

Stranger in a Strange Land:

Immigrant Gardeners in a Nation of Immigrants





Founded in 1979, the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) is a 501(c)(3) membership organization serving individuals and organizations that support community gardening and greening in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the United States and Canada.

Vision

A sustainable community in every garden.

Mission

The American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) improves lives by increasing and enhancing community gardening and greening. ACGA works toward this vision through its mission that strives to build community by increasing and enhancing community gardening and greening across Canada and the United States.

Core Values

ACGA recognizes that community gardening improves the quality of life for people by providing a catalyst for improved health, neighborhood, and community development; stimulating social interaction; encouraging self-reliance; beautifying neighborhoods; producing nutritious food; reducing family food budgets; conserving resources; and creating opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy, and education.

The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association Editorial Committee

Sandy Pernitz
Community Garden Coordinator
City of Seattle, Department of
Neighborhoods,
P-Patch Community Gardening
Program, Seattle, WA

Kristin Faurest
Artemisia Landscape Design
Budapest, Hungary
faurest.kristin@chello.hu

Marti Ross Bjornson
Writer, Editor, Educator
Evanston, Ill.
m-bjornson@northwestern.edu

Liat Raisin
Harvard University
Graduate School of Design
Newton, Massachusetts
liatracin@gmail.com

Don Doekelheide
Reedy Creek Park Community
Garden, Charlotte, N.Car.
National test gardener for
Organic Gardening Magazine
dboekelheide@yahoo.com

Maryanne Lucas
Kids Growing Strong
Westlake Village, Calif.
mlucas@kidsgrowingstrong.org

American Community Gardening Association Board of Directors

Bill Maynard, President
Sacramento Area Community Garden Coalition
Sacramento, California
wmaynard@cityofsacramento.org

Charlie Monroe, Vice President
DeKalb County Parks and Recreation
Dept.
Lithonia, Georgia
camonroe@dekalbcountyga.gov

Brien Darby, Secretary
Manager of Community Gardens
Denver Botanical Gardens
Denver, Colorado
darbyb@botanicalgardens.org

Maryanne Lucas, Treasurer
Exec. Director, Kids Growing Strong
Westlake Village, California
mlucas@kidsgrowingstrong.org

Bobby Wilson, Past President
CEO, Metro Atlanta Urban Farm
Program Director, Univ. of Georgia
Cooperative Extension
East Point, Georgia
cpcfarmbobby@aol.com

Cordalie Benoit
CT Community Gardening Association
New Haven, Connecticut
Cordalie.benoit@aya.yale.edu

Joelette Crawl
Forestry Program Specialist
Federation of Southern Cooperatives/LAF
Epes, Alabama
joletcc@yahoo.com

Nancy Kohn
Executive Director,
New York City Parks Green Thumb
Program
New York, New York

Nancy.kohn@parks.nyc.gov
Demetrice Mills,
President, Brooklyn Queens Land Trust
New York, New York
demetric.mills@bqllt.org

Lukan Paulus
Director of Operations
Growing Healthy Veterans
Graylake, Illinois
lukan@growinghealthyveterans.org

Sandy Pernitz
City of Seattle P-Patch Community
Gardening Program
Seattle, Washington
Sandy.Pernitz@seattle.gov

Kim Scott
City Planner
Cleveland City Planning Commission
Cleveland, Ohio
KScott@city.cleveland.oh.us

Liat Racin
Postdoctoral Research
Harvard University
Graduate School of Design
Newton, Massachusetts
liatracin@gmail.com

Cathy Walker
Metro Atlanta Urban Farm
College Park, Georgia
cpcfarmcathy@aol.com

Sandra Zuniga
San Francisco Dept. of Public Works
San Francisco, California
Sandra.zuniga@sfdpw.org

ACGA Staff

Alsie Parks
Office Coordinator
3271 Main Street
College Park, GA 30337
1-877-ASK-ACGA
Email: aparks@communitygarden.org

American Community Gardening Association

3271 Main Street
College Park, GA 30337
1-877-ASK-ACGA
info@communitygarden.org
www.communitygarden.org

Cover: Gardeners from the High Point community garden in Seattle.
This picture and the picture on page 1 were provided by Sandy Pernitz,
Seattle P-Patch Community Gardening Program.

Follow us on



Table of Contents

- 2 Presidents's Letter
William Maynard, ACGA President
- 3 Introduction
Liat Racin and Kristin Faurest
- 4 International Garden of Many Colors,
Alex Cole-Weiss and David de la Pena
- 6 Growing Food in Alaska-Rais Garden
Corey Allen-Young
- 9 "Growing Communities" Workshops
- 10 Memories of 'Homeland' in Community Garden
Liat Racin
- 12 Global Greens in Your Community Garden
Don Boekelheide
- 16 History of the American Community Gardening Association
- 17 Strengthening Seattle:
Public Outreach and Engagement for All Local Neighborhoods
Virginia Weihs
- 18 From Seed to Soup
Holly A. Chaille
- 20 Helps Sacramento's Newest Residents Grow New Roots
by Lisa Welze
- 22 Determining Motivation to Garden Among
Bhutanese and Burmese Refugees Using Photo Voice
by Ruth Grubisec
- 30 Chicago Global Garden Welcomes, Trains Refugees
by Linda Seyler
- 32 See you in Cleveland for the 2016 ACGA Conference
- 34 Refugee and Survivors Shaping Our Future Growth
by Mary Black and Erin Hantke
- 36 Building a Bridge: The Namaste Community Garden
by Katie Vincent



© American Community Gardening Association. *The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association*, Volume 20, is published by the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA), 3271 Main Street, College Park, GA 30337. Web site: www.communitygarden.org

ACGA is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization of gardening and open space volunteers and professionals. *The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association* is a tool for advocacy, publicity, networking, and providing the best technical assistance available for the design, planning, management, and permanence of gardening, greening, and open space programs that emphasize community.

The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association, provides a forum where professionals, volunteers, and supporters working on community gardening, greening, and open space issues can relate ideas, research, opinions, suggestions, and experiences.

The words "*The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association*," "American Community Gardening Association," the journal's cover logo, and the Association's logo are the exclusive property of the American Community Gardening Association. ACGA holds exclusive rights to all materials appearing in *The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association*, except where noted.

Letters to the Editor and Article Submissions

The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association welcomes letters to the Editor and article submissions. Address letters, story ideas, or complete articles to *The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association*, ACGA, 3271 Main Street, College Park, GA 30337. Email: info@communitygarden.org

Reprinting Articles

Requests to reprint articles should be sent, in writing, to *The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association*, ACGA, 3271 Main Street, College Park, GA 30337.

Subscription

A subscription to *The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association* is a benefit of membership in the ACGA.



President's Message...

To Our Members, Friends, and Supporters

“Bloom where you are planted.”

This issue of the *The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association* celebrates community gardening and greening by focusing on people from around the world who now garden in community gardens and urban agriculture projects across North America. For more than 300 years, immigrants have traveled to North America to explore, to escape famine and war, or to seek a better life for their families, making North America one of the melting pots of the world.

The newcomers have brought their beliefs, customs, art, and centuries of time-tested farming practices — as well as seeds and root stock — with them. Now they grow a wide variety of produce from their native cultures as they till the soil of their new homeland.

Their unique and diverse plants and styles of gardening can be found in community gardens across the continent. They are what make community gardens a great place to learn about other cultures and their growing practices.

Community gardens celebrate diversity and, paradoxically, we can find common ground through gardening. As all true gardeners do, we like to share our stories, our growing techniques, and the produce that we grow. Visit a community garden today and discover what you have been missing!

We hope that you will enjoy this issue of the *The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association*. The articles were submitted by ACGA members and tell of the stories found in community gardens of North America.



William Maynard
President, ACGA

P. S. We hope to see you in Cleveland next year for the 2016 ACGA conference!

Introduction

by Liat Racin and Kristin Faurest

Members of the Board of Directors, American Community Gardening Association

Stranger in a Strange Land: Immigrant Gardeners in a Nation of Immigrants

“Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history.” (Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*).

North America is home to two patchwork nations composed in a series of migrations. All Americans – besides Native Americans — had at one time been strangers to this land. Being a “new immigrant” has always been synonymous with challenge, adjustment, and at times, adversity or prejudice.

For the men and women who leave home for one or many reasons, the path into the unknown may be guided as much by fear as by hope for the future. Some come to escape oppressive governments and decaying economies while others are lured by the prospects of new adventures and cultural opportunities. No matter the reason, the process of adopting often means facing a series of bumps on the road toward expectations and achievements. Besides language and cultural barriers, the loss of social support systems and foodways may leave many feeling vulnerable.

In an era where one can cross the border by sea, land, or air, immigrants can find unique opportunities in community gardens. In fact, immigrants have played a crucial role in the distinctive development of America’s community gardens, from the country’s beginnings to the contemporary gardens described in this issue. These spaces represent a crucial axis where the seeds of the past may be sown in new soil and brought to life in the present. Especially when many have come from rural, agrarian communities, growing familiar fruits and vegetables from the land they left behind and reaping the harvest in the face of new thorns, weeds, and/or climate, may provide a sense of control they otherwise lack in an uncertain and unfamiliar environment.

The bounty from the garden and the social connections it builds can be critically important in helping immigrants root a life in a new place and social context. A community garden tended by new immigrants may be an unmatched means of introducing them to neighbors and local culture and norms. Gardening may also

offer an unprecedented range of cultural expressions, flavors, fragrances, and an opportunity to embrace and claim the new land as one’s own.

In order to be accepted, newcomers here and elsewhere around the world often have to prove they are an asset, and not a burden, to society. Of course, community gardening cannot rectify this issue on its own. However, participating in community gardening may offer an inexpensive, familiar, and pragmatic formula for helping new immigrants of different backgrounds to retain a sense of themselves while (re)developing their new identity and becoming established as a part of the communities in which they settle. Ironically this also (re)defines the core character of the very communities of which they are becoming a part.

The theme of this year’s *The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association* brings forth an array of articles addressing the subjects of assimilation and the ‘preservation’ of cultural identity. Indeed, community gardens play a unique role in this balancing act. Just as people migrate for different reasons, the concept and act of community gardening means something different for each person.

Several of our stories feature gardens sponsored by organizations dedicated to improving the immigrant experience. They demonstrate the importance of empowering immigrants to become the main decision-makers in their own gardens and lives. A

fundamental theme mentioned through the articles is the difficulty in obtaining translators to facilitate communication between gardeners and organizations. A less obvious but equally important theme is about crossing cultural barriers to identify and nurture leaders within these immigrant gardener communities.

There’s no doubt that community gardens have the ability to touch the lives not only of immigrant gardeners in America, but also those of all gardeners who have left people and places behind. We hope these stories and pictures are as inspiring and thought-provoking for you as they are for us.

