



where children go to learn and grow

The Three Sisters:

Autumn Lamondin
Industrial Design (ECUAD)

Farrah Olegario Nazareth
Industrial Design (ECUAD)

Xiaolan Wang
Interaction Design (SFU)

Fall 2013 Cohort



CityStudio

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Project Summary

About TriGarden

For those who care about educating your children at a young age about food, TriGarden is here to help. The garden has been designed to allow children to learn first hand how to grow food, how to care for their seeds and saplings and how to harvest their nurtured vegetables.

There are exciting activities to involve the participating children. Everyone is encouraged to get their hands dirty and be at one with nature. An educator with volunteers will be in attendance at every activity guiding the toddlers and helping them plant a vegetable of the season.

TriGarden is an amazing opportunity for an education session through hands on experience. We are a program under the direct responsibility of the Vancouver Park Board. We provide all tools for activities and encourage the toddlers to help the volunteers to clean their tools. The knowledge and effectiveness of this program help in understand our roots to the Earth in an urban environment.

What?

The TriGarden is an interactive gardening structure that will be built in front of the Creekside Community Centre, where children can go have fun learning about growing food.

Who?

We are currently working with Lindsay Cole, who is a park planner from the Vancouver Park Board, Jason Heieh, who is the planning assistant and Lehran Hache, who is the engineering assistant in Vancouver Park Board. The community partners we are now working with are The World in a Garden and Creekside Community Centre.

When?

The estimated time for completion of this project is dependent on the design and the material procurement approval by CityStudio and Vancouver Park Board.

Where?

The vacant gravel lot directly outside Creekside Community Centre is our chosen site for TriGarden. This is a temporary location, as the garden will be moved to a new location after development of an adjacent building is completed.

Why?

TriGarden supports the COV's goals to find alternate ways of growing food that the city can promote and local food education. Food is everywhere, and yet a lot of us take it for granted. It is seen as more of a commodity item, rather than a natural process that involves time, energy, and care. We believe that it is of importance to teach children about where their food comes from and how to nurture plants before this knowledge is completely lost. This will set the precedents for future generations to understand and appreciate the process of growing and harvesting healthy food.

Project Details

Executive Summary

The TriGarden is an interactive gardening structure designed to engage children in learning about growing food in a fun and playful way. This project's aim is to educate children to learn about the process of growing food. It will be located in front of the Creekside Community Centre as a section of a new community garden. TriGarden highlights educational needs surrounding alternative solutions for growing food within the city and local food education.

Team Members

Autumn Lamondin, Industrial Design, Emily Carr University of Art and Design;
Farrah Olegario Nazareth, Industrial Design, Emily Carr University of Art and Design;
Xiaolan Wang, Interaction Design, Simon Fraser University



The Three Sisters at the Community Garden Site

Methodology

Original Intentions:

TriGarden was created in CityStudio's Fall 2013 # 6 cohort. Our group was initially formed under the assumption that we would be developing a rooftop garden. The collective goal was to provide low-income families with the opportunity to meet other families, and to teach their children more about nutritious food. The interests of our group were to fill in the food-literacy gap by providing families with the tools to be more self-sufficient.

All class groups were encouraged to develop a matrix with multiple locations and values around the city of Vancouver. Each team member was asked to rate a location based on their core value. The location that correlated with the highest score indicated our likely location of build.

