

Let's grow!

GARDENING ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE
MENTAL HEALTH, HEALTHY EATING
AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



let's grow!

Let's Grow: Gardening activities to promote mental health, healthy eating and physical activity

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Lastly we wish to extend our appreciation to the many hardworking staff, volunteers and participants in our Community Health Centres and community gardens who have shared their experiences with us. We hope we can continue to create spaces where community and health flourish.

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SPRING



SUMMER



FALL



INTRODUCTION

People are passionate about gardening! Whether it is delighting in a ripe tomato picked fresh off the vine, the feel of being outdoors or watching a bean sprout break through the ground, there is something unique and captivating about gardening.

Over the past few summers Central Toronto Community Health Centres has held a weekly gardening group. With the help of a grant from the Government of Ontario Healthy Communities Fund, we were able to expand the program to provide more staff support, workshops and field trips at our health center and at South Riverdale Community Health Centre and Flemingdon Health Centre. Our garden programs focused on ways to link gardening to mental health promotion, physical activity and healthy eating. Throughout the summers, participants in the garden programs made new connections, learnt new skills and shared a wide variety of healthy foods together. This manual brings together some of the successful activities we did during the program. It provides ideas and simple workshop plans that can be tailored to your group or community garden.

Participants in our Health Centres have differing relationships to gardening. Creating a program that is flexible, accessible and client centered are key components to getting people engaged in gardening. Even with the best program though, gardening won't always be a fit for everyone. But sometimes, the experience of being outside, seeing things grow and feeling a connection to something bigger than oneself can be transformative. Participants in our garden programs reported feeling more hopeful, full of pride, relaxed. One of them said that coming to the garden "brought me back to life". Recognizing people's experiences with gardening and choosing activities that are respectful of these differences is essential in creating a space where people feel welcomed and can flourish. We hope that these activities provide some inspiration of easy ways to learn and play and grow through gardening. Use them as they are, change them to suit your garden and create new activities all together! Dig in and enjoy!

Linor David

Health Promoter

Central Toronto Community Health Centres



HOW TO CULTIVATE THERAPEUTIC SPACES: PROMISING PRACTICES

Programs that are focused on recreation and food security can offer therapeutic benefits, as much as programs explicitly focused on mental health promotion. The ideas below can apply to all types of groups.

be flexible

- **Recognize that what is therapeutic for one group/individual might not be therapeutic for another**

People come to gardening from many different experiences. It is important to recognize that not everyone has a positive association with getting their hands in the dirt. For some people, the benefit may come from being in a beautiful space and not being expected to work. For others, the physical aspect of the work may be very relaxing. Sometimes it's about connecting to something alive and seeing and/or helping it to grow. There is research that suggests plants themselves can reduce stress merely by being in their presence. What attracts different people to the garden will be different, so be prepared to adjust your activities to your group. Take the time to ask people what interests them the most about coming to the garden, and take the time to meet those needs as best as you can. The key is to create the context and opportunity for people to explore and define their own relationships with the space.

- **Have flexibility around the actual gardening techniques (especially if staff know a lot about gardening)**

Many community garden coordinators have an agricultural background, where the priority is production. In agriculture, things like planting with the right spacing, at the right depth, and in the right spot take precedence. However, adherence to this type of agricultural training in a community garden can create a situation where the staff person becomes the 'expert' and gardeners seek input before each task. Note that the goal of a community garden should not be production, and that placing production and expertise at the forefront can take away the ownership of the gardeners and the learning that comes from mistakes. Community garden programs work better when they promote human relationships before plants.

- **Take risks and plan for failure**

It is in the nature of growing food that we may not always succeed. Pests, disease, drought and floods are all out of our control. In the spring, talk to gardeners about the possibility that the plants may not all grow. This will help people to celebrate the randomness of success when they do. Framing your planting in the spring as "rolling the dice and hoping for the best" can help reduce disappointment, self blame and anger when things don't work out. This has obvious ties to the rest of life too!

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HOW TO CULTIVATE THERAPEUTIC SPACES: PROMISING PRACTICES

focus on facilitation

- **Make group guidelines**

Set group guidelines as a way to ensure safety within the group. Allow the group the opportunity to speak about what they individually need, and to voice concerns about being in a group. This is a great time to figure out everything, from people's allergies to what to do if conflict arises. Depending on the structure of your group, going over the guidelines when a new person joins is important for consistency, and to reinforce the principles the group has agreed on.

- **Integrate techniques like check-ins at beginning of sessions**

"How was your week?" Simple check-ins are a way to make sure that all group members have a space within the group. Giving each person an opportunity to speak creates balance, and keeps people up to date on how everyone else is doing. It also helps to let people get to know each other, provides structure for group development at the beginning of the program, and helps to create a safe space by providing an opportunity for people to articulate if they're ever uncomfortable or need something from the group.

- **Call people in between sessions**

This tends to keep people engaged over the course of the week and they are more likely to come when someone checks in with them. It also gives people a space to raise concerns or questions they have about the group that they may be less likely to voice when everyone is around.

- **Create space for people to share – don't over-program**

We noted that jamming too many activities into the garden program can push out space for natural interactions to develop. Pacing is important. Don't program every session. Leave open space. Prioritize the relationship people have with each other, followed by their relationship to the plants, and followed by the garden activities.

- **Involve everyone – make everything a conversation or an invitation to participate**

When making a decision, make it a conversation. There are many different ways to tackle an issue in the garden, and it is meaningful to hear what everyone thinks. As much as possible, collectively come to a decision together. Sometimes mistakes will be made. That's okay, and a part of the process.

make it inclusive

- **Make the space accessible and physically safe**

Can everyone navigate the garden space? Are there tripping hazards or stakes that are hard to see? Does someone have an allergy to something in the garden? Consider everyone's physical safety. It is important to make an effort to address any and all of these issues. This not only prevents injuries but also demonstrates care for the gardeners.

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HOW TO CULTIVATE THERAPEUTIC SPACES: PROMISING PRACTICES

- **Have a space to sit down comfortably**

In our experience, the gardens that have the most conflict are the ones that are the most crowded. It is well worth it to sacrifice a plot to stick in a picnic table or some stumps to sit on. Choose the shadiest spot so that folks can escape the heat in the summer. This creates a natural break area where folks can have a snack and chit chat.

- **Work with people**

Work alongside folks. Working alongside the participants demonstrates that you are both literally and figuratively 'with' people. It is something you can attempt to demonstrate verbally, but tends to have more reach when you can show it. This means turning the compost, raking the beds, and planting the seeds. It also means taking breaks with people and leaning on your pitchfork and chatting.

- **Consider barriers to attendance**

Transportation needs, time of day, religious and cultural holidays can all impact people's ability to attend the garden. For example, planning a community potluck during Ramadan, Yom Kippur or Lent may exclude some of your gardeners. At the same time, having all morning sessions may exclude gardeners who work, have school, or have trouble with early mornings. Ask gardeners about these aspects of their lives and incorporate them into garden schedules. This practice honours and respects people and guarantees that one cultural practice or schedule doesn't dominate the group.

- **Food/Snacks**

Nothing says 'welcome' like a snack. People are often rushed, or don't have the time or resources to make themselves food. Snacks can also decrease conflict: people are less likely to argue when they have full bellies. Additionally, we have found it reduces conflict if food is always divided equally. This applies to communal harvest, snacks and leftovers. If members of your group are food insecure, being fair will be paramount in reducing conflict and keeping everyone fed.

- **Move the kitchen into the garden**

Transitioning from the garden into the kitchen can take a long time. Once we started rolling tables out of the health centre to chop on, setting up a butane stove to cook with, and creating a hand washing system outside, everyone was much more relaxed. Bringing the kitchen outside relieved the time pressure caused by slow transitions and worked better for our gardeners who would rather stay outside than go inside.

- **Celebrate**

Special events give people things to look forward to and break up the season. Listen closely and follow people's lead. We have gone on field trips to parks and gardens in the city, prepared thanksgiving meals, celebrated birthdays, and enjoyed potlucks together. Over a season gardeners get to know one another and support each other. Celebrations, with lots of pictures, help solidify and put a face on what is being achieved.

