



Growing Food, Growing Health, Growing Community!



Year end message from our Executive Director

This time of year, is particularly good for reflecting on our progress and those we are grateful for. Thank you so much for supporting Unity Gardens throughout the recent years. Only with your help and the help of thousands of people in our community have we assured everyone in our community has access to healthy food, nature and each other. Although this has been the most amazing year for Unity Gardens, your continued generosity in helping make our efforts so successful is very much needed for our success.

Our summer programs; Garden Camp, Garden Guides, and the Chef to Table recipe sharing pot luck picnic were the most effective ever! We hosted over 80 children at our free day camp thanks to the sponsorship of Memorial Community Health Enhancement. The kids enjoyed trying new vegetables and playing actively outside, setting the stage for a life time of healthy habits. They practiced empathy through helping care for our chickens and goats, which was transferred to how we treated each other. We developed relationships with our neighbors and helped hundreds of harvesters with tasting tours and recipe sharing.

I was so happy to see some of our most challenging campers tour new adults through the garden, sharing the delight in finding a special tasty vegetable or weed.

The 2016 success of our South Bend Farmers' Market booth has also been far beyond our hopes. This exciting project, supported by NAP tax credit donations and the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County, is responsible for Unity Gardens having a regular revenue stream and store front to support our free food gardens and programs. If you have not visited our booth yet, please come any Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday 7 to 3pm! Say "Hi" to Hannah, Tara, Mitch, or Sara! There are many treasures to purchase, and you will be helping to support Unity Gardens and other local farmers! We're right across from the cafe' inside door "C".

It is amazing to think that we have successfully developed a free food system; a dignified way for everyone to have access to healthy food, and now we are creating the revenue to

help sustain it. The effects of our Unity Gardens are widespread; connecting neighbors and friends to nature and each other while creating an urban ecosystem so people can learn new ways to protect our earth.

The growing sales revenue stream from the Farmers Market Booth prepares us for our next stage of growth; a learning center, where we can connect to our community year-round; hosting classes, indoor volunteer groups, and other programs at the LaSalle Square Unity Garden. This will help Unity Gardens create additional income to assure our organizational sustainability. To accomplish this, we need everyone's help! If you have not donated or volunteered yet, please do. Together, we are growing the first free food model in the country!

Plan Your Garden Now



These cold snowy winter nights are perfect to have a cup of hot chocolate and take some time to plan out your spring garden.

Getting started: I like to plan my garden using graph paper, but there is always the option of getting a free online garden planner. The point is, get something that is visual so you can see what the garden will look like.

Location, Location, Location

Your garden is a long term investment, so finding a location that is right for both you and

the plants is key to success.

Here is what the plants need:

6 to 8 hours of full sun, well drained soil (avoid low lying areas that stay wet.), and access to water.

Here is what you may need:

a close water source, a convenient place to work and harvest, and a place that you can dedicate for gardening long term. You also may consider raised beds if you are challenged with getting down on the ground.

How big should you make your garden:

the best advice is plan small with room to grow. Gardening can be difficult, so most beginners start with about 100 sq ft (10'x10') A few 4' x 8' raised beds is a pretty good start. You can always expand later. Starting too big may make you resent gardening as it easily gets out of hand.

Test Your Soil: [Purdue Extension](#) or [A&L Labs](#) are great place to start. Their websites will have instructions on how to properly take a soil sample and read the results.

What to grow:

For first time gardeners it is good to keep it simple. Grow what you like to eat. Lettuce, green beans, tomatoes, peppers, and squash are all good choices for first time gardeners. These are all pretty easy to grow. You can expand as you learn. We grow everything from seed, but buying plants is simpler and easy for first timers.

These are some pretty basic tips on how to get started on your garden, but there is so much to learn, which is why we started our Growing a Garden series. Please join us! It is a great place to connect with other gardeners and learn what you need to know to grow a great garden.

2017 Events

We have started planning our 2017 event schedule. We will continue to add updates on our newsletter, and of course you can always check out what is new on our website.

www.theunitygardens.org

Winter Garden Series:

Held at the LaSalle Branch Library 3232 W. Ardmore South Bend 46628

All Classes Are Free And Open To The Public

Tuesday January 3rd	6:00pm	Vegetable Garden Planning
Tuesday January 10th	6:00pm	Companion Planting
Tuesday January 17th	6:00pm	Pests in the Garden
Tuesday January 24th	6:00pm	Container Gardening
Tuesday January 31st	6:00pm	Tomatoes, Peppers & Eggplant
Tuesday February 7th	6:00pm	Greens, Squash, Corn & More
Tuesday February 14th	6:00pm	Soil and Composting 101
Tuesday February 21st	6:00pm	Maintain Your Garden
Tuesday February 28th	6:00pm	Backyard Chickens 101
Tuesday March 7th	6:00pm	Grow a Herb Garden

[More Class Info](#)

Growing Summit 2017

Saturday & Sunday March 11th & 12

St. Joseph County Public Library

304 S. Main Street

South Bend, IN 46601

2 days of free classes and vendor booths

Free Garden Camp for Kids

June 26th thru June 30th &

July 17th thru July 21st

9am until 3pm

LaSalle Square Unity Garden

3701 Prast Blvd

Taste of Unity Harvest Party

Thursday, October 19th

5pm to 8pm

Palais Royale 105 W. Colfax Ave

Cost \$30.00

Building Our Future

The Wheels Are Turning

Everything is in motion and we are moving forward with our Community Learning Center building. We currently have \$116,500.00 of our \$400,000.00 goal The amount is enough

to get the shell of our building up which is a great start, but of course, we want to fill our empty shell. We are relying on our community for help. Please share this information with everyone, and please donate! Every bit gets us closer to our goal.

Shelter our Garden Campers - from weather and storms

Provide Indoor Volunteer Space - for year round opportunities to help

Host Year Round Classes and Programs - helping us expand our classes and tours

Create a Food Hub for our Community - adding year-round food in a food desert area

Build a Community Gathering Space - helping us build stronger relationships

Provide a Home for Unity Gardens - where people can connect to fresh produce, nature, and each other all year long and for years to come!

Only together can we make this happen. Your donation is critical to our growth!

Please call, text or email me to discuss this exciting opportunity!

Sara Stewart, 574-315-4361 GrowUnityGardens@yahoo.com



**Unity Gardens Community Learning Center
Coming Soon**



www.theunitygardens.org 574-315-4361



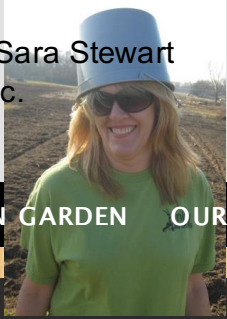
[Donate Here](#)

Thanks for reading our newsletter. We love being a part of this great community and hope to see you in the garden.

Sincerely,



Mitchel Yaciw & Sara Stewart
Unity Gardens Inc.



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