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### Special Thanks

Earth Day Southern Tier ([www.myedst.org](http://www.myedst.org))  
City of Binghamton ([www.cityofbinghamton.com](http://www.cityofbinghamton.com))  
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**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](http://www.riverreadbooks.com)).

Call 607-205-8108 to confirm meetings.

**All are welcome!**

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Website:  
[www.vinescommunitygardens.org](http://www.vinescommunitygardens.org)

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



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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:

Season Extension,  
October 15th at 2pm at the Urban farm, 16 Tudor St

Vermi-composting with CCE's Kevin Mathers,  
October 27th at 6:30pm in the BC Library Exhibit Room

NEWSLETTER OF VOLUNTEERS IMPROVING NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENTS

# COMMUNITY GARDEN TIMES

September 2011

## Greetings from the Chair

I happen to have a special affection for community gardens. I am a voyeur of sorts, wandering among plots planted by people determined to have a garden--even when they don't own the land on which to plant one. And community gardens have a social aspect that is mostly lacking from a private garden. By definition communal, although they consist of individual plots, community gardens are places where gardeners get together to share stories, learn from each other, perhaps trade some produce ... and even a few smiles.

I experience a lot of emotion in these gardens mostly because I

find them so touchingly human. Completely without pretension, these gardens are 100% authentic. They are modest. They are communal, and yet, in each one, I can read the personality of the individual gardener. Most of all, they are gardens that testify to the strength of the human desire to plant a seed and nourish oneself and others with what it produces.

Neighbors, students, children, seniors ... all share this common effort to grow and eat fresh organic food ... to treat themselves to the first bite of a juicy ripe tomato, the crisp pop of fresh corn, the bite of healthful greens,

or perhaps the gorgeous scents of herbs.

VINES Community Gardens are offered at a reasonable cost and they are accompanied by an offering of classes that include, but are not limited to, composting, canning, garden design, companion planting and more. If you are already renting one of our plots, thank you. We hope you've found your garden to be a special place. Or, if you're interested in a plot, let us know! We do our best to be sure that everyone who wants one gets a very special growing place - for your garden and for your soul.

~ Connie Barnes, VINES Chair

## Binghamton Urban Farm Update

This growing season at the Binghamton Urban Farm has been bittersweet. It was our first full growing season and our first season with the greenhouse. We grew a lot of food, had a great summer youth program (see next page), and learned a lot in the process. Overall, we consider this year a great success, and we are proud of what was accomplished with the help of our fantastic youth crew and so many other volunteers.

However, like so many across the region we experienced loss with the September flooding. The Urban Farm was submerged in water as deep as four feet. The flood waters were contaminated with not only bacteria but a significant amount of petroleum. As a result, we lost our fall crops and some of our soil. Though we are being told by experts in the environmental engineering field that we should not be concerned about long term contamination of the soil (since gasoline and diesel

are volatile liquids that evaporate into the atmosphere), we are taking a number of precautionary steps to ensure that the soil is safe for food production.

We will be testing the soil for contaminants several times before the next growing season, aerating the soil to help the petroleum evaporate, and using oyster mushrooms to help pull contaminants out of the soil. Mycoremediation, the removal of toxins from the environment using mushrooms, and phytoremediation, the removal of toxins using plants, have been shown to improve soil and water quality after petroleum contamination. These two methods will be incorporated into the Urban Farm's remediation process. We will be working with the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry to measure our progress.

As a result of this drastic shift in production, the Urban Farm will no longer hold farm stand



Shaquell Heyliger, Youth crew team leader selling veggies at the Otsiningo Farmers' Market

hours for the 2011 season. The Urban Farm is still at the Otsiningo Park Farmers market selling local products such as cheese, dried beans, and micro-greens. As we monitor our soil at the Urban Farm we will keep everyone updated on our progress. Nevertheless we still plan to have another successful growing season next year.

### VINES 2nd Summer Youth Employment Program at the Urban Farm a Big Success!

This year's Summer Youth Employment Program employed 12 Binghamton youth, while teaching them valuable job skills and providing essential assistance in continuing to develop the Urban Farm. The program was funded through the City of Binghamton's Green Jobs Grant, which comes from Community Development Block Grant funds. The program benefited greatly from a partnership with Broome County Gang Prevention (BCGP).

The program expanded upon last year's achievements, incorporating many of the same successful activities and projects. As in 2010, youth learned about the process of growing and selling produce from start to finish. They also cooked with produce grown at the farm, prepared a meal which was shared with BCGP's Growing Connection program, Mayor Matt Ryan, and several residents at the Binghamton Housing Authority (BHA). Youth employees met local farmers and learned about our



(Above) 2011 Youth crew with Dorian Lans, SYEP Supervisor from Broome County Gang Prevention



(Right Top) Binghamton Mayor and Binghamton BHA residents being served food prepared by the Youth crew



(Right Bottom) Building VINES' farmers' market sign

food system and the importance of supporting local farms.

