



July 2007  
Summer Issue

Sunflowers, Photo: Getty Images

Plant-A-Lot (PAL) is a project of CENYC's Greening program.

## Inside this issue:

<i>Earth Angels</i>	1- 2
<i>Controlling Weeds</i>	1
<i>Summer Gardening</i>	2,4
<i>Learn It, Grow It, Eat It --Sustainability Through Healthy Eating</i>	3,5
<i>Stew-Map</i>	4
<i>Greening Staff at GreenThumb Workshops</i>	5
<i>ACGA Annual Conference Boston, MA</i>	6

## Earth Angels

Melinda greets me with a hearty welcome calling me an Earth Angel who has come to help her babies - her gardens... and she has many. Currently she is helping create the Garden for Living, sponsored by the Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia Foundation, the NYC Housing Authority and Council on the Environment of NYC's (CENYC) Plant-A-Lot (PAL) project at the George Washington Carver Housing Project. This new garden is just another pearl on the string of gardens Melinda has created including the Garden of Peace, the Garden of Hope and the Garden of Love stretching from 99th to 106th Street. It is quite obvious that these determined gardeners like Melinda, (and those who support them) who have created safe, green havens across the city, are the *real* Earth Angels.

I have spent the last two months as the Rainwater Harvesting Intern with the CENYC's Greening program. Each day is an adventure - the men I

work with know the gardens like family - and have taken me to visit many of their relatives. At each site we meet committed and passionate people working not only to grow gardens but to cultivate their communities. At the 1100 Block Bergen Street Association Garden we met Yvonne, a gardener of over 15 years, whose garden has just won a new rainwater harvesting system through a collaborative sponsorship between Nature's Path and Rodale's *Organic Garden Magazine*. Yvonne shows us her new roses and explains how she is getting ready for the preschool graduation party she hosts each year. The young men working around the garden periodically yell out to her, proudly showing off the pruning and other work they have completed. Her new 1,000 gallon tank, funded in part by Nature's Path, producer of organic cereals ([www.naturespath.com](http://www.naturespath.com)), will replace the barrel system put in over five years ago and will collect water from a new tool shed and the building next door.

*(Continued on p 2)*



5th Street Slope Children's Garden BBQ June 2007, Renovated Summer 2006, Photo:Layman Lee

## Controlling Weeds

The best way to control both annual and perennial weeds in the summer time is to pull the root system out of the ground completely. This can be accomplished by hand or by using a variety of garden tools such as hoes, cultivators and trowels in addition to hand-held weeder. All these tools can be found at the local garden center. Once the roots have been pulled, a mulch can be put down on top of the soil where the weeds were to prevent future weeds from emerging. Other non-toxic cultural controls that prevent weeds would be to remove weed flower heads before they go to seed and pull flowering weeds in the surrounding area such as dandelions, crabgrass, and fox tails to prevent future seed dispersal.

*Find this helpful? Want to submit a question of your own? Every month one garden question will be posted on our website [www.cenyc.org](http://www.cenyc.org) with answers from PAL staff! To submit your question please email [llee@cenyc.org](mailto:llee@cenyc.org) or call 212-788-7935.*

## Earth Angels (cont.)



PAL staff Tom Twente, and Lars Chellberg with Melinda Fultrell. Photo: M'Lis Bartlett

In Harlem, at the Washington Memorial Garden, another gardener, Robert, opens the church next to the garden so that CENYC's PAL staff Lars and I can access the roof and connect a new drain piping system. This system will direct rainwater to the storage

tank located in the garden below providing gardeners easy access to water during dry spells and lower the amount of water the NYC sewer system has to handle during a heavy rainfall. Additionally, any extra water will be piped underground to a low area on the far side of the garden where we have built a rain garden. It is filled with native species -- sedges, cone flower, yarrow and others -- that can tolerate a high influx of rain as well as long dry days.

Robert introduces me to his grandchildren and then gives me a tour of the garden. He points out fruit trees planted over 20 years ago and relates how he and his friend Richard vie for the best peach at the very top of the tree each summer. In the back of the garden, near the apple tree he shows me an old steel drum grill, asking if I know where to get a new one as this has twice burnt through the bottom. He says quietly

that on summer weekends he feeds 80 hungry people who come for BBQ and to sit in the garden.

