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<http://groups.google.com/group/vinesbinghamton>

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and also Donald Allen, Peggy Benz, Lisa Bloodnick, Marty Butts, Chuck Cummings, Doug Daly, Ben Farrer, Steve Googin, Joe Graney, Dan Jelsma, Jerome Rigot, John Schminkton, Alan Steinberg, and all of our volunteers!

Land Sponsors

Richard Andrus (Corbett Ave Garden)
Duncan Family (Columbus Garden)
Angela Testani (Pine St Garden)
City of Binghamton (Tudor St Urban Farm Site, Laurel Ave Garden)

VINES is an volunteer organization which supports and promotes urban food production. Our work is made possible by the hard work of our volunteers and the generosity of our donors.

Please consider donating to VINES to help our projects thrive!

~ All donations to VINES are tax-deductible ~

All donors will be recognized on our website and in our newsletter. Donations over \$1,000 will be recognized on a plaque at the garden of the donor's choosing for two years.

**Support VINES by sending your donation to:
VINES P.O. Box 3104 Binghamton, NY 13902**

VINES Meetings

VINES meets monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm
RiverRead Books, 5 Court St in Binghamton (www.riverreadbooks.com).

Call 607-205-8108 to confirm meetings.

All are welcome!



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Mission Statement

VINES is an organization committed to developing a sustainable and just community food system. We do this by bringing together diverse groups of people, with a focus on youth development, to establish community gardens, urban agriculture and community green spaces. We strive to develop and beautify urban sites and empower community members of all ages and abilities.

Upcoming

Workshops:

• **February 22nd @ 6pm:**

Vegetable Gardening 101 with Renee Schloupt, BC Library Exhibit Room

• **March 17th @ 1pm:**

Garden Bed Planning, BC Library Exhibit Room

• **March 31st @ 1pm:** Seed Starting Workshop with Allen Steinberg, BUF Greenhouse

NEWSLETTER OF VOLUNTEERS IMPROVING NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENTS

COMMUNITY GARDEN TIMES

February 2012

Greetings from the Chair

With the snow and ice happening outside, now is the time I start planning my garden and flex my gardening muscles! I find inspiration in spring's seed and plant catalogs that are now hitting the mailboxes or find them online where many websites are updated with the newest information. Not only does thumbing (or clicking) through the colorful pages chase away the winter blues, but they're chocked full of great ideas for next seasons' plantings.

Every year I keep a garden journal and inspiration file. In my journal, I take a look at what worked and what didn't last year. My tomatoes had me swimming in

pasta sauce, I had the tiniest leeks I've ever seen, I didn't plan and do enough successive plantings, my peppers weren't as abundant as I'd hoped ... on and on. I decide what stays, what goes and what rotation I'll be using this year. I place my seed orders and decide that MY Spring has arrived!

I hope that you'll find inspiration in our newsletter; read about what happened last year at the VINES gardens, what's planned for the 2012 growing season, what classes are being offered and how to get involved. Rent a garden plot, learn from your neighboring gardeners, enjoy the camaraderie that is part of com-

munity gardening. If you haven't joined us in the past, what are you waiting for? If you're a returning gardener, welcome back!

I am proud to be a member of this organization. The volunteers work hard and give of their time freely so that we may all enjoy gardening throughout the greater Binghamton area. If you are able to volunteer your time to help out, there are many ways to help! If you can afford it, please consider a donation to VINES as well. Every penny helps toward building new community gardens and upgrading existing ones. Whatever you decide to do, join our family!

-Connie Barnes, Chair

Binghamton Urban Farm Update

During the winter we take time to reflect on the past year and plan our summer youth employment program, and the 2012 growing season. In January and February, urban farm managers attended the Northeast Organic Farmers Association Winter Conference and the Food Project Winter Institute where they gained more knowledge about urban agriculture and youth programming. The urban farm is growing in so many ways, and we are excited to start growing in the new year.

