

SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY

GROW FOOD EVERYWHERE!

ROOTED AND RISING

A walk on the Seeds of Solidarity path is often with purpose. A garden-cart of seedlings to plant with our SOL Garden youth program, or produce to restock the solar-powered farmstand is hauled up amid conversation about the day. The cart is pulled down the path at the end of the day stacked with tools, muddied mail piled on top. This path connects farm fields with spaces for educational programs. It connects us with Chestnut Hill Road — wonderful, eclectic neighbors have welcomed our efforts since we arrived at this land twenty years ago with scythe, skills and a vision.

Interspersed among our gardens, greenhouses, and solar-powered buildings are sculptures and artistic altars, and words from those whose wisdom keeps the journey towards justice and freedom ever alive. A colorful sign with a quote from indigenous elders reveals a planting of traditional Narragansett corn. Activist Angela Davis's photo graces one greenhouse; another honors UFW founders Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. An image of Martin Luther King with Thich Nhat Hanh between our art studio and group meeting space emanates compassionate conviction.

The walk is not just about what we do, but the creativity, connectedness and reverence with which we do it.

Dr. King stressed we must insist on civil rights while also ending the war on Vietnam, must march to stop violence while creating jobs as well as justice. His inseparability of issues was often met with resistance, but he was brilliantly, passionately steadfast. In current times, social justice, health, food, and environmental issues are increasingly understood as intrinsically interwoven. Thousands persevere at Standing Rock, where Sioux, allies, and a spectacular arrival of sacred buffalo unite in non-violent actions that illuminate connection among water, culture, climate change, and racism.

While there is cause for despair, there is cause for hope in the abundance of grassroots and global movements that are rooted and growing. Fifty years after Dr. King's words rang truth at the Riverside Church, the call to act from deep within remains essential.

"Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movement, and pray that our inner being may be sensitive to its guidance. For we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us." — MLK



Seeds of Solidarity Awakens the Power among youth, schools, and families to Grow Food Everywhere to transform hunger to health, and create resilient lives and communities.

FOOD FOR THE SOL

It was 1999, the first year of our SOL (Seeds of Leadership) Garden project and we needed a slogan. Youth participant Ray Hendricks, a then aspiring, now successful songwriter chimed in with 'Food for the SOL.' It still holds almost two decades later, and speaks to the body-mind-soul approach of our food justice program for low-income local teenagers. Along with ample skills to grow and prepare food, the 25 youth who commit to the free, six-month program immerse in a life-transforming experience. SOL Garden is about good food for all. And SOL is a space for learning and dialogue that builds environmental literacy in an era of climate change, tools for wellness amidst an opioid epidemic, and skills for conscious communication to balance the isolation of excessive technology.

Springtime activities by staff and guest presenters in 2016 included beekeeping, agro-ecology, making wood-fired pizza, herbal self-care, and crafting personal mission statements towards college, careers, and life dreams. Summer brought outreach visits to area childcare gardens, cooking a feast for those hungry, and educating at the farmer's market. Our field trip to First Generation's theater performance of 'Tenderness' illuminated experiences of oppression and the refugee crisis, complementing discussion in our SOL racism study group. Exposure to multiple social issues and critical conversations expand awareness of the many opportunities to be changemakers that await youth leaders.

We are excited to launch a new, weeklong summer intensive for rising high school seniors and recent grads called 'How To Live.' This will enable us to provide even more youth with skills to help them spread their wings in the safety of a compassionate community and adult mentors that support body, mind, and soul.

Our model has always been to work deeply in our region, and then share our practices widely. Director Deb Habib was invited to join a national advisory committee to shape a strategic plan for the emergent field of Creative Youth Development to guide national efforts that connect adolescent development, creativity, and social justice.



SOL Garden changed my life in a lot of ways but the biggest way was by getting me into college. When it was time to apply I went to SOL Garden staff for a letter of recommendation. It was the most influential letter I received and without it I probably wouldn't have gotten in. —Darnell



HEALTHY FAMILIES

How exciting! Childcare providers in our raised bed garden program now feel confident to not only continue and expand their gardens, but also teach the families they serve to grow and enjoy fresh vegetables. This year we sowed many seeds of food and health through container garden workshops for families, hosted by the childcare providers. Container gardens are particularly great for those with limited sun, or who live in apartments or have temporary housing.

Participants in the workshops shared: “I was surprised at how much it produced...*I didn't realize how much fun it would be...we love the containers and will be continuing this next year...it definitely influenced us to buy and eat more fresh vegetables.*”



TIPS FOR CONTAINER GARDENING

Always fill your containers with a quality compost/loam blend, and use GMO-free seeds and seedlings as is best for any garden.

