

Cultivating Cosmic Patriotism by Cultivating Cosmos: Urban Gardening and the Creation of Community

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Abstract: This paper explores my claim that urban gardening represents an important contemporary setting in which to cultivate what Jane Addams calls “cosmic patriotism,” an alternative to the patriotism of the tribe, and a form of patriotism characterized by a commitment to multiculturalism, humanitarianism, and internationalism. Community gardens, “guerilla gardens,” and other collective, urban agricultural ventures offer the very sorts of urban settings Addams argued were crucial for the nurturance of such patriotism: a pleasurable, or recreational setting in which city residents could share their knowledge and culture with each other in a spirit of play and openness.

Jane Addams: Cosmic Patriot

I am a citizen of the United States. Of late, my country and its political and economic leaders have been actively creating and exacerbating enmity among peoples and nations across the globe. In the name of peace and justice, the government of my country has launched a “war on terror” predicted to continue for decades—a war that will surely guarantee its own continuation as it creates its own new enemies.

These days, the word “patriot” has become a weapon in the war on terror, to be launched against those who express concern or criticism about the course of action our military has pursued in Iraq. A patriot, according to the partisans of war, believes “my country, right or wrong.” A patriot doesn’t ever question her country’s decision to use its military might.

To be an American in these dark times leaves me feeling a range of emotions, from anger to deep sorrow and shame. At such a time, it seems to me especially important to hold up other American visions of patriotism, that their power and promise might act as counterweights to the uncritical flag-waving that, too often these days, passes itself off as “the only true patriotism.” One alternative vision of patriotism that greatly inspires me emerged in Chicago’s inner city at the turn of the last century. In the early nineteenth hundreds, Chicago was one of the most congested, dirty, dangerous, impoverished cities in the country. It was also one of the most ethnically heterogeneous, culturally vibrant and progressive. In the midst of this messy, tumultuous city, in the very heart of its immigrant district, Jane Addams lived, worked and created a new vision of patriotism together with people from scores of ethnic groups representing more than a dozen countries.

In 1889, as very young women, she and Ellen Gates Starr founded Hull House on the near west side of Chicago. At Hull House, over the course of four decades of community work in this complex and dynamic multiracial neighborhood, Addams cultivated what she called a “more progressive” definition of patriotism, which she labeled “cosmic patriotism” or “cosmopolitan patriotism”—terms I will use here interchangeably.[1] In contrast to the insular, provincial conception prevailing in many

sectors today, cosmic patriotism is characterized by internationalism, multiculturalism and humanitarianism.

Writing in 1907, when there lingered late-nineteenth-century optimism that war had become “obsolete,” Addams wrote that the “passing of the war virtues”[2] along with the growth of cosmopolitan, multicultural cities, demanded the cultivation of a new form of patriotism. “We know full well,” she writes, “that the patriotism of common descent is the mere patriotism of the clan—the early patriotism of the tribe—and... [is] unworthy to be the patriotism of a great cosmopolitan nation. We shall not have made any genuine advance until we have grown impatient of a patriotism founded upon military prowess and defence [sic], because this really gets in the way and prevents the growth of that beneficent and progressive patriotism which we need for the understanding and healing of our current national difficulties” (Newer Ideals, 216).

The patriotism that can best serve the needs of an increasingly urban, multi-ethnic nation is “cosmic patriotism.” Cosmic patriotism realizes that the “tribal morality” that served homogeneous communities well in the past must be joined to an “inter-tribal” morality that can address the circumstances faced by people living in increasingly diverse communities. And where can we find the signs of such patriotism? Addams writes,

If we would institute an intelligent search for the social conditions which make possible this combination [of intra- and intertribal morality] we should naturally seek for them in the poorer quarters of a cosmopolitan city where we have, as nowhere else, the conditions for breaking into this double development; for making a fresh start, as it were, toward a synthesis upon a higher moral line which shall include both. There is every opportunity and necessity for compassion and kindness such as the tribe itself afforded, and there is in addition, because of the many nationalities which are gathered there from all parts of the world, the opportunity and necessity for breaking through the tribal bond.... (Newer Ideals, 11-12)

“It is possible,” Addams goes on, “that we shall be saved from warfare by the ‘fighting rabble’ itself, by the ‘quarrelsome mob’ turned into kindly citizens of the world through the pressure of a cosmopolitan neighborhood. It is not that they are shouting for peace—on the contrary, if they shout at all, they will continue to shout for war—but that they are really attaining cosmopolitan relations through daily experience” (Newer Ideals, 18). The chaotic, impoverished, tumultuous neighborhoods of the recent immigrants are the incubators of a cosmic patriotism, a patriotism that will help us all to move beyond endless war. Far from being “the problem,” as such neighborhoods are too often characterized today, Addams suggests they are our best, most important hope for genuine peace.

