

Issue 13

Winter 2023

THE Garden's EDGE



gardensedge.org

Dear Friends,

We hope you find inspiration reading about the impact of our work in 2023.

The year began with children and their parents participating in an **Ancestral Skills Camp in Guatemala**, where music, crafts, and visits to local artisans inspired children to continue learning about these traditions throughout the year. It was so successful that we later hosted a **similar camp at our farm in Albuquerque** for kids to learn land-based crafts and spend time outdoors.

In February **we received a wonderful visit from the California-based organization, End World Hunger**. For years, this organization has supported our work in farming and nutrition.

This year's **rains filled the sand dams to the top**, making it possible for us to build up another section of the Chixolop Sand Dam wall. This means that the community will collect and store even more water in the future! We also continued **planting trees** for Watershed Restoration. Reforestation goes hand in hand with Sand Dam Technology.

The Association Qachuu Aloom **finished building their new offices** in November and this year we **celebrate 20 years of work together!**

The **Milpa Project** continues with more farmers growing native corn, beans, and squash, and we rematriated three varieties of native tomato seed to Guatemala.

Many new **Creative Solution Projects** are underway, including a **Maya Achi language school**, support for a local **physical therapist**, and a **traditional healing center** in the remote community of Chiac.

Seed Travels planted and harvested Amaranth this year with nine community organizations, schools, and Indigenous Nations located within the Haudenosaunee Territory. In California, our friends from Indigenous Permaculture grew Amaranth and celebrated the harvest at their community garden. Year after year, the network of seed savers, the sharing of seeds, and the knowledge that emerges from these exchanges, is growing.

In Albuquerque we **celebrated the wheat harvest**, learning how to thresh, winnow, and mill, rediscovering our connections to the entire life cycle, from the field to our plates. We also collaborated with a **Seed School at UNM Land Arts and Ecology**.

*Our website, facebook, instagram, and youtube channel are full of updates and videos of these and other projects. We also send out a seasonal **online newsletter**. You can sign up on our website. Make sure to add **info@gardensedge.org** to your contacts, so the newsletter doesn't go to your spam.*



An Update on Guatemala's Struggle for Democracy

Last August something remarkable happened in Guatemalan politics. Bernardo Arévalo, son of Guatemala's first-ever democratically elected president, Juan Jose Arévalo (1944), won the presidency in a landslide. Arévalo (father) was the author of the social and agrarian reforms that essentially provoked the U.S. backed coup (1954), and the beginning of the 36-year armed conflict and genocide. Arévalo (son) ran with the anti-corruption social democratic party, *Movimiento Semilla* (Seed Movement).

Not surprisingly, given the country's struggle with corruption and impunity, prosecutors at the Attorney General's office are trying to prevent Arévalo from taking office in January through, as Arévalo predicted, a "slow motion coup by lawfare." Thousands have taken to the streets in months of pro-democracy protests shutting down highways, schools, and businesses in support of Arévalo.

Please ask your representatives to support the peaceful transition of power in January 2024: www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm



Thank you to our wonderful supporters!

Baker Creek Seed Company | CC Culver, Owl Peak Farm

Emily Sandall Foundation | End World Hunger 2030

Gates Presbyterian Church | Ithaca Public Education Initiative

Scott Evans Foundation | Undaunted Carnival Foundation

Vibrant Village Foundation

And all of our individual donors.

A special thank you to those who signed up to be monthly donors!

We are just **\$400 a month** away from meeting our **goal of \$15,000 a year** in monthly donations.

Help us get there in 2024!

www.gardensedge.org/support

Ancestral Skills Camps



Shaley (left) and Hilary (right) learned to weave at the Ancestral Skills Camp.

In January we hosted our first-ever **Intergenerational Ancestral Skills Camp**, with kids, their parents, and local teachers who shared traditional knowledge and skills in music, art, craft, and culture.



Children learned to carve wooden spoons with a local wood carver (left).

A local association shared the ecological function of Tul (bulrush) on the shores of Lake Atitlan and how to sustainably harvest and weave its long reeds to make traditional mats (right).



Families in Albuquerque celebrating the wheat harvest in September!