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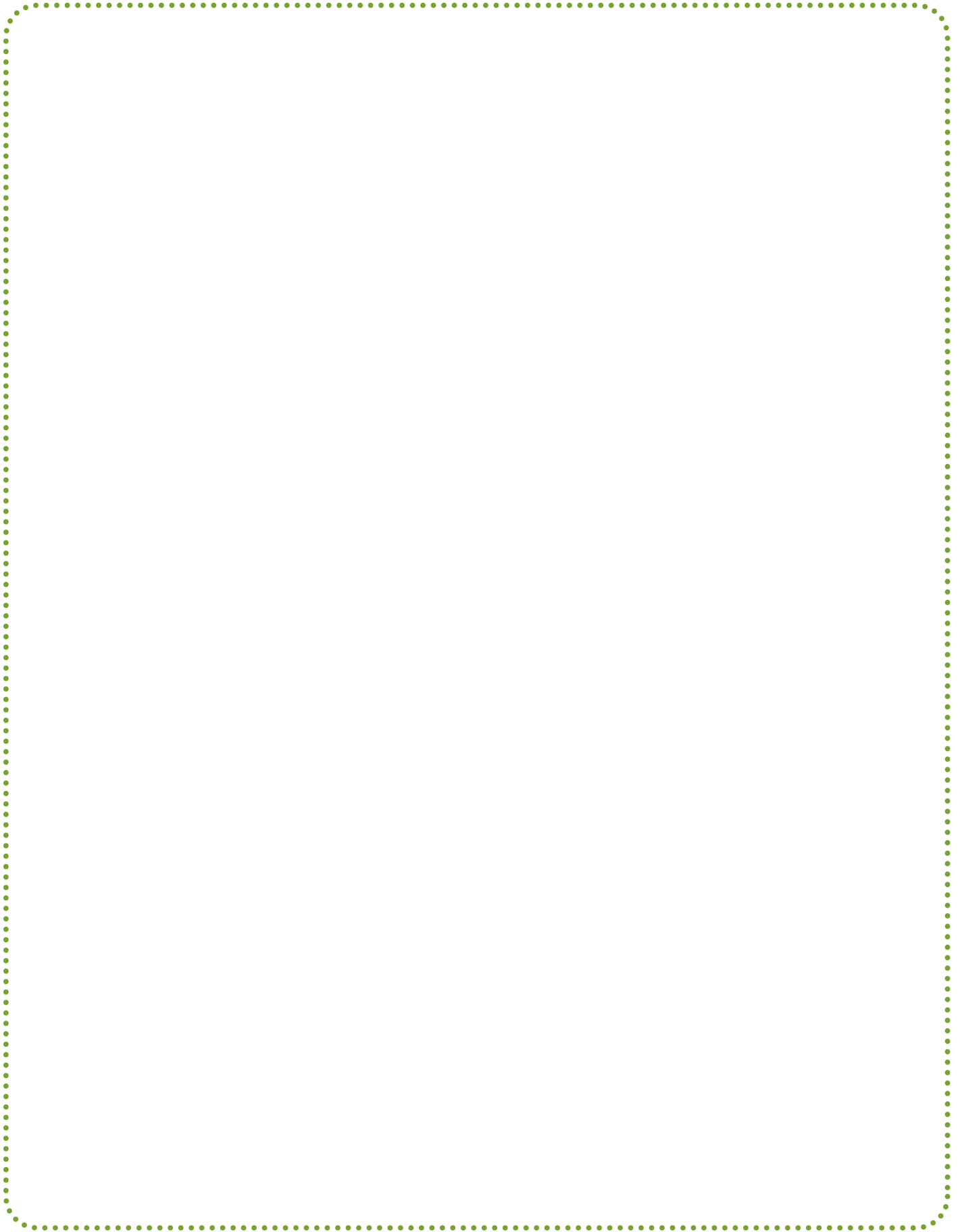
SPRING



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COMMUNITY MAPPING

GETTING STARTED



overview

This workshop is a way to build group cohesion and acknowledge the experiences and diversity within the group. Through a visual mapping process, participants can highlight what skills and experiences they bring to the group and think about what the garden and group may offer. This is also an appropriate time to establish ground rules and expectations as a group.

Connecting with the group in this intentional way has the potential to build the strength of the group and enhance the social and emotional outcomes of the group. Through the mapping process participants can engage with one another in discussion that goes beyond gardening and food security.

activity

1. Fasten mural paper to a wall and sketch a representation of the garden space. Leave lots of room around the outside of the sketch for writing space. This can be done in the garden if weather and space permit. Set up chart paper or extra mural paper to make additional notes that may come up.
2. Ask people to consider why they chose to come to the garden group and what they are looking forward to. These things can be included inside the garden sketch. The idea is to represent what assets the garden may hold for us; for example: learning about plants, fresh food, new friends.
3. As a second layer on the map, ask people to consider what they bring to the group and the garden; i.e., What are our assets as individuals? These things can be written outside of the garden sketch.
4. As a third layer on the map, consider what we offer the garden as a group; i.e., What are our assets as a community?
5. As a fourth layer on the map or on a separate piece of paper explore what will help to build a healthy group. How can we facilitate the work to be done? The discussion can help inform a set of group rules/norms/expectations.
6. This mural can be something to return to on a regular basis. It can be a tool used to remind everyone of what behavior is expected and what the shared vision was for the group.

suggested dates

Spring or one of the first gardening sessions

time

60 minutes

materials

- Mural paper
(check art stores)
- Chart paper
(for additional notes)
- Coloured chart markers
(non-toxic)
- Masking tape
- Prepared questions

themes

- *Listening*
- *Self reflection*
- *Cooperation*
- *Confidence building*
- *Planning*



COMMUNITY MAPPING - GETTING STARTED

notes

- If the group is quiet or nervous about talking, having some words written out on cards and available for people to choose from might be useful.
- People could also have the option of drawing a symbol or image on the paper to represent themselves. Cutting and pasting from magazines can work well too.
- A variation is to have participants write or draw a note to themselves about what they hoped to their hopes or goals were for the season. Seal them up and give them back during an evaluation session.

discussion questions

First Layer:

- *What drew you to the garden group?*
- *What are you hoping to get out of this experience?*
- *What are you looking forward to?*

Second layer:

- *What skills/experiences do you bring to the group?*
- *What are your strengths?*
- *How will you contribute to the garden?*

Third layer:

- *What are some of our strengths as a group? (e.g., watering, cleaning up the space, building trellises, sharing knowledge.)*

Fourth layer:

- *What will help this to be a healthy group?*
- *What are some things that will help us feel safe and happy in this group?*
- *What will help to make this a healthy garden?*
- *Any other ground rules that people would like to see?*

STARTING SEEDLINGS

SPRING



overview

This workshop introduces some basics on how to start plants from seed. While there are a variety of techniques and needs for different plants, this workshop is designed for starting seeds indoors and transplanting outdoors when the time is right. Starting plants from seed can be a powerful way to build connection to the garden early on.

activity

1. Decide how many of each seed to plant. Plant 10 to 30 percent more than you hope to end up with in the garden.
2. Give each person containers to use and pass around the seed starting mix to fill each container. Give each person one container for each type of seed you are planting.
3. Start with one type of seed and demonstrate planting it to the depth of its longest edge. For example, if you are planting a bean seed and its longest edge is 1 cm, the seed should be planted 1 cm below the surface. Plant two seeds per container and the plants can be separated or thinned out later on. Tap the soil down on the seed gently with your fingers.
4. Pass the seeds around for everyone to take two. Take some time to look at each seed and talk about what kind of plant it is. Follow each seed with a label for the plant and stick it in the soil. Wait until everyone has planted and labeled the one kind of seed before starting the next.
** Info to include on the label: type of seed, variety, date, and company/where the seed came from. This information can be useful for tracking which seeds germinate better than others and also for seed saving later in the season.*
5. When all seeds have been planted, sprinkle cinnamon on the surface of the soil in a thin layer. Cinnamon helps prevent fungus that could kill your seedlings.
6. The soil needs to be moist. Watering from the bottom is a good way to give the soil the right amount of moisture without disrupting the seeds. Set the containers in a dish with the water and let the soil soak it up. As a bonus, you can water your seedlings with room temperature chamomile tea for the first few weeks. Chamomile is an anti-fungal and

suggested dates

Late winter - early spring
(it depends on what seeds are being planted)

time

45 minutes

materials

- **Seed starting mix** – can be bought from a garden store. To make it yourself, see notes below.
- **Seeds to plant** (tomatoes, beans, peppers, basil are all fairly easy and popular).
- **Spray bottle** – hardware stores usually have these.
- **Small potting containers** – you can use anything that drains. See notes below.
- **Labels and permanent marker**
- **Option:** clear plastic covering, cinnamon, strong chamomile tea.

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SPRING



STARTING SEEDLINGS

activity (cont'd)

using this continuously with your seedlings will help reduce the chance of fungal attacks on your plants.

7. Store your seedlings in a warm place that you will remember to check daily. While the seeds don't need light immediately, they will need sun eventually. Plants will need at least 8 hours of light to do well.
8. The planted seeds can be covered with a plastic bag or lid to help retain the moisture and keep it warm. While the seeds don't need light to start the germinating process, clear coverings allow you to keep an eye on what's happening. Once leaves start to form, take the lid off.
9. Check the seedlings daily, making sure the soil stays moist but not soggy.
10. When the seedlings are almost ready to go outside (this will be different timing for each plant and determined by the last frost date), begin introducing them to the outdoors slowly. Set them outside in the shade for a couple of hours the first day and gradually build them up to full sun and full days.

themes

- Gardening skills
- Environmental stewardship
- Self care

notes

- Seed starting mix – To make your own soil for seed starting you will need something light that can hold moisture well. Coconut fibre, vermiculite and perlite all serve this function. Peat or peat moss is commonly used, but is harvested at greater rates than it can reproduce, so best to use one of the alternatives listed. Some people like to add compost to the mix to have nutrients ready for when the seedling is growing. One option you can use as a guideline is: two parts coconut fibre (coir) and one part compost. This is a really great place to use worm compost if you have it!
- Potting containers – While these are available for purchase, it's not necessary. One option is to clean out last year's store bought seedling containers and use them. Alternatively, wash things from the recycling bins, like yogurt containers, punch holes in them, and use those instead. Potting containers are often available free from nurseries, especially in the fall.



