

# COMMUNITY GARDEN

Volume 1, Issue 1 July 2009

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## Greetings from the Acting Chair

Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments (VINES) has organized and coordinates six urban community gardens within the city of Binghamton (see map on page 4).

In David Tracey's "Guerilla Gardening," he claims "it takes a village to raise a turnip." VINES makes a similar claim with respect to cultivating and maintaining the "community" in community gardens, as well as the botanical and ecological processes involved in urban vegetable gardening.

To organize and operate a community garden effectively over the long-term, it takes neighbors, youth, support from local organizations and a mutually reinforcing community ethic. From board members of various organizations, to donors, state agencies, businesses, garden coordinators, and volunteers, VINES has established a strong foundation for a community

food system in the city of Binghamton.

In accomplishing this, VINES has received financial support from many sources, most prominently from three anonymous joint-donors offering matching funds of up to \$2,500. Additionally, VINES has received grant monies from a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Environmental Justice Community Impact Grant of \$39,438, and four City of Binghamton Neighborhood Development Project Fund (NDPF) grants through the city of Binghamton ranging from \$2,100 to \$2,340 each.

With all of the support VINES has received and the stalwart effort of VINES members and local residents, the 2009 growing season looks to be botanically and socially productive. Even though we are optimistic about this year's

growing season and community projects, VINES welcomes new members and volunteers all the time. Even if you are only leisurely passing through on a Saturday or Sunday, feel free to visit one of our gardens; we promise not to put in chains and force you to weed.

Each garden site has a variety of activities and projects occurring at any given time, and we can easily match volunteers' interest and a given garden's projects and activities. Please follow your curiosity and peruse the articles about each VINES garden.

For information and scheduling of each garden's projects, activities and events, contact the garden site coordinator (his or her information is located at the end of each VINES garden article).

~Scott Barvainis,  
VINES Acting Chair

## The Laurel Ave Community Garden

On May 1st, the Binghamton University Price Waterhouse Cooper Scholars group worked on the Laurel Street site. The majority of the work that needed to be done was completed that day.

We currently have 20 beds, all rented. The children from Horace Mann school have planted their garden. It will be a three-sister garden. Corn is the oldest sister. She stands tall in the center.

Squash is the second sister. She grows over the mound, protecting her sisters from weeds and shades the soil from the sun



Laurel Ave Garden after the workday with the BU Pricewaterhouse Coopers Scholars Group in May



### About VINES

VINES is a not-for-profit group organized in 2007 to create and sustain community gardens in the Binghamton area. A community garden is a parcel of otherwise unutilized city property that is managed and developed by community members to produce food crops for personal consumption. A garden's bounty may also be donated to soup kitchens or shared with others in need.

VINES endeavors to help each garden to succeed by coordinating and centralizing fundraising efforts, building leadership among community participants to sustain the gardens and by obtaining and preserving land for community garden use. Our organization also works to make connections between community gardens and area schools.

### VINES Meetings

VINES meets monthly on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 6 pm RiverRead Books, 5 Court St in Binghamton, ([www.rivereadbooks.com](http://www.rivereadbooks.com)).

The VINES Community Outreach, Volunteer Recruitment, and Stewardship working group meets the 2nd Thursday of the month at RiverRead Books at 6:30 pm.

**All are welcome!**

## The Corbett Ave Community Garden

It took over a year to get the many invasive Norway maples removed from 26 Corbett. Following that, the City Public Works crew generously uprooted the stumps and then bought in at least 6 inches of topsoil to cover the site. The soil there simply was not adequate without an enormous amount of effort.

With the soil in place, volunteers from BU and the community, using a variety of scrounged materials, laid out eight 10 x 20 ft garden plots to be rented.

As of the beginning of June, all were rented and planted, and there has even been some landscaping around the perimeter. At the north end, where neighboring trees cut down a bit on available light we have planted some herbs and fruiting shrubs.

As funds become available, further plans include dwarf fruit trees around the edge. As labor is available we intend to build a small storage shed for tools. One of our major concerns here is deer herbivory and much of the work on the site

has been to make a solid deer fence. The fence must also be woodchuck-proof as a wandering chuck could show up at any time and make mincemeat out of many of the vegetables. As of June 9 the gardens are looking good with lots of young plants developing nicely.

