

It's time to Get Dirty! Urban Food Growing and LifeCycles Urban Agriculture Programs

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It's mid June, and over the last few weeks like many of you I have been itching to get out of my greenhouse and into the garden. But spring, she is a fickle one, and has barely given us a teaser of the warm days to come. My husband and I have been busy the last few years building a house, so needless to say besides communing with our flock of trusty hens, I have been lamenting my "gardenless" state. This year things are different. The house is finished (not exactly!) and I found the time to build a little greenhouse and garden.



As much as I want to involve my 4 and 6 year old boys in the garden, let's face it they are "destructo-trons". So they have their own garden. It is a raised bed with a bean teepee in the middle. They have planted different types of their favorite veggies around it and a few flowers, but have reserved a construction zone for digging and tunneling on one side.

I, like many of you, am taking up the challenge to eat locally. I love the freshness, the taste, the health benefits for my family, and in addition I just love to get out there and get my hands dirty, really muck around. Despite my haphazard fumbblings it is still amazing to me that seeds grow, and flower and fruit. Seeing my "Star Wars Crazy" kids also wonder at this miracle gives me hope.

Despite the busy lives we lead, growing food today in our backyards and in our cities is gaining a resurgence of interest. People are really enjoying the health and recreational benefits, let alone the creative outlet, of gardening. Others are seeing it as a way to supplement their incomes by selling what they are growing.

As the growing season is upon us, you may want to check out the wide range of Lifecycles urban agriculture programs:

- **Sharing Backyards Program:** an on-line map and database that allows people who would like to share their backyards with those looking for a place to garden
- **Community Gardens and Urban Food Forests:** LifeCycles supports groups to develop and sustain community gardens and develop food bearing forests on public lands.

- **Fruit Tree Project:** a raft of LifeCycles volunteers pick fruit trees in people's backyards and provide the bounty to home owners, to organizations that feed people in need, as well as supply LifeCycles' line of food products (such as Quince Paste and Spinnakers Apple Cider Vinegars) where proceeds go towards keeping the project running.
- **Growing Cities**-want to know more about growing food in cities? This web based resource points you to information and links to local resources, workshops, organizations and supply stores and nurseries that can help get you started.
- **Growing Schools Program:** builds gardens in schoolyards and links food growing activities to curriculum, as well as has a wide range of classroom based activities related to food and sustainability from kindergarten to grade 12.

For more on these programs see www.lifecyclesproject.ca or call our office.

I hope everyone has a happy and bountiful growing season. It's early to tell, but I have visions of a blanket of basil underneath my heirloom tomatoes, ever bearing strawberries and oodles of gorgeous greens. I'll let you know how it goes.....