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Citizens Come Together on Behalf of Urban Ag in KCMO

Volunteer committees work to implement codes in support of urban crop and livestock production.



By Katherine Kelly

Imagine driving home from work and pulling into your neighbor's drive to buy just-picked, still-warm-from-the-sun tomatoes and some greens, with leaves so fresh they gleam in the light. Imagine hearing your son tell you that he just got hired by the "Garden Lady" two blocks over and he's going to spend 20 hours a week planting, hoeing, and selling vegetables rather than working at the nearby fast food joint. Imagine a class put on by the Department of Parks and Recreation, where students visit an urban farm down the street, plant potatoes and spread straw mulch and learn from the farmer about where food comes from.

Gretchen Kunkel (Greater KC Food Policy Coalition) and Patty Noll (right) (KCMO Dept. of Planning and Development) take citizen input at a public meeting in October.

These are the kinds of activities the Urban Ag Codes Steering Committee wants to be legal in Kansas City, MO. During a public meeting held at Bad Seed Market last October, some fifty people signed up for an opportunity

to form the Steering Committee and the Livestock Subcommittee to learn about codes and zoning and to help shape the future of urban agriculture in Kansas City. Their commitment to quality of life, health, and the economy has brought them together to work for city regulations that work for food production and for neighborhoods.

At the first meetings of the Steering Committee and the Livestock Subcommittee in November, a few key issues were identified:

- Commercial sales of farm products in residential neighborhoods is an activity that should be encouraged and legal; the goal being to increase availability and access to fresh, healthy foods and to support positive economic activity.
- Hiring employees and using volunteers on urban farms in residential neighborhoods should be supported. Income opportunities, educational opportunities, and community building are just a few of the benefits urban farms offer.
- It should be legal to grow and sell food from your own or someone else's yard. The model of using many backyards to produce food for sale is a creative way to make use of urban land and to increase access to locally grown food.
- Small numbers of poultry and small livestock (goats, for example) can be managed and regulated to promote their benefits as pets and as producers of healthy eggs or milk while protecting public health and neighborhood quality of life.
- Urban farming and agricultural activities need to address questions of aesthetics, parking and traffic in order to maintain the residential character of neighborhoods.

The city has assigned Patty Noll, Project Manager for the Zoning Ordinance & Subdivision Regulations Revision, and Patrick E. Egberuare, Division Manager for Animal Health & Public Safety to work with the Steering Committee and the Livestock Subcommittee. KCCUA's Daniel Dermitzel, a group of law students under the direction of Jeffrey Berman, Associate Dean of the UMKC School of Law, and others are doing research on codes from other cities. The mission of the two committees is to identify our goals, suggest sensible regulations and to engage elected officials, community leadership, and other stakeholders in the process of proposing codes revisions.

If you are interested in getting involved in this process or have questions or concerns, please contact Katherine Kelly, katherine@kccua.org.

Let Yours Be the Hands that Help



By Tina Hoover, KCCUA Board Chair

Between now and December 31, KCCUA's year-end campaign will raise money to support urban farmers and the healthy local food they produce. Over the next four weeks our goal is to raise \$15,000 from people like you—and me. I will be writing my own check to the campaign, because I believe in the work we do. Without KCCUA the local food movement would lose a powerful voice for urban farms. I believe in the transformational effect that farms in the city have on people and on our values. The funds we raise in December provide critical resources to support KCCUA's work in 2010.

Our theme this year is “Let Yours Be the Hands that Help.” Our hands connect us to the plants we grow, to the food we eat. There's something special in a farmer's hands: strong and covered with earth, nurturing life from the ground. Our hands connect at market, grower and eater. We come together over food.

The campaign celebrates the hands that grow food and share it with our city. The hands that help us all by growing food in a way that sustains our planet.

We are mindful that for many families growing vegetables is sustenance. Hunger in America is at a 14-year high. We celebrate the hands that grow nutritious food to feed neighborhoods where grocery stores have left, and convenience stores have started feeding children. The hands that teach young people how to grow and cook real food. The hands that support families through income from family farms in the city.

