



### **News from the Learning Garden #3**

#### **Spring '02**

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.

#### **Dedicated Volunteers Create Big Changes at Venice High School Garden**

Over the last three months, much work has taken place at the Learning Garden. With the support of a generous (anonymous) benefactor and several smaller financial donations, chief landscaper Stephen Gates has been able to work with a crew every weekend. A small group of dedicated volunteers from Venice High School, Yo San University, and the community have come regularly to assist in this phase of building the garden infrastructure, which is mostly heavy labor. Many thanks to all, including Sarah Dickinson, Zach Mann, Alex Ruiz, Alex Gord, Josh Duran-Carlson (VHS); Emily Snider, Marius Imfeld, Carl Ploss, Wendy Seitel (Yo San); Colleen Hill, Cherry O'Meara, and all others who have donated their time and energy. Special thanks to those who have made funding available.

#### **More Volunteers Welcome**

The Learning Garden has grown to the stage where more volunteers are very welcome. As we complete the first cycle of building the infrastructure and go into working with the plants, you might like to join us...we won't ask you to carry heavy rocks. The garden is open every Saturday and Sunday from 9-5. See you there!

#### **The Yo San Herb Garden**

The Yo San Chinese Herb Garden area is now ready for planting. Raised beds have been constructed, and healthy organic soil will be arriving soon. A fully automatic irrigation system has been installed. The next step will be planting low-maintenance perennial herbs in the beds, and medicinal vines to grow over the fence along Walgrove Ave. A small kiva-classroom has been carved out of the ground; the seats have received their final coat of plaster, and the steps will soon be paved with gorgeous purple jade-colored river rock. When complete, the kiva will be covered with a lattice dome of flowering vines, and the entire garden screened from the street...an excellent place for Yo San students to have their herbology classes.

#### **Pond and Waterfall Completed**

The pond and waterfall are now fully renovated. Small creatures have started appearing -- goldfish, gambusia, water snails -- donated by Stephen Gates and an unknown Venice

High student who appreciates nature. The waterfall bubbles out of beautiful river rock and cascades down a series of ledges, which will soon be planted with lush medicinal greenery. The sound of the water produces a wonderfully relaxing effect, and people gravitate to the area. We will soon be planting a variety of water-loving medicinal plants, including lotus, watercress, nutgrass, and wild ginger. The plants have been researched by Yo San student Doug Frasier, and will be procured and/or donated by Mark Benson and others.

### **Tai Chi Platform Under Construction**

The former outdoor class area is being replaced with a raised platform for Tai Chi and Qi Gong classes, as well as other social and educational activities. When complete, this area will be paved with smooth stone, and surrounded by a collection of small trees, shrubs, and aromatic plants. It is one of the most relaxing areas of the garden, directly under several huge trees and close to the waterfall; it is also popular with the local squirrels, birds, and butterflies. Yo San students will have their Tai Chi and Qi Gong classes here, and students and faculty at the high school will be welcome to join them.

### **David King Begins Teaching at the Learning Garden**

David King, the Garden Master of Yo San University, has started teaching regular gardening classes at the Learning Garden. He will be offering his knowledge and experience on the second Sunday of every month, at 2 pm. All are welcome.

### **Yo San Begins Adopt-A-Plant Program**

Under the guidance of David King, Julie Chambers, and Keiko Cronin, Yo San has initiated the Adopt-A-Plant Program. Using seeds donated by Jean Giblette of High Falls Gardens, Yo San students are in the first stages of germinating, transplanting, and raising important Chinese medicinal plants. Those who successfully grow the plants from seed to one year maturity will receive lab credits; for those whose plants don't make it, well, there are always more seeds. So far, several students and their plants are succeeding: the transplanting of a student's *Artemisia Annua* -- an important Asian anti-malaria herb -- was one of the topics of David King's class last Sunday. We encourage all Yo San students to become familiar with this important aspect of herbal training and knowledge, and wish them good luck. Many thanks to Jean for providing seeds, and to David, Julie, and Keiko for launching the program.

### **The Learning Garden to Have Web Site**

Three generous volunteers have offered to raise money and donate their skills to design and build a Web site for the Learning Garden. Kim Zanti and her team (Hill and Thomas) are currently raising the necessary funds to create a first-class site, which will include an extensive database of all the plants grown at the Learning Garden. Many thanks to Kim and team for the support!

### **Jackie Domac Fights for Good Nutrition at Venice High**

Jackie Domac, director of the health education department at Venice High, has been working for several months on a grant proposal that would have important long-term benefits for the students at the school. If accepted, Venice High would become a pilot school for the LEAF Grant (Linking Education, Activity, and Food). This grant is being made available to schools in California for the purpose of stopping soda and candy vending on campus and improving nutrition for students. The Learning Garden could play an important role in this and similar grants in the future, by linking the clinical services of

Yo San University with Venice High, providing students with foods and herbs grown in the garden, and hosting community health awareness events. If the grant is approved for the school, the Learning Garden may receive a small percentage for this purpose. This effort is not without controversy, as Jackie has learned: there is considerable resistance to removing sodas and junk food from the campus, due partly to their addictive properties, as well as the fact that they have traditionally generated income for school events. As a center of health education, the Learning Garden supports Jackie's efforts and hopes that, through her work and collaboration with the garden and Yo San, the epidemic of adolescent obesity, diabetes, ADD, and other nutrition-based illnesses can be reduced.

### **Support the Learning Garden: Buy a Personalized Engraved Paving Stone**

The Learning Garden is seeking funding by selling personalized engraved paving stones. For \$100, your name will be immortalized forever in the garden, on an attractive 12 x 12 inch stone placed in one of the winding walkways, surrounded by aromatic flowers. Not interested in having your name included among the distinguished benefactors? Buy one for a family member, a loved one, a friend, a student of Venice High or Yo San, or anyone else! Please make your \$100 check payable to Venice High School PTSA, and mail it to: Julie Mann, 2454 Louella Ave., Venice, CA 90291. Your purchase will keep the crew working through the summer on the projects described above. Many thanks to Julie Mann and Emily Snider for their ongoing efforts to raise money for the garden!

### **Corner of Venice and Walgrove to Be Landscaped This Summer**

Under the guidance and inspiration of Diane Pollack, horticulture teacher at Venice High School, the corner of the Learning Garden facing Venice Blvd. and Walgrove Ave. will be landscaped over the summer. We are envisioning a beautiful focal point that attracts the attention of the public, which will include ornamentals, flowers, medicinal herbs, and edible plants. Volunteers for this project are welcomed!

### **David Crow Promotes the Learning Garden Nationally**

Over the last several months, David Crow has travelled extensively, speaking at conferences, symposiums, schools, and on radio programs. Promoting the Learning Garden as a model of community-based medicine and health education has been one of his foremost priorities. As a result of his efforts, many people around the country are now aware of the Learning Garden, and inspired by what it represents. David is now working with Annah Williams from the Bay Area to create a non-profit foundation, whose primary purpose will be to share this vision with larger audiences. Last week, Annah left her position as a technical writer to devote full-time attention to this endeavor. Many thanks for such dedication, Annah!

### **Questions or Comments About the Learning Garden?**

Feel free to call David Crow at 310-822-6812, or e-mail him at the address on this letter.

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