



SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY

GROW FOOD EVERYWHERE!

PASSION AND GRATITUDE

“What’s your passion?” asks Seeds of Solidarity co-founder Ricky of the circle of twenty-five teens at our SOL Garden youth program on an April afternoon, the promise of spring in the air. When you are conditioned to hearing ‘where is your hall-pass’ at school day in and out, responses to deeper life questions may not surface immediately. But over the weeks and months, heartfelt conversations combined with hands in the earth cultivate trust and dreams emerge from these young people, hungry for connection.



In all of our programs, we witness great beauty and wonder. A three year old embraces then smooths the beckoning garden soil at a childcare center. Groups of inquiring college students find unity between theory and practice. Women seek healing from trauma, bonding as they stain wood for their new garden.

Wonder feeds passion, as does gratitude. Both are so needed to keep afloat and hopeful amidst waves of loss and violence, locally and globally, that can overwhelm.



Passion is nourished by feeling life fully, by taking creative risks. Passionate pursuits can emerge in response to injustice, the stunning beauty of the natural world, or an expression of human ingenuity. Seeds of Solidarity is forever inspired by the work of the New Alchemy Institute. This renowned research and education center magnificently melded science, spirit, and visionary thinking. It ignited seeds of passion among the Seeds of Solidarity founders, working there as young people, and fed the desire to live and farm with reverence for the natural world, be of service to community and society, and share ideas and teachings with others.

Carrying the gifts forward, we love to support young people and all people in blossoming towards their dreams.

Our organizational passion has thrived for almost two decades now as we’ve explored and innovated alongside staff, interns, board, supporters and thousands of program participants. Our mission stays relevant and work invigorated as we keep our minds, hearts and programs open to change and forge new partnerships that respond creatively to current health, justice, and environmental needs.



We strive to keep our ideas and work fresh, passion alive and gratitude at the center.

Seeds of Solidarity Awakens the Power among youth, schools, and families to Grow Food Everywhere to transform hunger to health, and create resilient lives and communities.

SOL GARDEN

Each year we provide hundreds of local high school students with ecology, sustainable agriculture and renewable energy presentations in their science classes. Some are enticed to join SOL (Seeds of Leadership) Garden, our flagship program that engages local teens in authentic learning and critical conversations on food, ecology and life topics. They gain skills for resiliency through growing and cooking healthy food and design/build projects, learning alongside staff mentors and guest presenters. They practice civic engagement as they prepare community meals for those in need, help create gardens for local daycares, and educate thousands about composting at the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival, among a host of other activities.



The first session of our weekly program in early April can be glorious or... as it was this year, snowing! Remarkably, 25 youth climbed off the van and through the slush to gather around the fire we made in a 55-gallon drum to warm cold hands and toes before sowing the first seeds of the season. When asked what brings them back each week to this garden-based program, this is what we hear:

*I have never been in a more **open, accepting, and inspiring place** and to have somewhere like that, especially for teenagers is absolutely amazing...*

*Sol Garden is where **I discovered who I am.** I likely never would have known myself had I not come here.*

*SOL Garden **brings beauty and love** to an otherwise struggling area. Every week I am overwhelmed by the positivity and acceptance*

I am received with. A piece of me lives in these wooden benches and these garden beds.

***This sense of community** has renewed my hope and instilled a positive outlook on how I view the world. Being surrounded by these change-makers has inspired my mind views and my physical choices on a daily basis.*



Try this SOL lunchtime favorite: **CRANBERRY KALE SALAD**

- 12 stalks of kale
- 2 lemons
- 1/2 cup each: shaved Parmesan, nuts or pumpkin seeds, and dried cranberries
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp honey or maple syrup

De-stem kale, tear into small pieces, and place into a large mixing bowl. Squeeze the juice of the lemons over the kale, and then massage it until tender. Whisk together honey and olive oil. Drizzle over kale, and then add cheese, nuts, and dried fruit. Toss together with a sprinkle of freshly cracked black pepper.