Your tax-deductible contribution to KCCUA can be made [here](#) or mailed to KCCUA, 4223 Gibbs Rd., Kansas City, KS 66106. To discuss your donation or to support KCCUA's work through a gift of stock,

IRA, personal property or other means, please contact Semie Rogers, Development Director semie@kccua.org.

On behalf of all the area farmers, residents and KCCUA, I thank you very much for your support.

Reach Tina Hoover at tmhoover@mac.com.

Field Notes from the Kansas City Community Farm



Laughter rose from the heart of this farmer as headlights were turned on to finish the job.

By Alicia Ellingsworth

Garlic. The word invokes a smile on the face, a dreamy daze and memories of meals past. Garlic is powerful. We know that. Our garlic needed to be planted this fall and being fresh out of field crew I was up for an experiment. I sent out a call for help. Then I waited.

Earlier in the week two old roots beds had been selected for the new garlic beds because carrots and beets are known to be friends of garlic. Our usual composted chicken manure was tilled in along with crop residue to create a nice seed bed. Seed garlic had been ordered; individual cloves had been separated and were waiting to be planted.

Planting day arrived along with sunshine, a perfectly blue Kansas sky and our first volunteer garlic planter and CSA member, Super K. I was smiling! We headed out with seed garlic in buckets, hand tools, measuring tape, stakes and our handy-dandy PVC pipe. The field is expertly marked so we used the measuring tape to stake out the beds for the precise location. Our beds are four feet wide and 150 feet long with three foot paths in between.

Garlic can be planted as close as a few inches apart, but with a little more space the bulbs will grow larger so we planted the cloves four across in the bed and about six inches apart in the rows (the marked PVC pipe guided our plant spacing down the bed). Tools were tossed aside as the soil was nice and loose. With our left hands we dug and pulled the soil back as the right hand placed the cloves, pointed end up, about three inches into the ground. The soil was then released over the cloves and they were covered with a little pat and a prayer. We inched south for about an hour.

Good progress had been made when Super K was called off to her next adventure. Just about that time another wave of volunteers started coming. This group came on bamboo bicycles, in cars, trucks, SUVs and with children. They came with smiles and ready to work. My right-hand daughter corralled the kids and they formed their own digging, climbing and squealing team nearby. The new group made quick work of the two designated beds, and even though the afternoon was advancing quickly, they were not about to stop. So I set out to hunt for another spot in which to plant. Laughter rose from the heart of this farmer as the sun set over I-635 and headlights were turned on to finish the job.

In darkness, some folks smiled and waved good-byes, others came in for coffee and conversation. The garlic was in the ground. It was time to celebrate the day's work shared among growing friends. With a little mulch, winter's sleep, some sunshine and a few months, we'll be pulling up garlic and stirring up new memories.

You can reach Alicia at alicia@kccua.org.

Jac Smit, Pioneer of Urban Agriculture Planning, Dies at 80



Jac Smit, 1929 -2009

By Joe Nasr

Jac Smit, often referred to as “the father of urban agriculture”, passed away on Sunday, November 15th at his Washington, DC, home, a few days after his 80th birthday. After working initially in the US (notably Chicago), Mr. Smit had a long career as a planner around the world, with assignments in Egypt, Iraq, Tanzania, and across South Asia, among others. Jac was a pioneer in advocating for the cause of urban agriculture, first publishing on it in the 1960s. He was the lead author on the seminal book on the subject: *Urban Agriculture: Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities* (1996). Jac founded The Urban Agriculture Network (TUAN) in 1992; the unique library that he collected for TUAN will form the foundation of a new Urban Food and Agriculture Learning Center in

Toronto, to be managed by MetroAg–Alliance for Urban Agriculture. For more information on Jac’s contribution to the field of urban agriculture, see www.jacsmit.com. Jac is survived by his wife Elise Fiber Smith.

He will be greatly missed.