It may seem a long distance to travel, to begin at patriotism, and arrive at urban gardens. But using Jane Addams’ patriotism, the journey is quite short—just two steps long. We have already taken the first step, by noting Addams’ claim that this new “cosmic patriotism” is coming to birth in those areas where ethnic conflict seems most difficult to avoid—the crowded and impoverished inner cities. In these neighborhoods, residents have not only opportunity, but also motive to develop this new patriotism.

The second step is to identify the skill Addams believed her neighbors had to cultivate, if they were to turn the potential of those immigrant neighborhoods into genuine “cosmic patriotism.” The skill is the capacity for “social intercourse” in a diverse community, the capacity to share “comradship,” while recognizing that “sense of being

unlike one's fellows" ("Recreation," 616). The patriotism of the "modern, heterodox city," Addams argues, "must not be based upon a consciousness of homogeneity, but upon a respect for variation..." ("Recreation," 616). The new city is a place of cultural and ethnic variety; in the midst of such fundamental difference, people must, quite literally, learn how to appreciate each other.

The old, homogeneous cities of eighteenth century Europe, by contrast, had relied upon the fact that each citizen would see his fellow-citizens as like him in some crucial respects; patriotism in such a city rested upon a "shared national type," and an "inherited heritage" ("Recreation," 616). The residents of early twentieth century Chicago could not rely on fellow-feeling; neighbors shared little or no heritage with each other, and often found everything about the other strange, irritating, even terrifying.

Imagination, and a deep respect for racial and ethnic variety, must replace fellow-feeling and shared heritage in the modern, cosmopolitan city. "The future patriotism of America must depend not so much upon conformity as upon respect for variety" ("Recreation," 617). The city has a "solemn obligation" to foster this new cosmic patriotism, by creating places in which its residents can train their imagination and develop their respect and appreciation for each other. ("Recreation," 615-6). Addams suggested that such training is best done through "pleasure and recreation." [3] She praised Chicago's city parks, which provided facilities in which people could cross ethnic and racial boundaries to share their social and cultural practices. [4]

By identifying the skill community members need, and the setting in which it is best cultivated, we have traveled the distance from patriotism to gardening. Or, to be less grandiose, we have sketched one way to understand the value and importance of the gardens springing up in urban neighborhoods all over the world. The garden is the infinitely-malleable medium residents of a cosmopolitan city can use to develop their imagination, cultivate their capacity to appreciate cultural and ethnic variety—and also share with their neighbors the literal fruits of their creative labors. Gardens are soil in which to cultivate cosmic patriotism.

Addams herself didn't explore gardens' potential; she could not have anticipated the enormous, explosive interest in all things green and growing that cities are witnessing in this century: urban agriculture, community gardens, edible schoolyards, farms in the city, microfarms, guerilla gardens, subscription gardens, community supported agriculture, allotment gardens, and gardens of many other descriptions.

Cosmic Patriotism In the Cosmos

Had she been able to contemplate this proliferation of planting, I think Addams would have agreed with me that gardening is brilliantly suited to the task of cultivating our capacity for social intercourse. In part, their suitability arises from the fact that they serve such diverse and varied purposes—a result of the fact that they stand at the center of what it is to be a human being in all its complexity. To wit: gardens put us in touch with the soil, that most fundamental of substances, but they use that soil to create fantastical displays of color, texture and fragrance; they fill not only our elemental need for food, but also our more "refined" desires for beauty; they produce plants both spontaneously (we call them weeds) and through the efforts of careful, intensive tending (which we call plant breeding). In short, gardens occupy that deeply-permeable border between nature and culture. They reveal, by their very position on the border—the

inadequacy of the apparently tidy dichotomy. Gardens, we might say, stand as metaphors for the human condition itself, a condition in which the natural and the cultural are always already entangled in each other.[5] They feed everything from our most basic animal needs to our most “frivolous” and inessential desires; as such, they make for particularly interesting settings in which to carry out the kind of recreational and pleasurable activities Addams says are most suited to cultivating imagination and appreciation for variety, and to developing the capacity for humanitarianism.[6]

