

center for
Earth Spirituality
& Rural Ministry

SUMMER 2008

EARTH ALMANAC



a ministry of
School Sisters of Notre Dame

Earth Education



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DIGGING DEEPER, GROWING TOGETHER AND TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

ORGANICALLY YOURS— LISA COONS, CENTER COORDINATOR



THE CENTER for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry has been busy growing food, growing community between people and growing connections with the bounty and blessings of our Earth. This was highlighted most recently for me on a Friday evening in the gardens.

It was one of those magical nights in the garden when all the planning, the hard work, sweat, blisters and calluses (not to mention mosquito bites) of preparing, planting and weeding the garden had finally ushered in

the abundance of the summer harvest. We had just had a long dry spell finally come to an end with a half day of rain that brought welcome relief to many. The plants had perked up now reaching their leaves skyward as if in gratitude for the rain. The many small animals that make their home in or near the gardens seemed to be playing as they flitted, flew and hopped about. The gardeners themselves were perked up and enjoying the gardens and each other.

One family harvested boxes and boxes of lettuce sharing generously with the families around them.

Another had aging parents along with them to show them what their grandkids are doing in the gardens. From across the gardens, we all heard a squeal as a new gardener spied for the first time, her very own watermelon as tiny as a marble but a huge accomplishment for her. Another had a friend visiting from out of town and was giving her the food they harvested together telling her, "in one week, or two, it will look like this all over again and there

will be so much more." They were laughing heartily as they switched easily from their native African language to English and their older children helped tend the harvest and the smaller children. One of them exclaimed, "I feel like I'm in Africa!"

The gift of place, of community, of home. It's one of the things we do here at the Center and it's one of the things that makes this garden a deeply vital place in Mankato.

Read on to catch up further on what we've been up to and what we have coming at the Center. We've included tried and true recipes from some of the gardeners, our Summer Solstice Celebration and from one of our community potluck suppers that all feature delicious summer produce. Here's to summer's abundance! *

Organically yours,

LISA

lcoons@ssndmankato.org

RIPE: BY ESTHER HOFFMANN *Poem for the Summer Solstice*

IN THIS GARDEN of grass and sky, I am filled.

Plum love, the flood of juice after the first thirsty bite,
Dearest Goddess, in this afternoon of cloud, cloud, then sun,

what am I

to feel it all kneel before me?

Your ancient lovers in white robes whirled in the skirts of Your
gardens chanting:

I am wood you are fire take me.

I am wood you are fire take me.

I am wood you are fire take me.

Until they were fires that needed no wood.

I ask only for such courage
to see Beloved in all, to be Lover to all:
to kiss each mouth, taste each fruit, to braid every head,
praise each leaf, to drink every drop, wash each foot.

To fall onto my belly and vow to be slave to such love.

My identity scratched out by gravel,
tearing, scattering innards and fears,
bowels and doubts along the grass-path,
as I crawl into Your heart.

Am I only words?

Can I only love You this way in poetry?

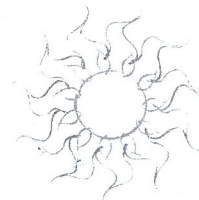
I am wood you are fire take me.

So that I am not always the idiot poet
budding with love of the stars flowering above
raising my hands only to cover my eyes.

A restless child I toss within myself.

Wake me up!

Wake me up to myself and the garden
we dreamt when I slept
with my head between your breasts.



GARDENER PROFILE: LYNN ROZEN

INTERVIEWED BY CRISTAL LUSTIG



AFTER A BUSY DAY at the Solstice Celebration, I spoke with Lynn Rozen, a seasoned gardener in the Community Gardens. The following details her experience in the Community Gardens.

■ CL: So Lynn, why the CESRM Community Gardens? What's special about them for you?

■ LR: Well, I first decided on the Community Gardens because I love to garden. I live in a duplex rental property, so there is no place to garden there. When I moved in, I called the Agriculture Extension Office and they directed me here.

■ CL: How long have you been gardening here?

■ LR: I started at the Community Gardens six years ago. As time goes on, I've come to love the diversity of the community. The all-organic gardening was appealing to me. And I love that I can bring my daughter here to experience the diversity of community that just isn't as apparent in the rest of Mankato.

