

# Market Gardens Program



## Programmatic Goals

In the summer of 2012, we launched the Market Gardens Program, which connects skilled immigrant, low-income gardeners and emerging food leaders with land on which they can cultivate sustainable food for market purposes. Our market gardeners have sold sustainably grown produce at the Minnesota Street Market, Good Earth Food Co-op, Nick's Third Floor Restaurant, NY Gyro, Kalahari Foods, and the Sartell Farmer's Market, and value-added products at the St. Cloud Farmer's Market. In 2014 this program will grow to provide training on business planning, as well as continued support for the program participants in sustainable and organic gardening practices.

Our gardeners will occupy three distinct spaces: the Monastery of St. Benedict's /Common Ground CSA in St. Joseph, the Promise Neighborhood in St. Cloud, and the Environment Camp in Cold Spring, on land donated by the Catholic Charities Children's Home. In these spaces, gardeners grow produce for sale directly to restaurants, grocery stores, and local farmer's markets.

Our programmatic goals include: 1) provide land access, support, and training on sustainable and organic gardening practices, business planning and marketing for food entrepreneurship; 2) support all individuals who want to become food leaders in their communities, being especially inclusive of low- to middle-income marginalized individuals and families that wish to participate in the growing local food economy; 3) advance a fresh, local foods economy in central Minnesota which celebrates both cultural diversity and ecological biodiversity.

***Program vision:*** *Through the Market Gardens program, participants learn about the preparation, planting, and management of a mid-scale market garden, the development and management of a cooperative food business, and the cultivation of sustaining and lasting relationships with customers, be they Produce Managers, buyers at a restaurant, or farmer's market attendees.*

## Expectations of Program Participants

- Program participants will attend 4-6 workshops scheduled by CMSP in partnership with the Land Stewardship Project.
- Participants are expected to attend a bi-weekly meeting with the Market Gardens Program Manager and fellow site-specific gardeners, so that they can begin developing relationships, governance structures, and review expectations, etc.
- Throughout the growing season, participants will be expected to log **10-15 hours per week** gardening and managing deliveries to restaurants, stores, or markets.

## Expectations of CMSP

- Program participants can expect ongoing, direct support from the Market Gardens Program Manager in the form of: training and education on sustainable gardening practices, business

planning and marketing, supervision and feedback on progress, and troubleshooting issues that may arise in the garden or with buyers.

- Program participants can expect a modest stipend, to be paid monthly
- Participants can expect ongoing feedback and evaluation for personal and professional growth

### **Program Timeframe**

- Mid-April – Mid-May (Pre-season training, 1 month)
- Mid-May to Mid-October: Growing season Apprenticeship (5 months)

### **Workshops offered by the CMSP and the Land Stewardship Project**

- Skills Assessment
- Why is this work important? A conversation on social and community food systems
- Starting from seed/planting
- Harvest Technique and Post-Harvest Handling
- Marketing & Buyer Relationships
- Finance/Recordkeeping
- Farm Tour

**Questions? Contact Chanti Calabria, Market Gardens Program Manager, at [chanti@sustainmn.org](mailto:chanti@sustainmn.org).**