

THE Stories behind the Plots

by Deb Lucke

at the stony Kill Foundation Community Garden

Once upon a time there was a man who dreamed of dirt. That's because for many, many years—ever since he emigrated from Bangladesh—Nurul Kader had lived in rentals without space for a garden. When he found out about the community garden at stony Kill, he signed right up.

I COME BEFORE WORK FROM FIVE TO EIGHT AND AGAIN ON THE WAY HOME.

The Dream
DREAMER: NURUL KADER

The garden is trellised. The vegetables hang.

IF A GOURD GETS HEAVY I USE ROPE ON FOUR SIDES TO SUPPORT IT.

The vines shade the Elephant's Ear and cilantro growing below. Wait a sec--Elephant's Ear is edible?

THE LEAVES. THE STEMS. YOU CHOP IT. FRY IT.

Nurul also grows Malabar spinach. Red Amaranth, pink, Brandywine tomatoes, chilies, and more chilies.

DON'T PULL UP SPINACH, JUST CUT.

I WELCOME PEOPLE TO CONTACT ME TO HELP THEM GROW.

Dawn Filippone, a neighbor from a nearby plot, has her eye on a ripening Bitter Melon she would like to taste.

Nurul's happy to give it away.

I GIVE TO MY CO-WORKERS, MY SISTERS, MY BROTHERS, MY NEIGHBORS, FRIENDS...

NOT ONLY DO I ENJOY SHARING--I HAVE TO! BECAUSE I GROW... ..SO MUCH.

Erik Fyle of the stony Kill Foundation says, Folks bump into each other, they ask about what's growing, relationships happen organically.

That's exactly what happened with two sisters, Jai Li and Pan Cao, who are part of a group farming together.

Jai

DURING THE PANDEMIC, WE COULDN'T GET TO CHINATOWN FOR OUR VEGETABLES.

WE THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE SHORTAGES AND THAT WE SHOULD PLAN AHEAD.

Pan

They rented two plots.

WE ARE NOT FARM PEOPLE. WE HAD TO LEARN.

It grew to six plots when their neighbors asked to join.

YOU HAVE TO GROW YOUR SOIL FIRST.

It should be soft.

Jai is the leader of the group.

I LEARNED FROM OTHER GARDENERS WHEN I LIVED IN JAPAN. IT'S A SMALL COUNTRY. THERE'S NOT SPACE FOR BIG MACHINES. YOU NEED STRATEGIES TO GROW EFFICIENTLY TO FEED THE POPULATION.

THE CELERY GROWS UNDER THE LOOFAH.

THE LONG BEANS GROW WITH THE ELEPHANT'S EAR SO THEY GET SHADE AT THE START.

WE GET ALONG WITH THE WEEDS. THEY SHADE THE LETTUCE. OTHERWISE IT WOULD BE TOO HOT.

I'M A NURSE IN ICU. MY JOB IS STRESSFUL. I COME HERE, I SEE NEW LIFE.

IT HAS MEANING.