

Support these Organic Farms to Help Transform Our Foodshed

My bioregion has a lot of growth opportunities and has made great strides within our local foodshed. The biggest sustainable access that anyone can have in relation to their local foodshed is to grow their own produce, like the veggies we grew (shown above) from our organic garden! The **Sustainable Food Center** has been a key player in transforming our community. They have advocated change, helped impoverished communities have access to healthier food choices, provided resources and education, and launched necessary services. They are available at some of the Austin farmers markets in some impoverished areas and have potential growth opportunities to branch out to other neighborhoods. The **Capital Area Food Bank** recovers a lot of food from many restaurants and farms and distributes it to poor communities throughout this region (Texas 2014).

There are several organic farms in Austin, some of which have been around for quite some time. **Tecolote** is an organic family farm a few miles from my home in Manor, which has been the longest CSA distributor in Texas (Kramer 2014). Their engagement in the food movement is through their contributions in living sustainably, local restaurant/co-op distribution, farmers markets in different counties, the slow food movement, and biointensive/sustainable/civic agriculture. These are some of the things I learned from this incredible farm by volunteering and working

for them. As a CSA shareholder or farmers market shopper you will be pleased to have access to specialty smoked peppers from David's famous outdoor wood smoker and other unique heirloom varieties that are boom-tastic! Chat about your next dish at the market with Katie!

Green Gate is an organic family farm about ten miles from my house that focuses on civic/sustainable agriculture, CSA distributions, some restaurant wholesale, meat/honey/dairy shares on-site from other farms, host to a bee colony from an offsite beekeeper to share the pollination benefits, promote community development and education through their New Farm Institute (Flynn 2014). I've had the wonderful opportunity to work and volunteer for Green Gate! Learning from Farmer Chip and Farmer Erin is a unique and magical experience. Something that you don't want to miss! **Help support them in building their NFI infrastructure and site. Donate!**

These two farms are very similar, especially since they are strong family farms, yet their focus is somewhat different. While Tecolote focuses on their direct market reach through face to face networking, Green Gate focuses on educating the community on food ethics. Not to sound exhaustive, I'm trying to simplify. They both represent farm gate to food plate, instill historical character at their farms and equally share traction in their fields. Green Gate has integrated permaculture design at their farm sites and they are open to the public to learn, offer children's farm camp programs, and alternative educational curriculum opportunities to local schools. They are the only organic farm in Austin that focuses on this. Green Gate provides additional SNAP benefits from the government

by doubling the voucher from \$10 to \$20 per day for produce when used on the farm (Banks, 2011).

There is a crucial demand in any city or town for people and children to have access to learning about where their food comes from. That ignites interest which can lead to change. Not all organizations who are involved in the foodshed allow others to learn from them through first hand experience. Although you can volunteer at several of the organic farms within this bioregion, that doesn't mean that people are begging to do so, especially if they don't care about the food movement or know why it's important.

Urban Roots in Austin is another organic farm with a civic/sustainable agricultural drive that teaches struggling teens a better way of living. This includes preparing food, field work, advocating change, and they team up with other local businesses to fundraise and raise community awareness for their mission. They stand out as leaders in their field in this arena and use their community engagements at the market, SXSW and other festival exposure, farm dinners, CSA, and fundraising events to propel their grassroots movement. Urban Roots attacks food security issues by providing produce to poor communities. Support their social movement, community impact, and farm! They are the funnest farm to volunteer for! Volunteer!

Although not all of the local organic farms have a mindset to transform lives through educational opportunities teaching volunteers or community members, they do in their face to face interaction at farmers markets, website exposure, grassroots involvement and CSA distribution. The need for expanding **SNAP benefit** access at all the farms and providing mobile access to local, fresh foods in different impoverished

neighborhoods is imperative to closing the gap between different populations who may be missing out on the local food system, necessary sustainable food transitions and food security.

For more information about volunteering at a local Austin or Manor farm please review my [Green Thumb-Texas Directory page](#). Or talk to your local farmer at your nearest food hub! Building new relationships through Community Supported Agriculture is a great place to start! Find a local CSA farmshare near you!

Bibliography

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Moral Persuader

Greetings! It's been such a long time. So let's catch

up. Well I'm almost done with my second graduate class at Green Mountain College in Vermont. Love the program, Master of Science in Sustainable Food Systems. It challenges every inch of my brains capacity. I finally feel like I'm able to take my passions to the next level. What a relief that is, after much ado and frustration trying to get others to understand the magnitude of where I was coming from. I realized it wasn't necessary to be in a program that was no where near the caliber level that I wanted to be at as convenient as it was to get accepted and local. My heart wasn't ever really attached to the school where I got my undergrad degree from simply because it was after so many years of efforts at several colleges that I didn't contribute my success to that one school but all the others. I had an upwards of about 185 college credit hours which also included coursework in a variety of fields. I started out at Columbia College and ended up at Green Mountain.

Boy how I wish that I was one of those people who say who they are going to become, xyq, and just be it. But clearly God has had other plans for me, my entire life. It has been far from an easy one. At some point I hope to sit down long enough to finish writing what I think will be a pretty interesting autobiography because of some of my struggles. There's bits and pieces that were fleeting humiliation and a time or two I nearly died. The closest I've come to finishing my book is writing another song. But getting to this point of who I've become makes me realize how influential my earliest role models were. They became my life force and have defined my complete being. If it wasn't for my great grandmother Kit Henderson, my mother Teresa's mother Gloria's mother, who knows where I'd be? Digging my hands in the dirt as much as ever before? I take great

pride in what G'ma Kit taught me. Her first lesson was the moral persuader.

