

DIG IT

Community Gardening Takes Root in Lexington—take the Tour.

By Jim Embry

Everyone is invited and encouraged to join the emerging Lexington community gardening movement. Get your hands in the dirt....grow food in your back and front yard....meet your neighbors....talk to your kids....find your soul.

“Since the E. coli scare with spinach and salmonella with tomatoes, people are making connections that most all of food is coming from one place,” commented Bruce Mundy of the Teen Center who has been engaging youth in gardening for many years in Lexington’s east end. “By raising our food locally (and how local is your own backyard?) then we avoid these troublesome food scares and reclaim our community...one plot at a time. Community gardens are a great place to involve our youth. Students from Martin Luther King Academy have worked in the Nelson Ave. garden, got their hands dirty and did not want to leave. Youth offenders assigned by the drug court have worked in the Winburn Garden and found a greater sense of community and responsibility. Gardens are a way to restore our youth and our community.”

Ryan Koch of Seedleaf, an avid gardener, sees the importance of growing produce personally, and advocates the use of corner lots, church grounds and other open spaces for gardens. He sees the Lexington Community Garden Tour as a good way to raise awareness, educate and hopefully build enthusiasm for using community plots as sources of food... for the body and mind.

“Most people don’t really realize how many community gardens there really are,” said Ryan, noting that the garden behind Al’s Bar is one of Lexington’s best kept secrets and could become a model for other local restaurants.

What is a community garden?

Community gardens transform empty lots into green, living spaces. They are collaborative projects created by members of the community; residents share in both the maintenance and rewards of the garden. There are an estimated 10,000 community gardens within U.S. cities. During WW I and WWII community gardens called Victory Gardens

were promoted by the government, seen as vital to national security and provided 40% of the food needs of the country. This historical link with gardens has served recently as an inspiration to many communities.

In comparison to cities like Seattle, Boston, Detroit and even San Francisco, Lexington is lagging in the community gar-



dens department. We’re pretty far behind in terms of gardens per capita and support from the local government, but there’s lots of energy and momentum here. Gardening can help recharge urban energy and is a way to approach people about surface water issues, and educate people about not using pesticides. The Community Garden Tour is a way to connect the kernels of corn and the people who are involved around the city. We want to raise awareness of safe gardening practices, as well as the positive outcome gardening with other members of the community can have.

The simple act of planting a garden can

create positive environmental, economic, and social impacts on a neighborhood. Community gardens foster cultural understanding and an awareness of the environment around us. Children eat more fruits and vegetables as a result of participation in gardens, are more likely to try new foods and initiate discussions regarding eating habits at home and confirm the garden’s value as a learning environment.

Although community gardens are primarily used by people who don’t have access to their own gardens, they can also be a good networking opportunity for those who do have their own gardening space at home.

JOIN US

The 2008 Lexington Community Garden Tour will include stops at: The Rock/La Roca Garden, London Ferrill Garden, Winburn Community Art Garden, Southland

donations are accepted!!! Sponsored by Sustainable Communities Network, The Rock/La Roc, Bluegrass Partnership for a Green Community and others.

The 2008 Lexington Community Garden Tour will include stops at these sites: The Rock/La Roca United Methodist Church 1015 N. Limestone; Gardens located behind Arlington Elementary (and gardens on Price Ave. and Todds Rd) Rev. Aaron Mansfield 859.255.0712; therocklaroca@alltell.net Members of the church and surrounding community began their garden together in April 2007. Since the original work days dedicated to planting, the garden was tended by neighbors from the community and in the spare time of those who work at and attend La Roca. The garden contains a variety of vegetables: tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and beans—AND includes a variety of community people. The Latino and African gar-

den members plant many vegetables that are culturally relevant to them and provide an opportunity to celebrate cultural diversity. Church leaders harvest vegetables and distribute them to neighbors. Community members are encouraged to harvest and use the vegetables themselves. Rev. Aaron and his congregation have invited other houses of worship to find God in the garden and to create Gardens of Eating.