Each garden that CENYC's PAL staff works with has a special character from vegetable gardens built by pregnant teenage girls, to sites lovingly filled with sculptures made of scrap materials, to those piloting extensive composting systems and composting toilets. Each is maintained by passionate individuals - Earth Angels - who tend their gardens and their surrounding communities with water, compost and compassion. 🌱

By M'Lis Bartlett, Rainwater Harvesting Intern.

M'Lis is a Masters of Landscape Architecture student at the University of Michigan, her internship at CENYC was made possible by the Sussman Foundation.

## Summer Gardening



Impatiens

These are the months you spend a good deal of time just coping with nature, precipitation and natural growth in our urban environment. The weeds will thrive and can quickly outgrow and overcome your plantings in surprisingly little time if you are not on top of maintenance. Cultivation and mulch may help to save much muscle-aching work.

### WATERING GUIDELINES.

When the City temperatures are peaking out and you feel uncomfortable, remember your garden. The garden should be watered before it needs it. The experienced gardener will prevent wilted stems, stalks and leaves by watering before the plants get to the droopy stage. This requires constant attention, even on weekends. When you are away, ask someone to be on standby.

The best time to water is before 11 am. If your closest source of water is the fire hydrant, be sure that you notify your local fire station of your usage and any damaged pentagonal hydrant nuts. In case of water shortages or low pump pressure, you will be expected to lessen your usage of water. Other ways to keep pump pressure high is to ask the cooperation of your fellow residents in not opening up the pump without a sprinkler or reducer cap. Not to

do so is a waste of a valuable resource - water - and can be dangerous in case of fire.

It is much better to soak your plants than it is to sprinkle them. Sprinklers are generally good only for lawns. Trees and shrubs in your garden should receive 5 to 10 minutes per pit from a gently gurgling (not gushing) hose. Do not walk in the soaked area.

Watering devices that may help the new urban gardener adhere to the soak principle are the canvas soil soaker and a head sprinkler or similar trickling nozzle.

The rush and force of the standard spray hose fixture can beat your plants to the ground, and expose the root system by washing away the soil covering; in addition, it will cause the ground to look wet very quickly, when it is not; this is called shallow watering. The perils of shallow watering are several: a thirsty, wilted plant is an easier target for

insects and disease; further, the roots will not penetrate deep down into the soil for new nutrients and anchorage, and lastly, delicate root tips and hairs will dry out and hamper intake of water when it is available.

The most neglected plants are those growing under shade trees. Leaves are umbrellas and while the rest of the garden may have been soaked by summer's earlier showers, the plants under shade trees may still be dry. These areas should be checked and soaked, especially if ground covers and evergreens such as hollies, azaleas and rhododendrons are planted.

**BULBS.** Bearded Iris, usually dormant during July and August, can be planted now. Unlike tulip and daffodil bulbs, the Iris rhizomes require shallow planting and should only be lightly covered with soil to help insure fall growth.

*(Continued on p 4)*

## Learn it, Grow it, Eat it -- Sustainability Through Healthy Eating

High School students in 5 Bronx, New York High Schools are talking food. Small groups of students visit the local bodega and survey the drink choices; others stand in front of their class and demonstrate how much sugar is in a popular soft drink. Classes visit the Jacqueline Denise Davis Community Garden [a PAL supported community garden since 1999] two blocks away to pull weeds, plant seeds and see earthworms, ladybugs and birds in action. What is going on here? The Learn it Grow it Eat it Project is the catalyst behind these activities. Why engage High school students in these activities?

First time visitors to New York City might easily think that they have landed in food heaven. With nearly 20,000 restaurants and over 1,000 mid-to-large-size grocery stores and supermarkets that cater to dozens of ethnicities the city is teeming with a fantastic variety of fresh and prepared foods available 24/7. However, this bounty is not spread evenly throughout the city. Termed the "grocery gap" by some, many low-income neighborhoods have only limited access to fresh, healthy foods. Lacking decent sized supermarkets these neighborhoods tend to be filled with fast-food restaurants and small grocers that often don't offer basics such as fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat milk, and whole wheat bread.

