

## An Edible Landscape



12

Visitors to our edible landscape are welcome to taste apples, pears, cherries, peaches and plums in season. Our purpose in installing these plants was to illustrate our belief that the earth is abundant and delicious. We invite you to sample rather than collect the whole harvest, to illustrate the corresponding

principle that abundance should be shared, not pillaged.

While preparing this site in 2004 we found a buried sidewalk, a relic from times past. No one is certain who built this sidewalk or why. Today it will lead you through a thicket of wild plums, elderberries and blackberries. Further on you'll find a variety of trees and shrubs, including pecans, cedar and hemlock. At the north end of the woodland you'll discover a cozy resting spot among a grove of white pines, dogwood, poplars and oak trees. In total, we've put in more than 300 plants here.

We rely on community involvement to maintain the Edible Landscape, which serves as an educational resource for local schools and community groups. We invite you to contact Community GroundWorks if you are interested in becoming a natural areas steward at Troy Gardens. As part of our Learning Community, volunteer stewards receive instruction about all facets of natural areas restoration in return for practicing what they learn right here.

## Sweet and Savory



13

This lush serpentine garden spills over with perennial herbs like sage, mint, sorrel and tansy. Planted and maintained by volunteer stewards, our herb garden is a place for visitors to directly experience the intense character of living herbs. Feel free to tear a bit of leaf and rub it under your nose for an instant introduction to each plant's aroma. Stewards frequently

fill a jar with cold water and herbs from this garden for a refreshing tea to enjoy when their work is done.

## The Crossroads



14

Here our trail enters an interface of four distinct zones: Prairie, Woodland, Lawn and Garden. Many human activities also converge here. This is the Crossroads of Troy Gardens.

The spectacular tiered garden, anchored by leftover boulders from the Prairie Grotto, was born from a desire in the Hmong community to present a demonstration garden of their traditional herbs and medicinal plants, as a gift to their adopted home here in Madison. Feel free to explore this garden.

The lawn below the Crossroads was originally intended as another section of community garden plots. However, as we began to build features and launch program areas on the site, it became obvious that we needed an open expanse, an empty space without programming, to balance the orchestra of uses we were putting on the land. Making room for free space turned out to be a wise decision.

## Woodland Wonder



15

You are standing at the threshold of a transformation. This shady lane is an example of sugar maple regeneration, as hundred-year-old maples naturally die off and younger trees take over.

Our natural areas management plan, which combines structured goals with continual input by the staff and volunteers who do the work, is designed to facilitate this process. With ongoing removal of invasive species like garlic mustard, and conservation of the 3000 native southern mesic forest species we planted in 2002—including spring ephemeral flowers like trillium—this area will come full circle when future generations are stewarding this treasure.

## Meaningful Fitness



16

All work and no play is the recipe for a starved life. Children can be taught chores, lessons and games; but they must *discover* how to play. Nature provides ideal conditions for imaginary quests, robust and noisy activities, creative problem-solving and the quiet revelation of miracles from worms in the leaves to muscles in your own arms.

Community GroundWorks promotes "Meaningful Fitness:" our commitment to encouraging children to explore the natural world and invent their own ways to play in it. The playground in front of you provides conventional opportunities like a sandbox and climbing structures; behind you, we've created a fort-building area where kids can imagine what they want to construct, search and find what they need from the forest, and figure out how to have a great deal of fun building it.

## Back To The Garden



17

Troy Community Gardens is Community GroundWorks' most visible project, and one of the key reasons the land was successfully preserved. People from varied economic, geographic and cultural backgrounds have planted their plots here every spring since the 1980's.

This garden contains 330 20' by 20' plots, where some 200 families grow their own food. Plot fees are based on a sliding scale relative to a family's income and household size. Some people garden as a hobby, some as a necessity. Most gardeners will tell you it's something they *must* do, because it's part of who they are.

## Touching Life



18

You are standing in the center of Troy Community Gardens. Facing up the slope, to your right is a predominantly Hmong section of the gardens. Many Hmong families collaborate, sharing several plots. They use traditional methods from their Laotian homeland to plant vegetables like long beans, mustard greens, bitter melon and tiny, hot peppers. Because these foods

are hard to find in America, Hmong gardeners allocate almost all their space to their essential crops. Daily hoeing keeps weeds at bay and demonstrates the dedication Hmong gardeners feel toward their gardens.

