

Interview: Gloria Steinem Remembers Bella Abzug

WE



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Lorna Crozier

on The Sex Lives
of Vegetables

The Hunt

Kill or Cull

Cuba

The Duality
of Equality



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Front cover image by Janet Heath.

Adapted from *Hand of Flowers*, 1952, by Pablo Picasso. *Our Flowers in the Hand* means making peace all at once with our hands and with our environment, 1998.

Fine charcoal pencil and watercolour on paper.

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WE

by **Connie Guberman**

“Isn’t the term ‘urban agriculture’ an oxymoron?” responded a friend of mine when I told her that I was guest editing an issue on women and urban agriculture. The terms ‘urban’ and ‘agriculture’ seem incompatible: we are not used to thinking of cities as sustainable landscapes. I was raised in a city, and like the majority of North Americans today, learned about how food was grown from the idyllic storybook pictures of the farmer on ‘his’ tractor in ‘his’ fields. Cities were apparently for flower gardens.



I remember planting carrots and cucumbers to cascade down a relative's new front yard rock garden — only to have his neighbour sneer at how inappropriate it was not to at the very least hide them in the back yard. My relative capitulated to the pressure and pulled them out.

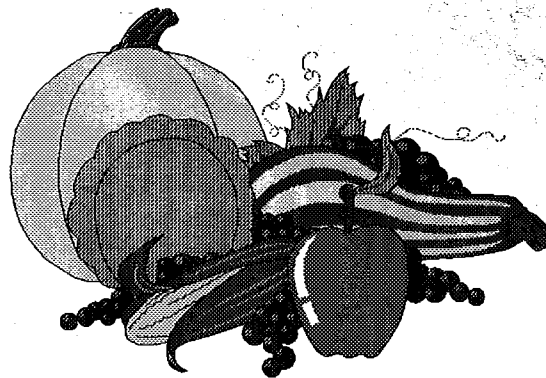
Urban agriculture includes initiatives which address a range of interconnected structural issues — economics, poverty, race, housing, health, gender, well-being, and the environment. It contains not only the practice of growing food in cities, but as well encompasses social movement: in their various manifestations — community gardens, rooftop gardens, alternative food distribution networks, co-operative buying affiliations, community kitchens, school gardens, seed saving projects, therapeutic gardens — urban agriculture initiatives have the potential to challenge and upset how the predominant food system is organized and controlled. Women traditionally are the ones responsible through food production and preparation for the family's health and well-being, and are still at the forefront of these truly 'grassroots' struggles.

Urban Agriculture is as ancient as civilization itself. Public open spaces had a functional purpose and were put to productive use: urban and rural values were integrated for survival. But the legacy of eighteenth and nineteenth century western planning, of relegating public open space to beautiful, passive retreats from the nastiness of city life, is still prevalent. Typically, by residents and planning professionals alike, nature is perceived as being and belonging outside the city, or treated as a scenic landscape.

Hunger, poverty, adequate nutrition and access to appropriate foods are critical global concerns. By challenging a range of traditional values and attitudes, we may create cities which meet people's vital and comprehensive needs.

Women's leadership in this world-wide movement offers the potential to direct ecologically, economically and socially transformative restoration. We include here a range of articles that make this clear. And we are indebted both to our writers and to the International Development Research Council of Canada for making this issue possible, to the poet Lorna Crozier, and our featured formidable artists, for lending us their generous talents.

We pay deep tribute with Gloria Steinem to Bella Abzug, who led and inspired an entire generation of women and men to challenge both injustice and misuse of power where it is found. **WE**



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FOOD **for ACTION** **CONSUMER DEMOCRACY**

by **Deborah Moffett and Mary Lou Morgan**

"You are what you eat,
your cuisine is your politics
and food is an edible dynamic
binding present and past,
individual and society,
private households and
world economy, palate and
power." BELASCO, W.*

Food can provide the basis of empowerment for women: all over the world women's personal and political mobilization has been demonstrated. Among successes are the Community Kitchen movement in Latin America, the Anti-Hunger movement in Brazil, and the Co-operative movement in Japan. Closer to our home is a recently launched project that we have been involved with, Field to Table's Good Food Box program in Canada. Organizing around food issues creates opportunities for people to exercise some control over their lives; it democratizes daily life.

In March, 1997, 35 Toronto-area women gathered in a warehouse to share experiences, to talk about food and to generate ideas for community building and personal development. The women were co-ordinators for the community-based food distribution project called The Good Food Box. It is run by Field to Table, which in turn is part of a non-profit umbrella agency, FoodShare, that supports a range of community-based anti-hunger education and advocacy initiatives. Field to Table supports local farmers wherever possible and provides organic as well as conventional produce to its customers in Field to Table programs.

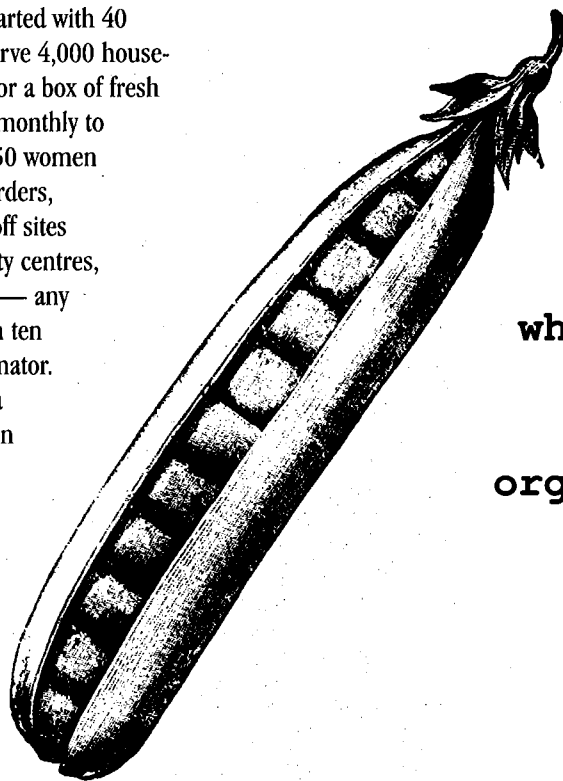
The Good Food Box community started with 40 families in 1994 and has grown to serve 4,000 households monthly. Participants pre-pay for a box of fresh produce. The food is delivered twice monthly to neighbourhood drop-off sites, and 150 women volunteer their time to co-ordinate orders, payments, and deliveries. The drop-off sites include homes, churches, community centres, day-cares, work-places and agencies — any place in the greater Toronto area with ten interested participants and a co-ordinator.

The Good Food Box is more than a produce-buying club. Involved women often get together to share stories, delight over fresh food, update each other about community events and issues, swap recipes and break the isolation of the home. Co-ordinators are forming real networks for support, problem-solving, and are strategizing for future program direction, while gaining a sense of self and connection to community. Money goes directly to farmers, thereby circumventing the dominant food system flow, and power structure, that exists between producer, retailer and consumer.

Field to Table looks for inspiration to one of the most successful consumer-based social movements in the world, the Seikatsu Club in Japan. As part of the co-operative

movement that emerged in Japan in the 50's, the Seikatsu Club was started in 1965 with 60 women. It won the Right Livelihood Award (known as the alternative Nobel Prize) in 1989, and now serves over 225,000 households. Founding members self-organized to gain access to safe and healthy food in the wake of the Minamata disease* outbreak, by collectively purchasing milk directly from farmers who used ecologically sound farming principles.

The GOOD FOOD Box
supports a range of
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conventional
produce...



The Seikatsu Club movement quickly spread from its pragmatic beginnings and became organized to challenge the state and corporations on a number of levels. In addition to operating as a network of buying clubs, the Seikatsu Club members are now consulted by manufacturers to approve new products and packaging, as well as to define processing and growing methods. Their clout comes from providing a guaranteed market to the producers and their consistent history as

lobbyists. Activities spread from collective buying to developing workers' collectives, running and contributing to co-operative food stores, initiating member-operated food markets, school lunch programs, catering, restaurant and bakery operations, cooking schools, day cares, housework services, nursing care and meal programs for the elderly and handicapped, and even marriage counselling.

The democratic structure of the Seikatsu Club has leant itself to hands-on political mobilization. Women organize themselves into *hans* or groups of eight to ten neighbours. Each of the *hans* get together for collective purchasing, mutual support, evaluation of products and organizing for events, campaigns or activities that the group is interested in pursuing. *Hans* work together on the projects and campaigns that resonate with them, and everyone is encouraged to have a voice in decision-making.

The Seikatsu Club has expanded its political involvement to deal with environmental issues, while continuing to do work around healthy food access. Members successfully pushed for a corporate move away from production and

distribution of synthetic soaps which were killing fish and irritating children's

skin. Amongst other changes, they also convinced Tokyo's municipal government to reject the use

of rainforest lumber in its public works projects. The Seikatsu Club has campaigned for safe industrial waste-handling, natural resources management, clean tap water, safe sewage

treatment, nature conservation, anti-golf course and resort development, food additives

elimination, food contamination awareness and pesticide reduction.

Hans membership is impressive — numbering about 26,000 nation-wide. Each *han* elects a representative to a regional branch (*shibu*) with 50 to 100 *hans*. Each *shibu* elects members to the General Assembly who then elect the Seikatsu Club's board of directors. Policy-making is bottom-up — directed from the *han* level.

The number of women who have joined the political arm of the Seikatsu Club (*Seikatsu-sha* Network) is significant. Through the movement's campaign "Political Reform from the Kitchen", 75 women have won local political seats throughout Japan and have worked to change public policies.

The Seikatsu movement's success is partially due to its particular social context and historical development over 25 years — in the wake of the Minamata disease in the Japan of the 60's, the climate was ripe for development of a women's co-operative society to tackle food and environmental issues. The economy and work ethic were strong;

The Seikatsu Club has campaigned for safe industrial waste-handling, natural resources management, clean tap water, safe sewage treatment, nature conservation, anti-golf course and resort development, food additives elimination, food contamination awareness and pesticide reduction.





The HUNT

KILL or CULL

by *Dee Kramer*



Photo credit: Gurbireet Kaur



Conrad Richter sends over 700 varieties of seeds to 20 countries around the world. As vice-president of Richters' Herbs (North America's most comprehensive herb specialists based in Goodwood, Ontario, Canada), adding varieties to his list is a life mission. He has recently set up seed collection agencies in Nepal, Ghana, China and Ecuador. The projects are in early stages, but their potential is enormous. "It is a work in progress," says Richter, "We scan the world for herbs used in ethnic cultures. We try and find seeds that we have only read about in books, and which are otherwise unobtainable in North America."

Richter comments on the wider environmental implications of these projects. "Many of these countries do trade internationally in medicinal herbs. The plants are dried and shipped around the world, but this raiding of leaves, flowers, stems and roots has become so widespread that the environmental integrity of the countryside is being endangered, and some medicinal species are now nearly extinct."



... local agents
send him seeds,
and manufacture
herbal medicine for
[their own] local
consumption with
very basic
technology that
can be operated
without electricity.


In contrast, collecting seeds encourages local people to look after the plants so that there are seeds for next year. "Seed collection encourages greater husbandry of the wild fauna of the area," says Richter. The benefits of local villager involvement are high, and money earned from seed collecting can supplement their yearly incomes, and may proffer women some fresh independence.

Naturally, the benefits work both ways. "One of these kinds of plants may turn out to be the source of the next anti-viral compound," says Conrad.

Aku Dunyo, Richter's first local seed collector, who also pressed plants and sent them off to a botanist for identification, became his wife. She joined him in Canada



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who are overloaded with misleading messages from advertisers that thin is in. The campaign's goal is to counteract a recent Australian poll that found that almost three percent of Australian females have an eating disorder. Experts from fields such as health, media, advertising and fashion will be asked to contribute to the campaign. Funding for the *Healthy Girls Can Do Anything* campaign will be found in the State budget. The campaign follows a similar one called *Girls Can Do Anything* whose slogan was printed on stickers and passed out to teenagers around the State.

