



# SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY

## GROW FOOD EVERYWHERE!

### HEALING AND RESILIENCE

**O**ur work responds to devastating issues like hunger and climate change with actions that support healing, beauty, and resilience. Through our programs with youth, families, people in recovery, and students of life, we 'awaken the power' to reclaim skills that make lives and communities food strong and build resistance to corporate takeover of the food supply and assault on our health. Sharing strategies for renewable energy and ecology-centered farming practices, we teach that it is possible to live and work simply and deeply, and put an end to fossil-fueled greed, war and environmental havoc.



We are often humbled and challenged. We are often moved by the profound healing and joy visible and expressed among those with whom we work. We are always awed by nature. From wise teachers and practitioners of many traditions, we hear over again that it is more important than ever to spend time in nature, where one can draw strength to build resilience. Urban or rural, there is always something growing or alive, microscopic or grand wonders to help us recognize our modest place in the big magnificent picture. Prioritizing contemplative time for reverence is not to be confused with withdrawing from the often overwhelming social and environmental crises of our time, but for strengthening internally so we can be more resolute to make changes in our own lives, and resist that which threatens others or life-sustaining ecosystems. In resonance with the natural world, individual power is most awake and receptive, generating a sense of connectedness that centers our ability to resist injustice, and to support healing. When we are attentive and responsive, we can rise towards that which is just and sacred.



In our annual newsletter, we reflect on and share a year of programs, partnerships, and practices on farm and in community. We aspire to hold the values of remembering and resistance, and healing and resilience core so that our ways of being and vision forward are most whole and powerful.

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.

# TEACH [AND FEED] THE CHILDREN WELL

**W**hen we started our Grow Food Everywhere for Health and Justice initiative five years ago, we created gardens for families facing hunger. But joblessness, landlord problems or domestic violence sometimes meant they had to leave their homes... and gardens. Simultaneously, we realized that there were many women in our community who ran family childcare programs at their homes, and that these providers could reach a dozen children and their families—many in need of nourishment in all forms—through one garden. And, they had the enthusiasm and flexibility to integrate garden learning into the day and to use their fresh harvest for snacks and lunches. Over the past two years this program has blossomed a supportive and enthusiastic network of family childcare providers, inspired many young children to grow, prepare and enjoy healthy vegetables, increase physical activity, cultivate connection to nature, and extend fresh joy to their families.



Our SOL Garden youth leaders teach and learn through this program too. They made and trialed four healthy salad dressing recipes, then did the same when they visited the childcare programs. Try everyone's favorite:

## HONEY MUSTARD YOGURT DRESSING

### Mix or blend:

1 c. plain yogurt, 1/4 c. Honey,  
2 T. Dijon Mustard, 1/2 tsp. salt.



Enjoy over fresh salad or steamed greens.

*I have one child who refused to eat any vegetables. Now that he has helped grow some, he will at least try one vegetable each day...The kids loved being a part of our garden... four of my families had their own gardens this year...[the children] used their skills from when we built and planted our garden, telling their mom how to plant salad greens and carrots.*

— Providers

## IN OUR RESEARCH:

**P**articipating childcare providers indicated that over 75% of young children demonstrated increase in positive attitude about eating fresh vegetables as a result of their daycare garden, and all said they would have a garden as part of their program from here on. 92% of families said their children were showing more interest in fresh vegetables since having a garden at their daycare, and over 80% of families were interested in starting or expanding a garden at their home.

*When we first planted the garden we thought it wasn't going to come out good but it grew beautiful and the green beans were like 1 ft long.*

— Child

*Having the garden is great for my child health wise and in learning.*

— Parent





**G**reens are great to grow at home, schools, or in community settings. Healthy and tasty, they grow quickly and thrive in spring and fall, which means more food grown in a Northeast climate. When people visit our farm and see hundred-foot beds of arugula, multicolored lettuce and spinach, it is hard to conceive how much food that really is. So we scaled it down, got our youth leaders involved in a research project, and set out to see how much a four by eight foot garden bed could produce over the season. While there were a few research interrupters (the neighbor's chickens thinking fresh greens were pretty tasty) we were able to extrapolate results.




