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The CityRoots Dig - September 2009

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Dear CityRoots Participants and Friends,

It is hard to believe that we are coming down the home stretch of the 2009 CityRoots season. Even with the extended program of five months, time has certainly flown as group participants attend planning meetings, do community outreach, adopt vacant lots, plant gardens, trees, and shrubs, install permeable patios and pathways, and so much more. We at UEI are thrilled with the progress the groups have made in terms of the addition of ecological elements to neighborhood landscapes and the strength and drive of neighbors to come together.

With just four weeks left in the season, the projects are all in full swing. Let's keep up the momentum and hard work, and get our family, friends, and neighbors out there to help so that we can end CityRoots 2009 with a bang! We will surely appreciate the end result for a much longer period of time than it took to make it happen.

Please read on to learn about the latest CityRoots activities, upcoming events and learning opportunities around Boston, as well as our Tip of the Month.

CityRoots Announcements

Urban Community Gardening Panel Discussion

Please join us for dinner and a discussion about urban community gardening. It will be an opportunity to reunite with current CityRoots participants while learning about a wide array of helpful topics for building and maintaining gardens in the urban environment.

We have the pleasure of welcoming several urban garden experts who will provide their advice on topics such as: successful gardening techniques; how to access resources; bioremediation strategies; and building and managing a thriving community garden. The panel will include presenters from the Worcester Roots Project, ReVision Urban Farm, and Boston Natural Areas Network, as well as a local community garden coordinator.

When: Wednesday, September 23, 2009

Dinner: 5:30-6:30 PM

Presentations: 6:30-7:30 PM
Discussion: 7:30-8:30 PM

Where: Codman Square Tech Center
450 Washington Street
Dorchester, MA 02124

Please RSVP so we know to expect you!

To RSVP, email Chris Timmel at ctimmel@urbaneco.org with the following information:

- Number of people attending
- Number of kids needing childcare (if applicable)
- Number of people (adults AND children) having the chicken vs. vegetarian meal option

We look to seeing you on the 23rd!

Join us for a Green Roof Demonstration and Installation!

The United Neighborhood Association (UNA) and the Claybourne Street Community Garden welcome CityRoots participants in witnessing an exciting CityRoots event: a small-scale green roof will be installed on a community tool shed! Small-scale green roofs and shared community tool sheds are new additions to our CityRoots programming. Karen Weber with the Foundation for a Green Future and Charles Sinkler with Apex Green Roofs will demonstrate a method for building a green roof, and then UNA will install the green roof. The tool shed was built in partnership with YouthBuild Boston. Please join us for this exciting and educational event!

When: Saturday, October 3, 2009
10:00 AM

Where: Claybourne Street Community Garden
42 Claybourne Street
Dorchester, MA 02124

Citizen Forester Workshop Canceled

We are sorry to announce that the Citizen Forester Workshop lead by the Boston Parks and Recreation Department has been cancelled due to a reallocation of staffing at the Parks Department. The CityRoots Coordinators will instead be available to give on-site training on pruning techniques for their CityRoots groups. We are hopeful that the Parks Department will be able to offer their Citizen Forester Workshop to CityRoots participants next year. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Allston/Brighton North Neighbor's Forum

Parents, friends, students and teachers are close to finishing their work on the Gardner School Playground. We will gather once more on the evening of Thursday, September 24th to plant a Dawn Redwood, some groundcover, and a mix of shrubs and perennials. With the help of students a collection of meadow flower seeds will be spread throughout the site.

For more information contact the Allston/Brighton North Neighbor's Forum through ABNNF@googlegroups.com

Egleston Square Neighbors

An exciting effort to beautify the front of the Egleston Square Public Library is off the ground. Neighbors, staff and members of the library friends group will be gathering on Saturday, October 3rd from 9:00-2:00 PM to install large planters along the sidewalk at Columbus Street. The planters will be filled with a mix of native and butterfly-attracting perennials. We will also be featuring a rain barrel exhibit inside the library which will be held up for raffle. We will also be collaborating with the Franklin Park Coalition on Saturday, September 26th to host a tree and shrub planting at the Seavers and Walnut Street entrance to the park. Please join us for either of these events!

Contact Karen Chaffee at kchaffee@urbaneco.org for details.

Shawmut Springs Church

Members from the Shawmut Springs Church and other enthusiastic neighbors spent the month of August establishing and building trails at the entrance to the park. With pick axes swinging, piles of soil building, chunks of asphalt and other debris emerging, the path edging was laid. With more hands at work this month we will continue to build the trails and plant shrubs in the interior of the park. Join us for our final two CityRoots-hosted workdays on Sunday, September 13th and 27th.

Please visit the Shawmut Springs Church's website for more information at www.shawmutsprings.org.

