

Third Annual Garden Tour Report

text and photos by Miranda Hileman, Compton Mentor Fellow

The 3rd Annual Lexington Community Garden tour provided almost 100 people the opportunity to learn about community gardening in Lexington, celebrate the efforts of community gardeners in the area, and take ideas home to their gardens..

The first garden on the stop was **The Rock/La Roca United Methodist Church's Garden of Eatin'**, just across the street from the church. This year they planted a variety of vegetables including tomatoes, peppers, peanuts, amaranth, watermelons, cucumbers, and beans along the perimeter of a grassy area in hopes to avoid soggy soil. The church also has a larger garden on Todds Road. Church and community members—who originate from all over the world—are invited to plant in the garden, providing an opportunity for all to celebrate cultural diversity. Gardeners are encouraged to harvest and use the vegetables for themselves; leftover vegetables are harvested and distributed to neighbors.

At the **Winburn Community Art Garden** we were greeted by Roy Woods, the director of the Community Action Council, Carolyn Benford, neighborhood garden director, youth who were working through the Mayor's Summer Youth



Employment program, and folks from the Winburn Neighborhood Association, all excited to describe what the garden brings to a neighborhood that's been identified as a food desert by the Community Farm Alliance because of the lack of access residents have to fresh fruit and vegetables.

To combat this food desert and to create a food oasis, children and adults work in fellowship side-by-side planting corn, squash, beans, peppers, cabbage, tomatoes, okra, sage, greens, yams, coneflowers, lettuce, eggplant and more. Artwork in the garden was made from found objects, emphasizing that recycling and reusing is a necessary and fun thing to do. This garden has served as a community service

site for groups such as: UNESCO Art Miles Project, youth from the Fayette County drug court program, Leadership Lexington, Youth Green Corps, Lexington Youth Leadership, and has also been a grand place for discovery of life and has also reaped community connection.

Out at **PeaceMeal Gardens** on the Bluegrass Community and Technical College Leestown campus, farm manager Jessica Ballard was there to speak about the two-acre garden and the concept of PeaceMeal: to encourage the community and students to develop healthy associations with local food production and become concretely involved in the process. The many participants in this large, multi-





faceted garden include allotment gardeners, Food Not Bombs, the Lexington Free Store, God's Garden, and the BCTC Market Garden. Many of those participants were onsite to discuss all the work that's gone into the garden. This summer, through the support of Ginny Ramsey at the Catholic Action Center, PeaceMeal Gardens received a deer fence, large-scale plowing, many vegetable plants that found a home in the rich soil at the farm, and volunteers from across the USA. Carrie Berend and Caitlin Lucille from the Catholic Action Center spoke about how the group's efforts have helped create this sacred space for gardening and building community.

Next we traveled to the **Day Treatment Center** where Fred Reed has been managing the student-led garden for about two years.

The garden provides students an opportunity to get outside working with their hands and shows them that food does not just show up on a shelf in the grocery store.

This year's garden is full of just about everything: potatoes, tomatoes, beans, flowers, peanuts, herbs, raspberries, apple and pear trees, grapes, cantaloupe and watermel-

ons, squash, corn, peppers and gourds. It showcases youth involvement and empowerment: students have planted everything, done research on various parts of gardening and food production, and know thoroughly what is planted where.

The incredible and inspiring garden was established in 1998 by Josh Radner (now at Yates Elementary) and Janet Daner.

After that we headed to the **Chrysalis House Community Garden** off Versailles Road where we were treated to a song by the children and a small presentation with signs about the garden. We met Director Lisa Minton, and volunteers Jennifer and Nettie Appleby.

We heard from one of the gardeners, Belinda, who explained how she became involved in the garden and told us what working in the garden has done for her, providing a community for her, and being one of the best experiences that she has had through the Chrysalis House.

Since March the kids have been discovering what happens in a garden each week. They have eaten snow peas, lettuce and greens right off the plants and have fun just digging holes and finding earth worm, lady bug, and butterfly companions. The children have made much of the art in the garden, and other art pieces have been donated by Lattitude.

