

# SEEDS TO SOIL

*a grassroots approach to growing food access  
and community in Central Harlem*

Lien Tran  
Major Studio: Interaction  
Spring 2011

[seedstosoil.org](http://seedstosoil.org)



## Seeds to Soil

Carrie McCracken TRUCE  
Community Garden

Seeds to Soil  
awareness and access to affordable,  
healthy foods in our community.  
Learn to grow vegetables. Seeds, containers and soil  
will be provided. Get started today!

**What:** Grow vegetables

**When:** April 23, 2011

**Time:** 10am- Noon

**Where:** Saint Nicholas Avenue (117/118)



# PUBLIC INTERVENTION

- » public seed-starting event
- » plant mystery seeds to take home
- » request to visit website and share



## When

Saturday, April 23, 2011, 10AM-1PM

## Weather forecast

Pouring rain

## Location

Carrie McCracken TRUCE Community Garden  
(St. Nicholas Ave. @ 117-118 St // under Steve's tent)



# ISSUE

Central Harlem is classified as a **food desert**.

# DESIGN QUESTION

How to engage the Central Harlem community in **food justice** and sustain participation?



# FOOD JUSTICE

“ ensuring the **benefits and risks** of where, what, and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten **are shared fairly**

- Gottlieb & Joshi



Initiating **food justice** in Central Harlem with community garden and seed planting events

**Building community** around the shared experience of caring for plants and shared **empowerment** from growing own food



# RATIONALE

“ ... it has been proven worthwhile for communities to make a public commitment to **providing** land, horticultural training, soil and compost, and other means of support to enable people who want to garden to do so...

Doing so affords them the opportunity to **come together in community to grow.** ”



Closing the Food Gap by Mark Winne



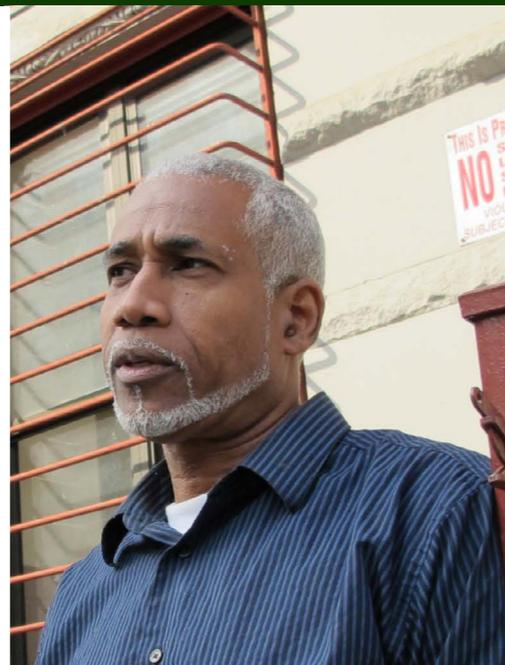
# USER GROUP



- » Urban residents of Central Harlem
- » Historically low- to middle- income minorities
- » New diversity as result from heavy development
- » Cultural roots in agriculture and farming
- » Lack of access to affordable fresh foods
- » Lack of awareness of others in community
- » Connected to technology



## Seeds to Soil - Growing Food Access in Central Harlem



*research including surveys and interviews*

We want to hear from you as we design a community initiative to grow awareness for and access to affordable and healthy foods in our community! Please fill out this quick survey so we can better serve



# PRECEDENTS

Leah Gauthier's Sow-In

Sprout Robot

The screenshot shows the Sprout Robot website. At the top left is the logo 'sprout ROBOT' with a small robot icon. To the right are social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, along with links for 'Plans' and 'Sign in'. Below the navigation is a white banner with the text 'Help SproutRobot fuel the gardening revolution! [Join our team!](#)'. The main content area has a brown background with the headline 'Grow your groceries.' and the subtext 'SproutRobot tells you when to plant & sends you seeds.' Below this is a form with the label 'Enter your zip code:' and a text input field containing '10010'. To the right of the input field is a 'Get Started' button. A small badge next to the button says 'It's free to sign up!'. At the bottom, there is a 'How it works:' section with three green boxes: 1. A heart icon and text: 'You tell us where your garden is and what you want to grow'. 2. A calendar icon with the number '31' and text: 'SproutRobot makes your personalized planting calendar'. 3. An envelope icon and text: 'When it's time to plant, we mail your seeds and/or send you an email'.



# SEED INTERVENTION

<http://vimeo.com/23136660>





# RESULTS

- » 26 people planted seeds
- » young children to adults
- » individuals and families
- » avid gardeners and novices
- » 6 seed posters, 19 posts, 10 comments
- » lots of buzz

“Your work is seminal, encouraging and wonderful. This is a laudable effort! I want to be included and to assist as I can!”

“Sounds like very important work! Keep going!”

- Social Justice Advocates

Once again Monkalicious is making a grand appearance with sooooo many long sprouts! I do have to admit I forgot about her and on the weekend I went to check and wow the sprouts were pushing up against the saran wrap. All that reading I suppose...

published by monkalicious on Wed, 05/04/2011 - 22:58

Seed Group: Monk



Dizzy are very happy. I am almost sure that Dizzy is Basil. In fact in the photo you can see Dizzy in the small cup and Basil in the bigger pot. They really look the same. In addition the seeds were very small and black, exactly like basil...

published by gangelo on Sun, 05/01/2011 - 15:28

Seed Group: Dizzy



# REFLECTIONS



- » capacity building
- » accessible to all ages, ethnicities
- » consider multilingual involvement
- » uptown mentality as driving factor
- » trust gained through dependability
- » participation as welcoming, approachable
- » connecting over distance
- » acute awareness for technology's role



# NEXT STEPS

- » take to the streets
- » continue seed events throughout summer
- » community block party
- » food & recipe swaps // potlucks
- » planning and capacity building in winter
- » develop in-person and virtual community
- » RocketHub





Advanced Consortium on  
Cooperation, Conflict, and Complexity  
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**CRAFTERVENTION** 



# THANK YOU

Michelle Jackson  
Earth Institute, Columbia University  
Steve & Carrie McCracken TRUCE  
Community Garden  
Liz & Craftervention

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