Speaking more concretely, assembling just a partial list of the reasons that people come together to garden gives us glimpses of the reasons that the desire to garden has taken hold so strongly in the city; reasons that illustrate how literally and metaphorically central to human life is the growing of plants. Gardens provide landless city dwellers with access to a patch of ground to tend as their own; produce fresh vegetables for people living in urban “food deserts”; create spaces of changing beauty in the midst of a dense urban landscape; provide classrooms for children; offer training grounds for youth leadership; preserve heritage varieties of plants; grow vegetables important in one’s culinary heritage but not available in commercial markets; reclaim abandoned lots from drug dealers; improve the nutritional opportunities in a neighborhood; give members of a community a setting in which to engage cross-culturally; supplement family incomes; and relieve pressures of dense urban environments.[7]

What holds together these various urban gardening exercises? There is no single, general name or inclusive description for this activity. We can, however, get a sense of its breadth, and sort its variety by naming some distinguishing factors.[8]

Gardens and micro-farms may be located on public land, on private land, or on ambiguous or unclassified land. Gardens may be legally located on the ground they occupy, they may be illegal (constructed without the consent, or even the knowledge, of the landowner), or they may be tolerated, with a wink and a nod, by landowners or public officials.[9] Some gardens are open to anyone in their community; others serve just a particular population—the children in a school, or the residents of an apartment building, for instance. The garden may be truly collective, with all gardeners tending the garden in its entirety, or it may be divided up into subsections, with gardeners responsible for their own plots and entitled to whatever they produce. (Some guerilla gardens invite all passers-by to consider themselves gardeners, and to water or weed plots as needed.) Gardens may use organic or conventional gardening methods, or some collectively-negotiated mix of the two. They may focus on flowers, on vegetables and fruit, or on some combination. Their yield may be shared among gardeners alone, it may be sold at a market, or it may be distributed to emergency food shelters. (In my experience, much of it may also rot upon the ground; gardens always seem to produce more than anyone knows what to do with, and at a certain point, everyone just gets tired of harvesting the abundance.) They may be governed by lots of rules, or they may be almost anarchical in their organization.

If we were to boil down these gardens to their common elements, we might say that each contains soil, sun, plants, water, human beings, and (most importantly) relationships, all of which must be negotiated for everyone to flourish in ways that are mutually tolerated, if not actually mutually appreciated. The question then arises: how, specifically do community gardening projects cultivate cosmic patriotism? In other words, how does gardening with others train our imagination and foster our respect for

human variety?—skills Addams regarded as essential for the cosmic patriot. And how does such gardening cultivate humanitarianism?—another component of patriotism she often invokes.

The best way to answer these questions is of course to consider some actual gardens. I do so by considering each tool of the cosmic patriot in turn.

Appreciation and Respect for Diversity

“There is no doubt that the future patriotism of America must depend not so much on conformity as upon respect for variety” (Addams, “Recreation,” 617).

The single most important capacity a cosmic patriot must develop may be her capacity to honor and value the diverse ways of life lived by those around her. Addams believed that her own inner-city neighborhood held rich potential for cultivating this capacity precisely because so many nationalities and ethnic groups lived in close proximity to each other—so close that contact with each other was unavoidable. But as Addams noted—and as any number of real-world situations illustrate—proximity to others ethnically different from oneself does not, in and of itself, guarantee respect and appreciation. Indeed, it often breeds isolation, fear, loathing, even violent hatred.

Addams observes that, in order for proximity to serve cosmopolitan patriotism, there must also be opportunities for people to experience each other’s differences in non-threatening contexts. There’s nothing automatic about such contexts: “In a great city, just because men are crowded into hotels, apartment houses and tenements..., they are often deluded into thinking they [are interacting with each other]. Therefore, unless the apparatus of social intercourse is formally provided by the city, it is possible in the midst of the crowd to cultivate habits of solitude and great secretiveness...” (“Recreation,” 615). Not only the city has an obligation to create such “apparatus”; civic and community organizations do as well. Indeed, Addams would argue that all of us who live in a community share this obligation to each other; for Addams, such work is the work of democracy building, and is the ordinary, daily responsibility of all members of a community.