STARTING SEEDLINGS

discussion questions

There is a lot of potential in a seed. What potential do we have?

What environment would we need to sprout?

What are heirloom seeds, what are organic seeds?

What are the repercussions of selling sterilized seeds to farmers all over the world?



HEALTHY SOIL

overview

This workshop explores the importance of healthy soil for healthy gardens and therefore healthy food. It introduces easy ways to check the basic composition of the soil and how alive your soil is. This workshop can be about simply scratching around in the dirt and making observations or it can extend into a conversation about relationships and personal care.

Studies have been done linking physical contact with the microbes and bacteria found in dirt to elevated serotonin levels. So dig in!

activity

What kind of soil do you have?

1. This activity can be done either in pairs or as a large group. If the group is going to split up, demonstrate this activity first. Find unused sections of the soil to explore. Everyone must be careful not to disrupt the roots of growing plants.
2. Use the trowel to dig a 6-inch hole or at least as deep as one hand length.
3. From inside the hole, put a small handful of dirt into the palm of your hand, add a bit of water and squeeze. What does the soil do? Sandy soil will fall apart, and high clay content will make the clump stick together. A loamy soil (ideal) will feel crumbly in your hands. Loamy soil is a mix of organic matter, sand, clay and silt, and has the most opportunity to support life and hold water.

How alive is it?

1. Next to the hole you just made, count how many critters you find in a square about 1 ft x 1 ft. Dig down about 6 inches or one hand length.
2. Five to thirty critters per square foot indicate a healthy, alive soil.
3. If the soil shows poor signs of life, options can be discussed: adding compost, mulch and water will all help build the health of your soil.

suggested dates

May or June

time

30 minutes

materials

- **Trowels** – one for everyone
- **Water**
- **Gloves if people want them**

themes

- *Respect for diversity*
- *Environmental stewardship*
- *Observation skills*
- *Gardening skills*
- *Physical activity*

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HEALTHY SOIL

notes

- Bringing some visual images of the different size/shapes of sand, compost and clay can be useful to understand how they hold water, plants, and creatures.
- Soil holds elements of the earth (carbon, nitrogen etc) and growing food is what translates these essential elements into a form we can consume.
- If there is a concern that soil might be contaminated, soil samples should be tested.
- If there is a lot of interest in soil pH, soil tests are available at many hardware stores. The key idea with pH is that either extreme of the spectrum (acid or alkaline) will create challenges for a garden. The most important thing is that the soil be living i.e., have signs of life.
- It is possible to spend a lot of time, dollars and energy modifying the soil. An alternative way to interpret and respond is to use the pH measurement to find out what will grow optimally in the kind of soil you are working with and use it as a guide for your plant list.
- Some people don't like touching dirt. Bring out a bucket with water so people can rinse off afterwards.

discussion questions

*What happened when we squeezed the soil together?
What does it tell us about our soil?*

*What critters did we find when digging?
Why are they important?*

*What are some of the relationships in the soil ecosystem?
How do they interact to create a healthy environment?
How does that translate into human relationships?*

*What are some of the ways that we impact the soil-both
negatively and positively?*



COMPOSTING

overview

This workshop allows the group to put together a composter and begin the composting process in the garden. It also works well for composters that have been unused or used ineffectively. The compost produced can be used to feed the garden and help to build healthy, resilient garden spaces.

It was our garden participants who really encouraged us to start composting. They pointed out that we were trying to work in harmony with the environment and that without compost an important part of the cycle was missing.

activity

1. Choose where the composter will be located.
2. Create alternating layers of dry, woody (carbon) material and green (nitrogen) matter. Cutting/breaking up the materials into smaller pieces (6-10 inches) will help speed up the decomposition.
3. Add water to the compost until moist. Test: squeeze a clump of the compost in your hand and some water should drip out.
4. Let the compost sit for three weeks, checking for moisture levels often. The idea is to let the temperature peak, and when it begins to fall, turn the pile. Composting thermometers are available if you want help.
5. After three weeks, turn the compost, adding air to the pile to help with decomposition.
6. Each time new matter is added to the pile, ideally the ratio is 10-30 parts carbon (brown, woody) to 1 part nitrogen (green).
7. When food scraps are added to the compost, be sure to bury them into the pile to avoid fruit flies.
8. Continue to check moisture levels of the pile. It needs to be moist but not soggy to work well.

suggested dates

Earlier in the season is ideal to get the process functioning before the winter

time

30 minutes

materials

- **Compost structure** (minimum 3x3x3 ft)
Try sourcing an old unused one. Building one from an old futon frame or wooden pallet works very well.
- **Lots of dry, woody matter** (dry leaves, sticks, etc). *Planning ahead of time and leaving leaves to dry out will help build your stash.*
- **Green plant matter** (food scraps, plant scraps from garden)
- **Pruning shears** (one pair per person)
- **Water**
- **Shovel or garden fork**

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SPRING



COMPOSTING

notes

- If you are worried about rodents or raccoons, check out online resources for rodent proofing. If you are only using leaves and greens, this shouldn't be a problem. Food scraps are the main attractor.
- If the pile is smelly or overwhelmed with fruit flies, there is a problem. Check moisture levels first (smelly means it is too wet), then consult more detailed resources.
- An indoor vermicomposter might be a better fit, depending on your space and support.

themes

- *Physical activity*
- *Gardening skills*
- *Environmental stewardship*
- *Cooperation*
- *Observation skills*

discussion questions

Growing food takes nutrients out of the soil, compost puts them in. Most food that is grown commercially relies on heavy chemical fertilizers. What are the environmental effects of this system?

BEAN SALAD

RECIPE



overview

This recipe demonstrates healthy eating when fresh produce is at a minimum. It can include the process of how to use dried beans as well as learning to make a new recipe with limited fresh produce.

Like other greens in the brassica family, cabbage is an excellent source of vitamins, minerals and fibre. It's also cheap, local and it stores well.

activity

1. Wash vegetables. Chop the cabbage into thin pieces (think coleslaw) and grate the carrots. Cut green onions into small pieces; scissors work well.
2. Mix the vegetables with cooled beans.
3. In a separate dish (glass jar works well) mix together oil, vinegar, dried herbs, mustard, salt and pepper. A dash of maple syrup or honey adds some sweetness. Mix the dressing well.
4. Pour over the salad and let sit if time permits. The cabbage is softer with more time in the dressing.

notes

- The time required for any of the cooking activities can be shortened by doing more prep work: chopping, rinsing, measuring, etc. This is also a way to simplify the workshop.

suggested dates

May

time

20 minutes

materials

- **Black beans** – 1 ½ cups, cooked
- **Chick peas** – 1 ½ cups, cooked
- **Cabbage** – 1.5 cups
- **Carrots** – 3 large
- **Olive oil** – ½ cup
- **Vinegar** ¼ cup (*any kind, but balsamic if possible*)
- **Mustard** – 1 tbsp (*any kind*)
- **Dried herbs:** *basil, parsley, oregano (or experiment)*
- **Option:** *maple syrup or honey 2 tsp*
- **Salt and pepper**

themes

- *Healthy eating*
- *Cooking skills*

SPROUT SALAD

RECIPE



overview

This recipe demonstrates healthy eating when fresh produce is at a minimum. It can be paired with the Growing Food Indoors workshop or as a follow-up. Not all ingredients suggested are local, but that could be used as a discussion point.

activity

1. Cook the rice. This can be done before the workshop and left to cool.
2. Rinse sprouts and let drain in a sieve.
3. Prepare the dressing: mix the oil, lemon juice, mustard, salt and pepper together.
4. Mix the sprouts, rice and dressing and serve. Alternatively, rice and sprouts could be served separately and people could choose their own ratio.

notes

- If your nasturtiums are blooming in the garden, the flowers make a beautiful addition to this salad. This can introduce the idea of plants serving multiple functions: nasturtiums are great aphid traps, produce beautiful flowers and we can eat the leaves and flowers!
- Apple can also be added to this sprout salad. They provide sweet and juicy bites. If you have ripe avocados you can add them to provide some richness and healthy oils.

