



Living Archives: Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat ■ NewsWeek
Thursday, April 12, 2007

Living Archives: Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat ■ NewsWeek
Contact Living Department

34°F
Flurries
Forecast »
VIEW LIVE WEBCAM

- Home
- NEWS**
- Top Stories
- Local/Vermont
- Sports
- Living
- Entertainment/Weekend
- Music
- Business
- Opinion
- Columnists
- Multimedia/Video
- Forums
- Travel
- Contact Newsroom
- TOWNS**
- Burlington
- Charlotte
- Colchester
- Essex
- Hinesburg
- Jericho
- Milton
- Shelburne
- S. Burlington
- Williston
- Winooski
- Franklin County
- NATION/WORLD**
- ARCHIVES**
- Search from:
-
- News Archive
- NewsWeek
- Sunday's Edition
- CLASSIFIEDS**
- Place an ad
- Careers
- Wheels
- Real Estate
- Apartments
- Shopping
- Dating
- Free Press Jobs
- ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- Obituaries
- Births
- Weddings
- Announcement Forms
- School Cancellations
- SERVICES**
- Contact Us
- Subscriber Services
- Customer Services
- Email Headlines
- Submit Feedback
- Advertise
- Ad Design Specs
- PDA Version
- Troubleshooting Tips
- SPECIAL SECTIONS**

Community gardening enjoys long history

Published: Thursday, April 5, 2007
By Dorothy Pellett
Free Press Correspondent

Nearly everyone in Vermont who dreams of starting a community garden can tap into a source of help this year, through the Vermont Community Garden Network and Friends of Burlington Gardens.

Today's reinvigorated community gardening movement is firmly rooted in Vermont history. Expanding from a 1970s concept developed in Burlington by Gardens for All, it embraces hundreds of community and school gardens in Vermont and thousands more throughout the country.

Growing food for the common good began much earlier, of course, with American Indian gardens as communal plots providing work and produce shared with all families.

Even before 1900, Philadelphia and other cities had "vacant-lot gardens" designed to help people grow their own food, and Boston had begun school gardens to introduce children to nature and practical skills.

Called Liberty Gardens, War Gardens or Uncle Sam's Gardens, back yards and public lands were planted with vegetables to feed the hungry in this country and to export food to Europe during World War I.

Public programs continued on a smaller scale as relief efforts during the Depression, but their value intensified when Victory Gardens came into the picture during World War II. Government officials advocated gardening for health and pleasure as well as for food. They offered community plots and classes in cultivating and preserving produce, with a goal of 18 million gardens in 1943.

The home-building boom after World War II broadened people's opportunities for planting personal gardens as a hobby. But community Victory Gardens had left others with a desire to share the social benefits of their experience, and they established gardens where they would add value to blighted neighborhoods and encourage residents to work together.

Rooted in Burlington

It would be difficult to find anyone more enthusiastic about gardening than Jim Flint, executive director of Friends of Burlington Gardens and coordinator of the Vermont Community Gardening Network. As an historian, he is familiar with the origin of community gardening in Burlington. "The roots of the past are important to the work of the future," Flint said as he reviewed historic journals and records from the 1970s.

In 1971, Garden Way Company owner Lyman Wood of Charlotte and two associates visited a garden site in Boston that had evolved from the Victory Garden era. Called Fenway Community Gardens, it represented three generations and 15 ethnicities enjoying gardening as recreation.

Wood proposed that the Burlington Parks Department begin such a garden on a smaller scale at Oakledge Park the next year. With the success of that initiative and another started at Shelburne Farms by two H. O. Wheeler School teachers, Wood was inspired to found Gardens for All and to hire retired restaurant owner Tommy Thompson of Ascutney to direct the program.

The community garden program switched into high



Copyright 2007
THIS WEEK IN PHOTOS

Maggie Leugers of Burlington Parks and Recreation and Marcella Melloni of Burlington celebrate the harvest at the Children's Discovery Garden in 2000. Photo courtesy of Friends of Burlington Gardens

More information

This winter, the Vermont Community Garden Network sponsored symposia in Burlington, Springfield, Rutland and Newport where last year's grant recipients shared successes and challenges of their community projects. VCGN collaborates with organizations including Vermont Master Gardeners, 4-H Growing Connections, Food Works Gardens for Learning, American Community Gardening Association and Burlington Food Council, which is establishing gardens at all Burlington schools.

Grant applications

WHAT: Vermont Community Garden Network mini-grants for garden startups. Available to groups throughout Vermont
DEADLINE: Friday. U.S. mail postmark for applications for VCGN mini-grants and for community teaching garden. Download applications at www.burlingtongardens.org. For information, call 861-4769 or or e-mail jflint@burlingtongardens.org

Upcoming classes

WHAT: Community Teaching Garden. Friends of Burlington Gardens offers program with a goal of helping beginning gardeners learn to cultivate and use fresh organic produce. Garden space, seeds, use of tools and 40-class sessions taught by Jim Flint and volunteers.