GROWING FREEDOM

In addition to the vital role it holds in creating a strong local food system, SOL Garden provides a safe, joyful setting that is a beacon of hope and lifeline to a positive future. For many of the 400 youth who have participated in our program since 1999, SOL Garden is a focus of their college essay (often first in their family to go) and a significant volunteer and work experience helping qualify them for jobs and careers. Creative youth development programs like SOL Garden are critical amidst the social backdrop of the current opiate epidemic that is hitting isolated, rural regions like ours hard. Youth need places to practice healthy ways of being, learn to ask good questions and take actions to direct their own lives. Addiction specialists who look at social dimensions of the disease speak of 'dislocation' – the loss of belonging, connection, and meaning that are essential to a fulfilled human life. In 17 years of SOL Garden we have learned that caring environments that promote creativity, kindness, and liberation of the spirit are vital during adolescence and support transition to a self-determined adult life that is rich with health and possibility.

We are grateful for soulful staff and guest presentations: **solar energy** with Micky, **food justice** with Ya-Ping, **pollinator power** with Dave, **spirit of soil** with Ricky, **mushroom farming** with Willie, **dream boxes** with Annie, **water ceremony** with Phyllis, **creative writing** with Jacqueline, **goat dairying** with Rachel, **cooking** with Mary, **clay bowls** with Lydia, **paddling** with Peak Expeditions, plus a great end of summer youth retreat and vigorously bonding young men's hike.



WE APPRECIATE
MA State Senate President Stan Rosenberg
(above) for his ample support and joining
our SOL circle, and Congressman
Jim McGovern (below), a great advocate
of anti-hunger efforts, including ours.



Check out our new youth-made SOL Garden video at seedsofsolidarity.org/sol-garden/.



KIDS AND CARING



"I want to do it I want to do it"

is the mantra as we pull out the power drill and begin building a garden bed at a family childcare center. Wise to the ways of three year-olds, the childcare providers we work with know just how to organize the enthusiastic and encourage the wary. Wooden bed built, the compost and loam mix goes in barrel by barrel. As invited, small hands begin to sweep gently over the soil, smoothing it for the seeds soon to come, seeking and finding worms. An entire small body has been known to lift itself up, over and in, to be one with the garden. While planting seeds is so fun, the sensory soil full of life draws them in like a soothing bath.

Connecting to the earth, literally, is one of the most healing things a child can do. There are the benefits of fresh air and exercise plus increased compassion and focus caring for seeds, plants and tiny creatures. Research suggests early exposure to a range of microbes may increase immunity to allergies and asthma. And our personal favorite, that *mycobacterium vaccae* found in soil may stimulate

serotonin production and make you happier! And of course, all that great fresh food to nourish growing bodies and develop a love of vegetables and willingness to try new things.

With 14 family childcare providers, a public pre-school that serves many children with special needs and two child/parenting education programs having received gardens that nourish over 250 kids each year with fresh veggies and healing soil, we look towards more family engagement, such as providing big garden bags filled with soil and vegetable plants to enable families to nurture their own gardens and family time no matter their housing constraints.

Says a participating childcare provider:

When the kids are **responsible** for all that goes into the garden it gives them **ownership**. With that **they are eager** to try and eat more of what they grow... All my daycare kids have at least tried a couple of new veggies this year. Most can't wait to pick and put it on the lunch menu. **The education** that this program has given to me as a provider is also **priceless**. The rewards from the garden are **shared** with the families and friends that visit, as well as keeping us eating good all season.



Visit seedsofsolidarity.org for free resources on creating raised bed gardens, school gardens, and more!



GARDENS THAT HEAL

Patients entering a community health center are greeted by five garden beds with signs that read: Please help yourself... harvest outer leaves of kale and chard... enjoy the cherry tomatoes... these are chamomile flowers; they make a soothing tea.