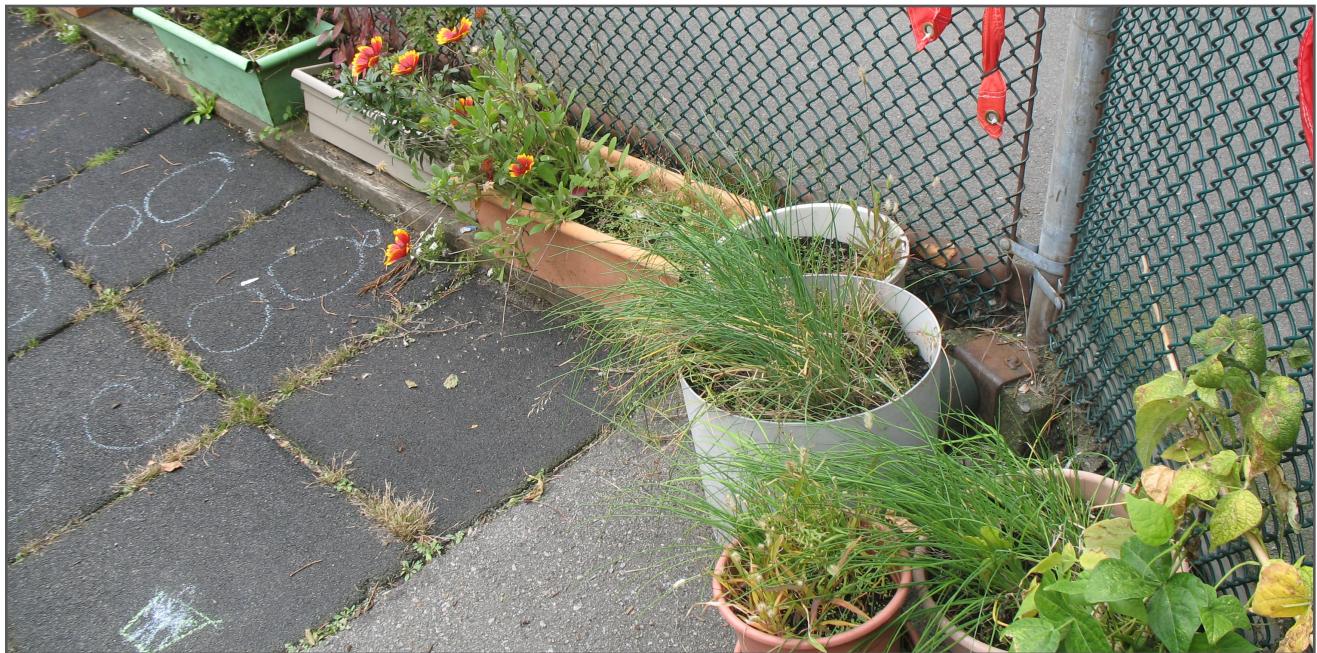
Preliminary Community Research:

Strathcona is Vancouver's lowest income neighbourhood. Ray-Cam Community Centre in Strathcona provides low-income families with the ability to feed their families by growing food in the community centre's gardens. The community centre is dedicated to using the food grown in their vertical and herb gardens to feed children in their programs during lunch time. In some cases, food grown in is used for classes that are held to teach parents how to cook nutritious meals.



Ray-Cam Community Centre Vertical Garden

Upon initial visit, we all agreed that it was a good place to build a garden. As well, a place to develop potential programs to educate parents and children alike about food.



Ray-Cam Community Centre Children's Garden

Changing Tides:

Extensive research and field sites led us to concur that an educational children's garden was more effective than developing a rooftop garden. In our growing urban culture, giving children the chance to learn about where their food comes from and how it is harvested seemed to be of more value to the city.

MacLean Park:

We visited MacLean Park in Strathcona. Time was spent assessing the behaviours of young children, more specifically ages 2 - 6. Our key findings were that at a younger age, children are impressionable and curious. Their interests are far and wide. Kids are curious about all things new.

As a team, we watched their interactions with other children. Setting in motion an 'edible garden' with a playground context sounded exciting. An edible garden is meant to be a playground with surrounding vegetation in raised beds. A place for children to be provided with tools to then grow their own saplings into vegetables. Our new found project was to accommodate children in a low-income neighbourhood by giving them a gardening space by a playground to grow and learn about food.

Preliminary Design Ideas:

To reevaluating our project direction we asked ourselves the W5: who, what, when, why and where:

What? Our garden's intentions was to educate children, and allow them to have fun while growing and learning about food.

Who? Families with young children in a low-income neighbourhood.

When? The build process was intended to begin as soon as we received approval from the City of Vancouver under the direction of our CityStudio instructor Duane Elverum.

Where? MacLean Park, a location that satisfied the City of Vancouver's (COV) Greenest City 2020 Action Plan goals.

