

CDCG presents...the veggie mobile

A few years ago Capital District Community Gardens' staff read about a mobile organic market roaming the streets of West Oakland, California. That market's mission: to make healthy foods more accessible to people in need by selling direct to the people. They were addressing the same problems of food security and access to nutritious foods that we had identified right here in the Capital District and that we continue to address with our Community Gardens and Squash Hunger programs. CDCG adapted this idea to fit our Tri-city area; the project was planned and grants applied for and received. It is with great enthusiasm that we are able to announce that **our very own Veggie Mobile will hit the streets of Albany, Troy, and Schenectady in Spring 2007!**



Aside from being tasty, vegetables fill an important part of human life: the hungry belly - and they do so with nutritious goodness. Most of us know just how important fruits and vegetables are to a healthy lifestyle. If a person eats the recommended daily amounts of all of the food groups, you would be eating about 4½ cups of fruits and veggies a day. But if you live in a neighborhood where the nearest grocery store is miles away and you don't have a car, your access to these essential staples is limited. Unfortunately corner markets filled with highly processed foods, liquor, tobacco, candy and fast food are your easiest options.

The staff and volunteers at Capital District Community Gardens are working hard to bring this Veggie Mobile to

life. We are in the process of procuring a UPS-style step van that we will retrofit with refrigeration and shelving units. The refrigeration units will be powered by photovoltaic cells and the truck will run on biodiesel, making it a truly green machine. To make the Veggie Mobile charmingly conspicuous, it will be colorfully painted and outfitted with a sound system that will announce our presence before we arrive.

We plan on targeting the neighborhoods of Arbor Hill in Albany, Hamilton Hill or Goose Hill in Schenectady, and North Central Troy. Our selection of these three areas is based upon several factors: the percentage of residents at or below the poverty level, percentage of children eligible for free lunch, and most significantly, lack of access to fresh produce. The truck will make a one-hour stop at each location every day of operation. During these stops, the brightly painted truck will be parked in a safe high traffic and highly visible location while "open" for business.

The Veggie Mobile will also include a *Taste and Take* program targeting senior centers and some of our region's more isolated public housing projects. Taste and Take will offer produce from local farmers for residents to taste and then take home at no charge. This program will introduce residents to fresh produce items and provide information on how to prepare them.

The NYS Department of Health has already made a strong commitment of funds in support of the Veggie Mobile Project with a grant of more than \$100,000 over a

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from our window

Amy Klein, Executive Director

The mission of Capital District Community Gardens is to educate and engage the community in organic gardening and urban revitalization for the benefit of the Region and the health of its citizens. In operation for over 30 years, CDCG manages 46 community gardens in Albany, Rensselaer & Schenectady Counties, plants hundreds of city street trees each year, and works with community groups to improve the overall appeal of our cities and the quality of life for residents.

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Activities for CDCG staff have been a bit unusual this fall. Of course we planted trees and cleaned up the gardens for the season. We continued to collect produce for Squash Hunger and teach children about its importance with our Taste Good Series. And we began planning for the exciting launch of our Veggie Mobile. But facing the potential LOSS of THREE long-time community gardens and fighting to save one garden from immediate destruction was unusual territory for us.

While Community Gardens' staff has many talents, we are a bit out of our element in the legal arena. But that's exactly where we found ourselves this fall when our Morris Street Garden was threatened with abrupt closure.

We were asked to create the Morris Street Garden for neighborhood use in 1998 by the former owners of the property. At the time we thought a 15-year lease on the property was enough security to justify the development of this garden on land we did not own. It took us two years to develop this site at great expense – both in cost and staff time. The City of Albany also expended resources to help create this neighborhood resource. These costs do not take into account all that the gardeners have put into this site over the years to get the soil “just right” or to plant raspberries, asparagus or other perennial crops.

Since 2000 this community garden has been utilized by 18 families growing their own food. The food produced by the garden each year impacts more than 70 individuals and reaches beyond those families through our Squash Hunger program and sharing with neighbors, friends and extended family.

We have tried to negotiate with The Community Preservation Corporation, the current owners of the Morris Street Garden property, to preserve the garden – asking them to honor our lease, or to plan their development around the garden and we offered to purchase the property but they have refused all of our efforts. We are now forced to work in the unfamiliar legal realm to try to save this vital neighborhood resource from destruction.

The Dana Avenue and the Downtown Troy Gardens are also vulnerable to pressures. The Dana Avenue Garden was created in 1996 and although it is in the middle of the Park South Development Area, we are hopeful that this important green space can be preserved. The Downtown Troy Garden is one of our oldest (created in 1988) and most active gardens located in the heart of the City. The site's owners have made a strong commitment to preserving this garden despite its proximity to the planned Congress Street Corridor Project. We are very grateful for their support and believe we can work together to protect this beautiful neighborhood treasure.