Gardens can be versatile and useful pieces of this apparatus, a fact that community organizations have begun to realize. Many urban gardens, like the Chicago parks Addams praised, are locales in which people can reveal their cultural practices relatively risk-free without demands for conformity.[10] (You can plant whatever you like on your plot, so long as you don’t get in the way of someone else’s rutabagas.) But the potential of gardens for cultivating diversity goes far deeper than this, and a sizeable number of urban gardens have been established for the express purpose of fostering cross-racial, cross-ethnic dialogue, cooperation and community building. You already know the story of one such garden, for it is located in this city.

Hamburg’s Intercultural Garden is part of an influential nationwide gardening network coordinated by the organization Stiftung Interkultur. The Intercultural Garden project, begun in 1995 in Göttingen, now includes more than sixty gardens. As Christa Müller, Director of Stiftung Interkultur writes, “These social spaces, new in the German project landscape, not only serve urban recreational purposes and supply organic fruit and vegetables but quite deliberately pursue a further aim: intercultural communication and integration on the basis of a resource-oriented approach” (“Intercultural Gardens,” 58).[11] Müller continues:

Intercultural gardens bring together Germans and immigrants—very often with a refugee background—from all strata of society to cultivate fruit and vegetables, exchange seed and recipes.... Working the soil together, which has allowed many to use their knowledge and abilities for the first time in Germany in an international context, also creates a field of learning that goes far beyond planting and harvesting garden produce. (“Intercultural Gardens,” 58)

Gardening together opens the door for all manner of exchanges and cooperative ventures, both formal and informal, involving everything from recreational activities to essential services. Such expansion and extension of connections formed is precisely what Addams had in mind; sharing of dance, craft, and other activities from one’s culture would be not an end in itself but would open the way to more and different cooperative ventures among formerly-isolated groups. Such expanded communication and cooperation is the warp and weft of the fabric of cosmic citizenship—its basic, essential element.

Gardens, Müller emphasizes, both enable immigrant gardeners to “‘put down roots’ in [the] future as well as [enrich] cultural variety in Germany as a country of immigrants” (“Women,” 1)—almost precisely the qualities Addams identified Chicago a century earlier, when observing that the inner-city neighborhood is the ideal location for cosmic patriotism to develop. There, Addams observed, individuals are daily working to break down the old division between “tribal” and “intertribal” morality, a division that is necessary if we are to move beyond a patriotism of war and provincial loyalty. Using Müller’s language, what we are witnessing in the gardens is a move beyond the old dichotomy of “integration versus parallel societies, assimilation versus ethnicization,” into a realm of “transnational and transcultural spaces” (“Women,” 1).

Such intercultural work is not confined to this network. In the U.S., a sizeable youth gardening movement has developed, with interracial communication as its explicit focus. The Food Project in Boston is perhaps its most well-known exemplar. It brings together youth from a predominantly African-American inner city neighborhood and from an affluent white suburb, to grow food collectively for sale at area farmers’ markets and donation to emergency food providers. The Food Project website notes “We believe racism and inequity persist in our society and that The Food Project’s integrated approach to youth and community development through sustainable agriculture can contribute new solutions” (“Commitment to Diversity”). To that end, they “integrate young people of all backgrounds in meaningful work throughout the entire organization. This creates a multi-age, multicultural community that is dynamic and effective in accomplishing change” (“Commitment to Diversity”). Ultimately, the Food Project seeks to “grow a thoughtful and productive community of youth and adults from diverse backgrounds who work together to build a sustainable food system” (The Food Project).

The Intercultural Gardens, the Food Project, and other cooperative urban gardening ventures illustrate the power of gardens to incubate meaningful cross-racial, transnational and transcultural communication—a fundamental tool for the cosmopolitan patriot.

Imagination

“...the imaginative powers, the sense that life possesses variety and color, are realized most easily in moments of pleasure and recreation” (Addams, “Recreation,” 616).

Any garden relies heavily upon the imagination. What other human capacity could persuade us to bury tiny seeds in the dirt, on the implausible premise that they will turn into something that looks like the picture on the package? Only imagination can fortify gardeners for the work of coaxing reluctant plants to grow and thrive in spite of poor soil, bad weather, pests, invasive weeds, and other gardeners. Beautiful, healthy gardens are wonderful rewards for nurturing—and also disciplining—one’s imagination; they are literal, vivid examples of Addams’ “variety and color” of life. Gardening with others enables imaginations to operate collectively, to inspire, challenge and bolster each other.