■ CL: How long have you been gardening?

■ LR: All of my life. I was brought up around it. I always mix flowers with

veggies. I really love that. It's just something that I strive for . . . to always have something that looks pretty in the garden—year-round. My daughter has been gardening since she was three years old. By five, she had her own portion of our plot to plant as she wished. So when you ask me how long I have been gardening, I have to say, as long as I can remember.

■ CL: So what is your favorite part about the Community Gardens?

■ LR: Well, my favorite thing is how peaceful it is up there. I love the fact that just being there is a meditation. There's just a sense of peace. I don't think every garden has that. I think it comes with the intentions of the School Sisters; that calm and peaceful feeling. For me, there is also a sense of gratitude. The Sisters pro-

vide us with so much. Just everything here gives me a sense of gratitude for what I've been given.

■ CL: What is your favorite thing to harvest from the garden?

■ LR: Basil, because it's so fragrant and delicious. I also love okra—it has very beautiful flowers. It's a member of the hibiscus family, so okra can grow to be ten to fifteen feet tall. They're nice tall plants with big, beautiful flowers.

■ CL: Any tips you'd like to give to your fellow Community Gardeners?

■ LR: In general, if you have plants that start to show signs of disease or begin to die, like on tomato and pepper plants, you want to clear away the diseased/dying plant matter. Wash your hands before touching other plants. Plants spread bacteria, just like humans, so if you leave dead or diseased leaves on, it can affect plants even in the next year. This is especially true with plants in the cucumber family.

■ CL: Do you have any family recipes you'd like to share?

■ LR: I freeze pesto for the winter. I process about 1/2 a c. of chopped basil with about 1/4 of a c. of olive oil, one or two cloves of garlic, 1/2 a c. of grated parmesan or Romano cheese, and a handful of pine nuts or walnuts. This mixture is wonderful on pasta! *

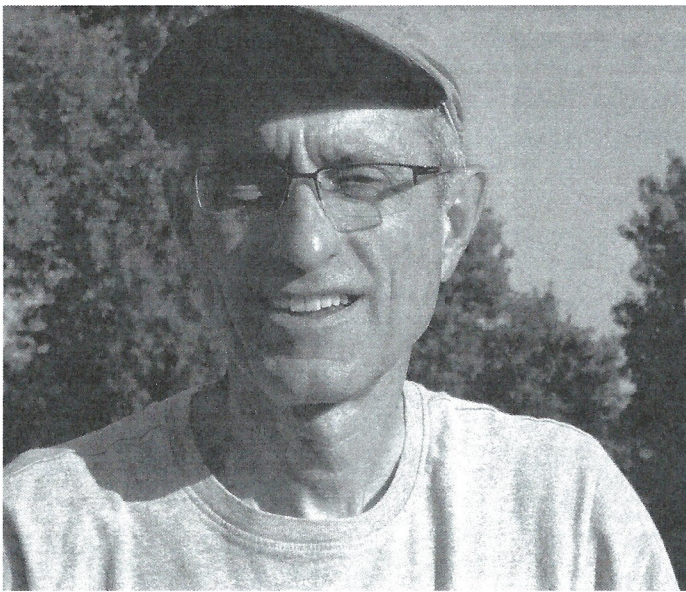
RECIPE

Summer Gazpacho

10 large tomatoes
1/4 c. olive oil
1/4 c. red wine vinegar
4 c. tomato juice or V-8
3 cloves garlic, minced

1 t. salt
1 t. ground black pepper
3 cucumbers, seeded and chopped
1 onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped

GARDENER PROFILE: JIM ACKIL



I RECENTLY TENDED the Echo Food Shelf plot in the North garden with life-long gardener, Jim Ackil. In his second year of gardening in the Community Gardens with the Center for Earth Spirituality Rural Ministry (CESRM), Jim shared his insights. The following is a summary of our discussion.

■ **CL:** So Jim, why the CESRM Community Gardens? Why do you garden here?

