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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.

Currently there are five community garden sites, each in different stages of development. We are raising funds to purchase new and current VINES properties, and supplies for each garden (tools, lumber, etc). Having ownership of the community garden lots is an important investment, as the community is otherwise at risk of losing access to the sites in which they have invested much energy and resources. VINES has been successful at applying for and receiving local and state grants to support the gardens, but these grants are helping mostly to build the gardens, not maintain them. This is why we are asking the community to invest in these gardens — so that they can continue to thrive throughout the years!

Support VINES by sending your donation to: VINES P.O. Box 3104 Binghamton, NY 13902

VINES Meetings

VINES meets monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm
RiverRead Books, 5 Court St in Binghamton(www.rivereadbooks.com).

Call 245-6208 to confirm meetings.

All are welcome!



NEWSLETTER OF VOLUNTEERS IMPROVING NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENTS

COMMUNITY GARDEN TIMES

Volume 2, Issue 1 June 2010

Greetings from the Chair

VINES is entering its fourth year as an organization. Looking back, we've accomplished a lot in a very short time. We've established five community gardens in vacant lots across Binghamton providing community members with nearly 70 garden beds to use for growing their own vegetables.

Looking ahead, we envision building many more community gardens, getting involved in developing other community green-spaces for active and passive recreation, and establishing a successful urban agriculture project that produces affordable, healthy foods within food deserts while providing skill building and job opportunities for our youth.

Already, the Binghamton Urban Agriculture Project (see below) is off to a great start!

VINES is proud to be a part of a successful, growing movement across the Country (and the World) that is promoting the consumption of locally produced food and working to increase access to healthy, affordable food to people of all income levels. Currently, there are an estimated 18,000 community gardens throughout the US and Canada. Since 2000, the number of farmers' markets in the United States has doubled.

While we should celebrate our successes, I want to offer some sobering statistics to help put in perspective the importance of VINES's work. Since 2007, food stamp participation in Broome County has increased by 29%, and one in four children in our county live in households that

receive food stamps. From 1980 to 2007, the distance food travels from farm to table has increased by 25%. Developing a more sustainable and equitable food system is evermore critical and evermore challenging, especially in our current economic environment.

Please consider doing your part to support VINES in developing a more sustainable, equitable food system in our community by donating financially or volunteering with us. More information on volunteering with VINES is provided throughout this newsletter and information on how to donate to VINES is available on the back page. Thank you to all of our current and future supporters!

~Amelia LoDolce, VINES Chair

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Mission Statement

VINES is an organization committed to developing community food systems primarily through establishing community gardens, parks, and other collective green spaces as well as economic micro-markets and niche networks that strengthen and increase empowerment and enhance the quality of life within neighborhoods and surrounding communities.

The Binghamton Urban Agriculture Project

VINES is proud to announce its new and innovative project: The Binghamton Urban Farm Project (BUFP). The Project's focus is on building productive urban farm sites that produce organic food for community members. BUFP is currently developing an intensive food production system on two vacant lots on Tudor St, in Downtown Binghamton.

Additional goals for the project include creating jobs, decreasing energy intensive fossil fuel use in food production, and building strategic skills for growing food within the community through youth targeted educational programs.

In terms of food production, most of the growing will be done in a central greenhouse and sev-

eral hoop houses. These structures will allow us to grow through the winter.

The City of Binghamton and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County (CCE) are partnering with VINES to host a summer work program for youth. CCE's *City Project* worked with VINES in 2009, helping to build raised beds and erect a cordwood shed at the Liberty St community garden. The youth summer project will commence on July 13th.

The project has been in the planning a design phase since the summer of 2009 and construction began in April.

In partnership with the Marz Farm in Berkshire and CHOW's Farm in Conklin, BUFP has helped to develop a cooperative Community Supported Agriculture



Peas and herbs growing at Tudor St

(CSA) project: Binghamton Harvest. The CSA has 21 members who pay a yearly amount to receive a weekly share of vegetables during the growing season. This upfront capital is helping BUFP get its Tudor site up and running. Stay tuned for updates!

If you are interested in getting involved, email: binghamtonurbanfarms@gmail.com.

The Columbus Park Community Garden

The Columbus Park Community Garden has undergone a transition this year. A number of beds toward the front of the garden will be reserved for community members to rent, but the back portion of the site will be used for growing food for the Binghamton Urban Agriculture Project. Our goal is to involve youth from the Columbus Learning Center, an alternative high school in Binghamton's Center City

neighborhood, in maintaining the site and in using produce from the garden to create value-added products and market them at farmer's markets and the Binghamton Urban Agriculture Project produce stand.

Despite its youth-oriented approach, the Columbus Park Garden needs community support. To build stronger ties between generations of people in our communities, VINES will

be hosting work-parties at the Columbus garden. Bring together the young, the old and the in-betweens, the work-parties will include reinforcing and putting up additional fencing, building raised garden beds, spreading woodchips, planting apple and pear trees and exchanging experiences and ideas. Food and drink will be provided!

So don't miss an opportunity to engage with the different spectrums of your community, an opportunity to make it a safer, healthier and more food secure place to live. For more information on programming and scheduling contact Scott Barvainis, VINES coordinator at vinesvolunteers@gmail.com.

The Laurel Avenue Community Garden

As Summer approaches, and hopefully with the cold weather behind us for now, we are looking forward to another extended and more prosperous growing season. Some of the Laurel Ave gardeners have gotten a jump start to the season from the simple implementation of A-frame covers, they already have a bounty of early greens (arugala, spinach) and peas to freshly snack on.

At the Laurel Avenue site we are all filled up again this year, having all the plots rented by the end of April. To those who might be reading this and are interested but haven't had a chance to get a plot, don't be

discouraged and please contact one of the site coordinators to find out more details about volunteering and other potential opportunities for growing space.