Gardeners in the city must be especially imaginative, for tillable land is a scarce and priceless commodity, and simply finding a place in which to stick one’s trowel is daunting.[12] Indeed, when considering the ways in which collective gardening cultivates the imagination and thereby serves cosmic citizenship, one can find a rich collection of examples by looking only at the challenge of finding land. Guerilla gardeners’ responses to that challenge illustrate some of the boldest and wildest exercises of the imagination.

Guerillas, the Robin Hoods of the urban gardening scene, regard the population density of cities as an invitation to increase what one calls the “garden density.” “Through our offensive, we demonstrate that society need not choose between dense cities and garden cities” (Reynolds, 69). Guerillas studiously train their imaginations to notice spots that could be gardened—a traffic island in London, waste ground next to a fence in Tokyo, a railway right-of-way in Chicago. Such spaces don’t even register as three-dimensional spaces on the consciousness of us non-gardeners; the idea that they could become beautiful spaces, or spaces productive of food, is like telling us that money grows on trees. To us, it does seem as if densely populated cities are, by definition, not garden cities. Guerillas, gardening from Berlin to Buenos Aires, Wellington to Walukumba, show us how a well-trained imagination can unravel that erroneous assumption.

While guerilla gardeners represent the sometimes-romantic and quixotic limits to which imagination can take daring gardeners, most all collective urban gardens involve the imaginative re-appropriation of land, and the inventive revitalization of the soil. Bare ground is rarely there for the taking, and if it is, chances are it has been polluted or heavily mistreated. In the aftermath of a natural disaster, land may become more available, but not necessarily more useable. Post-Katrina New Orleans illustrates this conundrum well, while two community gardening organizations illustrate the imagination at work there.

Ordinary powers of imagination have had to become superpowers, even to reclaim existing community gardens savaged by Katrina’s floodwaters. New Orleans Farm and Food Network (NOFFN), and Parkway Partners are partnering with New Orleans residents to bring gardens back to the city—efforts aimed not only at beauty, but also, crucially, at increasing the availability of fresh vegetables in neighborhoods that

have become “food deserts” as a result of the loss of neighborhood grocery stores. In yards and gardens where topsoil already polluted by heavy industry was further contaminated by saltwater, and where money is scarce, community members, aided by these organizations, have pooled creativity. The old bathtub an African American man has converted into a raised bed is not just a quirky novelty; it is just one clever, money-saving way to create a garden above toxic soil. On a vacant lot where a group of Latino gardeners hopes to develop a microfarm and sell their produce at area farmers’ markets, volunteers are readying the lot by putting down a layer of recycled cardboard and topping it with clean donated soil. NOFFN further extends the reach of individual residents’ creativity by offering seasonal classes in which gardeners can learn and can also share ideas.

Undoubtedly the creation of a collective garden in the city presents endless opportunities for participants to train their imagination. In addition to learning to imagine a garden where now there is only a needle-strewn empty lot, there is the imagination required to envision the design and layout of a garden. But if we consider gardens specifically as incubators for the development of cosmic patriotism, the most relevant exercises of the imagination are probably those that involve puzzling out ways to work with other people—people who control the land one wishes to garden, for instance.

Here again, guerilla gardeners present us with some of the most daring uses of imagination and creativity, though again their efforts are far from unique. Both Richard Reynolds and David Tracey devote significant portions of their books on guerilla gardening to issues such as: how to encourage landowners or city officials to tolerate the existence of a garden; how to enlist community support for your garden; how to entice others to maintain (or at least not destroy) your garden; and how to enroll new gardeners in the movement. The one-size-fits-all answer to these questions is: “use your imagination.” Think cleverly, act locally.

In Minnesota, an organization called the Land Stewardship Project offers a farmer training program that might be called an “imagination training program,” because of the emphasis it places on brainstorming skills. One young farmer, Katie, who took the course but who has no access to land of her own, has created a unique garden subscription program, in which food is actually grown in subscribers’ backyards. Imagination enabled her to take the concept of community supported agriculture—in which subscribers pay you to grow food on your own land—one step further. Subscribers have had to be persuaded to turn their yards over to this venture—still more evidence of the ingenuity that collective and community gardening projects involve. In the case of Katie’s clients, land may not be all that scarce, but on the other hand, her clients’ expectations that their lawns will look a certain way are difficult to flout. Growing tomato plants where you’re “supposed” to have roses is dicey business. Helping landowners to re-imagine their lawns as productive farmland is a cosmically imaginative endeavor.

