

# **Valley of Heart's Delight Local Growing Circles Information Sheet**

## **What is a Growing Circle?**

A local Growing Circle is made up of a group of home food gardeners who build community in their neighborhood or community by sharing the experience of growing food organically with other like-minded individuals.

## **What happens in a Growing Circle?**

Think of a Growing Circle as a group of like-minded individuals who come together to share experiences, resources, and the work of growing food organically in their yard.

Growing Circles usually meet once a month at alternating members' homes. The person hosting the meeting usually facilitates the meeting. At a typical monthly meeting, members can learn something new about organic food gardening methods, plan next season's garden, work in a member's garden, help harvest crops in exchange for take-home samples, take a field trip to a local nursery to purchase seedlings everyone can share, or do anything else the group feels is time well spent concerning food gardening. Season after season, as experiences, resources, and harvests are shared, a deep connection is formed and community is born!

We have put together a suggested monthly activities calendar, which you will find in your resource packet, filled with ideas to get you and your group started.

## **Why should I belong to a Local Growing Circle?**

The purpose of a local Growing Circle is to build community in your own neighborhood or community around the process of food gardening. Many people find gardening to be an experience that calms the nerves and feeds the soul. If you want to share this experience with other like-minded individuals, joining a local Growing Circle is for you. Not only will you be able to make new gardening friends, you will also be building stronger ties to your own community.

## **What if I'm just a beginner?**

It doesn't matter as long as you are eager to learn about organic food gardening. Members vary from beginners to experienced gardeners and almost everyone has a thing or two to learn from other gardeners.

## **What is the typical size of a local Growing Circle?**

A Growing Circle is a living thing; therefore, its size fluctuates. Current groups vary from 5 to 25 and even 125 members, with additional drop-ins from month to month.

## **What if I mostly grow ornamental plants in my garden? Does it make sense for me to join a local Growing Circle?**

If you are currently growing ornamental plants, but you are interested in learning how to grow your own food organically, by all means, join a Growing Circle.

## **What if there isn't a local Growing Circle where I live?**

You're in luck! The Valley of Heart's Delight wants to help you start one in your own neighborhood. We have put together some guidelines for starting a local Growing Circle. If you need assistance once you've read the guidelines, one of the Valley of Heart's Delight team members would be happy to support in your effort.

## **What is the Valley of Heart's Delight?**

Food is fundamental to a sustainable future. Transporting food uses up non-renewable fossil fuels, which alters the climate with greenhouse gases. Conventional farming practices also pollute the water and deplete the soil. So, although supermarket shelves are filled today, we are undermining our ability to produce enough food in the future.

Fortunately, we live on some of the most fertile land on the planet. The region known today as Silicon Valley was once heralded by farmers, poets, and the Chamber of Commerce as the "Valley of Heart's Delight." In 1940, productive fruit and nut trees graced over 105,000 acres in Santa Clara County alone. In 1998, only 4,500 acres remained.

Our project seeks to create a vision of the future, which integrates past and present. Our project name, *Valley of Heart's Delight*, evokes the region's rich agricultural heritage, rooting our vision in the understanding that healthy natural systems are essential for our wellbeing. To meet the challenges that face us, we can also draw upon Silicon Valley's ability to find innovative solutions to ever-changing conditions.

Our goal is to open up new opportunities for local, organically grown food production. In doing so, we can restore the fertility of our soils and reduce our reliance on the petrochemicals (pesticides, fertilizers, and fuels) that are polluting our environment. And by participating in this process, people will reconnect with the Earth as the source of our physical and spiritual nourishment.

### **The project has six main components:**

- **Home food gardens**
- **Getting Going Growing**
- **Harvesting for the Hungry**
- **Healthy School Lunch Committee**
- **Statewide coalition work**
- **Educational events**

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