

Spring 2008

# FOOD NOW ATHENS

A Publication of the Athens Urban Food Collective (AUFC)

## Fruits of Change

With the successful release of the first issue of Food Now Athens behind us, we at the AUFC look forward to bringing you more thought provoking articles, informed discussion, and handy how-to's in this issue. However, before we can move forward we feel it necessary to address a letter that we received shortly after the release of the last issue.

The letter, penned under the pseudonym Activist for Change, criticized the apparent inactivity of the food activist organizations across the county. We at the AUFC feel it necessary to refute this letter because its substance is simply untrue and overlooks just how much action is occurring across the county.

The amount of action currently going on across the

county is unprecedented and shows no signs of waning. The newly created Athens Farmers Market (grand opening on May 17<sup>th</sup>), multiple community gardens starting (Common Ground, rooftop AUFC garden), the continual success of Food Not Bombs, which is now serving food multiple times a week, and a growing number of educational gardens within the Athens-Clarke school system show that agro-food activism is alive and well in Athens. These groups do more than just stir up discussion (however important calls to action may be); they are moving forward from simply talking action to taking action.

Activist for Change created further discussion through a seemingly displeased letter directed to sev-

eral of the food activist groups s/he felt were not taking enough action within the community. However maddening a disgruntled letter can be, Activist for Change's letter has spurred members of the Athens Urban Food Collective to organize this issue of Food Now Athens around the many exciting and important things that are actually happening in Athens to make better healthier food more accessible to more people. From the new Farmer's Market in Bishop Park, to workshops where people can learn how to can their summer harvests, a lot of caring people are working hard on these issues. Let the fruits (and vegetables) of change in our community continue to be discussed and then planted with an abundance of action.

Issue 2, Spring 2008

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## Athens Farmers' Market: Local and Sustainable

*It's about time!* For nearly 10 years there have been small markets on the property of restaurants and stores scattered around town. As of May 2008, there will be a large, central, permanent farmers' market in Bishop Park. Fresh local food will be easier to come by with the emergence of the Athens Farmers' Market.

By choosing to buy local sustainable food you can help change the food system while eating better! Local sustainably grown food is an important alternative to food which depends on petrochemicals for its existence. By choosing

to buy local sustainable food you help reduce the use of petroleum. In addition, the industrial petroleum based food system drives most farmers to work very large farms, and small farmers who want to stay that way have a really hard time competing for market share. Buying at the new Farmers' Market will help support small farmers as well.

Volunteers are needed to make sure each Saturday runs smoothly, so if you would like to help out in any way, please contact Craig Page at [CraigP@localplace.org](mailto:CraigP@localplace.org) or send us an email at [AUFC@riseup.net](mailto:AUFC@riseup.net).

**-When:** Grand opening Saturday May 17<sup>th</sup> from 8:00AM to 1:00PM and every following Saturday until November 15<sup>th</sup>

**-Where:** Bishop Park, near the tennis courts, on Athens Transit Bus route 7.

**-What:** Food grown within 100 miles of Athens using sustainable farming techniques. The market will also feature local hand-made and home-made crafts, direct-trade coffee, freshly baked breads and other goods.

Food Now Athens is created by the Athens Urban Food Collective, a 501-c3 non-profit organization. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions please feel free to contact us via email at [aufc@riseup.net](mailto:aufc@riseup.net).



# Between Grocer and Gas Pump

Anyone who has walked through the aisles of their local grocer can't help but notice the recent increase in the cost of food. The price of food depends partly on the cost of oil. Petroleum is a key ingredient in fertilizers, pesticides, and of course the diesel required to transport the food. When you think that the average morsel of food eaten in the U.S. travels 1500 miles, it becomes obvious that rising oil costs are stressing people's food budgets. At this writing, the cost of a barrel of oil has just passed \$123 and is expected to continue to increase. Fewer and fewer people will be able to ignore the link between oil and food as the cost of both continue to climb.

Globally, the connection between the price of oil and the cost of food is having violent consequences. In places like Haiti, the cost of food is resulting in food riots because of the resulting hunger. The reaction to food shortages is frightening but real. With continued upward pressure on the cost of food and oil, the prospect of food riots in American

cities may not be so far-fetched.

