

TUG Network Meeting Minutes Wednesday, July 22, 2015

TUG Updates

- **Progress on Hydro market gardens!** A special meeting of Toronto Agriculture Program this morning brought together Toronto Water, Parks Forestry and Recreation (PFR), Real Estate, Public Health and Social Development, Finance and Administration divisions.
- Allowing sales of produce from Parks land is not part of PFR mandate, so a new policy will need to be developed and taken to Council. Lauren Baker of Toronto Public Health drafted a new description of the market gardens – Community Entrepreneurial and Engagement Development (CEED) gardens. This highlights how the gardens balance community benefits and revenue generation through sales of produce.
- We are lucky to be working with a dedicated, persistent and strategic team at the City!
- **TUG Website** – Beta version is almost ready to be shared with reviewers. If you'd like to help us create an effective and easy-to-use site, you can sign up to be a beta tester by emailing rhonda@torontourbangrowers.org
- **TUG Steering Committee** has established three sub-committees: Membership (to ensure that TUG is responsive to members' needs), Communications (to get the word out about TUG effectively) and Equity Plan (to develop ways to ensure TUG contributes to a more equitable urban agriculture movement)

Presentation: Joshua Barndt, Parkdale Area Land Trust

<https://www.facebook.com/ParkdaleCommunityLandTrust>

<https://parkdalecommunityeconomies.wordpress.com/category/community-land-trust/>

Tour: TELUS House Toronto Urban Rooftop Garden

TELUS staff Renee Nadeau and Sameer Panjwani talked about the unique challenges of building a garden meant to engage busy employees in food production and rooftop greening as tenants in a downtown office tower.

The site and its challenges

- Project started 4 years ago.
- TELUS are tenants in LEED certified building. 3 terraces designed as storm water management basin, so plants were chosen for water catchment, not food. The soil was initially poor, so they had to bring in a lot of bags of many different growing media.
- Site is windy, soil is 10-12" deep. None of the perennials on the roof lasted over winter. Can't stake things. Mulch flies out to Air Canada Centre. Can't compost here. Building manager has many requirements.
- Pleasing aesthetics absolute must as a requirement. Promotional aspects for TELUS.

Solutions

- Burlap rows between planting beds hold compost and manure, act as paths
- The installation of a new hose bib allows them now to wash plants in plastic bins, then put the water back on the plants, avoiding the loss of nutrients.
- Last year was an experiment. They planted everything everywhere. This year, things are more organized, and more limited number of plants. 3 spots are designated for medicinal plants.
- They let a lot of plants self-seed. No problem with pollination – they believe their bees come from the Royal York.
- They use companion planting, crop rotation, succession planting.
- They cannot start seedlings. They had to purchase seedlings for a workshop on the subject.
- Root vegetables do generally well.
- Now that they have honed down their choices to fewer, more suited varieties of food crops, they are thinking of talking to the restaurant downstairs about possibly purchasing some of what is grown on the roof.

Employee engagement

- Connection to employees is fundamental. Needs to find ways to connect to highly varied employees, avoiding dirt, dealing with the limited time (many commute 2-3 days per week, relying on GO schedule – discouraged by the company from coming in more often).
- In winter, workshops are given once a month to maintain interest. These include challenging aspects like food security.
- They hold a farmers market on site on Tuesdays, selling crops from the garden itself, through baskets.
- They cannot promote their activities, put signs in the building, etc. Many rules on communications.
- The list of volunteers in the garden has about 30 people on it; 5-6 are regular volunteers.
- A new garden is planned at TELUS building in Vancouver

Presentation: Martin Bailkey (Growing Power, Madison WI), Effective Networking for Urban Agriculture

community-food.org

Presentation: Katherine Brown, Southside Land Trust, Providence RI, Fundraising for Land Trusts

<http://southsideclt.org/> - also has an urban agriculture resource centre