suggested dates

May

time

20 minutes

materials

- **Assortment of sprouts** (*alfalfa, mung beans, sunflower, etc.* These can be purchased from a health food store or sprouted using the technique listed in the Growing Food Indoors workshop.
- **Cooked brown basmati rice**
- **Olive oil**
- **Lemon juice**
- **Mustard**
- **Salt and pepper**
- **Apples or avocados** (*optional*)

themes

- *Healthy eating*
- *Cooking skills*

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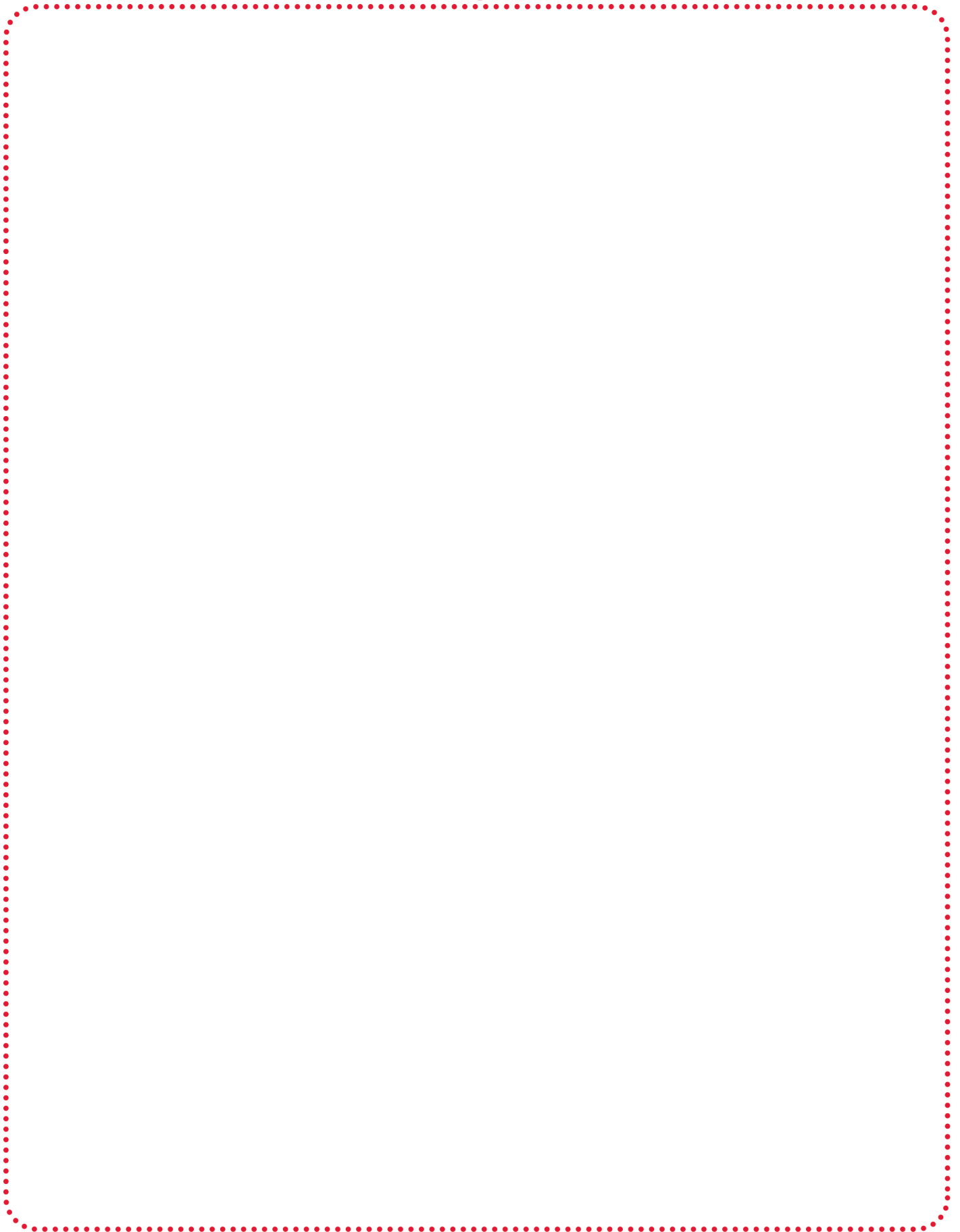
SUMMER



SUMMER



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BUILDING TRELLISES

overview

This workshop engages participants in building some of the structural elements in the garden. The group can work cooperatively or in pairs to create functional trellises for plants to climb. Facilitating upward growth is important in small, urban spaces. This can be a low- or no-cost activity with some advanced planning.

We were lucky enough to have a master trellis builder in our group, he even brought his own tools! Trellis building can be meditative (if you know what you're doing) or a way to practice taking risks (if you're just learning!).

activity

1. This activity can be done with a few interested people while others carry out usual garden maintenance tasks, or as one big group. Depending on the participants, you could have a couple of small groups working on separate trellises.
2. Begin with a discussion about which plants in the garden need trellises and how tall the trellises should be. The group can then brainstorm for different structures or a pre-determined format can be explained.
3. Demonstrate some ways of lashing the posts together with twine.
4. It's helpful to lay the project out on the ground as though it were standing upright. Make adjustments in sizes, fit, materials, etc. as needed.
5. For a simple version of a trellis using four 6-foot stakes and twine, follow these instructions:

Drive two stakes into the ground 5 ½ feet apart. Take a stake and have one person hold it horizontally at the top of the two standing stakes. Use twine to tie each end together; many criss-crossing 'x' patterns will work. Do the same with the remaining stake, just above ground level.

Tie the ball of twine to one of the corners and loop it up and down across the length of the horizontal stakes. Tie the end off and cut the twine.

suggested dates

Early summer, once seedlings get tall enough to need support

time

30-60 minutes

materials

- **Twine or jute** – one ball per pair or group.
- **Stakes** – lengths depend on what plants you have. Read the package for height range and account for at least one foot being underground.
- **Reusing old materials is ideal: fridge racks, elections sign stakes, etc.** (but remember that plants don't like climbing on metal as it gets too hot).
- **Mallet** or other tools for driving stakes into the ground.
- **Small hatchet** (optional) Can be used to make pointed ends to drive into the ground. If you have access to the tool, the work is quite easy.
- **Images of trellises**

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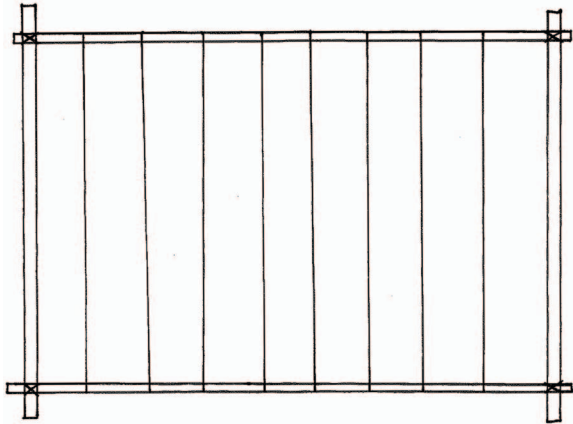
SUMMER



BUILDING TRELLISES

activity (cont'd)

This same structure can be used with a variety of sizes. For wider versions, you may want to add another vertical post in the centre.



themes

- Physical activity
- Gardening skills
- Cooperation
- Problem solving
- Risk taking
- Mindfulness

notes

- To simplify the activity, work collaboratively on one trellis as a group. You could also consider building one ahead of time and using it as a model for building others.
- As the plants grow, encourage them to find the trellis and wind their way up. You can wrap the plant around the structure to get it started.
- At the end of the season, cut or untie the twine and roll it up to use again next year. Take the stakes out of the ground, clean them, and store them for next year also.

discussion questions

What are the some of benefits of a trellis? Some examples are providing shade; keeping plants and food off the ground further away from disease; and helping to build up in small spaces to increase yield.

What are some other way we can increase yield in small spaces?



PICKLING

overview

This workshop uses a salt brine to pickle fresh cucumbers. It is a simple pickling recipe taken from *Wild Fermentation* by Sandor Elix Katz and the workshop model is from Garden Jane (www.gardenjane.com). It makes for a fun and rewarding group project. This recipe does not involve canning and the resulting pickles must be stored in the fridge. Depending on the size of your group you may want to double the recipe.

Fermented foods help aid digestion and they are eaten in different forms all over the world. Sourdough bread, kimchi and sauerkraut are all examples of fermented foods.

activity

1. Approximately 2 hours before the workshop, put the cucumbers to soak in an ice water bath (a big cooler filled with lots of ice and water works well). This will help to make the pickles crunchy.
2. Begin with a discussion about food preservation and some of the ways and reasons we preserve food: freezing, canning, drying, etc. This recipe requires low energy inputs for process and materials.
3. Use a large food grade bucket or ceramic crock for your pickling container. Clean the pickling container well.
4. Rinse the dill and peel the garlic cloves. Place them into the bottom of the pickling container.
5. Move the soaking cucumbers from the ice bath into the pickling container, inspecting each one: remove dirt and any mushy ones you find.
6. In a separate bowl or large jar, mix the salt brine: 1.5 Tbsp salt per litre of water. You need enough brine to cover all of the cucumbers and then some. Keep mixing the salt and water ratio and then pour over the cucumbers until they are submerged.
7. Lay the plastic or ceramic plate flat on top of the cucumbers and press down; the brine should be well over the plate. This serves to keep the cucumbers submerged. Weight the plate down with a clean glass or jar filled with water.

suggested dates

August

time

30 minutes

materials

- Food grade plastic bucket or ceramic crock
- Water
- Sea salt
- About 3-4 pounds of pickling cucumbers *the fresher the better!*
- 3-4 heads of flowering dill (*dill flowers are the best because they have the strongest flavour*)
- Jars (*for distributing the pickles when they are ready*)
- 2-3 heads of garlic
- Glass jar to be used as a weight
- Tea towel
- Grape leaves (*wild are ok*) or oak leaves are an option for better crunch; the tannins in these leaves help to make crunchier pickles.

let's grow!

