

Digging, Sowing, Tending, Harvesting (Bringing the War Home)

Gina Badger, May 2009

To the United States Air Force and the Republic of Vietnam army, the dense jungle surrounding the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos and Cambodia was impenetrable, chaotic, and dangerous; in an attempt to get a handle on this unruly situation, they had to strip the trees naked with a devastating array of chemical defoliants. Conversely, to North Vietnamese troops and Vietcong, the trail was a highly organized and logical transportation network that enabled the scale and force of their military resistance. Likewise, Fidel Castro and the 26th of July Movement troops relied on the densely vegetation of the Sierra Maestra mountains to protect their elaborate camp during the lead-up to the Cuban Revolution.

Perhaps the special importance of vegetation in these recent revolutionary struggles can help to explain why, since the 1970s, a subsection of urban gardeners have been calling themselves “guerilla” gardeners. Whatever the original inspiration, the term guerilla makes strong associations and claims to militant revolutionary politics. The present writing will take these claims seriously, concluding that the guerilla descriptor indicates more style than substance, and has become a distraction from the actual politics at work in forms of radical urban gardening.

I will begin with a critique of the use of military metaphors to describe contemporary forms of urban gardening. Despite awkward malapropisms, the

practice of urban gardening has much to contribute to leftist resistance in the United States. I will argue that the engagements of guerilla gardeners are, at best, an acknowledgement of the fact that the war is always-already home. Further, gardening can be part of a nuanced approach to engaging in guerilla war-fair.¹ At worst, however, these actions become distanced from their own political histories and related struggles, becoming empty performances of rebellion. I will devote the second section of this argument to a description of the radical politics of gardening, as understood through its connection to related anticapitalist struggle.

If we are to take the guerilla appellation and the political intentions it pronounces seriously, we need to hold guerilla gardeners to their word. This may mean that we need to be a little harsh with them. While there is much to be learned from drawing explicit connections between the actions of US urban gardeners and revolutionary armies in the Third World, it is a mistake to make these associations too casually. When a group of primarily white community gardeners in New York City took on the name Green Guerillas in the 1970s, galvanizing a fringe gardening practice into something of a cohesive movement, they were engaging in the complicated politics of appropriation.

Cynthia Young describes the stakes of these politics as a risk of reproducing the “homogenizing tendency of Western imperialism and colonialism” (Young 2006, 12). This is a risk that I do not take lightly. While I cannot hope to fully attend to the global dynamics of these politics, I will

¹ A term appropriated from the Italian *Autonomia*, indicating conflict transformation, not pacifism, as the goal of anti-authoritarian resistance.

endeavor to make Third World connections while emphasizing “homegrown” radical anticapitalist politics, a dose of medicine made in America, for America.² Everything travels in a globalized world, and appropriations can be a potent form of doing politics, but the specific transfers of power that occur in each case need to be reevaluated at many points along the way. In the case of guerilla gardening’s penchant for militaristic language, this reevaluation is a necessary measure if we are to understand the important place of gardening in nourishing a homegrown US anticapitalism that is connected in solidarity with global struggles.

Making War-Fair: Appropriations of Military Terminology

Is it possible for dissenting Americans to engage in a guerilla war against their own neoliberal state? If so, perhaps one of the necessary first steps is to recognize the extent to which everyday American life is permeated with militarism. Since 1967, artist and writer Martha Rosler has described this process of recognition as “bringing the war home.” Rosler’s project, *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967-72; 2004), draws explicit connections between the US army’s imperialist offensives in Vietnam and Iraq and the everyday domestic lives of American civilians, insisting that “images of war were not imposed or forced into these living rooms, they belong[ed] there” (Cottingham, 1991) (see images 1 & 2).

² Young defines radical as having “profound counterhegemonic effects in the social word” (11). I would only add a nod to the adjectives’s etymology; if the goal is to be radical, it is crucial to address hegemony not only “profoundly,” but at its roots.



Clockwise from top left. **Image 1** Martha Rosler. *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home (Red Stripe Kitchen)*. 1967-72, photomontage (from Worcester Art Museum, 2007). **Image 2** Rosler. *House Beautiful – New Series (Photo-Op)* 2004, photomontage (from Worcester Art Museum, 2007). **Image 3** *House Beautiful*, May 1945. Cover. (From Colomina 2007.) **Image 4** “Kill Lawn Weeds With Weedone,” advertisement. From *Better Homes & Gardens*, April 1946. (From Colomina 2007.)