RWANDA

Despite decades of bloody warfare between Tutsi and Hutu populations in Rwanda, a recent truce has been called in the unique form of the Aburukundo collective. Even the newly minted name signifies the women who are united and who like each



last year. Donyo comes from a small village in Ghana, Dagbametè, and is in the process of building a medical clinic there which will use local herbal medicine. "I feel very strongly that this clinic needs my support," Richter says. "Herbal medicine is under siege in Ghana. Most of the herbalists are over 50 years of age and their knowledge is not being passed on. They feel very intimidated by the modern medicine that is practiced in the cities. They are surprised and thrilled at how herbs are having such a revival in the West."

Richter has also established a small business where local agents send him seeds, and manufacture herbal medicine for local consumption with very basic technology that can be operated without electricity. He has provided them with encapsulation equipment that can be hand-operated, and the ground herbs are poured into capsules, then sealed and processed under hygienic conditions.

Richter explains, "Ultimately, the project will be run by women, and they should be the primary beneficiaries. That is going to be one of my criteria. The women are based in the village and have the time to do the manufacturing. They also make better collectors. They are more in tune with the medicinal plants and most of the herbalists are women anyway," he says.

The herbalists in Ghana export seeds from the Neem plant and the Physic Nut tree. The latter is a rather obscure herb, sometimes called the termite plant. Grown as an ornamental, it has medicinal value as a strong purgative. It can also be used as a poultice for external wounds and for herpes, and is in very high demand.

Seed-collecting for the Neem plant is delicate. The seed is only viable for 30 days and cannot be allowed to dry out. Richter has the seeds flown into Canada by air courier where the final cleaning is completed by Richters' staff.

The seed collection model he has established in Ghana is intimate and based on personal relationships. Although still in its early stages, it has become a model for other countries. First, he finds a local person who speaks English and who can write well enough to keep up a correspondence. This person becomes his contact in the country and the central organizer for the seed collecting. His projects are all small scale — they do not involve governmental or non-governmental organizations, and depend on the relationship he has developed with his contact person. It is a husbandry of preservation, both for the land and for those involved. **WE**



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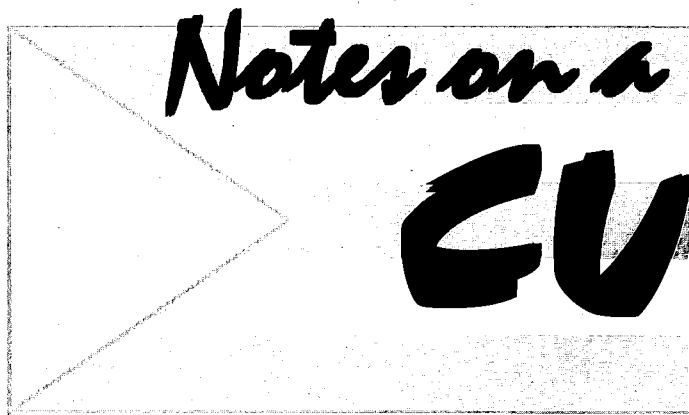
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other" — speaks a vocabulary of peace and reconciliation. There are 40 Tutsi and Hutu women who make up the Umutara-based coalition: a result of significant grassroots efforts to stabilize the war-torn community and jointly rebuild in a spirit of intertribal rapprochement. Since women make up just over half of Rwanda's population, and are more often than not the sole surviving heads of families, it is within their power, particularly if they are land-holders, to determine how labor and land are most beneficially managed.

As agents of their own self-empowerment, the Aburukundo women are responsible for the building of houses and schools, in addition to a manufacturing and distribution centre for the clothes and household items they themselves make.

Gardening, tree-planting, an animal husbandry, all contain the array of skills that women intend to teach their daughters. Impressively, the conference women's union is a national



Notes on a

CUBAN

Experience

The Duality of Equality

by **Mariana Canidad Cruz and Yalila Murciano,**
translated by **Nancy Allan**

The Cuban revolutionary government recognized even from its beginnings in 1959 through its policies the full equality of women and men; there was to be equal, active participation by both sexes in social, economic and political transformation. Women's participation in the national economy increased from 15 percent in 1965 to 43 percent in 1995, reflecting mainly their enlistment in waged work. Women readily took advantage of the proffered free education which allowed them to develop scientific and technical skills. In 1995, the percentage of women in technical occupations was 64.6, an increase of around seven percent over 1990. Their leadership roles, however, have increased less than a quarter of one percent over the same period, to 28.8 percent in 1995 from 28.6 in 1990.

Although figures show that women make up over 50 percent of the work force in health, education and tourism programs, they make up only 30 percent of the work force in the agricultural sector. Of that number, 30 percent are in technical positions and 11 percent in leadership positions. While it is plain that Cuban women are part of the country's economic life, it is also evident that there is no correlation between their high level of participation and competent technical skills on the one hand, and their leadership roles on the other.

Until the 1990's, Cuba had a secure foreign market for its

main export, sugar. It enjoyed good credit rating, favourable exchange rates, and was able to import all the goods it required, including all its energy needs. The loss of this market in the early 90's threw the country into an acute economic crisis. Both imports and nationally produced goods became scarce and serious food shortages ensued. Petroleum imports fell to 5.7 million tons in the 90's from a high of about 13 million tons in the

Petroleum imports fell ... sugar

prices fell ... There were few

funds available to invest in

seeds to initiate and sustain

national agricultural

production.



70s, and sugar prices fell from over 60¢ per pound to 9.2¢. There were few funds available to invest in seeds to initiate and sustain national agricultural production.

This economic crisis became known as the "special period". Cuba had to develop multiple alternative solutions to deal with the food shortages. The government introduced provisional measures with the goal of having the people produce their own food. In the cities, every inch of free, state-owned property was authorized for use to produce food for direct consumption. This urban agriculture demanded maximum use of local resources.

For example, Havana has an area of 727 square kilometers, with more than 2 million inhabitants representing 20 percent of the country's population. As in other cities, even before the "special period" some citizens had sporadically cultivated produce, but with government initiatives and the new availability of plots, "people's gardens" began to proliferate. The Ministry of Agriculture organized institutions to provide technical advice and support at local levels to producers using organic methods.

This source of production has outlived the provisional period and an organic, city agriculture has evolved. Although achieving high yields was not originally an objective it has occurred in many instances. Some surplus products go to support educational and health institutions in the area, and there is often produce left over

to be sold. Some 26,000 families in the area benefit.

The many ugly refuse dumps and weed-covered plots that had previously existed have disappeared, and the support of the housing and road-construction industries, as well as that of various city services has helped to make transformation possible. The transformation in gender roles has unfortunately not been as thorough.

There are two aspects of this situation to consider:

- i) Women in Cuba carry all the weight of domestic responsibilities, which were made more difficult by scarcities during the "special period".
- ii) Established ideas and social customs that allow men more power in the private sphere are projected onto social and work spheres. Women are assigned supporting roles rather than leadership



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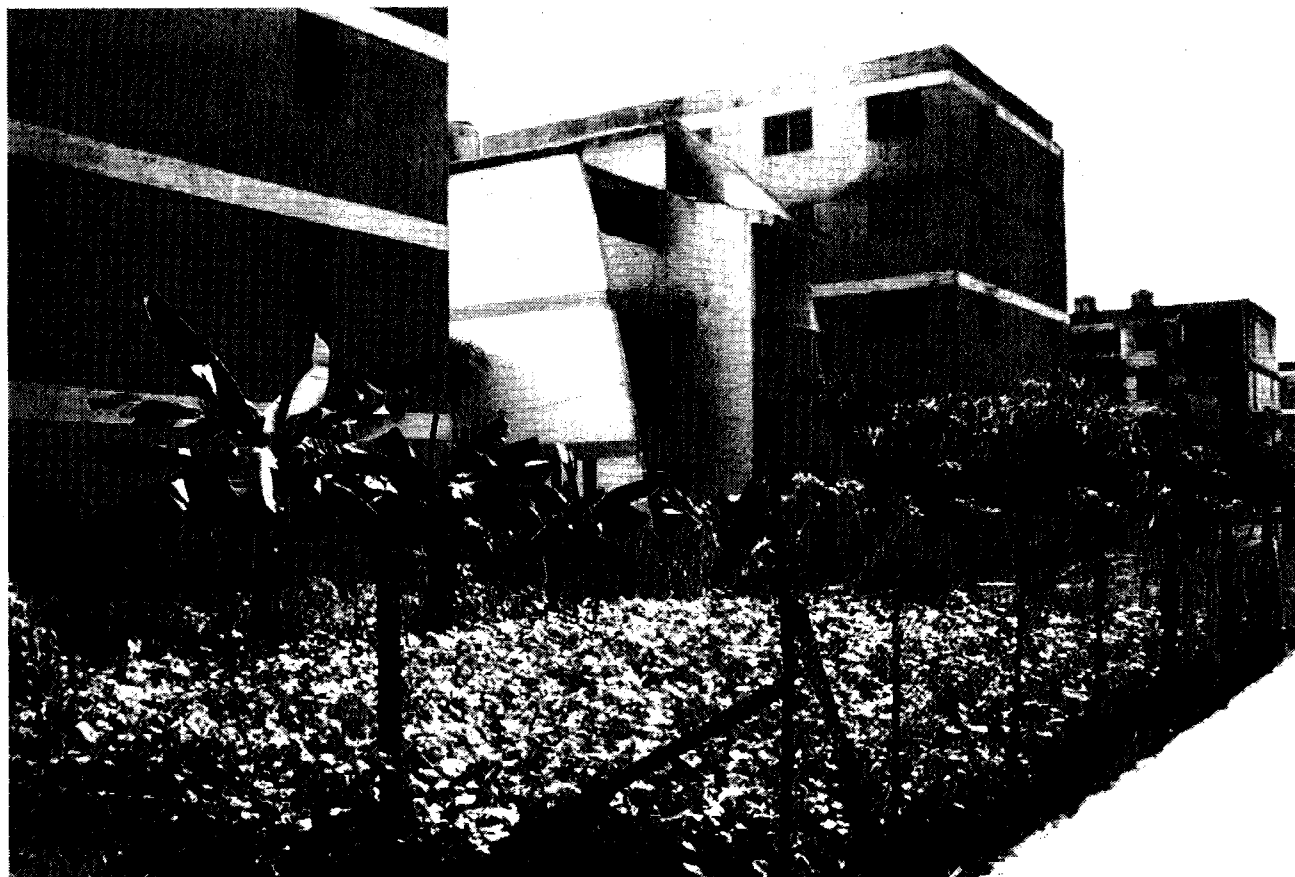
community in accordance with strict peace-keeping ideals, the American non-profit organization

Laubach Literacy recently agreed to assist the group in providing training and materials for the construction of a school for literacy and technical skill-development.



UNITED STATES

A recent report from the University of Chicago has definitively shown that women are subliminally affected by each others pheromones. The study proved conclusively what was only previously assumed, that humans respond to different pheromones much like animals do. It also proved that pheromones are the cause of what women have known for years; that their menstrual cycles begin to coincide if they live together. To test the theory, scientists took samples from different women at various stages in their cycles. They then tested these secretions on another test group and measured their rise and fall of their hormones. The women who were

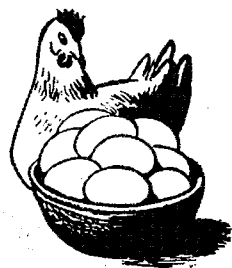


roles, especially in the agricultural sector which, historically, has been dominated by men. It is not enough that a woman demonstrate her unquestionable ability to carry out a task, she must show that she has somehow "resolved" the other daily loads that she is shouldering, so that she can do the work "as if she were a man."

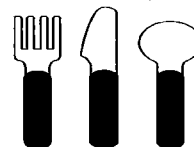
There has been no interest in collecting official statistics on the number of women among the 26,000 urban producers,

is headed by a woman, Yalila Murciano Guerra. She has three subordinates, two women and one man, who provide technical advice and distribute supplies to a total of 98 producers. The majority have free use of state land, while ten own the plots they work. Only nine producers are women, although more than half of the female family members help with the work of the male tenants.

America Alarcon is one of the nine women. As a child she



... the limitations on participation of women as producers is directly related to the heavy burden of domestic and other work they must carry



but empirical evidence would suggest that direct participation must be between 20 and 30 percent.