In this upcoming growing season we are looking to be doing more workshops on composting, soil amendments, cover cropping (what and when to grow) and season extension practices (building simple cold frames/bed covers), as well as more garden beautification projects (i.e. a pergola, border plantings of flowers and perennials, a butterfly and bird garden/nectary).

If you wish to get involved



this spring, summer and/or fall, either stop by the garden, contact a coordinator and sign up for the garden list serve, where we have correspondence about project work days. The group email is as follows: laurel-ave-

community-garden-members@googlegroups.com.

For more information, please contact Linda Collins at mcollins10@stny.rr.com or Johan Jelsma at johan.jelsma@gmail.com.

The Liberty St Community Garden

2010 looks to be a promising year for the Liberty St Community Garden. Though only the first full growing season for this site, all of the garden beds are rented, and most have already been planted. With the help of VISTA/Americorp volunteers through the Rural Health Service Corp, we were able to turn under our cover crop of rye grass, build compost bins, and have the site ready for planting in early May. We're looking for-



ward to hosting additional workdays throughout the summer to complete the construction of our cord wood shed.

From the day the first beds were being built last year, we

could tell that this garden would be embraced by the community, especially by the youth. As soon as we arrive at the garden, young people from the neighborhood come by and lend a hand without being asked. They have been so helpful and interested in being involved that we have reserved a bed just for the youth in the neighborhood.

We're looking forward to involving the youth in even

more creative ways through a partnership with the Lee Barta Community Center. We are working on involving participants of the Center's Summer Youth Literacy Program in the garden throughout the summer.

For more information, contact Amelia LoDolce at amelia.lodolce@gmail.com or 245-6208.

The Pine St Community Garden

The Pine St. community Garden is looking for new garden members for 2010. Raised-bed garden plots are available for the astronomically low price of \$20.00 for the entire season. We are also offering vegetable transplants at 1/2 the cost of the big box stores. We offer a wide variety of vegetable and herb plants to choose from: tomatoes to pepper to cabbage to a variety of herbs, such as basil, thyme and oregano. In addition to individual plots, we have com-

mon areas for vegetables with extensive space requirements, such as squash, cucumbers and pumpkins.

Vestal High School students helped clean up the site on June 3rd, but there are still chores to be done at the site: compost piles need to be turned over, common areas need compost and hand-tilling, and apple trees need mulching and watering. If you're like me, chores are more bearable if you have new projects to start as you work on the old ones.

For the 2010 growing season, we need to build a couple more compost bins, several vermin-composting containers, a tool shed and a covered picnic area.

As you can tell, the Pine St. Community Garden has a lot going on. We need new garden members and volunteers with a creative streak and a solid work ethic. So if you are looking to learn new and practical ways to grow food both individually and with your community, Pine St. is the garden

for you. Garden membership is only \$20 for the year and it comes with practical instruction from the garden coordinator, a 5' x 10' or 5' x 8' raised garden bed/plot and access to profoundly affordable organic vegetable transplants, seeded and raised by VINES in a local greenhouse.

If interested, contact Scott Barvainis, Pine St. Community Garden Coordinator by email at vinesvolunteers@gmail.com or by phone: (607) 201-9896.

The Corbett Ave Community Garden

All of the garden beds at Corbett were rented out by mid-May this year. Taking advantage of the warm weather participants began preparing their beds in April and planting in May. Carol Miyake, a found-

ing member, has generously purchased 8 dwarf fruit trees which were planted in April. One of our sites will also be planted to provide salad greens for a UU church program. We may also add a few more

shrubs and eventually plant the Washington St bank with small trees.

With assistance from Vestal High School students who volunteered at the garden on June

3rd, we have constructed a tool shed for the site.

For more information about this site, contact Dick Andrus at randrus@binghamton.edu.

Vermicomposting: Composting with Worms

Worms do an amazing job of breaking down organic matter and by using the right kinds of worms under the right conditions you can both avoid landfilling your household food leftovers as well as produce some very high class compost. On a household scale here is what to do:

1. Get a plastic tub with a lid. Size can vary but 20" long x 16" wide and 14-18" deep work well. You can drill some holes in the top of the bin and on the sides. Attach screen or mesh with caulk to cover the holes to keep out flies.
2. Fill the bin 2/3 full of a mix of soil, ground up leaves, shredded newspaper and maybe compost from another pile. Make sure the mix is nice & damp.

proportions aren't critical but should be more or less even in amount for each component.

3. Add wet food scraps and worms. Do not include meat scraps or big tough pieces (you'll learn by experience what the worms can't handle). Use red wiggler worms, which you could find from someone with a well established backyard compost pile or you can order them online. Feed well and they multiply like crazy. Don't use night walkers or the worms you find on the sidewalk when it rains.
4. When a bin is well developed, each pound of worms that you have will consume one pound of garbage each day.

5. When you add food scraps, dig well down in your bin as it should be completely covered up to prevent attracting fruit flies. If you divide your bin into roughly 6 sections you can add each day's garbage in a different sector and by the time you get back to the first sector the beginning scraps will have been eaten!
6. Don't let your bin get too cold. 40 degrees F is a minimum, so bring them inside during the winter.
7. If the bin gets too wet you can add absorbent material like shredded leaves or newspaper. You can also drill a hole in the bottom of the bin from which you can collect excess water into a container and use it to water plants. If the bin starts

to get full you can remove some of the compost and add to your garden or potting soil.

For more information on composting or vermicomposting contact Kevin Mathers, Cornell Cooperative Extension Resource Educator, at kjm8@cornell.edu, or call (607) 584-5013.

A good web resource is: <http://ccetompkins.org/garden/composting/how-fact-sheets>

