

Roots and Wisdom, a youth agriculture and community service program, brings together urban, suburban, and rural Schenectady County youth to grow organic vegetables for donation to local food pantries and for sale at area farmers' markets. The program teaches its participants about sustainable agriculture, hunger, nutrition, and diversity. Roots and Wisdom's participants, through hard work and community service, create genuine change by helping county residents in need.

dig ideas

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PHOTO/TIM TEAR

"We greatly appreciated the opportunities that you extended to our daughter this year. There's a lot of growth going on and it is not just in the garden. It has touched us in so many ways—as parents, consumers, environmentalists, and community members."

—MELISSA AND JOHN BARTLETT, PARENTS OF A 2007 SUMMER YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Garden Gifts

The following was written by Megan "Dash" Matiz, High School senior, 2006 and 2007 Summer Growing Program participant, and Roots and Wisdom Advisory Board Member

Nothing tastes better than a cucumber fresh from the plant that I spent my hot summer days cultivating. From transplanting to harvesting, I was a part of the life in that garden. And the agriculture is only a small portion of a day for Roots and Wisdom.

The environment truly supports individual growth and moral development through social interaction—for instance—the wisdom of tolerance and benefits of nutrition. I started eating better, knowing as much about food as my human ecology teacher. I even became more patient, which is saying a lot for me.

Mutual respect throughout our crews made communication effective. We all became such close friends that we played games and sang together. We weren't just practicing teamwork; we were building relationships. I became a leader—and not just any leader—one that knows how to lead.

Creating connections throughout the community, whether through service or common interest, contributed to the sense of fulfillment we all went home with. I found myself explaining the history of Schenectady to my friends and family because I knew it and actually found it interesting. I started volunteering my time on a regular basis throughout the city.

For the past couple weeks, the high school science teachers have been discussing the difference between store-bought and locally grown foods. No one had more to say about it than me; I even brought a conversation about conventional versus organic to the table. Nowadays, I can't go past a nice amount of land without imagining it with a garden.

Garden News

A recent trend in the northeast for vegetable growers is to extend their growing season by using high tunnels or unheated greenhouses. High tunnels, inexpensive passive solar structures constructed of steel tubes covered in thick plastic, rely mainly on the sun's energy to heat the soil and air. In a traditional greenhouse, most crops are grown in flats or pots on benches while growing in high tunnels takes place in the ground.

Roots and Wisdom has constructed a high tunnel at the Horticulture Education Center in Schenectady's Central Park. We look forward to getting a jump start on our warm season crops—tomatoes, peppers, basil and eggplants—with the



PHOTO/BARB STANLEY



PHOTO/DEBBIE FORESTER

Dash Matiz

expectation of reaping early harvests of some of our favorite summer vegetables.

In September, we will replace the warm season crops in the high tunnel with fall/winter crops of lettuce, spinach and hardy greens. We will begin harvesting these vegetables in late October and continue harvesting through the following spring.

In addition to providing fresh local produce for nearly an entire year, high tunnels help spread out farm labor thus creating more stable economic and employment opportunities.

Special thanks to Bill Milak, Chris Logue and Jim Bedard for their building help.

Wish List

- children's books on gardening and nature
- recycled grocery bags • cutlery
- light-weight hand truck • outdoor bell
- garden gloves • window screens • shelving

518-372-1622 x286 or info@rootswisdom.org

Happenings

Children in the Garden

Middle School students are invited to join us at the Fehr Avenue Neighborhood Garden and the Edible Playground in Orchard Street Park on May 5, 12, and 19 and June 6 and 9 to learn about gardening and food until 5:30 pm. Programs will be held concurrently in the two garden locations.

Wee Ones on Wednesdays will be held at two garden sites. Preschoolers will learn about plants and insects and growing things! Edible playground programs will be on May 14, May 28, and June 11; Fehr Avenue programs will be on May 7, May 21, and June 4. Contact digin@rootswisdom.org to register.

Family Garden Days

Bring your children, your parents, and your neighbors and experience the joy and satisfaction of working in the garden. We will have special Family Volunteer Garden days in our Fehr Avenue Neighborhood Garden on Saturday, May 10 and Saturday, June 7 from 9:00 am -12:00 noon. The Edible Playground Family Garden Day will be held Saturday, June 7 from 9:00 am-12:00 noon. Contact chris@rootswisdom.org to register.

Farmers' Markets

July through September

Each week on Tuesdays we will be selling an assortment of the more than 140 varieties of vegetables and herbs we grow in our gardens at the St. Luke's Farmers' Market, 1241 State Street in Schenectady between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm.

New this year, we will be at the Downtown Schenectady (City Hall) Market on Thursdays between 9:00am and 1:00pm selling herbal iced teas, fresh herbs, flowers, and our new specialty soaps and salve.

Be Vocal Eat Local Week

August 4 through August 10

Once again we will be joining an international effort to encourage people to eat locally grown food and support local farmers. We will be planning activities celebrating local food with our Summer Growing Program participants, check our website for information in July.

“I was determined to know beans.”

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Help Us Grow

Roots and Wisdom extends its warmest thanks to the individuals, community groups and foundations that made generous gifts to our program in response to our Fall 2007 Appeal. Support from our friends enables us to continue growing food, community and connections in Schenectady County and beyond.