We favor re-usable 'Root Pouch' brand bags, but so many containers can be used: **Old plastic grocery totes poked with drainage holes are a cheap option.** Thrift store

colanders work well for shallow rooted salad greens. Five gallon buckets with holes drilled in the bottom house tomato plants, and old plastic storage bins 6-8" deep with drainage added grow a variety of **culinary herbs.** Utilize vertical space as you might in a raised bed: a pole bean can climb up a stake in the back of your container while a cucumber trellises over the front; a large kale can provide shade for leafy salad greens. **To ease watering frequency, poke holes in a plastic bottle, fill and bury it, or try an unglazed clay pot with the large hole plugged, filled with water that seeps slowly to roots.** Winter is a great time to ask garden centers for old, large nursery pots—then use up old paint to make bright designs on the outside.



Making worm bins was a great way to start the season with our childcare provider cohort.

Vermicompost.net wriggles with ideas such as plans for a low-cost worm bin and check out our friend Ben's Bins at wehaveworms.com

Visit seedsofsolidarity.org for free resources on creating raised bed gardens, school gardens, videos, and more!



FARM AS GATHERING PLACE

We ran an apprentice program on the farm for years. It is heartwarming to know that many who spent time here continue to incorporate no-till farming techniques learned, and equally important, cultivate self-care and healthy relationships. Our model has changed, and now every Tuesday the farm becomes a gathering place for volunteers.

In 2016, a diversity of fabulous folks came together. Owen carried out an internship through Deerfield Academy to foster his interest in food systems. Quentin, also high-school aged, came from Ecuador for a month to further his English while farming. Diane is a retired engineer who, after two seasons volunteering with us, opened her own roadside farmstand. Claudia is a young adventurous family friend interested in sustainable living. Chris and Laura barter space on our land to experiment with tiny houses and renewable energy in exchange for some farming hours—a relationship made even more special in that Laura was in our youth program 12 years ago. Elders and parents Stan and Mim are expert garlic sorters and can entice anyone to share their life story while bagging seed garlic.

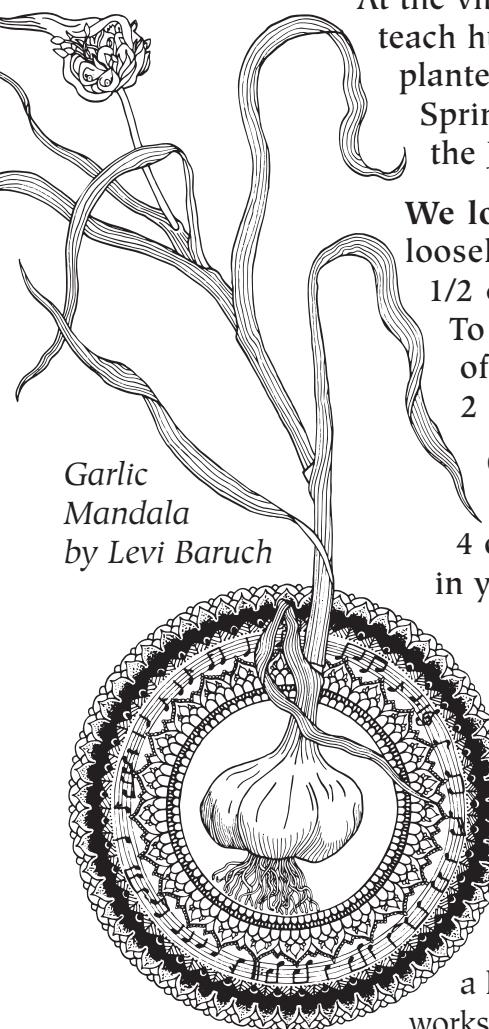
We are also pleased to partner with GAAMHA, a local agency that provides adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities with job training and volunteerism through meaningful community engagement. Shane is a GAAMHA participant who considers the whole Tuesday farm crew ‘good workers and new buddies.’ Support staff Joy loves how time on the farm expands participants’ social skills and increases self-reliance. After each visit, they bring food they helped grow back for lunch with others in their program. Our farm regulars Diane and Chris enjoy the fresh energy GAAMHA volunteers bring, and the opportunity to interact with people they would not get to otherwise.

As we see in our education programs, collective work carries the satisfaction of seed to table as well as space for supportive conversations and idea sharing. Tuesdays on the farm have become a special way to unite those diverse in age, interest and ability.

Our seasonal visiting days also attract eclectic groups who forge connections around common interests. Several local colleges arrange tours or presentations to bridge theory with practice. While fall and winter are quieter and a time to build, make art and plan, come spring the farm is once again a gathering place where food, relationships, and ideas are cultivated.