To provide a closer look at women in the urban agricultural setting, it may be helpful to look at two specific municipalities of City of Havana provinces. La Lisa and Playa are adjoining municipalities on the north west perimeter of the city. Their combined area is about 100 hectares. In contrast to other municipalities, private-sector horticulture in La Lisa and Playa

lived in the country and helped her father work the land and it was not until 1991 that she decided to devote herself full time to agriculture. During the "special period" the local government authorized her to expand her productive area from .1 hectares to .3 hectares, the additional land being state-owned. Her intensively-worked garden is in a residential zone that also contains various research centres. Here she is allowed to sell her produce directly from her organic garden without paying

rent or taxes. Her main products are vegetables and condiments and, on a very small scale, she raises poultry and rabbits. Working women who live in the area are happy to be able to obtain fresh vegetables so easily.

Another female tenant is Olga Oye Gomez who is of Japanese heritage. Her father was a well-known producer, and he introduced her to horticulture as a small child. In the 80's she became a chemical technician in a metallurgical research centre, but after her father's death in 1990 she assumed full responsibility for the garden while carrying on her technical work and looking after her husband and two small children. She explains this feat by observing that Cuban women have learned from childhood to take on multiple tasks and diverse responsibilities. Since 1992 she has worked the land full time with the help of her family, whom she is training to become producers. She continues to balance horticulture with domestic responsibilities, preparing a week's meals on Sundays.

There are also state-owned plots in the municipality of La Lisa, and the producers working these areas receive advice from their local Popular Councils. The municipality has seven zones, five of which have female area heads who advise some 1,320 citizens working 130 hectares.

One of these women is Lourdes Sanchez who advises 217 producers working 29 hectares. Only eight of these producers are women, five of whom are housewives and two work at state centres. Lourdes estimates, however, that 30 percent of the male producers are helped in the gardens by their wives and daughters. If it were not that the women are burdened with waged work besides gardening, raising and educating their children, as well as looking after the household and doing housework, the participation would be greater.

Amada Rosabal works a hectare of land earmarked, in the medium term, for the construction of new housing. She lives in an apartment block near the area and works every other day at the Pharmacy Institute. She sows plantain and yucca,

has fruit trees and raises poultry. Her husband and four children help her on the land, she says, and also help with the housework, otherwise she could not manage so much.

Now, 80 percent of her produce is consumed by her family, while the surplus goes mainly to feed the children at a local child-care centre and at a primary school. A small amount is sold to neighbours. Amada is also president of a group of garden owners who meet to study and exchange experiences.

The experiences of these women in La Lisa and Playa municipalities are not necessarily typical of other areas in the city, but they illustrate the pro-active role a woman can fulfill as a leader in the agricultural sector which, historically, has been dominated by men. It is also evident that the limitations on participation of women as producers is directly related to the heavy burden of domestic and other work they must carry. The capacity and aptitude of Cuban women to take on the work of urban agriculture is simply not reflected in the current situation. **WE**



WEGlobetrot

proved to have the ability to linger so substantially in a room as to affect the mood of the next person entering it.



INDIA

Though the title of India's newest prime minister went to Atal Behari Vajpayee of the Bharatiya Janata Party last March, the real political scene-stealer throughout the country's nationwide elections was the rival Congress Party's "star campaigner" Sonia Gandhi. Given her status as a long-standing, proudly a political recluse, and still grieving widow of Rajiv Gandhi, the devoted daughter-in-law to the late Indira Gandhi is relative-by-marriage to two of India's recently assassinated Congress Party prime ministers. Ms. Gandhi's reluctant decision to campaign on behalf of a party hamstrung by inside corruption and of its political agendas, and on behalf of a country rife with splintered and seemingly irreconcilable interests, surprised many.

Opposition parties follow



Photo credit Timothy Greenfield-Sanders Courtesy of WEDO

1920 - 1998

INTERVIEW

Gloria Steinem *remembers* Bella Abzug

A Tribute

by
**Christine
Covern**

For most of the 77 years of her life, Bella Abzug was a driving and hugely significant force in the women's, peace, and civil rights movements. She was also known for her many eccentricities: she had the nerve to run for the U.S. Senate in the 70's, she played poker like "one of the boys", sang a manly version of Marlene Dietrich's song "Falling in Love Again", and her most recognizable feature was her habit of wearing flared pants.

But what most people don't know about Ms. Abzug is that she was one of the few women in the 70's for which she carried a name that was a rare piece of Americana.



Photo credit: Rick Bard

When she died in New York City on March 31st from complications following heart surgery, the world lost one of its most gifted and passionate leaders.

Among Abzug's many accomplishments, she served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, founded the National Women's Political Caucus, and was head of President Carter's National Commission on Women. She was influenced by the McCarthy hearings, was an effective conscience during the Nixon administration, and of course a growing presence to be noticed alongside Martin Luther King. Her achievements for women's advancement were remarkable. It was Abzug who wrote the first law to ban discrimination against women who wanted to obtain credit, credit cards, loans, and mortgages. She was responsible for introducing bills addressing family planning, child care and abortion rights. She was also a staunch supporter of gay and lesbian rights, and introduced an amendment to the Civil Rights Act to include gays and lesbians.

"Every second requires that I do, move, push. People are desperate for help, for leadership. There's no place else to go but to me, they say, and the sad thing is that very often they are right. That's what I want to help change."

- Bella Abzug from "Bella!"

In recent years she co-founded the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), an organization which embodied and represented the culmination of her life and work. WEDO helped revolutionize United Nations agendas concerning women and environmental and human rights. During her own battle with breast cancer, she also co-convened the first World Conference on Breast Cancer in an effort to help progress work to eliminate the disease.

Never one to shy away from opposition, it was Abzug's utter devotion and perseverance that allowed her to be so effective. Mim Kelber, a lifelong friend of Abzug's and co-founder of WEDO, described her as "a person not intimidated by anyone or anything." As Bella herself said in her 1972 book of the same name: "They call me Battling

Bella, Mother Courage and a Jewish mother with more complaints than Portnoy. There are those who say I'm impatient, impetuous, uppity, rude, profane,

brash and overbearing. Whether I'm any of these things, or all of them, you can decide for yourself. But whatever I am - and this ought to be made very clear at the outset - I am a very serious woman."

WE interviewed Gloria Steinem, a close friend and colleague of Ms. Abzug's, who gives us some insight into Abzug's remarkable life and work:

WE - Thanks very much for taking the time from your busy schedule to speak with us.

Steinem - I'm just glad that you're doing something about Bella. It's great.

WE - Did you ever get a sense of what motivated Bella to do the extraordinary work that she did?

Steinem - Bella from childhood had a world view not a local or national view. Perhaps this came in part from being a Zionist. She always had an international

consciousness. And she always saw justice for one person being inextricably bound up with justice for another. She told a story about how when her father died she tried to say Kaddish for him and was forbidden to do so in the temple because only sons are supposed to do that and she rebelled against that and did it anyway. So she had an enormous sense of fairness. It was beyond justice - it was fairness.

WE- And I suppose her parents were the key motivators that instilled that in her?

Steinem - Yes. You know, her father ran a meat market called the "Live and Let Live Meat Market" in the Bronx and her mother had enormous faith in her daughters. I think both parents were convinced that Bella could

"I think women would change the nature of power, rather than power change the nature of women."

- Bella Abzug, from an interview in 1992 with Environment Action Magazine

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astonishment over Sonya's lack of political experience and expressed resentment at her "foreigner" status - she is an Italian-born Catholic. Yet as the surviving upholder of her family's revered reputation, as champions of a secular, centralized democracy, her support was inevitable. The national surprise was how quickly the initially shy Sonya blossomed into a self-assured campaigner to garner mass support in record time. When she emerged last March as the newly elected head of the Congress Party (the second most powerful party in parliament), it was clear that India's voters had found an unexpected but galvanizing leader.

CANADA

In order to protest the deepening impact of federal government cuts on the lives of women in Canada, a unique event was set for this spring. Called The National Women's March Against Poverty, the event was launched in British Columbia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland, and involved scores of women available across



and should be president...[Bella] was just always enormously intelligent and practical as well as being idealistic. She could posit a view of what could be and was able to move people for it in a practical way. But she was a very radical person in the best sense of radical. You know, going to the root of a problem. Yet, she didn't hesitate to work inside the electoral structure. She was also one of the few political leaders who came up through social justice movements, not a political party, which gave her a special strength because she wasn't beholden to a party. Which drove the party crazy, of course. But it also allowed her to go directly to the people.

WE - Do you remember your first meeting with her?

Steinem - I believe it was 1967. We were all marching outside the Pentagon to protest the Vietnam War. There was a large group of women organized by Bella and others...I remember distinctly because I had never seen a woman with such a forceful style. And it frightened me at first and it took me awhile to realize that this was very important. That there is a lady-prison in which many of us languish and it's important to break out of that prison and Bella did that...I ended up realizing that the discomfort was my problem, not hers; that I needed to get over the idea that the only way to come into public was as a lady which is, of course, very limiting.

WE - If you were to pinpoint the most valuable thing that Bella

"There are plenty of people, including my husband Martin, who think I'm nuts. They don't believe I can get anywhere. They worry that I'm taking on too much. They warn that, at best, I'll be misunderstood; at worst, I'll be spurned and cut down. Who knows? Perhaps they're right. But I don't think so."

- from "Bella!"

ever accomplished in her career, what would it be?

Steinem - It's interesting you say that. It's hard to do because it was all of a piece. In the New York press, especially, she's been treated as a New York character and someone whose activity was in the past. She actually was a world leader whose most important accomplishments were in the last ten years. As the President and Board Chair of WEDO, she really was...I hesitate to put it this way because Bella would be the first one to say that nobody does something individually...but perhaps more than any other single person she was responsible for organizing so that non-governmental organizations around the world could have an impact on the United Nations...and that was a huge accomplishment. No one else had managed to do that.

WE - Is that something that she was particularly proud of?

Steinem - I think so. And, of course, within that overarching influence, the most important thing to her was to make the female half of the world visible and respected and autonomous; [for each woman] to have dignity and self authority.

WE - Is there anything that she particularly regretted or wished that she had done differently?

Steinem - I think that her sadness was that her talents were under-used and under-appreciated. As I said at her funeral, the least she should have been was President of the United States. I mean, this is a person of a stature greater than Churchill, greater than Golda Meir. She was never allowed to rise to the level of her competence. She sometimes reminded

me of a great conductor with no orchestra or a great composer whose music was not being performed. Because she was never quite accepted in the existing structure. She always had to create her own. So, she was always something of an outsider.

WE - How differently has the press and the public related to you than to Bella? And how much do you think that was a part of her flamboyance and outspokenness?

Steinem - You know, I campaigned for Bella when she ran for the U.S. Senate. And at the same time there was a woman named Gloria Schaeffer who was running for Secretary of the State of Connecticut. So I was going back and forth in these two campaigns. And when I was in Connecticut they would say that Gloria Schaeffer is too ladylike, too quiet and couldn't be effective in politics and then I would come to New York and they would say that Bella was too unladylike, too loud, and couldn't be effective in politics. But I think that even though I would be perceived as not loud and brash like Bella that what we share is the fact that there is no proper way to come to power because women are not supposed to come to power. So we were both criticized in ways that our male counterparts would not have been.

WE - When I asked Mim Kelber what the world should have known about Bella Abzug and didn't, she said her complete perfectionism, hard work and the fact that she made herself accessible 24 hours a day. What would you say?

Steinem - Mim is right. For instance, when Bella was in Congress she was the key woman in founding the National Women's Political Congress and also the Women's Conference in Houston which was like a constitutional convention for women...But not only that, she was always up until three in the morning hammering out the wording of coalition statements. She did the work late at night with no reward at all. She was the one who was bringing groups together, making peace, making coalition language. She did the work. From the biggest to the smallest - she did the work.

WE - Bella seemed perpetually self-assured and confident in public. Was she the same persona in private?

Steinem - She really was the same in public as in private. I think the one thing that was probably less evident in public, unless you had seen her over a long period of time, was her humor. Although she was a very funny speaker, [it was] her humour and her affection for people; the fact that you could walk through the streets with Bella and not only did many people know her and come up and say, "How are you?" and "I voted for you" and "Give 'em hell," but Bella knew them. She would walk through a neighborhood and remember which woman had a child that was sick, and which man was trying to get a job somewhere. She was very personal, loved to dance, was a wonderful singer, played the violin, played poker... She was the universal person.