After years of hard work and tens of thousands of dollars for creation and upkeep, it is heartbreaking to face the threat of losing these gardens. For these reasons we now build new gardens ONLY on land owned by CDCG and we are working as hard as we can to protect these vulnerable community assets. As our pro-bono attorney quipped, “Boy, you guys really take your gardens seriously.” He's right!

Amy



canning salsa step by step

by Hillary Hess, Gardening Educator

So there I was, a city gal from downstate, teaching a class about preserving the harvest. Well... I have frozen vegetables and fruit before, and I have made pseudo sun dried tomatoes in the oven. I seem to recall a foray into jelly in seventh grade Home Ec class, but that was a few years ago. Ok more than 25, whatever...

CANNING? Isn't that something they did during WWII? Nobody does that anymore, right? Then I recalled a conversation with my girlfriend Sydney about making and preserving salsa. I decided to call and ask her advice. She came over in a flash, equipment in hand. Her first piece of advice was to get a good reference book. The Bible of canning is Ball's Blue Book.

Here are the main points to canning: boiling water kills most bad microorganisms. However, there is one offender that can survive 212°F and it is the bad critter that causes botulism. Botulism is not fun. Trust me, it isn't going to make you look like you had a face lift, although you may be a very attractive corpse. The key to killing this little bugger is to create a hostile environment where it can't grow. This means that the pH needs to be below 4.5 (really acidic), or it has to be pressure canned which requires a special pressure cooker to raise the water temperature to over 230°F. One easy way to lower the pH of food for canning is to add ascorbic acid (vitamin C). A canning kit can be purchased at a number of places for about \$25. It includes a big pot, lid, and jar rack. You should invest in a jar lifter and funnel, as well as a silicone cooking mitt. You will need medium sized jars with lids.

Sydney offered her tomato salsa recipe and took me through the process step by step. I have to admit the end results were well worth the effort. Everyone has raved about this salsa. The store bought stuff is okay, but the fresh stuff is incomparable. There are lots of benefits to making your own fresh salsa, especially if you grow tomatoes. You can add lots of fresh vegetables including peppers, onions, tomatillos, shredded carrots, chili peppers, leeks, and fresh herbs. You control the amount of salt in the salsa, and you can make yours chunky or thin, depending on how you like it. Since you own the bragging rights, you can make it as hot and spicy as you want. And to top it off, your family and friends will be impressed with your domestic skills!

Salsa Step by Step

4-5 lbs tomatoes peeled and blanched
1 large onion
1 head of garlic peeled (use roasted garlic if you want)
1 can black olives drained (optional)
½ pound of hot peppers (jalapeños work well)

Tip: when handling hot peppers, wear latex gloves!!

2 or 3 large bell peppers
4-5 sprigs of cilantro
Salt and pepper to taste
Ascorbic Acid

Run all ingredients (except ascorbic acid, salt and pepper) through a food processor until chopped, do not puree. Cook in a saucepan for an hour over medium high heat. Add 1 tsp. of ascorbic acid per cup of liquid and stir well. Put salsa in hot jars, removing any air bubbles by stirring with a wooden spoon handle (metal can shatter hot jars). Fill to ½ inch from the top of jar, and wipe the jar lip clean. Put on the lids and tighten down with the metal bands (not too tight). Place the jars in a wire rack. Submerge the rack and jars in boiling water. Start timing it once the water returns to a boil. Boil for 35 minutes. Keep a separate pot of boiling water in case you need to add water due to evaporation. Once the time is up, place hot jars on a towel to cool for at least an hour. You may hear the lids pop as a vacuum forms. The lids should become slightly concave, and the bands will

become loose. After 24 hours, you can remove the bands. Date and label jars and store them in a cool dry place. When opening the jars, the lid should pop. The outside should be clean and the contents should look clear. If they are cloudy or moldy inside, discard it. When in doubt, throw it out! Refrigerate after opening. Enjoy! z



garlic (*allium sativum*)

What is a more universal seasoning than garlic? Nearly every cuisine on the planet includes this tasty bulb. It can be hot or sweet, depending on how it's handled. The origin of the word *garlic* comes from the Old English *garleac*. Originally from central Asia,

garlic has been in use for at least 6,000 years. Egyptians worshipped garlic and placed clay models of garlic bulbs in the tombs of pharaohs. Garlic was so highly prized it was even used as currency.



Folklore holds that garlic protected against the Evil Eye and warded off jealous nymphs said to terrorize pregnant women and engaged maidens. A Christian myth says that after Satan left the Garden of Eden, garlic arose in his left footprint and onion in his right. Garlic has also had a long reputation as an aphrodisiac. Tibetan monks were forbidden from entering the monastery if they had eaten garlic, presumably because of its reputation for inflaming passions.

