



Kula Farm
 By Interfaith
 Neighbors
www.kulafarm.org

**3rd Quarter
 2015 Updates**

GROWING JOB SKILLS AND HEALTHY FOOD FOR ASBURY PARK AND BEYOND

IN THIS ISSUE

Asbury Grows

by Roger Boyce, Director, Business Development Center

To all of our supporters,

The past 3 months have been very busy here at the Kula Urban Farm. The end of the summer was kind to us, with abundant okra, tomato, collard green, and parsley crops. In all, we harvested over 500 pounds of healthy, organic produce.

Saturdays mornings continue to be the time for "community harvest." During these hours we open up a portion of the farm for our neighbors to harvest their own fresh produce to take home. This is always a good time. Recipes, jokes, and jibes are all shared amongst the small group of regulars who attend.

We've also been spending some time getting the word out here at home about urban farming and its impact on various cities. In late September we hosted (along with the Asbury Park Environmental Shade Tree Commission) a film screening/fundraiser at The

Showroom, our neighborhood independent movie theater.

The film, "Growing Cities," profiles different urban agricultural projects around the country. It talks about the challenges they face and the impact they have, while telling the stories of some interesting people whose lives have been positively affected by growing their own food.

The screening was accompanied by a presentation about the Kula Urban Farm, and a Q&A with the audience. The event was very well-attended. It seems there is a real appetite (pun intended) in our community for more engagement around gardening and local food.

And there will be more programming coming soon. We are working on partnerships with the Asbury Park Boys & Girls Club, the AP High School, Master Gardeners, and some other groups as well.

Interested in working with us? Our contact information is on page 4.



Farm to Cafe

Chef Wendy and staff cook up some delights with produce from the farm.

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Greenhouse Growing Continues

Hydroponic growing systems and getting ready for winter

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From Farm to Café

At Kula, we believe that healthy, local food should be available to everyone who wants it, regardless of one's income. The Café always serves up fresh dishes at affordable prices, but this summer there was a new twist...

Weekly specials were conjured up by our amazing staff, featuring produce from the Farm just next door. Blueberry pancakes (page 1) were a big hit, at least as long as the blueberries lasted!

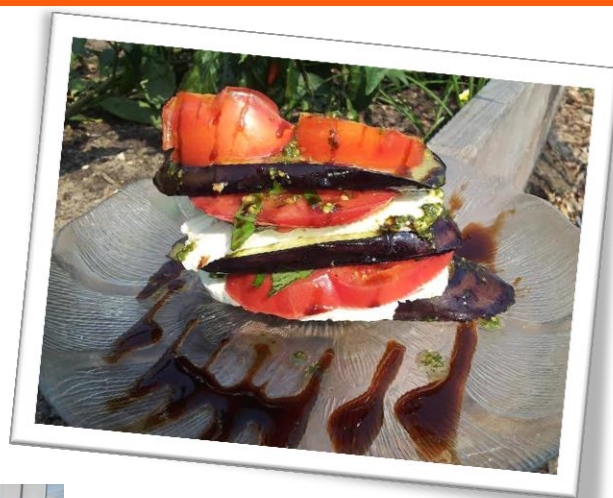
Later in the summer, Chef Wendy came up with the Jersey Stack (pictured right), a tasty concoction of heirloom tomatoes, eggplant, and pesto...all straight from the farm. Only the mozzarella and balsamic vinegar were from outside Asbury!

These specials have been quite popular, and customer feedback shows that people really appreciate eating food with ingredients grown locally (in this case, just next door). All of this is consistent with our mission of raising awareness of local produce and healthy eating. We hope to build on these early successes with continued feedback from the community. Keep an eye out for more farm-fresh specials the next time you're at the Kula Cafe.

Each Monday afternoon, the entire Kula staff carries out its "Need to Feed" program. Bagged lunches of sandwiches and fruit juice are distributed to anyone who is hungry.

This summer, visitors took home eggplant, tomatoes, and collard greens along with their bagged lunches.

The synergy between the Kula Café & Urban Farm is clear, with lots of opportunities for increasing access to healthy, affordable food.



← *K-U-L-A! participants having fun outside the café*



Kula Café/Farm staff hand out lunches and produce outside the Café on a warm Monday afternoon.

Vertical Growing comes to Asbury Park

Some background...

The future of farming is upon us. Large, well-financed companies (like AeroFarms in Newark) are converting old warehouses and factories in economically depressed urban areas into high-density indoor lettuce "farms." Plans are in the works for entire skyscrapers of multi-story indoor farms powered by the sun.

