



Growing up in Granby

By Chester F McQueary

Growing up in Granby, Colorado in the 1940s, vegetable gardening in our front yard was a part of life. My parents had experienced the hard times of the Great Depression economic crisis living and working on a family farm. So gardening had been an essential part of their lives for many years. At 8,000 feet elevation, people sometimes said that there were two seasons: the Fourth of July and winter. And indeed chilly summer nights and a short frost-free growing season made our gardening focus on hardy root vegetables, peas and lettuces, cabbages and chard. The nearby town of Fraser, for many years an official station of the US Weather Bureau, was listed by the US Department of Agriculture as having a frost free season of 18 days! So no one thought of "exotic" crops like tomatoes, corn, squash or melons.

Yet we did garden, and in the era of World War II rationing of many basic goods, our garden was an important source of fresh produce in our diets. And the U.S. Government officially promoted home vegetable gardening as **Victory Gardens**, which at peak had 20 million home gardens producing an amazing 40% of U.S. vegetables. Though some of us never gave up our interest in growing edible plants after our youthful involvement, in the rush to "normalization" and suburban living surrounded by bluegrass lawns in the 60 years since WWII, many citizens have become disconnected from the fundamental life cycles and processes which create the food on our tables. And gigantic corporations have transformed the diets of many, concocting dyed, chemically flavored, near-nutritionless, semi-toxic products loaded with cheap calories, fats and sugars, which then result in the ever-growing rates of diabetes, heart disease and chronic disease.

As the U.S. economic situation degenerates, with ever-rising energy and

food prices rising in parallel to an agro-industrial system in which the average food travels 1,500 miles from where it was grown or manufactured, more and more of us are realizing the necessity and wisdom in growing more of our own food foods right at our doorsteps. One recent study found that hi-tech corporate agriculture produces about 25% of greenhouse gases.



Melanie Sloan shows off her selections in filling up her plant start tray at the GFNL seed swap afternoon at AVO's (Apr6). Check out p.3 for Grow Food not Lawns up-coming events!

Living here in a high-altitude desert, using precious water to grow acres and acres of lawn around our homes needs to change. Turf grasses cover more than 25 million acres in the U.S., more than any food crop and three times the U.S. corn acreage. The typical 1/3 acre home lawn gets 10# of pesticides, 20# of chemical fertilizers and 170,000 gallons of water! Do the math to a staggering and toxic conclusion: 375,000 tons of pesticides and 750,000 tons of chemical fertilizers all inevitably leaching into ground waters. Denver Water reports that lawns and landscaping consume more than half of annual water usage. But delicious vine-ripe melons, tomatoes, grapes, pesticide-free lettuce, chard, kale, sweet or fiery peppers, summer and winter squash, and many others all provide flavors and nutrition and variety at low cost to the wallet and environment. And once established, a productive garden can require less care, time and water

than lawns... and with far richer, tastier results.

In retirement, when we moved into a 1960's tract house, we quickly removed the lawn in favor of a fruit and vegetable garden providing a rich variety of foods in season as well as plenty to dry, can, freeze and store for later use. A new era of Victory Gardens is both possible and desirable. Come join the fun! cfm

"How I Became Revolutionized through Gardening" or "Gardening as a Revolutionary Act"

Ruth Inglis-Widrick

I will never forget the moment of epiphany, when I finally "got it." One spring day, working the soil at our Community Garden, I beheld the rich brown earth. With the memory of several seasons of hauling in compost and manure, digging it in shovel-full by shovel-full, I reflected with delight on how my plants would thrive in that dark, loamy soil. With a flash, the thought burst into consciousness "My life depends on this soil." I had been gardening for years, but never thought of the soil in that way. Maybe that was because I had grown up gardening in the humid Midwest. Produce sprung from the earth almost effortlessly compared to here in Colorado where soil resembles hardpan, bugs enjoy garden produce even more than I, and rain is about as frequent as snow in May. Perhaps it was only when it took so much more work to make the miracle of abundance happen that I began to open to a deeper dimension.

I recalled my neighbor, a longtime organic gardener, tutoring me over the backyard fence, saying "The secret to a healthy plant is healthy soil. Nurture the plant by nurturing the soil." Whatever it was, something happened that day that made me realize that that spade-full of rich soil I was turning was

(continued on page 2)

Revolutionary (cont)

Very Important. Those seeds, those plants depended on some mysterious life force stirred by the metabolic activities of billions of microscopic beings, generating an alchemy to bring forth and nourish life itself.

My thinking was never quite the same after that day. I became increasingly *aware* that our bodies' health flourishes when we eat "close to the earth" - whole foods, and mostly plant foods. And how about our social, environmental "body"? Our national policy is to support big corporate farms, that treat soil, well...like dirt, replacing small organic family farmers who are apprentices of the soil's mysteries. Mega-farms apply to their crops fertilizers made from petroleum and pesticides developed from chemical warfare agents, using soil simply as a means to prop up plants. My spadeful of rich humus decries that as a way of life, a way to life!