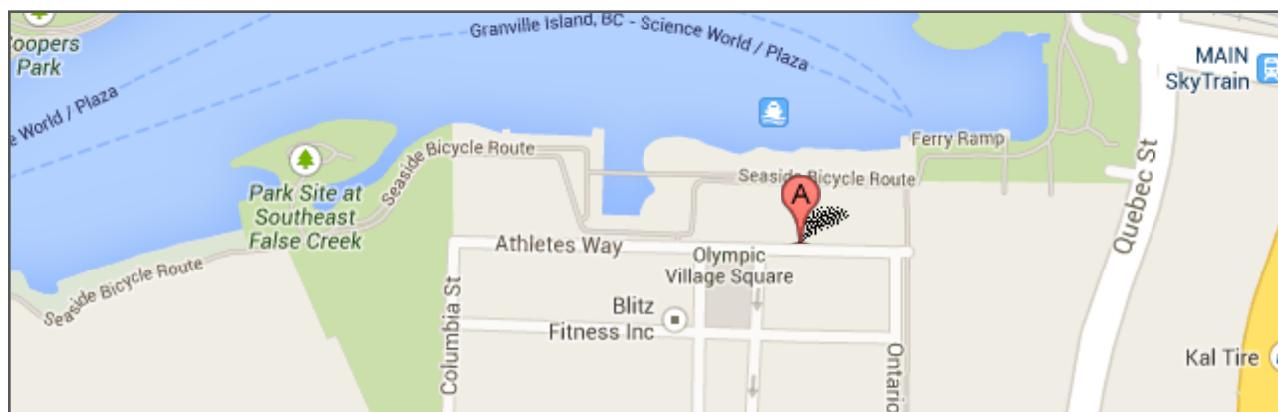
Why? Our idea for building a garden supported the COV's goals to find alternate ways of growing food that the city can promote and local food education.

Vancouver Park Board:

We were introduced to Lindsay Cole, a Vancouver Park Board planner, who showed interest in our project. A meeting was set up to discuss our ideas and intentions for building a garden for children around the city. After discussing our concept for a garden, we were introduced to the city's regulation and policies. The political structure did not give us the time during our CityStudio class to put forth a proposal for approval. Lindsay gave us option to join community members that were in the process of developing gardens.

Creekside Community Garden:

After weighing our options with multiple sites, we found Creekside Community Garden the most appropriate fit for our garden. Creekside Village is located in Vancouver's Olympic Village, a newly developed space that is still growing. The placement of our garden was planned to be permanent, but in the new context it was suggested to be a movable gardening structure on raised beds.



Creekside Community Centre - Google Maps

Developing Relationships:

The location for the gardening structure opened doors for us to move forward to design, build and generate stewardship plans. We were introduced to multiple people at the Vancouver Park Board and Tricia from A World in a Garden. The process began to unfold as multiple people started to get involved to move the project forward.

Hiccups. Solutions and the Future:

As the project unfolds new details became clearer. With the development of a budget and the cost for a sustainable kid's garden and tools, a substantial amount for fund raising would need to be generated. It was during this process of sending drawings and details to the landscape architect that a new suggestion was put on the table, canvassing the surrounding neighbourhood for locally sourced materials that could help construct the interactive garden. It would be a sustainably-driven gardening project built by the repurposing of materials.

Project Outcomes and Impact

In order to design and develop a kid's educational gardening structure we addressed current concerns expressed by the COV. Through research and insights from community partners we found the following:

Food-Literacy Gap:

Nowadays, when the refrigerator in our home is running out of food, the first response is usually to go to the nearest supermarket to purchase more. The vegetables are beautifully placed on the shelves as colorful paints on the palette. The name and the price is all we learn about that food item. Where is our food from? How is it grown? Why and how is it beneficial for our body? For the younger generations who live in the city, food is familiar yet much stranger.

Community Gardens:

Many urban dwellers don't have the opportunity to connect with their food. An increasingly popular way in many cities around the world is through emerging community gardens, which are areas of urban land used for planting food by people in urban areas, typically by residents with restricted access to their own land(Wals, 2007).