International Garden of Many Colors

by Alex Cole-Weiss and David de la Pena, UC Davis



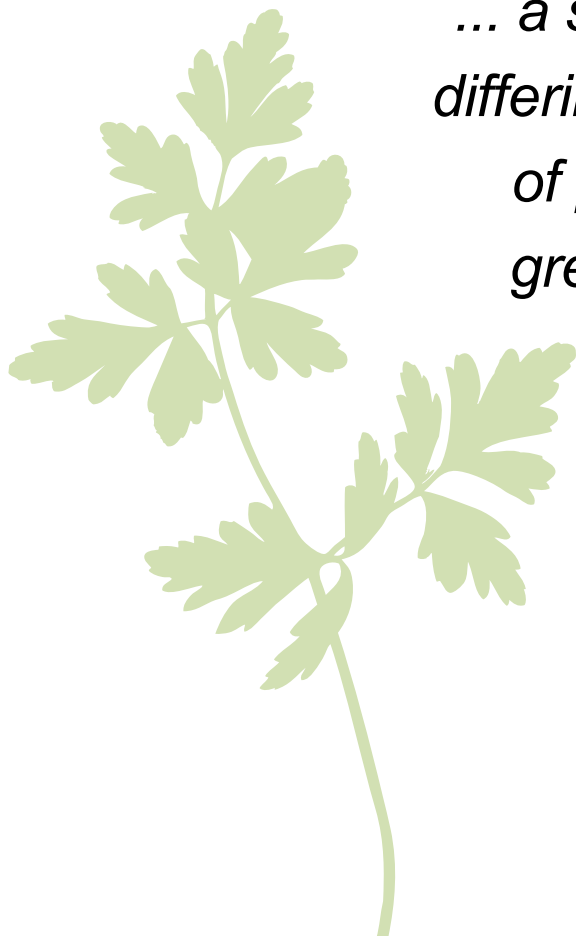
Spring comes quickly to the rich agricultural valley of Sacramento, so it is not surprising that on a cool and sunny February morning, people are already at work in the International Garden of Many Colors. Started in the early 1990s by mostly Russian, Ukrainian, and Mexican immigrants, this informal community garden lies just north of the American River, which runs through the heart of Sacramento, adjacent to an affordable housing apartment complex.

The gardeners reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity for which the city is known, and the garden supplies fresh produce for all kinds of treasured food traditions, from borscht to salsa. However, this garden is a place of struggle as much as success, an incredible asset to some, a worrisome liability to others, and an ongoing question mark in the context of Sacramento's urban agriculture revolution.

On my first visit, as a curious student intern and avid gardener, an elderly woman greets me and crushes fragrant bay leaves in her fingers for me to smell. Planted in the underutilized space beneath giant electrical towers, winter crops such as cabbage, potatoes, fava beans, and wheat grow well, and bright orange calendula flowers spill into the paths. By early May, gladiolas, roses, and irises start to bloom, alongside growing tomato forests, dense raspberry bushes, and meandering squashes.

The International Garden of Many Colors is a great example of how community gardening contributes to a fulfilling environment for immigrants both to build new lives in new places and to maintain traditions, even in the context of migration. The food is grown primarily for home consumption, with surplus shared with friends or exchanged for a few dollars with those in the neighborhood. Many gardeners grow fruits and vegetables from their home countries, which are not easily found in typical American grocery stores, like black currants, sorrel, and fresh garbanzo beans.

*... a site where
differing visions
of public city
green space
clash.*



Having brought seeds from her home country, one gardener explained to me, “Ukrainian dill is much better than American dill.” Gardeners not only grow much of their own food, but also medicinal herbs like artemesia, yarrow, chicory, greater celandine, plantain, and comfrey. Many older gardeners are on a fixed income and often help out with grandchildren or other family members. For those who have the skills and energy to grow food, the garden contributes to the health and happiness of entire families, particularly in times of limited resources and structural barriers to accessing those resources.

Gardeners are proud of the fruits of their labor, even if the hard work has been made more complicated with recent state-wide mandatory water restrictions, because of drought. Some gardeners have decided not to plant this year because of water challenges, but others wouldn't dream of letting their plot go after having worked on it for 10, even 15 years. The gardeners themselves have designed the patchwork garden layout over the last 20 years, using mainly reused and recycled materials. Pallet fences, teddy bear scarecrows, homemade trellises, and plastic milk jug cloches speak to resourcefulness and freedom of expression. However, one person's trash-into-treasure is still another person's trash, and not everyone loves the DIY garden aesthetic—or the fact that gardeners are technically squatting on public land.

Like other community gardens around the U.S. and elsewhere, the International Garden of Many Colors is a site where differing visions of public city green space clash. The land is owned by the city, and the garden also sits partially within a utility corridor. Safety, code compliance, and liability are all concerns for the city, and the local electrical company wants to build an access road and clearance areas underneath the towers.

Though gardeners know they don't actually own the land they work, they nevertheless feel a sense of ownership through the effort they have put in and continue to devote to the beauty and productivity of the land. Previous city attempts at removal have been met by energetic resistance from the gardeners, supported in part by the affordable housing organization's community organizing program.

However, there is no formal leadership structure for this garden. This seems to be something of a double-edged sword. In moments of crisis, people come together to fight eviction, but proactive organizing and leadership wanes over time. Gardeners have the freedom to design and manage their plot as they see fit, but maintaining ground rules and sticking to procedures that resolve conflict and sort out who gets a plot to work is not as easy, especially when not everyone shares the same language. Opportunity to access garden plots, responsible water usage, and fairness and respect are all issues that occasionally become problems in the garden. Despite the challenges, this

immigrant-driven garden remains strong, with its unique companion planting of structure and anarchy.

This past year, the International Garden of Many Colors has a new horizon. With the support of a local council member, Sacramento's Department of Parks and Recreation has agreed to build a new, official community garden immediately next to the existing garden, prioritizing new spots for gardeners who may be displaced by the utility access road. Some gardeners are excited about this proposal, given the resources that come with a formal garden, like guaranteed water, free seeds, and shared tools. Others are wary, wondering whether the new garden will meet their needs in terms of space, design, and autonomy. Some worry that the new garden may become an excuse to get rid of the old garden entirely.

So what is the future of democratic, community-based, immigrant gardening in Sacramento? Community gardens must find a balance between formal and informal structures to meet the needs of a broad spectrum of users, especially in culturally diverse places. The success and struggle at the International Garden of Many Colors invites community garden advocates and city residents alike to consider how social and cultural diversity goes hand in hand with biodiversity.



Growing Food in Alaska-Rais Garden

by Corey Allen-Young, Catholic Social Services



There's no garden like an Alaskan garden – at least, according to the farmers of the Fresh International Gardens Project, who know a thing or two about producing crops. For many of the refugees who participate, the project has allowed them to re-connect with their agricultural roots. Since 2007, the garden project has included varied refugee groups, including Hmong, Tongan, Somali, Congolese, and Bhutanese refugees, many of whom come from agricultural societies. However, even with their wealth of experience, growing produce in what is arguably the northernmost international community garden in the world has some challenges.

Imagine yourself with your hands in the dirt in a plot within the 8000 square feet of the Fresh International Gardens on a sunny may day in Alaska. Blue skies and warm temperatures (HOW WARM?) surround six Bhutanese refugees who are all smiles, while prepping for the season's first crop. Working Anchorage's biggest farm isn't easy for the gardeners, who have to adjust old habits and techniques in order to succeed in their new home.

Bhutanese refugee Phul Niroula learned that quickly. Niroula, who resettled to Alaska with her family as part of Catholic Social Services' Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services program (RAIS), says these new garden plots are a lot smaller than the ones her family farmed. She also notes that traditionally, back in their home country, animals like oxen are used to plow the fields; here they often use a mechanized plow.

For more information about Catholic Social Services (RAIS) program or the Fresh International Gardens project go to www.cssalaska.org or contact Jessica Kovarik at 907-222-7376 or jkovarik@cssalaska.org

According to Niroula, in Alaska, while there are difficulties in growing certain vegetables, just like the size of the state of Alaska, others — like cabbage, spinach, and carrots — grow really, really big.

Created through a USDA risk management grant to give refugees an opportunity to learn how to grow produce in Alaska, the Fresh International Gardens Project also gives gardeners a chance to practice speaking English and to connect with the larger Anchorage community. Julie Riley, with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service, runs the project and says that many of the gardeners are elderly and face isolation in their new country. Getting them out of the house to work in the garden and to sell produce twice a week at the local farmers markets has proven to have a positive impact.

The impact is also felt on the environment. Since all of the produce grown in the Fresh International Gardens is sold and consumed in Anchorage and Alaska, Riley says that fewer products have to be shipped, trucked, or flown in from other places in the U.S. or around the world. In fact, the Fresh International Gardens is the largest source of local produce in the city.

The gardeners of the Fresh International Gardens are working towards their own piece of the American Dream by learning small business skills. Through classroom instruction (on issues of marketing, pricing, packaging, etc.) and hands-on learning in the garden, the group is able to harvest and sell more crops each year, total of 31 different vegetables, four flowers, and three herbs. In the summer of 2014, 4,230 pounds of potatoes, radishes, beets, and the Fresh International Gardens Salad Mix (lettuces, mizuna, arugula, spinach, dill, nasturtium

flowers, and chickweed) were grown and sold for \$10,270.

Chandra Subba, a Bhutanese refugee who came to Alaska with her family five years ago as part of the RAIS program, says Alaska has good soil. However, she has learned that not every crop she likes (tomatoes, cucumbers) can grow. Two-thirds of the crops that refugees have experience with are warm season vegetables that are not suitable for Alaska.

According to RAIS Director/State Refugee Coordinator Jessica Kovarik, “The experience of for-profit gardening is a new one for many of the gardeners at the Fresh International Gardens. Most of them are subsistence farmers, whose daily lives centered on producing food to nourish their families. Fresh International Gardens has inspired many of the gardeners and their families to go back to their roots. After learning how to grow produce in Alaska, many have joined other local community gardens where they grow produce to feed their families.”

Currently the group’s main gardeners are Bhutanese and Congolese. Despite language barriers and some difficulties with crops, there is no denying their enthusiasm. Subba says she has learned to start early and utilize Alaska’s longer summer days to grow potatoes, carrots, radishes, kale, and cilantro. With the successful introduction of so many new crops, the gardeners have incorporated new food into their diets. Riley says mustard seed and sesame leaves are quickly being shared among the different cultures in the community. She also says that this shows that all Alaskans benefit from these crops as much as the gardeners benefit from their own unique Alaskan garden.



PEPPERWOOD GROVE

THE GROOVY GREEN BOTTLE



GREENING COMMUNITIES

ONE GARDEN AT A TIME

ACGA



AMERICAN
COMMUNITY
GARDENING
ASSOCIATION

With every purchase of Pepperwood Grove a portion of the proceeds will be donated to American Community Gardening Association*



*For every participating 750ml or 3L sold from April 1-December 31, 2015, 1.25% of gross profits will be donated to American Community Gardening Association. Minimum donation of \$20,000, maximum donation of \$25,000. Campaign benefits efforts to promote and support community gardens. For more details go to pepperwoodgrove.com

communitygarden.org



“Growing Communities” Workshops

What past attendees have said:

“Now I feel empowered to help my community grow together.”

