

Spring 2007

During the first and second world wars people in England, Canada and the United States planted gardens in hopes of helping the war effort. By supplying up to 40% of the fruits and vegetables eaten locally from backyard gardens, more food could be shipped overseas to soldiers and the money made from growing locally could be spent on war bonds.

The departments of Agriculture promoted the home effort with posters and great campaigns. The goal was to provide more money for armaments to secure the success of the war movement. Little known is the fact that there has never been such a successful food campaign since.

After the war, the production of food decreased precipitously from these gardens with everyone assuming the goal was accomplished, the war was won. However with the end of the war all of the European countries required even more food to recover from the devastation brought on by the war. It's taken decades to fully come back and even now there are large subsidies paid to keep people farming in Europe, the USA and here in Canada.

The only groups that truly profited were the large corporations that shifted from using nitrogen for bombs to using it for fertilizers. These corporations are the ones who promoted innovation as a means to securing the food systems of the world. How much of this innovation has helped? If we can classify genetically modified foods, monocultures, thousands of tons of chemical fertilizer and the devastation of family farms as innovation...I think we need victory gardens once again.

Within the Yukon we still have this opportunity to provide our own food sources. Call it food security. We are all at the mercy of fuel prices, highway conditions and trade barriers, we really need to support anyone who promotes agriculture and food production here. Better yet, why not do something as innovative as supporting a victory garden of your own. If you really need help there are people willing to do just that. Call the Agriculture Branch, the Yukon Agriculture Association, the Growers of Organic Food Yukon or the Downtown Urban Gardeners and ask them how to make it happen.

I would say innovation lies in the heart of a farmer, not in the sealed labs of giant corporations. Their bottom line is profit, it's the law.

Innovation lies in creating your own garden in that spare piece of yard in the back. Imagine eating your own, home grown potatoes for six months of the year. Taste incredibly fresh green herbs you never knew could taste so good. Find out what arugula is or how good steamed tat soi is. If you need a recipe for it, ask me.

Throughout the summer when your victory garden is up and surprising you with its bounty, make sure and get some to your friends and neighbours. Think about supporting a food bank, Mary-house or the Salvation Army kitchen. Bring your overabundance to the Fireweed market and join with other like-minded people to sell some produce. There is no satisfaction greater than growing, eating and sharing with others the food you've produced.

To combat the higher food prices and the ad campaigns of the corporations get innovative, grow your own victory garden. Join me won't you?

Talk to me about real food – Tom Rudge