SUMMER



PICKLING

activity (cont'd)

8. Cover the top of the pickling container with a tea towel and let sit on a counter top for one week.
9. Check the pickles each day by tasting the brine. Don't be afraid of the scum or bubbles that form; this is part of the process so just skim it off the top and let the taste be your guide. If the brine tastes sour, throw out the batch.
10. The week after the workshop, the pickles and brine can be put into individual jars to take home. At this point they need to be kept in the fridge and will last several months.

themes

- *Healthy eating*
- *Cooking skills*
- *Cooperation*

notes

- It's great to have a batch of these ready for tasting in the workshop. So if possible, make a batch the week before and start the workshop with samples.
- Many different vegetables and fruits can be pickled in this same way. This same recipe can be done in the fall with beets, carrots, cabbage, cauliflower, beans, etc. Try different seasonings too: pepper corns, caraway seeds, hot peppers, etc.

discussion questions

Fermentation is one way of preserving vegetables, what are others?

Did your grandparents preserve vegetables or fruit? Do you? How can we preserve that knowledge?

Fermentation happens when microorganisms naturally present around us transform our food. Wild fermentation is the idea that by tapping into the complex and diverse microorganisms around us we can become healthier. What do you think?



HERBAL VINEGARS

overview

This workshop introduces using fresh herbs from the garden to flavor vinegar. The activity begins one session and is completed approximately two weeks later (after the vinegars have been infused).

Vinegars help extract minerals from the herbs, making the infused vinegars a rich source of minerals and calcium.

activity

1. Gather fresh herbs from the garden (or purchase them). The fresher the better.
2. Set a saucepan on the stove with enough vinegar to fill the jars.
3. Introduce each herb and pass them around individually for the group to observe, smell, taste, etc. Talk about possible combinations to try. This is a good chance to talk about some of the health promoting aspects of herbs.
4. Slightly bruise the herbs and tear them into small pieces. Keep each type of herb separate.
5. Press the chosen combination of fresh herbs into glass jars, filling it halfway.
6. Heat vinegar to a boil on the stove. Fill the jars with the warm vinegar from the stove.
7. Cover the mouth of the jar with waxed paper and tighten the lid.
8. Set the jar in a dark place for 2 weeks.
9. After the infusion process, strain the vinegar into a clean dish using a fine sieve or cheesecloth. This separates out the herbs which can then be discarded. Pour the infused vinegar back into the jar.
10. Enjoy the vinegar on salads or as a dip with oil and bread.
11. Store the vinegar in the fridge.

suggested dates

June - onward

time

30 minutes

materials

- Red wine or apple cider vinegar
- Fresh herbs (*ideally from the garden*) – use leaves and soft stems.
- Glass jars and lids
- Waxed paper
- Cheesecloth or fine sieve
- Permanent marker and label
- Saucepan

themes

- *Healthy eating*
- *Cooking skills*
- *Creativity*

let's grow!

SUMMER



HERBAL VINEGARS

notes

- A simpler way to carry out this activity is to make one jar of vinegar, collectively. This also works well for people that don't have a place to use vinegar on their own.
- Don't be afraid to add lots of herbs! It is better to make the flavor too strong than too weak. If the flavor is too strong just add more vinegar.
- Variation can be built in around choosing what herbs to put in the vinegar. An adaptation is to have a set combination of herbs to put into the jars. This adds some simplicity, but everyone is still able to make their own.
- Gayla Trail (in *Grow Great Grub*) suggests the following combinations: basil, oregano and thyme, or dill, nasturtium and lemon balm. Some people enjoy garlic cloves too.
- Flavoured vinegars can be made with any sort of vinegar but red wine or apple cider vinegars works well.

discussion questions

We know eating greens and salads are good for you, what ways do you have of livening them up? (tasty sauces, salad dressing, nuts, fruits)

What makes something a good combination (spicy with sweet, basil with oregano)? How can this play out in our relationships?

HERBAL TEAS

SUMMER



overview

This workshop highlights ways to use some common herbs that grow easily. Making herbal tea is a way to promote relaxation and healing.

activity

1. Begin with a broad discussion of common herbs using examples in the garden when possible. Take time to smell, touch, taste and observe the different herbs.
2. Introduce the idea that many plants have different healing and medicinal properties - even the ones that are often considered to be "weeds". Just like other medicines, some plants can be very powerful and we need to know about a plant before we use it for healing or health purposes.
3. Chose one or two herbs to use as an example for the workshop. Common and easy to grow herbs are mint and lemon balm. Used in tea, peppermint can help with digestion and has stimulating properties. Lemon balm has more relaxing and soothing qualities and a strong lemony scent.
4. Demonstrate making herbal tea as a group. Take 5-10 fresh leaves per cup of water and put into a tea pot. Pour boiling water over the leaves and let steep for 10 minutes covered. Covering the tea helps retain more of the healing properties.
5. Pour everyone small cups of tea, let cool, taste and compare. You can also steep some grocery store tea bags of the same herb and compare to the fresh herbs. Add honey to taste.

notes

- A hot weather alternative is to make the tea in advance and sample it chilled as a group.

discussion questions

Do you drink tea at home? Which tea do you like best? Do you know of other ways to use herbs and plants for healing?

suggested dates

June - onward

time

20 minutes

materials

- **Fresh herbs** (*ideally from the garden*)
- **Herbs for tea** (*dried or fresh*)
- **Honey**
- **Mugs and spoons**

themes

- *Healthy eating*
- *Plant knowledge*
- *Stress reduction*

COMMUNITY MAPPING

REFLECTION



overview

This workshop helps to generate feedback on the programming to date and can help bring attention to the groups' successes, cohesion, process or problems. The photos can serve to provoke stories and remind the group of all that has been done so far. This session can easily serve as an evaluation tool as long as comments are being recorded.

activity

1. This activity requires having photos from previous sessions, ideally all of the workshops and all of the participants. Print a big stack of the photos ready for the workshop day.
2. Spread the photos out over a table that everyone can gather around and look through.
3. Fasten the mural paper to a wall – can be done in the garden space if weather and space permit. Set up chart paper or extra mural paper to make additional notes that may come up. Have tape on hand to attach photos as the activity is carried out, and markers to capture the ideas and discussion.
4. There are suggested questions listed, but consider any others you want to add to capture the information you need.
 - a. Begin by asking participants to take some time to look through the photos and choose one that resonates with them or helps to describe a favourite aspect of the program (5-10 mins).
 - b. One at a time, each person can speak about a photo of their choosing while the facilitator tapes it to the big mural paper and jots down the main ideas from what the person says. This can be repeated for as many rounds as people are engaged.
 - c. Once the photo component slows down or is finished, the discussion can shift into other reflection questions.

suggested dates

*Halfway through season
and/or end of season*

time

Minimum 45 minutes

materials

- Mural paper
- Chart paper (for additional notes)
- Coloured chart markers (non-toxic)
- Masking tape
- Printed photos from throughout the season
- Questions prepared

themes

- *Listening*
- *Turn taking*
- *Cooperation*
- *Self reflection*
- *Celebration*



COMMUNITY MAPPING - REFLECTION

notes

- If the group is quiet or nervous about talking one at a time, it can also be done as a collective effort. Take one picture at a time, attach it to the mural and have the group work together to come up with words or sentences that describe the photo or the important aspects that it represents.
- This mural can be an exciting piece to hang up in the centre where participants will see it as they visit.
- A follow-up conversation with the group may be appropriate to describe how their input will be used in future programming.

discussion questions

Why did you choose this photo? What do you like/dislike about it?

Between gardening times, do you think about the group? In what ways?

Does the food from the garden change the kinds of food you eat or amount of fresh food you consume?

Why did you initially choose to join the group? Are they the same reasons you continue to come? Now could be a time to open the letters from the first community mapping session and reflect on them.

Is there anything you've found surprising about the group/ program? What could we change about the program?

KALE CHIPS

RECIPE



overview

This recipe takes an extremely nutritious, less common vegetable and demonstrates a simple way to prepare and enjoy it.

Like other greens in the brassica family, kale is an excellent source of fiber, calcium, vitamin K, A, C, and B6. It is often referred to as a "superfood" because per calorie, it is one of the most nutritional foods on the planet.

activity

1. Begin by introducing the vegetable and talking about variations within the kale family – has anyone seen kale in the store? What kind?
2. Preheat the oven to 350° C.
3. Identify a few people who will share the task of rinsing the kale leaves in water. This can be done in large bowls of water to split the task among participants. Other participants can be drying the leaves by shaking them into the sink or using tea towels.
4. Once leaves are rinsed and dried, the leaves can be ripped up into smaller pieces and put into the large mixing bowl. They can be approximately the size of a tortilla chip.
5. Drizzle the leaves with a bit of olive oil and a light sprinkle of salt. Start with small amounts! You can always add more if need be. Mix the leaves around with clean hands, rubbing the oil through the leaves for even distribution.
6. Spread pieces onto the cookie sheets, laying them as flat as possible against the tray.
7. Place the trays in the oven and set a timer! Check after 5 minutes, but it can be closer to 10. It is a very fine line between crispy and burnt!
8. Ready to eat almost immediately.

suggested dates

July - October

time

30 minutes

materials

- 1 bunch of kale
- 2 cookie sheets
- ¼ cup olive oil (or less)
- 1 tsp of salt
- water for rinsing
- big mixing bowl
- tea towels

themes

- *Cooking skills*
- *Healthy eating*
- *Cooperation*

let's grow!