WE - What have you taken away personally from the experience of having known her?

Steinem - Well, I'm working on that. I have her picture by my telephone so that I don't try to phone her. I haven't absorbed her death yet [but] I know in my head that the best way to keep her with us is to keep asking, "What would Bella do?" in a situation and try to take her qualities into ourselves. And I'm not sure what that will mean in my life yet but I think one thing is to realize that conflict is positive. Unlike

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the country in caravans and meeting in the nation's capital, Ottawa. It is based on a similar Quebec march that took place in 1995 which also protested unfair cuts. Among the demands of the 1995 march were new pay equity laws, low-cost housing, and improved social services for women. Almost all of these demands were eventually given promises for action. The theme of the march is "For Bread and Roses! For Jobs and Justice!". It is initiated by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).



KOREA

In a sign of how little some things change, a recent survey has shown that Korean school textbooks have failed to reflect the positive change in women's social status over the last 20 years. Instead, according to the Korean Women's Development Institute, textbooks still depict women as inferior to men. The survey also found that many textbooks still contain a number of stereotypes about women.

"Women have been trained to speak softly...and carry a lipstick. But women today are carrying a bigger stick, moving beyond the kitchen table, demanding a place at all decision-making tables, and actually transforming power, extending the boundaries of progress."

Bella, I got a load of the female socialization that conflict is not a good thing. So, I am trying to remember Bella. Ironically, before Bella died - and, in fact, I never dreamed that she would not come out of the surgery okay - she was at home and would get out of breath if she exerted herself too much. After the whole Clinton scandal began I was very sick. I had a fever and laryngitis. I couldn't speak at all and couldn't respond to the press. So Bella said, "They can come to my house as long as I don't have to go to the television studio." In my heart I wasn't sorry, because it was a thankless task - like commenting on a train accident - so I was somewhat relieved that I couldn't talk. But I remember that as sick as she was, Bella took it on because it was important. So that was why I wrote the obit page piece in the The New York Times in which the first line was something Bella had said to me which was basically: "Clinton doesn't need impeachment, he needs sex addiction therapy." So even though I didn't know at the time that we would be without Bella now, Bella plunged me into conflict. So perhaps that's the lesson that she needs for me to learn.

WE- Thanks very much for your time. **WE**



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poetry by

LORNA CROZIER

PUMPKINS

Pumpkins are the garden's
huge guffaw.

 Toothy grins
splitting their cheeks
long before
you carve a face.

They roll on the ground
holding their sides,
deep belly laughter
rising in waves slapping
drum-barrel chests
like water in a bucket.

They are laughing
 the last laugh
the ludicrous genital
tug and pull of things

laughing with the moon-mad
melons
 spilling like breasts
from the earth's popped buttons.

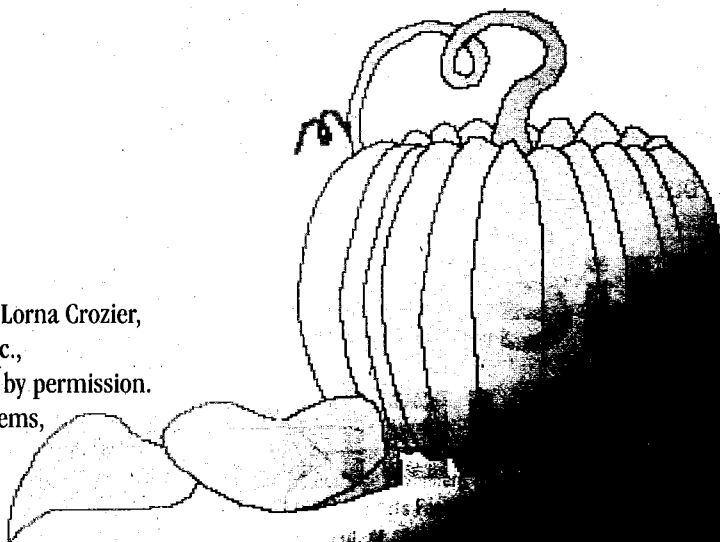
From "The Sex Lives of Vegetables" in
The Garden Going On Without Us by Lorna Crozier,
published by McClelland & Stewart Inc.,
The Canadian Publishers. Reprinted by permission.
Lorna Crozier's latest collection of poems,
A Saving Grace, is also published
by McClelland & Stewart.

ONIONS

The onion loves the onion.
It hugs its many layers,
saying O, O, O,
each vowel smaller
than the last

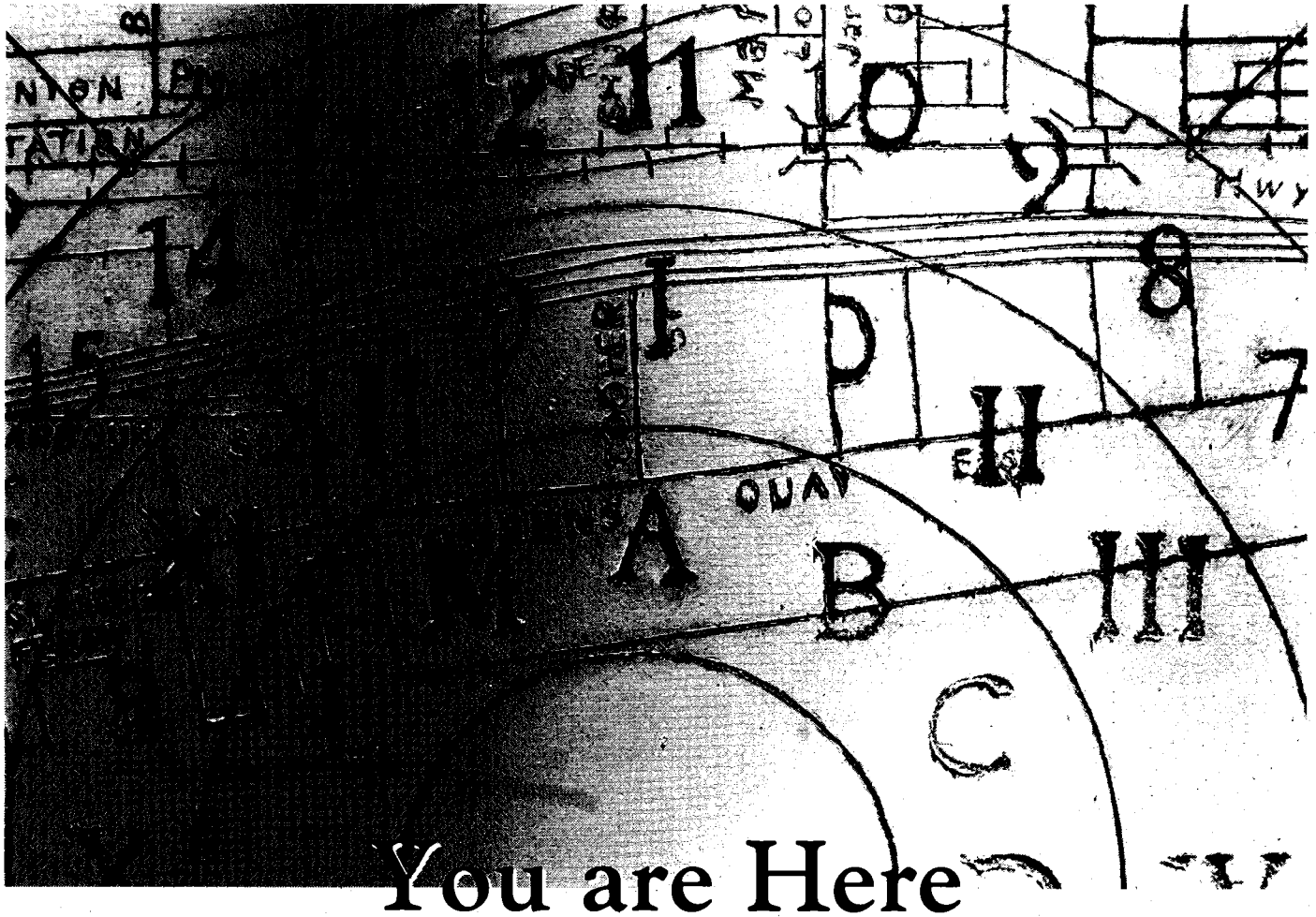
Some say it has no heart.
It doesn't need one.
It surrounds itself,
feels whole. Primordial.
First among vegetables.

If Eve had bitten it
instead of the apple,
how different
Paradise.



WEfocus

by Fredrica Mintz



You are Here

"A city is held together, not by physical structures, but by belief."

Millie CHEN

Our collective experience of the city, one that is mundane and of convenience, displaces the possibility of an aesthetic and spiritual place. Artist Millie Chen's work, which has focussed on the body in culture, reasserts a language of desire.

In an urban planner's office, Chen has installed a work, *You Are Here*, which conjures hopes and questions the future. She uses numerical symbols in a mandala shape, and a sort of astrocompass to point the way from an earthly door and mortal threshold toward the northern heavenly and



spiritual gates, thereby inspiring us to consider a wider vision of time and space. She presents a Chinese Shih divination plate filled with tea leaves grafted onto the new world city of Toronto.

Drawing from Chinese tradition, Chen challenges who it is that defines urban reality. Is it the theorists who think about it, the masters of politics and trade such as urban planning professionals, who design it, or the multi-ethnic residents who live in it? The natural or supernatural elements are at odds with the notion of a cartographer's rational, contemporary urban setting.

Overlaying a spiritual reading onto a North American grid, Chen's work disrupts the idea of a technocratic or monocultural vision. *You Are Here*

orients the viewer with a basic navigational tool lifted into the realm of the spiritual, thus opening a dialogue about who is navigating and where we that we collectively intend to arrive.

1995. Various ground tea leaves (peppermint, chamomile, bergamot, lemon, lime, jasmine, orange pekoe, red raspberry), paint, plaster.
 Location: Berridge Lewinberg Greenberg
 Sponsor: Toronto Arts Foundation
 Dark Gabor Ltd. #6

by Cathleen Kneen



Biotechnology

A Woman's Business

Simply put, biotechnology encompasses all methods of changing the internal makeup, the genetic pattern, of an organism to make it behave in a way which it would not otherwise have done, thus creating a product which is deemed useful or commercially viable. Sometimes genetic manipulation is carried out with material from the organism itself, such as the "anti-sense" gene in the Calgeneis tomato which supposedly slows down the ripening process. Sometimes it is

a question of transferring genetic material from one organism to another across species, including animals and humans.

When we think of biotechnology as a women's issue, what immediately comes to mind are the new reproductive technologies. There are a number of additional issues for women and for the human community which these technologies raise. Fundamental to all of them, however, is the issue of ownership and control.

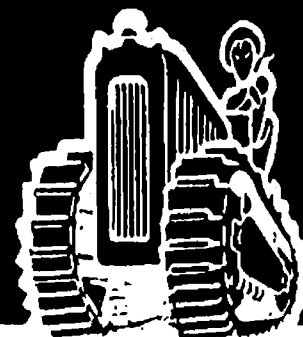
This is not disinterested science. Commercial value is dictated, not only by the cost of research and development of these technologies, but also by the process itself. Once upon a time, every gardener and farmer would seek out the plants which exhibited characteristics she wanted: taste, time of ripening, size, productivity, whatever. She would carefully collect seeds of these plants and use them for her next crop, or trade them.

With the discovery of hybrids, we have plants which, when interbred, are capable of producing a seed that is more vigorous or productive than either of its parents, but which will not "breed true". This means that seed from the daughter plant will not reproduce the characteristics of its parents: the

Though most of the world's farmers are women, they are generally involved in small-scale or subsistence production, with produce destinations being their families or immediate neighbourhoods. The dominant mode of agriculture is quite different; it is an industry operating on an upwardly linear model, producing commodities for a global market. This is the agriculture that shows on Gross Domestic Product statistics, and through which we characterize whole countries as producers of one or another commodity (as in the infamous banana republics of Central America).

Success for a farmer is defined in business terms of profit, rather than on human terms of community health and welfare. Among the outward marks of success are the large

Among the outward marks of success are the large machines which characterize the male role in agriculture.



farmer has to purchase from the seed company annually. This process has been furthered with patenting, where the new seed is the property of the company and may not be reproduced without royalties paid to the patent holder. Clearly, the control is in the hands of the seed companies, and they are ensured that farmers are dependent on them.