On its website, NOFFN invites readers to

Imagine our city with small urban farms tucked into every neighborhood-utilizing abandoned or underused green space. What if you only had to walk a block or two to talk with your local farmer and your kids could see where food comes from and what a “real” farmer looks like. Remember the taste of a fresh

tomato just off the vine, or salad greens picked first thing in the morning for dinner at night? (“Urban Farming With NOLA City Farms”)

The powers of imagination, fueled by the anticipation of a tomato and bolstered by the energy of one’s gardening compatriots, are bringing urban gardens into existence across the globe. Those gardens, in turn, serve as imagination’s training grounds.

Humanitarianism

“The patriotism of tribal loyalty, guarded by militaristic attitudes, affections, and institutional structures, needs to be a thing of the past. We need to move to a new form of patriotism...where concern for human well-being is structured into our institutions, our affections, and our actions” (Fischer, 8).

A collectively-run garden may seem like an odd institution in which to structure a concern for the wellbeing of community members, but considered from another perspective, the purpose that at least some gardens serve—providing humans with sustenance—is so fundamental that they are the ideal institutions in which to carry out this particular aspect of the work of restructuring patriotism. Several community gardens, and urban and collective gardening programs in the United States have made hunger alleviation an explicit part of their mission: Plant a Row for the Hungry, for instance, is a volunteer program that encourages individual and community gardeners to plant extra rows in their gardens and donate surplus produce to a local emergency food provider. Many community organizations in low-income neighborhoods have created community gardens with the express purpose of increasing the food security of community members; such an aim is part of the mission of the Intercultural Gardens, the Food Project, and NOFFN, for instance. On a more abstract level, gardens in prisons and in schools give their gardeners something of beauty and value to care about, to nurture and to be responsible for—forms of human connection often absent in the lives of prisoners and students.

The most ambitious—and often the most multifaceted—efforts to build humanitarianism into the goals of a community garden may be found in gardens that define themselves as parts of the growing movement called “community food security.” According to the Community Food Security Coalition, a community is food secure if all its members have access to safe, affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food at all times of the year from non-emergency sources. (Community Food Security Coalition) The community food security movement emphasizes the fact that food security requires support—economic, social, and other forms—for both eaters and growers. Food security is not simply a value for consumers, but benefits local producers as well.

In a number of cities and towns around the country, gardens have formed or reformed themselves with the express purpose of contributing to the food security of their communities. One notable example of such a garden is Missoula, Montana’s Garden City Harvest, which describes itself as: “a collaborative effort working to provide healthy produce to Missoulians in need while educating the Missoula community and University of Montana students about sustainable food systems and agriculture. We accomplish this with four vital programs: Community Gardens, PEAS Farm, Youth Harvest and the Community Education Program” (Garden City Harvest). Garden City Harvest takes a multifaceted approach to the challenge of making Missoula food secure, an approach that

acknowledges that food insecurity takes more than one form. Community gardens, concentrated in low-income neighborhoods throughout the city, provide garden plots and all necessary tools to interested gardeners on a first-come, first-serve basis. The PEAS program is a university program in agriculture, as a part of which students grow tens of thousands of pounds of vegetables on an urban, organic farm, for distribution to low-income city residents. Youth Harvest employs at-risk teens in an urban garden, where they work alongside college students in the PEAS program. Garden City Harvest makes fresh, healthy and safe food available to all residents of the city, including—it is worth noting—residents who are able to pay for such food but have who have not been able to find a source for it. The program enables residents across the economic spectrum to realize the interrelated ways in which their community has not been food secure, and to benefit from its increasing food security.

Funding for these programs comes from an impressive patchwork of city, county, state and federal agencies, civic organizations, and individuals, representing a broad array of interests, and illustrating the ways this organization has structured humanitarian goals into its very design. Among its sponsors: the city government, the state university, the public school systems, the judicial system, a human resources council, a council on aging, the local food bank, and a host of private foundations and individuals.

