



Sustainable Communities Network

***Changing lives &
landscapes***

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Dear Community friends and kindred spirits,

In 2009 both [First Lady Michelle Obama](#) and [First Lady Jane Beshear](#) of Kentucky planted gardens at their residences in hopes of inspiring citizens around our country and state to also grow a garden and eat more healthy food. Over the past year as our economic situation has worsened producing higher unemployment and increasing costs of fuel and food, people everywhere are struggling to maintain their household and meet their basic needs. These developments have generated a **renewed interest and an increasing necessity** for growing our own food. Consequently we have received many phone calls, emails and on the street requests for support, resources and funds for establishing backyard and community gardens. We have seen the faith community reaching out to create [Gardens of Eatin'](#) for their congregations and others in need. We have been quite surprised and excited by the keen interest in [School gardens](#) and [Farm to School](#) projects. We have seen disparate sectors of our community collaborate and embrace for the first time around growing food and food security.

During World Wars I and II, all Americans were encouraged to support the war effort by planting [Victory Gardens](#) in their yards, workplaces, schools and city parks and to share the bounty with neighbors. Citizens young and old became part of this **national movement** that provided opportunities for community members to plant and grow, harvest and can, cook and store, share and eat fresh and local foods. This **grand spirit** of community engagement and learning around gardening is what we need and what we witness is re-emerging across our country... **an urban gardening and local foods movement** and we are blessed to be part of this movement as we help [Lexington Gardens Grow](#).

Sustainable Communities Network as been responding to this movement in many ways: **organizing neighborhood meetings, sharing tools and resources, offering advice, preparing grants, hiring and training youth, organizing volunteers, distributing plants and seeds, connecting with farmers, creating web-based resources, speaking at every opportunity..... and yes we can also be found joyfully...[digging in the dirt!](#)**

For more details of our work we invite you to read our [SCN Annual Report 2009](#) and our Youth GreenCorps [Back 2 Nature Project Report](#). Our humble efforts inspired KET- KY Educational

Television to broadcast two profiles of our work at: [WinburnArt Garden](#) and [Garden Connections](#). Also the KY School Garden Network posted an interview at: [SCNonyoutube](#).

From these reports you can see that 2009 was a year full of building **relationships...we call it spinning spider webs...** that included such initiatives as:

- **we helped establish and expand gardens at:** *Chrysalis House for Women; Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program; Nelson Ave with youth in Drug Court; Catholic Action Center God's Garden; Virginia Place; The Learning Center; Winburn, Green Acres, Malboro and Gainesway parks; Lexington, Woodford County and Louisville schools, several faith congregations;*
- **we collaborated with Catholic Action Center to:** *build a [Lexington hoop house](#) so we can grow food year round; set up a worm composting operation [God's Worms](#) ; provide service opportunities for 4,000+ volunteers; glean 2000+ pounds of fresh vegetables for area food banks*
 - *organized the 3rd Annual Lexington [Community Garden Tour](#); designed and facilitated two school garden [Gardening with Class](#) workshops; hosted several community garden workshops,*
 - **we participated in, helped organize and served as speakers at state and national conferences such as [American Community Garden Association](#), [Growing Food & Justice](#) conference, [Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group](#), [Earth Spirit Rising](#), [KY Council of Churches](#)**
 - **while also interacting monthly with local organizations such as Catholic Action Center, Chrysalis House, Family Court**
 - **we created the [bluegrass school community garden network](#) an interactive website**
 - **we introduced our dear friend Will Allen of [Growing Power](#) when he visited Lexington, toured GP in Milwaukee and participated in Will's Hoop House workshop in Louisville hosted by [Breaking New Grounds](#)**
 - **after attending GFJI in Milwaukee we visited Detroit and got hugs from folks at [Catherine Ferguson Academy](#) , and are helping promote their video [Grown in Detroit](#)**
 - **Served as mentor for Berea College graduate Miranda Hileman with the [Compton Mentor Fellowship](#)**
 - **We contributed articles and photographs for the recently published [Sustainable World Sourcebook](#).**

- **Contributed articles for 3 issues of our beloved friends at ACE Weekly: [Lexington Gardens Grow](#), [HOBY Eco-Art](#), [Shovel Ready](#)**
- **We handed out 500+ free copies of [Yes Magazine](#) who are so dear to us and included information on the [Earth Charter](#) in most every presentation**
- **We were blessed to meet and talk with the [Indigenous Grandmothers Council](#).**
- **With conscious intent we connected with [Awakening the Dreamer](#) to help create a new story for the Earth**

In 2009 we reached out to extend our network locally and nationally while also working on a daily basis literally *in the trenches* providing support for families and communities who wish to become more self-reliant by growing and eating some of their own food and also developing the partnerships that create a more sustainable local economy. **Please take time to read more details about our work in our [SCN Annual Report 2009](#).**

[WE are excited and look forward to continuing our work in 2010...!!](#)

In 2010 we seek to continue our existing projects and relationships while offering new programs such as: [Bluegrass Food Security Summit](#), **Sustainability 101, Worm and Backyard Composting, Eco-Art Projects, Sacred Earth Retreats**. Despite the condition of the economy **our eyes are on the prize...**sustainable communities that are *ecologically healthy, socially just, economically vibrant and spiritually fulfilling*.

We welcome any [contributions to SCN](#) Sustainable Communities Network that will allow us to **remain responsive** to the growing needs..and **open to the opportunities...**that **gardens, healthy food, eco-art and sustainable living** bring to our communities. We are blessed to have so many dear kindred spirits around the country doing this [The Great Work](#) that contributes to our planetary cultural paradigm shift [The Great Turning](#) .

We remain dedicated to our programs that **empower, inspire and educate** our communities to become vortexes of change for social justice, sustainable living and sacred Earth connectionsespecially the youth!!

We are very **grateful for your continued support, friendship and involvement** and look forward to enhancing our relationship with you in 2010. This work is likened to **spinning spider webs, so let's reach out and find inspiring ways to stay in touch and vibrate the web**. We humble folks in Lexington, KY appreciate all the work that each and everyone is doing to build **sustainable communities** and [Sacred Earth Connections](#).

Sustainably yours...and with love and hugs to all!

Jim Embry, Director