WHEN: Classes Monday and Thursday evenings, May 14-Sept. 27

WHERE: Ethan Allen Homestead in Burlington

COST: \$50; scholarships available

INFORMATION: Questions about the hands-on classes and garden space in the Community Teaching Garden at Ethan Allen Homestead can be directed to Jim Flint at 861-4769.

Online resources

-- www.burlingtongardens.org
-- www.communitygarden.org
-- For reports about benefits of gardening and positive responses to plants and peaceful green spaces, visit www.communitygarden.org/whatgood.php

STORYCHAT

This article does not have any comments associated with it

ADVERTISEMENT

ONLINE MARKETPLACE

- FIND A JOB
FILL A JOB
- FIND A CAR
SELL A CAR
- FIND A HOME
- RENTALS
PLACE AN AD
- BUY STUFF
SELL STUFF
- SHOPPING
COUPONS
- FIND A DATE

ADVERTISEMENT

VTcars.com
MEGA-SITE

Start Shopping

New Vehicles

Pre-Owned Vehicles

Courtesy The Subaru Corporation
TWIN CITY SUBARU **SUBARU**

DINING

RESTAURANTS

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Browse a selection of restaurants in Burlington and the surrounding area!

DOWNLOAD DELIGHT

Click here to download the password protected photo.



50 Something



Bridal



Vermont Outlook



Health



Vermont House & Home

gear. "It was nothing short of amazing for a person new to the area to have 14 community gardens started within five months," Flint said. Clues to Thompson's intense effort can be found in a 2-inch-thick book of typewritten notes listing daily conversations, ideas gleaned and plans under way. By 1976, more than 1,000 garden plots were leased in Burlington.

Garden Way's philosophy, Flint said, was sustainable living: the idea of growing and preserving food grown close to home. A Garden Way store and other local businesses provided support for that way of life, selling gardening tools and canning supplies and funding Gardens for All. Between 1979 and 1982, Gardens for All employees Larry Sommers, Charlie Nardozi and Lynn Ocone expanded the program to involve senior citizens, youth and prison inmates. A site in the Intervale with 150 garden plots is named the Tommy Thompson Community Gardens to honor the work of Thompson, who died in 1983.

Burlington's community gardens have made a gradual transition from Gardens for All to the National Gardening Association for Burlington Area Community Gardens, now part of the city's Department of Parks and Recreation. Opportunities and garden sites are described at www.enjoyburlington.com where prospective gardeners can download application forms for full size 25-by-30-foot plots at \$52, half-size at \$34, or youth at \$18. The garden plots come with water access, pre-tilling, a newsletter, invitations to garden gatherings, and a requirement to actively maintain one's garden and to help with a community work day.

Flint became executive director of the nonprofit Friends of Burlington Gardens in 2001 after eight years with the National Gardening Association. The new position enabled Friends to focus on local educational projects and programs for families, children and immigrants to the Burlington area, and to encourage anti-hunger initiatives.

"What we want to do is help people capture the essence of working with the land and with each other, to form friendships and teach children. We can derive a benefit from just being in nature," Flint said. This year will be the 21st season Flint and his family have grown their food in a community garden.

Community network

Eating food grown close to home is an idea that Vermonters are welcoming. High costs for fuel and food have helped to re-energize the gardening movement just as the same concerns did in the 1970s. Spurred by awakening interests in healthful foods and becoming re-acquainted with neighbors, people throughout the state are eager to organize gardens.

"When the Vermont Community Garden Network began last year, we estimated that there might be 20 new community and school gardens in Vermont," Flint said. "The number of projects we're working with is now more than 60 and climbing."

VCGN mini-grants funded 48 applications in 2006 for materials to assist small groups to start community gardens. Flint happily displays participants' photos and written summaries of the results, all related to food and including a service aspect. Although grants are relatively small, from \$50 to \$500, the materials they provide — compost, garden carts, timbers for raised beds, fencing, topsoil or water systems — can be the inspiration for future projects.

"We want to foster the idea that you can do a lot of different things with gardens as long as they involve food," Flint said.

Printer Friendly Version

E-mail this article to a friend



Beat the 2007 Price Increases!

NO PAYMENTS NO INTEREST for 6 MONTHS! with approved credit



HotSpring
Portable Spas

Over 700,000 Happy Owners of HotSpring Spas!

Built for a lifetime of relaxation.™

THE ALLEN ADVANTAGES:

- ◆ Total Satisfaction Guarantee
- ◆ Written Energy Guarantee



www.AllenPools-Spas.com
WILLISTON - 70 Simons Plaza
288-9028 • 800-644-0441
RUTLAND - 1-800-649-5952
WHITE RIVER JCT - 1-800-543-7665

More from today's Living section:

- › Community gardening enjoys long history
- › Chitchat: Bright lights, big sewer
- › Survivor Watch: Time to step up, 'play the game'
- › A growing enterprise
- › Horoscope

Burlington Free Press INTERACTIVE TOOLS

Printer Friendly Version

E-mail this article to a friend

Website Problems/Feedback

Contact Newsroom

Subscribe to the Free Press

News Week

The week in photos

RSS Feed