RECIPE



KALE CHIPS

notes

- The time required for any of the cooking activities can be shortened by doing more prep work: chopping, rinsing, measuring, etc. This is also a way to simplify the workshop.
- Adding other seasoning can be good. Parmesan cheese, curry powder, sesame seeds, etc. can be sprinkled in when you add the salt. You can make one cookie sheet with the basic recipe, and then add the seasoning to the remaining leaves in the bowl.
- Talking about the different ways to cook and enjoy the same vegetable can help demystify some less common foods. You could do the kale chips one week and follow up with the kale salad the following week, or vice versa.

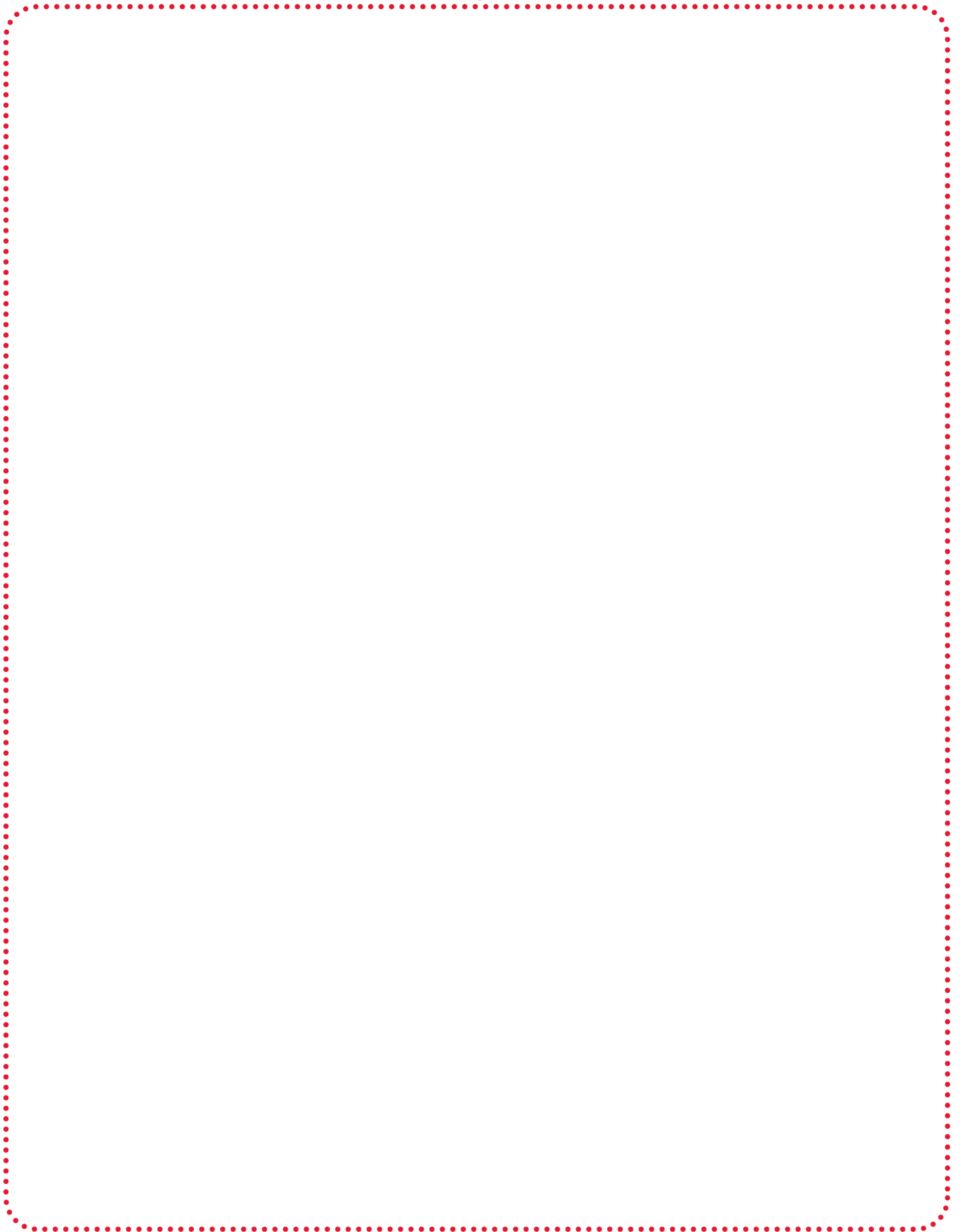
discussion questions

Have you tried kale before? How else have you used/tasted it?

Why do you think kale might be good for us?

How can we tell by looking at a food whether it is healthy - for example kale is dark green and has fibrous leaves (discuss colour, texture, processed or not).

let's grow!





FALL



let's grow!

SEED SAVING

FALL



overview

This workshop introduces some of the ways to save seeds and invites people to consider why seed saving is important. In addition to building garden skills, seed saving helps to create self-sufficiency for the garden and makes critical links to food security.

There's so much pride in having saved seeds. Label them with the name of your garden and bring them to a Seedy Saturday event near you to trade!

activity one: seed saving principles

1. Take some time to explore the garden and the different ways the plants present their seeds. Identify some examples: beans (we eat the seed); marigold flowers (create seeds after flowering); peppers (inside, we don't eat them); lettuce (seed comes once lettuce has bolted into tall conical shape).
2. A few seed saving principles that can be discussed:
 - Select seed from your best plant. Some qualities to consider: flavour, yield, size, and resilience to weather, disease, insects.
 - Genetic diversity is important. Select from a variety of the plants you wish to save.
 - Storage tips: wait for the seeds to be completely dry before storing. A simple test is to try bending the seed: if it breaks instead of bending it is dry. Store in a cool, dry and dark place.
 - Labeling: always label with the name of the plant, year and location it was last grown. Make sure seeds don't mix while being collected, dried or stored.
3. Talk about the timing and techniques for collecting various types of seeds. For example, beans work well to let dry on the vine, while peppers should be taken when the plant is ripe and fresh, and dried out on cloth or a paper towel.
4. The group can collect some seeds, put them into envelopes and label them.

suggested dates

August - October

time

20 minutes

materials

- Plants in the garden as examples
- Envelopes
- Marker (*non-toxic*)
- Examples of interesting and beautiful seeds (e.g., varieties of beans)

themes

- Gardening skills
- Environmental stewardship
- Observation



SEED SAVING

activity two: tomato seeds

Demonstrating tomato seed saving can be done indoors. Gayla Trail (*You Grow Girl*) has a very comprehensive set of instructions on this process. Here is a condensed version:

1. Scoop the seeds and jelly-like substance from the tomato into a small container.
2. Let sit for a few days, stirring occasionally. Expect a rotting smell.
3. When you see mould forming, they are ready. Add some water and drain/skim that mould off the top.
4. Add more fresh water and stir well.
5. Healthy seeds will settle to the bottom so slowly pour the water out and let the floating seeds go with it.
6. Put the healthy seeds in a strainer, rinse well, and spread them out to dry for a few days (on cheese cloth, newspaper, tea towels, etc.).
7. When the seeds are dry, put them in an envelope or container and label them.

activity three: germination

Different seeds will last for different lengths of time. Many seeds can last a number of years. This simple germination test will give you an idea of how many plants you will get from your seeds (i.e., the germination rate). Rather than throwing the seeds out, you may just need to plant more of them. Try this test over the winter or when you are getting ready to start seedlings.

1. Place seeds on moist paper towel.
2. Keep warm and moist for a few days.
3. Look for germination: a little tail sprouting from the seed.
4. Keep checking and add moisture as necessary.
5. Observe the rate: 50% or better is good. If the fewer than 50% germinate, plant extra to compensate.



SEED SAVING

notes

- Cross pollination is when pollen from one plant pollinates a different but closely related plant and produces a seed that isn't 'true'. For example, if you plant different varieties of squash close together (e.g., acorn and butternut), they may cross-pollinate and produce seeds that will turn produce into a hybrid (which could be awesome or could be inedible).
- When saving seed, it is important to avoid cross pollination so that the seed you save grows into the plant that you intend to grow. To make things easier, start by saving seeds from self-pollinating plants such as; lettuce, beans, snap peas, marigolds and tomatoes.
- Many seeds sold in the store are hybrids (a cross between two different genetic strands). When buying plants or seeds, it's important to note if the plant is a hybrid or not because trying to save seed from hybrid plants will produce inconsistent results.

discussion questions

This activity can tie into a big picture discussion about food security. Understanding seed saving can help to open our eyes to the plant lifecycle and what it means to hold the power to grow our own food.

Corporate control of seeds and food production is threatening our food security. Sharing the skills, knowledge and practice of saving seed is part of challenging this trend and supporting our right to grow and access food.

Why might we want to save seeds?

What does the loss of genetic diversity mean?

PUTTING THE GARDEN TO BED

FALL



overview

This workshop serves the practical function of getting the garden ready for winter and tidying up. This also provides closure for the group and can open a conversation about caring for ourselves over the winter.

When we nourish the soil and clean up the loose ends in the garden we are reminded of how winter can be a time of rest and nourishment for ourselves as well. Recharging ourselves and the soil can set the stage for flourishing in the spring.