To your left, a diverse mix of people tends distinctly personal plots. Here you'll see flowers, tomato cages, home-made fences, birdhouses and garden art, in addition to the veggies. Each garden is as much an expression of its proprietor's personality as it is a food resource. And you'll see mulch as the primary defense against weeds, rather than frequent hoeing. Both the Hmong way and the western way result in food and happiness, illustrating the principle that self-determination is the mother of abundance.

## Growing Together



19

This magical place is Troy Kids' Garden. Children from area community centers and schools participate in our spring-through-fall Kids' Garden Program each year. Each child

chooses from a variety of gardening, art and adventure activities offered by staff and interns each day, a self-selected process of discovery where everyone fits in and has fun. The Kids' Garden provides young people with a safe, supportive environment in the city where they can learn to grow and prepare nutritious foods and develop a lasting respect and affection for nature. Beyond the Garden Program, Troy Kids' Garden is intended as a destination for all children who visit here, a place where they're supposed to get their hands dirty.

Other members of the Troy Kids' Garden Learning Community include school teachers and community educators who gather every summer under a big tent at the Kids' Garden for a week-long professional development course on garden-based education. Troy Kids' Garden provides the foundation from which we pass on the lessons we have learned about effective garden-based education to youth garden projects in other communities in Wisconsin and across the nation.

## Culinary Arts Classroom



20

A central goal of the Kids' Garden Program is to improve the nutrition and build the horticultural and culinary skills of young people through gardening and food preparation. Over the years, we have learned that the best and

most enjoyable way to meet our goal is to involve youth participants in the whole cycle of food production. When they take part in the entire process—from starting seeds to harvesting food to preparing meals—young people incorporate more vegetables and fruit into their diets.

In the Culinary Arts Outdoor Classroom, children harvest fresh produce that they have planted and tended, and turn it into delicious and nutritious snacks. Children are also provided opportunities to integrate healthful food with fitness. When a young person uses his muscles to combine basil, kale and garlic into pesto on the bicycle-powered blender, he gains a deeper appreciation for the food he eats, which sustains his body that has done the work of growing and making the food.

## Chickens, Compost & The Circle of Life



21

Our trail has finally wound back to the beginning of this revolutionary project. You find yourself in a grove of mulberry trees where our Kids' Garden staff has installed a kitchen-implement orchestra, and picnic tables offer a shady place to make art projects or simply to rest and watch the life of the garden go on.

Check out the home of our chickens, whose yard abuts a triple-bin compost system. The hens live out their natural lifespan here, with the sole expectation that they will tolerate curious children, scratch in the compost, and lay the occasional egg. Children in the Kids' Garden Program know the hens by name, and raffle the eggs each day during the season. For the rest of the year, the hens remain here under the daily care of a volunteer and her dog.

The compost system begins with fresh plant materials in the first bin. When that's full, we turn the contents over into the second bin and begin filling the first again. When the first bin refills, we turn the second bin's contents over into the third bin and the first bin's contents into the second bin. By the time the first bin is filled once more, the material in the third bin is finished compost, ready for the garden. The chickens easily hop into the bins to hunt, stirring the compost and enriching it with their droppings. A magnificent example of the circle of life!

Many people these days suffer from a sense of emptiness and separation. At Community GroundWorks, we believe that an intimate relationship with nature, from tending vegetables to learning the habits of wild plants and animals, can fill that emptiness and connect people back to life—particularly when the natural resource and the responsibility for its stewardship are shared with others.

Such an intimate relationship is easy for children to grasp—it comes naturally. For adults, it requires practice, both physical and spiritual—returning to a garden plot, volunteer steward project, or beloved nature trail time and time again.

A feeling of wholeness and connection inevitably comes to us when we open our hearts and minds to a relationship with the natural world. All we need is a place to experience it.

And that brings us back to Troy Gardens.

Thank you for visiting.



At Community GroundWorks, we pursue our mission guided by the following core values:

Our strength comes from welcoming diverse experiences,

cultures and points of view, and from respecting the integrity of the natural world.

We are committed to collaborative decision-making. We partner with and support the efforts of others who share in the work of building enduring communities.

We share in the collective responsibility to steward and protect the earth's resources. We are committed to ethical business practices that ensure an economically healthy organization.

We serve as a model for innovative land use, by developing program designs and strategies to grow food and support healthful lifestyles.

We invite people to stray off the path, allowing individuals to define their own experiences and interactions within a shared natural resource.

We believe that social justice must include access to nourishing, fresh food, and broad opportunity for people to embrace the natural world in a meaningful way.

If you like what you've seen and approve of our work, please help us continue. We're a nonprofit organization and your donation is tax -deductible. We rely on direct support from people like you.

