



2011-2012

Our Food

Reconnecting Food and Community

Introduction



Our Food

Reconnecting Food and Community

The Our Food Project is a continuation and expansion of the Food Action Committee's work. The project's overarching goal is to achieve healthier weights by changing communities' relationships to food. In doing so we are hoping to foster and build positive food environments within the diverse communities in which we work.

We build positive food environments by using a tailored process for each community, beginning with outreach and consultation. From this ongoing outreach and consultation process, we will develop a series of activities that will aim to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, increase recreational opportunities and bolster community food security.

Activities include sharing our gardening, cooking and preserving skills, building community greenhouses and root cellars, supporting and promoting CSAs and alternative food distribution systems and generally connecting interested communities to resources and support. These activities are our toolbox and our projects are always changing along with the communities in which we work.

How we work

Collaboratively

- We spend time building genuine and long term relationships in order to create a sense of community and connection to the work we do.
- We aim to bolster, support and share resources with other organizations doing complementary work.
- We believe working collaboratively creates engagement, leadership and builds capacity as a community. It may take more time but its power and reach is exponential.

Grassroots and Led by the Community

- We want to do the work because it is genuinely needed and wanted.
- We do not know what is best for others and so we ask lots of questions and engage in long term conversations with each community about their needs, wants and ideas.



“ I think it's learning how to preserve [food], too. That nothing goes to waste. Because sometimes we have things and then, if you don't know what to... how to preserve it a little bit better, then it ends up being tossed out or something. So learning how to preserve the food is very important. Because it will help us financially.
—Project Participant





Inclusive and Accessible

- We need to work to ensure that barriers to participating, leading, or accessing our work are addressed and resolved.
- We aim to provide tangible supports such as child care at our workshops, and offer transportation support as well as work towards less tangible supports such as creating a welcoming space for a diverse range of people.
- We believe that all people have the right to good food and supportive communities.

Locally and Site Specific

- We use the resources, struggles and goals of each community as the starting point for our work.
- Each person/community/situation is different. We work within decentralized, person-based networks of resources and support, sharing ideas but also looking within each of our own communities for answers.

Action and Person Based

- We aim to address the tangible obstacles to community based food systems and respond to them directly and creatively.
- We work in a hands-on manner, crafting solutions and long term relationships.

With a Long-term Vision and a Sustainable Pace

- We believe significant change takes time.
- We aim to work with a manageable number of projects so that we are able to give long term support.
- We approach each aspect of a project as one step in a five, ten or twenty year plan and aim to do the work well and at its own pace.
- We believe wellness and happiness in our jobs is essential to good work.



“ I call it a little world because we have a lot of people from different walks of world, different ages, different countries, different colours, races and the garden brings them all together. Gardening, I believe is a piece of heaven, that you can't choose who comes and who goes. It belongs to everybody! —Lira, Hilda Unity Garden Society (H.U.G.S.)



Our Programs

Ethically and Supportive

- We source our materials and food locally and support local businesses as much as possible. We believe this is an integral part of our work.
- We support environmentally sustainable practices and encourage others to do the same.
- We financially support small community businesses and our local farmers and recognize the importance of paying a fair price for wages and products; we reflect these real costs in our budgets and projects.

With a Holistic Application of Our Values

- We aim to apply these principles to all facets of our work from writing proposals, hiring staff, relating to our colleagues, carrying out project activities, conducting evaluation and research, and even within our own lives.
- We want our work to be a celebration of all the momentum, dedication and creativity of community food movement in Nova Scotia and beyond.

Growing Our Gardens

We work to increase community garden spaces and increase support for urban agriculture and community food projects. We work closely with community centres, schools, and community organizations to build and sustain collective garden sites. We offer project start-up support to help communities get started. Once a garden is built we also offer skill building workshops, and help to develop urban agriculture infrastructure such as greenhouses, rainwater catchment systems and compost operations.

School Garden Matchmaker

The Matchmaker program helps us connect interested community volunteers with local school gardens in need of a few extra hands. We find volunteers who would like to help with a garden and match them to a nearby school to help with summer weeding and watering as well as to work with teachers through the school year



“ Kids that won't eat tomatoes, that won't eat cucumbers, you put them into the garden with plants they've grown from seed, and all of a sudden they're out there with 26 other kids in their class and they're all eating cucumbers and have huge smiles. You can see in the smile that they're all very, very proud of that cucumber they're eating. —Deirdre Evans, Parent Volunteer, Ecole Saint Catherine's School Garden





to include the garden activities in the classroom work and after school programs.