In *Domesticity at War*, Beatriz Colomina details the penetration of military technologies into American homes during and post WWII. Colomina’s research demonstrates in no uncertain terms that the war is always-already home; the reliance of the American economy on military expenditures and technological development assures that every aspect of American civilian life is infused with militarism. In her chapter on the suburban lawn, Colomina

illustrates the historical and technological connections between the cultivation of greenery, from front lawns to Victory Gardens, and US state militarism (see images 3 & 4). Once we see that the war is already home, the real task becomes deciding how we want to be involved.

Seed Bombs: The Loading and Unloading of a Symbol's Radical Potential

I recently had a rather upsetting encounter with something that I am normally quite enamored of: a reference to a seed bomb. Seed bombs, which I will treat in detail a little later on, are favorite tools of guerilla gardeners because they enable the effective and fast sowing of seeds in hard to reach and hostile locations. For a few years now, I have been following the rise in excitement around seed bombs, especially in the art world, and have conceived of a few projects that utilize them. Recently, seed bombs have been featured in a major exhibition at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), *Actions: What You Can Do With the City*, and in an article in the new edition of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*. Seed bomb making workshops were part of the CCA exhibition, the Baltimore conference *The City From Below*, and Montreal's *Festival of Anarchy*. Bomb-based artist projects by The National Bitter Melon Council, Three Miles (Noah Scalin and Christopher Humes), and Kathryn Miller have been featured in exhibitions and public performances.

Last week, knowing my research interest, a friend tipped me off on a Lush Cosmetics window display that he insisted I *had* to see. I biked up to Harvard

Square here in Cambridge and found the shop front in question, which was dominated by a huge poster proclaiming “The Revolution Will Be Cultivated... at Lush!” The poster features a bold, revolutionary-flavored graphic of a raised fist sprouting a bouquet of brightly colored flowers (see image 5). The poster, along with a display of seed bombs, was announcing a Lush-sponsored *Seed the Nation Contest*. An elaborate marketing strategy that capitalizes on the current “Green” frenzy, this contest makes explicit the perpetual vulnerability of any countercultural practice to commodification. This discovery was upsetting



Clockwise from top left. **Image 5** Lush poster for the *Seed the Nation Contest*, 2009 (from <http://www.lush.com/shop>). **Image 6** N55. *Protest Rocket Launcher*, 2008 (from CCA *Actions* website, <http://cca-actions.org/search-actions/50>). **Images 7 & 8** Three Miles. *Plant the Piece*, since 2004.

because it confirmed something that I already knew: in the idea of a seed bomb, there is nothing inherently resistant, nothing that cannot be co-opted for commercial purposes. Seed bombs, like any other tool, have their own kind of logic, but this logic can easily be appropriated for a number of ends, some radical and others purely fetishistic.

Genealogy of the Seed Bomb

In New York City in the 1970s, if you lived in the Lower East Side or Harlem or the Bronx, living conditions had deteriorated to the point where it was pretty much impossible to sit back and do nothing about it. Responding to massive disinvestment, building deterioration, demolition and landlord arson that left many lots empty and accumulating rubble, residents across the city began to establish gardens (Staeheli and Mitchell 2008, 98). The community gardening movement that emerged at this time was influenced both by the history of urban gardening in the United States, particularly the Victory Gardens campaign of WWII, and the imported skills and habits of new immigrants (Carlsson, 2007: 83; Lawson 2005, von Hassel 2002, Wolff-Erskine 2002).

Like the Victory Gardens campaign, and other nationwide gardening programs that came before it, the community gardening movement emerged in response to prevailing economic and political conditions that created both a need for productive greenspace and derelict land upon which to make it (Carlsson: 83; Lawson 2005; von Hassel 2002). Malve von Hassel, in *The Struggle for Eden: Community Gardens in New York City*, describes community gardens as “a kind of canary indicating economic and political fluctuations in the country” (36).

Community gardens were distinct from previous state-sponsored urban gardening initiatives largely due to their grassroots character; while earlier campaigns had been sponsored by either the state or charity organizations, the new community gardens relied on the time, labor, and skills of residents (Lawson: 207; von Hassel: 32).

