

See What's Growing~

Winter 2006-2007

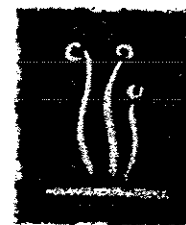


This Issue:

- *Message from Greenfolks Garden
- *A Sense of Permanence
- *Cultivating Community — Garden Park
- *Gardening Through the Generations — Hocking Heritage Gardens
- *Community Garden Coordinator Hired — Spencer Garden

Milwaukee Urban Gardens, Inc. / 414.431.1585
www.Milwaukeeurbangardens.org

Greenfolks Garden Joins Milwaukee Urban Gardens



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Message from Greenfolks Garden

Written By: Sarah Moore

Many years ago I had a guerilla garden in an abandoned lot adjacent to what is now the Green Folks Garden. Back then the ground was nothing but clay and gravel. My roommates and I watered the garden by hanging a hose over our balcony and filling up big white pickle buckets and dragging them across the street to the plot. I remember the day when some kids rode through the garden on their bikes leaving behind tire tracks and footprints - smooshing our sprouts. I think I cried. I shouldn't have because each rivet and footprint ended up being the most lush spots in the garden as the water pooled within each indentation. The zinnias, cosmos and sunflower sprouts all recovered and thrived, teaching me a life-long lesson that what can often seem like a set back is often a blessing. The next year the neighboring landlord bought the plot, planted grass, and put a fence around it. I credit myself (my garden) for showing the landlord that the plot was worth caring for.

I moved away but years later in 2001, my sister Claire and I had a conversation about how she could start a garden in the two lots that are now Green Folks Garden. But she didn't just start planting and dragging water as I had. She started organizing. Claire started talking to neighbors and lots of enthusiasm bubbled up. A groundbreaking day was planned, a plan was drawn up, flyers were made, and a tiller was borrowed. Perennials, a few bushes and trees were donated, and help arrived. A generous neighbor gave us permission to use his water. And Green Folks Garden was born.

The garden plans were created to accommodate both individual plots and community spaces for residents to cooperatively plant, grow and harvest delicious vegetables and beautiful flowers. An emphasis on organic was set early on. Currently we are planning to plant fruit trees and bushes to add more fresh food to the neighborhood and demonstrate sustainable food practices within the city.

Every year since it's founding the garden has evolved into a more valuable element of the neighborhood. It is aesthetically beautiful, a safe place for children to play, and offers opportunities for neighbors to learn and share with one another. The garden has become a social gathering place. Each year in late June we have wonderful ice cream social, utilizing fresh-picked strawberries from the communal strawberry patch. Neighbors have planned a variety of events each year - COA organized a children's garden plot, Claire and Sativa held yoga classes on Wednesday mornings, and story time in the afternoon. Other events were planned such as a bike in movies.

Green Folks Garden is comprised of two adjacent lots owned by the city of Milwaukee and managed under two different departments. Up until now we have been granted a short-term lease and permission to use the lots. However, last year, with the increase of new buildings in the community we started to feel that the garden may be at risk of being sold and developed.

See What's Growing!

A Sense of Permanence

A once-vacant lot now a lush green space shared by residents of Riverwest.

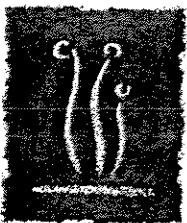
Greenfolks Garden, located at 519-525 East Wright Street, has existed since 2001 when the founders decided to preserve the lot and advocate for a permanent community garden. Recognizing the potential for improvement and neighborhood beautification, Greenfolks members worked to design a space that would bring the community together to celebrate in the harvest of fresh produce, herbs and flowers. The space has become a common area for community members to gather and learn from one another. It has also inspired conversations about the benefits of urban agriculture and organically grown produce. Because of the vision and determination of a small group of individuals, Greenfolks Garden has become a part of the landscape and the community at large. In response to the benefits of the garden, community members have made many generous donations to Greenfolks for the purchase of the property.

Last spring, members of Greenfolks began actively pursuing ownership of the space and created a partnership with Milwaukee Urban Gardens to assist with the acquisition. In April of 2006, the group acquired a lease agreement from the City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services granting them permission to maintain the space and continue urban gardening activities. Milwaukee Urban Gardens (MUG) had the property appraised and an environmental assessment preformed soon after. A proposal was submitted to the City on October 29, 2006, for MUG to be the chosen developers of the property to ensure that it remains green space dedicated to youth, the community and food production for neighborhood residents. The City will report their decision for our proposal in late January.

Community Garden Coordinator Hired--Spencer Garden

Milwaukee Urban Gardens has recently hired Erin Kanuckel as the Community Garden Coordinator. Erin is a fellow in Public Allies, an internship program that advances diverse young leaders to strengthen communities, nonprofits, and civic engagement. Erin has worked and volunteered at community garden in the past and is very excited to about the work of MUG and helping to further the mission to protect urban green space.

As the Community Garden Coordinator, Erin will be working closely with youth from the Daniels-Mardack Boys & Girls Club to help further develop Spencer Garden located at 4669 N. 30th Street. Erin will create an implement a service learning project for youth at the Boys & Girls Club that provides hands on activities in the Garden that focus on healthy physical activity, environmental stewardship and increased food security. Plans for next years growing season have already begun. MUG has received seed donations from the America the Beautiful Fund and Seeds of Change enabling us to save money and start seeds early this year with the youth.



