

AND FINALLY

WITH LYN RIDDLE

On considering a community's health

Greenville Journal
4/22/11

VIVIANE TRAMA has been in Greenville for seven years.

Here's what she's accomplished:

She has students, teachers and volunteers in 12 elementary schools planting gardens.

She teaches a series of cooking classes using produce from local farmers.

She takes city folks to area farms, where they work for a day to experience the life of a farmer.

She runs a community garden in the North Main Street area in which 15 members each year learn how to grow food.

She's partnered with Upstate Forever to show films about food.

And now comes her latest endeavor – an Urban Farm Tour on May 7, during which 30 sites will be featured.

It's all part of her effort to promote organic gardening under the auspices of the non-profit organization she established in 2005 – Greenville Organic Foods Organization, perhaps best known by its acronym: GOFO.

"We wanted to create a family friendly event that engages and motivates people," she said.

The tour includes not only vegetable and herb gardens, but also how to catch rainwater, raise backyard chickens, keep bees, and the best practices of composting. Upstate Forever's office on Manly Street in Greenville will be open to show the ease with which energy efficiency can be incorporated

into the workplace.

These are not huge farming operations. Consider Clements Family Farm, a 1,500-square-foot back yard – about the size of a small house – that includes a year-round greenhouse, chickens, bees, an orchard, fruit bushes, nut trees and grapevines.

Joan and Tony Corey wanted a vegetable garden for their family. They created a garden on a narrow city lot off Summit Drive, where they grow cherries, strawberries, pears, pomegranate, almonds and pawpaws. And their bees produce almost 40 pounds of honey.

On Gallivan Street in the North Main area, Ted Christian planted a few tomato plants in 2002. Now he's expanded to 600-square feet for cabbage, corn, green beans, melons, root vegetables, and summer and winter squashes. In his front yard.

Trama came to Greenville after a decade in Austin, Texas, where the 100-plus degree heat and little rain wore her down. She grew up in Brazil and while she wanted more diversity in climate, she knew she could go no farther north than North Carolina.

She traveled to towns in the Southeast that interested her. Asheville with its progressive culture was more in keeping with what she experienced in Austin, a college town and the capital of Texas, which proudly proclaims its penchant to be weird. Its visitor's



Greg Beckner/Staff

The GOFO garden is on Washington Street in Greenville.

website actually says that.

But Greenville lured her with its Liberty Bridge and Falls Park, its downtown.

"I couldn't believe a downtown could be that charming," she said.

Initially, she said, she "felt a little out of the water," and so decided to start GOFO. She's been through all sorts of eating regimens – microbiotic, vegetarian – but stayed true to her love of properly grown food.

"I've always been very in touch with nature," she said.

And she believed Greenville would embrace the idea of knowing where food came from, knowing the people who grew it and, for some, growing it themselves.

She says the biggest misconception people have about organic food is

that it's too expensive. But when they learn what it takes to grow food in this fashion, they understand and appreciate it.

People also believe they can transplant a plant or put a seed in the ground and leave it alone to grow.

"It must be done on a daily basis and that's why gardening is so therapeutic. Touching dirt, touching plants and how much you care for them. Mentally and physically, it's an important component of natural healing."

Trama keeps an organic garden in several raised beds outside her office in the Crescent Studios building on West Washington Street. Right now she has kale, broccoli, cauliflower. Stalks of garlic rise from a narrow slip of land between the building and the parking lot.

Soon, she'll harvest and spread out the produce in the kitchen for others who have offices at Crescent Studios. But first, her plot will be on the Urban Farm Tour.

"This is something that needed to be done for the community," said Trama. "To create a community that is healthier."

Got a story
to inspire,
amuse, or
entertain?



Contact Lyn Riddle at 679-1250
or lriddle@greenvillejournal.com.