



GREENING our communities

through Live Green Toronto Grants



PROJECT:

Not Far from the Tree

“Toronto was waiting for a project like this: the homeowners needed rescuing from the abundance of fruit being dumped on their lawns, volunteers were waiting for opportunities to have fun and reconnect with their food sources, and plenty of people struggle to get fresh, healthy fruit into their diets. So, when the opportunity came my way to pick apples from a museum property, it grew into a community-building project that continues to engage hundreds of Torontonians.”

Laura Reinsborough,
Project Coordinator

Not Far from the Tree

Not Far from the Tree is a fruit-picking program that harvests fruit from residential trees that would otherwise go to waste. Teams of volunteers pick a variety of fruit, from cherries in early-summer, to apricots, plums and elderberries in mid-summer, to apples and pears in the fall. The bounty is then distributed: one third to the fruit tree owners, one third to the volunteers and one third to community organizations in the neighbourhood who make good use of the fresh fruit.

After a successful pilot in 2008, Not Far from the Tree wanted to grow in four key ways:

- by extending the program into three wards (Parkdale/High Park, East York/Beaches and St Paul’s);
- by registering more fruit trees;
- by coordinating teams of volunteers to pick fruit; and
- by increasing programming and education outreach.

“Big and complex problems like hunger and climate change require us to work together, and this project makes that happen at a neighbourhood level.”

Laura Reinsborough, Project Coordinator



For more information or
to join in the picking, visit
notfarfromthetree.org
or email
info@notfarfromthetree.org.



Call 3 1 1



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Not Far from the Tree's 2009 season exceeded every expectation. The program was expanded to three wards, 450 fruit trees were registered, 400 volunteers harvested 8,135 lbs. of fruit of which 2,711 lbs. were donated, and 40 community outreach events took place. In 2010, the harvest more than doubled to almost 20,000 lbs. A website and blog helps participants stay up to date, and functions as a database for volunteer information, tree registration and communication.

By making use of local fruit that would otherwise go to waste, Not Far from the Tree saved 43 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. By making a convincing case for homeowners to keep trees that may have been considered a nuisance, Not Far from the Tree turned trees into assets and improved air quality. The program also initiated cultural change as it encouraged participants to reconnect with local food sources and reduce their environmental footprints.

Not Far from the Tree was a finalist in the 2009 Green Toronto Awards and selected as one of "50 reasons to love Toronto now" by Toronto Life. Not Far from the Tree continues to build on its momentum, offering a model for urban fruit harvesting projects across Ontario and beyond. With the help of Not Far from the Tree, similar projects have been initiated in Kitchener-Waterloo, Niagara and Mississauga. Organizations in Ottawa, Sudbury, Brampton, Georgia, and Oregon have also sought their advice.

2008 Community Investment Program Grant (\$25,000)



With overwhelming demand—so many fruit trees across the city needed to be picked and more volunteers were interested than could be accommodated—it was clear that Toronto needed an organization such as Not Far from the Tree. As a result of their growth, a new Director role was created to focus on expansion while day-to-day management was delegated to team leaders.

Did you know?

Toronto's fruit trees produce about 1.5 million lbs. of fruit a year. The harvest season runs from early July to the end of October. The fruits in our neighbourhoods include serviceberries, mulberries, apricots, plums, crab apples, elderberries, pears, apples, sumac, black walnuts and ginkgo nuts. Fruits that are not eaten fresh are pressed into apple cider, turned into applesauce, crab apple and grape jelly, dried pear slices and more.



"It's always so revitalizing to see a person's face light up from the simple act of eating fresh-picked fruit."

Robin Newman, Event Coordinator