■ **JA:** Well, my wife, Kay, and I moved here three and a half years ago from Illinois. We always had a big garden in Illinois, but when we moved to North Mankato to be closer to our children, we just didn't have the space around our house for a garden. We're retired and were new to the area when we saw an advertisement in the newspaper about the Community Gardens. The people up here are just nice people. It also provides a good outlet. And of course, my wife and I love vegetables.

■ **CL:** How long have you been gardening in general, and more specifically, in the Community Gardens?

■ **JA:** Well, this is our second year in the Community Gardens. As far as gardening goes, well, I guess after I

got my first job, settled in and bought a house. Let's see, that was back in seventy-four—that's a long time ago. I was a city kid, but my father always had a garden, so I guess I grew up with it. I started my own garden and eventually grew seedlings for

other people in the community.

■ **CL:** What is your favorite thing to pull out of your garden? Do you have a favorite vegetable?

■ **JA:** I love tomatoes, eggplant, and garlic. My wife and I really enjoy Italian-style cooking.

■ **CL:** Do you have any tips for first-time gardeners?

■ **JA:** Do what's fun! Grow what you like to eat. It's something you choose to do and it's probably one of the least stressful activities you can do. So grow what you love. It's good for all ages.

■ **CL:** Do you have a favorite recipe you'd like to share?

■ **JA:** The one thing we're most consistent with is pizza. My wife experiments with various types of dough, but the pizza sauce is the same. We make it all summer in hopes of having enough to freeze so that we can have fresh pizza sauce every Saturday, all winter long.

Jim recently sent his fresh pizza sauce recipe and the following information via email:

Take however many tomatoes (some type of Roma or paste tomatoes are best as they have less juice and more pulp) you have (we try to have enough to fill a food processor bowl, but you can start with any amount, and a processor isn't necessary).

Wash them and cut them into quarters (leaving the skins on). Squeeze out the juice and seeds (these can be used for some other sauce if you wish).

Add roughly chopped garlic to the remaining tomato pulp. How much you add is a matter of taste. I can't imagine adding too much. Put these two ingredients in a food processor bowl and puree for a few seconds. Or if you are not using a processor chop by hand.

Then add salt, olive oil and fresh basil leaves. How much is a matter of taste. Pepper, oregano, marjoram, and other spices can be added if you wish.

Puree again to the consistency you prefer. We like it somewhat chunky. Then mix in a tablespoon or so of tomato paste, right out of a can.

Pour the sauce into quart freezer bags, label, and stash in the freezer. Each bag can be the sauce for a pizza or two. Though it isn't necessary, we cook the frozen sauce down a bit before we use it on the pizza dough. This reduces the wateriness and fills the kitchen with the great aromas and memories of our summer garden each Saturday night throughout the winter when we fix pizza. A hearty zinfandel and "Prairie Home Companion" are nice accompaniments to this sauce.

On other advice: gardening can be good for the mind and body in lots of ways. In addition to offering personal pleasures such as calmness, joy, accomplishment, satisfaction, etc, and wonderful good foods, it can also provide forms of functional exercise, working lots of joints and muscles in coordination. *

REFLECTIONS

FROM THE SPROUTS PRE-SCHOOL GARDEN

BY LISA COONS, COORDINATOR

They are our most dedicated gardeners. They come in the rain, sleet, and I daresay, if we had a freak snowstorm, they'd come in that too! Our "Sprouts" are completely irreplaceable. These exuberant pre-schoolers (ages 2 1/2 - 5 years) join us on the Hill in the Community Gardens every Wednesday morning at 10 a.m. June to August to connect with the community of Earth through an early experience of gardening.

Of course, I use the term "gardening" pretty loosely here. They'd just as soon eat the seeds I give them to plant as actually put them in the ground. I've learned to adapt my well-intentioned class plans to the interests of the Sprouts and what is happening in the garden each week. If I've failed to notice a "major" development in the garden (such as the mud puddles pooling in the garden area), and made plans to include it in my class, they quickly bring my attention to what is obvious to them (the irresistible need to run unabashedly through them over and over and over and over...) The sheer joy of playing in the rain water, the soil and the straw is a reminder to me to bring a sense of playfulness to any "work."

