

THE Garden's EDGE

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Celebrating 20 Years!

This year we are celebrating 20 years of work in Guatemala! Throughout the year, we will be highlighting different parts of our work over the last two decades so you can see how we began, and how we have grown.

Please support the celebration of this work with a donation. We will be gifting to our monthly donors very special, rare Guatemalan tomato seeds.

[DONATE](#)

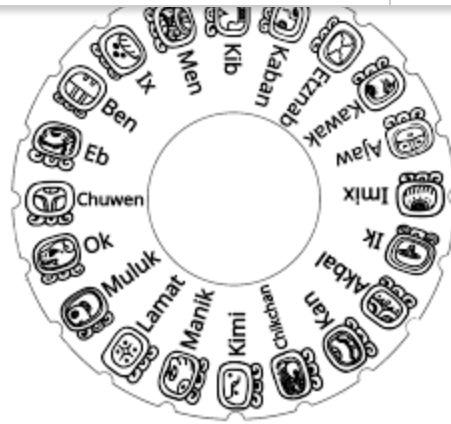
Whether you have been journeying with us since the beginning or we met you somewhere along the way, we are grateful that you are here. Thank you for supporting a Food and Seed Sovereignty movement that started with a handful of tiny seeds and a dream. The dream was to bring the seeds and agriculture of the Maya Achi back after the horrific genocide war that took so much from the communities, people, plants, nature, and culture of the region.

In Maya Cosmology 20 is a very significant number.

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word for the number 20 are the same, **Winaq**. One person has ten fingers and ten toes.

The Chol Q'ij (just one of three Mayan calendars) has 20 day signs known as *Nahuales* and 13 energies. $20 \times 13 = 260$ days which is equivalent to 9 lunar cycles, roughly the time it takes for human gestation.



Looking Back...

The Year is 2003 – There is no [Qachuu Aloom Association](#) and no [Garden's Edge](#) yet! This comes later. At first, we call our work PPAS (Proyecto de Producción de Alimentos y Semillas) The Food and Seed Production project.

Journey with us back in time through [this video](#) of the early years of our work.



Photo: Cristobal holding his native corn seed



Cristobal Osorio Sanchez shared his dream with me to build a Maya Achi organization to preserve the agricultural practices he remembered from growing up in his village of Rio Negro.

Cristobal was a survivor of a series of horrific massacres in his community of Rio Negro which was destroyed by a hydroelectric dam in the early 1980's. This is a video where survivor Jesus Tecu retells the story. Please be advised before viewing, [this video describes extreme graphic violence](#) against Rio Negro and villages around Rabinal.

In this picture, Cristobal walks up the hill during the commemoration of the March 13th, Rio Negro massacre, carrying a cross in honor of community

or names you can read the full complaint filed with the [Inter American Commission on Human Rights](#) on behalf of the survivors of the Indigenous Community of Río Negro.

Cristobal is a lifelong farmer and also trained in the [Farmer to Farmer Movement](#), a horizontal approach to community work, where farmers from similar backgrounds inspire each other in regenerative agriculture practices. After Cristobal was forcefully displaced from his village of Rio Negro, he moved to a government built shanty town, called Pacux, located just outside of Rabinal.



He noticed farmers in the villages surrounding Rabinal were dependent on chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and hybrid seeds. In a few decades of war and the introduction of modern agriculture, the ancient and sustainable practices of his ancestors were being replaced by high-input agriculture that was making people and the earth sick. This was also causing dependence on government food programs, NGO's, and later bank loans.

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Ixpata, (right) loved to organize and work with other women and in 2003, she began to work with us. We met with many widows in the villages surrounding Rabinal and they shared their stories, hopes and dreams. During the first year only 12 people participated.



We purchased this deforested and degraded cattle pasture land in 2004, and it would later become the beautiful food forest demonstration center of the Qachuu Aloom Association. Today trees, medicines, and vegetables grow here and the sound of birds fills the air.

*Photo left: Pacux, **Cristobal, Elena, and Sarah** 2004.*

Luisa Xitumul (below) was the first participant from her village of Panacal. She organized a group of widows who joined together and started a collective garden at her house in 2004.



The next addition to this newsletter will take us back in time to the first farmer to Farmer workshops of 2003-2004, where you can learn to compost along with us!

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