At the same time, under-served communities suffer a disproportionately high number of health problems that can be linked to unhealthy eating. In low income neighborhoods throughout the city, residents are more likely to die from diabetes and other obesity-related problems such as heart disease and stroke. According to the New York City Department of Health 1 in 8 New Yorkers is diagnosed with diabetes – 90% of these cases are type 2 or adult onset diabetes which can be linked to poor eating habits. Perhaps most scary, is the growing number of incidences of childhood/teen diabetes and obesity. Almost a quarter of all New York City elementary school students are obese, compared with a national average of 15 percent. Things are even worse in high schools throughout New York State; the percentage of students who are overweight or are at risk of becoming overweight is nearly 30%. The New York

City health community is in agreement that solutions to these problems require a multi-faceted approach that includes improving food access and nutrition education.

Since its inception in 1970, Council on the Environment of New York City has focused on improving the quality of life of New Yorkers. The Greenmarket farmers markets connect small local farmers directly to city residents in 40 neighborhoods in all five bor-



oughs providing them with fresh fruit and vegetables. The Greening and Open Space Program empowers people in neighborhoods throughout the city to create, manage and sustain community gardens and park/playgrounds. The public school based Environmental Education program engages young people in environmental and health related projects.



This year CENYC joined these three long-standing programs to create "Learn it, Grow it, Eat it" an innovative food/health initiative that we are piloting at five public high schools in the Morrisania section of the South Bronx. The goal of the project is to encourage the 200 participating high school students to take control of their health through nutrition education and improving food access in their schools and community.

**How it Works** The program has in-class and in the garden components. In the classroom students learn about healthy eating, where their food comes from, and sample locally grown and/or organic food. In the community garden students learn to tend the soil and grow vegetables.

In the classroom students develop awareness of healthy and unhealthy foods. The students engage in a dialog about their eating habits and the possible health consequences of a diet high in calories, fat, salt, and sugar. They learn to evaluate the nutritional make-up of meals at favorite fast food restaurants, and learn to decipher food labels such as figuring out how much sugar is in favorite drinks. With this knowledge they brainstorm the healthiest options at neighborhood diners. Students explore the benefits of eating lots of fruits and vegetables and cutting down on junk food.

The students also investigate food safety issues such as fruits and vegetables doused with pesticides and contaminated fish and talk about "food miles" --the energy used and pollution generated by shipping food over thousands of miles. In-class discussions focus on alternatives to the mainstream food distribution system– farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture programs, and growing food in community gardens for themselves.

Throughout, students sample locally grown foods such as apples, berries, purple carrots, cucumbers, and radishes. They make salads and try organic peanut butter without added salt or sugar ("mmm, tastes like crushed peanuts" says one student). To spread their knowledge of healthy eating students in turn offer their schoolmates, teachers and the community locally grown fruits and vegetables at events such as health fairs, parent/teachers night and holiday parties.

It is in the community garden that many students make their first contact with growing food or growing something at all. This past all students planted garlic for summer harvest as they prepared vegetable beds at two local

*(Continued on p 5)*

## Summer Gardening (cont.)

Add bone meal to your bed before planting. Beds that are three years old may be crowded: the rhizomes (Iris bulbs) can be dug up, divided and replanted now.

**PROPAGATION.** Perennials such as Campanula, Coreopsis, Dianthus, Delphinium, and herbs should be seeded now. Some annuals can still be sown: Portulaca, Balsam, Zinnias and Poppies. Now is also the time to take cuttings of your large Impatiens, Coleus, Artemesia, Verbenas, Pinks, Euonymus and Pachysandra. Shrubs with runners e.g., Hydrangeas and Forsythias, may be propagated by layering: even climbing Roses may take root if fastened down in soft, friable soil with an anchor, such as a bent coat-hanger or clothes pin and kept moist. Chrysanthemum plants can still be set out in the garden.



**VEGETABLES.** You can still try for Tomato, Eggplant, Pepper and some Summer Squashes by setting plants out now. Weeding is a must if you want to keep your food plants thriving. Winter Potatoes, Winter Squashes, Lima Beans, Sunflowers and Midget Corn are some plants you might start from seed in the garden now, along with cool season

crops such as cabbage, kale, collards and spinach. Vacant areas such as your garden path or spring bulb beds can be sown with green manure crops such as Soybean, Vetch or Clover.

**COMPOST HEAP.** Enrich your pile and recycle grass clippings, weeds and organic garbage from your kitchen.

**HEDGES.** Privet, Hemlock and Yews will respond to shaping and shearing now.

**INSECTS.** Keep an open mind -- try different, integrated methods of coping with insects and keep trying until you find what works for you. Remove standing buckets of H2O from the garden.