We take scent, color and texture hikes. We look closely around us and lie down in the grass to watch the clouds above us. We listen to the sound of the wind in the trees and a pileated woodpecker in the distance. We taste each week the bounty that surrounds us in the Community Gardens. Their parents watch in amazement as they children nibble onions, kohlrabi, broccoli, greens and even some flowers and "weeds." Many of the parents themselves are tasting new things, learning new things right alongside their children.

We talk about plant parts and the Sprouts scramble up the "parts" of the sacred corkscrew willow tree that provides the centerpiece for the Kids' Peace Garden. They walk and if their feeling courageous, jump across the tree trunk stepping blocks fashioned just for them and their developing motor skills. They eagerly gift plants around them with water from their cans. At the end of each class, we share our "Sprouts Tea" made from the many herbs and wildflowers in the gardens. I watch them drinking into their growing bodies all that vital earth energy and nutrition and I feel a small triumph over the bottled drink corporations.

These youngsters' natural reverence for all earth's creatures from the lowly worm to the bunnies, snakes and birds (but especially the worm!) that we often see in the gardens brings me to a place of mindfulness and recognition of my own small place on this planet.

I bring the Sprouts to the gardens under the guise of teaching them something and no doubt, they do learn much. However, if I pay careful attention, I just as often find myself in the humble position of student to their life lessons. *



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Parade of Community Gardens across Minnesota**, August 16, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. In our 16th year, we'll celebrate with a potluck lunch and an open house, special events and tours of the gardens.
- **Fall Equinox Harvest Celebration**, Monday, September 22, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Join us for food and fun!
- **Living Well the Second Half of Life Retreat** with Kathleen Mary Kiemen, SSND, October 3 and 4.
- **Spring Forest Qi Gong Level I Workshop**, Saturday, October 18th, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- **Third Annual Earth Justice Conference**, "Web of Life, Way of Life." Saturday, November 15.
- **Winter Solstice Community Celebration**, Sunday, December 21.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

call the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry at 389-4272 or e-mail lcoons@ssndmankato.org

DONATIONS

WE HAVE MANY PEOPLE TO THANK for their generous donations of time, talents and thoughtfulness.

Jim and Kay Ackil
Marty Beil
Diane and Chuck Frost
Ross Gersten
Kari Klingal
Lyn Kruckeberg
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Gladys Schmitz, SSND

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Beyer's Greenhouse
Craig Bruns Farm
The Coffee Hag
Joe and Liza Domeier and Pehling Bay Farm
Tom Depuyt and Lookout Drive Welding

Drummer's Garden Center
Edenvale Nursery
Minnesota Green, a program of the Minnesota State
Horticultural Society

AND A BIG THANK YOU

to our summer intern from MSU, Christal Lustig!

RECIPES:

SUMMER SOLSTICE SHORTBREAD COOKIES

(Recipe compliments of the Coffee Hag)

Oven: 375° F.

1 1/2 c. butter
2/3 c. sugar
2 T. fresh rosemary (chopped)
2 3/4 c. flour
1/4 t. salt
2 t. sugar (dusting)

Cream butter and sugar together. Add dry ingredients (*dough will be somewhat soft*) Refrigerate for 1 hour. Roll out into 1/4" thick. Cut circles or shapes and sprinkle with sugar.

Bake for 8 minutes at 375° F. Makes three dozen 1 1/2" x 2" size cookies. Store in airtight container. Flavor increases with age.

CILANTRO-AVOCADO POTATO SALAD

(Compliments of Michelle Muggli who brought this dish to the spring potluck)

2 lbs. potatoes, diced, and cooked in boiling salted water until tender, drained

1/3 c. finely minced red onions

1 T. minced garlic

1/2 t. Salt & pepper

3 T. extra-virgin olive oil

4 firm-ripe avocados, peeled, pitted, and diced

2 T. fresh lime juice (I used the juice from 1 whole lime.)

1 T. minced jalapeno (I removed the seeds and ribs so mine was mild.)

A handful of cilantro leaves, finely chopped.

Combine potatoes, onions, and garlic in large bowl and sprinkle with 1/2 t. salt and 3 turns pepper. Add olive oil, tossing to coat. Add the avocados, lime juice, jalapenos, and cilantro and toss well to combine. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper to taste. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour before serving.