GARLIC FOR LIFE



At the vibrant venue of the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival, we teach hundreds each year to grow the amazing allium. Garlic cloves are planted in autumn, about 6 inches apart in fertile soil, and then mulched.

Spring brings tastes of the leaves and scape (flower-stalk) before the July harvest.

We love garlic greens pesto! Blend until smooth: two cups of chopped loosely packed tender garlic greens or scapes with 1/2 olive oil, 1/2 c. Romano cheese, and 1/3 c. walnuts or pumpkin seeds.

To make it slightly less garlicky, cut the quantity of garlic greens with some arugula or spinach to make up the 2 cups of greens. Great on crackers, pasta, or grilled chicken.

Garlic is known for its **many health properties**, including antibacterial and antiviral. Slice six cloves of garlic and let sit in 4 oz of honey, covered, for at least a week. Use a tsp of garlic honey in your tea or hot lemon water to treat colds. **Or, go raw!**

THE PORTAL TO THE FUTURE—THE FUTURE IS HERE

was a theme of the 18th North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival. The festival was founded as a celebration of regional agriculture, art, and skills for local living.

This year, the festival partnered with North Quabbin Energy to fill one field with a plethora of possibilities for a more just and sustainable future. Attendees walked through a handcrafted gateway to exhibits and workshops devoted to DIY skills and technologies

that promote work with hand and heart, and respectful use of natural resources. Folks from near and far that might not seek or have access to such enjoyed learning about urine-diverting toilets, backyard solar, plants for pollinators, tiny houses, the region's tribal heritage, and much more.

We continue to enhance our 'portal to the future' at Seeds of Solidarity. This year we made a home scale urine-to-fertilizer digester, expanded our off the grid solar electric system, and experimented with more no-till soil building methods to share widely with other farmers and gardeners.

Check out www.seedsofsolidarity.org/newsletters-and-publications/ for our recent articles in the *Huffington Post*, *Cornell Small Farms Quarterly*, and *The Natural Farmer*, plus a guide to making a 'Urinator' for liquid gold.



ENERGY



HEALING GARDENS

Our work turns increasingly towards therapeutic gardening for those who have experienced trauma, are in recovery, or incarcerated.

We enter the third year of teaching and implementing raised beds as part of the G.A.R.D.E.N program that unites Greenfield Community College, New England Center for Women in Transition, and Montague Catholic Social Ministries in a grant from the Women's Fund, to provide courses for Franklin County women in need of economic and food self-reliance.

We are pleased to partner with Franklin County House of Corrections

as part of their educational programming and farm to institution efforts. Our organic gardening course for men in medium security, all undergoing treatment for substance abuse, resulted in four new raised beds there built and planted by the men, who received college credit and envisioned ideas for future food and farm related micro-enterprises.

Our newest effort launches after many fertile conversations at the new Quabbin Retreat, an outpatient and residential center run by Heywood Hospital that treats adults and adolescents struggling with mental health and addiction. We are designing therapeutic gardens and related programming for this facility that hopes to grow into a vibrant farm to institution landscape.

One of the beauties of gardening is that it can be an introspective solo experience, or done in community with others, thus serving as meditative, healing practice or pro-social activity. In addition to the great benefits of the nourishing food to be gained, the skills acquired support long-term wellness and resilience among all.

With 30 years of deep experience in the organic farming and food justice movements, we are compelled to contribute our knowledge and passion to help agencies and institutions that address trauma and substance abuse integrate therapeutic gardening alongside other effective body/mind approaches.

A study in the journal *Neuroscience* reported that a bacteria—*Mycobacterium Vaccae*—found in soil is linked with **increased serotonin production** in the brain, and indicates that **gardening** may actually elevate serotonin levels and potentially help to **counter depression**.



SEEKING THE SACRED ON THE FARM



The seasons arrive with uncertainties of drought, sudden winds, snowy or snow-less winters. The human-wreaked havoc of global warming is felt deeply by farmers locally and globally (and 60% of the world population are farmers!). Yet the land still provides such amazing bounty of wild and cultivated food, and medicinal plants. There are many contradictions in these times.

For these reasons, it feels essential to unite people diverse in culture, and to honor past, present and the unseen through contemporary ceremony and celebration on the farm. We began the season with an 'Awaken with the Land' gathering of friends and farmers, artists and musicians. Upon arrival, some walked the stone circle at the edge of the garlic field while others added natural and symbolic objects to a heart-shaped mandala. Ricardo invited song to Brazilian rhythms, Phyllis and Ricky encouraged offerings of meaningful words or gestures. Carlos's meditations held the circle sweet and strong. Water gathered from the spring cascade at nearby Bear's Den, so rich with native history, was poured into hand-made clay cups then showered with blessings on the fields. Nourishing food from winter stores and spring gardens was shared.