Jac Smit generously contributed to Urban Grown in December 2008. See his article entitled "[Eat Half Your Lawn](#)".

Grower Finds Ways to Make the Most of High Tunnel

New York farmer experiments with growing in the "third dimension."

Clearview Farm is a 190-acre diversified vegetable and field crop farm located in Palmyra, NY. Field crops have been produced for 29 years and certified organic vegetables for the last five. Produce is marketed through three farmers markets and the Finger Lakes Organic Growers’ Cooperative. Another market outlet is the Good Food Collective which is a CSM or Community Supported Market where several vendors provide fruit and veggies for 100 members to a collection point at the South Wedge Market in Rochester, NY, for further distribution. This is the fourth year that a high tunnel has been incorporated into the farm production system.



Taking high tunnel production to the next level at Clearview Farm, Palmyra, NY.

By Kurt Forman, Clearview Farm & Robert Hadad, Cornell Vegetable Specialist

Using high tunnels for season-extended vegetable production is a costly investment. There are two ways to make it more economically profitable. One is to grow and harvest plants inside the tunnel for as long as the season allows. The second method is to use more of the “inside” of the tunnel. By this we mean growing plants in the "third dimension," the unused upper portion of the tunnel.

High tunnels have a set amount of floor space. The ground area of a 30’ x 96’ tunnel is 2880sf. You can’t do more than that. There is, however, more space just "hanging there." Our project used hanging gutters filled with soil to grow plants suspended from the rafters. Above the tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers planted in the ground of the high tunnel, we envisioned containers--much like flower boxes--where leafy greens and dwarf peas and other crops could grow.

Funded by Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NE-SARE), a USDA grants and outreach program, this farmer grant provided the money to purchase the materials to build on our ideas.

If we could design a container that could hold enough soil to provide room for roots, be easily watered and moved out of the way when needed, and grow a marketable crop in a reasonable time for a profit, then the concept would be worthwhile.

We decided to try rain gutters. We used the two types that were easily available: 10ft sections of vinyl and aluminum. The vinyl gutters provided a bit more volume for soil than the aluminum. We thought that maybe there could be something bigger, so we also tried 10ft sections of 6" schedule 40 PVC water pipe cut lengthwise. This did provide more volume of soil but was hard to cut even with a 10" table saw.

To hang each gutter set, two 2" pulleys were hung from where a hoop joined two purlins about 10 feet from the ground and about 10 feet apart. The gutters were filled with potting soil and baling twine or steel cable was used to tie each gutter up and through the pulleys. The vinyl and aluminum gutters required extra support underneath to keep from bending. A 10ft 2"x4" stud was attached for rigidity. The PVC pipe didn't need the support.

Each gutter-baling-twine assembly went through the pulleys and was then tied to the tunnel side wall. The gutters could be lowered to the ground or about chest high so that seeding and harvesting could be done without bending over. The gutters could also be raised high enough to get a tractor underneath to cultivate the soil for the main crops.

Even during the cool months of March, a sunny day dried out the soil in the gutters quickly. A trickle irrigation system was designed for each gutter so that all or any one of the gutters could be watered efficiently. Trickle tape was placed in each gutter attached to a shut-off valve that was then connected to a length of flexible hose that ran to a header. The shut-off valve was clamped to the gutter. In this way, the gutters could be raised or lowered without affecting the trickle system.

Having a good soil mix was important. It needed good water holding capacity. Readily available fertilizer was needed that didn't leave a salt build up. Leafy greens like lettuce, Asian mustards and brassicas did well. Dwarf sugar peas adapted well with a little trellising, using baling twine secured horizontally between the two vertical pieces of twine that suspend the gutter. Cilantro did well and spinach fair. Shallow-rooted crops that don't need much soil did best in this situation.

The cost of the setup was remarkably low. We installed 14 gutters and there was room to do more. The gutters provided almost 46sf of additional growing space and between three and five crops of vegetables depending on variety. The total material and transportation costs for the 14 gutters was \$316. Labor to construct and install them with drip tape was about 34 hours at \$12/hour or \$408. So, cost per gutter was \$51.72 or about \$11.50/sf.