Large-scale, year-round, indoor growing will be able to feed a large portion of a given city's population, many theorists speculate. The number of "food miles" traveled on produce, especially for city dwellers, will be drastically reduced. Recirculating water and solar power means significantly less resources will be needed. By taking advantage of economies of scale, the price of produce from these types of facilities can be made affordable and accessible.

What makes all of the above situations possible is the ability to grow certain crops vertically and without soil (hydroponics).

Arranging crops vertically, growers take advantage of the total cubic footage of whatever space (greenhouse, warehouse, etc.) they are using. Density is the key in this game. In the end, growth productivity per square foot can be 600-700% higher than horizontal growing.

Lettuce, chard, herbs, flowers, basically anything except for root vegetables can be grown this way. Hydroponics is in use in cities and towns all over the world.

Coming soon to a table near you

And now this farming of the future is sprouting up on the west side of Asbury Park. Since the Kula Urban Farm is situated on a ¼ acre residential lot, we need to take maximum advantage of every square foot of the property. Our greenhouse is the heart of the

operation, and from the beginning we knew we needed a good vertical growing system.

After a great deal of research, we settled on the ZipGrow vertical growing towers, produced by Bright Agrotech from Laramie, Wyoming.

Dr. Nate Storey, the founder of Bright Agrotech, who wrote his dissertation about light loss in vertical hydroponic growing systems. He's clearly an expert, but what's more is that the company provides a whole host of resources about everything from business planning to pest management. There's even an online community of people using the Zipgrow towers who share information and encouragement.

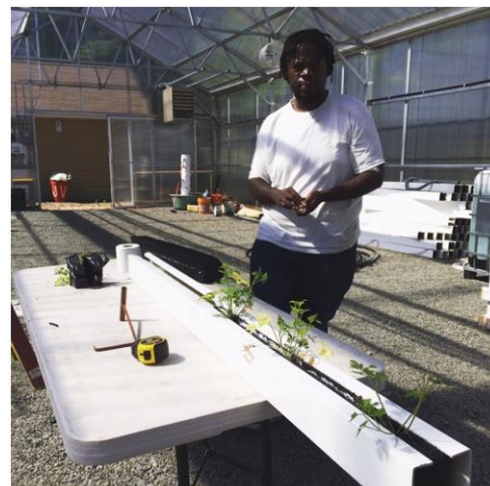
For the Kula Urban Farm greenhouse, we purchased an initial set of 100 Zipgrow towers. Each one is 6 feet giving us 600 linear feet of growing space in a relatively small footprint.

We have a recirculating irrigation system which brings water and nutrients to the roots of plants in the system. This allows us to use significantly less water than traditional outdoor growing.

Also, the towers are lightweight and mobile. They can easily be removed from the system and brought to a farmers market or grocery store for "customer self-harvest" – what could be fresher?!

Possibilities abound

These growing towers can also be used as a teaching tool in classrooms. As one can imagine, there are many lessons a teacher can illustrate with a mini-garden in the class. What's more, students can see the process from seed to harvest and learn more about healthy eating in a fun way.



Planting the towers



Lettuce and spinach growing in the Zipgrow Towers



With proper spacing, a lot of growing area can be packed into a small amount of square footage.

Looking ahead...

This will be our first winter with the greenhouse in operation. It will be challenging to grow with short days and cold temperatures, but we are ready for the challenge!

If you or anyone you know has an interest in volunteering, please use the email address below and you will be added to the email list for volunteer opportunities.

Email us your comments at kulafarm@gmail.com

In the next newsletter, we will share what we've learned using our vertical hydroponic growing system, the "ZipGrow Towers."

There is so much to share with you, more than we can fit into this newsletter. Please let us know if you would like to tour Kula Urban Farm and learn more, or even come and get your hands dirty!

All are welcome.

Also, if you know of any business owners that you think would be interested in hiring our trainees, please let us know. We'd love to hear from you.

In Conclusion

Interfaith Neighbors wishes to extend our deepest gratitude to all of our funders. Without you this project would not be possible.

We'd also like to thank all of the volunteers, neighbors, food justice activists, teachers, and interested people who have shown their support over the past year.

For more information, check out our website and follow us on whatever social media platform(s) you may use.

www.kulafarm.org

www.facebook.com/kulafarm

Twitter: @kulagrows

Instagram: @kulafarm



The sign says it all!

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115 Atkins Avenue
Asbury Park, NJ 07712