McCormack Civic Association

Neighbors and friends continue to work late into the evening every Wednesday night and have spent the last three Saturdays planting the hillside with ivy and native shrubs. Decomposable erosion control netting has been placed to hold back the soil and last weekend the group sweated it out in the sun to prepare the first of two rain gardens on site. There's lots of work to be done so if you haven't joined in yet you can come this Saturday, September 12th to pitch in! A shovel will be waiting for you!

For more information on our workdays please go to the McCormack Civic

Association website: www.McCormackCivic.com

TNT Green Space Alliance - The Boston Project Ministries

BPM successfully installed UEI CityRoots' first raingarden at its DND Adopt-a-Lot site of 93 Norfolk Street in Codman Square. Participants have already observed several neighbors make a detour through the site on the new gravel path to enjoy the flowerbed. Bumblebees and butterflies are now making 93 Norfolk Street their new home!

In the next week, the group will clean up and remove debris from the site and install a new chainlink fence with gates around the perimeter of the site. The last big planting day will take place Saturday, September 19th at 10 AM. We hope you can join!

Call Boston Project Ministries at 617.929.0925 to get involved.

United Neighbors Association

UNA has just completed the installation of UEI CityRoots' first permeable paver patio! With the consultation of Unilock, the manufacturer of the pavers, a skilled bricklayer named Eddie Gamble, and dozens of family and neighbors, the group completed the installation in three work days. Thanks to the help of supportive family members, the workers stayed very well-fed and energetic. The final product is looking great!

In the next two weeks, UNA will complete plantings in neighbors yards this Saturday, September 12th at 10 AM and a raingarden next Sunday afternoon, September 20th at 12 PM. You can contact Theresa at latsont@verizon.net or Katherine at 617-552-0184 to learn more.

Dakota Gardens (Formerly Four Corners Green Neighbors)

Dakota Gardens refers to the name the group has given to the DND Adopt-a-Lot site of 105 Dakota Street which they intend to turn into a vibrant community garden. Together with Katherine, the group has been developing a schematic design for the site and writing an application to the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund for additional funding.

This Sunday, September 13th at 3 PM, the group will host a joint rainbarrel installation workshop at 113 Dakota Street. For this workshop, they are partnering with UNA, also located in Four Corners, for an opportunity for cross-group exchange within the neighborhood.

If you would like to get involved, please contact Katherine at 617-552-0184 or e-mail Esther at estravagen@yahoo.com.

Uphams Corner Westside Neighborhood Association

The group has now installed nine rainbarrels, distributed five composters, and are helping create gardens in the neighborhood. The group has bought its rainbarrels from two companies: the Boston Building Materials Coop and the New England Rainbarrel Company. At one installation Joan and John Freele of the NE Rainbarrel Company suggested a handy tip for over-wintering your rainbarrels: if you use a flexible spout, you can stretch the downspout down to the ground when you bring the rainbarrel inside for the winter.

Please contact Joanne at 617-265-7479 or jt4house@yahoo.com to learn more or get involved!

City-Wide News & Opportunities

Mayor's Food & Fuel Summit

As we see Summer coming to a close, this is a great time to get a jump start on finding ways to reduce those food and utility costs during the cool months that lay ahead. Find out about food and fuel assistance programs, home weatherization techniques, financial planning, and more. A FREE weatherization kit will be handed to the first 200 participants and flu shots will be provided as long as they last. Click here for details.

Cost: FREE

When: Saturday, September 12th
9:00 AM-1:00 PM

Public Meeting on North Allston/Brighton Community Plan

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) will be hosting a public meeting to discuss the North Allston/Brighton community wide plan. Come learn more and share your ideas about a sustainable park to be incorporated in the community space behind the Honan-Allston Library, as well as plans for Western Avenue and Soldiers Field Road. Visit the BRA website for more information.

Cost: FREE

When: Tuesday, September 15th
6:00-8:00 PM

Success with Sweet Potatoes

Join Matt Kochka, Farm Manager at ReVision Urban Farm, for an informative and interactive workshop on how to grow sweet potatoes, a hearty, low-maintenance crop, right in your back yard. Find out more about this free event.

Cost: FREE

When: Saturday, September 19th
9:00-11:00 AM

Fall Forest Festival

Come out to Franklin Park with your friends and family for a fun early Fall day full of games, nature walks, painting workshops, and more! Click here to see the schedule of events.

Cost: FREE

When: Saturday, September 19th
10:00 AM-2:00 PM

6th Annual RiverSing

Join the cultural arts group, Revels, along with the Charles River Conservancy mark the beginning of the lovely season of Autumn with a community sing along the banks of the Charles River near Harvard Square. Bring your family and friends to enjoy some beautiful music and the sunset along the river. Visit the Revels website for more information.

Cost: FREE

When: Sunday, September 20th
6:00-7:30 PM

Community Meeting for Columbia Point Master Plan Review

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) will be hosting a community meeting to discuss the Columbia Point Draft Master Plan. Come out to provide your input on this substantial project that will have a lasting effect on the neighboring communities. Visit the BRA website for more information.

