



News from the Learning Garden (#5)

August, '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.

California State Department of Education Representatives Meet at the Learning Garden

Jackie Domac, Chair of the Venice High School Health Department, has made another extraordinary contribution to raising the level of health consciousness in the public school system. She sends this announcement about an important event she organized: "On May 20th, The Learning Garden was the host site for the California State Department of Education LEAF Conference (Linking Education, Activity and Food). The garden provided the perfect ambiance for the kick-off to a three-day collaborative event attended by educators and health experts from throughout the state. After being greeted by Venice High School's Students for Public Health Advocacy, visitors were treated to a garden tour and a vegan cooking demonstration by local chefs Del and Coluch. The entire event was plant-based, to assure minimal environmental impact. State officials consider The Learning Garden to be an excellent working model of a community-based school garden, and hope that others will follow in our footsteps." Many thanks, Jackie, for all that you are doing to improve the standards of health and health education everywhere!

Agape Church Sponsors "Sacred Service Saturday" at The Learning Garden

On Saturday, June 21, thirty-seven volunteers from the Agape spiritual community offered their time and energy in support of The Learning Garden. Their labor included weeding, mulching, land clearing, and planting. Karen Sugarman, director of Earth Spirit Agape Ministry, has coordinated a monthly work day at the garden for members of the church. In addition, the Earth Spirit Ministry now holds monthly planning and meditation meetings here at the garden. These meetings are on the fourth Sunday of each month at 2 pm, and are open to the public. Many thanks to Karen and the members of Agape.

UC Extension Master Gardeners Program To Hold Graduation At The Learning Garden

On Saturday, August 9th at 2 pm, the UC Master Gardeners Training Program will hold its commencement ceremony at The Learning Garden. This statewide program offers training in gardening, and in turn, the graduates serve community hours as gardening teachers and advisors to the general public. Yvonne Savio, manager of the program, will be officiating at the graduation.

The public is invited. Congratulations to all the graduates; we look forward to fruitful collaborations with the UC program in the future.

Yo San Herb Classes Expand

Students of Yo San University are now getting herb lab hours for their participation in the Chinese herb garden. Several groups of dedicated students are enjoying the educational benefits of hands-on work with the medicinal plants of the Chinese pharmacopeia. The Yo San garden has now been planted with about thirty species of important herbal medicines, and more are arriving. Robert Newman, plant collector extraordinaire, has donated numerous species, including some rare and endangered varieties, from his personal collection. Everyone at The Learning Garden is most grateful to Robert for his continuing support, and to all the students from Yo San who are helping to bring Chinese medicine to our culture.

Teacher's Welcome Brunch

On August 28th at 10am, the Venice High School PTSA will hold their annual Teacher's Welcome Brunch in The Learning Garden. This will be the first time that many of the teachers will see the fully planted garden. All of us at the garden extend a warm welcome, and invite all the teachers to use The Learning Garden as an outdoor classroom.

The Learning Garden Begins Planting Food Forest

The Learning Garden co-founder and chief fundraiser, Julie Mann, has procured a \$10,000 Neighborhood Matching Fund Grant from the City of Los Angeles to begin planting a Food Forest around the perimeter of the garden property. This permaculture-inspired forest, which is also partially funded by the State Board of Education LEAF grant, will be one of the largest of its kind in the country. When completed, the forest will contain a large collection of diverse medicinal and food plants, including trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcover crops. Landscape designer Stephen Gates and his crew have started the preliminary landscaping for this monumental project. In mid-September a permaculture workshop will be held to initiate the planting, and the entire project is expected to be completed by the winter season. Next spring the students at Venice High and Yo San University, and everyone else involved with the garden, will enjoy an abundance of locally produced organic foods and medicines.

The Rhizorporous Project Performs at Chi Patio

The Rhizorporous Project is a collaboration between artists Keith Mason and Michelle Berne, which actively engages young people in discussion and debate on issues which affect the quality of their lives. The Project, which is funded by the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Division, Artist In Residence Program, performed "The Dragon's Advocate" on June 13 at The Learning Garden Chi Patio. This original theatrical performance, written and performed by twenty-one students from Ms. Morrison's 10th grade Humanities class at Venice High, featured giant puppets and original performance objects designed and created by the students. The play, which included brilliant performances by large mutant vegetables, was a protest against genetically modified foods...a perfect event for the otherwise organic Learning Garden. Thank you, Rhizorporouses!

