Prairie Smoke Gardens
Small Scale Farming in the City
Growing food for our neighbors

On a beautiful June 3rd afternoon Katie and Madrone Kubovcik, Prairie Smoke Gardens, hosted a small group of growers around their mini-farm in the city. This Neighborhood Supported farm supplies fresh vegetables and fruit to 10 families. The two-acre property lies within the City of St Paul, on a dirt road no less!

Kobocik stressed that while farming can be done on many different scales, it is important to know your goals and find the scale that helps you best meet them, adding, “Find resources that can be shared, for us it is the greenhouse that is partially rented to other growers.”

Prairie Smoke is transitioning their production to no-till methods and cultivation of more native and adapted varieties, this she said is revealing many benefits, especially in an urban area.

“A very important part of our situation, Kobovcik explained, “is good relationships with our neighbors. Because they want us here and support what we are doing, we don't have all the obstacles to navigate that are common in urban areas. We rent land from our neighbors; they are our customers. Their engagement supports not only our production, but the larger goal of building community around food and increasing people's access and interest in local food production.”

Katie is also a Farm Education Consultant, working with Big River Farms and Renewing the Countryside providing technical assistance, and FSA/NRCS Connector and Land Access Navigator. She discussed the challenges small scale specialty crop farmers face. “Knowing how to farm and understanding farm finances is hard enough, but new farmers are too often unable to find, afford and secure land”. She described how the Land Access Navigators offer services to assist new, resource-limited farmers in developing a plan to access land, as well as the importance of making the needs of small-scale specialty crop farmers known in order to create new models and effective programs.

Networking! Katie Feterl (l) of SFA greets Alexandra Cortes of the MDA, who described the 2021 Drought Relief Assistance now available to farmers:

www.mda.state.mn.us/droughtrelief

This is a fantastic, creative example of how market farmers in urban areas are growing substantial amounts of fresh produce and reconnecting people to each other and the food they eat! --KH

Cover crops; soil health benefits.

www.sfa-mn.org/twin-cities-growers-network

Questions? Contact Network coordinator Karl Hakanson, UMN Extension-Hennepin County - khakanso@umn.edu

Photos Karl Hakanson – v6/27/22