One way to refine the system is to add a winch to raise and lower the gutters, since they can be heavy when loaded with soil, plants and water. Also, further experimentation to discover which plants do best with limited soil would be advisable. A timer that facilitates periodic watering would also be helpful because the gutters tend to dry out quickly. There may also be other soil mixes that have improved water-holding capacity. And lastly, if there were a way to devise a gutter with greater soil capacity, that could be advantageous as well.

For more information, contact Kurt Forman at clearviewfarm@bluefrog.com or Robert Hadad at rgh26@cornell.edu. To learn more about SARE grant opportunities visit www.sare.org.

Urban Agriculture Seen as Integral to Portland's Strategy for Sustainability

City responds to residents' calls for a more localized food system.

Steve Cohen manages food policy and programs for the City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. He focuses on all aspects of a sustainable food system including land use planning, urban agriculture, food security, economic development, purchasing, composting and climate change. Steve has extensive experience in purchasing, distribution and marketing for major regional, national, and international food and beverage companies. Over the past 30 years he has played key roles in

establishing indoor and outdoor festival markets, performing arts venues and community spaces in Oregon. Our thanks to Steve for providing this overview of Portland's urban agriculture and food policy activities. Please use the hyperlinks to learn more about the projects mentioned in this article.



A portion of Portland's "Better Together Garden" at City Hall.

By Steve Cohen

In 2005 Portland, OR, became the first U.S. municipality to establish a *food policy and programs* position outside of a public health department. Housed in the Office of Sustainable Development, the new position added food systems planning to ongoing efforts to reduce the city's carbon footprint through innovations in energy, green building, solid waste management and recycling.

A program designed to support the nascent interest in sustainable food and expand opportunities for urban residents provided a plateful of possibilities. Choices had to be made about urban agriculture initiatives, but

two areas stood out: Protect and promote a stable agricultural land base outside the city's Urban Growth Boundary and provide education and facilitate residents' efforts to grow their own food within it.

Championing rural producers is accomplished by [supporting a strong network of farmers markets](#) and CSAs, as well as [assisting city businesses](#) who want to purchase sustainably grown food. Lobbying for regional efforts to maintain agricultural land included mapping direct-market farms for a regional government process that is currently determining urban and rural land reserves adjacent to the Urban Growth Boundary. (November 2008 meeting packet is available [here](#))

Portland's strong planning ethos is the foundation for our acclaimed quality of life. While urban density is integral to our comprehensive plan, there's always room for city dwellers to grow food. The [Diggable City Report](#), initially researched and written by Portland State University grad students, inventoried city-owned land for urban agriculture potential. While density and good stewardship have kept available properties to a minimum, opportunities do exist and land has been successfully converted to community gardens and other urban agriculture projects, with more in the planning stages. Most recently, a city block was turned into a CSA managed by Nepalese immigrants.

Two additional [Diggable City Reports](#) concluded that satisfying the demand for gardening space will take public-private partnerships with schools, businesses, and the faith community whose buildings often are surrounded by arable land. The city currently assists residents by matching land to users and facilitating zoning, water and ownership issues.

Zoning has not been a real obstacle to producing food in the city, but existing codes were written at a time when urban farmers started up tractors at dawn and agriculture was practiced on a much larger scale. In January 2009, the Office of Sustainable Development merged with the Bureau of Planning creating the new [Bureau of Planning and Sustainability](#) which, among other opportunities, provided an inside track to updating the zoning code. A new definition of agriculture as well as issues such as siting farmers markets and community gardens, drop-off locations for buying clubs and CSAs, and the commercial growing and selling of crops from residential gardens are all on the table for a spring 2010 review.



Portland Mayor Sam Adams (left) harvesting spinach at City Hall garden.