## How Many Greens Can a Salad Garden Grow?

Seeds are sown in patches versus rows, using a cut and come again method, and based on a six-month outdoor greens harvesting season. We found that a salad garden with pea greens, lettuce mix, spinach, arugula and braising mix can provide 9–12 hearty servings from the cutting of a 2'x 2' patch, and be cut every three to four weeks. And so, a 4'x 8' bed can provide two really big bowls of assorted greens a week, or enough for four people to enjoy a serving of salad most days of every month from May through October—about 500 generous servings of salad. And, these numbers increase if greens are grown in a solar hoop-house or low tunnel where the season length and quality are enhanced.



# HEALTH



In small spaces, containers of all shapes and sizes make great gardens. Food grade 55 gallon drums cut in half or an array of smaller five gallon buckets with drainage holes and healthy soil work really well. A friend's abundant garden in Brooklyn was upcycled from an old kiddie pool. Various 'garden bags' can be purchased, or use your old cloth or heavy plastic shopping bags with some small drainage holes. Tag sale colanders make great mini salad gardens on sunny windowsills.

### NEW PUBLICATIONS TO SHARE!

Get program updates, research findings, a map of our Grow Food Everywhere gardens, and tips for raised bed growing at [seedsofsolidarity.org/grow-food-everywhere-for-health-and-justice/](http://seedsofsolidarity.org/grow-food-everywhere-for-health-and-justice/)



We provided a workshop to Baystate Child Nutrition Programs to inspire container gardening with family childcare providers across the state.





# SOL GARDEN: FOOD, LOVE, ACTION!

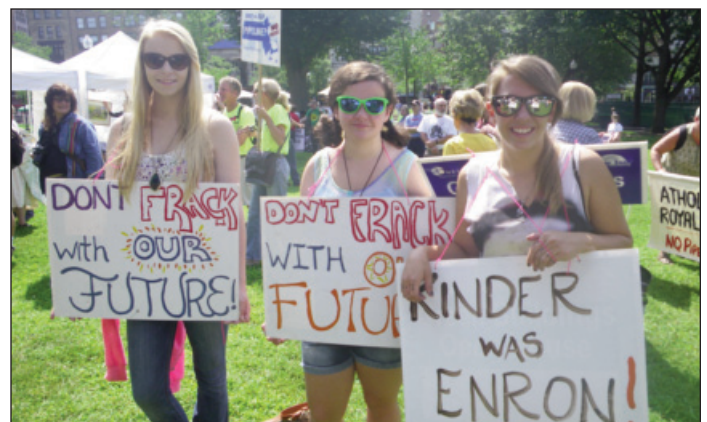
**O**n an autumn day, I stroll among wild asters and golden-red foliage to the far end of our farm, home to the SOL (Seeds of Leadership) Garden program fields and greenhouse. The lingering crops evoke stories from many months of this program for local youth, starting with seeds sown in April and guest presenters teaching about native pollinators, mushroom foraging, personal wellness and environmental activism.



I brush by a frost nipped basil plant and am transported back to pesto garlic bread we made and served along with kale salad and pasta primavera to feed those hungry at a community meal. I harvest some chard and picture a box brimming for donation to the local food pantry. I recall when another youth group, First Generation, came to visit, cross-cultural connections forged through gardening, shared food, and theater games. I see a can of paint in our SOL Shack used to create 'Don't Frack with My Future' signs worn on a rolling statewide march, then at a rally to oppose a dangerous, proposed pipeline through our communities. Ah! and the weekend leadership retreats, one for young women (we made lavender eye pillows and homemade pizza and danced) one for young men (they hiked, shared deep, and ate starchy campfire spaghetti). At our season-culminating Garlic and Arts Festival, SOL youth blossomed as leaders, selling farm fresh food and handcrafted tees and engaging the crowds at our 'Gardens not Garbage' display. We celebrate 350 local youth engaged over the years, and thousands of pounds of food grown, shared, and prepared. A circle of handmade weathered benches in the garden await the springtime return of another group in 2015, marking year 17 of this remarkable program and many lives transformed.



**THANK YOU:** guest presenters who shared their knowledge and passion with SOL Garden this year: Amy Donovan, Connie Turner, Dave Small, Nikki Sauber, Sue Paquet, Mary Hakkinen, Peak Expeditions.