This year's program also included some new components based on our research on other successful urban agriculture youth programs. We employed two of the youth as crew leaders, giving them an additional level of responsibility and an opportunity to gain more leadership skills and training. We also incorporated

a feedback component called Straight Talk, which gave youth a chance to learn about their strengths and opportunities for improvement, increase their self knowledge and communication skills, and improve their ability to give and receive feedback. The program this year also incorporated more job and life skills training – all youth finished the program with a completed resume to use in

future job searches and also learned some of the basics of interviewing for a job, opening a bank account, and money management.

Many thanks to the wonderful group of youth participants that worked on the farm this summer. We shared a lot with them, learned a lot from them, and we hope many of them will come back to work with us again next summer!

### Pine Street Community Garden Member Feature: Sherry Campon

Sherry Campon rented a plot for the first time this year at the community garden on Pine Street. Chrissy Cebula, VINES board member and Pine Street Coordinator, interviewed Sherry about her experience as a member of the garden.

**Question:** Have you gardened prior to renting a plot on Pine Street?

**Sherry:** Yes. I've had a garden since about ten years ago, starting with four little plants. Since then it's gotten bigger and bigger every year.

**Question:** What is your favorite vegetable to grow, and how

do you like to eat it?

**Sherry:** My favorite vegetable to grow is tomatoes because you can eat them raw and you don't have to cook them. A homegrown garden tomato is the best. I also like to grow cucumbers.

**Question:** What do you like most about the garden?

**Sherry:** The front rock gardens with flowers and herbs look the best. We want to thank Cheryl for helping with the rock gardens!

**Question:** Do you feel like you've gotten to know more people in your community

since renting a plot?

**Sherry:** Definitely. The community feels like it's coming together with this garden. So many people have stopped by and talked with me about it, and mentioned how nicely it's coming along.

**Question:** Do you think that community gardens are a positive addition to a neighborhood?

**Sherry:** Yes, I definitely think they're a good thing. In the four years that I have lived next door, when there weren't any plots, it's gone from overgrown and empty to flowers, vegeta-

bles, and a lovely place for the community to gather. Everyone can benefit from a community garden!



Sherry Campon with her plot this Spring at the Pine Street Garden

### Susquehanna Valley Mycological Society

Are you interested in finding local wild mushrooms to cook with, but aren't certain when to find them or how to safely identify them?

Each year the Susquehanna Valley Mycological Society (SVMS) meets for several forays, searching for wild mushrooms with mycologists who can safely identify edible ones. SVMS is a friendly and diverse group of fungophiles and for a small annual fee (individual or family memberships are available), anyone can join the group. During the 2011 season, five different walks were planned, from Owego to Martin's Forest in Oak-

land, Pennsylvania. While there weren't as many black trumpets this year, there were many morels to be found, and each trip will offer new findings. These walks sometimes include family-friendly activities such as swimming or camping and will be well worth the time.

See [svmsonline.org](http://svmsonline.org) for details on the forays, which are an invaluable resource for learning about edible mushrooms. Appreciate the often overlooked bounty of our area's terrain and climate by enjoying food that costs only the time it takes to harvest and cook!



Dryad's saddle found on a SVMS Foray (Source: SVMS Website)

### Square Foot Gardening— Grow More in Less Space!

In the 1970's, an engineer named Mel Bartholomew invented a way for gardeners to grow vegetables in only 20% of the space normally needed for a garden. According to Bartholomew, in a raised garden bed only 4'x4', enough greens and vegetables can be produced during a growing season for a family of four!

Square foot gardens need a few key ingredients to be successful. A location that gets 6 to 8 hours of sun, has good drainage, and either 100% compost or a mix of coarse vermiculite, peat moss, and compost are crucial for square foot gardening. Compost is necessary to make sure that your vegetables get all of the nutrients they need. Saving your kitchen vegetable scraps and placing them in a separate area until they are completely decomposed is a great way to make your own compost!

After your raised square foot garden bed has these



Garden beds planted using the square foot gardening method.

features, make a grid for each box 1'x1' big, which will make 16 boxes. Then plant a different flower, vegetable, or herb in each square. There can be 1, 4, 9, or 16 plants per square, depending on the size of the plant. Below are a few examples of how many crops can be planted in a 1'x1' square.

**1 Plant per Square Foot:** Potatoes, Collards, Broccoli, Kale, Tomatoes, Peppers,

Okra, Pumpkins.  
**4 Plants per Square Foot:** Parsley, Basil, Chards, Bok Choy, Lettuce, Strawberries.  
**9 Plants per Square Foot:** Beets, Spinach, Garlic, String Beans, Peas.  
**16 Plants per Square Foot:** Carrots, Radishes, Onions, Green Onions.

After planning out your garden, plant only 2 to 3 seeds per hole and plant transplants

in a saucer shaped depression. Water your garden by hand with sun warmed water, and be careful not to step anywhere on the soil that you're growing in. When you finish harvesting a crop, replant something else! Many plants can be grown in a 1'x1' square throughout a growing season. Square foot gardening can save time, water, work, and money! For more information visit [www.squarefootgardening.com](http://www.squarefootgardening.com)