– Great Falls, Mont.

“Probably the best community building workshop I have ever been to – gardening related or otherwise!!!”

– Charleston, W.Va.

“It provided me with the tools not only to organize gardens, but also [to organize] other projects in group and community settings.”

– St. Paul, Minn.

“This workshop was phenomenal: in two days it gave me the knowledge, skills, tools, and inspiration to organize my community; normally, it would have taken me years!”

– Charlottesville

In the past several years, there has been a tremendous growth of community gardening, but often the focus is only on building the physical infrastructure of the gardens – raised beds, water systems, fencing. However, based on more than 30 years of experience, ACGA recognizes that there needs to be as much, if not more, attention to developing the human infrastructure – the COMMUNITY – of the garden. The goal of the ACGA Growing Communities Workshop is to build SUSTAINABLE community gardens.

What is it?

Growing Communities is an in-depth, two-day (ACGA will work with communities or organizations to custom design one-day or three-day workshops), hands-on workshop based on the ACGA’s curriculum for community development, Growing Communities: Community Building and Organizational Development through Community Gardening. Participants learn proven strategies that community organizers use to develop dynamic leaders and create strong community gardening programs through a participatory approach to community building. As a “train the trainers” session, attendees learn the principles and practices of community building, and how to pass these techniques on to others in their community by conducting their own workshops. The curriculum offers ways to engage the power of local community members to have a positive impact on their own lives and the lives of their communities.

Specific topics covered in the workshop include:

- Community Organizing
- Leadership Development
- Grassroots Fundraising
- Communications
- Planning
- Coalition Building
- Asset-Based Community Development
- Meeting Facilitation
- and Developing a Board of Directors

ACGA trainers can also provide customized, more specific trainings on individual topics.

Community gardening is most successful and long lasting when the people affected by the garden have a role in leading the development of the garden. Including individuals from diverse backgrounds in all stages of the planning process creates stronger programs and neighborhoods and enriches the experience of gardening. Focusing on a community’s assets, rather than on problems, leads to building a community. Offering opportunities for community members to experience themselves and their communities in new and empowering ways provides for the seeds for long-lasting change. This is transformation. This is the foundation for community gardening and community building.

LEARN MORE!

Check the ACGA website or call 1-800-ASK-ACGA

Memories of 'Homeland' in Community Garden

by Liat Racin, Board Member, American Community Gardening Association

“Every garden, even one just made, is a place haunted by spirits that whisper to our memory.”

— Hester and Francis (1990)

Beyond providing a place to grow food and make friends, community gardens offer a tangible link to a lost homeland, in new, unfamiliar and frequently challenging surroundings.

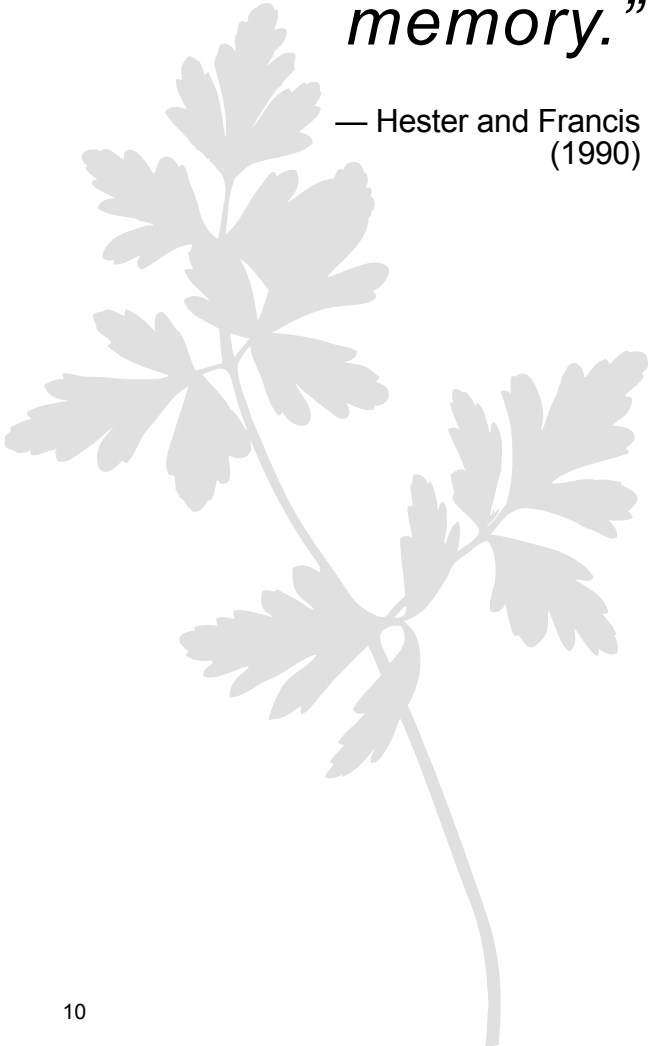
Immigrant gardeners may grow some interesting and unusual crops, sometimes from seed carried lovingly from the world they left behind. Along with their precious seeds, immigrants bring with them an equally important resource, cherished memories of a past life. These memories influence and interact with gardeners and their gardens, sometimes in unexpected ways.

As part of a PhD research project in New York City, I explored the relationship between memory and community gardening. I found that the colors, smells and tastes of a community garden can restore certain memories of people and places left behind. At the same time, and perhaps more importantly, I also discovered that community gardens are not simply passive places where individual gardeners nostalgically reawaken dormant memories. Instead, community gardens, as vibrant communities within the vast and impersonal city, become social spaces where gardeners together dynamically form and reform images of homeland and their ever-changing cultural identity.

My research focused on three public community gardens in the South Bronx. Two of the gardens were predominantly tended by Puerto Rican-born gardeners. Many had grown up on the farms of the island's countryside before migrating to the city between 1950 and 1970. The third garden had a demographically diverse membership, mostly Spanish-speaking gardeners from Latin America and the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico. As experienced garden organizers like to remind us, every community garden, like each of the three described above, is a unique cultural ecosystem, shaped by a host of physical and social factors interacting in complex ways. They offer a unique visual testament that reflects the memories, actions, choices and cultural values of gardeners.

To gather information, I purposely drew on a number of different strategies. I conducted interviews, recorded observations and worked side-by-side gardeners. I enlisted seven gardeners from each garden, who all self-identified as Puerto Rican. I also took a careful look at what researchers call “material artifacts” including things as a garden's characteristic crops, its structures and overall design.

One signature feature of the built environment, the “casita,” served as the heart of two of the gardens. Literally meaning little house, the “casita” functioned as everything from a garden tool shed to a community meeting place and a setting for impromptu concerts and feasting. Simple and sometimes



brightly decorated by the gardeners, the “casita” represents a form of Caribbean vernacular architecture linked with the island’s preindustrial rural landscapes (Aponte-Pares, 1997). The presence of this structure is one example of how a memory from home influences gardeners’ choices and understandings of spaces, objects, and social experiences in gardens; and of how gardens provide spaces to create feelings of “home” (Corlett, Dean & Grivetti, 2003; Sciorra & Cooper, 1990).

Memories can also be sparked by garden plants. For example, in one of the gardens, participants praised “gandules” (pigeon peas) while recalling childhood memories of life in Puerto Rico. Growing in the community garden, this tropical legume “really makes the garden look like Puerto Rico,” one gardener said. At first glance, “gandules” seem like a perfect illustration of how gardeners cultivate plants based on their memories of home (Baker, 2004).

As usual in community gardening, however, the situation is not quite so straightforward. The relationship between gardening and memory is more nuanced and complex.

When I eagerly asked about “gandules” at the other two gardens, gardeners merely shrugged. For them, “gandules” had no evocative status above other typical crops grown on Puerto Rico. They were simply, in the words of one gardener, “one of Puerto Rico’s many special plants.” In fact, gardeners at two of the three gardens did not even bother to grow “gandules” at all.

I came to understand that each community garden was creating its own coherent “memory of home” in a unique way, based on gardeners’ memories, personal experiences, crop choices, social interactions, and even wider political pressures. In this active and on-going social process, gardeners co-create their understanding of the past. This may mean that gardeners do not always come to the garden and leave it with exactly the same images and memories of their homeland. The results are sometimes unpredictable.

This finding casts new light on the relationship between gardening and memory. Winterbottom’s (2007) assertion that gardens are the living expression of a gardening group’s culture gains an added dimension. Community gardens do honor and preserve memories, but they also provide dynamic social spaces where gardeners – immigrants, non-immigrants and migrants alike - together cultivate a new identity, based on a shared and evolving narrative that may involve re-imagining collectively images of the homeland they left behind.

ACGA is proud to host...

Garden Mosaics

**Connecting youth
and elders to
investigate the
mosaic of plants,
people, and cultures
in gardens to learn
about science, and
to act together
to enhance their
community.**

Garden Mosaics is a science, environmental, and garden education program that combines intergenerational mentoring, community action, and understanding different cultures. Activities take place in community gardens, neighborhoods, and home and school gardens. Youth learn from community gardeners who share their practices, cultural backgrounds, and wisdom. Youth also learn from the Garden Mosaics educational resources and activities developed at Cornell University with funding from the National Science Foundation and US Department of Agriculture.

**Visit the ACGA website at:
<https://communitygarden.org>**

Global Greens in Your Community Garden

by Don Boekelheide, National Test Gardener for Rodale's *Organic Gardening* magazine

When an international refugee family starts working a garden plot, fellow community gardeners traditionally give the newcomers a warm welcome. If these gardeners are anything like me, though, they have a hidden agenda. It's not about cultural differences, in spite of challenges. I mean, how do you say "hello" and "welcome!" in Sgaw, Nepali, or Kinyarwanda? No, this secret obsession is all about gardening. Sooner or later, you'll find me peeking around the tomatoes to see what the new arrivals are growing.

There's lots to discover. Immigrant and refugee gardeners bring with them dozens of unusual and delicious vegetables, new to most Americans. For just a taste, here are five green leafy vegetables from around the world brought to us by immigrants. They are sure to be hits in North American community gardens and on the table — whether in a salad bowl, stir-fry, or tropical stew.



Callaloo (The Caribbean)
Seed source: Evergreen Seed (variety Red Stripe Leaf)

Callaloo (*Amaranthus* spp.) is a super-green that thrives in hot weather. Highly nutritious and easy to prepare, it tastes better cooked, which gets rid of excess oxalic acid and addresses the raw stems and leaves, which are too tough and hairy, even for most hard-core paleos.

A member of the amaranth family, callaloo grows rapidly in warm weather from dust speck tiny seeds into short, bushy

plants. Gardeners usually direct seed the crop, which is ready to pick in just 35 days and gives three or four harvests of leaves. Insect pests often eat holes in the leaves of older plants, but by relay planting every two or three weeks and removing old plants to the compost, you can keep callaloo productive and fairly decent looking. Hole-phobic gardeners may resort to an organic insect control such as spinosad or pyrethrum.

