



Buffalo Environmental Management Commission

Monthly Energy/Efficiency and Sustainability TIP SHEET November 2009

As part of its City Charter-defined mission to advise the Mayor and Common Council on environmental issues affecting the City, the Buffalo Environmental Management Commission submits a monthly "tip sheet" on a timely topic for your information, review and consideration. This month's tip sheet showcases sustainable food systems.

Recent articles in the Washington Post and Buffalo News have highlighted a growing trend in urban gardens and aquaponics projects that produce an inexpensive, sustainable, high-quality and healthy source of food for inner city residents.

Will Allen of Milwaukee is the founder and chief executive of Growing Power, Inc. a Milwaukee-based company that develops urban farming techniques and teaches young people how to grow food in poor, inner-city neighborhoods. The Growing Power program is about building sustainable food systems and creating an industry around local food systems that can improve communities by helping to reduce crime and creating employment.

Allen began growing vegetables in individual pots, making efficient use of limited greenhouse space. In Milwaukee and Chicago his projects have made use of vacant lots and flat garage rooftops that are ideal locations for gardens that produce fresh vegetables year-round. He has also created a self-sustaining system of fish farming, where fish are raised in water that also circulates to feed growing plants.

In Buffalo, NY, Jesse Meeder, Massachusetts Avenue Project farm education coordinator, has developed a system for raising tilapia as a food source in an urban farm setting. His project is housed in an urban garden adobe and straw bale greenhouse on Buffalo's West Side. The aquaponics system, with pumps and heater, was constructed for no more that \$500 and provides work training experience for local youth and will help to make Massachusetts Avenue Project self sustaining.

Once the original population of organically raised tilapia is obtained from the fisheries operation of the State University of New York at Cobleskill the only other expense is for the electricity to run the heater and pump, which Meeder plans to convert to solar in the near future. The water for the system comes from rainwater that is collected into a 1,000-gallon holding tank. Heating the water to 80 degrees keeps the greenhouse warm enough to raise watercress, basil, beans, tomatoes, and other vegetables. When the fish reach the length of 8 to 10 inches they will weigh approximately a pound to a pound and a half and will sell for \$5 to \$6 each.

If you have any questions regarding the tip sheet please contact Joe Gardella (Interim Chair, BEMC) at gardella@buffalo.edu or Dennis Sutton (BEMC support staff) at dsutton@city-buffalo.com. We look forward to any input on the monthly tip sheet.

BEMC members are willing to attend any meetings to promote implementation of these programs in the City of Buffalo. BEMC meets monthly, on the third Wednesday, 8:00 AM, 920 City Hall. The web site address for the BEMC is: http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/Home/CityServices/Environmental_Management_Commission.