For more information about the Corbett Ave Garden, please contact the site coordinator, Dick Andrus, at [randrus@binghamton.edu](mailto:randrus@binghamton.edu).

## Columbus Park Community Garden

The Columbus Park community garden, located at 26 Columbus Park East, is a youth-centered community garden bordering the Columbus Park recreational area.

Throughout July and August, VINES, Binghamton Housing Authority, and Broome County Urban League are partnering to host youth gardening,

composting and urban sustainability projects within the garden site. Projects range from raised garden beds to a water catchment system that will feed an aquaculture pond to an arbor for grapes and other creeping edibles.

Also in the works is a value-added project where youth harvest tomatoes and turn

them into local saleable products, such as canned tomatoes and salsa for winter storage and consumption.

For information on scheduling and how to participate in the projects contact the Columbus Park garden coordinator, Scott Barvainis at [vinesvolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:vinesvolunteers@gmail.com).

## Laurel Avenue Community Garden (continued from page 1)

with her leaves, keeping it cool and moist. Beans are the third sister. She climbs through the squash and then up the corn to bind all together as she reaches for the sun. Beans help keep the soil fertile by converting the sun's energy into nitrogen-filled nodules that grow on its roots. As beans grow they use the stored nitrogen as food.

We are planning a neighborhood activity—hand painted gourd bird houses to hang around the garden.

The Laurel community garden is becoming a great success, neighbors have become

friends, blight has become beauty, and neighborhood children are eagerly awaiting all the wonderful vegetables they've worked so hard to plant.

The picture to the right shows the first vegetable harvested at the Laurel Community garden—grown by Lisa Burt and her children Alissa, Ryan, and Nick.

For more information about the Laurel Ave Community Garden, please contact Linda Collins at [mcol-lins10@stny.rr.com](mailto:mcol-lins10@stny.rr.com) or Johan Jelsma at [johan.jelsma@gmail.com](mailto:johan.jelsma@gmail.com).



Radishes— the first harvest from the Laurel Garden

## The Pine St Community Garden

The Pine Street community garden, located at 67 Pine St. at the corner of Pine and Chapman, began its first full year in March of 2009 after moving the original garden from 15 Pine St.

With a grant from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC) Environmental Justice Community Impact Grant Program and a Neighborhood Development Project Fund (NDPF) grant through the city of Binghamton, VINES designed and developed a community garden space based primarily on sustainable and permacul-

tural design principles.

The urban garden space offers 23 10' x 5' raised garden beds to residents to rent based on income and other factors. In addition to raised garden beds, the Pine Street garden will have various composting systems for food waste and leaves and grass clippings, an arbor for grapes and hops, a dwarf orchard, a strawbale shed, and a covered community gathering structure with a living roof.

As of July, all of the garden plots have been rented for the season by neighborhood resi-



April workday at the Pine St garden

dents and youth.

For information and scheduling of projects and events, contact the Pine Street community garden coordinator: Scott Barvainis, [vinesvolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:vinesvolunteers@gmail.com).

### Community Garden Benefits

- Vacant property and neighborhood beautification
- Increased green space in urban neighborhoods
- Creation of public space for individuals to grow food, reducing their food costs
- Providing education around gardening and nutrition for all residents
- Improving the quality of life for residents
- Stimulating neighborhood and community development
- Creating opportunities for recreation, exercise, and socializing

## The Liberty St & Virgil St Community Gardens

The Liberty St. community garden got a delayed start this growing season. However, the ten raised beds, 10' x 5', are close to completion and are nearly completely rented by residents and youth.

With the help from a Neighborhood Development Project Fund grant through the city of Binghamton, VINES is able to offer residents a variety of free vegetable transplants as a remedy for the late start to the growing season.

Throughout July and August, VINES will be building a variety of composting systems, a cob shed and a water catchment system to collect and store rainwater. The various projects will be directed by VINES coordinators, experts from local organizations, residents and volunteers.

The Virgil St. community garden is currently in the initial phase of development. VINES is inquiring into an adjacent property to augment the size

and scope of the Virgil St. garden space.

Raised garden beds and various composting systems will be built in the later part of July. We are looking for garden coordinators and volunteers to facilitate and expedite the garden development.

