



News from the Learning Garden (#4)

April '03

The Learning Garden is a collaboration between Venice High School, Yo San University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and the local community. Its purpose is to bring high quality nutrition and medicinal plants into the public school system, to deepen the level of education for students of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and to educate the community about the benefits of plant-based healing systems.

Greetings to everyone. The news of the world is troubling, yet the Learning Garden continues to become a place of beauty, solace, education, nutrition, and inspiration. As the Indian poet Tagore said: "The foolish run. The clever wait. The wise go into the garden." Since the last newsletter, many wonderful events have taken place at the corner of Venice and Walgrove in Venice, CA. These changes are increasingly visible to the community, and a source of hope for all who become involved in this important project.

May Day Celebration

The Learning Garden is celebrating its one year anniversary. Please join us for May Day festivities on Saturday, May 3rd, from 10 - 4. There will be numerous musicians performing, including the Venice High School chorale, classical guitar by a VHS student, jazz singers, bluegrass and Celtic music, and who knows what else...bring your instruments. There will be demonstrations of Tai chi and Qigong, accompanied by bamboo flute. Herbal teas will be served by Yo San students, and there will be ongoing garden tours. Various speakers will be giving lectures on health, healing, and gardening. Plants will be offered for sale, and there will be an abundance of food and drink. For pagans and other fun-loving folks, there will be a May pole dance. Come celebrate the garden's first year, and everything it represents for the future.

Learning Garden Web Site Up

The Learning Garden has the home page of its web site up and running. Please check out www.thelearninggarden.org. The web site was generously designed and set up by Kim Zanti, along with Hill and Thomas from Design Pod. Kim says: "This project is a shining example of community resolve to change a landscape--not only of the earth, but of a culture that is breeding obesity, depression, and violence among teenaged children. Please pass on this web site to anyone who may be interested in supporting the project or in starting a learning garden in their own community." Thank you Kim, Hill, and Thomas, for your donation of time, energy, skills, and money to the garden.

Venice Co-op Joins Garden The Venice Ocean Park Food Co-op has joined the Learning Garden. A plot of land has been set aside for members of the Co-op to cultivate as a food production and demonstration garden, under the supervision of

Garden Master David King. The Learning Garden welcomes all the members of the Co-op; your presence and bountiful crops will be an inspiration to the community.

California Department of Education To Meet At The Garden

Jackie Domac, Chair of the Venice High School Health Department, has successfully negotiated and coordinated the LEAF (Linking Education, Activity, and Food) grant for the school. This grant has provided money to find alternatives to selling sodas and candy on campus, and to increase health standards among students through nutrition education and physical activity. Jackie's work has received nation-wide media attention, including coverage on NPR and CNN. Part of the grant money has been given to the Learning Garden, for the purpose of planting medicinal, fruit, and nut trees. Jackie sends this wonderful news item: "The California Department of Education's visit to Venice High School concerning the LEAF grant went very well. So well, that they want to have their registration and various activities for the next state LEAF meeting to be held in the Learning Garden. They want to illustrate our garden as an example for all of the other LEAF sites." Many thanks, Jackie, for your hard work and leadership in the community.

High Falls Gardens and Crane Herb Company Create Medicinal Plant Internet Forum
Jean Giblette, founder and director of High Falls Gardens in NY, has been one of the Learning Garden's generous benefactors. Jean and HFG have provided seeds of Chinese medicinal plants, which are now growing in the garden, money, and valuable educational assistance. Jean has worked hard for many years to help acupuncture schools around the country start medicinal herb gardens. She sends this news item, which is of special interest to all students of Chinese herbology: "A new Student Gardens forum and medicinal plant seeds are available. High Falls Gardens has posted two lists of free seeds available to Student Gardens participants at the new forum established by the Crane Herb Company. Open to students and practitioners of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, as well as growers of Asian medicinal plants, the forum is our first medium for the exchange of observations on cultivation of these plants in diverse climates and bioregions. HFG director Jean Giblette asks all Student Gardens to post a short description of their project, to let each other know what they are doing. Eventually, we hope to use the forum to compare notes on where in North America the different Asian medicinal plant species grow best. To register at the forum, send an email to forumadmin@craneherb.com." Thank you, Jean, for your dedication to helping the ancient traditions of Chinese medicine flourish here in the West.

News From The Garden Master

David King, the Garden Master, has been diligently overseeing the many springtime activities happening at the Learning Garden. He sends these news items: "Over 200 plants have gone into the garden in the last two weeks! Volunteers have helped transplant little seedlings into larger pots, and we have hundreds more plants in the greenhouse getting big enough to go into the garden or be sold to benefit the garden." David is working to establish a relationship with the Wild Oats store in Santa Monica...the Learning Garden will have a display there on April 19th. David also sends the following schedule of classes: "Saturday from 10 -12 there are gardening classes offered in the garden. Classes already given include "Getting Your Garden Started," "Dealing with Shrubs and Perennials," and "The Beautiful Food Garden." The 19th's class will be "Landscape Maintenance and Pest Control Without Killing Yourself (or your pets or your kids or your neighbors...)." Future classes will include "Composting," "Tool Care," "Flowers for Dinner," and "Everything About Gardening from Seed," - including starting from seed, collecting and saving seed to plant

next year and breeding your own varieties! Please note, it isn't stopping after the initial four classes are up." David devotes at least three days a week, without pay, to helping the garden flourish. Without his support, the Learning Garden would not be what it is. You may contact him for schedule details, to volunteer, or just to say "thank you" at learninggardenmaster@yahoo.com