The majority of the New York City gardens were established on land appropriated by the city once it had been abandoned by its owners and fallen into tax arrears. Not having the funds to maintain the 11,000 lots transferred to its ownership during the fiscal crisis, the city allowed many buildings to deteriorate and then demolished them (Staeheli and Mitchell: 98). A few landlords, put off by the prospect of gardens being established on their property, began to put up fences (Tracey 2007: 34). To the gardeners, the erecting of fences signaled a new, openly antagonistic phase of the deteriorating relationship between landowners and themselves. Property owners, be they private or state, could no longer be seen as simply dismissive of the needs of residents but actively in opposition to them, and the fences preventing them from gardening became a potent symbol of this antagonism. This first clear act of defense was read as a declaration of war, and in response the gardeners needed a weapon. Enter the “seed green-aid,” as engineered by a newly galvanized group of Lower East Side gardeners, the Green Guerillas.

In 1973, The Green Guerrillas published a fact sheet detailing two different recipes for seed “green-aids”/grenades. The instructions were simple: fill either old glass Christmas baubles or balloons with time-release fertilizer, peat moss crumbs, and seeds, and lob them over the offending fences. A scanned copy of

the original typewritten recipe is easy enough to find these days, on the internet and in at least one print publication (Tracey: 94; see image 9). Von Hassel sees seed bombs as primary symbolic, explaining that they were

... tossed over fences into vacant lots to start a literal grassroots revolution on ‘acres of opportunity,’ as they were called by one Green Guerilla member. It is a strategy still used on occasion, more for its powerfully symbolic content than for the actual chance of success; seeds do not do well in rubble and debris. Since the 1970s undoubtedly many of these balloons, actual and conceptual, landed on stony ground.” (von Hassel: 22).



Clockwise from left. **Image 9** Green Guerillas. Seed grenade recipe, 1973 (from Tracey, 2007). **Image 10** Green Guerillas on break, 1975 (from Reynolds, 2008). **Image 11** Liz Christy, founder of the Green Guerillas, in the Bowery/Houston garden, now the Liz Christy Garden, c.1975 (from Reynolds, 2008).

Actually, the roots of the seed bomb go back much further than the Green Guerillas, and the original recipe is designed specifically to help seeds germinate and thrive in adverse conditions. In the 1940s, Masanobu Fukuoka began to direct-sow seeds enveloped in clay pellets as part of his organic farming

methodology, known to permaculturalists today as the Fukuoka Method. Fukuoka's use of clay-coated seeds was a revival of the ancient Japanese *tsuchi-dango*, or earth dumpling. Fukuoka's pellets, like the original *tsuchi-dango*, are ingeniously designed balls of clay, organic matter such as compost or manure, and seeds. The pellets offer several benefits for arid or otherwise hostile growing environments. The dried, hardened clay allows for digless sowing, stops the seeds from blowing away in the wind, and protects them from birds and other munching predators (Fukuoka 1985, *ii*). Out in the elements, the seeds will be protected until optimal germinating conditions arrive. Once sufficiently moistened, the clay softens, admits oxygen and water, and the seeds begin to germinate. The spouting seeds develop roots that further loosen the clay. The molecular composition of clay is ideal for assisting nutrient transfer from the organic matter to the new roots, thus sustaining the plants through their most fragile stage of development.³ As long as the plant is a hardy one and its roots have got somewhere to go once they get too big for the clay ball, the seed bomb has succeeded in establishing the plant.

For Fukuoka, seed bombs were primarily an agricultural technology that saved labor and helped optimize seed sowing. For the Green Guerillas, the seed bombs were about taking the offensive of private property seriously. Neither one of these uses can entirely account for the current popularity of seed bombs, so what can? A big part of what is exciting about the seed bomb is its packaging: the insistence that this materially rather simple and functionally friendly object is a

³ For a good description of the role of clay in nutrient transfer from soil to roots, see Sadava, D. et al. *Life: The Science of Biology*. Macmillan, 2006 (pages 781-787).

weapon.

It is the confused ontology of seed bombs that fascinates and troubles me, because it throws their possible applications wide open. It is perhaps a little too easy to turn them into a commodity that smacks of revolutionary cachet without having any meaningful connection to resistance movements. The moment of the Lush appropriation is a good canary indicator for the health of this symbol's radical potential: it's clearly got wobbly knees. If we want it to do radical work, we need to make sure that we are framing it in the right way.