Winburn Community Art Garden located at the Community Action Council at 1169 Winburn Drive is a collaborative effort among the Community Action Council,

Community Garden, drive by the garden behind Al’s bar and more. Dinner following the Tour (8-9pm) will be a time for sharing information, presenting awards and tasting the local harvest. Food for the dinner will come from local restaurants and potluck. Persons attending dinner are encouraged to bring a dish to share. People can choose to ride on the buses or on bike. Check in begins at 5pm. The Tour begins at 5:30pm at La Roca and the buses leave at 6pm for other sites. Pre-registration required at sustainlex.org or for more information call 859.312.7024. The Tour and dinner is free but

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Russell Cave Elementary, Sustainable Communities Network, the Northeast Lexington Initiative, and other individuals and businesses in the community. Children and adults are working side-by-side to create a beautiful edible and artistic space. Neighborhood residents work in the garden on Tuesdays (5-8pm) and Saturdays (1-3pm). A gazebo is being built as we write as an Eagle Scout project. Beautiful murals hang on the fence and are part of the Native plants in flower beds were furnished by Shooting Star Nursery. All art work and structures were completed using found objects stressing the need to recycle and reuse to the youth. Volunteers from the Dunbar Memorial Garden provided pavers that were placed around the trees. This garden has been a grand place for discovery by the children and a point for community connection. For more information, contact: Catrena Lewis 859.294.5249, CLewis@commaction.org, or Jim Embry 859.312.7024, jgembr0@cs.com

London Ferrill Community Garden located at 251 E. 3rd St., between the Old Episcopal Burying Ground and the Fire Department was created out of a joint partnership between Christ Church Cathedral, the MLK neighborhood association, and Seedleaf. This community garden offers a place for residents to grow their own food and meet one another. It is located on a site that was once segregated, a place that excluded the majority of those nearest to it, formerly enslaved Africans and more recently African Americans. For this reason, a primary focus of the garden is racial reconciliation and food justice. It is named after London Ferrill, an heroic clergyman who served in this area during the cholera epidemic of the early 1830s. At one time he had the largest church in Kentucky and he baptized both African and European Americans. He is buried at the adjacent Old Episcopal Burying Ground. Gardeners include residents of all ages from the sur-

rounding area, the Fire Dept, Christ Church, two Sayre classes and BCTC. In addition to the individual plots, the garden has a community portion which is installed and maintained by Seedleaf, an urban gardening nonprofit. The produce from this garden is distributed widely among places that feed people in the neighborhood and elderly residents. It is also a site for garden education. Sherry Maddock 859.559.3837. geoffandsherry@yahoo.com. Seedleaf (Ryan Koch) <http://seedleaf.typepad.com/>

Southland Community Garden sits in Hill N Dale Park (LFUCG) near Southview and Fairview Drs. With support from LFUCG City Council and Parks Dept., Neighborhood Association and community residents, The Southland Community Garden project aims to foster connections in the community and raise the profile of (sub)urban gardening. In addition to the 11 households participating, support and involvement has come from the city council, the parks department and a neighbor-

hood nursery school. The garden has proven to be a beautiful addition to Hill N Dale Park and a great educational resource for neighborhood kids, who come to play in the park and have a chance to see vegetables and flowers growing. We have also gotten community residents involved in composing the scraps from the Good Foods Co-op. For more information, Mason Colby mason.colby@gmail.com. You can see pictures at www.flickr.com/photos/politicalhero/

Stella's Garden—located on 6th St in the empty lot directly behind Al's Bar at 6th and N Limestone Sts. A major purpose of the garden at Al's Bar is neighborhood beautification. This garden is situated in an economically diverse section of Lexington. Neighbors have been initially surprised, then glad for its presence. The produce of this garden is harvested weekly and delivered to Stella's Deli, an eatery that features locally-sourced food. ■

Benefits of Community Gardens

- Improves the quality of life for people in the garden*
- Provides a catalyst for neighborhood and community development*
- Stimulates Social Interaction*
- Encourages Self-Reliance*
- Beautifies Neighborhoods*
- Produces Nutritious Food*
- Reduces Family Food Budget*
- Conserves Resources*
- Creates opportunity for recreation, exercise, therapy, and education*
- Reduces Crime-Preserves Green Space*
- Creates income opportunities and economic development*
- Reduces city heat from streets and parking lots*
- Provides opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural connections*

Get on Board

2nd Annual Lexington Community Garden Tour

When: 5:30-8pm July 31. Check in 5-5:30pm. Buses leave at 6pm for other sites.

Where: starting and ending at The Rock/La Roca United Methodist Church, 1015 North Limestone across from Arlington Elementary School. Tour sites will include The Rock/La Roca Garden, London Ferrill Garden, Winburn Community Art Garden, Southland Community Garden, and a drive-by the garden behind Al's Bar and more!