Biotechnology is another step in this process of corporate dependency. The majority of biotechnology patents are in "crop protection": they enable the crop to resist, not just pests or disease, but the deleterious effects of particular herbicides, pesticides or fungicides. A good example is Monsanto's "Roundup Ready" crops which can survive treatments with the company's own agrototoxin: major seed companies are owned by major chemical companies.

Saving seeds to locally sell a ready crop is not a simple circumvention of this system. To begin, corner stores and supermarkets alike are locked into supply agreements with the few major distributors remaining: California, Florida, or Mexican produce is stocked and selling in stores even at the height of more northern local growing seasons. Supply times, quantity, quality and price are set by distributors and chains. In order to ensure that one can produce within such parameters, producers find themselves using all the industrial inputs, from seeds to agrototoxins, which have been designed precisely to fulfill this scenario.

machines which characterize the male role in agriculture. The ideology surrounding this agriculture makes it very difficult to even think of alternatives to the definitions of progress embedded in its system. It is on this basis that "development" projects in many poor countries have contrived to remove women's authority in food production and have passed it over to men, whether through financing mechanisms which are in men's hands, or more grossly, by redistributing land traditionally belonging to women. Women may continue to grow food, but agriculture is a man's domain and the goal is profit. Biotechnology is a tool for enhanced profit for the corporation which develops it, of course, and for many of those who employ it.

When we turn to human reproduction the picture is even clearer. However we now choose to relate to our biological nature, it is our ability to conceive, bear, and feed children which has most defined us as women. It is precisely in these three areas that new reproductive technologies are operating. Scientists are working to create human life. Is it to relieve women of the pain and shame of infertility, or ultimately to appropriate the power of birth? From in vitro fertilization to embryo implants, the clear result will be to eventually make babies without the need for women. We have already witnessed notorious efforts to persuade women that industrial products are better for their infants than mother's milk; we have here



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witness to embryos created in labs and switched from woman to woman as if she were nothing more than an incubator. There is much metaphysical and high-sounding rhetoric about all of this, but behind the rhetoric are a few corporations making great sums of money and increasingly ripening their control.

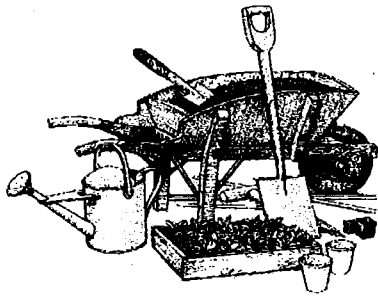
Through biotechnology, scientists are engaged in genetic manipulation of fetuses: to repair perceived defects. The question of value is obvious: who gets to decide what features are of keeping value and which should be removed? As with abortion, the question of choice is a decoy. The real issue is control: who owns the process? Who imposes the value framework?

The pressures to conform to the industrial model of birth are as socially compelling as imposing industrial agriculture. How is one to resist amniocentesis, or other even more invasive tests, which are "offered" to ensure a healthy baby? Do we turn our backs on infertile women whose infertility, as environmental scientist Rosalie Bertell has noted, is in all likelihood caused by the very industrial system (through pollution, low-level radiation, etc.) which is now proposed to cure it?

When we look at the third area of biotechnology concentration, the picture is similar. Massive efforts are being made to gain, and to gain control of information about genetic makeup. Each bit of information is to be patented so that any therapy which might possibly be developed will profit the original corporation regardless of its effect on the total health of the population on which it is used. Take, for example, the current efforts to patent the BRCA-1, popularly known as the "breast cancer gene". If this "gene" is patented, the company's intention is to develop it as a test, for genetic susceptibility to breast cancer, which would be recommended for every woman of a certain age. Never mind that the test can't really predict anything, since cancer is a very complex phenomenon and there is no simple cause-and-effect; never mind the mental effect of being diagnosed positive; never mind the effect on the unfortunate woman's insurance, or employment prospects. Just think of the money they will make. We have only to look at current mamogram success hype and misinformation to know this is true.

I do not mean to suggest that the questions revealed by the activities of biotechnologies are easy ones: the hope of a cure for AIDS through genetic manipulations, the development of a recombinant form of insulin, or indeed the promise of more productive food crops, - these are very compelling. But all must be evaluated in the context of the reality of contemporary biotechnology and the interests it serves. As author Vandana Shiva pointed out, the scientific method itself is inherently violent; it removes organisms from their natural environment, isolates them in a lab,

GROWING a Need



Starting a Community Garden

by Amina Miller

When I started to work as health promotion co-ordinator with a new health centre in the City of Etobicoke, Canada, one of the first things that I wanted to do was to start a garden. We had data from a community needs assessment, but nobody had identified a need for a garden. I had experienced the value of a community garden in a previous position, am an avid gardener, and I confess it was initially more for personal interest that I introduced the project.

I found a local park that was overlooked by dozens of apartment blocks, but was empty most of the time. It accommodated a shabby swing area, some litter baskets and a lot of grass. I set about determining how the park was used and who used it by watching it for long periods of times at differing times of day. I developed an intimate understanding of the nature paths, game areas and relaxation areas, so that I could locate the perfect spot for our garden that would not interfere with other people's established uses of their park. It was important the envisioned garden not cause inconvenience to non-gardeners.

Etobicoke's Parks and Recreation Department did not want a community garden, and especially not at this location. They had seen how parks in other areas had become untidy and suffered vandalism, and Etobicoke did not have a precedent for using park property for a community garden. Because of the extreme vandalism that had occurred here (every tree planted over the years had been destroyed), the Parks Department considered the park a write-off. So what did I have to lose?

I showed the director my plans for the location, the design of the beds and the size of the plots and reassured him that it was ideal for reducing any potential for untidiness, would be small enough not to create too much of a demand on individual gardeners, and acknowledged that there was still potential for untidy gardens, resident complaints, and unfortunately, vandalism. In the end I was given permission to pursue the project on the

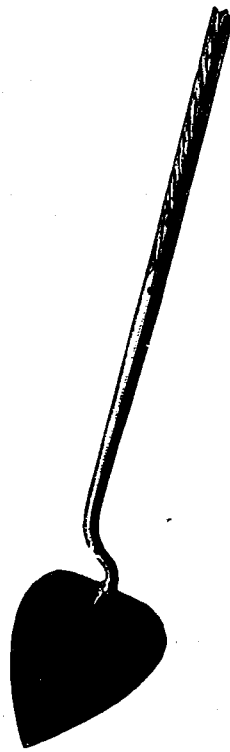


condition that he would help clean up what he figured would become an 'abandoned eyesore' at the end of the year.

The next stop was funding. Armed with my designs, location and support from the City, I wrote a proposal and searched and secured funding. The easy part was over. Now for the community.

After running a glowing article and advertising a meeting and the plots in our *Health Centre Newsletter*, and having it delivered to every household in the area, we attracted exactly one person to the first meeting. At this point theory told me that if there is no community to support a project, it will be doomed.

Theory did not meet the woman who did come to that first meeting! She was so enthusiastic that she claimed she counted as two members. She assured me that if we had another meeting, others would show up; she promised to talk up the



During the process of breaking soil that first day, many people stopped by to ask what we were doing, to give us their opinions and advice on how we should proceed, to lend a hand, or to chat.



Photo credits: the author

idea of the community garden in bank line-ups and the supermarket, if I would continue to tell anyone who cared to listen.

With 12 keen people and the beginning of our community, we discussed the problems we would face, the materials we would need, and identified the physical tasks of building four large wooden containers. We addressed having no direct source of water and no security from the evident and prevalent vandalism, and settled on a dependence on nature and hand watering, on garden security patrol duties and public awareness appeals, reserving fencing or dog patrol plans as a last resort. We problem-solved the necessary sequence of events to ensure that planting could commence Victoria Day weekend.

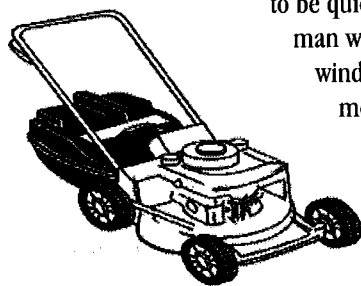
Plans are meant to be foiled, and the price of lumber had increased by 25 percent. To compensate, personal tools were loaned, gardeners bought their own plants and hand tools, and with adjustment, plans went ahead.

During the process of breaking soil that first day, many people stopped by to ask what we were doing, to give us their opinions and advice on how we should proceed, to lend a hand, or to chat. The community men who helped mentioned that this heavy work was a welcome change from their more sedentary apartment

maintenance. There were others, convinced we were wasting our time. The police even stopped by and told us that someone had reported that it looked like we were digging a massive grave.

Because I had expected it to be a long day, I had brought my four dogs and tied them to a nearby shade tree. The dogs attracted children which inevitably brought more people nearer the garden. The dogs were 'walked off their paws', and neighbours who saw us hard at work thankfully brought us juice and coffee. They commented that they enjoyed seeing activity in the derelict park. People who earlier had not known each other found common bonds and established additional friends in the community.

With 50 people of all cultures and ages running around by the time the topsoil arrived, we surrendered to a well-deserved lunch break.



Rain threatened, and our work needed to be quick. I had noticed a large man watching us from his window all morning and motioned for him to come and help. He was a biker who habitually hung out near the park, drank beer with his buddies and engaged in

pharmaceutical business transactions. In return for his ample assistance, I offered him a plot. He emphatically declined. A few days later he came back and asked if his mother could use one to grow potatoes: we allocated the one closest to his apartment.

We never had trouble with vandals; the bikers that hung



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around the garages at the edge of the park were our security. They were absorbed in helping the young children and elderly. As barriers and fear dissolved and were replaced by communication, personal identities grew.

One of the attractions of a garden is that one can be as private or as public as one chooses while the focus is the task of growing. One elderly woman named Lydia dreaded having an epileptic seizure in public. One day she experienced one and was shielded from public view, by those who knew and supported her, until she recovered. All who were involved indicated that their lives had been enriched by being given the opportunity to care for someone who had been a complete

stranger only months before. This magnitude of individual and personal enrichment would be invisible in an evaluation assessment under the general bureaucratic heading of community development.

The ten year-old boys who had helped with the initial construction were given a plot and with the same enthusiasm they had shown the first day, weeded, pruned and watered their plants to excess. They had been a part of the birth and growth of something permanent in their community. Not many adults, let alone children, can point to some fixture in their community and know that they helped to build it.

The most unexpected spin-off from the project was the founding of The Neighbourhood Beautification Committee to mobilize the community to demand that the rest of the park be upgraded. They wanted trees, seats, and a retrofitted playground. They also collaborated with local apartment dwellers to plant trees along the streets, and with the City to sow wild flowers in unkempt areas. They lobbied to have old dumpsters removed so that their environment began to take on a cared-for appearance and residents began to take pride in their community.

Access to water in the first year had been managed by renting a huge plastic cube which was filled periodically and unofficially by the fire department. The City Works Department people were so impressed with our creative security system for the cube, that they gave us advice on composting and by the middle of the second year were supplying our water.

By that second year we had many people on the wait list, and the demand for plots became so pressing that we had to establish time allowances for gardeners to ensure an equitable access to use.

Of our 18 plots, we have members from the black community, East Indian community, French, Europeans and Canadians. Members of the neighbourhood who had

initially complained about our 'private club-like' atmosphere however, refused to be placed

on the waiting list and our response was interpreted as racial discrimination. It was very difficult to reduce this tension and not be subject to further possibilities of reverse discrimination.

Regardless of the struggles of this community garden, there were many irreplaceable benefits that the community enjoyed. When the Director of the Parks Department referred to me as a 'miracle worker', it was a personal triumph. He reminded me of my first meeting with him for his reluctant initial permission to start the garden and now remarked that it was the first time the community had taken interest in this park, and the first time their efforts had not been vandalized within days. To be the catalyst through which the energy of the community could flow to initiate change, had been a great privilege, and the witnessing of a 'miracle' was not solely owned by me. WE

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Gender,

UTILITARIANISM &

POLAND

by
*Anne Camilla
Bellows*

Metropolitan and state interests in Poland manipulate their public's food access and food labor in part through a calculated social marginalization of women's labour.