While the urban farm has been doing a lot of planning we have also been participating at the winter farmers market. VINES assisted in organizing the winter farmers market at the Metro Center in Downtown Binghamton, which has been a huge success. Sponsored by the City of Binghamton Economic Development Department and the Otsiningo Farmers Market Association the downtown location

has greatly benefitted farmers and serves as an accessible venue for a wide range of customers. The Metro Center welcomed the farmers market into its doors and donated the market fee to area flood relief efforts. The market operates every 2nd and 4th Saturday where 15-20 vendors from the Greater Binghamton area sell a variety of goods. For the first time, the market participates during First Friday Art Walk where the market is open from 5pm-8pm, and hosts a variety of art and food events such as an infused oil demonstration, pottery demonstration, and local foods fair.

At the winter farmers market the Binghamton Urban Farm sells pea and sunflower shoots, which are a tasty and healthy micro-green. We also sell a variety of New York State goods such as organic fresh vegetables from Stick and Stone farm in Ithaca,

organic grains and dried beans from Gianforte Farm in Cazenovia, organic pasta made with NYS grain from Flour City Pasta in Fairport, and cold pressed sunflower oil grown and processed by Stolor Organics in Cazenovia. We also sell gift certificates so you can give friends the gift of supporting the Binghamton Urban farm! We are very thankful for our supporters and the community where the urban farm sits. See you all at the Farmers Market!



From Left: Mayor Matt Ryan, Lauren Tonti: VINES Americorps Service Member and Niechelle Wade President of the Otsiningo Farmers Market Inc and Owner/Operator of Sunny Hill

BUF: Youth Interview

Amanda Marquez participated in the VINES Summer Youth Employment Program on the Binghamton Urban Farm for six weeks in the summer of 2011. VINES Board Member and Youth Program Supervisor Rebecca Heller-Steinberg interviewed Amanda about her experience with the program.

Question: What was your favorite part of the Summer Youth Employment Program?
Amanda: My absolute favorite part of the program would have to be coming up with and preparing our weekly meals.

Question: Did you get to do anything for the first time while working at the farm? What?
Amanda: I'd never harvested vegetables before working at the farm so that was a first for me.

Question: Did you learn any new skills while working at the farm? What are they?
Amanda: Working on the

farm with 11 different people taught me so many things. The main thing it taught me was working with other people isn't always going to be easy, but you have to learn to put certain things aside to get the job done.

Question: What else did you learn or gain from participating in the program?

Amanda: I also learned that the local farmers market sells more than just fruits and vegetables. You can get a variety of different things ranging from cookies and cakes to meats and spices.

Question: What crops that you helped grow at the farm do you like to eat? How do you recommend preparing them?

Amanda: I personally LOVE cucumbers; I eat them all the time. When I prepare my cucumbers, I peel them, then slice them into thin pieces and put them in a bowl. I then take some vinegar and vegetable oil

and mix it in. Then I add the most important ingredient - Goya Salad & Vegetable seasoning. After that, it's good to eat.

Question: What would you say to others considering applying to the Summer Youth Program?

Amanda: I would tell them [to] do it; it's a great experience and it's also a lot of fun.

Question: What do you think VINES and the Urban Farm contribute to the community?

Amanda: I think VINES and the Urban Farm contribute a lot to the community. They give people the option to buy fresh produce that was grown by people for the community.



(Above) Amanda Marquez during the Summer Youth Employment Program

(Below) The Binghamton Urban Farm



Gregory Lane Garden Update

The seeds have been planted on Gregory Lane. Well, not literally, but by the time spring rolls around, VINES' newest garden will be well on the way towards its first growing season. Thanks to a generous donation by Schoolyard Village residents Scott Lauffer and Richard and Lynda Wragge, the empty lot at Gregory Lane and Starr Avenue in Binghamton's First Ward is now VINES property. Scott Lauffer eyed the "for sale" sign planted on the corner and an idea sprouted. Rather than envisioning more townhouses or perhaps something even less aesthetically pleasing, he pictured a community-shared green space. The Wragges, long time residents of the area, embraced



Gregory Lane future garden site, off of Starr Ave.

the idea. Both are avid gardeners, bringing expertise to planning and development of the garden. At approximately 122'x75' Gregory Lane is VINES' largest acquisition. At a time when VINES spaces are fully utilized, it will expand capacity by 25-30 beds, including several handicapped accessi-

ble beds.