The Green Guerillas, recognizing the importance of words as frames for activities, chose to call them seed “green-aids,” an appropriation and adaptation that flirts with militancy while forcing a mutation, perhaps a cultivation, in meaning and intent. *Plant the Piece* by Three Miles (since 2004; see images 7 & 8) makes the ontological shiftiness of the seed bomb explicit with an overtly pacific message. Their seed bombs take the form of revolvers, which when sprouting recall the iconic confrontation of a gun barrel and a cut flower. Danish collective N55 takes another approach to exploring the offensive potentials of seed bombs with their *Rocket System*, which launches capsules of Heath Bunting's “superweed” seeds, designed to cross-pollinate and evolve gradually into a strain of plants resistant to widely used chemical herbicides such as Roundup (see image 6). The N55/Bunting collaboration directly confronts the attack on functional biodiversity mounted by Monsanto et al, while playing on the public's general fussiness about weeds.⁴

⁴ As any urban ecologist worth her salt will tell you, a weed is just a subjective interpretation of a plant that's growing somewhere that it wasn't wanted. Often, “weeds” such as mugwort

Richard Reynolds, Britain's self-proclaimed poster boy for the guerilla gardening movement, recently published *On Guerilla Gardening: A Manual for Gardening Without Boundaries*, a flashy volume whose cover may well have provided the graphic inspiration for the Lush poster (Reynolds does, after all, have a background in advertising). Reynolds's title directly cites Mao Tse-Tung's influential text *On Guerilla Warfare*, which also takes the form of a manual. Reynolds provides an admirable catalogue of contemporary guerilla gardening practices on a global scale, as well as a rare overview of its prehistory and history.

Reynolds is a champion of the seed bomb, and has been seen recently on British morning talk shows promoting them. He rather uncritically works the allusion to bombs right into the rest of his military references: "assaults," "offensives," "attacks," "arsenals," and so on. As with the seed bomb's appearance in a corporate ad campaign, we ought to take Reynolds's use of military language seriously. These terms refer to a radical movement whose actual politics are belittled by beautification projects such as planting petunias in derelict road medians, as Reynolds encourages us to do. This language claims too much for a version of guerilla gardening based on urban beautification. These appropriations do not seem appropriate, let alone generative of radical potential.

(*Artemisia vulgaris*), play important ecological functions. See the "Manuals" section of N55's website for more information regarding this and other projects. (<http://www.n55.dk>)

Vegetative Logic: The Special Place of Vegetation in Grassroots Struggle for a Postcapitalist World

The history of guerilla gardening has to be pieced together from a variety of sources, mostly informal. It can sometimes be difficult to distinguish it from the more well-documented and mainstream tradition of community gardening. The two practices are best understood in relation, not only with each other but with a complex of urban-based grassroots struggles.⁵ Through their adoption of the guerilla descriptor, gardeners in the Lower East Side connected their politics not only to related local struggles, but to global anti-imperialist movements. Rather than go to pains defining guerilla gardening in isolation, I will endeavor to demonstrate how it functions as an integral element of these related struggles. This analytic approach is necessary if we are to understand how guerilla gardening is not a defeated performance of palliative care in a neoliberal state but a vital part of homegrown urban anticapitalist struggle. Other accounts of contemporary urban gardening focus on struggles to create community and on connections with the environmental movement (Lawson; von Hassel; Woelfe-Erskine, 2002; Lambhorn-Wilson, 1999). In the next section I will describe the contributions of urban gardening to three elements of anticapitalist struggle: the “right to the city,” environmental justice and food security, and the creation of non-monetary economies.

⁵ For the sake of clarity I will focus on practice in the United States, and primarily in New York City, though neither movement is at all contained in this way.

Right to the City: Property Relations & the Creation of Publics

David Harvey, in a recent essay published in the *New Left Review*, proclaims that “the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city” (Harvey 2008). Harvey clearly illustrates the similarities between Haussman’s aggressive urbanization of Second Empire Paris and the massive restructuring of New York under Robert Moses in the 1940s and 50s. Each state program was part of a comprehensive response to the need to absorb surplus capital. In both cases, as Harvey illustrates, the righting of the economy was only a temporary measure, leading quickly into renewed cycles of excess capital accumulation. As is well-documented, the bursting of the global property-market bubble in 1973 and the fuel crisis preempted the bankruptcy of New York City in 1975, leading into an unprecedented period of urban decline (Harvey 2005, 2008; Staeheli and Mitchell; von Hassel).

Over the past 30 years, the increasing neoliberalization of the global economy has affected the shape of cities generally, not only New York. According to Harvey, under neoliberal rule, our cities “increasingly consist of fortified fragments, gated communities and privatized public spaces kept under constant surveillance” (2008: 32). As such, the right to the city has a lot to do with the creation of new relations of labor and property – new publics – that do not operate according to the capitalist model.

