



THEME COMMONS

SUB-THEME:

Food Culture and Sovereignty

TITLE OF WORKSHOP

**Gardens, Edible Landscaping and Happiness
Education**



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VIRTUAL GARDENS/REAL GARDENS

Gianni Gaggiani

Paper Abstract

Web 2.0 at the service of horticulture: can a virtual garden help us grow a real garden and feed a family or sell produce in a neighbourhood market?

Can a site teach the secrets of fruit and vegetable growing and train users to produce food by themselves? Can it reinvent and (re)launch a social version of bartering, the oldest form of trade of all?

Is it possible for people to grow a garden using a computer, recover ancient knowledge and spread it across the web?

Let's discover how, maybe for the first time, real and virtual are meeting in a new experience called *Grow the Planet*.



URBAN, SCHOOL AND COLECTIVE GARDENS

Valeria Cometti, *head of education at Slow Food Italy*

Luca Miserere, *botanist and Slow Food Italy trainer*

Paper Abstract

Decorative greenery or urban gardens? Recently we read in the news about fruit and vegetables from London's neighbourhood gardens being served at the Olympic athletes' canteen (<http://www.capitalgrowth.org>). Social, school and community gardens — these are just a few of the forms, some of them more consolidated, others more innovative, now appearing in towns and cities. So why are so many gardens springing up? Maybe because they are the simplest form of self-production of food, a chance to keep in contact with the neighbours through habits and traditions that mark time and relax the mind. We take our cue not only from the social garden in Cervignano, (http://www.slowfoodfvg.it/home_sff.php?n=734&l=it/) or the gardens of the post-earthquake “tent cities” of L'Aquila (<http://www.newsfood.com/q/38615349/l-aquila-slow-food-progetto-quot-10-orti-per-10-tendopoli-quot/>), but also, from the spontaneous citizen movements that step in to modify flower beds earmarked as public greenery, when no other land is available (http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2009/luglio/14/Milano_aiuola_diventa_orto_Zucchine_co_7_090714013.shtml), or from other movements that protest when they are limited to using urban agricultural land (see the case of Grugliasco <http://www.lunanuova.it/news/427660/Per-gli-orti-urbani-ora-serve-la-cauzione.html>). The moment has probably come to reconsider urban greenery and the use made of it, in Italy and the rest of Europe largely geared to the decorative aspect since the 17th and 18th centuries. This has contributed to the loss of the biodiversity of local flora. About 11 per cent of Italian flora consists of non-native species or others such as *Robinia pseudoacacia*, *Prunus serotina* and *Reynoutria japonica*, classic examples of species introduced to beautify our gardens and now naturalized here to the detriment of native ones (Celesti Grapow L., ‘La Flora’, in Blasi C., Boitani L., La Posta, Manes F. and Marchetti M., *Stato Della Biodiversità in Italia*, Rome, Palombi Editore, 2005). Even the European Union has become aware of the phenomenon in recent years and believes it is important to fight it by reintroducing



local species to city parks. Hence the choice of new plants may fall on edible species that are part of our flora such as the hazelnut tree (*Corylus avellana* L.) (<http://www.verdeblog.com/il-nocciolo-arbusto-bello-perfetto-anche-per-siepi-originali-201203/>), the cherry tree (*Prunus avium* L.), the almond tree (*Prunus dulcis* L.), the walnut tree (*Juglans regia* L.), the chestnut tree (*Castanea sativa*) and so on. Citizens thus have the chance to enjoy a pleasant experience, picking a fruit and tasting it, getting to know its different varieties and, maybe, helping to care for and promote respect for it. Let us not forget that gardens and orchards are versatile, interdisciplinary educational tools that were already working successfully in schools at the start of the last century, in the wake of a pedagogic movement based on pragmatism and activism. Witness the garden of the Scuola Rinnovata Pizzigoni in Milan (<http://www.scuolarinnovata.it>). Through a garden *I learn by doing, observing and waiting*, I alternate it with book study and broaden my way of learning — by training my senses, for example. When educational models work, they proliferate and fuse; hence the birth of “Gardens of Peace” (<http://www.ortidipace.org>); the Slow Food “*Orto in condotta*” school garden project (<http://www.slowfood.it/educazione>); the “Thousand Gardens in Africa” project (<http://www.fondazione Slow Food.it>); edible school gardens (<http://edibleschoolyard.org>) — the list could go on and on. For the “*Orto in condotta*” project, for example, the school garden provides an opportunity to build a learning community, to weave a web of relations between a school and the area in which it is situated, and to study history and geography through the products and testimonies of local artisans, senior citizens and also young scholars. A garden can be an open-air classroom, a veritable “life school”, for young and old alike.

EDUCATION AND HAPPINESS

Francesco Mele, *Slow Food Italy* trainer and expert in games communication

Paper Abstract

Education signifies providing tools. But tools *for what?*

The possible answers are virtually infinite. Here I'd like to suggest one that may appear simplistic: *education signifies providing tools to make people live better.*



True, this means that any argument based *only* on quantity is instantly incomplete: the idea that education is a matter of accumulating notions and skills (“the more I know the better I’ll be”) risks being inadequate, to say the least. Knowing the names of the world’s capital cities or all about trigonometry may help to improve the wellbeing of an individual or a community, but in no way does it complete that wellbeing.

I’d even go as far to say that a type of education that seeks to provide tools for people to live better ought to be rechristened “happiness education”.

Saying that, I realise that happiness may appear as something very abstract and intangible. Yet in the last few years living well and being happy have been studied by a number of economists, most notably by Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1998.

These economists set out from a critique of the quantitative model of wellbeing (such as the one that measures a country’s prosperity solely by its GDP) to seek other criteria to assess the wellbeing of an individual and a community.

Following the lead of their studies, we might define happiness as *the set of physiological, material, social and psychological conditions that allow a human being to feel well, grow and develop his or her potential through a sense of shared social wellbeing*. I believe it is necessary to set out from these new definitions of happiness and broaden our outlook to embrace relations, potential and sharing, and think about the tools education has to provide.

I believe that the area of food can provide many of these tools.

Discovering food with children is an increasingly common approach in schools, partly thanks to the introduction into syllabuses of food education, to school gardens, to renewed attention to differences when designing canteen menus and, more in general, to a growing culture of food quality. I think it is useful for teachers to reflect upon the potential of these experiences. In this way they will be able to exploit them to the full and transform them into meaningful opportunities as part of a more general “happiness education”. The ten tools to develop what we refer to as “happiness education” are: pleasure in doing things, competence, collaboration, time and waiting, rules, creativity and reuse, memory, curiosity, conscious choice and conviviality.



TACKLED ISSUES:

- Sustainable production and responsible consumption
- Education on how to be happy through food
- The importance of vegetable gardens besides food production (social value, use of time, free choice of food, medium for relationships)

GIVEN ANSWERS:

Small distribution is more sustainable than large distribution?

Sustainability is more than reducing CO2 emissions!

Vegetable gardens are beautiful too: 60% of British owners of gardens are turning them to vegetable gardens

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS, MESSAGES & COMMENTS: