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Hola Kitchen Gardener!

I recently had a chance to travel to Cuba to learn about Havana's inspiring organic farms and gardens and how they came to be. With the embargo still in place, I feel lucky to have had a chance to visit a place so close to the US geographically yet so distant politically and agriculturally. The closest most US gardeners will get to Cuban agriculture is growing mint in their gardens for a [homegrown mojito](#) [1].

Cuba offers a unique case study for one way of sowing the seeds of a home-grown revolution. Over the years, many things have been tried in many places to convince people to grow some of their own food from the Victory Garden propaganda of last century to internet-age garden challenges. In Cuba's case, the most effective driver of home gardens happened to be the least desirable one from a social perspective: total economic collapse.

It's impressive that organic gardens can now be found all over Havana and that the city's 2 million residents source most of their seasonal fruits and vegetables from within 30 miles of the city center. What most people don't realize is that the Cubans didn't really have much say in the matter. With their economy cut off from the world's flow of food, oil, fertilizers and pesticides, their choice, if you can call it that, was "grow food" or "starve."

I produced a [short YouTube video about my trip](#) [2] if you'd like to hear and see more. The experience has me thinking about other ways of promoting kitchen gardens that don't involve threats of famine and environmental catastrophe. Fear is a powerful motivator for many, but I'm convinced that playing up gardening's positives is more socially sustainable in the long run.

On that note, I'd love to hear any creative ideas you have for promoting kitchen gardening and how KGI and its network of 20,000 gardeners might help. We've started a three part online discussion [here](#) [3], [here](#) [4], and [here](#) [5] to bring some of these thoughts together and I'd encourage you to participate. KGI may not be a wealthy organization in terms of its finances, but we're rich with thoughtful people like you!

Wishing you a great spring, fall, or whatever season you happen to be in at the moment (in Maine, it's hard to tell these days),

Roger Doiron
KGI

PS: As some of you know, I'm taking KGI on the road next year to Europe and trying to [rent out our "white house"](#)[6] if you know of anyone who wants to live and garden in Maine for a year, 5 minutes from the ocean and 10 minutes from the "foodiest" small city in the US (according to Bon Appétit magazine).

Photo credit: Mark Muller

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[6] <http://www.3powderhorn.com>