Callaloo is a world citizen, popular under countless names throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe. Classic Jamaican callaloo leaves have an attractive pattern of red and green, adding a colorful accent to the veggie patch. Amaranths leaves range in color from all dark green to intense purple. Grain amaranth is a close relative, as are the old fashioned flower, "Love Lies Bleeding," and the all-too-familiar pest, pigweed. Callaloo cannot survive cold weather and dies at the first frost.

Linguistic note: The word "callaloo" is used throughout the Caribbean as a name for prepared greens, and leaves from cocoyam, an unrelated plant, are sometimes cooked as "callaloo." When looking for seed, try the alternative English name, "Chinese spinach." Amaranths drive botanical taxonomists batty since the plants cross so readily. *A. cruentus* is used for callaloo; *A. tricolor*, for the virtually identical (in the garden) Asian types.



Verdolaga (Mexico and Central America)
Seed source: Wild Garden Seed

Verdolaga (*Portulaca oleracea* var. *Saliva*) is the Spanish name for garden purslane. It is popular in Latin America and also in Mediterranean countries. Two varieties are relatively easy to find, "Tall Green" and "Golden."

Cultivated types have larger leaves and a more upright growth habit than purslane, but the pleasant lemony taste and satisfying crunch are the same. The seed is even tinier than amaranth. Scatter sparsely and keep moist; germination occurs in a few days. In summer, it can grow to maturity in four to six weeks. It prefers soil with ample organic matter and does best if harvested all at once (Mine never wants to grow back.). Stems and leaves are edible. I like mine raw in salad, but the most popular dish to try is with eggs in *huevos con verdolagas*, a Mexican classic. Nutrition note: Verdolaga is the highest plant source of Omega-3 fatty acids.



Molokhia (Somalia and the Middle East)
Seed source: Evergreen Seed

Molokhia (*Corchorus olitorius*) is a staple in Middle Eastern kitchens, is also popular in West Africa, and is a familiar part of Somali and Somali Bantu food. A medium-sized upright leafy plant, it is grown for its edible leaves.

Molokhia has been eaten in Egypt since the time of the pharaohs. There, it is traditionally prepared finely chopped and sautéed with coriander, spices, garlic, and stock, then served over rice with rabbit or chicken. It is rich in iron,

protein, and other nutrients. Molokhia is tasty, but has a somewhat goeey texture, like okra, when cooked.

The edible variety of jute, an important fiber crop, molokhia is in the mallow family with okra, cotton, and hibiscus. It is easy to grow. Some authorities recommend putting the seed into a tea strainer and steeping them for 10 seconds in hot - not boiling - water before planting in flats, then transplanting after three weeks. I did fine with direct seeding and skipped the hot water. Plant about six inches apart, in rows about a foot apart. Harvest after 30-60 days, cutting the stems and leaves or simply harvesting the whole plant. Cut in the morning or late afternoon and use right away, since it wilts rapidly.



Sarson (Lhotshampa, from Nepal and Bhutan)
Seed sources: Wild Garden Seed, Evergreen Seed, Fedco Seed

Saag is the Lhotshampa term for sautéed greens, a popular dish in Nepal, Bhutan, and northern India. Different kinds of leaves find their way into the saag skillet, especially **sarson**, **mustard greens** (*Brassica juncea*), and **palak** or spinach chard (*Beta vulgaris* var. *Bengalensis*). Sarson is also a key ingredient in gundruk, a signature Nepalese and Lhotshampa dish made of greens and daikon radish, which are first fermented (think kimchi) then dried. To use it, a cook lightly stir fries the dried gundruk or reconstitutes it by adding it to a soup or curry.



Palak (Lhotshampa, from Nepal and Bhutan)
Seed sources: Wild Garden Seed, Evergreen Seed, Fedco Seed

The two greens, mustard and palak, come from different plant families. Mustard is in the cabbage or brassica family, while palak is a type of beet, like Swiss chard. Beets are now part of the vast amaranth family (Amaranthaceae, which botanical taxonomists have decided includes the formerly separate Chenopodaceae. Got that?)

The two main takeaways for gardeners are 1) Sarson (spicy) and palak (mild) taste very different; and 2) both are okay with cooler weather and can stand a bit of frost. In fact, all mustards, as Grandma told us, actually taste sweeter after a frost. In the garden, both do best in the cooler spring and fall seasons, though palak has excellent heat tolerance.

Mustard greens are well known traditional crops across the American South. Finding seed is rarely a problem; some varieties are fast growing and eye-catching. My favorite source is Wild Garden Seed, with their Indian selection, including “Dragon Tongue.” Wild Garden’s varieties have a less pungent kick of some mustards. Normally, mustard is direct seeded, and matures in about six weeks (You can cut small leaves much sooner.). Thin to about 6-12 inches apart, or simply grow without thinning and harvest with scissors.

Palak has potential for becoming a community garden staple. It has a mild, delicious leaf that tastes much like spinach, suitable for raw use in salads and smoothies. It has terrific heat tolerance, meaning you can have a fresh spinach-y green even in summer. The seed looks like beet seed, as botanically, it is a beet, after all.

True palak can be maddeningly hard to find in the U.S., especially improved varieties from India. Evergreen Seed has carried them, but not for the past two years. Fortunately, there is a substitute, nearly as good — perpetual spinach (*Beta vulgaris* ssp *cicla*). A close relative of Swiss chard, perpetual spinach resembles palak, though was not quite as good in hot weather in my garden trials. A staple in allotment gardens in the UK, perpetual spinach is a favorite of UK native Pam Dawling, now head gardener at Twin Oaks Community in Virginia. Dawling’s book, *Sustainable Market Farming*, is perhaps the best guide for scaling up from family growing to market gardening. She recommended the variety to Fedco Seed, which now carries it: www.fedcoseeds.com

Both palak and perpetual spinach are easy to grow. I direct seed in rows one foot apart, then progressively thin to about one foot apart. Harvest using the “cut and come again” technique.



Water spinach (Southeast Asia)

Water spinach (*Ipomoea aquatica*), the last crop on our international greens tour, is popular but controversial. Love it or hate it, you probably can’t avoid it if your community garden includes refugee or immigrant gardeners from Asia, such as the Karin or Hmong people from Indo-China. It is little wonder why market gardeners love it. The crop is delicious, vitamin-rich, and very easy to grow. In fact, that’s the problem - ecologists hate it, because it spreads too eagerly.

As the debate continues, community gardeners may find their practical experience parallels that of *Transplanting Traditions*, a highly successful refugee

garden near Durham, N.C. There, water spinach is one of the most important and popular crops in its community garden, CSA (community supported agriculture buying club), and farmers' markets, according to the Transplanting Tradition website. The crop is marketed under a variety of names, including ong choy, kang kong, and Chinese spinach.

The plant grows easily from both seeds and cuttings, similar to its botanical cousin, the sweet potato. An "upland" variety can be grown in soil more-or-less like any traditional vegetable and also grows well in containers. Active regular harvesting of the tender tips and leaves encourages the plant to branch and stay more compact. It is perennial and can keep producing a number of years in warm areas. However, it is very frost sensitive and dies out in cold weather. This helps make it less dangerous in colder areas when grown as a carefully managed summer crop.

In areas that do not freeze, you may want to talk with gardeners about the *Pros and Cons*. You can limit damage potential by keeping it well away from open water and by limiting gardening to containers.

Though water spinach seeds and cuttings are available, most community gardeners obtain stock as pass-along cuttings from other gardeners or from a trip to the local Asian market.

This very short list of greens is just a taste of what's in store for adventuresome community gardeners.

Ethiopian and Eritrean gardeners may bring banana-like enset (*Ensete ventricosum*); Central Americans may sow tree spinach (*Cnidoscolus aconitifolius*, or "chaya"),

Mayan squash (*Cucurbita ficifolia* or *C. pepo*), or huauzontle (*Chenopodium nuttalliae*, or "Aztec spinach"); Central Africans may bring equi seed watermelon (*Citrullus colocynthis*); Iraqis may bring space-alienesque traditional eggplant (*Solanum melongena*); and the list goes on.

In welcoming immigrants and refugees to our community gardens, we provide assistance and support to the newest Americans. However, community gardening is never a one way street. Immigrants share new ways to understand the world – family, resilience, sustainability, and stewardship. Just as importantly, at least to gardeners, they bring dozens of tasty new vegetables, each with a story to share.

RESOURCES FOR FINDING GLOBAL GREENS

Growing tropical greens is not difficult, and the best teachers, of course, are the refugee and immigrant gardeners who grow them.

In addition, a global network of tropical research stations offers research-based online advice. Dr. Manuel Palada, CEO of Farm Systems International (an agricultural non-profit whose motto is "sustainable agriculture for poverty alleviation"), suggests a series of excellent informational pamphlets developed at AVRDA-The World Vegetable Center in Taiwan (avrda.org) Another good source of information is ECHO: echonet.org

Seed companies if you want to try:

Evergreen Seed: www.evergreenseeds.com

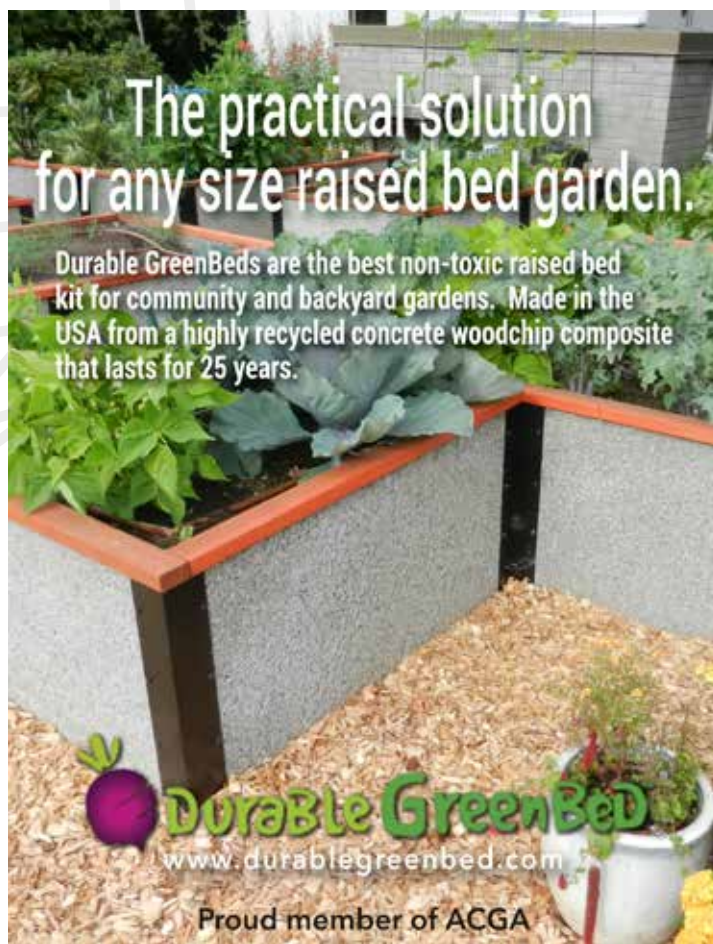
Wild Garden: www.wildgardenseed.com

Fedco: www.fedcoseeds.com

Don't forget, It is always a great idea to...

