

ISLES' 21ST ANNUAL HOUSE AND GARDEN TOUR



A gardener from Bellevue Cottage shows off his produce. (Credit: Michelle Knapik)

The number twenty-one just might be lucky. We had the most beautiful, sunny day for our 21st annual garden tour on July 11th. Over 50 people visited community gardens and toured new homes being built by YouthBuild trainees. The tour ended with a delicious meal at Isles' Children's

Garden, courtesy of our community barbeque experts. We want to thank gardeners who hosted us with refreshments at each stop and contributed dishes to the lunch. If you couldn't join us this year, mark your calendar for next year's tour on July 10th.



READY, SET, GROW!

Recent studies show that early childhood is the best time to begin educating kids about nutrition and healthy food. It is also the best time to change eating habits in children's families. Isles launched an exciting new program this year called *Ready, Set, Grow!* (RSG). Partnering with four Trenton preschools and Fernbrook Farms' Education Center, *Ready, Set, Grow!* introduces fun ways to connect with food, nutrition, and health.

In the schools, Isles works with teachers and family workers to conduct after-school cooking demonstrations for parents. Each month a fresh vegetable or fruit is prepared in a healthy recipe and shared. Isles installs gardens at each preschool site so the children get the chance to tend, harvest, and then enjoy the fruits (and vegetables) of their labor! More than three hundred children visited Fernbrook Farms in the fall and spring semesters to meet a farmer, learn where food comes from, and experience the farm transition through the seasons.



Garden Tour stop at Escher Street SRO. (Credit: Michelle Knapik).



Eric Tadlock, Education Coordinator from Fernbrook Farms, leads students from Washington Elementary.

SEE HOW ISLES' GARDENS GROW...

RIVERA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

During Earth Week 2009, Isles led an outstanding group of volunteers from Princeton University on their Day of Interfaith Youth Service at Rivera. Volunteers helped to clean out and replant flower beds surrounding the school and completed the installation of a school garden. Students from Rivera Elementary along with Louellen Monard, teacher and garden coordinator, and Joseph Marazzo, school principal, joined us for a day of fun and planting—a literal “common ground” for all ages and denominations.



(Credit: Amy Smith Rogers)

THE LAWRENCEVILLE SCHOOL

In our quest to find more space to grow food, Isles now partners with The Lawrenceville School to develop a demonstration garden on the school campus. Lawrenceville has an impressive commitment to sustainability and greening, extending to its food service. Chef Gary Giberson, president and founder of Sustainable Fare, the food service company for Lawrenceville, welcomed the garden on campus. The Isles garden plot produced lettuce, string beans, kale, collard greens, and endive- all donated to Crisis Ministry, which distributes the food to needy families in the region. We look forward to growing lots more fresh greens and vegetables into the fall.



Swiss chard at the Lawrenceville School.

GARDENING SEASON IS NEVER OVER

Don't put away those garden gloves just yet! Keep weeding until the frost hits to prevent any nasty seeds from surviving the winter. You can still water perennials and shrubs until the soil temperature reaches about forty degrees: this lets the roots develop for more vigorous plants next season. Instead of tossing bags of leaves to the curb, keep them for your compost or run them over with a lawnmower to create a perfect shredded mulch. When it's finally just too cold to work anymore, curl up with a good gardening book or seed catalog and plan for the coming spring.

JOIN US

Want to join or start a community garden? We can help place you in an existing garden or help connect you with others in your neighborhood to start a new one.

Call us at 609.341.4700.

ISLES COMMUNITY GARDENING ASSESSMENT

Isles has supported community gardens for 27 years. But what is the impact of the gardens? We know from previous surveys that many gardeners grow produce to feed not just their immediate families, but also extended family, friends, and neighbors. This summer Isles partnered with Professor Domenic Vitiello of the University of Pennsylvania to study the impact of our community gardens in detail. The research team is investigating the scale of production, including varieties and quantities of produce grown, to help us better understand how the food is distributed within the community. The results of the study will be published in late 2009.

