Seeds of Discent

excerpted from the book *Seeds of Discent* by Nic Esposito

As most gardeners can attest to, growing food can instill a sense of peace in your soul when it's holistically incorporated into the rhythms of life rather than set aside as something secondary that's done in the spare time when a break is needed from the world.

Too often people are so tied to the worries of things that they begin viewing the garden in the same light as they see their 9-5 jobs. Just like the first day of a new job, there's so much excitement when spreading the first layer of soil, putting those first seeds in the ground and seeing the little green shoots sprout.

Although nature's help is acknowledged, it's still hard to deny the power felt when you get a seed to grow. And those first plants are usually successful, but not because of the conventional beginners luck. It's because the brand new soil that so many people buy and ship into the city is doing most of the work. But the 9-5 gardener is usually not worried about building the soil. It's much too brilliant to watch these plants grow, mature and yield fruits or leaves. That first harvest of harnessing the Earth's power to feed your body can change your life.

So this gardener will either sit in reverence and watch the plants grow, or he'll clip as much food as he can, not trusting the phenomenon as truth, but thinking it's some trickery because nothing in life is free. Either way, it's the thought of a second planting, a succession planting as most farmers call it, that this gardener pays little mind. So when the plants have either gone to seed and the leaves are much too bitter, or they've been stripped clean by heavy harvesting and the garden pests who lent a hand, the 9-5 gardener realizes that a garden can't just rely on the initial investment to keep producing like a stock option.

It's then that a garden becomes another burden, much like a job or an investment portfolio or a piece of real estate can be. By August, when the harvest is at its peak, this gardener gets burnt out, takes a 2 week vacation and the plants become weeds like the thousands of vacant lots in the city.

> *It's common sense and intelligent design to think that a city should be built like a garden.*

After years of gardening, I think of my garden as a small city. It's the best analogy I've found to explain gardening to anyone from an urban neighborhood. We built our garden on a track of land that gets good sun and is close enough to a downspout where we use a rain barrel to catch water. We also use part of the land for a compost bin that keeps natural, renewable fertilizer flowing from the waste of our kitchen. The border of flowers that we planted around the garden attracts beneficial birds and bugs to pollinate the buds and control pests.

When we plant, we invest in some seeds and put them in the soil that we'll be building for years to renew the composition of its infrastructure so the plants can successfully grow. These plants are not one or two varieties that are chosen because they are beautiful or because one of us prefers to eat them, but because they each play their separate part while contributing to the ecosystem of the garden.

I'll admit that I hate picking green beans, and I'm not too keen on the taste. But I do know that they are a legume and when planted next to tomatoes they pull nitrogen from out of the air and into the soil for the tomatoes to feed on. It's the same when I plant a radish next to my chard or kale. Bugs like the radish smell much more than the leafy greens and they go after the tops. Sure, my radishes lose their leaves, but I still have the root and my greens are untouched.

I don't think it's naivety or idealism to say that a city could be built in the same way. It's common sense and intelligent design to think that a city should be built like a garden. Imagine a city positioned geographically and directionally that optimizes the local resources for its energy system like solar, wind or hydroelectric. It could use its border to cultivate its building materials and raise animals and crops for its food sustenance. And it could develop diverse political and economic systems where the more prominent professions like doctors, lawyers, entertainers and politicians could realize that their success is dependent on the hard work and livelihood of the more humble trades like construction workers, teachers, police officers and social workers. It's true that a tomato may be more desirable to the taste buds, but it couldn't grow without the green beans.

This communally preplanned, locally organized, resource based economy seems like a fools dream. *Human nature can't handle such cooperation* is the popular mantra of those comfortable in their inaction. But I'm not a fool. I'm a gardener and I'm watching it all happen in the soil beneath my boots. People could argue that I'm the dictator of the land and that I'm manipulating these systems for my own benefit. But this system is beyond my control because nature created it, not me. All I do is understand the system, and I accept that I can't do it alone. This new system can be created. It's just going to take a lot more thought and planning than the system we have now, and ultimately, we're going to have to become better human beings.
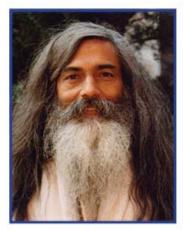
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