**MAINTENANCE.** Dead flowers should be removed as quickly as possible, taking care not to remove extra foliage. Pinch back premature flower buds from existing plants -- this will insure

fuller, stronger growth.

**SUN.** During the summer months be sure to protect yourself as well as your plants from the burning rays of the sun. Try to stay out of the mid-day heat and wear a brimmed hat on particularly brutal days.

**FIRST AID.** It is a good idea to keep a well-stocked first-aid kit on hand at all times. An old coffee can with a plastic top containing Band-Aids, disinfectant, gauze pads, surgical tape, smelling salts, scissors, string, a triangular bandage and safety pins will suffice. Stay hydrated by drinking lots of water.

**BULLETIN BOARD.** Keep your bulletin board in good shape and up-to-date. Post community news and volunteer sign-up sheets for border maintenance, watering, weeding, cultivation, compost duty, etc. 🌿

Help put your group on the map.  
Don't let your hard work go unnoticed!



STEW-MAP\* is New York City's first ever inventory and map of the more than 5,000 civic environmental groups working in our amazing city. This spring you should be receiving a mail or email form from the STEW-MAP team and we are encouraging you to fill it out.

Council on the Environment of NYC (CENYC), along with a dozen different citywide greening groups and 20 other organizations are working with researchers from the US Forest Service and Columbia University on this project. Together we will **count, map, and connect** all the different forms of environmental work happening in NYC – including gardening, park advocacy, beach cleanup, education, and more. Remember: it is the people who clean and green NYC for the present and the future.

If you have any questions: contact Lindsay Campbell of the Forest Service at 212-637-4175 or email [stew-map@columbia.edu](mailto:stew-map@columbia.edu).

\*STEW-MAP = the Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project

## Learn it, Grow it, Eat it -- Sustainability Through Healthy Eating (cont.)

community gardens for spring planting. Students engaged in activities such as weeding, amending soil, planting rye and wheat grass as cover crops, and starting a compost pile. Besides acquiring gardening skills students learned first-hand about seasonality, poor soil and how to amend it, and invertebrate life in the South Bronx. To help the students make the connection from seed to table, the students have ordered seeds and planned for spring planting with an eye toward including vegetables with the highest nutritional content along side their favorites.

School based gardening programs often fail because students leave in June just as the vegetable garden needs care and offers lessons on plant growth. When they return in September, the garden is weed choked or has succumbed to drought. To bridge the gap between spring and fall CENYC will be offering paid internships to our students to help cultivate summer vegetables. In addition to gardening, the interns will publicize farmers markets and the availability of other healthy food in the neighborhood. They will

also decide what to do with our harvest: eat it, donate it, and/or sell it.

As 'Learn it, Grow it, Eat it grows CENYC hopes to expand the program to other neighborhoods and partner with other organizations such as the New York City Department of Health to assist with programs that encourage healthy eating in low income communities, The Office of School Foods (which feeds over 1 million public school students per day) to help bring healthy and local food choices into school cafeterias and community-based food justice organizations to make sure residents of the students' communities are aware of healthy foods and where to find them.

CENYC hopes that the teens that come through our program empower themselves to teach their communities about the link between healthy eating and the environment. Often it is small comments made by students that show a growing awareness of this connection. At the Martha Neilson School students are talking about reducing exposure to

pesticides while continuing to eat lots of fruits and vegetables. I ask the students how they can do this. Sierra answers "buy organic". I ask "what if there is no where to buy organic in your neighborhood?" Sierra thinks for a moment and then offers "then grow it yourself." 🌱

By Lenny Librizzi, Assistant Director, Greening & David Saphire, Environmental Education. Photos: David Saphire.

Note: Article appeared in Public Garden magazine (July 2007).



## Greening Staff at GreenThumb Workshops!

### Organic Gardening

GERARD LORDAHL, DIRECTOR - OPEN SPACE GREENING PROGRAM, CENYC

"Organic" - - what does it mean? Gerard will demystify the word with practical advice on how to fertilize your plants, promote healthy soil and manage pests using organic methods.

