

Willistown's Spring Road Preserve Is Growing!

Willistown Township is teaming up with Greener Partners at the Spring Road Preserve to create an 85- by 100-foot teaching garden area and a fruit grove. They will be used to educate children and adults about a host of sustainable agricultural, environmental, and cultural topics—and to inspire gardening in all of its visitors!

What is sustainable agriculture? Sustainable agriculture integrates three main goals: environmental stewardship, farm profitability, and prosperous farming communities. It employs environmentally friendly methods of farming that allow the production of crops or livestock without damage to the farm as an ecosystem, including the effects on soil, water supplies, biodiversity, or other surrounding natural resources. Terms often associated with such farms include "self-sustaining," "organic," "ecological," and "biodynamic." Everything grown at the Spring Road teaching gardens will be all-natural and organically grown, from seed to harvest.

The teaching gardens will include:

- **A Pollination Garden**—focusing on bees, hummingbirds, and more to illustrate the importance of pollination and point out the severe dropoff in bee colonies.
- **A Colonial Garden** (that will be connected to the teachings of Historic Sugartown)—focusing on historic seeds used during the colonial era. Examples will include varieties grown in historic figures' gardens, such as Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate in Charlottesville, VA.
- **A Beneficial Insect Display**—focusing on plants that attract beneficial insects, such as parasitic wasps, green lacewings, hoverflies, and ladybeetles.
- **A Soil Nutrient Area**—exhibiting techniques of improving the soil naturally without using bagged fertilizer.

An important component of sustainable agriculture is captured by the slogan, "Buy Fresh, Buy Local." Buying locally grown foods reduces carbon dioxide emissions and packing materials. Additionally there is a great health benefit from buying locally, as you receive fresher, more nutrient-rich foods. Did you know, according to buylocalpa.org, that:



Most food travels anywhere from 1,500 to 2,500 miles from farm to table.



Most fresh fruits and vegetables produced in the U.S. are shipped from California, Florida, and Washington.



Fruits and vegetables shipped from distant states and countries can spend as many as seven to fourteen days in transit before they arrive in the supermarket.



Most fruit and vegetable varieties sold in supermarkets are chosen for their ability to withstand industrial harvesting equipment and extended travel, not taste. This results in little variety in the plants grown.

To find out more about buying fresh, local foods, go to Buy Fresh, Buy Local website at buylocalpa.org.

- **An Heirloom and Organic Seed Garden**—highlighting unusual varieties
- **A Native American Garden**

Greener Partners will be constructing the garden, doing the farming, and providing educational programming along with Willistown Township. The Greener Partners group has a passion for farm-fresh food and an abundant enthusiasm for advancing sustainable agriculture within the Greater Philadelphia region. Greener Partners' mission is to collaborate with like-minded organizations in an effort to establish and advance sustainable agriculture initiatives for the benefit of local communities. A few of the founding members of the group are Willistown Township residents. Greener Partners is working with many partners in addition to Willistown Township, including the Brandywine Conservancy, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and Tyler

Arboretum. You can visit Greener Partners in the big tent at Historic Sugartown Days on April 26. See page 7 for details.

Special thanks go to Cub Scout Pack 98 from General Wayne Elementary School and to Willistown resident Andy Schenk for their assistance with the Spring Road site preparation!

Keep your eyes on the Sugartown Road and Paoli Pike memo boards, and check for event announcements at willistown.pa.us and the upcoming (spring 2008) willistownparks.org. If you wish to be on a special announcement email list for events at Spring Road, email mhm@willistown.pa.us. Local organizations, groups, and individuals may contact Willistown's director of parks and recreation, Mare McLoughlin, with any inquiries or programming requests and ideas: 610-640-1669 or mhm@willistown.pa.us