Through a study of the garden allotments program in Poland, we gain a brief introduction to the complex and formalized practice of Polish urban agriculture. Gendered assumptions about relations of urban food production assign the non-paid, subsistence, and economically invisible labour of "gardens" predominantly to women of all ages and sometimes also to marginalized retiree and unemployed males.

In the past, the low-profile accorded to small plot food production has furthered official disregard for regional protests over city-based pollution that severely contaminates crops from industrial and transportation sources. The capacity to depreciate urban food production labour and disparage the significance of its output lends in turn a very tangible service to metropolitan interests that have sought, for private and public development interests, to dissolve urban agricultural space. The losses of short and long term food sustenance security, green spaces or "urban lungs" to clean local air pollution, and urban recreational space is the cost to all city

100 Years of Women and Urban Agriculture

residents for marginalizing women's labour and agricultural production.

In 1997, Poland celebrated 100 years of urban allotment gardening. 100 years began with the age of partition in Poland when the country was divided between German, Austrian, and Russian powers, and a vacillation, from capitalist industrialism, through 40 years of centralized communism, and back to western capitalism since 1989, was begun. Within this 100 year tangle of reform, revolution, and attempted revitalization, urban agriculture has maintained a fixed presence: low-cost urban food production and supply has contributed to social stability and malleable labour. It has garnered from its origins — in the industrial urbanization of rural indigenous Polish-ethnic peasants (eg: Schrebergartens, an urban garden allotment program) — its original and continuous importance. It was a model of paid (visible) mining males attached to unpaid (invisible) gardening family women or sometimes

retired men, and has been the seed from which all subsequent urban agriculture sprang. With a minimum of investment, the gardens served to pacify industrialists' paid and unpaid labour supply, to keep it from starvation, and even to keep it hostage.

Early industrialization exploited land as flagrantly as it did labour. The scientific management policies of mid-century bureaucratic government gave no thought to the pollution residues of industrial development. Autocratic governments suppressed environmentalists' early organizing to demonstrate the links between pollution and human health. In the most industrialized part of Poland exists also the highest pollution and human mortality rates. The local food production that provides subsistence security also lodges toxic levels of heavy metals and other contaminants (Sokolowska and Migurska, 1993).

The contradictions between political and economic promises of supply and social expectations of ersatz production (i.e. local food production) become more extreme in cases where urban pollution levels literally contaminate local food production. Forbidding local production exacerbates the inherent inability of the market and the state to guarantee secure food access over time. Women, with the social responsibility as family healers and food providers, are trapped between compromising family food provision and family health.

Under the post-World War II communist state in Poland, along with the industrial base, including re-acquired Silesian lands, the gardens too passed to state ownership, to be administered through factories and other sites of paid work (Lenkiewicz, 1971). In this centralized socialist system of production, distribution and services, decisions about almost all goods were made in Warsaw. Although people before the changes of 1989 had enough money to buy, the central government did not always successfully stock stores throughout Poland, or if so, stores did not always carry what people needed much less what they wanted. The most critical commodity in terms of social survival and stability was food. What people could not grow in their gardens, they stood in line for at the stores. This work of standing in lines, like the work of growing household food, was presumed, un(der)recognized, invisible, unpaid, and typically conducted by young and old females and sometimes also retired males.

Urban garden allotments were loosely organized throughout the communist period. Urban populations flocked to the gardens which still existed after the devastation of World War II and during the post-war period of non-capitalist food reorganization and distribution. The gardens grew slowly and steadily in number and in quality with modest steps towards goals of horticulture education, crop diversification, water pumps, electrification, community centers, and fences.

Beyond the work of food production, and through Social Committees still active today, women collected food and clothing for orphanages, organized care for elderly and

This work of standing in lines, like the work of growing household food, was presumed, un(der)recognized, invisible, unpaid, and typically conducted by young and old females and sometimes also retired males.

disabled garden members, introduced programs for children and youth to draw them into the gardening community, and generally built gardening culture and traditions. These services survive and provide an informal self-help network for garden members and their communities (Kondracki, 1993).

The dramatic food shortages of the 1980's were caused by periodic poor harvests combined with food exports being prioritized over domestic consumption for the sake of trade and international debt service. The call of the Polish Solidarity movement for local municipal and regional autonomy found an echo in the urban agriculture movement. The need to rally local semi-private food production to address local needs at last became recognized by the central state. Virtually admitting its inability to meet local needs and in indirect recognition of the critical nature of local food production, the government negotiated an informal agreement in 1980 allowing factory organized allotment gardeners to legally sell their excess produce (Lenkiewicz, 1980). In 1981, the national legislature passed a law creating an NGO-like status for the Polish Association of Gardeners (PZD (58 Ustawa, 6 Mar 1981, w sprawie pracowniczych ogrodach dzialkowosci)). The PZD then cooperated with the government to the extent of negotiating access to exports (Dzialkowiec, 1988). Suddenly the previously unpaid allotment farmers achieved social, political, and economic recognition and even promotion. The communist State that introduced martial law in Poland in 1981 ironically also resurrected the value and importance of local food production and its labourers for the sake of national survival.



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stability. It is no small coincidence, and remains to be further researched, that women were organizers of and mass participants in Polish street demonstrations and riots on behalf of the right to food access during this period (Walton and Seddon, 1994).

In 1989, the centralized socialist states of eastern Europe capitulated to the combined forces of their underground movements and the western market forces that held their debt notes. Society changed overnight in many respects. Food scarcity disappeared. Shops filled to overflowing. Just as suddenly, however, people often had no money to buy the new goods. Government price supports for basic food and other commodities disappeared, inflation skyrocketed, and unemployment — unknown since World War II — incapacitated entire towns. Those on fixed salaries, especially retirees, suffered tremendously. Women lost paid jobs at a much higher rate than men and have been re-hired, especially full-time, at a much lower rate than men. Persons over 35 in general, but especially women, have experienced the highest rates of unemployment from waged labour (Polish Committee of NGOs 1995). Thus the access to 'free' market goods became gated according to gender, age, and waged labour status. The paradox is that available and affordable food remained beyond the grasp of those who continued to produce it on a subsistence or reserve basis.

Again in these post-1989 years, the existence of gardens provides a safety valve for families and communities striving to maintain local food security and sustenance despite the vagaries of industry and government. And again this labour is invisible and even the need is hotly disputed. The history of and contemporary need to support local food autonomy, labour, and security has been engulfed by far-removed battles (Gazeta Wyborcza, 1996) about local government autonomy, economic development, and administrative aspects of decentralization.


A very special group in Silesia, the Gliwice Chapter of the Polish Ecological Club, comprised mostly of women, have organized to document and publicize their regional story, as well as to design strategies to minimize risk for populations who continue to rely on their local production. Their work breaks ground for urban agriculture movements worldwide: identifying risk while realistically addressing local food needs (Bellows, 1996).

From the inception of allotment farming, its production potential has been undermined in the

diminutive spatial designation of "garden" versus "farm". The message is, women work urban kitchen gardens; men work rural farms. "Garden" and "farm" not only suggest the physical size of tillable space, but indicate how much more the state values food production for exchange valuables opposed to non-monetary community "use" economies. Exchange economies provide tax revenues and profit; use economies bolster survival, flexibility to changing economic conditions, and community morale and traditions. If garden production can be claimed negligible, so too can the effects of pollution and contamination. That is, they can be ignored. A "farm" claims a more fixed relationship with the soil; a "garden", more transient and prone to displacement. These 100 years in Poland provide a case study of how the identity "garden" has served to diminish and manoeuvre food production labour — particularly women's. This marginalization directly impacts the production potential and long-term viability of urban food production space.

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Growing



in the City



Why Women Garden

by Susan Giordano, Chick F. Tam and Rachel Mabie

The Common Ground Garden Program, part of the University of California Cooperative extension, recently conducted a study of the fresh produce consumption patterns of Los Angeles gardeners. Of 1,200 surveys distributed, 117 participated, and 69 percent of the respondents were women. The women were almost equally split between home (50.6%) and community garden (49.4%) locations.

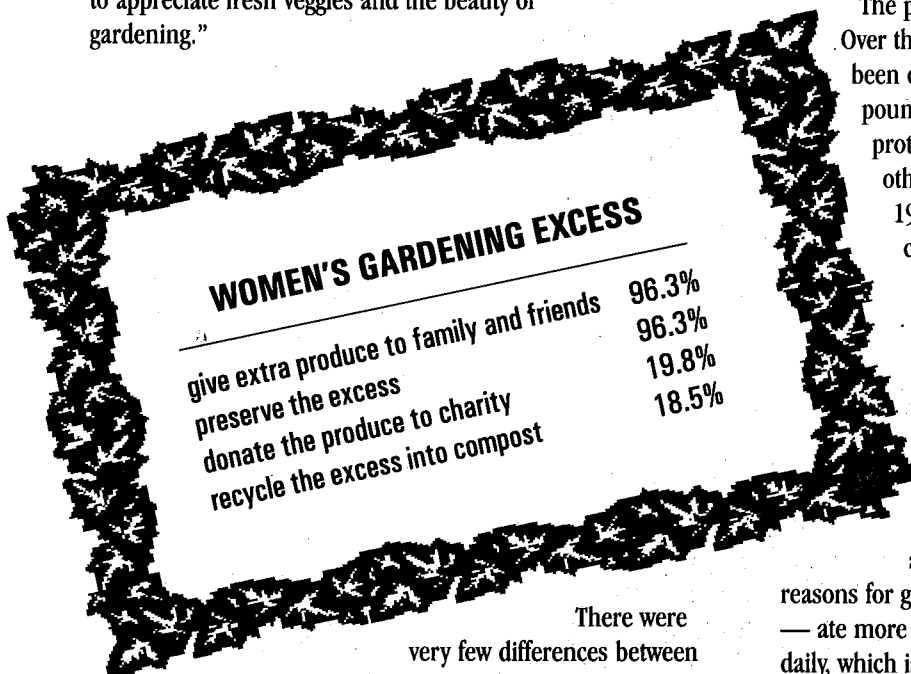
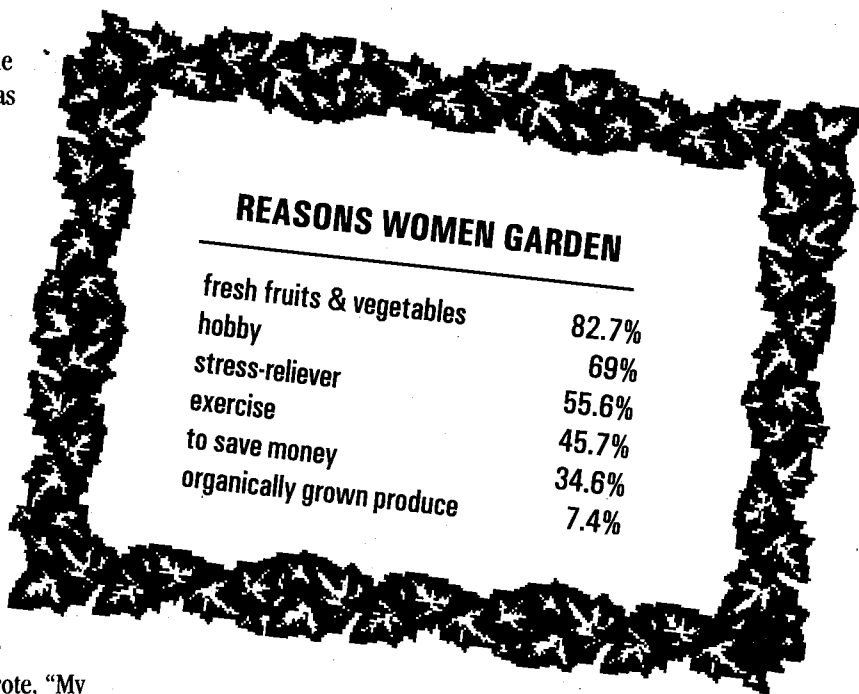
Valuable information was gathered on the role of gardening in women's lives, as well as the possible impact of gardening on their health and diets.