Belonging to the *Allium* family, garlic is related to onions, shallots, leeks, scallions and chives. Like its cousins, it has a unique defense mechanism: its cells contain chemicals that, when disturbed, produce a hot taste that is offensive to some. Science still hasn't figured out exactly what all of these compounds are. When cell walls are broken, the heat is released. However if the cell walls remain undisturbed, the cloves are sweet and delicate. If you want heat, crush the cloves; if you want sweet, roast the whole bulb. The smaller the clove, the more flavor it contains.

Garlic is good for the blood and boosts immunity. It repels mosquitoes, fleas and vampires. When the clove is cut or crushed, an enzyme within its cells combines with an amino acid. This creates a new compound called allicin which studies have shown can kill 23 types of bacteria, including salmonella and staphylococcus. When garlic is heated, a different compound is formed that helps prevent

arteries from clogging and reduces blood pressure and cholesterol levels. The blood-thinning quality of garlic may also be helpful in preventing heart attacks and strokes. Garlic may even prevent cancer because it contains Vitamin C, A, and B which stimulates the immune system to eliminate toxins and combat carcinogens. For the same reason, it may also become a valuable treatment for AIDS. A study in China showed that people with the highest levels of dietary garlic have a reduced risk of stomach cancer.

Although we typically use only the cloves or whole bulbs, the entire plant is edible. The entire root is called a bulb or head and within each head are many individually wrapped cloves. The cloves are wrapped in a thin paper, as is the entire bulb. The stem grows up from the center and within each clove is the potential for a new stem. There are two types of garlic - hard neck and soft neck. The hard neck garlic is grown in cold climates, has a rich, more distinctive flavor and produces a curly flower stalk known as a scape. The soft neck version is grown in milder climates and is usually what you find in the supermarket. It produces smaller cloves and no scape.

Garlic is a true winter crop. It is planted in the fall and left to grow underground all winter long. To plant garlic, separate the cloves and plant them point up, 2-3" deep and 6" apart. They require well drained soil high in organic matter, but little else. Apply a layer of mulch (straw works well) after planting to protect garlic from heaving. The shoots will come up right through the mulch in spring and will be ready for harvesting in mid summer. The flower stalk will produce a curl on top (a scape) when they are nearly ready. If you remove this scape early, it will help to produce a larger bulb. The scapes are delicious and can be eaten fresh or cooked. When the stem starts to die, it is time to pull the bulb up. Dry them thoroughly before storing, and they will keep for several months. You can tie the bulbs together and hang them in a cool dry place.

There are so many good, healthy reasons to eat more garlic; it's no wonder that it can protect our bodies from many debilitating illnesses and our souls from Satan, vampires, and those pesky jealous nymphs. Be sure to eat a little extra around Halloween! **z**



in the gardens

Seeking Land for New Community Gardens

Capital District Community Gardens is currently looking for vacant land in both North Schenectady and South Troy for the creation of two new community gardens. Thanks to the generosity of The Schenectady Foundation, we plan to build a garden that will serve the residents of Schenectady's Goose Hill neighborhood and the surrounding area. In Troy, we are seeking a suitable parcel to create a garden that will honor the memory of our wonderful friend, Glen Martin, whose family and close friends have graciously contributed funds for the purchase of property should we find an appropriate site.

Ideally, both of these parcels of land should be vacant, cleared and sized somewhere between 5,000 and 25,000 square feet. The site must also be exposed to suitable sunlight. We are interested in looking at parcels that do not necessarily meet all of the factors listed above because some existing site conditions can be altered to suit our needs.

Anyone with information about suitable vacant land in North Schenectady or South Troy should call Amy or Sharon at CDCG 518-274-8685 or via email at trees@cdcg.org. z

NEWS OF NOTE

Mumford Street Garden, Schenectady

This garden will receive new fencing to replace the inadequate 4' chainlink that is now in place. Several inches of good topsoil will be spread and some low maintenance landscape plants will be added around the outside of the site. z

Vale Garden, Schenectady

Vale will finally lose its rotted wood fencing and be replaced with a sturdy vinyl chainlink complete with a front gate. A much needed small storage shed will be added. All the small trees will be cleared to increase sunlight to the garden. Organic topsoil will be spread to improve crop yields. z

homespun help

Winter Composting

If you're like most gardeners, you'll spend the winter studying seed catalogs and dreaming of new spring flowerbeds. But you can do more than dream in the winter - build a compost pile now. Although the decomposition process slows down in cold weather, compost piles keep working all year long. Optimize your composting in winter months and welcome spring with a productive, healthy compost pile.

Late fall preparations- Collect bags of leaves. Compost some and stockpile the rest for use throughout the year. Harvest finished compost from your pile to make room for winter additions.