Also, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability's current updating of the city's comprehensive plan recognizes the connections between planning, food and health. Existing Conditions Reports were prepared for the [Portland Plan](#) and town

meetings are being held for residents' input. Planners are hearing that full-service grocery stores and garden plots are at the top of the list of desired amenities in one of the plan's organizing principles, the Twenty-Minute Neighborhood, in which residents can fulfill their daily needs within a 20-minute walk from home.

Food and agriculture have also been recognized as key elements in another recent city strategy, the [Climate Action Plan](#). Reducing carbon-intensive foods and increasing the consumption of local food are two objectives accompanied by action items that include the promotion of fruit and nut trees, community gardens and local food production.

Also noted in the climate action plan are educational opportunities for Portlanders to gain skills in organic gardening, fruit production, animal husbandry, food preservation and affordable, healthy eating. Providing such opportunities are non-profit organizations like [Janus Youth Programs](#) which assists low-income residents by growing gardens and community; for-profit ventures such as [Your Backyard Farmer](#) which establishes urban CSAs; and the city itself which has long supported youth education by providing land for an [urban farm](#), and more recently has started offering its residents sustainable food classes. In 2009, the city's [Urban Growth Bounty](#) educational series sold out 29 such classes. In 2010, the program will offer over 70 courses in growing and preserving food, keeping chickens and bees, cheesemaking and sustainable food on a budget.

Portland will continue to be a convener and a clearinghouse, improve web site resources, and remove obstacles to, and set direction for, the continued growth of urban agriculture. We'll plant seeds and offer encouragement, as was most visible in the [Better Together Garden](#) at City Hall. Ultimately, the hard work and the future of food in the city is in the dirt-stained hands of passionate Portland pioneers.

Reach Steve at scohen@ci.portland.or.us.

Local Food Gala Planned for 2010

Raising awareness and money with a celebration of local food & healthy eating.

A growing group of volunteers is coming together to organize a *Local, Healthy Food Gala* to support three organizations working to help the KC metro area grow food and eat well. Chaired by Kay Johnson, with leadership from Linda Nixon, Brenda Kumm, Ann Willoughby, Dede Palmer, Jane Zieha, Joan Wells, Karen Adler, Lori Mallory, Jenny Manka, Maria Kunstadter, Bonnie Winston, Lindsay Larick, Karen Rogers, Katherine Kelly, Erika DeVore and others, this event will raise funds for the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture, Kansas City Community Gardens, and the Food Policy Coalition of Greater Kansas City.

The event will be held in August or September of 2010. The food will be local and organic, prepared by Kansas City chefs. A silent and live auction will offer food, dining and travel, as well as gardening items. The program will also feature some of the amazing work being done in the Kansas City area to help people grow food and eat well. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Katherine Kelly at katherine@kccua.org.

Allotment Gardens to Make Room for Development in Berlin

Decision seems out of step with worldwide trends to protect and promote urban food production.

Carolin Mees is an architect and a PhD candidate at the Berlin University of the Arts, Institute of Theory and History of Design. Currently she is working as an assistant professor at Graz Technical University, Institute of Architecture and Landscape. Her research includes the development of community gardens in New York City and she has published several articles on urban public gardens and open space uses and presented at several conferences. For New York City's community gardens program "GreenThumb," Carolin has co-designed the prototype "Gardenhaus," a build-it-yourself structure adaptable to various site conditions and community needs.



The Wuerttemberg Allotment Gardens in Berlin are among those slated for development.

Photo by Carolin Mees.

By Carolin Mees

In Berlin, Germany, a city of 3.4 million inhabitants, 500,000 residents are cultivating nearly 75,000 allotment gardens (known as "Kleingartens" or small gardens) on approximately 7500 acres or 3.5 percent of the urban area. Three quarters of this land is publicly owned and managed by the city's Department of Urban Development. Nearly 70 percent of all allotment gardens in Berlin are permanently protected in the land use plan while the remaining gardens are merely included in an allotment garden development plan and subject to varying degrees of protection.