SAVE and SHARE SEEDS

with fellow community gardeners!





History of the American Community Gardening Association

ACGA is a product of two national community gardening conferences organized by the City of Chicago Department of Human Services in 1978 and 1979. A National Community Gardening Task Force created at these conferences was formed to address the issues facing communities at this time, including: federal social service cutbacks, high unemployment, and rising food costs. These issues were placing a large amount of stress on organizations that already were experiencing budget cuts.

ACGA has remained true to its mission for the 36 years since the organization began in 1979. ACGA facilitates the formation and expansion of state and regional community gardening networks, provides an informal clearinghouse for programs, develops resources in support of community garden projects, consults with organizations involved in establishing new programs, and conducts regional and national workshops and conferences.

ACGA relies on the generosity of its members and sponsors to continue its good works. Please consider supporting ACGA with a personal contribution.

DONATE TODAY

For more information, see our [ANNUAL REPORT](#)

GARDENER'S
SUPPLY COMPANY

America's #1 gardening resource for innovative, earth-friendly products in partnership with **American Community Gardening Association**

save **25%**

Gardener's Supply is a company of gardeners. We donate 8% of our profits back to the community. Mention CODE ACGA15 when you call 1-888-511-2132 for your 25% discount. Expires 12/31/15

The American Community Gardening Association wishes to acknowledge



for their generous support over the years.

THANK YOU!

Strengthening Seattle: Public Outreach and Engagement for All Local Neighborhoods

by Virginia Weihs, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods



Sometimes finding ways to conduct outreach to everyone in your community can be hard, especially when all people in your community don't speak the same language. The City of Seattle has launched an innovative program to engage people who usually don't participate in public processes. The hope and the goal is to encourage everyone to think outside the box and get the whole community involved in the planning, building, and on-going participation of local community gardening efforts.

In 2002, Seattle established its Race and Social Justice Initiative. This Initiative has an explicit goal of recognizing and working to end racial disparities and institutionalized racism. City staff led the neighborhood planning process while committed to prioritizing racial and economic equity in their work.

In 2009, city staff identified several historically under-represented communities from whom they actively sought input. These included immigrant and refugee populations, communities of color, seniors, youth, people living with disabilities, renters, and small business owners. Seattle then began the process of updating its neighborhood plans in three different southeast neighborhoods. Each neighborhood is home to a station of the city's newly opened Link Light Rail system. In addition, each of these neighborhoods is largely made up of people from historically under-represented communities; the population of Southeast Seattle is more than 80 per cent people of color; of these, more than 40 per cent are immigrants and refugees.

A central component of the neighborhood planning process was to collect the input of the residents of Southeast Seattle about what they wanted for and/or in their neighborhoods. Language barriers, cultural differences, disproportionate levels of poverty, and other forms of marginalization are relevant factors in these communities. Therefore, media releases, surveys, community events, and other commonly-employed outreach methods provided limited effectiveness in engaging these residents and in gathering meaningful feedback from these communities.

Drawing on the 'Trusted Advocate' model utilized by the White Center Community Development Association, a non-profit organization in Seattle, the city implemented a community liaison program to do outreach for the diverse groups living in Seattle's Southeast neighborhoods. City staff identified several historically underrepresented communities

from whom they sought active input. These communities included seniors, youth, and people living with disabilities from African American, Cambodian, Chinese, and Filipino communities, among many others.

Leaders from these communities were hired to host workshops, solicit feedback, bring people to meetings, and provide language interpretation services. The program was very successful, engaging 1,422 participants from 16 traditionally under-represented communities in workshops and providing interpretation in nine different languages at large community meetings. The comments and strategies collected through this process were incorporated into the development of the neighborhood plans. As the city finalized and worked to implement the plans, the communities were asked continuously for their input and were informed regularly about the plan's progress.

Following the success of this experience, the City of Seattle institutionalized the community liaison model by creating the Public Outreach and Engagement Liaison (POEL) program. Today, the POEL Program, led by the City's Department of Neighborhoods, recruits, trains, and manages a cohort of 35 to 40 individuals as liaisons every year. These liaisons represent the historically under-represented communities discussed.

The selected liaisons are themselves respected community members and bridge-builders who are skilled at facilitating their respective cultural community's engagement with the city's processes. Individual city departments working to engage historically under-represented communities make a contract with the POEL Program to hire and include the liaisons in their efforts. In any given year, there are more than ten city projects for which the liaisons do inclusive outreach and engagement.

This collaborative work between the city, the liaisons, and the communities they represent helps to ensure that Seattle provides information to all its community members, fosters diverse relationships, and receives rich and meaningful civic participation. The program continues to be a critical component of the city's racial equity work. Other cities and municipalities have sought to replicate the POEL Program in their own communities.

For more information visit the website of the Seattle [Department of Neighborhood's Outreach & Engagement](#)

From Seed to Soup

by Holly A. Chaille, WOW Garden Project
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Between 2004 and 2010, the city of Fort Wayne, Indiana, became home to thousands of refugees from Burma. Many of the arrivals had spent more than 15 years in refugee camps prior to relocation in America. They had little experience to prepare them for the living skills needed in America's midwest.

It was in 2010 that I became the director of the Fresh Food Initiative, established to provide cultural and educational assistance to help these refugees become comfortable in their new Fort Wayne community.

The Burmese are an agrarian people, whose approach to growing food seems less worrisome and fussy than American gardeners. One priority was to empower participants to grow culturally appropriate, fresh produce for themselves, so we set about recruiting gardeners for this Fresh Food Initiative. They had brought seeds with them from Burma and didn't need much instruction beyond understanding local frost dates. Participants were eager to put down roots and share their cultural traditions with us. During the first two seasons, because the neighborhood in which we were working had strict rules that essentially prohibited growing food on the property, we employed a variety of approaches, from baby pool gardens to leased land.

By the third year, gardeners put more than three acres into production, and an additional 78 home gardens were installed, providing more than 400 clients and their families with access to fresh food. Though these were some of the worst agricultural years on the books, the gardeners' resourcefulness and patience fueled the project. Soon the gardens and gardeners were attracting attention from community members asking to volunteer and from the media. The initiative literally created pathways for the community to connect and to engage in positive and meaningful experiences.

Federal funding was limited to three years. This motivated us to create The World on Wheels (WOW) Garden Project, not only as a fundraiser, but also as a vehicle for increasing community engagement. The WOW public art initiative consisted of 23 wheelbarrow gardens representing the many cultures of Fort Wayne.

The wheelbarrows were planted with traditional food gardens, reflecting each culture. Over one summer more than 23,000 people enjoyed



Akeema, a Burmese gardener, planting his garden during the first year. At the time the whole garden had just 33 raised beds on a commercial site.



The World on Wheels (WOW) wheelbarrows for display at Taste of the Arts before they were planted. The sponsor was an Irish pub, and the tap is actually a working soaker hose.

seeing them! The WOW Project raised \$40,000 while simultaneously educating viewers about the importance of culturally appropriate food access.

In the spring of 2013, I met a farmer who had purchased some land in an area of the city where poverty and crime were common and grocery stores were not. He fenced in the property, added a water line and began planting beans and watermelon. Soon the neighborhood kids became curious and wandered over to observe. The farm enjoyed several years of teaching youth how to grow food and sell it at a local farmers market.

When I met this farmer, he was moving toward retirement and much of the farm sat idle. With funds we had raised we added 36 raised beds, a new storage shed, and made other improvements to the farm, now known as Slataper Street Farm. That year we worked with 12 Burmese families -- all living in the public housing complex directly across the street from the farm -- to set up a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) business and held three events to recruit volunteers and customers. By season's end more than 200 people had come to the farm to grow or purchase produce.

We've since added bees, pollination gardens, and a children's educational garden called the Little Sprouts Garden. The Little Sprouts are pre-K kids who walk two blocks from their school with their teacher to our farm, where they plant seeds, pick apples, taste honey, and experience gardening from seed to soup. These school kids are all eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and most of them have never seen food grow in the ground or apples grow on trees. Many of these children have parents who grow food on our farm, and they delight in pointing out bulletin board pictures showing their folks at work in the garden.

None of the success the farm experiences came without "trowel and error." Funding and weather are both fickle. We've learned not to count on either to be in our favor too much. However, the pounds of food the farm produces, and the number of hungry mouths that get fed, tell us we are accomplishing a great deal.

We've gotten to know the gardeners and their families, too. The bridging of cultures on this little piece of land has given all of us the gift of community. At the end of each season we sit down with each participant and talk about their experiences. One of our newer farmers, a widow with six children who was isolated and depressed when she first came to the farm this year, said, "The garden is my family. It makes me feel happy."

The farm is also a place for storytelling — for all of us. It's the place where the gardeners can come to remember their roots and teach their children their own farming traditions. It's where I've learned to replant the little wisps of seedlings that I'm thinning out, because I saw it done, and it works. It's where we all work together, a community of gardeners, to feed our bodies and our souls.



The client bed photo, taken in 2014, features roselle which is a very popular green grown by many Burmese.



Roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) is a species of Hibiscus native to West Africa. It is also part of the cuisine of Burma where it is called chinbuang. Image from: <https://bucketfullofwords.wordpress.com/tag/roselle/>

How the Farm-to-Fork Movement Helps Sacramento's Newest Residents Grow New Roots

by Lisa Welze, International Rescue Committee of Sacramento, California Resettlement Director

New roots are growing in Sacramento, "America's Farm-to-Fork Capital." The International Rescue Committee (IRC), an international humanitarian organization that assists people in conflict and disaster zones, as well as refugees who have sanctuary in the United States, has joined forces with local farm-to-fork chefs and the Sacramento Native American Health Center. Together they are building an urban farm to support refugee, Native American, and other local farmers to improve food security, health, and self-sufficiency. The intended result will be a blend of culture, crops, and community that links local area businesses to up-and-coming farmers.

One IRC farmer, Ram Khatiwoda, was born on a family farm in southern Bhutan, where daily life involved caring for the family's animals. That changed when, at age 10, Ram and his family, along with more than 100,000 other individuals of Nepalese descent, were expelled forcibly from Bhutan.

Ram and his family spent the next 17 years living in a refugee camp in Nepal. With few employment prospects in the camp, Ram sought work with neighboring farmers outside of the camp. He worked on rice farms and did odd construction jobs, all while studying to earn his university degree in mathematics. Ram arrived in Sacramento six years ago; now, he, his wife, and three American-born children are all U.S. citizens. Ram works as a senior lab technician, but says he misses working the land and having home grown food to support his family and local community. The IRC New Roots Program has reconnected him to the land.

