

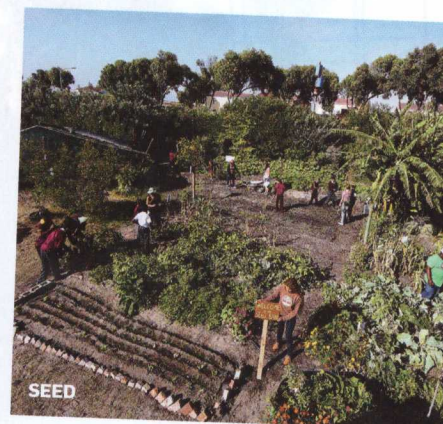
FARM AND GARDEN
NATIONAL TRUST

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In a country such as South Africa, says Rob Small, founder of the Farm and Garden National Trust, food gardens and micro-farming are vital. 'The movement is capable of feeding and employing the nation,' he says. 'We've proven that a family of up to five, who would otherwise be malnourished, can grow all the fresh food they need year-round, in extreme weather conditions and in very poor soils. One farmer can earn up to R6 000 per month, after costs, from just 500m².'

The trust has been providing free and subsidised services, training, networking and resources to community-based projects for poor and needy persons, including empowerment projects involving micro-farming, since 2008. 'Our first order of business was to ensure that our national flagship projects, Abalimi Bezekhaya (abalimi.org.za) and Harvest of Hope (harvestofhope.co.za), were supported and promoted,' says Rob. 'The success of these projects has since inspired hundreds of community-farming groups around the country, and even as far as Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Nigeria.'

To help, donate at farmgardentrust.org or see the Abalimi movement in action on the Cape Flats during the weekly tours from 9am-12pm every Tuesday.



SEED

SEED started out small in 2000, growing food at a few township schools on the Cape Flats. The programme proved hugely popular, and to date has reached 34 000 learners. 'It's been amazing to see what gardens do for children, opening them up to daily miracles, connecting them to the ecosystems around them, and giving them a feeling of resilience by being able to grow their own food,' says director Leigh Brown.

The organisation has also started a programme for unemployed youths to train them in permaculture. Almost 100 young people have graduated, with 70% placed in jobs, and 89% still growing their own food.

To get the broader community involved, SEED also built the Rocklands Urban Abundance Centre in Mitchells Plain, where visitors can learn about self-sustainability through food gardening. Here, visitors can get compost, containers and advice on growing their own food, and see just how to do so at a replica of an RDP house built from tyres.

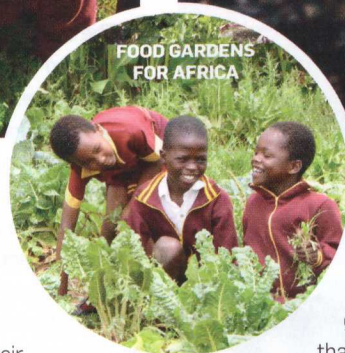
To help, donate funds to the youth programme or book a tour of the Rocklands Urban Abundance Centre at seed.org.za. →



REEL GARDENING



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In 2002, 16-year-old Claire Reid wanted to grow vegetables to sell to her parents for extra pocket money, but was frustrated by the wastage of seed and fertiliser, and her inability to get the seed in the soil at the correct depth and distance apart.

So she made seed strips with newspaper and encased the seeds in a paste of flour and liquid fertiliser. It won her the United Nations Environmental SEED award and launched her social enterprise: Reel Gardening.

Today, Reel Gardening has implemented more than 400 school and community planting initiatives, feeding more than 300 000 people. 'The Reel Gardening technology makes growing food easy, accessible and fun,' says Claire. 'It also saves 80% in water consumption and reduces the time needed to plant – which is critical in getting people to adopt the habit of growing.'



And, of course, there's also an app. It's called The Planting Revolution, and users earn data through Virgin Mobile as rewards for looking after their gardens. They can also donate their points to others.

Get involved by downloading The Planting Revolution on your smartphone or buying a Garden in a Box from any Food Lover's Market, of which R10 will be donated to projects that educate kids on healthy eating.

FOOD GARDENS FOR AFRICA

Trees for Africa was formed in 1990 to do some much-needed township greening, but the organisation soon realised what a difference food gardens could make. The name was changed to Food & Trees for Africa, and it's since planted 4.2-million trees and started thousands of food gardens around the country. Its EduPlant programme,

supported by the Woolworths Trust, is now a leading school gardening and greening programme that provides workshops and materials.

'EduPlant has helped thousands of schools to enhance learners' and their families' food security and contribute to poverty alleviation and skills in their communities,' says Robyn Hills, food gardens manager at Food & Trees for Africa. 'When people can help themselves, the culture of dependency is reduced. Food gardens are empowering and cultivates an entrepreneurial spirit.'

The organisation's farmer-development programme, FEED Africa, also supports and grows emerging organic farmers through land and infrastructure development, training and mentoring support.

Help by becoming a member of Food & Trees for Africa for R120 per month, or volunteer to help at trees.co.za. ■