David King Receives Stipend

Generous benefactors have made it possible for Garden Master David King to work full time at The Learning Garden. With David's continual presence and hard work, The Learning Garden is not only flourishing, but also becoming extensively linked to numerous important community resources. Over the last few months, David has brought the UCLA Extension Gardening and Horticulture Program, the Agape Church community, and the UC Extension Master Gardener's Program to the Learning Garden. In addition, he has successfully coordinated joint gardening efforts between The Learning Garden and Diane Pollock's Venice High School Horticulture program. David is a virtual magnet for dirt, plants and people: he has procured a multitude of donations from numerous sources, including mulch from the city of Los Angeles, mountains of amendments and potting soil from Orchard Supply Hardware, hundreds of packets of seeds from Seeds of Change, multitudes of flats of plants from the Huntington Gardens, and piles of tools from the UCLA Extension Program. In addition, David regularly sets up a table at Wild Oats, where he extols the virtues and accomplishments of The Learning Garden to anyone who will listen. In spite of this demanding schedule, he manages to find time to care for the rapidly expanding abundance of plant life at the garden. Many thanks to David, to those who have made it possible for David to work at the garden, and to all those who have made generous contributions of plants and materials.

David Wells To Start Ayurvedic Herb Garden

Ayurvedic practitioner David Wells has initiated a new project at The Learning Garden. Located adjacent to the Yo San Chinese herb garden, the Ayurvedic herb garden will feature numerous medicinal plants unique to the pharmacopeia of the Indian subcontinent. The two gardens will compliment each other perfectly, and will expand the number of species that are of special interest to students of herbal medicine. Many thanks, David.

May Day Event Cancelled, But Happens Anyway

The May Day celebration was cancelled due to a spring storm. However, this did not deter dedicated supporters and gardening enthusiasts from coming to The Learning Garden. Dressed in boots and raincoats, eager community members turned out for a muddy tour of the garden, even though food, music, and festivities had been postponed.

Summer Equinox Celebration Not Scheduled, But Happens Anyway

On June 22, another spontaneous celebration took place. Friends of The Learning Garden enjoyed a barbeque of food donated by Wild Oats, a Tai Chi performance by Master Wu, and tours of the garden. In addition to celebrating the equinox, the gathering was also a bon voyage party for Garden Master David King, who was departing for Guatemala to help establish a garden at an orphanage and school. Undaunted by the hearty welcome given to him by the local strains of giardia, David had a spectacular trip, and is now preparing for future collaborations between The Learning Garden and similar organizations working in Central America.

Emily Snider Starts Community Composting Project

Yo San student and Learning Garden volunteer Emily Snider recently purchased a collection of large buckets, which she distributed to her neighbors along Walgrove Ave. Now, The Learning Garden has a regular source of free compost, and the neighbors are actively involved in caretaking the land and plants. This simple community outreach program could have significant long term benefits for everyone. Herb King, a local herb store, is also donating its large volume of

compostable tea bags to the garden. Thank you Emily, Herb King, and the Walgrove Ave Compost Club.

Progress On Learning Garden Web Site

Learning Garden supporter Kim Zanti sends the following update on the progress of the site: "Plans for the website are moving forward once again. The full site plan is extensive, so we're starting small with a mini-site, which will grow as time and money allow. Even the mini-site requires funding, so the first step will be to update the placeholder page, and also add a link to the Learning Garden newsletters. Next, we'll start on the mini-site, comprised of four pages: Calendar, Newsletter, Slide Show, and Donation Information. Fundraising events to support the mini-site are in the beginning stage." Many thanks, Kim, for your ongoing support of the garden.

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 continue providing Garden Master David King with a stipend so he can work at the garden. We also need funding to expand The Learning Garden web site, and additional funds to match the Neighborhood Grant from the City of Los Angeles for the Food Forest. 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, or
2. Purchase an engraved paving stone: your name immortalized in a Learning Garden pathway for \$100. Checks should be made to Venice High School PTSA, and sent to Julie Mann, 2454 Louella Ave, Venice, CA 90291
3. Forward this email to everyone who might be interested in supporting the Learning Garden
4. Come and participate at the garden. For details of classes and events at the garden, 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