a hot summer day, the growing season was in full swing, and I was driving around from farm to farm helping to keep the tour running smoothly. I was also enjoying my opportunity to learn about urban agriculture. I went to small farms, large farms, urban farms and backyard farms. Each one provided a wealth of food and information.

I wasn't the only one who responded so positively to the tour. It has grown each year – as I think much of the local food movement has in Kansas City. With the KC Food Circle, we've seen a steady increase of farmers and eaters who want to become part of our organization, and great support from our volunteers and our community partners like Cultivate Kansas City.

I've learned a lot and enjoyed food so much in the years since my first season. And I inadvertently became much healthier. I hadn't set out to eat more whole foods, but buying directly from our local farmers encouraged me to do so. I think this makes my family and me healthier but I also think it makes our community healthier.



Emily's daughters are learning where their food comes from a young age. During the 2013 Urban Grown Tour, Julia explored the greens growing at Herb'n Garden.

Photo by Emily Akins

This is the beauty of food grown so close to home -- I know the people who grow my food. They have taught me how to store, prepare, and preserve all the delicious produce that comes to me fresh from their farm every week. I can even visit the farms and see with my own eyes where my food comes from. Best of all they have provided me with confidence. I know that their sustainable farming practices both enrich the earth and make for delicious, fresh produce. And I know that each crop and each farmer and each urban farm is enabling Kansas City to grow stronger every year.

I am excited to see the growth that has already happened in Kansas City and I am even more excited to see where Kansas City will be in the next 10 years as more farmers farm, more eaters eat, and as the efforts of Cultivate Kansas City continue to fill our urban core full of delicious food.

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students get to interact with World Food Prize laureates. The theme that year was rice. Given my love of sustainable food production (although it wasn't a conscious love at that point) and my affinity for Indian culture, I chose to write about the biodiversity of rice production in India. I first came across Dr. Vandana Shiva – physicist, ecologist, activist and author who is changing the way the world thinks about food, agriculture and sustainability – in this context and her passion stuck with me.

While at Grinnell College, I supplemented my sociology degree with a concentration in global development studies and tailored as many of my courses, internships, and practicums as possible to food and agriculture. Dr. Shiva's work came up repeatedly in my global development courses – whether fighting for water that was denied to peasants as dams were developed, or creating a network of seed savers and organic farmers all across India to preserve the country's biodiverse crops, Dr. Shiva was clearly a force in creating a more sustainable and just future for her country and around the world.

In 2012, we began brainstorming who to bring to Kansas City as a speaker for the Urban Grown Farms & Gardens Tour. Dr. Vandana Shiva's name made the list, but the timing didn't work out until a year later. In the spring of 2014, Dr.

Shiva addressed a sold out crowd at Unity Temple sharing her message of cultivating diversity, freedom and hope to create food democracy.

While Dr. Shiva was here, she mentioned a course she was leading on Gandhi, Globalization and Earth Democracy at Earth University, her learning center on a farm in northern India. I was sold.

In November, I ventured to India to participate. I joined 40 companions from all over the world on a 10-day journey exploring the principles of Gandhi in our modern, global environment. We learned from three incredible teachers – Satish Kumar, a former monk and long-term peace and environment activist; Professor Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche, the previous prime minister of Tibetan government-in-exile regarded as one of the leading Tibetan scholars of Buddhism and top authorities on the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi; and, of course, Dr. Shiva. We covered four key principles of Gandhi's philosophy.

Sarvodaya. Swaraj. Swadeshi. Satyagraha.

Sarvodaya means "upliftment of all beings." Gandhi recognized that all beings – human, animal, plant, and nature alike – have intrinsic value and have the right to live and flourish. He believed that nature is not a resource, but rather a source of life, and if we respect and care

for the value of all beings, they will nourish life.

Swaraj means "self-governance." In nature, there is no president – nature provides 8.4 million species (minus humans) with food, water, and shelter, all without organized government, technology or money. Swaraj, on a personal level, means management of the home in a self-reliant manner.

Swadeshi means "localism." Human beings are makers, not consumers, we should be creating things to support ourselves and our family. What we cannot make ourselves; we should seek to obtain from within our community, then our town, then our state, then our country, and minimally from global trade.

Satyagraha means "militant nonviolence," an idea for which Gandhi is well-known. Violence is any action which is undervaluing or undermining another person, being, or nature. Satyagraha is insistence on truth because when you have the power of truth, you don't need the power of a gun or violence.

As much as we learned and were inspired by the teachers of the course exploring these four principles of Gandhi, in many ways we grew more through the conversations and connections we made with each other. A common thread throughout our conversations was how to apply these idealistic principles in our life and work in modern times. For most of

the participants, myself included, we already believed in the value of these ideals, so the content of the course wasn't life-changing in that sense.

When I returned home and shared the ideas I had learned with friends, a few pushed back, saying sure, that's great in theory but those principles are not practical in our modern, global life. This was the same conversation we had circled around on repeatedly, and never resolved, during the course. During these conversations back home, I realized what had been life-changing about the course and my journey to India – even if ideals are not entirely practical in our daily lives, without them we have nothing.

For me, the ideals that were put into words by Gandhi resonate deeply with my personal history and my current work and values. Sarvodaya. Swaraj. Swadeshi. Satyagraha. These are ideals I hold close to my heart and let guide my thoughts, words and actions.

Upcoming Events

TEDxManhattan Viewing Party | Saturday, March 7 | 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Google Fiber Lounge | 1814 Westport Road, Kansas City, MO | The 5th Annual TEDxManhattan, "Changing the Way We Eat," will be webcast live from NYC on Saturday, March 7. Join us for a full day of inspiring talks from leaders and innovators working to create change in our food system. | The viewing party is free, but tickets required. Available here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tedxmanhattan-viewing-party-with-cultivate-kansas-city-tickets-15702235810>

KC Food Circle Expo | Saturday, March 28 | 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. | JCCC Gymnasium | More info: <http://kcfoodcircle.org/eat-local-expo/>

KC Food Circle Expo | Saturday, April 11 | 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. | MCC Penn Valley Gymnasium | More info: <http://kcfoodcircle.org/eat-local-expo/>

Gibbs Road Farm Transplant Sale | Sunday, April 12, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. | 4223 Gibbs Road, Kansas City, KS | Invite your friends: <https://www.facebook.com/events/923599297674490/>

Gibbs Road Farm Transplant Sale | Saturday, April 25, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. | 4223 Gibbs Road, Kansas City, KS | Invite your friends: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1556962267886710/>

Work the Farm | Second and Fourth Saturdays | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. | Gibbs Road Farm | 4223 Gibbs Road, Kansas City, KS | Sign up: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0d44afa72fa57-work1>

Volunteer Days at Juniper Gardens Training Farm | First Saturdays | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. | 100 N. Richmond Avenue, Kansas City, KS | Sign up: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0d44afa72fa57-work1>

Volunteer Days at Food Forest | Third Sundays | 1 – 3 p.m. | 5425 Mastin, Merriam, KS | Sign up: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0d44afa72fa57-work1>

Opening Day at Brookside Farmers Market | Saturday | April 18 | 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. | 63rd & Wornall, Kansas City, MO

For editorial comments please contact *Urban Grown* editor Ami Freeberg at ami@cultivatekc.org
The Cultivate Kansas City is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization.

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