We create gardens in our community to beautify and nourish community. Our intern Heather tends the health center gardens, master gardener Pat the raised beds at the Orange Innovation Center. Helen and youth she mentors through a job training program care for one at the library, and volunteers keep brimming container gardens at the food pantry watered. Quabbin Harvest Co-op and Mt. Grace Land Trust volunteers share in care of the co-op's garden oasis, enjoyed by all who enter and stroll by.



We are pleased to be involved in a healing, multi-year program launched by Greenfield Community College, with partners NE Learning Center for Women in Transition (NELCWIT), Montague Catholic Social Ministries, and the Women's Fund. We provide a course on organic gardening—one of four that teaches food preservation, edible landscaping, and forming cooperatives—to women survivors of violence and those seeking skills for food and economic self-sufficiency. Our course resulted in gardens designed, built and planted by the women that flourished outside of the NELCWIT resource center in downtown Greenfield. Said one participant:

Working together, we were learning how to do it; there was a lot of laughter, a lot of feeling like we could do this ourselves at home, and do this for other people. That was really important for all of us, building a community...feeling safe and growing and asking questions. That really gave us a sense of independence.

Try these herbs for soothing, nourishing teas:
Gather: nettles & red clover.
Grow: lemon balm, tulsi (holy basil), and chamomile.
Calendula blossoms make great salves and are tasty on salads!

Increasingly, we find people seeking to grow food, herbs, and learn to forage. Our own cabinets and altars host healing plants we grew and gathered this year: nettle teas to nourish, reishi mushroom, ginger and garlic tinctures for wintertime immunity, sage and sweet grass for cleansing space.

Food, herbs and gardens grown and gathered in community and gratitude are good medicine.