One tried and true response to rising food prices is for people to grow some of their own food. During the food crisis of the 1970s, for example (again, think oil crisis) many American cities launched programs to support urban gardening; government agencies leased vacant lots to neighborhood gardening groups, enabled access to water, and provided technical support for beginning gardeners. In many American cities, these garden programs have been going strong ever since, with long waiting lists for garden plots on city-owned land.

The time is here for Athens Clarke County to step up to the table and support urban food gardening. Rising food prices are stressing family food budgets. Kids are skipping meals so that their parents can pay the rent. ACC can prevent further distress across the community by acting decisively to sponsor and support urban food gardens. We urge the ACC powers-that-be to act, and to act now.

# Edible School Yards

One exciting developments in improving food security and appreciation in ACC is the school garden at Alps Elementary School. First graders have been tending a food garden on the school premises for two growing seasons. First grade teacher Ellen Walker has pioneered this effort, working hard to gain the support of the principal, parents, and fellow teachers. The garden is part of student's overall learning. Each year the students come up with a theme for the garden; the first year the kids grew a Pizza Garden. The Alps Elementary School Garden is a great local model for integrating traditional education with hands-on learning and good nutrition; school gardens are now being planned for Chase Street, and Barnett Shoals.

But while the Alps Garden may be the first school garden in a long time in ACC, school gardens are not new. In fact, they have been around in the United States since at least the 1890s. At that

time, it had become obvious that the US was changing from a mostly rural country to a mostly urban one. Farming had been central to the American identity since before Independence, and school gardens were created as a way to keep that tradition alive or at least familiar to the city kids of the day. When World War I, and later the Great Depression constricted the supply of food across the nation, children who had learned to garden at school found they had important skills. They could help their families grow food in the public gardens that were established to help people through hard times.

The garden at Alps Elementary School, then, is part of a long and important tradition. Kids working with Ellen Walker are lucky to be able to learn how to grow food and enjoy direct contact with nature. As more schools embrace edible schoolyards, we hope that more families will become active in the local food system.



# Foodscape Calendar

Event	When / Whom to Contact
Emergency Roots Farm Workday	May 17: Call 706 206 3858 or come b/t 8:30-9:00 to work on the farm
Rainbarrel Construction with Natalie White, ACC Stormwater Education Coordinator	May 22 7-8 pm @ Earthfare Café June 18 6-8:30 pm State Botanical Gdn; bring 55 gal. barrel \$17/\$15 members 706 542 6156.
Growing Native Workshop Series: Medicinal Plants	May 25, 1-2pm, @ Common Ground contact <a href="mailto:mflip-po1@gmail.com">mflip-po1@gmail.com</a> w/ questions.
AFANS—Athens Food Activist Networking Session	June 8, @ Alps Elementary School, <a href="http://localplace.org">localplace.org</a> for details
Growing Native Workshop Series: Rainharvesting,	June 8, 1-2pm, @ Common Ground contact <a href="mailto:viri-dis47@gmail.com">viri-dis47@gmail.com</a> w/ questions
Roots Farm Workday	June 14 and July 19, noon-5pm: see <a href="http://rootsfarm.org">rootsfarm.org</a> for more info
Athens Food Policy Council Monthly Meeting	June 15: 11 am @ Farm 255. Contact Shannon McBride at <a href="mailto:hands4sg@bellsouth.net">hands4sg@bellsouth.net</a>
<b>ONGOING</b>	
Growing Native Summer Workshop Series:	Workshops will take place on 6/22, 7/13, 7/27, 8/10, See <a href="http://localplace.org">localplace.org</a> for details
Food Not Bombs Prepared Free Vegetarian Meals	Mon, Wed cooking @ Common Ground 4:30-8:30, Sat 11-4, Contact <a href="mailto:athensfnb@yahoo.com">athensfnb@yahoo.com</a>
Rain gauge volunteers needed	Help collect rainfall data across GA. <a href="http://www.cochrahs.org">www.cochrahs.org</a>



## AUFC Interviews Craig Page of PLACE

**AUFC:** Tell us about your involvement with food in Athens?

**CP:** For the last 10 years now I've been working with food in Athens, mostly in restaurants. And then I started asking questions, like where is our food coming from? In the fall of 2006, I began answering that question and suddenly a whole lot of other questions followed like how it was grown, and how were the people who grew the food were treated, and the questions kept going. Finally I realized the safest and simplest and most just and most logical answer to all those questions was to buy local. So it was with this answer that PLACE incorporated in May 2007. I'm proud that we're turning 1 year old this year.