Cost: FREE

When: Saturday, September 26th
9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Fall Harvest Festival and Perennial Divide

Before putting your gardens to sleep this season, come participate in a perennial plant swap and enjoy the Fall Harvest Festival at City Natives. This will be the perfect time to prepare your for the Spring, get your plant care questions answered, and enjoy what City Natives has to offer with its fresh produce and beautiful landscape. Learn more here.

Cost: FREE

When: Saturday, September 26th
10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Hub on Wheels 2009 - Citywide Ride & Festival

Get on your bike and come down to City Hall Plaza to join thousands of other enthusiasts for fun ride around Boston. Your participation will support Boston Public School students and help raise awareness for the Boston Bikes program. Click here to register.

Cost: $45.00

When: Sunday, September 27th
8:00 AM-2:00 PM

History of Forest Hills Cemetery Walking Tour

Join veteran tour guide, Al Maze, as he brings you around beautiful Forest Hills Cemetery and explains the history behind the garden cemetery movement, the people involved in designing and building Forest Hills, and the notable figures buried there, all making this landscape a Boston attraction. Meet at the main gate. Follow the link for details.

Cost: FREE

When: Sunday, September 27th
2:00-4:00 PM

Save Those Seeds For Next Year's Garden

Continuing with the Fall harvest theme, learn how to collect and store seeds from the wild and your own garden with Jeremy Dick, Horticulturist at Boston Natural Areas Network. You will be provided with some great tips to bring your favorite plants to life year after year. The program is free, but registration is required. To do so, call 617.542.7696 or email info@bostonnatural.org. Find out more here.

Cost: FREE

When: Saturday, October 3rd
9:00-11:00 AM

2009 Grassroots Retreat in Eliot, Maine

The New England Grassroots Environment Fund (NEGEF) and the Toxics Action Center are offering their grantee groups a day long retreat in Eliot, Maine full of skills-building workshops, networking opportunities, local food, and good times for those working to maintain environmentally sustainable communities in New England. Boston Grants Initiative grantees can travel to and from South Station by bus for free! Click here for more information on this great opportunity.

Cost: $30.00/person
$55.00/2 persons
$75.00/3 persons
Some scholarship funds are available

When: Saturday, October 3rd
9:00 AM-4:30 PM

Lynden Miller in Boston

COGdesign will be welcoming Lynden Miller, a successful New York City public garden designer, to speak about her new book and loving career in designing and building beautiful public landscapes for people to enjoy in the urban setting. Come out for very special evening that will support COGdesign. Learn more here.

Cost: $25.00

When: Wednesday, October 7th
6:00-8:00 PM

Tip of the Month

Saving Energy During those Cooler Months Ahead

Though it may seem a bit early to think about cold weather energy savings, these past few days have felt like Fall, and we all know how quickly the cold weather will follow. To get a step ahead of the game, we are providing you with some ideas to prepare for those cool days ahead, as well as some general energy saving tips that will help our environment and your bank account.

Heating
∗ Make sure windows and doors shut securely
∗ Use heavy duty plastic sheeting over your window frames and seal tightly for a buffer
∗ Make sure to keep the shades open during the day to allow sunlight to help heat your home, and closed at night to diminish drafts
∗ Lower the heat to 55 degrees when out of the house
∗ Think about where you place your furniture. Don't block heating sources!

Lighting
∗ Replace your light bulbs with Compact Florescent Lights (CFLs).
∗ Turn lights off when you don't need them
∗ Rather than lighting up an entire room, use a "task lamp" to direct light where you need it (e.g., desk, reading light)

Water
∗ Check faucets for leaks and fix immediately
∗ Install aerators to maintain water pressure but decrease the amount of water used

Check out UEI's Sustainable Cities Resource Brochure for more tips on energy savings and other ways to live an environmentally conscious lifestyle.

NSTAR Fall / Winter Energy Saving Tips

Consumer Reports Tips

MassSave gives free energy audits to customers who qualify. They also offer rebates on a number of products, such as insulation, water heaters, and energy-efficient appliances. Call the state energy efficiency hotline at 1-866-527-7283 for more information about these services so that you, the customer, can take advantage of all that they have to offer.

The **Food & Fuel Campaign**, which was recently launched by the City of Boston, links government, private businesses, and non-profit organizations to help residents cope with the rising costs of the essentials: food and fuel. Follow this link to find out about a number of resources around the city to help you prepare for the winter, and come to the Food & Fuel Summit on September 12th to learn more about these helpful resources, get a free weatherization kit, and get a flu shot (while supplies last)!

Founded in Boston, MA in 1998, the Urban Ecology Institute (UEI) aims to promote the health of urban ecosystems through research, education, advocacy, and community action. UEI helps urban communities build healthy and vibrant cities by educating students and residents about their neighborhood environments, connecting them to each other, and engaging them in the transformation of their communities into healthy places where people want to live.

Rachael (Dobson) Harris
CityRoots Program Manager
Urban Ecology Institute

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