Our last stop was **The Croft at Beaumont Presbyterian**

Church where Jim DeLeo pointed out that in England and Scotland, a "croft" was a small enclosed parcel of land located in close proximity to a house, and cultivated by tenant farmers who did not own the land, but were entitled to keep some of the produce they raised.

This community garden provides a place for people to grow their own flowers, fruits and vegetables. It began in the summer of 2008 after DeLeo read the July 2008 issue of ACE Weekly that featured last year's Lexington Community Garden Tour.

Erica Horn heads The Garden Squad, the committee that developed the garden. She says "the land was a former tobacco farm, so the soil was excellent."

Gardeners include families from within the congregation and from the community, and even Boy Scout Troop 279. The garden boasts a large three-bin compost structure, built and donated by one of Eagle Scouts.

The gardeners grow food mainly for their own use, but contributing a portion of the harvest is encouraged as part of the garden contract; there is even an extra bucket where surplus produce is available for community members and passersby to share the bounty.

A delicious potluck concluded the event-filled tour, as we gathered to eat and clean up together and to reflect on all we'd seen and learned.



Edible Gardening Series Update

Organizer John Walker reports that the final Edible Garden Series events at The Arboretum will be held in September. They include three programs on seed saving. For details, please contact him (his information is in the shaded box at right). The group, he says, is transitioning to programs at the Episcopal Burying ground on Third Street sponsored by Seedleaf, a group that supports community and private gardens throughout Fayette County. They see “gardening together as part of a larger solution to local food insecurity, an entry point for conservation efforts, as well as a means to help neighbors have human interactions over food” (<http://seedleaf.org>). When you contact Walker for more information, you can also sign up for his e-mail updates on the series. We fea-

tured Walker’s article on an exciting gleaning project in the January issue of *Peaceways*. See updated information at the project’s new website: <http://home.insightbb.com/-igrowfood/>

LUGN/. Should you wish to take part in those city-wide efforts to share the summer bounty with those of our community in the most need, you may want to clip out the shaded box below to use when you approach gardeners to ask them to participate in gleaning. ■

Gleaners Wanted

- Do you have fruit trees or a vegetable garden in your yard?
- Do you ever have more fruit or produce than you know what to do with?
- Would you like to donate this fruit or produce to feed those less fortunate?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then I invite you to join the Gleaning Network. Gleaning is the act of collecting leftover crops from fields after they have been harvested. God’s Pantry and other food charities are in need of all the good, fresh local produce that they can get.

For more information about being part of the Gleaning Network, contact John Walker by e-mail at igrowfood@insightbb.com; or phone at 859.797-2326.

When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien.

(Leviticus 23:22)



**"Eating is
an agricultural act."
—Wendell Berry**



Slow Foods Eat-In—Labor Day—Sept. 7

Slow Foods USA is conducting their Eat-In campaign this Labor Day, Sept. 7th. They want to send our nation's leaders a clear message: It's time to provide our children with real food at school. Slow Foods says that “Real food is good at every link in the chain. It tastes good, it’s good for us, it’s good for the people who grow it, it’s good for our country and it’s good for the planet.” They are encouraging people to tell friends, contact legisla-

tors and to organize Eat-Ins Sept. 7th. An Eat-In brings people together to share a meal and show their support for getting real food into schools.

You can go to the national slowfoods campaign site at: http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/campaign/time_for_lunch/ to sign the petition and download organizer materials. Click the YouTube button on that page to see an explanation of the Time for Lunch

Campaign. There’s also a clip of MacArthur Genius Will Allen—who visited Lexington last April as a University of Kentucky Gaines Center lecturer—insisting on the importance of real food to all our children.

Locally, you can contact Mark Williams of Slow Food Bluegrass by phone at 502.303.3760 or by e-mail at slowfoodbluegrass@msn.com. Slow Food Bluegrass is a nonprofit organization that supports a biodiverse, sustainable food supply, local producers, heritage food traditions, and rediscovery of the pleasures of the table. ■

Announcement: Time to recycle your old lap tops! “Free U,” a local collation working to make university-level learning available without charge, has partnered in a project with Woodland Computers, who are accepting used lap top computers to be refurbished and donated to local non-profits. For more information, contact Jerry Moody at newmorningworld@gmail.com. ■