**AUFC:** What inspired you to get started? Did your inspiration to start PLACE come from your involvement with food?

**CP:** Initially, I was just interested in food because of cooking. But then I brought my interest onto campus, into school, and took a bunch of classes about food, like the Geography of Breakfast Commodities, the Anthropology of Eating and other classes. These courses ask more questions about food, like, what does food have to do with community and what will globalization do to the relationship between food and community? These classes taught me that our food could be seen as a community building tool.

**AUFC:** Tell us a little about PLACE?

**CP:** PLACE is an acronym for Promoting Local Agriculture and Cultural Experiences with the mission to promote a strong accessible local food culture in Athens, Georgia. The promoting local food part makes sense to people. But it's also very important that food is accessible to everybody because a culture is more than the sum of its parts. In addition to food grown near our homes, it's important how we interact and build a relationship with our food and with each other in that community. These are the cultural experiences in PLACE.

**AUFC:** What has been PLACE's progress thus far?

**CP:** PLACE has accomplished a lot in its first year. We've had four successful Athens Food Activist Networking Sessions, we've had multiple movie nights, workshops. We helped build educational food gardens; we've put together a curriculum guide to help teachers teach in the gardens. We've done a lot, but we couldn't have done much without the help of others. And we're very thankful for the people who have helped us because we're very much a grassroots organization, and we've been operating on a shoe-string budget as we work toward full tax-exempt non-profit status.

**AUFC:** What do you have planned for the future - I've heard about a project called Plant a Row?

**CP:** Plant a Row happens nationally where people volunteer to plant crops with the intention of donating them to a charitable organization, like the food bank, for redistribution to people who need them. Rather than people who need food getting the cheapest, most processed, least nutritious food they are getting higher quality, high nutrients fresher food and anybody can do it!

**AUFC:** What's going on with a farmer's market in Athens? Why has it taken so long? Was there an old one?

**CP:** In Athens we had a really strong farmers market in the 70s, 80s, and early 90s. And then there was a feud between some families who started bringing whole-sale produce from

Atlanta grown by other people and underselling everyone else at the market who grew their own food. One family finally undersold all the others until then they became the only vender and then everyone stopped coming to the market. So it kind of fizzled out around 1998. So we went a long time without having a large farmers' market, and we lost a lot of really great local farmers. But we had a strong core who used sustainable growing methods who organized themselves in 2001 to form the Athens Green Market at Big City Bread. These

are the same farmers who started Athens Locally Grown, an online direct sale option for farmers and consumers, an online farmers market for them if you will. However, to grow sustainable in the south it requires a lot more sweat equity, and the farmers put more time and care into growing but have less time for the intensive organizing required for a larger farmers market.

**AUFC:** What has PLACE's role been in the FM?

**CP:** PLACE's role started August 6, 2007 when we held a meeting w/ farmers and asked the question of, 'do you want a new bigger better FM for Athens?'. Since then, we worked together in an inclusive process with input from our local community and farmers. Organizing the new market has been rewarding as we have reached out to others to become community partners. Building from a foundation provided by the Athens Chamber of Commerce L.E.A.D. Athens Program in 2006, PLACE and the Athens-Clarke County Cooperative Extension Office created a market steering committee in the Fall of 2007 to choose a location. We knew what the perfect location would be: a place to which families could walk, bike, or drive, spend quality time together, listen to music, talk to neighbors, and buy fresh locally-grown food. This search lasted for weeks, then months. We became so used to being told "no," that when we heard "yes" from the park manager at Bishop Park, we were stunned, and of course, happy. Planning moved forward quickly as the growing season approached.