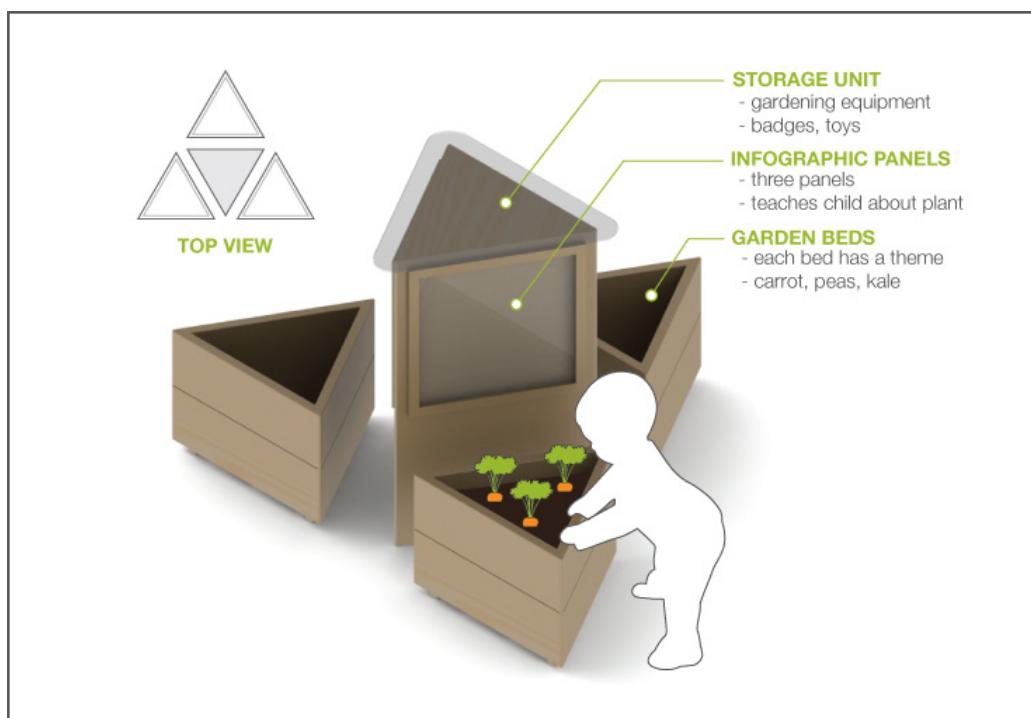
In Vancouver, there are more than 75 community gardens having been built. Many gardens have beds reserved for children to be involved enjoying growing. Those beds are often designed as a rectangular or u-shaped, no difference to other gardeners' beds. Children's unique requires did not get enough consideration. Moreover, children are not

always welcomed in the garden. The reason is that children might unintentionally break plants, to which gardeners have put a lot of efforts. Therefore, the possibilities for children to learn growing food are largely limited. The chances for dialogues across generations about food are also reduced.

Educating Children:

Recognizing the importance of educating children about food and the limited opportunities of community gardens provided to them, many organizations have conducted various programs to fill the gap. A good example is The World In A Garden, one of our sponsors, who “*is a multicultural urban farm and garden project that educates community and youth about the nutritional, cultural and environmental aspects of growing and eating food.*”

TriGarden is not only a gardening space where children can learn growing food, but is also a stage through which children and adults can have fun and build relationships. It closes the gap between children and food, playing and learning. The use of modular beds, informative posters, colorful paintings and role-play games will make 2-6 years children engaged in a fun growing process. Adults are also able to participate, guide and educate in TriGarden. Therefore, TriGarden provides an alternate way of growing food and local food education possibilities. It sets the precedents for future generations to understand and appreciate the process of growing and harvesting healthy food in Vancouver.



Current Design for TriGarden

Current Project Status

Once we have developed an effective and efficient stewardship plan and get the approval for either our current design or an iteration based on feedback, we will proceed to build our gardening structure.

An ongoing dialogue between us (the three sisters) and the park board staff is about design. What was once a triangular, modular structure is in the process of being redeveloped by using repurposed materials from the surrounding neighbourhood.

We are currently in communication with Vancouver Park Board members about the status of the requirements for the garden to move forward by canvassing local businesses for repurposed materials to build multiple gardening structures. Solidifying key objectives and supporters will help strengthen our current stewardship plan. The World in a Garden and potentially the neighbouring daycare centres and nearby child-related businesses will assist in accommodating and building upon our children's gardening structure.