# FARM, FOOD & SPIRIT STRONG

First there was the No Farms, No Food bumper sticker, then the positive spin with Yes Farms, Yes Food. A recent sighting of Maybe Farms, Maybe Food might, sadly be most on target. Increasingly, we experience global warming impacting our crops with seasons of uncertainty. Indigenous and peasant farmers have long been active voices speaking out about climate change, land and food justice, and practicing--in many diverse ways--ecological agriculture. These days there isn't a farmer we talk with, locally or across the country, who is not feeling the impact of global warming. We've used no-till cardboard mulch methods and solar hoop houses on our farm for many years now, emanating from our philosophy to treat the soil as sacred and use the sun's energy to extend the season of locally available produce. Now these and similar techniques are widely promoted as recommendations to mitigate the impact of climate change.

We often speak of the resulting benefits of worms and their fertile castings, and growth of beneficial microbes and mycorrhizal fungi from organic no-till methods. In addition to disrupting soil ecology, tilling brings soil carbon to the surface and accelerates carbon dioxide exhalation. Organic farming practices alone are not enough, as tilling is frequent for weed control, often more so than conventional agriculture.

Organic and no-till methods combined make for increased microbial life and extended roots that sequester carbon deeply in the soil. Our farm scale growing practices at Seeds of Solidarity build fertile soil and hold carbon where beneficial without use of fossil-fueled machinery. These practices are also very

adaptable to community-based and home gardens. Grow Food Everywhere (yes, our bumper sticker) affirms the power of the people to reclaim and share the skills to grow food to cultivate personal and community resilience, and create beauty and healing amidst the uncertainties wrought by climate change.



## CHECK IT OUT!

Link to our seven videos on farming and climate change, food justice programs, and cardboard method how-to: [seedsofsolidarity.org/newsletters-and-publications/](http://seedsofsolidarity.org/newsletters-and-publications/)

## GROW RESILIENCY

### CREATE

**GARDENS** for yourself and others using no-till organic methods.

**Support pollinator habitats in the wild and through plantings.**

**GROW ENDURING AND RESILIENT CROPS:** salad greens, kale, potatoes, winter squash, heirloom corn and other grains.

**ADD eggs, grass-fed meat, fermented foods.**

**Make simple low tunnels or add a hoophouse to extend the season.**

**PLANT trees and perennials with edible fruits, berries or nuts**  
— *ENCOURAGE your community to do the same.*

**COOK & TEACH OTHERS, ESPECIALLY YOUNG PEOPLE.**

**Reduce waste and recycle nutrients through COMPOSTING.**

## ... BE RESILIENT ...

**Spend time outdoors;** balance your techno-time, plug in to Nature.

*PAUSE several times throughout each day as mini meditations.*

**COMMIT to a movement, artistic, or meditative PRACTICE.**

### MAKE AN ALTAR:

*add things that inspire happiness and compassion.*

**INHALE POSITIVE NEWS**

**EXHALE KINDNESS & GENEROSITY.**





# BEAUTY IN COMMUNITY

## PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHEN

**S**eeds of Solidarity co-founder Ricky is making a midweek produce delivery when he notices a man clearly hard on his luck walking with a small bag in hand. Watching, he sees the man head to a Grow Food Everywhere garden and as a sign encourages, use the scissors attached to the garden bed to harvest salad greens, a bell pepper and tomato into his bag.

Community workdays transformed a downtown space—overgrown and littered—into one beautiful and available to neighbors outside of the new Quabbin Harvest food co-op. We worked in partnership with the Co-op, and building owners Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust who added a perennial, pollinator attracting landscape. Our SOL program made a garden for the Bohemian Kitchen café next door as well, adding yet more beauty to a newly revitalized block through meaningful youth leadership.

Community partnerships energize the Grow Food Everywhere gardens we plant in public spaces. Our colleague Helen needed to hold weekly meetings with the youth she mentors through a job program, and did so at our gardens at the local library, tending those while they talked about their lives and work. Master gardener Pat and our intern Heather each cared for gardens at the Orange Innovation

Center and Community Health Center, where garden signage offers harvest and cooking tips. At the Orange Food Pantry, a rented building with no green space, we made entry container gardens, filled with a great soil mix from our partner and local business, Clearview Compost. They proved abundant, adding fresh tastes to the boxes of non-perishables that so many families rely upon each week.