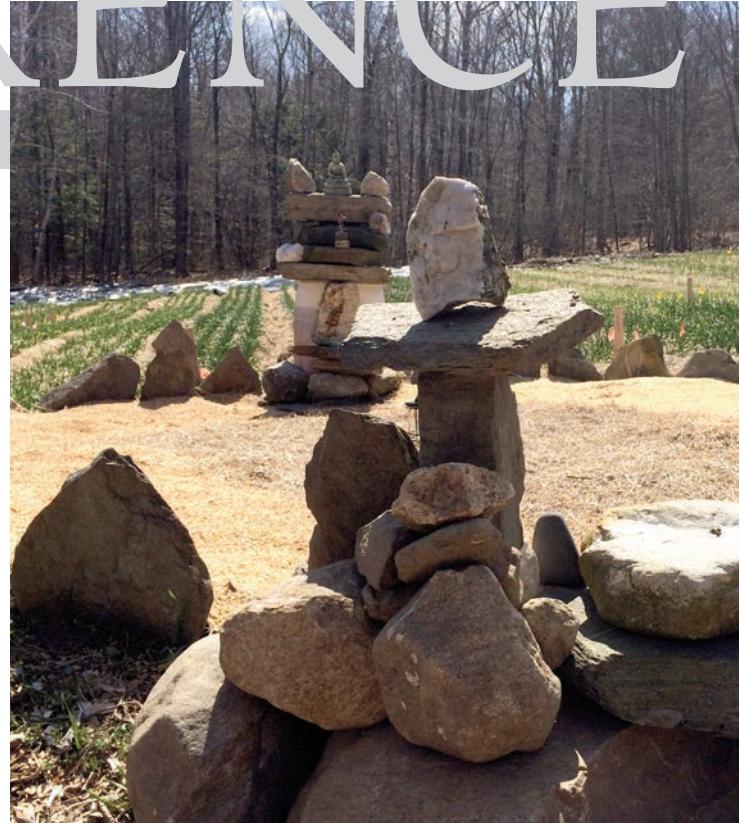
Wisdom from an Iraqi man we met while there on an 8-month international pilgrimage prior to initiating Seeds of Solidarity resonates: "Even in times of war we still breathe and make art." The merger of farming and art through woodwork, mandala, sculpture and photos can be found along the paths, gardens and interiors of Seeds of Solidarity, a body of work we call Seeking the Sacred on the Farm.

REVERENCE

Staying **Connected** to the Big Picture

Allow your **FIRST WORDS** each day to be something kind. Consciously **TOUCH** some part of the **NATURAL WORLD** each day: soil or snow, a plant, flowing water. **PREPARE** at least one of your meals daily; **SHARE** food you grow or prepare with family, friends, or those in need.

KNOW THE SOURCE of your food and energy, and the path of your waste. Change something you do or consume in the direction of **REDUCING YOUR IMPACT** on the **LIVES OF OTHERS** and the earth's resources. Make or do one thing that **INVOLVES CREATIVITY** most everyday. Before you sleep, **THANK** who ever or whatever you believe participates in the **CREATION OF LIFE** regardless of how hard or good your day.





SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY EDUCATION CENTER



From our Table: Magnify Your Love

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We hoisted a banner high above the Seeds of Solidarity tent at the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival this year with a favorite Jimi Hendrix quote: "When the Power of Love is Greater than the Love of Power, the World will know Peace."

If we were to list all of the ways in which power manifests through violence, environmental degradation, and human rights abuses there would not be enough room on the page. The final months of the presidential election year were unbearable: so void of basic goodness, let alone love. Even so, every day brings stories of another individual or group devoting their time, often their life, to a path of love and service to humanity.

Food justice, wellness, and skills for sustainable living are among the outcomes of our farm and educational programs and love is at center. A hand-painted sign on a tool shed offers words from the Dalai Lama: "The more you are motivated by love, the more fearless and free your actions will be." Our consistency is imperfect, but we try to return to this intention often.

Loving, purposeful lives and actions are at the essence of *Magnify Your Love*, a course we launched this year at the Omega Institute. The description offered: increase personal happiness, deepen intimacy, and expand love outward to live a life of love and service. The theme of magnifying love informs our new initiatives for 2017, and resonates throughout our book in progress, *Making Love While Farming: A Field Guide to a Life of Passion and Purpose*.



Pa'ante. Forward. With Courage and Love

Seeds of Solidarity founders Deb Habib and Ricky Baruc will be ready to hit the open road with a book tour in 2018.

Please contact us at solidarity@seedsofsolidarity.org to help arrange a signing or workshop stop.

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We value and need your support. Every contribution is meaningful. Please make a secure contribution at www.seedsofsolidarity.org.