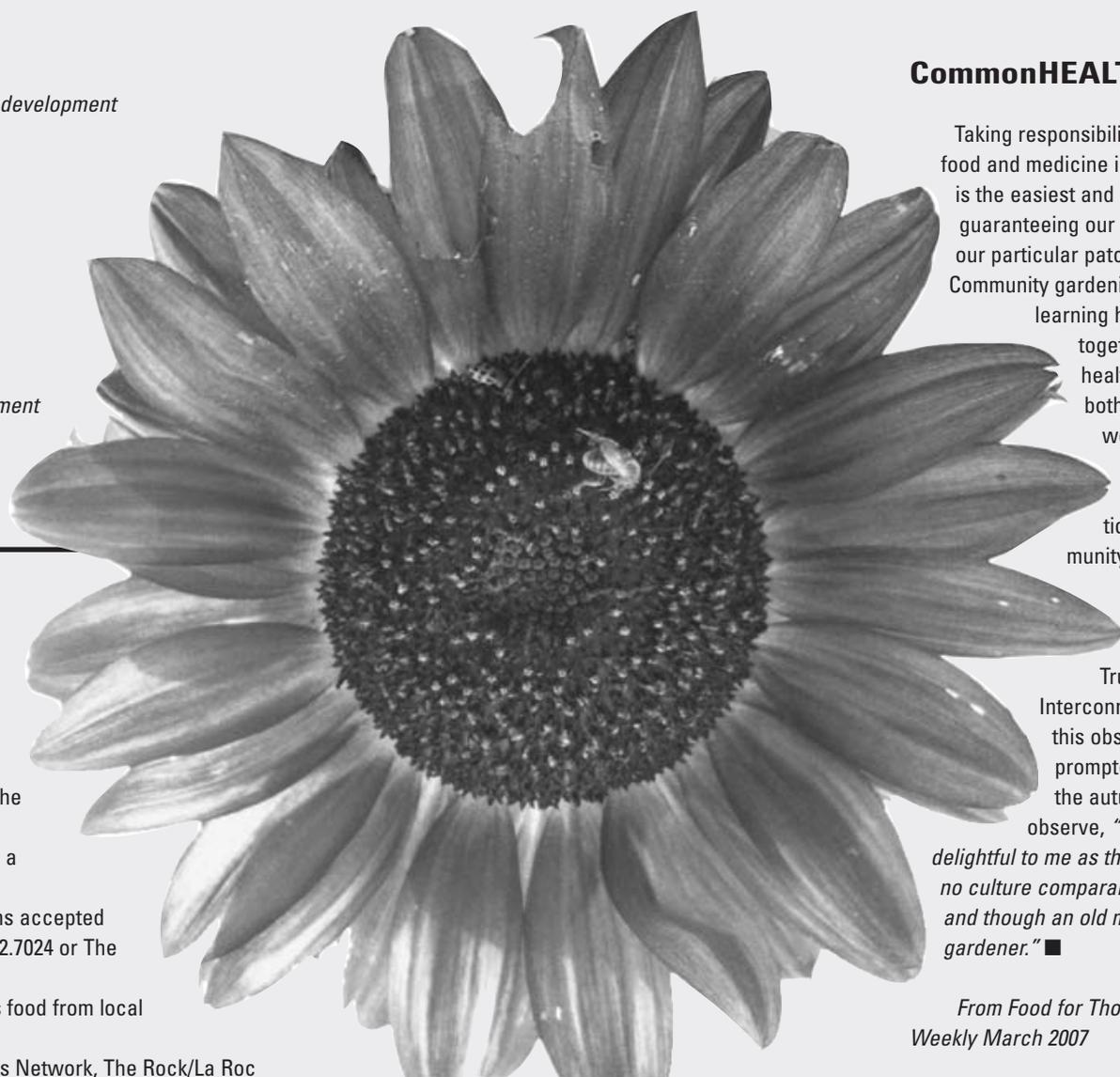
Cost: FREE, but pre-registration required and donations accepted

Register: at sustainlex.org or call Jim Embry at 859.312.7024 or The Rock/La Roca United Methodist Church at 859.312.7024

Dinner: begins at 8pm following the Tour and features food from local restaurants but also *potluck*, so bring a dish to share.

Sponsored by: Sponsored by Sustainable Communities Network, The Rock/La Roca U M Church, Bluegrass Partnership for a Green Community and others

Online: For more information about community gardens nationwide, go to www.communitygardens.org, www.kidsgardening.org, www.sustainlex.org ■



CommonHEALTH of Kentucky

Taking responsibility for growing our own food and medicine in our own neighborhood is the easiest and most effective way of guaranteeing our own health and that of our particular patch of biosphere.

Community gardening involves people learning how to live and work together for the common health and can serve as both a catalyst and a framework for reinventing ourselves and reestablishing our sacred connection with the earth community. Community gardening literally roots us in a common Truth, a Truth born of Nature, a Truth born of Interconnectedness. Perhaps this observation was what prompted Thomas Jefferson, in the autumn of his years, to observe, *"No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, no culture comparable to that of the garden, and though an old man I am but a young gardener."* ■

From Food for Thought, by Jim Embry, ACE Weekly March 2007