

Edible Gardens in Schools Draws a Crowd

Over 250 people attended the very successful "Edible Gardens in Schools" Workshop, which took place at the Unitarian Church in Westport, CT Monday, March 16th.

Interested parents, teachers and administrators, some traveling from as far away as Long Island took part in the 4-hour event, which included breakfast, 8 speakers and lunch. The discussion focused on how to introduce edible gardens in schools, as an educational tool to teach our children how food is grown and the importance of healthy food.

The feature presenter Dorothy Mullen explained the connection between children's health, learning ability and what they eat. Dorothy was responsible for getting gardens in all public schools in Princeton New Jersey. She is now helping other towns with this initiative. Those in attendance learned how to connect edible gardens to various subjects and age levels within the school curriculum.

Amy Kalafa, the event organizer and producer of the film ***Two Angry Moms***, talked about the changing times: "My 22-year-old daughter told me yesterday that all the things that embarrassed her about growing up in our family (the metal water bottles, the woven shopping baskets, the roosters crowing, etc) are now "cool" among her generation. I'm happy to ride the "trend" of sustainability. What I hope we can begin to accomplish locally is to establish an understanding of the value of teaching our kids how to grow food not only because it's cool but because their survival, and the survival of our planet depends on this knowledge."

Several comments collected after the event resonated with the idea that there is a strong grass roots energy behind this movement: "Loved learning about the process step by step. I feel closer to making this happen."

One attendee commented on the positive approaches to getting the garden started: "From practical ideas to upbeat solutions to real problems, the panel gave me great insight."

A panel of 6 experts on school gardens shared their knowledge, offering advice and valuable tools for creating edible gardens throughout the region. The momentum for these types of projects was clearly proven at yesterday's event, with an outpouring of ideas, enthusiasm and focus. Some school districts in Fairfield County already have outdoor "garden classrooms", while others are still working on appropriate site plans and permissions. Many area towns have Green Committees, so now the race is on to see which districts will "Grow Green" first. With so many community members eager to take part in making edible

school gardens a reality, local students may be harvesting their first crops before school's out in June.



Local farmer Annie Farrell (Millstone Farm in Wilton), looking at salad day photos