Our summer interns Vanessa Kennedy, a graduate student and Wachovia/NJ Department of Community Affairs Housing Scholar at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, and Reilly Kiernan, a Derian Internship/Community-Based Learning Initiative Fellow and rising senior at Princeton University, coordinated the data collection, interviews, and surveys of gardeners.

FALL PLANTING WITH ISLES: Four Gardens in September



Nearly one hundred volunteers from Princeton Day School broke ground at Canal Farm in Kingston, New Jersey on September 18th. The farm is a project started by the Terra Momo Restaurant Group in conjunction with Isles. Isles will maintain a section of the property to raise produce for Crisis Ministry of Trenton and Princeton, with the remaining section of the farm generating produce for Terra Momo's local restaurants.



On September 16th, Isles helped the Princeton Young Achievers install a garden at the Princeton Community Village (PCV) on Bunn Drive. Ten years ago, Isles constructed the community center at PCV. The PYA garden initiative is coordinated by Caroline Quinones, who leads the children in garden-based after school activities.



On September 17th, Isles helped staff and clients of HomeFront plant fall vegetables at the Children's Garden in Roberto Clemente Park. These volunteers are eager to start their own garden, but until a site can be identified for them for next spring, they are working in the Children's Garden.



On September 16th and 23rd, a class from the Bonner Center for Civic and Community Engagement at The College of New Jersey participated in work days at the Hedgepeth Williams School. The seventeen students and their professor expanded the garden and worked to define the beds with lumber. The students also planted some fall greens and vegetables.



Recipe

Enjoy one of the most popular recipes from our *Ready, Set, Grow!* program.

Curried Black Bean and Sweet Potato Skillet

INGREDIENTS:

4 cups of sweet potatoes, chopped	1 bunch of Swiss chard, stems removed and chopped
1 red onion, diced	1/2 cup low sodium veggie broth
1/2 a jalapeno, diced	2 tsp. of olive oil
3 cloves of garlic, chopped	1 Tbsp. of curry powder
2 bell peppers, chopped	
1-15oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed	salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

Heat olive oil in a large non-stick sauté pan. Stir in onions and jalapenos and allow to cook for 5 minutes. Stir in the sweet potatoes, curry powder, pinch of salt and half of the veggie broth. When everything is well combined, place lid on pot and simmer 8-10 minutes until potatoes are fork tender.

Add the beans, Swiss chard, peppers and season with salt and pepper. Pour remaining broth into the pan. Place lid on and cook for another 5 minutes until greens are wilted and beans are heated through.

GARDENER PROFILE: FRANK STILLWELL

Frank Stillwell is the manager of the Escher Street SRO Project, a transitional housing facility with 130 residents. The staff helps formerly homeless people adapt to mainstream life before moving on. There are eight plots in the garden, many tended by two residents in partnership.

Raised in Trenton and living in nearby Hamilton, Frank was a former teacher at Isles' YouthBuild Institute. He also spent two years in Romania as an educator. For the residents, the garden provides both structure and the promise of daily change in an environment that they can control. "It gives them a sense of participation, and they can do it by themselves," explains Stillwell. In 2007, the garden received an Isles grant that was used to add a small fish pond and artistic entryway arch.

Misfit animals are also welcome. "Barney", the resident groundhog, has his own plot at the edge of the garden, where vegetables are planted for his consumption. As a regular volunteer at the Mercer County Wildlife Center, Frank makes sure that everyone has a place at the table.

As far as future developments, Frank would like to add a greenhouse to complement the garden. This would enable the gardeners to start plants from seed earlier in the year and potentially allow them to have plant sales that would help raise money for trips and activities for the residents. As three of the residents are studying in Mercer County Community College's horticulture program, this opportunity would be a logical extension of Escher's mission to provide meaningful experience for residents' futures.



Renae and Frank share some peppers. (Credit: Michael Nairn)



Personalized plot at Escher Street. (Credit: Michelle Knapik)

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Self-Reliant Communities