Two well-attended planning meetings have been held, and Scott Lauffer, The Wragges and Kathy Cronin have volunteered as garden coordinators. Deciding on the lay-out of the beds as well as special features to provide a stamp of eye and soul -pleasing individuality generated lively discussion, and the creativity juices were flowing! Eschewing straight lines was easily agreed upon. Plans will be finalized in late January. With the conclusion of planning we can move forward with the purchase of materials and begin to build. Construction will be accomplished in phases. How quickly it proceeds and is completed will depend on funding availability. Various funding

options are being explored.

We are hoping to attract neighborhood involvement once the garden becomes a reality. New gardeners will be drawn in and come to realize the joys and benefits of growing their own food. The Gregory Lane Garden will provide a much needed open space where beauty and serenity prevail.

A plot rental rate has not been established. When decided upon, it will be posted on the VINES website and Facebook page. For more information, contact Kathy Cronin at kcronin55@gmail.com or Scott Lauffer at lauffer.scott@gmail.com.

Starting Seeds Indoors

A good place to start when starting seeds are the directions provided by the seed company that has bred the plant you will be growing. Seed companies spend several generations caring for the plants that produce the seeds we grow in our gardens. Their directions come from experience with the plant and in general should be followed for planting and spacing.

Getting a seed to germinate and begin the life cycle of the plant depends on many factors. The most basic of these are the moisture level and temperature of the soil. Whether starting seeds directly in your garden or indoors under grow lights, soil should be as moist as a rung out sponge. You may need to water more often when first starting seeds directly in your garden because seeds are sown near the surface of the soil where moisture evaporates more quickly. Also be sure that your soil is sufficiently warm,

and there is no danger of frost.

For an earlier season some gardeners start seeds indoors. To start seeds indoors you will need a table, grow lights, some containers to start seeds in and potting soil. Different seeds are sown at different depths in the potting soil. Once again it is helpful to refer to the seed package for this kind of information. After the seeds are sown and watered place the containers underneath the lights. Allow for about three inches of space between the top of the soil and the lights. Before germination seeds do not need light, but the heat lights generate can speed up the germination process. After germination keep lights on for twelve hours a day, and as your seedlings grow raise the height of the lights.

Plants started indoors need to get used to being outside before they are transplanted. This is called "hardening off". During the warmest part of the

day place your plants in an area that gets good sun exposure and is protected from wind and animals. Gradually increase the amount of time your plants spend outside until they are strong enough to be planted in the ground.

Here are some garden tips for February!

- Plant seeds for cold crops (cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, etc) indoors 6-8 weeks before transplanting time (14 hours of daylight)
- Start hardy herb seeds indoors
- Order shrubs and trees, including fruit, from nursery catalogs (choose companies based in our region, such as Fedco Trees, St. Lawrence Nurseries, and Miller Nurseries)
- Plan vegetable garden arrangement, rotating crop bed annually



Allen Steinberg teaching at the seed starting workshop last spring

Mather Street Garden Update

Last year, Design Your Own Park and Safe Streets Binghamton contacted VINES about creating a new garden site at 26 Mather Street on the West Side of Binghamton. With the help of Michele Warner, the Mather Street Site Coordinator, 6 garden beds were built at the site. Everyone can hardly wait for spring to arrive to continue building and growing!

This past month the Southern Tier Young Professionals recently contacted VINES to offer a grant as well as in-kind volunteer hours to help finish building the garden. Catalysts for Intellectual Capital 2020, a student-run economic development think tank at Binghamton University, contacted



26 Mather Street Neighbors building six garden beds last fall

Mather Street garden is off to a great start.

Some of the future site plans include 4 more 4' by 8' garden beds for a total of 10 all together, a large flower and herb beautification box, fruit trees and shrubs, composting, benches, and maybe even tables to play chess or checkers at. The

VINES to get university students involved and to help beautify the garden with possible murals, sculptures, and tiling. With so many wonderful people working together, the

possibilities are endless! The first garden visioning meeting of the year will be held on Saturday, February 25th, at 11 A.M., at Tabernacle UMC. Another meeting or

two will be held in March, and then hopefully we'll be well on our way to making our plans a reality by April and May. Please join us at our visioning meetings to help this garden come to fruition. You can help make this garden successful and improve the quality of life in our neighborhood! For more information contact Christine Cebula at christine24cebula@gmail.com.