*"I'd like to express the unconditional love I felt when I arrived—I never had that experience before, especially from people I'd never met..."*

*"The retreat gave me faith to move on my path in recovery..."*

— Retreat Participants



## PARTNERSHIPS HEAL

**W**e met Annie when she came to a Solidarity Saturday tour a few years back. A therapist working with people in recovery in the heart of Worcester, we co-envisioned a restorative retreat. This past summer we partnered to create an 'Elements of Healing' retreat on our farm for women in recovery from heroin and alcohol addiction. Powerful for us all, the experience affirmed a direction to share the tranquility and nourishment of our land to support those healing from substance abuse and trauma.



## PARTNERSHIPS INSPIRE

**O**ur 2014 workshop year emerged with our winter Food Forum, followed by three seasons of Solidarity Saturday tours, and amazing presenters uniting art,

culture, activism and land. Ricardo Frota energized rhythm and spirit with Brazilian percussion and ecology of sound. Camila Martinez shared her spirited work with Mayan elders to protect sacred seed from GMOs, plus readings from her book about curanderas. Artist and author Mira Bartók transformed a group of poets and writers into woodland creatures during her Writing the Land workshop. We are blessed to know and host these friends and teachers, sharing their creative genius and reverent ways.

And we are ever inspired by the grand collaboration, creating the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival with our neighbors. 2014 was a sunny success with record-breaking crowds, and still only 3 bags of trash!



# ENERGY

## PARTNERSHIPS EXPAND

**O**ur work ripples outward. We enjoyed our fifth year of teaching a weekend Grow Food Everywhere course at the renowned Omega Institute in NY, and as faculty in their Ecological Literacy Immersion Program this year. New partnerships abound: as consultants to advise the creation of a food, farming and service learning after-school program with the Amherst Middle School; as teachers of a course for survivors of domestic violence through an exciting partnership initiated by Greenfield Community College (GCC) and funded by the Women's Fund of Western MA, as well as another with GCC, when we'll teach a sustainable agriculture course to area high school teachers.







## SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY EDUCATION CENTER

### FROM OUR TABLE: *And Your Table*

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The North Quabbin  
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**W**e were deeply honored to receive the Barbara A. Corey award this year, the North Quabbin Community Coalition recognition of those who have gone above and beyond in commitment to improving the quality of life for those living and working in our region. We hold many memories and stories of the creative journey and partnerships that bring our work to fruition. And, sustaining a small non-profit organization is also very challenging. Since inception of our programs in 1999, tears have been shed over grants not received and program hopes thwarted, and from periods of all consuming exhaustion. We try to focus, as our friend and board member Kim says, on keeping our moral compass pointed to true north in order to remain resilient and of service to the greater good. We gather great nourishment from program participants, community partners, and donors, and humbly share here a medley of testimonials that charge our spirit.



*"Seeds of Solidarity has been a major catalyst in transforming our town from a struggling abandoned mill town to a vibrant, green, community-powered place of possibilities ... a role model for best practices in educating youth and community members about growing food, and bringing community together to address issues of hunger ... [as a food writer] I regularly mention the work of Seeds of Solidarity, encouraging other organizations to follow their lead ... It is rare to find an outfit that is so successful in combining its ethical basis with effective action ... They do tremendous outreach on a small budget and are able to rally support from the community and volunteers to accomplish amazing goals ... I only hope their work will serve as an example for the whole country of what can be accomplished in creating a greener community."*

We reflect then re-emerge stronger each year, carrying forward successes, introducing something new, always with gratitude for the ever expanding circle of support.

**PLEASE  
SUPPORT  
& SUSTAIN  
SEEDS OF  
SOLIDARITY:**

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youth and  
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programs

**EXCITE FIVE  
MORE** people  
to contribute;  
they trust you!



Seeds of Solidarity Education Center Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our 2014-15 education programs are made possible through grants from The Green Leaf Foundation, Joann Waite Bennett Memorial Fund of the GWCF, MA Cultural Council Youth Reach Program, Project Bread, Cardinal Brook Trust, Life Alive Café, Personal/Planetary Healing Fund of the CFWM, Hannaford Supermarkets, and Contributions from Individuals like you!



**We value and need your support. Every contribution is meaningful.  
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