Putting the garden to bed can be a physically demanding time. This is a good chance to remind participants about safe lifting, reaching, and bending.

activity

1. **Plants:** Cut back perennials. Woody stalks can be put out as yard waste if there isn't room in the compost pile. Diseased plants should be hot composted or put out as yard waste too.
2. **Soil:** Add compost to the surface, cover with mulch layer (e.g., straw or leaves), and water.
3. **Tools:** Clean and dry tools and put into a sheltered space. Take down trellises, rope, plant labels, etc. to be cleaned, organized and stored. Hoses, watering vessels and ceramic clay pots need to be emptied and stored so they won't freeze and crack.
4. You can also plant or move perennials in the garden at this time. They are often on sale at garden stores in the fall.
5. Empty plant containers or seedling pots should be cleaned with soap and water before storing.

suggested dates

Mid-October

time

Minimum 30 minutes

materials

- Compost
- Mulch (straw or leaves) – some garden stores often have straw in the fall or try ordering from a farmer at a farmers' market.
- Water
- Pruners (one per person)
- Gloves
- Paper and markers/pens
- Perennials to plant (optional) Garden centres often sell them off cheaply in the fall.

themes

- Injury prevention
- Physical activity
- Self care



PUTTING THE GARDEN TO BED

notes

- Often there won't be enough time to get through all of the work that needs to be done in one session. It is a good idea to plan for two sessions.
- This can be a quiet or a very social activity. Once the work is laid out, there is not much need for instruction and the time can be used for mindful/silent time or socializing while working together.
- Planting garlic is an activity that works well included in this workshop. This provides connection to next year's growing season.
- Introducing participants to other programs that are happening throughout the winter like community kitchens and arts programs can help bridge the winter months when gardening isn't possible.

discussion questions

What ways can we recharge ourselves over the winter?

What things would we like to see done differently next year in the garden? Different plants grown?

What things worked well this year?

GROWING GARLIC

FALL



overview

This workshop demonstrates how to grow garlic by planting cloves in the fall. It is a connection to the next year's growing season.

Planting garlic is a way to connect physically and emotionally to the growing process and the earth at the end of the season. This link to next year's growing season can help with the anxiety that some people experience as the garden season comes to an end. Garlic has antiviral, antifungal and antibacterial qualities.

activity

1. Choose a sunny location to plant garlic. The space will be used until mid-summer of the next year, and can then be replanted with greens, bush beans or other plants that have a shorter time to maturation.
2. Dig holes in a grid pattern or staggered grid pattern about 5 inches apart from each other and 4 inches deep.
3. Use hands to break a bulb of local garlic into individual cloves, placing one clove in each hole with the pointed end up.
4. Give each hole/clove a scoop of compost and cover with soil.
5. Cover the whole patch with a thick layer of mulch: straw works very well and you may want to have some on hand for the rest of the garden.
6. Mark the area you have planted with something that will make it through the winter. For example, you may want to drive sticks or small stakes into the ground to identify the area.
7. Garlic needs lots of nutrients! So give the plot another dose of compost in the spring by scattering it along the surface and watering it in.
8. When the plant produces scapes (long, curling green growth that comes from the centre of the stalk), cut them off and enjoy them sautéed or in garlic scape pesto. They have an onion-garlic flavor. Cutting off the scape encourages the plant to put energy back down into the bulb.

suggested dates

Mid-October

time

20 minutes

materials

- **Local garlic** (a hardy variety is important for its ability to grow in this climate)
- **Compost**
- **Straw**
- **Trowels**
- **Sticks to mark the space**

themes

- *Gardening skills*
- *Healthy eating*
- *Physical activity*

let's grow!

FALL



GROWING GARLIC

activity (cont'd)

9. When the leaves start to yellow and dry out, it's time to pull out the garlic bulbs! Enjoy them fresh or hang them to dry. They will keep for several months.

notes

- Each clove has the potential to grow into one bulb of garlic. When you are choosing how many garlic bulbs to get for planting, try to estimate how many cloves are in the bulb and calculate how many you want or have space for. You can grow approximately 9 garlic plants in a 1 foot x 1 foot square.
- This activity can be coupled with "Putting the Garden to Bed" tasks.

discussion questions

How do you enjoy garlic? Can you share cooking tips and recipes?

What rumours and legends are there about garlic?

GROWING FOOD INDOORS

FALL



overview

This workshop introduces how to make edible sprouts from dry seeds/beans. This is an inexpensive way to have fresh, nutritious food throughout the year. The activity can be done any time during the season and it is particularly relevant in late fall as a tool to sustain fresh food access over the winter.

Sprouts are a rich source of vitamins, minerals, proteins and enzymes. Many participants have started growing their own sprouts at home and find it a cheap and easy way to eat more fresh food in the winter.

activity

1. Prepare sprouts 4-5 days in advance of the workshop or purchase sprouts the day of or day before the workshop.
2. Introduce the activity by tasting the sprouts and talking about their nutritional value.
3. Begin with demonstrating the rinsing process: put a handful of seeds into the glass jar, fill it with water, and strain the water through the cheesecloth or stainless steel screens (repeat a few times). If using a mason jar, fasten the cheesecloth using the outer ring of the lid. If using recycled jars without the snap lids, secure the cheesecloth by placing it on the opening of the jar and wrapping an elastic band around the outside rim of the jar.
4. To begin the sprouting process the seeds should now be covered with water and left to soak for approximately 10-12 hours (doing this overnight works well). In the workshop this step can be demonstrated but then move on to step 5.
5. After soaking, drain the water out through the cheesecloth and stand the jar upside down at an angle (so water can continue to drain) anywhere at room temperature. Pick a spot (e.g., the counter top) that you will see the jar and remember to take care of it.
6. Explain and demonstrate the rinsing process: fill the jar with water, slosh it around, drain the water out, and set the jar upside down at an angle again. Rinse the sprouts twice a day.

suggested dates

Any time in the season

time

20 minutes

materials

- **Prepared sprouts** (made or store bought)
- **Raw seeds to sprout** (e.g., mung beans) *small handful for each person, plus demo.*
- **Glass jars** (mason jars or recycled glass jars) – *one per person plus demo*
- **Cheesecloth, nylons, stainless steel screens.** *Cheese cloth is available at large grocery stores.*
- **Elastic bands or outer ring of mason jar lids** (one per jar)
- **Water**

themes

- *Healthy eating*
- *Gardening skills*
- *Food access*



GROWING FOOD INDOORS

activity (cont'd)

7. When the seeds have grown a small tail (sprouted) they are ready to eat! When most of the seeds have sprouted, put a lid on the sprouts and keep them in the fridge (avoid rinsing a few hours before they go in the fridge because the sprouts will go moldy faster if they are wet). Eat them in the next few days for best quality.

notes

- A sample of sprouts should be started 4-5 days in advance to give an example of what it looks like. Store bought sprouts can be used as the example instead, and can be useful as a price comparison with the dried seeds.
- Mung beans are easy to sprout and mild-tasting, so they make a good example. The key is that they are raw.
- Preparing a salad using sprouts, or incorporating them into sandwiches works well to inspire some ideas of how to use what might be a new food for some people.
- If the sprouts smell badly or you see any mold, throw out the batch.
- There are other ways of sprouting, including growing in dirt or between paper towels.

discussion questions

Do you grow anything at home? Why or why not?

What kind of access do we have to fresh produce in the winter? Is it local, fresh, expensive?

Are there any other ways to eat produce in the winter on a budget?

PLANNING FOR SPRING

FALL



overview

This activity focuses on reviewing the garden and getting plans started for next year: thinking about what worked well and what could be changed. It is ideal to get some of this thinking done in the fall while thoughts and ideas are still fresh. While the “Community Mapping – Reflection” workshop can focus on the group norms and processes, this activity can be focused more on the plant list and physical layout of the garden.

This activity can shed light on what plants were most useful to participants and why. This is another way to understand the impacts of the garden and how the harvest is impacting each person's access to fresh and healthy food.

Exploring the strengths and limitations of the garden layout ties into our physical health in the space. We can plan the garden in ways that allow us to move with ease and help to avoid injuries and strains.

activity

1. Create a large, bird's-eye view drawing of the garden space. Attach this up on a wall or lay it out on a table.
2. Looking at the drawing (and the garden space if you're near it), talk about what was growing this year and where, and sketch it onto the outline. Have a discussion about what worked well, and what did not.
3. Identify on the drawing where ongoing environmental and social features exist: full sun, shade, dry spots, types of soil, compost, water hook-up, pollinators, garbage, cigarette butts, hard-to-reach places, etc.
4. Mark off where existing perennials are now. It's possible to move perennials, but if you plan to keep them where they are, get them on the drawing as a starting point.
5. Create a list of goals for the garden. For example: diversity, more food, pollinators, etc. These goals can inform your decision-making for what to include or change in the garden.
6. Create a sticky notes or little pieces of paper for each plant to include in the garden next year.

suggested dates

September - October

time

45 minutes

materials

- Large paper
- Coloured markers (non-toxic)
- Small pieces of paper or sticky notes
- Tape

themes

- Cooperation
- Listening
- Reflection
- Planning
- Injury prevention



PLANNING FOR SPRING

activity (cont'd)

- Using the current layout and the environmental/social factors identified, begin to lay out where things might go next year. Having the plants on little pieces of paper allows the ideas to shift and move while it's being discussed. Here are a few examples of considerations made in past garden plans:
 - Basic crop rotation: e.g., Where we planted beans one year, we planned for tomatoes the next. See the "Notes" section for more information on crop rotation.
 - One corner of the garden gets a lot of sun and the sprinkler doesn't reach it as well as other areas, so we responded by planning for drought-tolerant, sun-loving plants.
- Remember to build in the human element! Useful pathways and access points are important to make the garden accessible. If something was awkward or didn't work well one year, be open to creative ways of changing it.
- Take a photo of the map for back-up and store the map in a safe place for future reference.

notes

- A simpler version of this activity is to draw out what was in the garden this year and talk about what plants to grow again, add, or subtract. This can take a simple list form and the detailed planning can be done in other time.
- Another variation is to have the existing garden map created prior to the workshop and then time is spent only on reflection and planning for next year.
- If this is done as the last session, it can be fun to give each participant photos from throughout the season. This is one way to keep memories of the garden during the winter and keep folks motivated for next year!
- Crop rotation helps to change how the soil will be used and can manage the impact of what insects, pests, diseases, etc., will breed comfortably. Some crops are particularly useful to switch. For example tomatoes take a lot of nitrogen out of the soil, while beans fix nitrogen in the soil. In general, aim to change the family of plants that grow in one spot from year to year.