Community gardeners literally seize and then defend property in order to establish new publics. As previously discussed, most of the gardens established in New York City in the 1970s occupied fallow land owned by the city. In their

book *The People's Property?*, Lynn Staeheli and Don Mitchell describe community gardens as a particular kind of “*publicized* property that fosters a certain kind of community, and thus has its own effects on how the public is structured and who is included in it (95).” Community gardens do not create a venue for *the* public but *a* public. One community garden cannot do everything for everyone; what is important is that it serves the needs of the people who maintain and use it.⁶



Images 12 & 13 Scott Berofsky. Participation Park, 2008 (from <http://goforchange.com>).

Participation Park, a community gardening and art project in Baltimore, is an example of a contemporary initiative that takes into account the complex politics of property rights as they relate to the establishment of functional publics. Initiated in 2007 by a group of artists, Dane Nester, Scott Berzofsky, and Nick Wisniewski, Participation Park is located on the 1100 block of Forrest Street in East Baltimore. The garden, now entering its third season, is maintained

⁶ Derrida’s etymology of the word community may help us to understand why communities are of necessity limited and exclusive. Built into the idea of community is the defense of *munis* that keeps some people in a community and others outside (Caputo and Derrida, 107-8). The methods of the community gardening movement were militant from the outset; establishing gardens involved first seizing property, and then defending the right of access for a somewhat exclusive, if not fixed, public. The Green Guerillas further stake out this forcefulness by appropriating another word with military roots: *guerilla* is the Spanish diminutive form of *guerra*, for war. The little war. This appellation, like the group’s use of seed bombs, demonstrates their awareness of the antagonistic relationship between themselves and city bureaucracies and signals a willingness to take up the battle for self-determination.

wholly by volunteer labor and focuses on cultivating produce that can serve as a nutritious resource for its neighbors. In a 2008 interview with Alyssa Dennis, Berzofsky explains the group's position with respect to property:

we've decided against going the conventional route for gaining land security, which would be to either buy it or put it into a community land trust (which basically means the 501c3 land trust buys it). Both of these approaches reinforce the dominant relations of private property ownership that we want to question. So, instead we're explicitly squatting as a form of direct action. If there were an attempt to evict us... I think the struggles over the space would generate a productive dialogue about who has the right to the city in Baltimore.⁷

Here, the struggle for the creation of a public is stressed above and beyond other concerns; even though it may jeopardize the long-term stability of Participation Park, the gardeners take the distribution of the right to the city as a political goal of the utmost importance.

Long and medium term occupation of land isn't the only way that urban gardeners have challenged private property. Guerilla gardeners sometimes opt for less territorial, more anonymous approaches to gardening, such as planting a selection of edible greens in a neglected city planter, dropping the seeds of an invasive plant on a corporate flower bed, or tossing seed bombs over the fence protecting a stalled construction project. In this way, guerilla gardeners insist on a fundamental right of access to all space in public view. They insist that the whole city, above and beyond buildings and property lines, along with its soil, water, and air, is a complete ecosystem, the rights to which ought to be held in common by everyone who lives there.

⁷ Interview can be found on the Go For Change website:
<http://www.goforchange.com/2008/11/26/participation-park/>.

Environmental Justice and Food Security

In *On Guerilla Warfare*, Tse-Tung insisted “terrain, climate, and society in general offer obstacles to [the oppressor’s] progress and may be used to advantage by those who oppose him. In guerilla warfare we turn these advantages to the purpose of resisting and defeating the enemy.” Intimate local knowledge is described as “contextual intelligence” by Jason Corburn in *Street Science: Community Knowledge and Environmental Health Justice* (2005). For Corburn, it is an asset in a very different type of struggle – the struggle of city residents to meet their needs through policy change, securing increased service provision, and participation in better health studies. Environmental health justice projects, such as the ones described by Corburn in *Street Science*, to identify and remediate the uneven health effects of industrialization and postindustrialization on poor urban communities.

Beginning in 1995, the Williamsburg-Greenpoint-based environmental justice activists, under the banner of the Watchperson Project, participated in a US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study on neighborhood risk exposures to environmental pollution. The Watchperson Project helped the EPA to identify the practice of subsistence fishing as a significant source of toxic exposures. As neighborhood residents knew, many Puerto Rican and Dominican families were relying heavily on the consumption of fish from the East River for sustenance, and they suspected that the fish were contaminated with heavy metals and other toxins. Along with EPA officials, the Watchperson Project created and conducted a survey that exposed the full extent of this practice.