Key Challenges, Biggest Lessons, and Project Reflection

Key Challenges:

An obstacle we encountered during our initial meeting at the Vancouver Park Board was not being able to build what we intended due to the regulation of policies and its following timeline. As per our class objectives, the project was to be completed in a month. We were given the chance to immerse our design into an ongoing project, situated by the Olympic Village seawall, Creekside Community Centre.

For us, it sometimes needs effort to mentally draw a clear map of this network. For example, we need to get approval from one source and then connect to another course to further our progress. Sometimes one connection could potentially slow down the entire process, but we can only wait for people's replies. However, once communication is reestablished, the project can move forward towards completion.

Lessons:

We learned a lot during this process by collaborating with city staff and community partners. In order to complete the project, various contributors help in redefining and refining the end product. These people are usually from different organizations in the city, community and/or companies. Collaboration with each other helps to gradually accomplish goals. It is imperative to participate in this inter-organizational work for a gratifying result.

Reflections:

If we were to start over with our project, we would rearrange the order of our process. Our initial objective would be to meet with the landscape designer and then design and develop our concept. We would then focus on the stewardship plan with community partners, to know their expectation of our project. It would have been beneficial to understand their ideas of how their current programs could merge with our project to benefit everyone.

Stewardship Plan

Our children's garden is planned to be part of a larger garden housed in the Olympic Village area. The ideal goal was to have the garden developed maintained by the Creekside community centre, the surrounding daycare centres, the City of Vancouver, The World in a Garden and the development it is housed on.

Community Stewardship Program ‘TriGarden’:

The Community Stewardship Program intends to involve volunteers in an on-going maintenance and monitoring activities at Creekside Community Centre in the City of Vancouver's Olympic village. It is recommended for participants to work in a team that is guided by an experienced volunteer (team leader). Each team is requested to visits the site once a month for an annual tenure. The amount of visits is subject to the amount of volunteers available. Volunteers are encouraged to attend any special events and planting to help build the community space around the Olympic village.

Volunteers help to improve the long-term sustainability of our newly developed children's garden, TriGarden, while getting outside, team-building and developing new skills. This program is suited for adults looking for a short-term, regular volunteer commitment. The program season beings in May, and events are typically on weeknight evenings.

Stewardship activities include weeding, watering planted vegetation, mulching, collecting litter, maintaining bird boxes, building habitat brush bundles, and monitoring specific site conditions.

Our current plans are to continue participating with the project by having an open dialogue with Tricia and the Vancouver Parks Board to develop more potential stakeholders for our stewardship plan. Collaboration is vital to out our stewardship plan and our hopes are for the development of the stewardship plan for the children's garden in the near future.

Budget

TOTAL BUDGET:					\$ 424.36	
EXPENSES	SUPPLIER	QUANTITY				
	<i>Garden Structure Materials</i>					
1	Cedar	Homedepot	6		\$87.00	Tax included
2	Poly Mesh		1		\$12.00	
3	Plywood	Windsor			\$	
4	Duraplex	Homedepot	2		\$111.04	
5	Swivel Casters	Homedepot	9		\$50.30	
6	Infographic Posters	Emily Carr	3		\$60.00	
7	Galvanized Hinge	Richelieu	2		\$20.00	
8	Lock				\$	
9	Security Bolt	Homedepot	1		\$ 15.22	
10	Paint	Homedepot	3		\$16.80	
	<i>Role Play Tools</i>					
9	Badge		12		\$20.00	
	<i>Prototype</i>					
10	Cardboard		1		\$8.00	
	<i>Building Tools</i>					
11	Nails/Screws	Homedepot			\$ 5.00	
12	Tape				\$ 7.00	
13	Rollers				\$12.00	



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Acknowledgements

City Staff and Partners

We would like to thank Lindsay Cole, Jason Hsieh and Lehran Hache from Vancouver Park Board. We would also like to thank Tricia Sedgwick from The World In A Garden.

CityStudio Staff

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Targets and Priority Actions. Local Food.

<<https://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/local-food.aspx>>