81 WOMEN SURVEY PARTICIPANTS - 69.2%

Background		Age and Marital Status	
Caucasian	62%	over 40	50%
Asian	16%	between 40 and 60	46%
Hispanic	8.1%	above 60	32%
African-American	8.1%	married with minimum of bachelor's degree	51.9%
Native American	2.6%		

Women respondents had lower incomes than the men: 20 women (26.8%) had incomes classified as very low by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), while only four (12%) of the men who responded fell in this income range. Among the men who responded, a larger percentage (66.7%) participated in a community garden. The women spent a median of 6.2 hours per week in their gardens compared to 5 hours per week for men. Their reasons for gardening did not differ significantly from those of the men.

The love of gardening is often passed from generation to generation: 32% of the women said their primary gardening teacher was a parent. One woman wrote, "My mother gardened in our small backyard. I helped a little. During WWII years, as a teenager, my mother and I had a victory garden in the park." Another wrote, "My father has had a garden all of my life. I learned early how to appreciate fresh veggies and the beauty of gardening."



There were very few differences between ethnic groups or gender in the top ten favourite vegetables grown. Women's favourites, in order of importance were: tomatoes, mixed herbs, summer squash, cucumbers, lettuce, green beans, peppers, eggplants, onions and parsley. Men differed merely in that mixed herbs were grown only by 50% of the them.

The most dramatic finding from the study is that women gardeners are more likely to have significant health benefits from gardening than are men. The majority of gardeners in our survey (69.2%) ate more than five servings a day of fruits and vegetables (the number recommended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture). More women (77.8%) ate at minimum the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables

than did men (22.2%).

The potential health benefits of this are tremendous. Over the past five years, a great deal of research has been conducted on phytochemicals, chemical compounds which appear in food and appear to offer protective benefits against cancer, heart disease, and other diseases (American Dietetic Association, 1995). Many fruits and vegetables, such as the cruciferous vegetables (cabbage, broccoli, etc.) and yellow-orange vegetables, such as sweet potatoes and carrots, contain abundant supplies of important phytochemicals. It is known that people who eat five or more servings of plant a day have a 40% decrease in the risk of cancer.

The women who participated in this study were dedicated gardeners who appeared to have strong economic and practical reasons for gardening. The respondents — men and women — ate more than five servings of fresh vegetables and fruits daily, which is higher than the national average. Women gardeners ate more fresh produce than men, and are most likely therefore to reap greater health benefits. Beyond dietary gains and economic need, the women surveyed also cited the satisfaction, peace and well-being they feel while gardening. As one woman wrote, "Gardening makes me happy."

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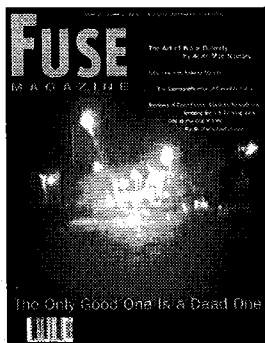
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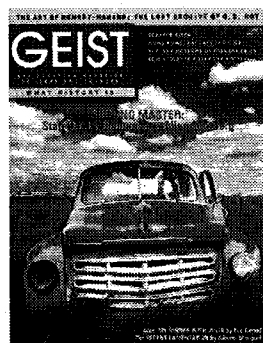
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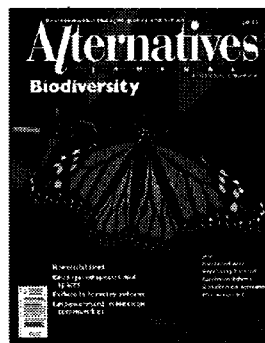


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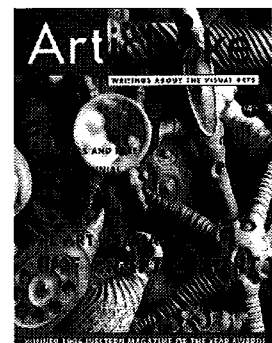


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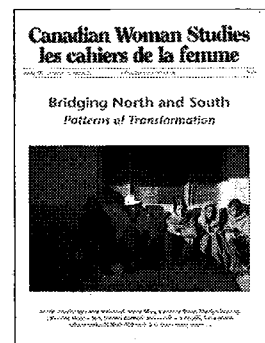
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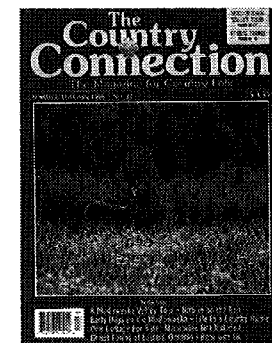
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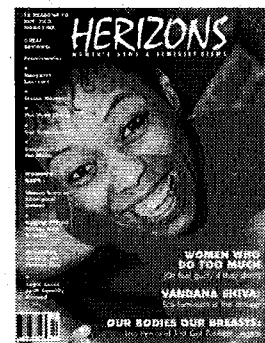
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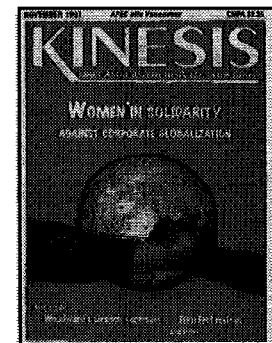
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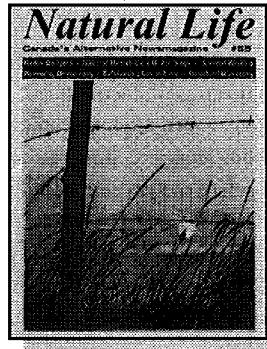
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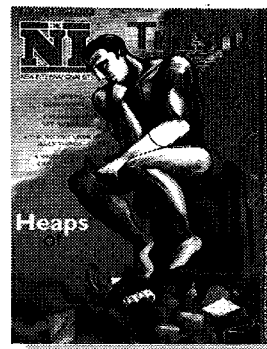
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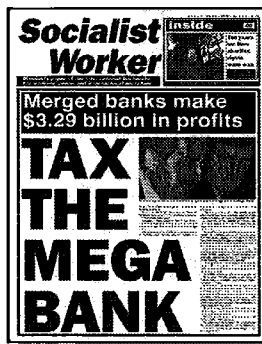
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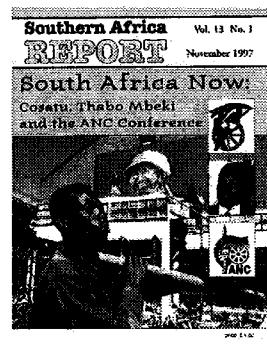
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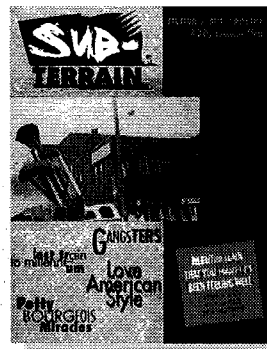
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A Patch of Eden: America's Inner City Gardens

by **H. Patricia Hynes**
Chelsea Green Publishing Co., 1996. 185 pp.
\$18.95 US\$

Reviewed by Sean Cosgrove

In this important book, *A Patch of Eden: America's Inner City Gardens*, H. Patricia Hynes has captured the frontier trends of the community gardening movement in the 1990's. In this decade, the US has seen the near removal of social welfare supports, and community gardening has experienced a wave of expansion since 1973 partly because of hunger and need. In spite of continued deterioration, decay and social disintegration, many inner-city communities have dug more deeply than ever into programs of community greening.

The book chronicles this struggle to maintain hope, beauty, and neighbourhood, by focusing on large, central-city urban gardening programs. Using personal profiles of stellar urban gardening activists, Hynes recounts the stories of four large city urban gardening programs. Her portraits of leadership and hard-working heroes are involved and powerfully drawn. The initiatives are often entrepreneurial and oriented to job training. Hynes examines how Cathy Sneed, Don Underwood and Jack Davis, Ernesta Ballard and Bernadette Cozert accelerated the horticultural movement in San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York to create viable commercial and educational entities in inner-city urban agriculture.

This is the cutting edge of community greening: her stories about prisoners growing food for food banks and "graduate" or ex-prisoners growing market garden specialty foods for restaurateurs in San Francisco shows a new level of sophistication in community gardening. Hynes thankfully does not dress up the conflicts or adversities, and urban / rural, black / white, public / private and age-related dichotomies are made evident. Hynes has done her research. By presenting its leading-edge pioneers in an interesting and readable fashion, Hynes has paved the way for more research.

How Does Our Garden Grow? A Guide to Community Gardening Success

by **Laura Berman**
FoodShare Metro Toronto, 1997. 16 pp.
\$25.00 (paper)

Reviewed by Lorraine Johnson

As avid gardening-book readers know, the challenge of combining theory and practice is rarely met. Here, it is admirably handled in the recently published guidebook to community gardening, *How Does*

Our Garden Grow? A Guide to Community Gardening Success.

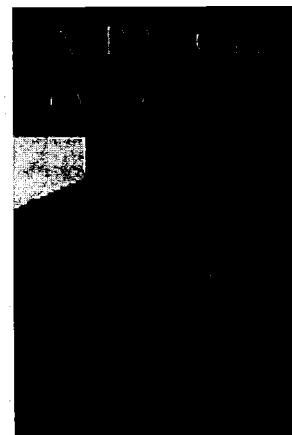
From the onset, author Laura Berman acknowledges that "every community garden I've ever known has been as unique as the people [who] garden in them. Indeed, with thorough and detailed sections on topics such as group committee structures, leadership, effective meeting strategies, fund-raising and community relations, vandalism and safety, rooftop and balcony gardens, gardening for people with disabilities, gardening for children, this book is a useful guide for any volunteer group working toward a common goal.

She covers crop spacing, timing transplants, succession and companion planting, general organic principles, vegetable growing, and happily, *How Does Our Garden Grow?* has an extensive list of seed companies, reference books, master gardener groups and community food advisor groups. Her chapter "The Importance of Gardens" eloquently points to the major social benefits of shared growing, and delightful sidebar quotations from community gardeners are peppered throughout the book, creating a sense of community.

Challenging Assumptions: Gender Issues in Urban Regeneration

by **Nicky May**
York, England: York Publishing Services, for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1997. 84pp.
£13.95 (paper)

Drawing on lessons from Oxfam's work in the UK and developing countries; this study looks at patterns of social disadvantage in urban areas and finds that poor women, generally more vulnerable than men, are often overlooked by planners due to assumptions about social and



economic gender roles. This reduces the effectiveness of urban regeneration initiatives.

Recommendations are made for the inclusion of gender considerations in policy-making.

Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature & Knowledge

by Vandana Shiva

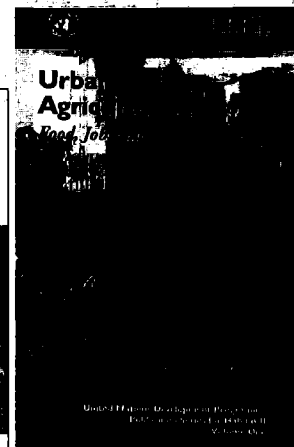
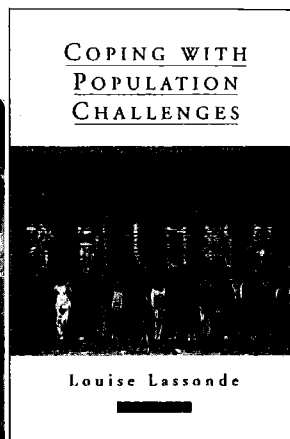
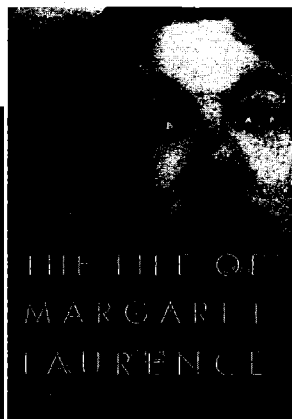
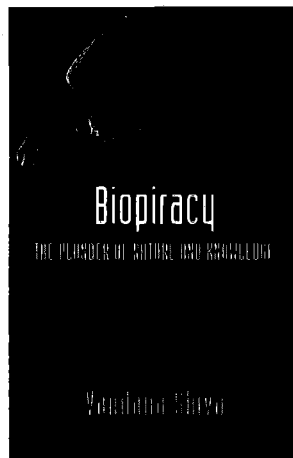
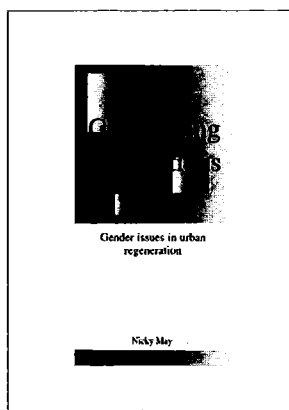
Toronto: **Between the Lines**, 1997. 148pp.

