

TUG Meeting minutes April 15, 2015

TUG Updates and More

- Working with Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance to help Greater Toronto Area organizations compile resources and examples of effective UA policies
- Rexdale seed exchange Wednesday, April 22 in partnership with RCGN & Toronto Seed Library. First event, hope it will become annual
- Rexdale Foodie Fest – great opportunity to establish connections in Rexdale, hundreds of people come out. Contact Tania Fernandes at tania.fernandes@rexdalechc.com
- Steering Committee – 8 members elected, 2 more approved by SC for a total of 10. One role is to provide connections and accountability to community, please feel free to communicate with them about your ideas and concerns. Have met once to determine work plan, meeting again in May.
- Roe Sivanandan presented his hydroponics/vertical growing project and fielded questions from an eager audience

Tour of Eastdale Rooftop Farm by James Davis

- Small technical school with 150 students, mostly with special needs. On list slated for closure.
- In early 2013, FoodShare had just finished a small rooftop garden on a school on the west side when offered the opportunity of a new, larger project on roof of school on east side.
- 13,500 sq. ft. of roof for growing. Formerly used as sports facility for the school, so designed to hold weight. Can bear 100 lb per sq. ft. – which is very good for rooftop farming. One problem for now is that the elevator reaches only the 3rd floor, so everything needs to be carried up one floor.
- Big support came from a LiveGreen grant for \$80,000. A Trillium grant funds one salary.
- They cannot build anything on site, because of union rules, so everything has to be made at FoodShare workshop, brought here and assembled. Also, nothing can be attached to the roof – everything has to be movable.

Eastdale Production

- Used “terrified wood” (thermally heated pine, to a very high temperature, which makes it suitable for outdoors). The base is made from longer-lasting plastic. Sole Food in Vancouver replaced their wood frames after the planks disintegrated.
- Used “engineered” soil from Growbark – lightweight, but tends to be very dry, so needs to be regularly watered. Thickness on average of 12 inches.
- Soil amended with worm castings. 3-cell composting bin. But with problems – lots of plastic.
- 100 shiitake logs for mushroom production. Not doing well on the roof – drying out.
- 50 barrels with fruit trees in them. Planted two years ago, but that was a hard winter, so many of them did not survive, had to be replaced.
- 3 rows of strawberries. Did very well, bearing until Oct. 2 rows saved for the school to use as it wishes in its science classes.
- 92 blueberry bushes, 5 varieties. Doing well.
- Buckets used for peppers and other vegetables, on bleachers that step up. Peppers did extremely well.

Eastdale Organizational Structure

- School Grown is a FoodShare program run out of Eastdale and Bendale, run by Katie German
- To deal with the gap when schools are closed, 14 students get funding for summer jobs from provincial program. Summer jobs, not tied to curriculum, though some students can earn two credits if they do extra work.
- Selling the plants helps fund the program. 3 years ago, a partial season made sales of \$1,500, mostly to teachers on site (not a full growing season. 2 years ago, sales of \$15,000. Last year, sales of \$17,000.
- Selling at East Lynn market weekly and at Fairmont market for a few weeks.
- Also selling to restaurants, the Chef's House (George Brown College). Head chef amazing, will buy anything on short notice. Did a final event there for 14 summer job students.
- Not aiming necessarily for students to develop careers in this area. [But one of the students did go on to study agriculture at Guelph.] This is much more about developing food skills and food literacy. Katie did Masters at OISE focusing on this program, with lots of interviews, which showed that program did change behavior.
- Data keeping basic. Logbook for weighing.

Niagara College Student Presentations

Three students from Niagara College's Environmental Management Program have been doing their placements with TUG. Each presented the results of their projects:

Joy Amadi spoke about strategies for effective water usage

Azadeh Mazaheri addressed the impact of climate change on agriculture and how urban agriculture can mitigate the effects of climate change

Nikolas Pereira presented a proposal for creating an agroforestry demonstration site at the proposed hydro farm in Rexdale