



EVERGREEN

Imagine your city with nature

Through EVERGREEN's community garden programs, local citizens are coming together to grow their own food, socialize and learn about urban gardening.

Seeding Healthy Communities

ISSUE TWO 2009–2010

Gardener Profile: Arcadia Housing Co-op

Picture yourself at eight years old, staring at a frilly green plant bursting out of a mysterious pot, and being asked to imagine what might be growing inside. This was the task put to a class of Grade Three students by teacher and Fort York gardener, Nancy Woodruff who looked at vigorously growing carrots and saw a learning opportunity for her downtown class.

"I was teaching the science unit *"Growth and Changes in Plants,"* Nancy said. "One weekend I dug up a row of carrots and replanted them in big pots. I brought them to school and asked the students what they thought they were from looking at the foliage. Each student then pulled up a carrot, drew a diagram of it, washed and ate it. They were thrilled by this activity and couldn't believe how sweet the carrots tasted. I realized that our idyllic little plots, sandwiched as they are between train tracks and highway, can provide crucial opportunities for educating both children and adults about sustainability and the beauty of nature."

In May 2008, Nancy and friends from Arcadia Housing co-op heard about the Fort York garden through the Harbourfront Community Center. Since then, they have enjoyed two seasons growing food together and sharing the garden with fellow community members. "One of our favorite things is walking over to our garden, pulling up great vegetables and then walking back home over the Bathurst bridge. The best was when we harvested our heritage pumpkins: two rouge vif d'etampes, two galeuse d'eysinne and one prize winner. We brought a shopping cart from the co-op and took them home in that." After a bountiful summer full of food, friends and learning, they're already looking forward to what the next growing season will bring.



What is Food Security?

With environmental and economic concerns on the rise, consumers are becoming more aware of the need for food supplies that are safe and reliable. The phrase "Food Security" is cropping up a lot lately, but what does it really mean? Food Security not only implies access to sufficient quantities of food for all people, at all times, but also explores issues of food quality, and the impact of its production, distribution and consumption on individuals and communities.

At the core, it's about building a food system that is safe and secure. This means that each individual has a voice in what they eat and where their food comes from. It also means re-establishing a connection to the food we eat, the people who grow it, and the environment from which it comes. Food Security is linked to a global food movement that aims to re-establish regional food supplies both in Canada, and the rest of the world.

The Role of Community Gardens

A community garden is just one way that individuals can work together on local food security. They provide opportunities for gardeners of all levels (including beginners!) to grow food, share ideas and enjoy outdoor activity with fellow community members.

The Four Food Security Groups*

AVAILABILITY
Sufficient food that is nutritious, safe and equally available to all.

ACCESSIBILITY
Access to food that is affordable and obtained in a dignified manner.

ACCEPTABILITY
Food that is culturally acceptable, supporting traditional and symbolic connections to food and land.

ADEQUACY
Food that is produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just.



*Adapted from Koc, M; MacRae, R; Mougeot, L; Welsh, J; eds. (1999). *For Hunger-proof Cities: Sustainable Urban Food Systems*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre

Promote food security in your area:

Grow Your Own!

Planting a vegetable garden is fun, inexpensive and delicious. No land? Try a balcony container garden or join a community plot in your area.

Buy Local

To support your local economy, buy directly from food producers and businesses that support them.

Eat in Season

By choosing food that is in season near you, your food will be fresher, tastier, and more nutritious.

Support Sustainable Practices

Try to buy certified organic, free range and fair trade foods whenever possible.

Get Informed

Ask questions about where your food comes from, who grew or raised it, and how it was caught or farmed. Speak to farmers, store managers and food retailers.

GARDEN UPDATES

The Emmett Avenue Community Garden

This is the only community space for food growing in Eglinton Flats Park, in Weston-Mount Dennis. The garden celebrated its third growing season with 89 participants—34 new gardeners joined this year! Seven workshops held in the garden and at Mount Dennis community kitchen brought gardeners and community members together to learn about local food and the food system, canning and preserving, and organic gardening.

The Fort York Community Garden

On the grounds of Historic Fort York, at Bathurst and Fleet Streets, these 1,200 square feet of raised beds were filled with more than 70 varieties of vegetables, herbs and flowers grown in individual, community group and communal plots in 2009. The 76 gardeners enjoyed eight months of gardening and built a new three-bin composting system to turn garden waste into healthy soil for healthy plants.

The Community Garden at Miziwe Biik

This garden is on the grounds of Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training, on Gerrard Street across from Allen Gardens. This garden boasts 560 square feet of crop space for native plants and traditional herbs in newly refurbished raised cedar beds. In 2009 the inaugural Harvest Social brought together 250 people who enjoyed traditional drumming, dancing and food at Evergreen Brick Works!

Fresh food from the garden is great for cooking meals that are healthy and delicious, and align with local seasons and food production. Here's one of many great examples from one of our Fort York gardeners:



Jane's Gazpacho

Gazpacho is a cold, tomato-based raw vegetable soup, originating in Southern Spain. It is often consumed during the summer months due to its refreshing qualities.

Ingredients

- 4–5 tomatoes, washed
- 1 large red or green pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 peeled cucumber, roughly chopped
- 1 medium onion
- 3–4 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 1–3 cloves garlic
- 5 tbsp. water, vary according to desired consistency
- 2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

Directions

Blend raw ingredients until liquid, or until desired consistency. Cool in fridge. Serve!

For a real Spanish rustic touch, blend in 1–2 slices of stale bread to create a traditional creamy texture.

Evergreen facilitates community food gardens at three sites across Toronto: Fort York, Emmett Avenue and Miziwe Biik, thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation's generous support of our Seeding Healthy Communities program.

For more information on our community gardening program, please contact Rebekka Hutton, Project Manager, Community Development: rhutton@evergreen.ca, 416-596-1495 x244

EVERGREEN is a not-for-profit organization that makes cities more livable. By deepening the connection between people and nature, and empowering Canadians to take a hands-on approach to their urban environments, Evergreen is improving the health of our cities—now and for the future.

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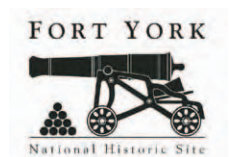


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