In 2014, local restaurant owners Josh Nelson and Chris Jarosz, seeking to expand healthy food opportunities for the city while bringing locally grown produce into their restaurants (Selland's Family Restaurants: The Kitchen Restaurant, Ella Dining Room and Bar, Selland's Market, and upcoming Obo), approached the IRC.



This year, the New Roots Kuchenu Farm in Sacramento was born: a collaboration among the IRC; the Chefs' Harvest and Educational Foundation (CHEF), a non-profit organization founded by Nelson and Jarosz; and the Sacramento Native American Health Center (SNAHC), a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of Native American and Alaskan Native populations through traditional, self-sufficient, and holistic health workshops and care.



The New Roots Program works with local communities to train and link families to farms and community gardens where gardeners grow fresh produce for themselves and their families, to help refugees integrate into their communities and meet their neighbors. In some cases, gardeners supplement family incomes by selling produce at local farmers markets and to local restaurants.

IRC participants who want to grow their own food are assigned a plot of land at the New Roots Kuchenu Farm. They also have access to farmer and business development training to learn how to adapt their native agricultural expertise to the Sacramento climate and market, write small business plans, and navigate the labor laws and regulations of California.

Farmers at the New Roots Kuchenu Farm are a mix of refugees from countries such as Bhutan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Afghanistan, as well as members of the local Native American community, and residents of nearby Sacramento neighborhoods. Connecting refugees and other would-be farmers to the five-acre urban farm can be therapeutic. The project provides easier access to affordable nutritious foods, supplemental income, and job training skills. The site has been transformed from a vacant lot to a multi-use site that can host a variety of activities, from cooking demonstrations and nutrition classes, to Native American sweat lodge ceremonies.

Similar to many other clients of the IRC, SNAHC clients have strong land ties in their heritage. "Ku-Che-Nu," which means "plants as medicine" in the Miwok language, speaks to the health and wellness the farm brings to the Native American community. By participating in the urban farm, clients learn how to

grow, harvest, prepare, and taste fresh produce — and to reestablish traditional ties to the land and celebrate their heritage.

CHEF founders Nelson and Jarosz helped pioneer the farm-to-fork initiative in Sacramento and celebrate the local food culture. Nelson wrote the resolution leading to Sacramento's title, "Farm-to-Fork Capital of America."

"The New Roots Kuchenu Farm will bring fruits and vegetables back to underserved neighborhoods, while providing a space for collaborative cooking classes, nutrition education, and practicing indigenous farming techniques by some of Sacramento's most diverse residents," says Lisa Welze, the IRC Sacramento's resettlement director.

The farm will showcase plants of significance to Native American, refugee, and immigrant populations from around the world, including plants with food, medicinal, and handcraft uses. A public display garden as well as local community garden plots support the community at large.

At the end of the day, Sacramento restaurants have a steady supply of fresh, locally grown ingredients supporting the farm-to-fork movement. Local restaurant owners associated with CHEF will purchase the produce grown by farmers at New Roots Kuchenu Farm. Access to the fresh produce gives these Sacramento chefs a leg-up in a town where consumer interest in farm-to-fork business models is growing at a rapid pace. The IRC New Roots Kuchenu Farm is a perfect example of a symbiotic community garden enterprise that bridges communities and culture — to build local sustainability.

Determining Motivation to Garden Among Bhutanese and Burmese Refugees Using Photo Voice

by Ruth Grubisec, Assistant Professor at University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

Bhutanese and Burmese refugees have access to an international garden at St. Francis Episcopal Church in San Antonio Texas and they appreciate opportunity to garden. We did a study to determine why. Qualitative data, utilizing Photo Voice, was collected to determine what motivates refugees to garden.

Questions were asked of fifteen gardeners who agreed to participate; Why do you participate in gardening? Does access to fresh produce from the garden affect your food choices? How does gardening impact you and your family? In addition, they were provided with training sessions to teach them the Photo Voice concept and how to use a digital camera. They expressed their answers through photographs.

Participants spent 4 weeks taking photos aligning to the study questions. These photo sessions were supervised, photos were downloaded and 5 photos were selected by each participant that described the meaning of gardening from their perspective. Captions were prepared by the participants for each of their selected photos. A photo display with the 5 photos and their captions was prepared for a photo exhibit given in the community to disseminate the findings.

There were themes that emerged

- Gardening is good for health, provides tasty vegetables, and is peaceful.
- Pride in growing their own vegetables and harvesting
- Socialization while gardening.

Readers should be able to use information to encourage others to provide refugee access to community gardening. The major themes cited by the captions in these photos provide evidence that gardening provides refugees with many important benefits that help them adjust to their new home.



I sow and grow corn and doing that myself makes me proud.



I share what I grow with my friends.



We love to share gardening and the food we grow together with our family and friends

Telling **PERSONAL** STORIES
Capturing the Meaning of Gardening



My wife is cooking eggplants from our garden by frying them in oil with salt, cumin and Turmeric powder.



One of my favorite things to grow and eat are the beans from my garden..



Having my daughter work with me in the garden makes me very happy.



The plants I grow do well without much rain..



We use hot peppers in a lot of our cooking.



My garden here reminds me of the garden I had back home where I come from.



I have cooked a meal of pumpkin and leaves with rice. Our family sits together and enjoys our food..



I am happy to have such good vegetable and I put a lot of work into growing them.

Capturing the Meaning of Gardening...
in **PICTURES** *and* *Words*



My okra tastes better than the okra in the store.



I like to plant pumpkins. We use the leaves in our food dishes. We chop up the leaves, mix it into rice, let the mix and sit for three days then fry it and eat it with other foods, like bamboo or eggs.



I like feeding eggplant and Okra to my kids for the vitamins.



My pumpkin is very tasty and is full of good vitamins.



It is fun to be outside in the garden working and sharing with my friends.



It is my culture to use a basket. We go to the garden and use the basket to collect the vegetables.



I have cooked a meal of pumpkin and leaves with rice. Our family sits together and enjoys our food.



I love to feed my grandchildren the vegetables from the garden



I am very happy when I work in my garden and harvest vegetables.



These are my long green beans I grow in my garden. These beans need a fertile soil. We use them in a fry curry and also sometimes we use it for soup, which is very tasty.

My daughter's favorite vegetables are pumpkin and zucchini.



My son picks some of our chilies, chilies makes our food taste better because we like spicy food.



This is the community gathering sitting together area at the International Community Garden. We have time for talking after we pick our vegetables.

Telling **PERSONAL** STORIES

Capturing the Meaning of Gardening



I picked pumpkin, eggplant, chilies, and green beans. The vegetables provided the seed for more plants in the future.



I like the taste of beans and they have a lot of vitamins.



I am taking care of my grandson while reviewing my photo journal reflections for this project.



This is an Asian green pumpkin which is used for vegetable. We are able to get iron, vitamin c, potassium, etc. It will grow on fertile land and needs regular water. It has a long branch and will weigh 5-10lbs. This is very familiar to me and I used to grow it in my home country.

Capturing the Meaning
of Gardening...

in **PICTURES**
and Words



I grow mustard to use in making curry.



I like the taste of the peppers,
I mix it with the curry and pickles.



I like to care for my eggplant.



I plant vegetables in the garden and share it with
my new friends.

Add Your Community Garden to the ACGA Community Garden Database and Map

ACGA is working to create a comprehensive list of community gardens across North America. To accomplish this goal, we need your help and the help of gardeners from coast to coast to submit some basic information about the locations and amenities of their gardens! By contributing to this mapping project, you will help ACGA and the world better understand how many communities gardens exist, where they flourish, and how many communities are benefitted by their presence.

Visit the ACGA website at:
<https://communitygarden.org/edit-garden/>
to be “put on the map!”



Sample page showing Denver and surrounding area.

ACGA



AMERICAN
COMMUNITY
GARDENING
ASSOCIATION

Join Us!

American Community Gardening Association

ACGA supports community gardening by facilitating the formation and expansion of state and regional community gardening networks, developing resources in support of community gardening, encouraging research, and conducting educational programs.

And **YOU** can join this growing movement!

Call ACGA at 1-800-ASK-ACGA or visit the website, **communitygarden.org** for more information about how to join and support the mission of ACGA.

BENEFITS of MEMBERSHIP

Individual Membership \$45

- Eligible to apply for grants
- Member listserv
- Free seed packets
- Technical support
- Website access (Full)
- E-Newsletter (Monthly)
- The Journal of the American Community Gardening Association* (Annual Publication)
- Conference and Workshop discounts
- Experts Panel (Monthly Online Training)

Sponsoring Membership \$65

- Same as above plus
- Satisfaction from supporting ACGA

Life Membership \$600

- Same as above plus
- Magnetic name badge “Life Member”

Organizational Membership \$100

- (Clubs, HOA's, Churches, etc.)
- Same as above plus
- Eligible to apply for discounted insurance

School Membership \$65

- (Special discounted rate for schools)
- Same as above plus
- Eligible to apply for discounted insurance

Umbrella Membership \$600

- Same as above plus
- 5-year term
- Ability to pass along 1/2 price ACGA memberships to its members/affiliates

Chicago Global Garden Welcomes, Trains Refugees

by Linda Seyler, Director Global Garden Refugee Training Farm, Montgomery, Alabama

Imagine yourself being plucked from your home, fleeing to safety, and waiting in limbo for years. Finally, imagine you find yourself in a safe, but foreign urban jungle. There you have eight months to learn how to care for yourself and your family. You are surrounded by plenty of food and every basic commodity that you need. However, you don't know what is safe to eat and what is not; you don't understand what is said to you and can't ask for help, because you don't speak the local language.

That's what it is like for many refugees who come to the United States from foreign rural communities. They once were respected, self-supporting members of well-functioning, traditional communities. To be asked to start over in a city like Chicago is disorienting and challenging in ways most of us cannot imagine. While newly-arrived refugees do receive help and support from dedicated resettlement agencies, they are expected to become financially self-sufficient within 8-12 months of arrival.

Who, exactly, is a refugee? A refugee is a person who was both forced to leave his/her home country and is unable to return because of threats to life and safety. "Refugee" is a legal status that the U.S. grants only after an individual has been thoroughly vetted by the United Nations Human Rights Council and the State Department. "Refugee" is a label that covers extensive past suffering and trauma.

The Global Garden Refugee Training Farm (GGRTF) rooted in a one-acre lot in Albany Park, one of the most diverse and densely populated neighborhoods in Chicago, deals with the here and now. The farm helps refugees move on by growing

food and creating security into the future. GGRFT stays on the light side, because that's where the veggies — and the kids, and the smiles, and the pleasure of doing well and lasting things for those you love — grow.

Global Garden Refugee Training Farm hosts 100 refugee families, mostly from Bhutan and Burma, who grow food for themselves and their neighbors in plots on Chicago's northwest side. Each family has its own plot, where most grow produce simply for home consumption.