In May of this year, the city legislature announced that five allotment garden colonies will be bulldozed to make room for development, including colonies that have been in existence for more than 90 years. Additionally, another 164 colonies of allotment gardens are scheduled to be released for development between 2014 and 2020. All in all, and with city officials proclaiming that no comparable metropolis has such a large number of privately used gardens in the inner city, some 18 percent of Berlin's allotment gardens are to be replaced by high-end housing, commercial buildings and sports facilities by 2020; all this with current real estate vacancy rates estimated to be around 14 percent.

This is happening at a time when researchers worldwide are discussing urban agriculture as a means to create socially, economically and environmentally sustainable cities and when several elected officials have started growing vegetables right next to their government headquarters as a way to promote healthy nutrition and greater food self-sufficiency. Among the reasons for this "sudden" trend toward urban agriculture are global climate change, the financial recession and the ongoing urbanization of cities with a concomitant shrinking population in rural areas. Climate researchers and urban planners recommend to strengthen regional systems and to reduce the ecological footprint of cities by increasing food and energy production within the urban environment. If Berlin's city government would realize the potential of the city's allotment gardens, the city could become a more sustainable city--as it had once been almost a century ago.

Starting with the industrialization and urbanization at the middle of the 19th century, colonies of small allotment gardens were created by members of the new working class on vacant parcels along the periphery of German cities. An allotment gardening movement began that gained momentum before and during the two World Wars, when, because of shortages in the food supply, even some of Berlin's oldest, centrally located parkland was cultivated for garden produce.

Gardening associations were formed as early as 1901 to organize the great number of urban residents commonly gardening on urban land and to express their common interest to preserve their gardens against ongoing urban development. In 1919 more than 15,000 acres of city land were dedicated to allotment gardening. That same year, legislation was enacted to regulate the design and management of allotment gardens. Today's regulations emphasize in general the use of allotment gardens for the cultivation of vegetables as well as for other recreational purposes. In practice, land is subdivided into thirds each for food production, ornamentals and other leisure time activities.

If, on the other hand, all of the land allocated to allotment gardens in Berlin (currently about 7500 acres) were to be used for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables, this would translate into about 96sf of agricultural land per resident. Since research found that in a 130-day temperate growing season, about ten times that much is needed to provide most of a household's total yearly vegetable and fruit needs, this is still not nearly enough. Plus, in light of many other benefits of not only allotment gardens but also community gardens and intercultural gardens--benefits such as increased biodiversity, greater physical health for the gardeners and their families, social and economical stability--not less but more land for privately-used gardens is needed for an increasing number of residents in Berlin. As the 150 years

of allotment gardening history and the 30-year history of community gardens have proven, community managed open spaces are important as flexible keystones for urban resilience and should therefore be protected as a specific form of land use in the urban area. Berlin's decision to reduce the land allocated for urban agriculture appears to be oddly out of step.

You can reach Carolin at carolin_mees@yahoo.com.

Calendar of Events

Kansas City Food Circle Annual Membership Meeting, Sunday, December 6, 2pm - 4:30pm, KCMO - South (Waldo) Library, 201 E. 75th St, Meeting Room A. All members and friends are welcome to attend. For more information contact Craig Volland at 913-334-0556 or hartwood2@kc.rr.com.

Great Plains Vegetable Growers Conference, January 7 - 9, Missouri Western University, Fulkerson Center, St. Joseph, MO. For program and registration information visit <http://extension.missouri.edu/buchanan/GPVGC.shtml>.

3rd Annual Breaking the Silence Environmental Conference: "How Health and the Environment Connect," January 8 - 9, Reardon Center, Kansas City, KS. For more information visit <http://www.breakingthesilence.us/>.

KCCUA Annual Urban Growers Meeting, Saturday, January 23. Mark your calendars now. More details about meeting time and location to be announced. Come meet other growers, supporters and learn about our collaborative purchasing and greenhouse projects.

Happy Holidays!

To subscribe or unsubscribe please send an email to info@kccua.org.
For editorial comments please contact *Urban Grown* editor Daniel Dermitzel at daniel@kccua.org.
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