Throughout the winter

1. It is best to layer "greens" (vegetable scraps, garden waste) with "browns" (leaves, straw). This ensures the right ratio of carbon to nitrogen, helps aerate and provides adequate drainage in the pile. Turning the pile in winter is not necessary since it may result in heat loss.

2. Insulating your compost bin will protect it from harsh winter winds and cold. Provide extra insulation by surrounding your bin with black bags of leaves or straw bales or create a windbreak with a tarp. While the outer layers of your pile may freeze, the inside can still cook. If you have lots of leaves, pile them on. As you add kitchen scraps over the winter, tuck them in under the insulating layer of leaves.

3. To reduce cold winter trips to your bin, start a pre-compost bucket. Use a bucket or small trash can to collect kitchen scraps. Layer them with adequate "browns" to prevent odor. You can freeze kitchen scraps in between trips to the compost pile.

Early spring maintenance- If your pile freezes over the winter, it will return to active duty once thawed. One common mistake is to pile all the winter's kitchen scraps into your compost without layering in browns. All green piles tend to be stinky! If your pile is excessively wet due to spring thaw, turn it and add more browns to soak up moisture.

Now go back inside and study some more seed catalogs!



veggie mobile

continued from page 1

five-year period awarded through their Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program, and CDCG recently hired two new staff to put the Veggie Mobile on the streets. An additional \$55,000 is needed to purchase and retro-fit the vehicle and to buy the first few months of produce for sale during market days.

As we continue to grow in our mission to bring fresh, nutritious food to the people of Albany, Schenectady and Troy, CDCG needs your help. The staff and Board volunteers are now working to raise those additional funds needed to get the Veggie Mobile on the road by early Spring. We're going to need support from the community to make this happen.

With your help, low-income families throughout our region will have easy access to fresh nutritious produce sold at cost from local farmers. What could be better for the health of our community?

You can join this effort by joining our special fundraising effort today. Do you have contacts in these neighborhoods or know of donors who would support this cause? Please share those contacts with us. Can you make an extra contribution beyond your end-of-year donation to help with this special project? All of your support is needed and greatly appreciated. Please give us a call at 274-8685. There are so many ways you can help. **z**

**Want to help get the Veggie Mobile up & running?
Check out CDCG's upcoming fundraisers and help get fresh produce to underserved neighborhoods in Schenectady, Albany & Troy.
Have fun and support CDCG!**

**THE
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2007

**Help Raise
Funds For
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Mobile!**

*Create Your
Team Today!*

- Companies
- Gardeners
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- Friends
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**When: Saturday, Jan 27, 2007
2:30pm - 5:30pm**

Where: Uncle Sam Lanes, Troy

Great Prizes for Everyone!

Call 274-8685 for more information
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- Brownies
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- Cookies

*Or dust off your spats & bustles and
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We'll have:

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**When: Sunday, Dec 3, 2006
11:00am- 5:00pm**

Where: 270 River Street, Troy

Call 274-8685 for more info



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To learn more or to make a gift of stock, contact Amy Klein, Executive Director at (518) 274-8685 or email amy@cdcg.org. **Thanks in advance for your generous support!**

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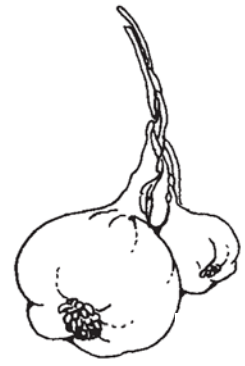
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on the table

In October, CDCG's Gardening Educator taught a class on growing and using garlic. Lucky participants tasted several recipes including garlic stuffed mushrooms, garlic and potato soup, garlic salsa, garlic bread, and just plain roasted garlic on crackers. But there was one dish that stood out in the crowd - a delicious savory garlic bread pudding. This would be a big hit at a dinner party or on a holiday table. It is simple to make, impressive looking, and just delicious. Enjoy!



GARLIC BREAD PUDDING

2 cups milk
8 garlic cloves, chopped
2 large whole eggs
2 large egg yolks
3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
: teaspoon salt
22 cups (2-inch cubes of Italian bread)
dash of black pepper

In a saucepan scald the milk with the garlic, let the mixture sit off the heat for 15 minutes, and strain it through a sieve, discarding the garlic. In a bowl, whisk together the whole eggs and the yolks,

add the milk in a stream, whisking, and stir in the parsley, salt and pepper to taste. Divide the bread cubes among eight well-buttered 2-cup muffin tins, ladle the custard mixture over them, dividing it evenly, and let the bread puddings stand for 10 minutes. The puddings may be prepared to this point up to eight hours in advance and kept covered and chilled. Bake in a preheated 350°F oven for 45 minutes or until they are golden brown and puffed. Let them cool for 10 minutes (they will sink as they cool), then run a thin knife around the outside of each pudding and lift them out carefully with a fork. Serve the garlic bread puddings warm. Makes eight servings.

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