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Season 2 @ Roots Community Garden

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Our first meeting of the season took place this week. Enthusiastically we discussed everything from seeds to lessons learned and strengthening relationships with our collaborative partners. Mrs. C. W. Earle wrote in *Pot-Pourri from a Surrey Garden*, that "half the interest of a garden is the constant exercise of the imagination". And our imagination was overflowing! Going through our seeds got us excited about the garden and the seed planting day coming up in March. We could almost feel the dirt in our hands and the sun in our face. Ahhh gardening! Ahh fresh veggies! Ahh flowers! Gardening is great for the soul! We left the meeting happy and excited about the coming gardening season only to be greeted by below zero temperatures (w/windshield). Hopefully this winter will not be a long one because we cannot wait to get started.

Lessons Learned

The meeting we just had got me thinking about lessons learned and how we should track this. I think a list will work just fine. Hopefully it will help us remember to not make the same mistakes and help others who are starting a garden in their community.

1) Save seeds= save money. We didn't save our sunflower seeds since these are edible. If we had saved just a handful, we could have saved on buying more for this season. The same goes for other veggies and herbs.

2) Start pumpkins earlier! We didn't think we could grow pumpkins due to the lack of space. However, we can grow pumpkins around the perimeter of the garden and have the vines trail onto the small wire fence making it a prettier sight.

3) Don't plant those cold crop veggies too early. Last year, we lost many veggie plants that had been snug in the greenhouse to the cold. Because we have insane weather in these parts (last week we had 60 degrees and less than 72 hours later 13 degrees) we need to push our planting date as far down in May as we can.

4) Use the greenhouse to the max. Last year our community helped us plant seeds in cups. (Without their efforts, we could not have as many veggie plants as we had). These were taken to community member homes and brought back to the POC to be planted in the garden. While we got lots of our seeds back, lots were also lost to over/under watering, people forgot to bring them in or the traveling to and fro proved to be too much of a climate change for the seedlings. We hope to use the greenhouse to the max- that means ever inch of it for as long as we can.

5) Save those fruit cartons from the big stores like Sams/Costco. These stores have tray like cartons that are perfect for transporting seeds in. Because the greenhouse has thin shelving the cartons expand space, keep the seeds in a sturdy and protected place and help with transporting.

6) Save money on soil. While seeds need good soil to take off, we spent a bit too much money on soil. We plan to buy stop soil and mix it with vermiculite or the higher rated soil in order to stretch our dollar but still give our seeds a good start.

7) Go vertical. While we do not want to be an eyesore to our community, we do want to use as much of the space in the garden as we can. By going vertical, we will be able to plant the small pumpkin jacks for the kids Harvest Party at Roots while saving space at the bottom for other veggies.

8) Diversify. We had more tomatoes, beans and peppers than we knew what to do with. NOT true. We knew what to do and we did it greatly. If we grew tomatoes and peppers on soil that had been untouched for many years, than we can grow other veggies as well. Its time to diversify.

9) Start stocking up on coffee grinds. While we drink lots of coffee at POC, its not enough. We will need to contact local coffee houses and ask for their coffee grinds early in the season and mix this into the garden soil.

I think that is it for now. In the meantime we will ignore those chilly temperature outside, read our seed catalogs and imagine another great community gardening season! Happy daydreaming!

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