Analysis of fish species commonly consumed also showed significant levels of contamination. While the EPA struggled to include this data in their larger risk assessment of neighborhood toxin exposures, the Watchperson Project initiated an educational campaign and a community garden. The garden was meant to provide an alternative source of food for the residents, ideally taking the place of some of the contaminated fish.

The Watchperson Project garden illustrates the role of urban gardening and food security in environmental justice projects. On its own, the garden can't accomplish much. It is only through its relationship to an education program, through the gradual reevaluation of a meaningful cultural habit (fishing), and its couching within a wider analysis of uneven resource distribution that it begins to offer real promise as a site for meaningful change. By providing a supply of affordable fresh produce, urban gardening addresses food security holistically, in "the societal context of poverty, illness, discrimination, and alienation in an urban context where the act of carving out a personal space is an act of defiance" (von Hassel: 116).

Non-Monetary Economies

In his catalogue of radical urban practices that "invent the future today," Chris Carlsson argues that the freely-given labor that keeps community gardens planted, watered, and weeded has the potential to shape a new class composition (2008: 95). Volunteer work "fundamentally alters the subjective experience of work" because it is a relationship defined by the satisfaction of the labor itself, the relationships it creates, and the unmediated and localized use of its products,

rather than by “coercion, by autocratic management and obedience, by the reward of wages” (95). Carlsson contends that this relationship to freely-given labor sets the foundation for working class recomposition based on non-instrumental relationships to nature, technology, and community (95). In addition to volunteer labor, barter and gift economies, seed saving, and recycling are a few other ways that urban gardeners sustain non-monetary economies, often based on careful use of scant resources and ‘closing the loop.’

Nance Klehm, a self-described “radical ecologist, designer, urban forager, grower and teacher” based in Chicago, runs a living seed archive that involves a network of people growing crops from ‘loaned’ seed, saving the next season’s seeds, and returning a quantity to the archive for further distribution. Unlike the headline-making Svalbard Global Seed Vault, opened early 2008 in Norway, the fact that “seeds are alive” is central to Klehm’s public seed archive.⁸ Seeds are recognized as a resource optimized through use, not conservation. Heirloom varieties of fruits and vegetables exist thanks to many generations of open-air pollination and seed saving, resulting in robust varieties prized for their unique, sometimes unpredictable, characteristics. The saving and sharing of organic and heirloom variety seeds is an important part of how urban gardeners create an alternative to large-scale, industrialized food production reliant on the use of synthesized fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.

Resource and skill sharing, recycling of materials, organic wastes, and excavated soil, seed saving, food donations, relationships with soup kitchens, and

⁸ See “Times Topics” section of The New York Times online for a comprehensive list of news coverage relating to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. More information about Klehm’s seed archive can be found on her website, *Spontaneous Vegetation*. (<http://spontaneousvegetation.net>).

appropriations of private property are all components of the non-monetary economies that circulate through gardening networks. Combining social justice concerns, innovative approaches to land use, and conscientious ecological interventions, these initiatives provide an important model for small-scale food production in cities that is profoundly threatening to large-scale industrialized farming.

Conclusion

As a researcher and artist entangled with the histories and politics gardening, with anticapitalist struggle, and with urban ecology, my personal stakes into this area of investigation are high. This research paper extends and is extended by a series of projects by the same name that investigate the radical potential of the actions of gardening – digging, sowing, tending, and harvesting – as they are applied to a range of projects not easily classified as “gardening.” Drawing on strategies of symbolic protest and urban intervention, one current project involves the creation of a temporary non-monetary economy based on the exchange of dirt, in the middle of Boston’s financial district.⁹

The radical politics of urban gardening emerge through its role in contestations of the private property regime, the environmental justice movement, and the creation of non-monetary economies (not to mention the creation of social centers and ecological overhauls). In preceding pages, I have argued that focusing on these connections allows us to see how gardening can be

⁹ See more information about this project, *The Little Dig*, on my website, *Scatter*. (<http://ginabadger.com>)

an important part of homegrown anticapitalist struggle here in the United States. This work is urgent because of the visibility and appeal of an already commodified version of guerilla gardening based on the hollow performance of resistant culture and misleading appropriations of the language of revolutionary warfare. Focusing too much on the roguish tactics of guerilla gardening is not necessarily doing radical politics, as some seem to think. Instead, gardeners committed to leftist struggle urgently need to strategize along with the rest of the left for a leafy green, socially progressive postcapitalist world.

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