

Jenna Lee Dixon

The Evergreen State College

Environmental, Health and Community Program

Faculty Sponsor: Lin Nelson

Community Collaborator: Garden Raised Urban Bounty

February, 17. 2004

Project Proposal

From the Ground Up:

A Cross-Cultural Exploration of Modern Community Gardens

## Background Information

Postindustrial culture worldwide has disconnected large groups of humans from one of our most fundamental survival tools, the cultivation of our own food.

Urbanization and agricultural monopolization are among many factors that have led to the collapse of direct self-sustenance. This cultural and literal uprooting of

people has had widespread ecological, economical, social and psychological implications. The gap between people and the source of their daily nourishment continues to grow, with increasing dependence on supermarkets and agribusiness products. However, for many decades the modern resurgence of small-scale local food production has also taken form consistently around the globe. From German allotment gardens, to US victory gardens, to the Brazilian Landless Movement, gardens and small farm plots have risen out of the basic need to eat and live in connection with the earth. The widespread initiation of community gardens has provided benefits to many people. These benefits include the basic provision of food and nourishment, the empowerment of disenfranchised communities, the aesthetic and ecological renewal of urban habitats and opportunities for education and community participation across all ages. As communities work on a grassroots level worldwide, a wealth of knowledge is being cultivated. With increased global communication, we have the potential to share information and learn from each other across borders and cultures. The lessons that we learn from people around the planet are invaluable to the creation and support of local endeavors.

## Questions and Objectives

The previous are just a few aspects of what I loosely call modern community gardening. During the Spring quarter of this 2003-2004 academic year I intend to explore this topic in great depth. I propose a cross-cultural examination of community gardens primarily focusing on the past century. The following are some of my preliminary questions. What were/are the social pressures that led to the creation of each particular gardening movement? How have these gardens been initiated and maintained? Where did/do they receive their funding and support? What challenges did/do they face? What were/are some of the social,

ecological etc. benefits of these gardens? In addition to these basic questions, I would like to explore the use of gardening in conjunction with the education of young people.

As a practical application of my work I would like to participate in a part-time internship at Garden Raised Urban Bounty. I am interested in all aspects of GRuB, including their organization, the mentoring of young people, community connections and the actual cultivation of crops. During my internship I would be willing to focus on a specific task associated with GRuB or to work on a variety of projects.

The nature of my final product could range from a practical guide for those wishing to start or support a community garden to a more academic thesis paper. If I can somehow support GRuB through my research and writing then I would be more than willing to tailor my work to their needs.

### Community Context and Connections

Along with the international garden projects in existence, there are many valuable local endeavors right here in Thurston County. These local gardens include GRuB related projects: The Kitchen Garden Project, Sister Holly Community Garden, the Downtown Intergenerational Garden and gardens located at Providence St. Francis House. There are also two public community gardens located at the Evergreen State College and in East Olympia. Lincoln elementary school has a garden facility for the education and nourishment of students. In addition, there are several Master Gardener Demonstration Gardens throughout Thurston County. The garden resources existing in the greater Northwest region beyond Thurston county are also plentiful. I would like to

familiarize myself with local as well as regional projects. When possible, I intend on visiting sites, interviewing participants and volunteering.

I will be doing this project/internship in conjunction with the Environment, Health and Community Program at the Evergreen State College. Lin Nelson, program faculty, will sponsor my project and potential internship with GRuB.

Small groups of Environment, Health and Community participants will gather weekly to share information regarding the development of our projects. These groups will be created around shared project themes. The shared themes of the group with which I will be meeting include local agriculture, education and community spaces.

## Process

My main tools of inquiry will be written texts and journals, the Internet, interviews and onsite investigation when possible. The following is an approximate timeline for my research and activities.

Week 1: Research the history of German Allotment Gardens

Week 2: Research international projects that have been inspired by the German gardens

Week 3: Study US Victory Gardens

Week 4: Study the Brazilian Landless Movement

Week 5 and 6: Explore urban garden projects, food bank gardens and gardens that are used in the education and employment of handicapped persons

Week 7 and 8: Study the use and benefits of gardening in conjunction with formal education

Week 9: Create final written work

Week 10: Create and share project presentation

During weeks five through eight my research will include regional on-site investigations. I will be working my research time around my internship with GRuB. Each week I will also be meeting with my sub-group from the Environment, Health and Community program. To facilitate the creation of a final project, I intend on creating a weekly synthesis of my research. I will share this information with the EHC sub-group at our meetings.

#### Preliminary Informal Bibliography and Resources

Barkes, Alys. Benefits of Urban Gardening in Theory and Practice . 1997

Boston Urban Gardeners. A Handbook of Community Gardening . Edited by Susan Naimark. New York. Scribner: 1982.

Branford, Sue and Jan Rocha. Cutting the Wire: the Story of the Landless Movement in Brazil . London. Latin America Bureau: 2002.

Clinebell, Howard. Ecotherapy: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Earth: a Guide to Ecologically Grounded Personality Theory, Spirituality, Therapy and Education . Minneapolis. Fortress Press: 1996.

Coe, Mary Lee. Growing with Community Gardening . Taftsville, Vt. Countryman Press: 1978.

Donovan, Colleen Moira. Negotiating Protest and Practice: Development, Rural Livelihoods and the Brazilian Landless Movement . 2001.

Gray, David B., in collaboration with Richard J. Bordenaud, Russel H. Weigel; foreword by Riley T. Dunlap. Ecological Beliefs and Behaviors: Assesment and Change . Westport, Conn. Greenwood Press: 1985.

Heyman, Mark. Places and Spaces: Environmental Psychology in Education . Bloomington, Ind. Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation: 1978.

Hynes, Patricia H. A Patch of Eden: America's Urban Gardeners . White River Junction Vt. Chelsea Green Publishers: 1996.

Jobb, Jamie. The Complete Book of Community Gardening . New York. Morrow: 1979.

Markle, Sandra. Instructors Big Book of Health and Safety . 1<sup>st</sup> Scholastic Print. New York. Scholastic Professionals Books: 1990.

Reynolds, Cecil R. and Terry B. Gutkin. The Handbook of School Pshychology . 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. New York. Wiley: 1999.

Victory Gardens of WWII: The American Farmers Pitch in . Videorecording. Sherman Oaks, CA. OnDeck Home Entertainment: 1998.

#### Online Resources

Atlanta Community Food Bank, the Community Garden Initiative and Atlanta Garden for Youth: [acfb.org/projects/community-garden](http://acfb.org/projects/community-garden) .

Chinese, Japanese, German, Swedish and English Allotment Garden Reports: Urban Agriculture Notes published online by City Farmer, Canada's Office of Urban Agriculture.

Food Bank Gardens in Seattle: [cityofseattlel.net/neighborhoods/ppatch](http://cityofseattlel.net/neighborhoods/ppatch) .

The German Allotment Gardens-a model for Poverty Alleviation and Food Security in Southern African Cities? Drescher, A.W.:  
[cityfarmer.org/germanAllot.html](http://cityfarmer.org/germanAllot.html) .

Oregon Food Bank's Learning Gardens:  
[oregonfoodbank.org/ofb\\_programs/learning garden.html](http://oregonfoodbank.org/ofb_programs/learning_garden.html) .

Politics of Community Gardening in Germany:  
[cityfarmer.org/allotmentReports.html](http://cityfarmer.org/allotmentReports.html) .