In another quarter-acre common area, refugees grow vegetables for sale at farmers markets, through the Global Garden Farm CSA, and to local restaurants. The communal commercial component of GGRFT gives the farm its identity, defines its purpose, and contrasts it with traditional community gardens. This common area offers demonstration and hands-on-training opportunities for those who want to learn about commercial, organic vegetable production and about marketing in the U.S. Income from the common area is used to buy seeds, tools, and equipment needed for farm operations. Farmers also earn income, directly, by selling surplus produce grown in their family plots.

Global Gardens began just as many other urban community gardens began: with an ugly vacant lot, neighbors who helped clean up, support from city government and local agencies, partnerships with local organizations and community groups, and mentoring from other urban gardeners and farmers. Unlike most community gardens, GGRTF is considered a farm because the refugees are encouraged to grow and sell surplus vegetables to supplement their household income.





Transplants raised in a greenhouse, frost-free dates, and other practices common in a four-season climate are new to farmers from the tropics and subtropics. However, participants at GGRTF were all professional farmers who managed hundreds of acres in their home countries; they are experts who can harvest amazing amounts of food per square foot. Look beneath an early stand of ready-to-harvest mustard greens and discover cucumbers sprouting below; later, lettuce will grow in the shade of the cucumber vines. (Are these strategies for dealing with limited land alone? Or are these practices potential lessons for outsmarting cucumber beetles and other pests?) Although GGRTF calls itself a training farm, it's sometimes difficult to say who is learning and who is teaching.

Sharing the farm site with a local community garden is essential to GGRTF's mission. Creating links beyond one's immediate family and ethnic group is essential for newly-arrived refugees to feel safe and at home in their new community. Chicago's Peterson Garden Project, which provides garden plots for and teaches gardening skills to urban gardeners, is the partner organization that shares GGRTF's garden area.

This partnership brings refugee farmers into contact with their non-refugee neighbors. Here conversation, questions, the exchange of garden tips and recipes, and friendships grow naturally within adjacent garden and farm plots. Each community learns how much they have in common. The refugees can see America beyond the gloss of fast food and pop culture, as families and community enjoying the simple act of growing food. Chicago natives and transplant Americans can meet their new neighbors in a relaxed, positive setting where shared values of work, family, and community become apparent. Of course, with or without a common language, the magnetism that draws young children into group play knows no cultural bounds.

As one farmer put it, "Before, we really didn't know each other, but now we have more friends. We socialize and

our kids play together. We talk about our concerns and problems and share solutions. I miss Burma, but growing vegetables and being at the Farm brings back the best memories. It makes me want to do my best in my new home."

GGRTF is surrounded by a culturally and economically diverse neighborhood; the weekly on-farm market stand is one place where everyone eventually meets. Farmers from Bhutan and Burma struggle with and expand their limited English vocabulary to explain how they prepare dishes using sourleaf or opo squash.

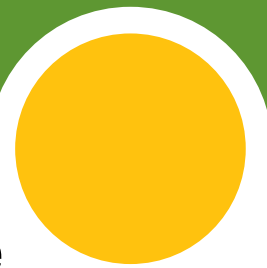
Squash vine tips are a favorite vegetable for these same farmers, but they learned how to use squash blossoms from their Mexican customers. An Egyptian neighbor shared seed for a mysterious crop he called 'molokia,' which turned out to be popular with customers from the Philippines and Vietnam, prompting more cross cultural recipe swaps.

There is a special message of homecoming and acceptance when market customers — neighbors who know a good vegetable when they see one — offer their hard-earned cash for the produce grown by Global Garden farmers. Prices are set to meet the needs of low income neighbors, but sometimes more affluent customers tell farmers to "keep the change."

Global Garden Refugee Training Farm's mission is to improve access to fresh vegetables for newly-arrived refugee families and their urban neighbors; to feed the souls of displaced farmers through reconnection with the soil and food production; to provide supplemental income for participating refugee farmers; and to foster new, refugee-operated farms. GGRTF began with funds from the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program, a division of the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement. The USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program provides additional financial support. Mother Nature and Mother Earth support the individuals who work the soil and reach out their hands in welcome.



Save the Dates



ACGA



AMERICAN
COMMUNITY
GARDENING
ASSOCIATION

37th Annual Conference

CLEVELAND, OHIO

August 4-7, 2016

Cleveland Growing Strong

▲ Health ▲ Equity ▲ Sustainability

- Health in all policies
- Hundreds of community gardens & farms
- Strengthening food security through urban agriculture
- Largest urban hydroponics operation in the U.S.
- First U.S. Urban Agriculture Innovation Zone



DON'T MISS IT... It's going to be AWESOME!

MARCIA L. FUDGE
11TH DISTRICT OF OHIO

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE WORKFORCE**

RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE PROTECTIONS

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON BIOTECHNOLOGY,
HORTICULTURE AND RESEARCH

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NUTRITION



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

WASHINGTON OFFICE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2344 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-7032; (202) 225-1339 FAX

DISTRICT OFFICES

RICHMOND HIGHLAND CENTER
4834 RICHMOND ROAD, SUITE 150
WARRENSVILLE HEIGHTS, OHIO 44128
(216) 522-4900; (216) 522-4908 FAX

LAWTON COMMUNITY CENTER
1225 LAWTON STREET
AKRON, OHIO 44328
(330) 835-4758; (330) 835-4863 FAX

E-mail: <http://fudge.house.gov>

July 29, 2015

American Community Gardening Association
3271 Main Street
College Park, GA 30337



Dear Members of the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA):

As a Member of the U.S. Congress, and the House Committee on Agriculture, I am committed to advocating for the agriculture community. Working to ensure that we increase access to healthy foods, eliminate food deserts and support traditional and non-traditional farmers is a top priority for me.

That is why I worked to have language included in the Agricultural Act of 2014, better known as the 2014 Farm Bill, to improve agricultural credit programs. By establishing a microloan program to provide more farmers access to capital, this provision has helped meet the needs of small, new, veteran and urban farmers.

I have also sponsored the Urban Agriculture Production Act to promote agricultural production and research in urban areas. Northeast Ohio, where my constituents live, is a great example of the need for this legislation.

Cleveland is at the forefront of urban agricultural development and farming innovation. From raised-bed community gardens and neighborhood farms to inner-city vineyards and orchards, a new generation of farmers is transforming greenspaces and revitalizing vacant lots.

I am proud to represent the City of Cleveland, Ohio's Eleventh Congressional District and the agricultural community. I know about the great strides ACGA has made to improve our communities – urban and rural. For this, I applaud you.

I am honored to serve as an honorary co-chair of the 2016 ACGA conference in Cleveland, *Cleveland Growing Strong*. I look forward to seeing you all next year. I wish you a productive conference and an enjoyable stay in Denver.

Sincerely,


Marcia L. Fudge
U.S. Member of Congress

MLF:lw



Refugees and Survivors Shape Our Future Growth

by Mary Black and Erin Hantke, The Ruby Garden

The Ruby Garden, nestled in Schreiber Park alongside the alleys adjacent to a local hardware store, stops busy shoppers in their tracks. In full bloom, the garden is a shining gem in Chicago's diverse Rogers Park neighborhood. A true community collaboration, the garden is unique because half of the 72 plots are tended by non-profit programs, and half by neighborhood individuals and families.

The non-profit groups include Heartland Alliance's Refugee Health Program and The Marjorie Kovler Center, which respectively serve populations of refugees and survivors of politically-sanctioned torture. Many of the refugee gardeners have experienced forced migration and now struggle to build new lives in a densely populated urban setting. They represent countries and traditions about which most Chicago residents have little previous knowledge, including Bhutan, Burma, Cameroon, Togo,

Eritrea, El Salvador, and Gabon, to name a few.

Neighborhood gardeners hail from Romania, Spain, Moldova, Mexico, Lithuania, Ireland, and Switzerland, as well as from the U.S. The garden supports this diverse population by design. In fact, the refugee service programs were at the forefront of the birth of the Ruby Garden in 2009, one of the first under the auspices of the Chicago Park District's "Edible Garden" program. The garden was dedicated to the memory of Ruby Langer, who lived with her husband Ed in an apartment adjacent to the park for 40 years. The Langers stewarded the park, collecting debris, befriending youth, and deterring gang activity.

Ruby Garden transcends language. Gardeners there regularly exchange expertise by sharing seeds, plants, and harvests. This boosts the community spirit, enriching knowledge, and building friendships. Each non-profit program has a staff worker liaison to offer support and



interpreting as needed. Community workdays as well as delicious “plot” lucks are scheduled periodically during the season and are well attended. Most programs share their produce communally among participants, most of whom could not otherwise afford to purchase fresh organic vegetables. The Kovler Center also hosts a twice-monthly International Cooking Group, where participants use the bounty from their plots to prepare cuisine from their home countries and then share in a communal meal.

To appreciate the health, healing, and community building benefits of the garden, it is important to acknowledge the struggles of newly-arrived refugees and survivors applying for political asylum. Refugees usually arrive in the U.S. after having endured years of displacement in refugee camps. Survivors of torture have also suffered forced migration. On arrival to the U. S., they endure the interminable process of applying for political asylum while living in shelters or doubled up in cramped apartments. All are coping with the effects of unimaginable loss exacerbated by everyday challenges inherent in making a new life in unfamiliar and often unreceptive urban environments.

The Ruby Garden offers not only a safe oasis and a place to breathe in this busy new country but also a means to connect to positive memories from one’s homeland. You often hear, “Oh, this smells just like what my mother planted...this brings me home.” “Oh, you have this plant in your country too?” Bhutanese gardeners have told us that they are really happy to have the garden in their neighborhood and to be able to use their farming skills to plant vegetables from home such as mustard greens, bitter melon, and special beans, all organically grown by their own hands. Exercise from walking to and working within the garden, opportunities to practice English with fellow gardeners, and planting marigolds to use in cultural festivals are additional benefits they cite.

Many thought they would never get to grow anything in America. One Bhutanese gardener related, “When I got here, I saw concrete. Just over all the ground, there was concrete. I was so sad. This place was nothing like my home, what would I do here?” Once in the garden, she was able to grow her own vegetables like she had at home and found peace when she was in the Ruby garden. “These vegetables and food remind me of my home. My family, we were farmers. I thank [Heartland Alliance] for helping me keep my skills and traditions alive.”

The emphasis on combining traditional farming practices with new urban farm techniques allows the older gardeners to maintain integrity and status by passing traditional skills and knowledge to their younger family

members. Local gardeners share extension season tips to adapt to the relatively short growing season in Chicago. Congolese gardeners help neighborhood gardeners learn that what they thought was a “weed” is in fact edible and delicious.

Each of these everyday gardening endeavors contributes not only to good nutrition, but also to providing respite from stress, a link to positive memories, diminishment of isolation, and reconstruction of social and familial networks. Moreover, the garden offers refugees and survivors the continuity of familiar rituals and seasonal rhythms. These have been a powerful source of safety, predictability, and meaning universal to all cultures and helped to create a sanctuary many can call “home.”