\$13.95 (paper)

As Europeans colonized the Americas, so science, through patents is now colonizing life forms. Shiva, a physicist and ecologist, shows how new life forms can be claimed as both original—for the purpose of taking out patents, and merely natural—when it comes to assuring the public that these altered

wrote every day until illness and despair led to the end of her life.

King is at his best when he is quoting from Margaret's letters, when we hear her voice speaking freely, trying to make sense of her life as a woman, mother and writer. Though he is less effective as a commentator, he has made me want to go back and re-read Laurence's work.



life forms are perfectly safe. Wisdom and warnings abound in this convincingly-argued book about biology and globalization. Talk about the world in a seed!

The Life of Margaret Laurence

James King

Toronto: **Alfred A. Knopf Canada**, 1997. 457 pp.

\$34.95 (cloth)

Reviewed by Elaine Batcher

Margaret Laurence, considered one of the greatest Canadian writers of the twentieth century, lost her parents in early childhood and was raised by her aunt/stepmother, under the tyranny of her grandfather. She escaped to school and early marriage, travelling to Africa with her husband Jack, a civil engineer. Her experiences there formed the basis of her first works. But as her craft deepened, Margaret was not entirely happy. To friend and fellow writer, Adele Wiseman, she wrote, "I often feel I am leading a double life—do you?" Alice Munro provides a vivid image of Peggy ironing shirts, trying to "do everything" in this marriage for a man ten years her senior who wanted a conventional wife. Difficulties were exacerbated by Jack's status as first reader and critic of her work. Ostensibly for their education, she moved the children to England and left Jack to take another third-world project. There and later in Canada, she

Coping With Population Challenges

Louise Lassonde

London, England: **Earthscan Publications Limited**, 1997. 173 pp. £14.95 (paper)

Demographers predict the world's population will double by the year 2050. The question therefore is no longer the traditional one of whether the planet can support ten billion, but how to provide a sustainable future for them. Quantitative problems have become ethical ones. Women's issues, reproductive choice and the notion of the individual are some of the questions discussed, in the context of international debate from the first World Population Plan of Action in 1974 to the 1994 Cairo Conference. The book is an excellent reference for researchers as well as non-specialists.

Urban Agriculture - Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities

United Nations Development Programme, **Publication Series for Habitat Urban Agriculture, Habitat II, Volume 1**, 1996, New York: USA, 302 pages free.

Reviewed by Regula Modlich

By the year 2000, 57% of humankind is expected to be living in cities. *Urban Agriculture* is a timely book which every municipal councilor, public works, park and health officer should read.

The book has four objectives:

- to provide an overview of urban agriculture in Asia, Africa and Latin America

- to show the significance of urban agriculture as a distinct industry
- to encourage governmental and non-governmental agencies to learn more about urban agriculture, to remove prejudices and barriers, and to facilitate its growth
- to recognize the potential of urban agriculture for improving public well-being and the quality of human life within cities

The UNDP Technical Advisory Group collected data and experiences from hundreds of authors, biologists, historians, and activists committed to urban agriculture. The sections are packed with fascinating and critically important information: Globally, about one third of urban families are engaged in urban agriculture, and approximately 66% of urban farmers are women. Berlin, for

example, with its four million population, still has 80,000 community gardeners and 16,000 on the waiting list. Meanwhile, the 1990 US Census found that metropolitan urban areas produced 40% of the dollar value of US agricultural production, up from 30% in 1980. At the same time, many of today's Asian, African and Latin American cities are largely self-sufficient in terms of their food supply.

From fish and guinea pigs to vegetables and mushrooms, the book provides important information on nutritional and economic sustenance, as well as environmental enhancement and disaster management. The writing may be somewhat dispassionate but, the length and breadth of the content are impressive, and the content includes an excellent bibliography. **WE**

WE

Nancy Allan is a freelance translator living in Saskatoon. She is a member of the Saskatoon Cuba Network and is on the editorial board of *Synergy* magazine.

Elaine Batcher is a Toronto area writer.

Anne C. Bellows is a geographer at Rutgers University working on issues of environmental health and food systems, especially in the context of social justice and human rights.

Millie Chen is a visual artist based in Toronto. She is currently incorporating time-based media into her explorations of the encultured body.

Sean Cosgrove is a Consultant with the Toronto Food Policy Council. He holds a Masters Degree in Urban and Regional Planning, specializing in urban food production.

Christine Cowern is a freelance writer and journalist living in Toronto. She recently completed her M.A. in International Journalism at City University in London, England.

Lorna Crozier is a Saskatchewan-born writer (Canada), now teaching and residing near Victoria. She is the author of ten books: *Inside the Sky* (Thistle-down Press, 1976); *Crow's Black Joy* (NeWest Press, 1979); *Humans and Other Beasts* (Turnstone Press, 1980); *No Longer Two People*, co-written with Patrick Lane (Turnstone Press, 1981); *The Weather* (Coteau Books, 1983); *The Garden Going On Without Us* (McClelland & Stewart, 1985, reprinted 1986 and 1987); *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence* (McClelland & Stewart, 1988, rpt. 1989); *Inventing the Hawk* (McClelland & Stewart, 1988, rpt. 1993); *Everything Arrives at the Light* (McClelland & Stewart, 1995); and *A Saving Grace: The Collected Poems of Mrs. Bentley* (McClelland & Stewart, 1996).

Mariana Canidad Cruz is active in the Grupo para el Desarrollo Integral de la capital, (Group for the Comprehensive Development of the Capital) which includes the massive urban agriculture projects in and around Havana, Cuba. Together with Yalila Murciano she wrote the paper "Agriculture and the Urban Environment in the City of Havana". Maria was in the Cuban Delegation to the 1997 Toronto Food in the City Conference in Toronto.

Susan Giordano is a registered dietitian and the Food Preservation and Nutrition Education Coordinator for the Common Ground Garden Program. Common Ground is part of the University of California Cooperative Extension in Los Angeles, California.

Brad Golden and **Lynne Eichenberg**, since 1984, have directed and collaborated on projects which address issues of public spaces and landscapes. Through large scale collaborations with architects and engineers, working as Environmental Artworks Studio, to smaller, private commissions, the two have become well-recognized for creating both permanent and temporary artworks involving the integration of architecture, art, and landscape construction. Awards and commissions have included City of Toronto Urban Design Awards of Excellence (1997), Ontario Association of Architects (1997), Canadian Institute of Steel Construction (1996), Canadian Architect Magazine (1994) and the Governor General's Rose Garden Competition (1992).

Connie Guberman works with the Metro Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), and teaches Women's Studies at Scarborough College, University of Toronto. She also grows herbs, vegetables and flowers in urban and rural gardens — her garlic is prize-winning.

Janet Heath has painted and travelled extensively. Born in Canada, educated at Columbia University and New York University, and exhibiting in several group and solo showings in Toronto galleries, she brings to her work playful, robust, and lyric qualities. She is now almost exclusively an abstract artist, believing it to be the truest expression of late 20th century sensibilities.

Lorraine Johnson is the author of *The Ontario Naturalized Garden: The Complete Guide to Using Native Plants* (Whitecap, 1995) and a long-time community gardening advocate in Toronto. She is chair of the Alex Wilson Community Project, a group building a community garden that combines both food-growing allotments and a naturalized component in downtown Toronto.

Cathleen Kneen is co-publisher of *The Ram's Horn*, a monthly newsletter of food system analysis, and is an activist and advocate of issues of sustainable agriculture and genetic engineering. She is also a potter, producing delicate functional stoneware from her home studio in Mission, B.C.

Dee Kramer is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

Rachel Mabie is the Urban Horticulture Advisor for University of California Cooperative Extension in Los Angeles and manager of the Common Ground Program. Rachel has ten years of experience working with low-income inner-city community and home gardeners.

Amina Miller is a health promotion co-ordinator in Etobicoke, and a long-time gardener and community activist.

Deborah Moffett is a mother, a food issues educator, and a volunteer co-ordinator and newsletter editor for Field to Table's Good Food Box program. She is pursuing graduate work in Environmental Studies at York University.

Mary Lou Morgan has worked for 25 years in all aspects of the food business, from greenhouse work to distribution and retail. She is manager of Field to Table, a project of FoodShare Metro Toronto. FoodShare is a non-profit charity with a rich history of advocacy and anti-poverty work. In 1983 she was involved in starting The Big Carrot, a large natural food supermarket structured as a worker cooperative.

Yalila Murciano is active in the Grupo para el Desarrollo Integral de la capital, (Group for the Comprehensive Development of the Capital) which includes the massive urban agriculture projects in and around Havana, Cuba. Together with Maria Caridad she wrote the paper "Agriculture and the Urban Environment in the City of Havana".

Chick F. Tam, M.S., Ph.D. is a professor in the Department of Health and Nutritional Science at California State University, Los Angeles. *WE*



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The conference is organized jointly by the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning (Dept. of Town Planning), the Faculty of Technology Management (Environment-Behavior Research Group) of Eindhoven University of Technology. The European Institute of Retailing and Services Studies sponsored and facilitate the event. Cost: NLG1000.

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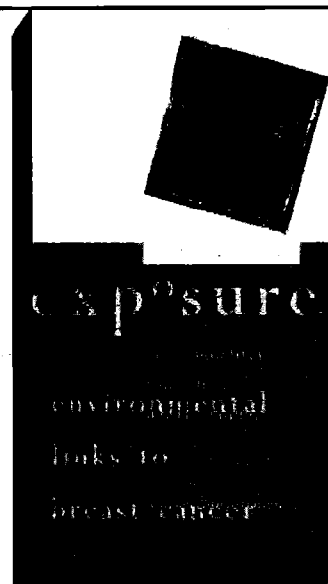
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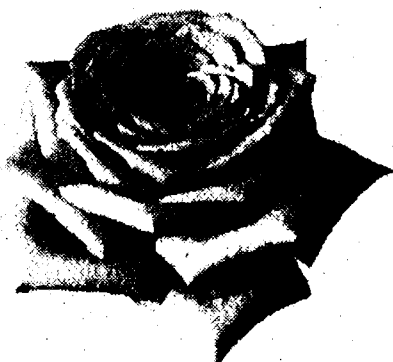
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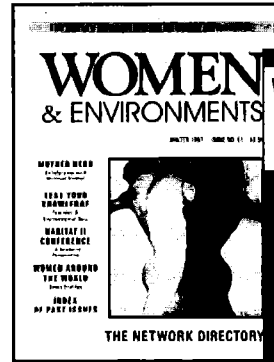
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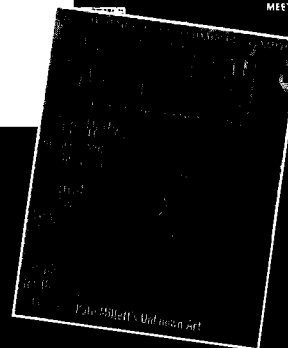
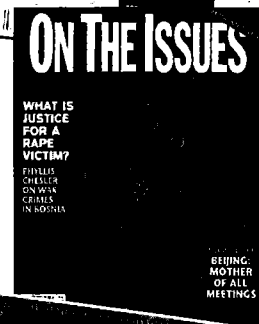
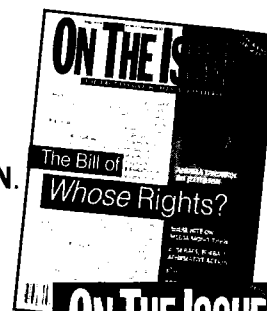
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Sediment Gardens



Brad Golden and Lynne Eichenberg

Part science project and part sculpture, *Sediment Gardens* explores the relationships between natural systems, urban infrastructure, and technology. Comprised of a trio of hopper-like reservoirs and downspout extensions, the three structures function to catch, filter, and to divert stormwater runoff from a nearby elevated highway structure to planted plots below the reservoirs. Through its transformation of a section of existing roadway infrastructure, this project succeeds in questioning the continuing relevance of current water resource management practices.

Metals (various), plant materials, filter structures,
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