Exploring seed saving methods with UNM Land Arts and Ecology Seed School.

Sand Dam

The Sand Dam is an ancient technology that captures sand behind a wall built across a dry stream bed. When it rains, water is captured between the grains of sand where it slowly filters and is gravity-fed to the community below.

The final stage of the Sand Dam construction delivers even more filtered water to the community of Chixolop! Josue Vasquez digs a shallow hole in the sand dam to find water held just under the surface.



Reforestation around the sand dam water catchment area helps control soil erosion and retain moisture in the soil.

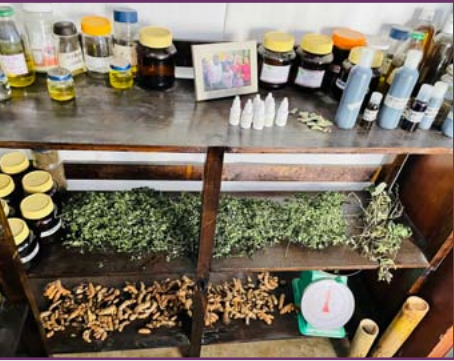
Milpa Movement



Milpa is a polyculture system of corn, beans, and squash, plus many more annual and perennial crops that provide families with their basic foods and medicines.

September Harvest Celebration with the community of Chichupac.





Aurelia Xitumul has been practicing traditional medicine for over a decade. Thanks to **Creative Solutions Grants** she now runs her own clinic for natural medicine out of her home.



Josselin Chun used a Creative Solutions grant to channel her passion for language and education into an **Achi Language School**.



Each year The Garden's Edge offers **scholarships and opportunities to develop skills** to Maya Achi youth through workshops and participation in the Qachuu Aloom Association.



Sabina, Aurelia, Monica, and IxChel shared an amazing two weeks together learning, teaching, and interpreting at the **annual Traditional Healing Course at University of New Mexico**.

Since 2008 we have been traveling throughout the Southwest, California, and more recently the Haundenosaunee Territories in the Northeast, to share and exchange ideas with farmers and community groups about how to nurture robust local food and seed ways. These exchanges are based on the "farmer-to-farmer" led philosophy that respects the local knowledge, traditions, and regenerative practices of the people who have directly experienced the consequences of industrial food systems (think heavy fertilizers, chemical inputs) and climate collapse in their communities. Ideas and stories are shared and the exchanges have led to many exciting collaborations.



Jaqueline House, Cayuga from Six Nations, and Sabina Ajcot Sosof, Maya Kaqchikel from Guatemala on September 30th, International Day of Truth and Reconciliation for all the children who faced forced assimilation in residential schools across Canada and the United States.



Sharing corn seeds and seed saving knowledge with elders at the Onondaga Nation Farm.



Cleaning amaranth seeds with kids from the Akwesasne Freedom School, Mohawk Nation. This autonomous school teaches exclusively in the Mohawk language, supporting students and their families to embrace important cultural traditions.



Seed Travels Group with Peter Jemison, Seneca Huron Clan Artist and Cultural Worker.



Soul Fire Farm.

Native Tomatoes Return to Guatemala

Did you know that tomatoes originated in Mesoamerica? Did you also know that these native tomatoes have virtually disappeared in Guatemala due to diseases caused by massive pesticide use? Many varieties were also lost during the 36-year genocide when many gardens and villages were burned by the military.

Through a **Seed Travels** connection we found 3 tomato varieties collected by the USDA in Guatemala before hybrid seeds were introduced in the 1970s. The USDA mailed us 3 packets of 25 seeds that we planted at our NM farm. A friend visiting from Guatemala saw the tomatoes and said, "Oh these are *Manzano tomatoes, the variety my grandmother used to grow! They were last seen in the 80's before our fields were burned and people had to go into hiding.*"

After two harvest seasons in NM we had enough seed to return to Guatemala. Francisco Sic planted them and we now have 2 pounds of seed and enough to share with 24 more villages in 2024!



In gratitude for your support for this important work, we would like to give all our monthly donors a packet of this precious seed in 2024.

We hope that you plant and share these seeds as an intentional act of kindness and hope for the future.

THE Garden's EDGE

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