The poem below by “a gardener from Haiti” speaks to this journey towards a home. She was inspired to write the poem by the sunflower with a visiting honeybee she photographed in the Ruby Garden.

Take a Moment and Smell the Roses

by Chantal Powell

*Bees for nourishing purpose
Immigrants for belonging purpose,
Feeling home purpose,
Adaptation purpose.*

*Find out what our environment has to offer:
city events, neighborhood parks, community gardens,
and include ourselves.*

*Participate, be a part of, make it home.
We might be away from home, but we can still feel
like home.*

*Lack of mint, clover, dandelions and milkweed, the
bees adapt to their
Environment,
They find the sunflower for nutrition.*

*They learn to appreciate. It is all about adaptation.
Let it be our journey.
When you don't have what you like,
like what you have.*

Building a Bridge: The Namaste Community Garden

by Katie Vincent, Garden Hotline Educator, Seattle Tilth



A short drive from downtown Seattle, in Tukwila, lives a community garden like no other. The Namaste Community Garden supports newly-arrived refugees as they adjust to life in the United States. Even if just for a short time, this small piece of earth is their mother, their therapist, their child, and their friend.

From Refugee Camp to Garden

Dal Diyali gets it. A Bhutanese caseworker for the International Rescue Committee (IRC) since 2009, Diyali was herself exiled, for 18 years, since she was a teenager, from Bhutan to Nepal before immigrating to the United States in 2008. Diyali understands why many IRC clients expressly ask for access to land for gardening.

To address this request, Diyali reached out to Forterra — formerly the Cascade Land Conservancy — for help in finding a suitable garden location, and Forterra found a large site at St. Thomas Catholic Church in Tukwila. In 2011, the three organizations (IRC, Forterra, and St. Thomas) broke ground, thanks to the enthusiasm and elbow grease of founding gardeners from Bhutan and Burma. Jenn Leach's film, "How to Build a Bridge," documented the construction of Namaste Garden AND won the People's Choice Award at the 2013 ACGA Conference in Seattle.

However, gardeners struggled to adapt to unfamiliar pests, like slugs and leaf miner, common in Seattle. In 2013, Forterra contacted Laura Matter, Garden Hotline Coordinator at Seattle Tilth, to ask her to teach a series of workshops to increase horticultural savvy. Matter recalls an incident with a garter snake: "We had no interpreter that day, but it was apparent the gardener killed it because, in his experience, snakes were dangerous creatures. Of course, a garter snake is a great garden ally. We tried to relay that but don't think we were able to fully convey this idea."

Since then, the IRC has provided translation for the Garden Hotline, which now leads regular workshops, donates supplies, and consults about soil fertility and general garden needs. The Hotline also hired a Bhutanese gardener as a community liaison.

A Home-like Haven

Today, the colorful Namaste Garden embraces its diverse, multilingual community. It provides a safe place for minority cultural expression in the concrete jungle. Gardeners grow crops from their homelands, like bitter melons and opo squash, which they can't easily find at grocery stores. On a sunny day in the garden, blue tarps line pathways covered in gundruk — a Nepali fermented leafy green — drying in the sun. Dressed in brightly-colored clothes, the gardeners invite passersby for a taste.



Allotments at Namaste provide multiple benefits for all participants who, Diyali says, “have spent most of their lives farming and working with the Earth and have a deep relationship with soil.” Once they have a plot, they simply radiate self-worth and satisfaction. Divali continues to explain that “most of the Bhutanese gardeners are either middle-aged women or elderly people with no or limited English.

Through this project, rather than remain alone in their apartment, they have an opportunity to meet other community people, work in their own plot, and share their produce. This helps to reduce their stress level and reconnect to the land. They can imagine their land back home in this small plot ... This has created a solution to complex problems like isolation, depression, and poor physical health.”

IRC also organizes volunteer work parties to connect local residents with gardeners. To date, they’ve shared the space with the Gates Foundation, Gorilla FC (abbreviation for???) , and countless other organizations. Despite language barriers, all gardeners reap the benefits. Without exchanging words, they share smiles, produce, and gratitude for being able to work the soil alongside others with a shared history of relocation.

Making It Work

As more refugees move in and/or out of Seattle, the demand on the IRC for garden plots increases. Since 2011, the garden has expanded from 64 to 81 plots. One challenge for Namaste is to cultivate a long-term community that is able to sustain the garden, despite its diverse and changing population.

Bhutanese, Karen (Burma), and Karenni (Burma) people still constitute the majority, but recently, gardeners from the Congo, Nigeria, and elsewhere in the United States have joined the group. This means that developing a strategy for cohesive communication and involvement is vital. Despite all best intentions, it remains difficult to find translators for all ethnic groups at every workshop and to encourage regular gardener participation.

In 2015, the community re-assessed its communication strategy with the intention of streamlining it. Now, Diyali partners with a dedicated volunteer at St. Thomas Catholic Church for registration. Since the IRC has connections with clients and translators, the garden’s organizers are optimistic that this will provide fairer access to garden happenings and workshops.

Currently, two other important AND budget-dependent community projects are on the horizon for Namaste, a permanent gathering space and a user-friendly compost system. The existing gathering area is a patch of unprotected, tall grass. Since many gardeners are physically unable to sit on the ground, which the abundant

rain in the Northwest keeps damp, the goal is to build a gazebo with benches.

A traditional three-bin composting system has never been a goal at Namaste, since gardeners there are most comfortable with the pit-style composting they know from home. Namaste Garden organizers are working to construct a pit system that takes into account Tukwila’s high water table and wet winters. Seattle Tilth’s Master Recycler Composter Eastside Program will assist with installation and education. Once funding is set, a contractor will be hired to dig the four-foot-deep trench and make adjustments to keep the pit from becoming a pond.

Finally, as celebration is key to community, leaders and participants hope for another harvest party, the establishment of farm stands, and regular cooking demonstrations to encourage neighbors, church members, and high school students to connect with the garden. Despite differences among individual circumstances, language, and history, the focus at this garden is on those qualities that are similar.

The hope for Namaste Garden is that it will be sustainable, will adapt, and will flourish. Namaste Garden, this simple piece of land in Tukwila, embodies the true meaning of its name, “I honor the sacredness and equality in us all.”





Join Us!

American Community Gardening Association

Improving lives by increasing and enhancing community gardening and greening.

ACGA supports community gardening by facilitating the formation and expansion of state and regional community gardening networks, developing resources in support of community gardening, encouraging research, and conducting educational programs.

And **YOU** can join this growing movement!

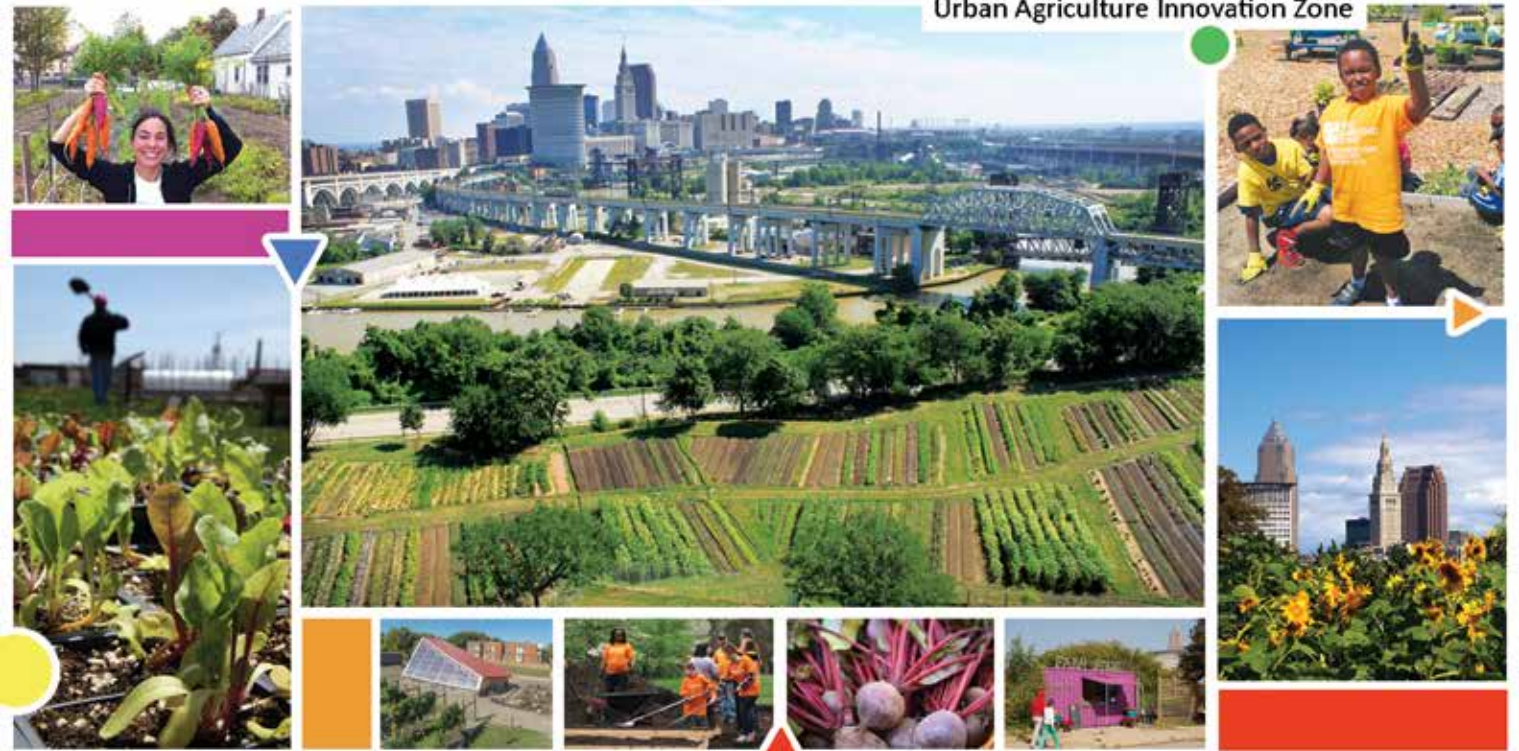
Call or visit www.communitygarden.org for more information about how to join, to become involved, to learn dates and descriptions of upcoming events, and for a harvest of resources and information.

Save the date!

ACGA 37th ANNUAL CONFERENCE in CLEVELAND, OHIO

Save the Date! *Cleveland Growing Strong*
August 4-7, 2016 Health | Equity | Sustainability

Health in all policies • Hundreds of community gardens & farms • Strengthening food security through urban agriculture • Largest urban hydroponics operation in the U.S. • 1st U.S. Urban Agriculture Innovation Zone



American Community Gardening Association
3271 Main Street
College Park, GA 30337
1-877-ASK-ACGA
info@communitygarden.org
www.communitygarden.org