

YWCA Vancouver - Rooftop Food Garden

Vision

The YWCA Rooftop Food Garden project will demonstrate how people can actively make a difference in the lives of women and families living in the Downtown Eastside, one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in Canada. It will provide fresh, local food and promote environmental sustainability and community health.

Project Goals

- **Produce fresh, locally grown food:** grow vegetables, herbs, fruit/nut trees, berry bushes and native/naturalized plants and create local bird/insect habitat.
- **Provide training:** provide YWCA clients, community members and youth with an opportunity to volunteer and learn about sustainable agriculture through their involvement in the project.
- **Develop Community:** act as a place for community members to meet through gardening, educational and social events.
- **Raise public awareness:** demonstrate the potential impact of a productive urban garden and the benefits of food security and sustainable agriculture.
- **Reduce ecological footprint:** work toward minimizing inputs and maximizing the use of all garden products and opportunities.

The YWCA Vancouver has developed a Rooftop Food Garden, completely run by volunteers, with the product being donated to women and their families living in the down town east side of Vancouver, one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in Canada. The food is delivered to Crabtree Corner Community Kitchen where it is incorporated into lunch programs. Nutritional training is also provided and portions of the produce are made available to the women to help them to feed their families.

The 650 square meter rooftop ornamental garden was converted over the past 2 years to provide over 450 Kg of high quality, organically grown vegetables in 2007. The goal for this year will be to exceed 1 tonne and we hope to double this amount in 3 to 5 years. We are currently planting berry and fruit crops to add to the dietary variety of the recipients. In addition, this garden is being used to promote environmental sustainability, community health and an awareness of the importance urban agriculture.

We currently engage a roster of volunteers to prepare the soil, plant and care for the vegetables and fruit, and harvest and deliver the food. Corporate and University groups have assisted with design/build projects such as compost boxes, cold frames for early planting and a berry trellis system. Future projects could entail bird and insect habitat, container gardening, water recycling, expanded composting, education/awareness displays, website development, food processing techniques/workshops, healing/medicinal plants, seed saving, social aspects, art in the garden, developing partnerships with other organizations to expand the concept of “volunteer gardens”, a lending/resource library, expanding workshops to the public, and many more possibilities.

For Garden information, please contact Ted Cathcart (tcathcart@ywcavan.org).