With the 2008 growing season in full swing, here are some of the ways your gifts provide critical program support to Roots and Wisdom:

- Summer Growing Program Crew Leader Salary **\$2,000**
- Garden supplies (seeds, compost, etc.) that support donations to 250 families in need **\$500**
- Uniforms for ten Summer Growing Program youth participants **\$150**
- Educational workshop materials **\$50**

Please make a gift to Roots and Wisdom (a self-funded program of Cornell Cooperative Extension) as part of our Spring 2008 Appeal. With your help, we can continue to create dynamic change within Schenectady, and build and cultivate our community through our agriculture.

The Edible Playground

Advocates for developmentally appropriate environmental education believe there is a real disconnect between children and the outside world, and that it is truly imperative for us to create opportunities for children to bond with the natural world, especially as future stewards of the planet.

Roots and Wisdom and area partners are busy making plans for the Edible Playground at Orchard Street Park in Schenectady’s Mont Pleasant neighborhood. The Edible Playground will provide children of all ages with hands-on learning activities in a garden setting enabling them to connect with their environment and their imaginations!



The Edible Playground shed at Orchard Street Park

Children will participate in activities including planting a sunflower house, creating a butterfly garden, preparing a feast with garden bounty, and learning about the magic of composting.

We look forward to co-creating a place of learning and exploration in the Edible Playground where children’s energy and creativity will flourish.

Dig In

What do a college student, member of the Albany Symphony Orchestra, homemaker, physician’s assistant, high school student, graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, workforce trainee,

physical therapist and an artist have in common? All these individuals volunteer at Roots and Wisdom and help make our program what it is!

Come join our diverse group of friends and supporters who help tend the garden and harvest the vegetables in the spring and fall. There are plenty of great opportunities to have fun and get your hands dirty. Individuals and community groups are welcome. Teambuilding and workshops related to sustainable agriculture, nutrition and diversity are offered by Roots and Wisdom staff.

Please contact digin@rootswisdom.org or call 372-1622 x286. No previous experience with farming is required. High school community service hours are available.

Reading List

Food, we eat it every day, but how often do we truly contemplate where it comes from? The following books take a critical (and often humorous) look at what we eat and what it means to us, our neighbors, and the environment.

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life by Barbara Kingsolver

Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty by Mark Winne

In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto by Michael Pollan

Plenty: One Man, One Woman, and a Raucous Year of Eating Locally by Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon

The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter by Peter Singer and Jim Mason

For information on giving opportunities at Roots and Wisdom, please contact Christine Horigan at 518-372-1622 x286.



PHOTO/CARRIE FOSTER

www.rootswisdom.org

Our website has been updated. The energy and creativity was generously donated by our Volunteer Webmaster, Kristin Peterson. Visit www.rootswisdom.org to learn about what is going on in our programs, how to volunteer, where to buy local food, area events, and much more; while there sign up to receive our email newsletter *Scoop*.



Roots and Wisdom’s mission is to engage the diverse population of Schenectady County—particularly youth—in serving their community through the support of a sustainable local food system. Participants will experience personal growth and development leading to positive social change.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schenectady County provides educational incubator services and acts as Roots and Wisdom’s fiscal agent.

In-Kind Supporters

Heartfelt thanks to the following individuals, businesses, and organizations for their generous in-kind contributions of materials to Roots and Wisdom from May 2007 through March 2008.

ActiveHost	Elsa and Richard Melby
Aurora Design	Niskayuna Co-op Market
City of Schenectady	Park View Cemetery
Marilynn and Dave Coutant	Price Chopper
Tanya Coulthard	Grace Reynolds
Hannaford Markets	The Sanctuary for Independent Media
Honest Weight Food Co-op	Schenectady County Job Training Agency
Maureen Kim	Linda Sciocchetti
George Latendresse	Vale Cemetery
Liberty Partnerships Program	
Maurice’s Sandwich Shops	

While we cannot list each individual by name, Roots and Wisdom is grateful to the more than 160 individuals who stepped forward to volunteer last year in the gardens and with office tasks. Thank you!

Roots and Wisdom Staff

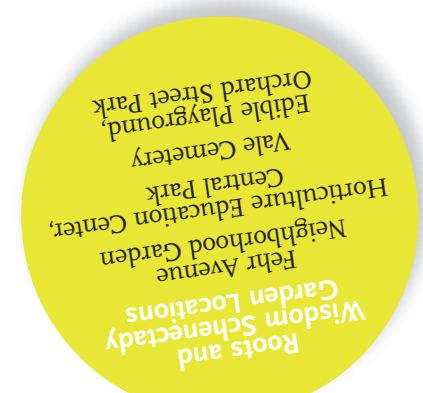
Amata Castillo, <i>intern</i>	Christine Horigan
Debbie Forester	Kristin Peterson, <i>webmaster</i>
Carrie Foster	Leslie Wiedmann-Herd

Roots and Wisdom Advisory Board Members

Mary Anderson, <i>chair</i>	Julia Holcomb	Jay Quaintance
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Amata Castillo	Al Lansing	Amanda Walczak
Matt Cutler	Chris Logue	Thomas West
	Megan “Dash” Matiz	

NEWSLETTER DESIGN/AURORA DESIGN

Roots and Wisdom
107 Nott Terrace, Suite 301
Schenectady, NY 12308
518-372-1622 x286
info@rootswisdom.org
www.rootswisdom.org



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