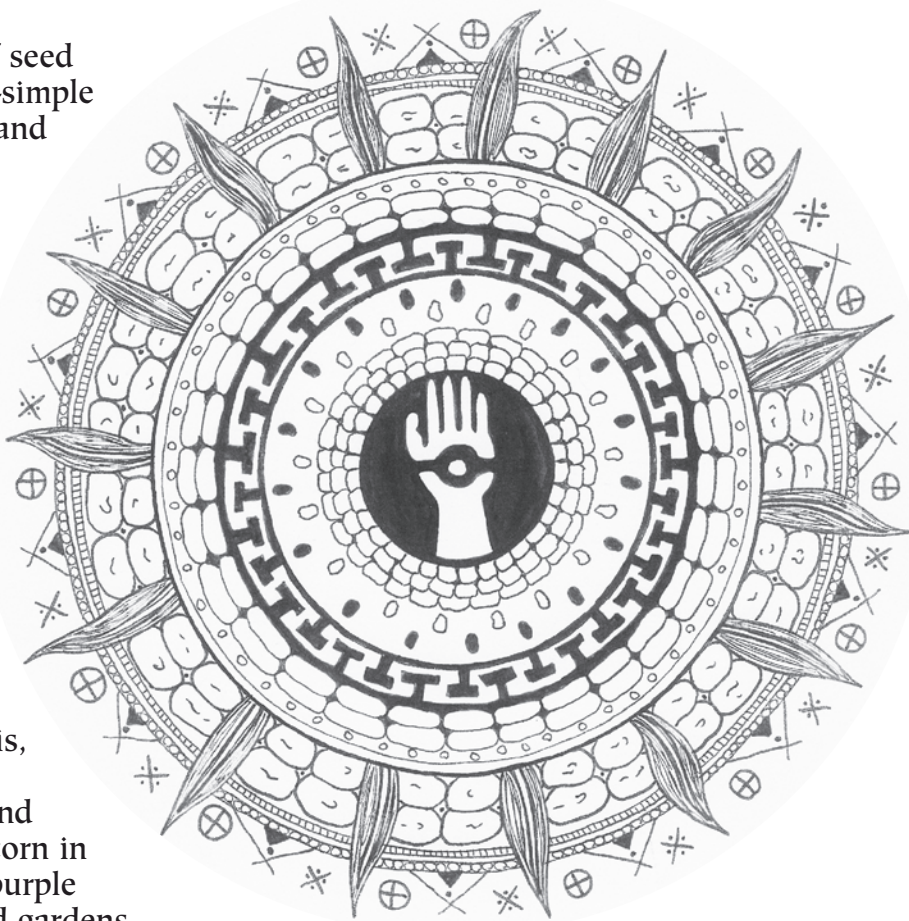
SACRED AND RESILIENT CROPS

In 1995 we bought a small paper bag of seed garlic from Wally and Juanita Nelson—simple living, black farmers, war tax resisters and role models to many. Twenty years after receiving garlic from Wally, Ricky plants over 15 varieties of garlic surrounded by the beauty of October with farm volunteers Diane, Laura, Faith and Chris. They plant thousands of cloves equaling 2 miles of heirloom garlic, varieties carried from many cultures that will become full bulbs nine moons later. Scooping a handful of cloves from a canvas apron, they go in pointed side to the sky to sprout, rooted end down to the earth. Uphill from the garlic beds winter squash still grow and reach for ripening. Next to these the stalks from the Narragansett corn remain, recently harvested. Passed on by farmer Whit Davis, we planted a circle at the Leverett Peace Pagoda this year, the harvest blessed by and gifted to Wampanoag Elders. Next to the corn in our field are beds of red papa cacho and purple Peruvian potatoes. In the greenhouses and gardens surrounding our home and among the verdant beds of salad and leafy greens for our farmstand and local food co-op are unique varieties like Indigo Rose tomatoes and Jimmy Nardello peppers, ginger and turmeric for health, plus tobacco, sage and sweet grass to share with native elders we are honored to know.

We grow crops of resilience, resistance and memory to honor diverse cultures carried forward in plants and to promote food freedom through the power of heirloom, open-pollinated seed. We plant them with all reverence due in soil that is filled with life and worked by hand. The act of growing pure, non-GMO seeds is antidote to the industrialization of food. Do this for freedom.

"Seed Freedom is threatened by patents on seed, which create seed monopolies and make it illegal for farmers to save and exchange seed. Patents on seed are ethically and ecologically unjustified because patents are exclusive rights granted for an invention. Seed is not an invention. Life is not an invention."

Excerpted from
Declaration on Seed Freedom
by Dr. Vandana Shiva • seedfreedom.info



Mandala by Levi Baruch • essentiallydesigns@gmail.com



GENEROSITY BUILDS COMMUNITY



It is easy to name what is most visible at the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival. There's fantastic art, seriously great food and music, inspiring energy and agriculture workshops- all with only 3 bags of trash for 10,000 folks. Stronger than the scent of garlic in the air is the sense of community, generosity, and love of place that pervades and holds it all together. Seeds of Solidarity is honored to co-create the festival with an amazing, dedicated and really fun group of friends and neighbors.



Five years ago when the vast infrastructure needs—setting up multiple tents, signs, recycle stations, parking, and so on—were exceeding the physical capacity of the not so young anymore organizers, we sought ways to engage support while keeping the spirit of volunteerism strong. Forever free of corporate sponsorship, and even with affordable exhibitor fees and admission, the festival is able to give \$5,000 a year in community grants. We needed more participation, not money in order to be sustainable. Unique as a model among markets and festivals, each exhibitor chooses a way to participate: helping at a set-up day, making a meal for these work crews, or other needs. True, it takes effort for a fest organizer to schedule over 100 vendors for their tasks, and the requirement to provide four hours of time does not mesh with those who want to just show up, sell and leave. But frankly, we only want those who enjoy the spirit of community and are invested in the vitality of our region. By the time the festival arrives, there are ample new connections and stories among exhibitors and organizers, shared over good hard work, food and laughter. Complaints from exhibitors are pretty much eliminated as they feel a sense of collective ownership. It is beautiful to be part of an event that is built on and models creativity, passion and generosity.