UCLA Extension Classes Start At The Learning Garden

Twenty-six students from the UCLA Extension Practices and Techniques class have each staked out individual 5'x10' gardens, have cleared the weeds, and have begun to prepare the soil they will plant and tend for the coming nine weeks of class. This class is a required class in the Extension's Gardening and Horticulture Certificated Program; the students will be gardening every Thursday evening.

Two New Gardens Started

The first stages of the Ayurvedic Herb Garden are underway at the Learning Garden. This garden will feature medicinal plants used in the traditional healing system of India. The Three Sisters Garden has been prepared and planted. This garden, which is based on Native American wisdom, combines varieties of corn, beans, and squash. The corn supplies the pole for the beans, the beans supply nitrogen to the soil, and the squash keeps the ground cool and moist. The students are looking forward to reaping a bountiful harvest.

Qigong Classes Offered At The Garden

Qigong classes are being taught by Master Jiqing Wu every Sunday afternoon from 3 - 4. Master Wu will be guiding students in the basic Qigong positions, then incorporating the Qigong breathing techniques into simple Tai chi movements. Classes are \$15 per person, and all are welcome.

Generous Patrons and Hard-Working Volunteers Support Garden

All of us at the Learning Garden would like to thank the numerous benefactors and volunteers who have generously donated time, labor, and the financial resources necessary to keep the garden growing. Your support has made it possible to create a peaceful sanctuary of learning for the students of Venice High, Yo San University, and the community. Please inform others of the garden, so our network of sponsorship can continue to grow. Several people have been especially important at the garden over the last few months...

David King sends these acknowledgements: "Thanks to the efforts of Yo San student, Sami Rank, Spring was welcomed at TLG by Yo San students. With free herbal tea and coffee and pretty darn good baked goods by Kelly Kim, the group had Qigong in the morning and afternoon, and lectures by David Crow and Billie Kariher. At the request of Dr. Daoshing Ni, two lavender plants were set out...the first for our troops in Iraq, wishing them a safe return, and the second for Peace to the World. Chris Bushman of the Southern California Koi Club came to our garden to do an appraisal of our koi raising efforts. Not only did he devote two hours of his time offering a most professional appraisal, he also donated a bevy of literature and 20 pounds of koi food. Yo San staffer Wing Deng donated 30 baby koi to "bring life" to our pond! Don Stewart, nationally known designer and metal artist, donated a flat's worth of plants to our succulent garden; many are unusual and uncommon." Julie Mann, who deserves an entire letter of

appreciation for her ongoing support, sends the following item: "On Saturday, April 5th, Creative Artists Agency and LA Works joined together with Venice High Students to rake, weed and plant in the Learning Garden. CAA has adopted Venice High and has supported the school both financially and through service days. Over 100 volunteers came out that day to help with the garden, and to paint school bathrooms. We are thrilled with the progress! Thank you, CAA!"

Master tree surgeon Mark Benson, and his assistants Chepe Martinez and Chepe's cousin Caleb, did several large tree pruning jobs for the Learning Garden in February, making the grounds safer and opening the lath house for better lighting. Thanks guys! Come hear Mark and his band get down with some Olde Thyme Celtic music on May 3rd.

The Learning Garden was visited last month by Emily Webb, a young woman involved in creating sustainable agroforestry projects in Guatemala. As a result of Emily's visit, Garden Master David King will be making a journey to Guatemala in June to teach a group of Kansas State Agronomy students. Many thanks, Emily, for linking the Learning Garden to your wonderful work in Central America! Finally, the Learning Garden gratefully acknowledges the hard work of Yo San student Emily Snider, who is so dedicated to the garden that she has moved in across the street. She is featured on the Learning Garden web site, and she certainly deserves it. Many thanks, Emily!

Volunteers and Donations Requested

The Learning Garden needs the ongoing support of numerous individuals, organizations, and the community, both at the garden and financially. In particular, we would like to provide Garden Master David King with a small stipend so he can continue working regularly at the garden. Please join us in our efforts to create a healing sanctuary for the students of Venice High, a place of higher learning for those studying traditional herbal medicine, and an environment of beauty for the neighborhood. Here are some of the ways you can help:

1. Financial donation. Checks should be made to Venice High School PTSA, and sent to Julie Mann, 2454 Louella Ave, Venice, CA 90291
2. Forward this email to everyone who might be interested in supporting the Learning Garden
3. Come and participate at the garden. For details, contact David King at learninggardenmaster@yahoo.com

Questions or Comments About the Learning Garden?

For further information, feel free to call David Crow at 310-822-6812, or email him at medicinecrow@earthlink.net

Please Forward This Newsletter to Anyone Who Might Be Interested in the Learning Garden