To find out how you can participate in either the Liberty St or Virgil St gardens, please contact Scott Barvainis at [vinesvolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:vinesvolunteers@gmail.com).



## Fundraising Report

The fundraising committee has morphed into a working group with a broader purpose. The working group encompasses community outreach activities, recruitment of volunteers and stewardship.

We were all saddened by the sudden illness of our tireless VINES chairperson Jon Yerger who took the lead in all aspects of VINES. Many volunteers stepped forward to take on some of the many responsibilities Jon had. Volunteer Linda Collins has taken on the responsibility of treas-

urer. Carol Miyake has taken on coordination of community outreach, volunteer recruitment and stewardship activities. Amelia LoDolce redesigned our VINES brochure and is designing our new newsletter, and Connie Barnes is editing the newsletter and other documents.

Some recent activities have included tabling at the Home Show, Earthfest, and at July-Fest. We raffled off a basket of gardening supplies at the home show and raised \$100. Scott Bar-

vainis developed a new Power Point presentation which was shown at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Binghamton ([www.uubinghamton.org](http://www.uubinghamton.org)) in preparation for a special collection to benefit VINES. The collection raised \$723 in unrestricted funds and another \$50 in contributions towards the container gardens on the corners of Vestal and Washington Ave. and at River Muse Cafe.

Later this season, the working group will be planning fundraising events at Tranquil res-

taurant and Cybercafe West. Both restaurants have offered assistance in raising funds for VINES.

In addition, Taylor Rental has agreed to sponsor VINES with discounts on equipment rentals and Price Waterhouse Cooper and the Binghamton University Students were major partners in the construction of the Laurel St. garden. Many thanks to our financial partners and our volunteers.



Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments

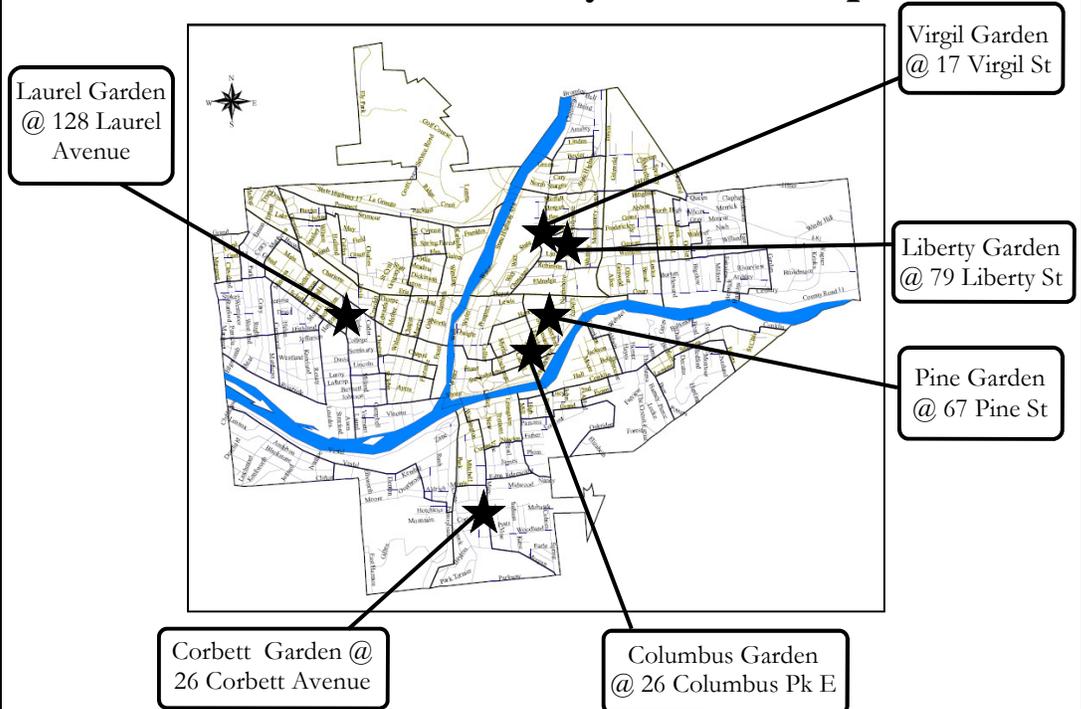
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## VINES Community Garden Map



## VINES Sponsors