Garden City Harvest, like the other organizations and individuals I have briefly discussed here, can be seen as vital elements of the infrastructure of a society in which cosmopolitan patriotism is valued and encouraged, and in which it gradually renders obsolete the old forms of patriotism rooted in narrow loyalties, unthinking solidarity, and celebration of war. By providing the literal ground on which individuals from diverse communities can join imaginative forces to feed their stomachs, their creativity, and their neighbors, collective urban gardening projects are cosmically significant.

Conclusion: a cautionary tale

In case it wasn't clear, none of this collective gardening is easy—not cultivating rock-hard, unloved soil, and not cultivating the capacity for social intercourse either. Reading a glossy garden encyclopedia, or viewing the blog of an avid gardener, one might make the mistake of thinking that growing plants is an effortless occupation. It's not; in fact, much of it is unremitting drudgery, with a shaky promise of payoff. I will admit, shamefacedly, that I am a terrible, terrible gardener. In fact, I have given up on anything other than digging large holes; I choose instead to support the efforts of good gardeners in my neighborhood by buying their produce, and by plying them with baked goods when they won't take my cash.

The drudgery of garden work is, generally, lessened when done in the company of others. Given that fact, it might seem as if “social intercourse” would generate spontaneously in a community garden and would not require the care and feeding demanded by a finicky perennial. Beyond being virtually automatic, gardens apparently have a magical ability to create community, using their powerful alchemical blend of dirt, water, plants, sun and people—or so the articles on urban gardening would have us believe.

It's true that a minimally organized community garden will provide opportunities for like-minded people to talk with each other, to trade tomato advice and swap squash seeds. But there's the rub; like-minded people. It's quite easy to trade tomato tips with someone who looks and talks (and gardens) like you. It's another matter altogether when

everything about your fellow gardeners seems Other. I close today with a cautionary tale about the limits of gardens for cultivating cosmic patriotism. The tale concerns my own town and the garden we started there.

About ten years ago, in communities across my state, people met in study circles to discuss the question “what does it mean to be an American in the current age of immigration?” (“Changing Faces”) In my town, the question was a particularly interesting one, because we had recently experienced a significant demographic change. What had been an almost entirely European-American town was now becoming home to groups of Latinos and Somalis. These changes gave everyone much to talk about in the two study circles that we formed. Out of our circles grew the desire to create a positive community project—something that didn’t involve the court system or the welfare system or the police. Addams would have called it a piece of apparatus, for social intercourse. We decided to form a community garden.

The garden got started easily, on land provided by my college and with logistical support from the school and the county government. Enthusiasm ran high; garden plots and plants were distributed free of charge. Somali, Latino and Euroamerican gardeners tended their plots side by side. Watermelons were grown. Squash beetles were battled.

Nearly ten years later, the community garden is...thriving. It’s bigger than ever. But virtually every gardener is white. Those early, enthusiastic efforts at cross-cultural pollination failed quite miserably. Nothing terrible or dramatic happened to bring this about; indeed, nothing happened at all. And that is no doubt a large reason for the exodus of Somali and Latino gardeners. Those enthusiastic gestures on the part of longtime, well established Euroamerican residents of our town weren’t followed with deeper, more significant efforts to try to get to know each other at the water tap, or to organize social events that would bring groups together. Many Somalis left my town altogether, drawn to larger cities with more resources; those who remain have not found a home in the garden. Many of the Latinos who live in the town have no interest in gardening. Their day jobs often involve arduous physical labor; for them, gardening isn’t exactly the “pleasure and recreation” that Addams says we all need. Furthermore, for Latinos whose immigration status is tenuous, getting involved in something even as minimally “official” as a community garden can feel like a risky enterprise.

There are no “bad guys” in the story of this community garden. No evil person set out to sabotage our optimistic efforts at multicultural community. But no one—including yours truly—put all that much effort into fostering it either. Like planting big, thirsty plants in a garden and then walking away, assuming the rains would come, we created the garden and assumed that the magic of plants would take over from there.

Do not misunderstand; the [X] Community Garden is a tremendous resource for our community—a beautiful locale where the soil is recovering from the years it spent under industrial cultivation, where healthy perennial plants like rhubarb and asparagus now dot the property, and where on any given evening, groups of gardeners can be found tending their plots and trading zucchini stories. The garden is many things—but it has ceased altogether to serve the purpose for which it was initially created. Is it a failure? No. But it is also an important lesson in the limits of gardens. Cultivating the capacity for social intercourse requires serious, persistent, long-term work on multiple levels. It will not survive on tomato plants alone.