Good Seed

Good Seed accepts donations of garden related materials from businesses and the general public and distributes them to community groups who would like to start a garden but do not have the funds or materials available to do so. The aim is to reduce waste by collecting unused goods, and to encourage urban gardening in general.

Seasonal Cooking Workshops

We share our favourite recipes in a series of cooking workshops each season. We often invite a farmer to the workshop to tell us about their farm. We also discuss the origins of the food items and options for buying local.

Preserving workshops

Jam, pickles, tomatoes and more! In summer & fall we teach workshops and share tips for preserving the harvest.

Farmers Market Demonstrations

We visit farmers markets and community festivals throughout the province in the summer months with cooking and preserving demonstrations to help promote the foods being sold by local farmers.

Root cellar tour and construction

We conducted root cellar tours in November 2010 and 2011. We also compiled tips from all of the root cellar hosts into a short document on the basics of root cellars. In May 2011 we constructed a root cellar at the EAC office. We have awarded five community root cellar grants to organizations throughout the province.

Community Supported Agriculture Support

We promote the CSA concept, visit workplaces to give advice on how to set up a CSA drop-off, and we are currently piloting a subsidized CSA program.



“...when we start to meet the people who are actually experiencing food insecurity and the access level, you meet the senior who’s totally isolated or you meet the family who has no time to cook because they’re full-time workers, or can’t afford to buy healthy food because of low wages. And you start to say ‘That shouldn’t be the way’. So you know it’s...the quality of relationships, and I think the EAC is good at this!
—Rita, Community Partner

“ It feels really important now to remember the importance of food, and I think it’s lost some of its sacred significance. When farmers, and when people that are interested in land, and people that are interested in healthy food...the more people that speak to it...then I think the better. I think it’s really important to how can we remind people of what food really is.
—Michelle Murton, Nutritionist, Community Partner



Highlights



- Ran **52 workshops** about Gardening, Seasonal Cooking, and Preserving
- Reached **1256 people** through demonstrations, workshops, meetings and celebrations
- Built our **first community root-cellar** at the Ecology Action Centre, and awarded 5 community root cellar construction grants
- Supported the development of **6 new community gardens** and continued to support **30 existing** community gardens this year
- Worked with **47 Community Partners**
- Opened our **first Passive Solar Community Greenhouse** at the Bloomfield Centre
- Successfully grew **1 vertical pumpkin** supported by a sling
- Had **50,422 views** on our two blogs from over **87 Countries**: Most popular posts “2012 CSA list” and “Guerilla Gardening on Bilby Street”

Partnerships 2011-12

- Adsum House
- Alderney Landing Farmers' Market
- Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network
- Bayers Westwood Family Resource Centre
- Bloomfield Centre
- Bridgewater Growing Green Festival
- Citadel High School
- Common Roots Farm
- Dalhousie University
- First Baptist Church Community Garden
- Goodness Grows Community Garden
- Go Project
- Halifax Independent School
- Halifax Refugee Clinic
- Halifax Public Libraries
- Hawthorne Elementary
- Highland Park Junior High School
- HUGS Garden
- Imagine Bloomfield
- Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services
- Independent Living
- Inglis Street Elementary School
- Lakeside Recreation Centre
- Local Source Market
- Musquodoboit



- Farmers' Market
- Nova Scotia Department of Health & Wellness
- Nova Scotia Farmers' Market Association
- Nova Scotia Food Security Network
- North End Community Garden
- Phoenix Youth Programs
- Prescott Community Garden
- reachAbility Association
- Select Nova Scotia
- Sharing and Caring Club
- Spryfield Urban Farm Museum
- St. Catherine's Elementary School
- St. George's YouthNet
- St. Joseph's A MacKay Elementary School
- St. Mary's University
- Sunrise Manor
- Tallahassee Recreation Centre
- Truro Farmers' Market
- Willow Street Community Garden
- Wolfville Farmers' Market
- YWCA



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