**AUFC:** In your opinion what issues haven't been tackled yet or what's being left out?

**CP:** I think we could have a lot more engagement with and from our elected officials and local government, getting them on board and getting legislative decisions that can be passed, like allowing food to be grown in our local parks w/o question, serving local food in our schools, serving local food in our jails, in our retirement homes, in our city hall at meetings.

**AUFC:** How could people do more on an individual basis?

**CP:** Buy food from a local farmer, purchase food at the Athens Farmers' Market, through Athens. Locallygrown.net, become a CSA member, eat at restaurants that commit themselves to serving local food (see [localplace.org](http://localplace.org) for a list). Plant a row and share the gift of local food with those who don't usually have access to fresh healthy food. Start a garden. Read a book at a book club like Barbra Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. Join Slow Food Athens and explore local food traditions with like minded individuals. Come to workshops or workdays at gardens around town. Volunteer at the farmers' market. The possibilities are endless and no one needs to tell you what to do to get started and be active!

I think we could have a lot more engagement with and from our elected officials



# From Red to Black: Composting at Home

Here in Georgia, we are lucky to have such a long period in which to grow vegetables in our gardens. However, our soil quality is a different issue. Instead of the ideal black “loamy” soil, which is evenly composed of sand, silt, and clay, we have a much higher concentration of good old red Georgia clay. But with a little effort, we can all take steps to turn our soil from red to black, while at the same time reducing the amount of our garbage every week.

The answer is composting. By combining the veggie scraps, egg shells, coffee grounds from the kitchen with

grass clippings and fallen leaves from the yard you can begin to increase the fertility of the soil in your garden. Lots of other things like wood ashes, cardboard, newspaper, and dryer lint can also go into your compost pile. Beyond these ingredients all you need is a place to start a compost pile and some sort of container. The container you use can be anything from old wood pallets put on the side to make a box, to bales of hay or wire grating made into a hoop. Layer your ingredients, keep them moist and let nature do its magic. The more you mix up your pile and get air into it

to help it break down, the faster you will get from red to black. There are many good web sites that have all you need to know about composting. The ones that we wanted to share include the Master Composter site at <http://www.mastercomposter.com>, the Compost Guide site at <http://www.compostguide.com>, and from UGA’s Extension Office: <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/horticulture/composting.html>. Have fun and good luck!



**GREENS:** Veggie scraps, grass clippings, etc.  
**BROWNS:** Manure, soil, ash, etc.



## Common Ground Garden Growing

The backyard at Common Ground Resource Center that has been gardened before. This year geography graduate student Michele Flippo has taken on the role of Garden Coordinator to help facilitate a new community garden at Common Ground Resource Center. The folks working in the garden so far this year have come from all over the community. Together, the group will decide how the food is grown and where it will go when harvested. The

Common Ground Garden is one of several in town that are beginning to build momentum and enthusiasm for people to grow their own food. In addition to helping out facilitating the garden for Common Ground, Michele is also doing activist research about the intersection of gardens and community. We at the AUFC wish her the best of luck this season and hope the community grows at Common Ground.

## Two in a Row

First Nik Heynen, and now Hilda Kurtz, each of the Geography Department at UGA, have received University support for building up the Athens Urban Food Collective. Heynen and Kurtz are successive recipients of Service Learning Fellowships through UGA’s Office of Service Learning. Service Learning Fellows meet and network with other service learning instructors to refine service learning assignments, and thereby enable UGA stu-

dents to make more and more positive contributions to the community. Heynen used the Fellowship to build up the AUFC as a resource center and reading room. Kurtz’s Fellowship will help the AUFC expand its scope by collaborating with community and University partners to expand community food gardening efforts in town. If you want to be a part of this effort, please email Hilda Kurtz at [hkurtz@uga.edu](mailto:hkurtz@uga.edu)



Did you not see something that is important to you? Well, we want your input. We at the AUFC create *Food Now Athens* for the broader community, and want it to reflect food-related issues facing Athenians. If you have ideas for stories, people you would like to see interviewed, or issues that are of concern to you, please send us an email at [AUFC@riseup.net](mailto:AUFC@riseup.net).