Endnotes

[1] See, e.g., *Newer Ideals of Peace*, *The Long Road of Women's Memory*, and *Peace and Bread in Time of War*. For an incisive exploration of this conception of patriotism, see Hanson.

[2] The phrase is the title of Chapter Eight of *Newer Ideals of Peace*.

[3] *Ibid.*, 616.

[4] The parks included “club rooms, poolrooms, drawing rooms, refectories, reading rooms, gymnasiums, swimming pools, and much other social paraphernalia...” (*Ibid.*, 619).

[5] Peg O'Connor, using a metaphor from the world of textiles, writes of the “felted” nature of the world. Nature and culture, she suggests, are “felted” together in an inextricable tangle. See *Morality and Our Complicated Form of Life*.

[6] While I will not pursue the question here, I am curious to consider the question of how Addams would see the potential of gardening to vary, depending upon the degree to which gardens are simply aimed at recreation and leisure, as opposed to providing basic nutrition for a family. Her own argument isn't fine-grained enough to say anything about the potential of particular kinds of cultural activities, and so it's not clear whether she thinks that, say spinning and sport differ in terms of the ways in which they promote social intercourse, because one produces something that is (or can be) a necessity, whereas the other is more purely an activity of pleasure. Does this matter? The case of gardens would provide a particularly fertile field on which to examine the question. Christa Müller's work has something to say about this question.

[7] Individual gardeners may join a particular gardening effort for just the reasons that garden was founded, or they may till their assigned, “borrowed” or purloined patch of earth for idiosyncratic motives known only to them. But whatever their private reasons, by choosing to move beyond their own window box or fire escape to grow with others, gardeners, by default, choose to throw their lot in with the community. This means that, like it or not, they must cultivate some capacity for social intercourse even as they cultivate their cosmos and their cauliflower.

[8] The collective or cooperative quality of these gardens may be characterized most simply by pointing to two kinds of urban gardens not in the mix. One is the “professional” formal, garden, found either on public lands or on private land accessible to the public. (The formal gardens located within Hamburg's Stadtpark would be an example.) Such gardens, tended by paid gardeners, are beautiful resources for their home cities, but by definition, they are not participatory ventures; community involvement in them is mainly confined to strolling the grounds and enjoying their beauty. The other kind of urban garden lying outside the mix is the private garden of a private individual. Such a garden may or may not be visible to anyone other than its owner, and it is certainly off limits to other people in the community who wish to dig in the dirt a bit.

While it undoubtedly makes positive contributions to the soil and air quality of its neighborhood, and while it may bring pleasure, sustenance, or economic benefit to its owner, a private garden, like a formal public garden, does not notably contribute to cultivating community, in the sense in which Addams and I are interested. Between these two types of gardens in the city lies an abundant variety of collective growing endeavors.

[9] It is not at all uncommon for a garden to move from illegally occupying land to legally doing so. Unfortunately, it is also not uncommon for a garden to go from legal occupation to eviction, a perverse consequence of the fact that land values in communities with established gardens often rise, making it more profitable for owners to turn gardens into buildings. The story of New York City's community gardens illustrates the interplay between these two tendencies; in thirty years, many gardens have gone from being illegal to being "sanctioned" by the city, to being destroyed by the city to make way for housing. The battle over the enormous, 14-acre South Central Farm (or South Central Community Garden) in Los Angeles is a good example of the way in which a garden gets destroyed.

[10] This is a generalization of course, and as such, it is subject to (numerous) exceptions. While community gardens can encourage individual and cultural expression, they can also become sites of much legalistic wrangling, when gardeners disagree about the gardening methods to be practiced, the plants to be grown, and the standards to be met by gardeners. Most every long-standing garden has stories of squabbles over what happened when a gardener didn't care for her plot, or another sneaked in banned pesticides when they thought no one was looking.

[11] Here is another place in which to reflect on the question posed earlier, namely; how does the potential of gardens vary, depending upon whether they are geared more to leisure and recreation or to sustenance—"resources," in Müller's terms. Her position privileges the importance of gardens as "resource oriented." But of course one of the powerful things about a garden is that it is never just one or the other—never just about providing beauty and pleasure or just about filling biological needs—and indeed gardens function well to challenge the very terms of such a dichotomy (a version of the nature/culture dichotomy).

[12] For a discussion of land scarcity, seen through the eyes of a guerilla gardener, see Reynolds, 62ff.

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