GROWING PARTNERSHIPS

As a small organization we sustain several local programs with depth and continuity, then look to partnerships to extend our reach wider to more audiences and communities. Among these:

Teaching 'Grow Food Everywhere' at the **Omega Institute** each year is a highlight of our season and we are excited to add a new course in 2016, Magnify Your Love. We enjoy offering field trips and presentations for **Mt. Wachusett Community College, UMASS,** and **Antioch** to enrich their agriculture and ecology courses. We share our farming practices as part of a **Cornell** project to spread sustainable no-till agriculture techniques among farmers across the nation. Through **Greenfield Community College** we teach a summer institute for high school teachers to develop food, wellness and agriculture curricula and an organic gardening course for women survivors of violence. We serve on the Children's Health and Wellness and Transition from Jail to Community task forces coordinated by the **North Quabbin Community Coalition,** and boards including **Foundation for Community Justice, Quabbin Mediation,** and **Orange Teen Housing.** We water the seeds of new partnerships with the **Opioid Task Force, the Franklin County Jail, and Heywood Hospital** to grow more food and health for all!





SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY EDUCATION CENTER

FROM OUR TABLE:

Honoring and Solidarity



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Thirty years ago on a field at the New Alchemy Institute that held our first market garden, we created a sign that read *This garden is grown in solidarity with those around the world helping to feed the people.* Since we came to Chestnut Hill Road and birthed Seeds of Solidarity Farm and Education Center almost two decades ago, it has remained of great importance to honor those who have gone before us and continue to inspire us along the path of good food, non-violence, human rights, and reverence for the natural world.

When visitors arrive they are greeted by Thich Nhat Hanh's mindful eating meditation at our farmstand. A Nelson Mandela 'love' collage is posted across from a field of long fertile beds and accompanying sign honoring the Mashpee people. Words from a Hopi prophecy are nestled into the forest on the path down. In front of the greenhouses and painted on decorated signs in the fields are photos and accompanying quotes by United Farm Workers co-founder Cesar Chavez, scholar-activist Angela Davis, Japanese farmer Masanoba Fukuoka, seed activist/scientist Vandana Shiva and John Lennon. We

invite visitors to stroll then share the sayings they like best and why. Said a teenager out with a group from Worcester, "I can't remember what it said, but the guy's last name was somethin' like Lama."



The name Seeds of Solidarity emerged from the original sign, solidified as we journeyed as part of an eight-month pilgrimage from Auschwitz to Hiroshima in 1995. Some folks initially think we are a seed company, until we explain that our name reflects the desire to be a place and vibration that supports and nourishes seeds of unity, relationships, and ideas. And, to be allies to others who carry forward movements that

propagate justice, dignity and peace. As we walk the path to and from our farm the images and quotes along the way offer a rich tapestry of multicultural and perennial wisdom. They feed us—and we hope all who visit—with courage and promise.

— Ricky Baruc and Deb Habib, co-founders

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& SUSTAIN
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Seeds of Solidarity Education Center Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our 2015/16 education programs are made possible through **grants** from The Green Leaf Foundation, MA Cultural Council Youth Reach, AT and T Aspire, Threshold Foundation, Joanne Waite Bennett Fund of the GWCF, Project Bread, Rose Community Foundation, Personal & Planetary Healing Fund of the CFWM, Franklin County Opioid Task Force, and **contributions from individuals**. Thanks also to Flat Rock Disc Golf, Gill Tavern, Wendell Coffeehouse and Ritu Ki Rasoi for **benefit events**, and Johnny's Seeds and Hannaford Supermarket for **donations**.

We value and need your support. Every contribution is meaningful. Please make a secure contribution at www.seedsofsolidarity.org.

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