Tutored by the living soil, I deep-down *know*, fresh organic food, grown in *real* soil, is a basic human right – for everyone. My mind spins – let's build a community garden in every neighborhood, a garden in every schoolyard, a network of small local farmers to get "real" food into every restaurant and cafeteria and grocery store. Every dollar spent is a vote for the food system we will bequeath to the next generation. Taking our hard-earned money to buy from the Farmers' Markets, the Co-op, or to Community Supported Agriculture farms means we are investing in a more sustainable, organic *and* local food system. That is revolutionary! Imagine if we all shopped like this – it could turn our world right side up! Small organic farms would spring up everywhere, and irreplaceable agricultural land would not be forever lost to development. A diverse food system based locally instead of an average 1,500 miles away would buffer from the vulnerability of natural disasters, terrorism, increasing oil shortages, and corporate-led obliteration of our genetic heritage through genetically modified and "terminator" seeds. Remember the "Victory Gardens" of WWII? In patriotic fervor, everyone turned their entire yards

into gardens, and then preserved and shared the harvest! What will happen when we too make it a priority to keep alive the skills of gardening, seed-saving and the gustatory delights of homegrown produce through millions of small gardens! Imagine every child in every city knowing what *real* food tastes like! Don't laugh - It has been said that New York City could successfully grow all the green vegetables it consumes in community gardens and on its own rooftops!

The first step to bring us all to our senses, it seems to me, is working a shovel full of real soil. There is something deep inside me that says *our very lives – as individuals, as a community, as a nation, as a world- depend on it.*

For more information, see www.localharvest.org



"Give a person some vegetables and you feed them for a day. Teach them how to grow vegetables and they can feed themselves for a lifetime."

-variation of Chinese Proverb

Agr

Commercial Agriculture's

Tw

Twelve Most Toxic Products*

S

Strawberries
Bell Peppers [red and yellow]

Our mission is to inspire and sustain development of organic food-producing gardens in people's backyards and in public and private spaces donated for that purpose.

Spinach, Cherries(US)
Chilean Grapes
Cantaloupe (Mexico)
Celery, Apples
Apricots
Green Beans, Peaches
Cucumbers

*source: Environmental Working Group EWG.org



Grow Food not Lawns

~Calendar of Events~

MAY 12 Presentation by Founder of *Grow Food not Lawns*, Bob Jones . What can we do of positive response within our neighborhoods and beyond in face of the mounting oil and food crises around the world? Unitarian Universalist Church, (Constitution off W. Drake to) 1815 Yorktown Av. Monday, May 12, 7:00PM. Contact: Bob Jones 223-2123 bobjonesinnz@yahoo.com

MAY 17 Building a No-Till Garden Bed – Sheet composting Workshop and Community Garden Kickoff. Participate in setting the stage for a new and abundant organic food garden on a piece of land adjacent to the Grange just east of Impala St. on Mulberry St. at the Community Gardens on Mulberry. Two sessions to chose from; each presenting similar information and tasks: Saturday May 17, 9:30–12:00 or 2:00– 4:30, suggested donation: \$5. What to Bring/Wear: drinking water; work gloves, sturdy clothes, a snack. Bring if you have them: work scissors, shovels, sturdy rakes, a wheel barrow. Questions and to let us know you are coming, CONTACT: Ruth Inglis – 224-9896 inglis@cahs.colostate.edu

MAY 18 Planting the Garden and Installing a Low-cost irrigation system with NOCO Gardenscape’s Lauren Dittman. 4PM. Come help plant and learn! Join with neighbors in midtown neighborhood , potluck follows. Limited number of participants. CONTACT: Lauren Dittmann 1-847-714-2764 lauren@nocogardenscapes.com

MAY 19 Film Showing: 11th Hour. With Leonardo DiCaprio narrating, this is the “sequel” to Al Gore’s Inconvenient Truth; the film calls for restorative action through a reshaping of human activity. Discussion follows. Unitarian Universalist Church, (Constitution off W. Drake to) 1815 Yorktown Av. Monday, May 12, 7:00PM. CONTACT: Bob Jones 223-2123 bobjonesinnz@yahoo.com

JUNE 1 Building a Neighborhood Network of Gardeners. Discussion / Presentation with SeaHeart in a north foothills neighborhood. Sunday, 11 am. Contact for information and directions: Tara Parr 493-0799

JUNE 5 Film Showing: The Power of Community. Documentary. Following the breaking apart of the Soviet Union and USSR withdrawal from Cuban support, the US tightened its oil embargo on the island country. The Cuban people call the time that followed “the Special Period” as they came together to victoriously

restructure their industrialized agriculture system to function without petro chemicals and fuels and to produce abundantly, *organically*, and to a large part in urban settings. Discussion follows. Unitarian Universalist Church, (Constitution off W. Drake to) 1815 Yorktown Av. Thursday, June 5, 7:00PM. Contact: Bob Jones 223-2123 bobjonesinnz@yahoo.com

... in the planning stages: more sheet-composting workshops – especially in preparation for next year’s gardens, pit-composting workshops, etc., etc. More film showings, more gardens implemented. Stay tuned and look for our website:



Activity on the patio at Avogadro’s on April 6 : the seed-swap and seed-starting party sponsored by GROW FOOD not LAWNS and Northern Colorado Gardescapes. GROW FOOD not LAWNS mission is to support people in implementing and sustaining organic food-producing gardens in their own yards and neighborhoods.

photo by SeaHeart

Grow-Food-not-Lawns.net to be up soon! Contact us to set up a presentation at your venue or neighborhood: bobjonesinnz@yahoo.com

Volunteers, Hear our call!! There are so many ways that you could become an important part of realizing the Grow Food not Lawns vision. If the interest and the urgency speak to you... GET IN TOUCH WITH US right away! Could you help us with spreading the word, helping us organize, sharing your garden wisdom, helping us glean, raising the energy... celebrating our coups? Contact: Bob Jones bobjonesinnz@yahoo.com or Tara Parr 493-0799, crows2tara@yahoo.com.