Learn more about our programs and donate online at [communitygroundworks.org](http://communitygroundworks.org).

Or mail your contribution to :  
Community GroundWorks, 3601 Memorial Drive, Suite 4, Madison, WI 53704

Contact us directly by calling 608-240-0409.

This guide was produced under a 2010-2011 grant from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board. You may keep it with our compliments, or return it to the box on the kiosk when you're finished with it.



Community GroundWorks

GROWING FOOD. GROWING MINDS. TOGETHER.

Welcome to  
Troy Gardens  
Bienvenidos  
Zoo Siab Txais Tos



We invite you to experience Troy Gardens, the flagship project of Community GroundWorks. This brochure will guide you along the **Sol Levin Memorial Trail** through an edible landscape of community gardens, a community-supported organic farm, and restored natural areas open to all.

Favor de reirse con nosotros.  
Thov uaj koom peb.  
Please join us . . .

## The Sol Levin Memorial Trail



### A Shared Community Resource



Through hands-on education, Community GroundWorks helps children and adults learn gardening, urban farming, healthy eating and natural areas restoration. Organized in 2001 as The Friends of Troy Gardens, our

organization now serves diverse communities and schools across the region. Our work expands as we carry our mission forward; but our home and our essence are found at Troy Gardens.

This mile-long trail will take you through each aspect of an amazing experiment in community-based urban agriculture and natural areas stewardship. Everything we do at Troy Gardens, we also teach others to do. Above all, Troy Gardens is a Learning Community. We hope that what you see here will inspire you to replicate our successes in your communities.

### Growing Our Own



This passive solar greenhouse was designed to use as little fossil fuel energy as possible. The 56° angle of the southern face and the building's orientation at 2° east of south provide maximum solar gain during

March and April, critical months for starting seedlings in our climate. Thirty cubic yards of rock base and 47 cubic yards of soil in the growing beds form a thermal mass that stores heat during the day and releases it at night. Electric fans pump heat from the building's peak through perforated tiles buried in the growing beds to augment heat transfer to the thermal mass. Vents in the south wall and north roof open automatically when temperatures reach about 70°F. and close again when temperatures drop. The vents use the passive solar mechanism of expanding and contracting wax to control their function.

Here we start plants for Troy Community Farm, including bedding plants which we sell to the public in the spring. We grow a variety of herbs inside as well, to sell at local groceries. The greenhouse features a vermiculture bin where worms turn compost into rich castings that we use in our potting soil. Our greenhouse has increased the profitability of Troy Community Farm, which provides a critical revenue stream for Community GroundWorks.

### Permanently Affordable Homes



The Madison Area Community Land Trust, and its late founder Sol Levin, for whom this trail is named, realized from the beginning that the Troy Gardens project

would require the economic engine of housing in order to proceed beyond the dreaming stage. On the five acres to your right, MACLT built 30 townhouses. Twenty of these were sold as land trust homes, at under-market rates to first-time homebuyers who earned 80% or less of the median Dane County annual income. These homes will be priced below market for all future buyers, who must meet the same restrictions as the original buyers. Land trust homeowners agree to limit their profit when they sell, in return for the low price they originally pay, making land trust homes permanently affordable. The remaining ten units are market-rate homes, available to anyone for whatever price the market will bear. MACLT owns the entire property of Troy Gardens, leasing the 26 acres of open space to Community GroundWorks for \$1 per year.

### Happiness Is For The Birds



Here our trail enters a lane that is both a swath of invasive plant species and a bird habitat. Non-native species such as buckthorn, honeysuckle, and green ash thrive in this area. They out-compete native plants and lower species diversity. Many birds enjoy the shelter and berries these invasives provide, flying into the gardens and farm to catch insects for their broods, to our mutual benefit. Community

members were adamant in the planning stages for Troy Gardens that the life in this lane should not be disturbed, and it remains an unmanaged wildlife corridor.

Songbirds colonized Troy Gardens in strong numbers after remediation of the land. Gardeners and volunteers have erected birdhouses in their plots and throughout the natural areas. If you quietly observe these in the nesting season, you're likely to see a bluebird, tree swallow or wren family in the making.

### Steel Rails



Beneath the gravel under your feet lie old railroad tracks. Many years ago, this spur brought supplies and visitors to the Mendota Mental Health Institute, established in 1860 on the shore of Lake Mendota, a short distance to the west. In 2001, we covered these tracks with 18 inches of gravel to protect people

from creosote and other contaminants contained in the railroad bed. The remediation resulted in a charming lane that bisects the yin and yang of Troy Gardens.