Gardening Through the Generations

Written by: Monica Thomas

Hocking Heritage Garden

My wonderful mother, who visited the garden with us one day, grew up on a farm in northern Japan. Through her example, I grew up with a passion for gardening, and happy childhood memories of digging in the dirt, playing in the sun, and eating ripe tomatoes fresh off the vine. There's no way to manufacture that kind of experience. You have to get your hands dirty.

I'm home during the day with my daughter, Sedra, who's 5 years old. We plan to home school, so I'm always on the lookout for fun stuff we can do together while learning. On a Monday in June I spotted a flyer at the library about Hockings Heritage. The program started the next day, so we went. I was expecting it to be another spoon-fed story time with some hands-on activities. What we found when we got there went well beyond my expectations. We found community of gardeners in action, and were invited to be a part of it. I introduced my daughter and myself, then went back to the car to get my gardening gloves.

We spent most of the afternoon cultivating the soil (i.e., pulling weeds). The kids stood in line to plant cabbage, greens, and marigolds. Then they took turn watering the plants.

Hockings Heritage Garden sits on a plain fenced-in lot in the middle of an ordinary residential block with houses on either side. They don't even have water, so in order to irrigate they pay the summer water bills for their neighbor lady. I look at that as a prime example of the "community" aspect of community gardening. I love that they didn't get the permit to dig the hole to bury the pipe to begin the paper chase to get the water to use in the garden; they just asked the neighbor if they could use her water, and she said OK. As a mom, I really appreciate this mentality, because when adults use common sense, children learn common sense.

My goal as a parent is for my daughter to grow up with confidence, aware of her own value. I want her to experience things herself. By being involved in community gardening, she is learning that she indeed can make positive changes to the world around her. I believe the best way, perhaps the only way, for a child to feel useful is to be involved in activities like this where they're contributing their time and energy towards a worthwhile goal.

It's an adult-centered world we're living in, and it's been a struggle for me to find ways that my daughter and I can volunteer together. So I'm so thankful for the opportunity for she and I to work side-by-side in the garden, soaking in the sun and making a difference in our community in a beautiful way.

The Hockings family donated their land to the Milwaukee Urban Gardens after the house they were living in burned down. The Hockings family is fine, they decided to move, but they left their legacy behind for their neighbors to enjoy.

The garden hosts a variety of vegetables, including some heirloom types, as they are seed savers. The children working in the garden can take home a share of the harvest. The remainder goes to food pantries.

"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

- Albert Einstein



UPCOMING MUG EVENTS

Holiday Celebration!

December 20 at 5:00 pm at
the Milwaukee
Environmental Consortium
1845 N. Farwell Avenue

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Milwaukee, WI 53202
Phone: 414.431.1585
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*Milwaukee Urban Gardens
acquires land and partners
with neighborhood residents
to preserve, develop and
maintain community gardens
to enhance the quality of life.*

WHY CREATE A GARDEN?

The simple act of planting a garden can create positive environmental, economic, and social impacts. Community gardens foster cultural understanding and an awareness of the environment around us.

Please help MUG continue our successes and keep the gardens growing. Without you, this could not be possible. Contact us at www.Milwaukeeurbangarden.org or 414.431.1585 to make a donation.

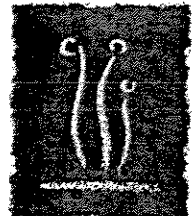
New Website!

We are pleased to announce that Milwaukee Urban Gardens has launched a new website that will serve as an online community for local garden groups to share information and resources. The website will host individual WebPages for community gardening groups to display information such as the history and mission of the garden as well as a list of upcoming events. To learn more about urban gardening activities and event in Milwaukee visit www.milwaukeeurbangardens.org.

Milwaukee Urban Gardens

1845 N. Farwell Avenue,
Suite 100
Milwaukee, WI 53202

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Spencer Garden - - Autumn 2004

Cultivating Community in Pursuit of Urban Green Space

Residents Come Together to Protect Garden Park for the Future.

The Sunday Farmers Market and performance activities featuring local artists and musicians attract crowds to Garden Park, which has been a center for community activities for over ten years. The legacy of Garden Park is no secret to Milwaukeeans; it is a place where many go visit, relax and enjoy urban green space. It is by and large one of the most versatile urban green spaces in the city of Milwaukee, and one of the few green spaces located in the Riverwest neighborhood. Garden Park has made a tremendous impact on the community: one that community members hope to preserve. The Caretakers of Garden Park along with concerned residents have formed a group called Friends of Garden Park to orchestrate community brainstorming sessions for discussion of preservation and maintenance of the space. Milwaukee Urban Gardens has met with the group to discuss community-wide concerns and possible solutions. Both groups are moving forward with planning for an acquisition of the site and development to include a “green” building and maintenance of about one-half of the lot as green space. The plan will allow Garden Park to remain a viable, active part of the Riverwest community, and will allow activities like the Sunday Farmers’ Market to continue. The building will have water and electricity available to gardeners, performers and farmers’ market participants.