**Thursday, July 19th 5:30 - 7:30pm MANHATTAN at La Plaza Cultural - Armando Perez**

650 East 9th Street @ Avenue C

Subway: 6 to Astor Place. L to 1st Avenue. Bus: M21 runs N-S on Avenue C. M9 runs N-S on Avenue B, M8 runs E on East 9th Street.

Giveaway: *fish emulsion fertilizer, soil pH testing kits, "Organic Gardening" magazine and a raffle for 2 ACGA memberships*

**For more information on GreenThumb workshops visit: <http://www.greenthumbnyc.org/>**

### GT Approved Structures

EDIE STONE, GREENTHUMB AND LENNY LIBRIZZI, OPEN SPACE GREENING PROGRAM, CENYC

Ever wonder - - What can I build in my community garden? GreenThumb has recently been issued guidelines from the Department of Buildings for acceptable structures in community gardens. Come here the director of GT talk about how these guidelines will impact existing and future gazebos, casitas, shade pavilions and sheds.

Afterwards, Lenny will give a short talk on how Model T's structure was built to provide shade and meeting space while harvesting rainwater.

**Monday, July 23rd 5:30 - 7:30pm, BRONX at Model T Garden**

1312 Bristow Street, b/t Jennings & Freeman

Subway: 2/5 to Freeman Street. Walk west on Freeman 2 blocks. Turn right Garden is on the right, next to the school. Bus: BX19 runs N-S on Southern Boulevard.

Giveaway: *hammers, work gloves, GT approved guidelines handout*

### The Poop on Composting Toilets

TOM TWENTE, OPEN SPACE GREENING PROGRAM, CENYC; DAN TAINOW, COMPOST PROJECT, QUEENS BOTANICAL GARDEN AND HANNAH RISELEY-WHITE, GREEN GUERRILLAS

Join Dan and Tom, as they provide an overview of composting toilet technology and alternatives. Dan will address the basics of composting toilets. The new sustainable Visitor/Administrative building at QBG will have a composting toilet to conserve water, nutrients, and sewage capacity. Tom will cover relevant city codes and standards and focus on realistic compost toilet system options for community gardens. Hannah will give a detailed tour of her garden's compost toilet.

**Thursday, August 2nd 5:30 - 7:30pm MANHATTAN at Pleasant Park**

439 East 114th Street b/t 1st & Pleasant Avenue

Subway: 6 to 116th Street Bus: M16 runs N-S on East 116th Street. M15 runs S on 2nd Avenue & N on 1st Avenue. Walk east on 116th 3 blocks, turn right on 1st Avenue. Turn left on East 114th Street.

Giveaway: *"The Composting Toilet System Book", by Steinfeld and Del Porto and "The Humanure Handbook", by Joseph Jenkins*



**Thank you for participating in our Annual Plant Sale!**

This May 100+ groups purchased over \$25,000 worth of flowering annuals, perennials, vegetables and vines, at cost, for use in their community gardens, other public greening projects or to re-sell the plants as a fundraising event. Thank you to everyone who participated and see you again next year!

## ACGA's 28th Annual Conference

*Beantown Digs Community Gardens*  
Boston, Massachusetts on August 9-12, 2007

The American Community Gardening Association's (ACGA) Annual Conference brings together hundreds of individuals from across the United States, Canada, and abroad, who are engaged in all aspects of gardening and greening. The conference includes hands-on workshops, keynote speakers, a film festival, and visits to parks, school gardens, community gardens, and other green spaces in the Boston area.

**Beantown Digs Community Gardens**, the 28th annual ACGA conference to be held in Boston, will showcase the Boston area's over 200 community gardens and urban agriculture projects. The 2007 conference is being held at Northeastern University in the heart of Boston -- with 35 community gardens within a mile walking distance. Over three and a half days, there will be workshops, bicycling, walking, and bus tours to Boston's diverse community gardens and other green sites, keynote speakers, a film festival, buffet of locally-raised food at Boston's premier "green" building, a silent auction, and more. 🌱



Visit [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org) for more information or call 1-888-275-2242 (1-888-ASK-ACGA).



51 Chambers Street, Rm 228  
New York, New York 10007

[www.cenyc.org](http://www.cenyc.org)

### Greening Staff

Gerard Lordahl  
*Director*

Lenny Librizzi  
*Assistant Director*

Thomas Twente

Lars Chellberg

Layman Lee