

A Vertical Garden

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Proposal:

We propose to cultivate a variety of herbs and vegetables sourced globally with an emphasis on plants from the Caribbean. We have been using vertical gardening techniques and container gardening on two small city plots in Brooklyn. We get approximately 4 hours of direct sunlight per day and need to import soil; the prospect of full sun will be exciting and we hope to see the variation in growth and yields at CycleX using some of the varieties we have been working with.

We are interested in incorporating a live art, vertical garden, spelling out the words, “Andes, NY”. A hay bed / soil combo with vertical vines such as, melons, cantaloupe, beans, peas, cucumbers and spinach, bordered by flowers to spell out the words. Drones can be flown over for aerial views of the live art project. The ever changing progress of the art can be viewed at different times during the growing season.

We would like to create a shallow trough pond, with a berm of local soil and collected rock. The sloping ground will fill the pond with surface, spring and stream water while an overflow will return excess water to the watershed, thus alleviating the need for constant watering.

Soil conditioning will occur throughout the grow season from collecting farm manure, as well as supermarket and restaurant food scraps for a compost pile to nourish the crops during the grow season.

In addition to agricultural experimentation, there is a social aspect to our garden. Our gumbo garden comes from our very diverse sharing community- many people share plants with us and information about healing properties associated with many species. We also share our harvest with neighbors and friends in the restaurant business. We would love to try growing on a larger scale, and adapt techniques and species to the rural environment in Andes with a shorter season, and different soil and lighting cycle to determine what could become production crops.

Bio:

Although we work in the arts and building trades, our passion is our small garden called OMI in Kings County Flatbush, Brooklyn. At a glance, it appears small but it is diverse and prolific due to our vertical practices.

The plants we have been working with include:

Vines: Andes hops, various cucumber varieties, such as, small pickle, longs and orange with a light citrus flavor. Also, peas, flat and green. String beans, yellow and green. We also have a British Guyana long Bora bean. Melons, cantaloupe, honeydew and kiwi, and a small short season garden variety pumpkin. We also grow a “neighborhood pride” wall of spinach, of three different varieties that we harvest all season, from the small tender leaves at the beginning, to the larger more mature leaves later in the year. They are Bajan spinach, (from Barbados) a hearty green, an American variety, and a tasty

purple spinach from Dutch Guiana they call Baji. All of these grow vertically on an erected fence. Also a variety of tomatoes whose baby green leaves are used for migraine headaches by our West African neighbors and a green seedless sweet grape.

In the ground we have Andes Horseradish (a local mixologist source for cocktails), small beets, potatoes, scallion, leeks, sweet onion, elephant garlic from the Carolinas and ginger. Small garlic is grown for its knots and flowers, a favorite with local chefs. We also have peanuts to keep up nitrogen (suggested by local seniors).

Other annuals include a large variety of extremely hot, mild and sweet international peppers: West Indian, Italian, Hungarian, Mexican and Natives. Corn is alternated biannually but harvested as babies. The green beard is used for headaches, the dry for diabetes. Okra (green and East Indian giant Red), a variety of Eggplant, Strawberries, a variety of Lettuces, Mustard leaves and Arugula in spring, purple Kale and a late summer into fall rotation of Green Kale, Brussel sprouts, Broccoli, White cabbage and parsley.

Perennials: Boysenberry, Mission Figs (purple) and Apricots, Blueberries Blackberries, Raspberries

Herbs (mostly potted, some in ground): Cilantro, Basils, Thyme, (English French German Florida Orange and Broad leaf Jamaican). Oregano, Sweet, Spicy Hot, Greek and Cuban, two Lavenders, Wild Curry, Mustard for seeds to grind into powder, a year round hearty Bay Leaf for soups, also Marjoram and Stevia. For Teas, Insulina (Costus Igneus) from Brazil, used by diabetics for insulin control by local Brooklyn Seniors. Jasmine, Valerian and Lemon Balm (Citrus flavor for those with acid reflux and citrus allergies). Also a nice variety of mints, chocolate mint is favored for Juleps and brandied dessert pesto.

For Color We have a Grenada (West Indies) Cotton, flowering Cuban and New World American Tobacco, a Trinidad and Tobago Dwarf purple heart Banana, Grafted two colored roses (developed by Andrew's father), a local variety of annuals and marigolds to help ward off the squirrels.

Thank you so much for this opportunity, and have a great growing summer.