### Hand-Scale Urban Agriculture



What you see behind the deer-proof fence is the five-acre, certified organic Troy Community Farm. Operating primarily as a CSA (community supported agriculture), Troy Community Farm sells shares of the harvest to mem-

bers each spring, producing enough to sell to the general public as well at our weekly Farm Stand.

The most enduring product of Troy Community Farm is the training we provide to interns and volunteers. In contrast to conventional farming that relies on gas-powered heavy equipment and chemical inputs, Troy Farm employs "hand-scale" techniques from seeding to weeding to harvest. This is a people-powered farm; the methods are ingenious, simple, and beneficial to the resource. We teach sustainable urban agriculture here.

Madison FarmWorks, an offshoot business of Troy Community Farm, combines the expertise of farming with the small scale beauty of the home garden. We design, install and maintain organic production gardens of any size at homes and businesses. FarmWorks staff offer educational programs to help gardeners build their vegetable production skills.

When people purchase goods and services from Troy CSA and Madison FarmWorks, they receive the added value of supporting an organization whose values they share.

### Wild Highway



This is the northern border of Troy Gardens. Here we consider the importance of wildlife corridors, areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations separated by human activities.

To the east, a working railroad cuts through limestone bluffs covered by scrub vegetation. The high capacity power lines that parallel the railroad require the vegetation under them be kept short, resulting in a tangle of blackberry and burdock impenetrable by humans (don't even try!), but no problem for animals. This green corridor connects Troy Gardens with Cherokee Marsh to the northeast and Lake Mendota to the west. Wild highways like this decrease interbreeding, prevent local extinction, inhibit disease, and allow innumerable creatures from foxes to flycatchers access to the habitats they need to survive, even when those habitats are fractured by the demands of the city.

### The Old Field



Before land was cleared for the farm and prairie restoration, the whole northern half of the property looked like this area, an abandoned field grown over with canary grass and mulberry trees. We have kept this remnant of the old

field and the mulberry trees, a favorite summertime banquet for both birds and people. The berries ripen in June. If you're lucky enough to be here then, sample the berries and see if you can taste subtle differences from tree to tree. When you find the one you like best, start picking and get your purple smile on.

You may see neighbors walking their dogs along this open trail. Rest assured they are welcome—dog lovers are an important part of our community. Our respect for all who share this resource depends on responsible use of it—for dog walkers, that means have a leash with you and pick up the poop!

### Seas of Grass

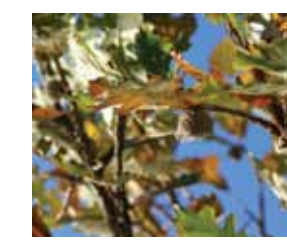


As you explore the 3.5-acre Troy Prairie, you may distinguish some of the 64 species of native prairie plants establishing themselves here since this prairie was born in 2003.

Because Troy Prairie connects the marshes to the northeast and the wooded lakeshore to the southwest, visitors have reported spotting bald eagles, osprey and other remarkable wildlife here during migration. Visitors can record their observations and impressions in the phrenological notebook kept in the kiosk you will find at the opposite entrance of Troy Prairie.

A prairie can take a century to develop fully—and will provide habitat for many species of animals throughout its life; even us humans, who use the prairie for a different kind of sustenance. What you see now is a diverse ecosystem in its infancy.

### Oak Trees Holding Hands



You're standing at the highest elevation of Troy Gardens. Facing the south you have an unobstructed line of sight all the way to Troy Drive. You can see every part of our ambitious, holistic project.

As you follow the trail, you may notice two saplings growing here, a white oak and a burr oak. We planted these long-lived trees in 2004 as the first step toward establishing an oak savanna. One day long into the future, these two trees will grow so large that their wide canopies will touch. We look forward to growing old with these icons of Wisconsin's native landscape.

### The Secret Circle



A prairie grotto, build below grade in order to be invisible from afar, was part of the community's plan for this land long before we turned the first spade of soil back here. The inspiration came from

Landscape Architect Steve Ziegler, who led the design-by-community process that resulted in the landscape you see here today.

With help from volunteers, Ziegler built this grotto in 2004. Huge boulders, donated by a generous landowner, came from the "driftless area" of southwestern Wisconsin, beyond the reach of the ancient glaciers that scoured the upper Midwest ages ago. The Ziegler family donated a burr oak tree to anchor the gathering area. The burr oak, a key species typical of the oak savannas that once covered Wisconsin, can live for hundreds of years, which is how long we expect Troy Gardens to be here.