The Ping Pong Paddle: aka Moral Persuader. I am extremely grateful now for getting swat on the behind, many times in my younger years. I gotta tell ya, the ping pong paddle swat on a childhood bare toosh, was far from fun at the time. It plum down right hurt! My mother, fortunately for me, carried on her tradition which started when I spent time with her while my mother finished her education at Hillsdale College. Discipline is necessary though. Without it, or without the "moral persuader," one may have no moral compass, not know right from wrong, and how is one to live independently when they don't know right from wrong. How can one make friends when they don't know what's wrong or right? I was also grounded when I was, "out of line," which was usually due to running my mouth. Go figure right? Humility is a necessary part of growth too. I learned the hardest lessons from mortification. Those stories are definitely for the books. Perhaps the rawness of reality will hit home for some people. I'm still embarrassed about them. They will be shared. I know, secrets we humans have. They actually become pretty interesting. I suppose they tell our life. What things may or may not define us.

Memories with Gma Kit include building towers with multicolored and multi shaped recycled cardboard blocks, cracking nuts from one of her many whole grain jars on her island of health benefits. She cranked her own applesauce, fed me dandelion heads and greens, taught me how to garden in every season, compost with her giant compost tumbler, eat whole grains, and I'm sorry, brewer's yeast-still not a fan but will occasionally add to a smoothie I make. It's a good

protein boost. I'll give her that. But it tastes awful and my Aunt Lisa adds it to her Dr. Pepper, I can't even imagine. Mom, and Grandma Glo, it does not taste good. I can't remember if Aunt Kelly likes it? Still. And I've come to love olives, dark chocolate, and blue cheese over the years, but Brewer's Yeast, don't think I'll ever be a fan of the taste. Yak!

My mom insists that she made me a part of her Vermiculture farm in the basement of which I don't recall. I recall a basement. That's all I remember on that memory but love to add that to my Gma Kit's accomplishment list. Especially since having a Vermiculture Farm is on mine! This past year we ordered worms for the first time online to add to all of our garden beds. We ordered 500 red worms from Uncle Jim's Vermiculture Farm.

For today, when I'm not feeling quite in the holiday spirit and I'm missing my husband far away. I feel grateful for what my Great Grandmother taught me. Maybe her earliest lessons were the lessons that I should have listened to all a long. Who moves you in your life? Who has transformed your life? What have they done to make living life extraordinarily different? How can you be more like them? Gma Kit was pretty simple. She didn't sugar coat anything, she said it like it was. I suppose in that way I'm like her too. But that's kind of our family tradition, to speak our mind so loud until it hurts. I wish our family wasn't like that but it is. Sometimes we step on each others toes and don't realize how bad our feet our aching until we notice we're actually crying. Sometimes we need a swift whack of the "moral persuader," to remind us that what we said, or what we did, "just ain't right." Sometimes, we need to APOLOGIZE. Especially to our own family. That

doesn't happen a lot of the time. It makes me very sad. We are so resilient, so proud, so strong, so confident, so independent, so gifted, so fun, and yet so blind.

I don't ever remember dreading holidays as much as I did this past season. Thanksgiving and Christmas have always been my favorite, because of the time that I've spent with family. But sometimes we need a break. Perhaps as I get older I'm less tolerant of all the induced stress that time with our family brings. I just want to spend it nestled up with my husband, reading the bible passages that my grandma Cora would read to me every Christmas that I shared with her too. This Christmas I'm thankful for my grandparents who have shaped, molded, changed my life and influenced my future. Especially my Great Grandma Kit, Grandma Cora, and Grandpa Doc. My Grandpa Rex, and Grandma Glo have been influential too. Thank you for all that you have shown me, and I'm so blessed and lucky to still have you in my life! I cherish every day that you are still a part of Earth and every day that I shared with you in every memory.

Let us not worry about all of the unimportant things that do not really matter. Let us be blessed, thankful, and joyous about the time and love that our friends and family share. Let us forgive one another for overstepping boundaries, imposing who we are so much that we forget that we are to love the other unconditionally, support them in all they do, and know that what they do is for their own choosing. That is what makes them who they are. That is what makes me who I am.

In living life more simply;

Less is more.
Live and Let live!
Live and Forgive!
Live and Apologize!
Love and Love Often!
Laugh and be True!
Shine and be You!
Find your Joy!
Now.

Bumblebees & Birds

Sometimes the best things that grow in your garden are the biggest surprises. Like this Peppermint Zinnia with a streak of solid red. How unique and beautiful it is. The butterflies and bumblebees love it too! We haven't seen honey bees much this summer but we sure have a ton of bumblebees, butterflies, hornets, and wasps. They haven't disturbed us and seem to be working along with the garden spiders, praying mantis, and lady bugs, so we're ok with that. Having great flowers like

Maximillion Sunflowers that multiply in tens and butterfly weed, are essential to your garden landscape. We love having birds around too and were blessed with another great birdhouse to add to our gardens.