PLANNING FOR SPRING

notes (cont'd)

- Companion planting is about finding plants that grow well together in shared space. For example, planting marigolds and nasturtium among tomato plants helps to reduce aphid damage to the tomatoes. Spinach and carrots are another useful pair: spinach has a shallow root and can be harvested mid season, leaving the carrots to mature with lots of space underground.

discussion questions

What worked well to create a healthy garden? Are there things that could improve?

What were our most significant limitations?

How did the physical garden space work for us – Was it easy to work in? Were there barriers to access? Hard to reach spots? etc.

What were the most prolific plants?

Do you have favourite plants from this year's crop? Why?

ROASTED ROOT VEGETABLES

RECIPE



overview

Root vegetables have excellent health promoting properties and can be enjoyed over the winter, helping us to maintain our vegetable consumption when the season makes it more of a challenge. A vegetable roast is one way to demonstrate a simple way to cook and eat these vegetables.

activity

1. Set oven for 350°C.
2. Wash and chop beets, carrots, potatoes, yams and onions into cubes.
3. Put into roasting pan and drizzle some oil, salt and pepper and mix. Adding some garlic cloves adds extra flavour.
4. Cover and bake until all vegetables are soft. This will take at least an hour.

notes

- The cooking time makes this a long activity, but it could be paired with the “Spring Planning” workshop, for example, making use of the long cooking time. Alternatively, the roast could be made in advance.
- Any combination of the vegetables mentioned will also work. To add some protein try adding cooked beans (kidney, black beans, etc.) or firm tofu cut in cubes.
- This is an opportunity to talk about some other ways to enjoy this tremendously healthy food. Grating raw beets into a salad or eating beet leaves sautéed with onions are tasty ideas to introduce.

suggested dates

October

time

*20 min to prepare,
1 hour to bake*

materials

- Beets, carrots, potatoes, yams and onions
- Olive oil
- Roasting pan (*with lid*)
- Salt and pepper
- Option: garlic cloves
- Knives
- Cutting boards

themes

- *Cooking skills*
- *Healthy eating*
- *Patience!*

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BOOKS, PUBLICATIONS & WEB RESOURCES

community gardening resources

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

Community Garden Manual, by Toronto Community Housing
http://www.torontohousing.ca/webfm_send/183

Onkwawen Tkaientohseron "Our Garden": A Guide to Building Stronger Aboriginal Communities through Community Gardening, by Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres.
Available from The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres <http://www.ofifc.org>

Growing Opportunities: A Social Service Agency's Guide to Garden Programming, by Evergreen
Available at <http://www.evergreen.ca/docs/res/Growing-Opportunities.pdf>

How Does Our Garden Grow? A Guide to Community Garden Success, by Laura Berman
An excellent how-to guide on starting a community garden.
Available from: <http://www.foodshare.net/how-does-our-garden-grow>

ONLINE

American Community Gardening Association <http://www.communitygarden.org>
Representing both Canadian and American Community gardens. Resources, links, education materials and advocacy.

Community Food Security Coalition <http://www.foodsecurity.org/>
North American coalition dedicated to the promotion of food security with links, advocacy and education.

City Farmer <http://cityfarmer.info>
Urban growing links, information, and blog based out of Vancouver.

Food First: Institute for Food and Development Policy <http://www.foodfirst.org/>
International advocacy and policy work.

Food Share – Community Garden Program <http://www.foodshare.net/>
Seeds, bees, composting, finding out about other community gardens, urban agriculture, workshop opportunities, and accessing other resources.

Green Thumbs Growing Kids – Toolkit <http://www.kidsgrowing.ca/tool-kit>
Lesson plans, tips for youth gardens, links to other resources.

Growing Food and Justice for All <http://www.growingfoodandjustice.org>
North American initiative aimed at dismantling racism and empowering low-income and communities of color through sustainable and local agriculture.

The Stop Community Food Centre <http://www.learningnetwork.thestop.org/>
Online forum for sharing resources, questions, ideas, etc.

Toronto Urban Growers <http://torontourbangrowers.org/>
Online forum for sharing resources, questions, ideas, etc.

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BOOKS, PUBLICATIONS & WEB RESOURCES

linking the garden to the kitchen

BOOKS

Simply in Season, by Mary-Beth Lind and Cathleen Hockman-Wert (Herald Press, 2009).

From Seed to Table - A Practical Guide to Eating and Growing Green, by Janette Haase (Insomniac Press, 2009).

Good Food for All: The Stop's Cookbook, by The Stop (Touchstone, 2009).

ONLINE

Mumm's Sprouting Seeds <http://www.sprouting.com/>

Sprouting seed company with great resources on the how's and why's of home scale sprouting.

Sprout People <http://sproutpeople.org/>

Sprouting company with information re: sprouting nutrition and politics.

West End Food Co-op Cannery <http://westendfood.coop/cannery>

Online canning recipes, event information and links to other great canning resources.

gardening in a health setting

BOOKS

Accessible Landscapes: Designing for Inclusion, by Phillip S. Evans and Brian Donnelley (San Francisco State University, 1993).

Garden for Life, by Lynn Dennis (Lone Pine Publishing, 1997).

The Enabling Garden: A guide to lifelong gardening, by Gene Rothert (Taylor Publishing, 1994).

ONLINE

Annotated Bibliography on Universal Design,

http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/pub/htmldocs/pub_universaldesign/index.htm

Created by the Accessibility Program at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in Victoria B.C. Contains an excellent section on gardens.

Agribility: Cultivating Accessible Agriculture <http://www.agrability.org/>

Links to tools, discussion and peer support for those farming with disabilities.

Therapeutic Landscapes Network <http://www.healinglandscapes.org/>

Information, links, blog, articles and case studies of multi-disciplinary approaches to therapeutic green spaces.

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BOOKS, PUBLICATIONS & WEB RESOURCES

organic gardening

BOOKS

An Illustrated Guide to Growing Food on Your Balcony, by lara lucretia mrosovsky (mycelium Press, 2011).
Contact lara.lucretia@gmail.com for distribution.

Food Not Lawns: How to Turn Your Garden and Your Neighborhood into a Community, by H.C. Flores
(Chelsea Green, 2006).

Gia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture, by Toby Hemenway (Chelsea Green, 2000).

Grow Great Grub, by Gayla Trail (Clarkson Potter, 2010).

How to Grow More Vegetables: Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land Than You Can Imagine, by John Jeavons (Random House, revised ed. 2012).

Organic Gardeners Handbook, by Frank Tozer (Green Man Books, 2008).

Rodale Organic Gardening Solutions: Over 500 Answers to Real Life Questions from Backyard Gardeners, by Cheryl Long (Rodale, 2000).

Saving Seeds: The Gardener's Guide to Growing and Storing Vegetable and Flower Seeds, by M. Rogers
(Storey Communications, 1990).

Seed to Seed, by Susanne Ashworth (Seed Savers Exchange, 2002).

Teaming with Microbes: The Organic Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web, by Jeff Lowenfels, Wayne Lewis, Elaine Ingham (Timber Press, 2006).

The New Organic Grower, by Eliot Coleman (Chelsea Green Publishing, 1995).

The Worm Book, by Loren Nancarrow and Janet Hogan Taylor (Ten Speed Press, 1998).

Vegetable Growers Handbook, by Frank Tozer (Green Man Books, 2008).

Vegetables, Herbs & Fruit an Illustrated Encyclopedia, by Bob Flowerdew and Jekka McVicar (Laurel Glen, 1997).

You Grow Girl, by Gayla Trail (Simon & Shuster, 2005)

ONLINE

Canadian Organic Growers <http://www.cog.ca/>

Online library, organic food resources, standards and statistics, newsletters, directory and links

Garden Web <http://www.gardenweb.com/>

Great online forums. Get your questions answered!

You Grow Girl <http://www.yougrowgirl.com/>

Blog and forum for urban organic gardeners.

Seeds of Diversity <http://www.seeds.ca/en.php>

Information on seed saving and genetic diversity.

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NOTES

