

Living

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SOWING SEEDS

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The News

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." - Chinese proverb

Huerto Romita is a community of horticulturists and permaculturists that not only grow their own food on rooftops and backyards within Mexico City, but also spread their knowledge with members of the community.

Huerto Romita is not interested in selling you the ecological fruits and vegetables that its community members produce in their gardens. Its members would rather you learned how to do it yourself.

"The purpose is to create a community with the capacity to replicate their knowledge in their communities," said Aida Real, director of Huerto Romita.

The learning points include composting, water collection and novelties such as soap making. The group gives workshops and installs gardens in local schools and government buildings as a means of branching out and sowing green thumb know-how.

And while the word "green" or "organic" is thrown around quite haphazardly these days, Huerto Romita does not claim to produce organic food.

"We try to avoid the lexicon 'organic.' We know what organic is, and the majority of what is called organic is not," Real said.

In Mexico City, the amount of heavy metals in topsoil makes it almost impossible to reach true organic glory, said Real.

Instead the group focuses on producing "ecological food," or food grown naturally in a sustainable manner without pesticides.

In reality, USDA "organic" only refers to the process of producing food. There is no limit to how much or how

little of these heavy metals are allowed in the soil produced.

Another interesting aspect of the initiative is its involvement with the outside community. Along with Colmena Educativa, Huerto Romita installs gardens in schools, some specifically for disabled youth.

Huerto Romita is looking to educate the masses, in hopes that those youth that might be in contact with permaculture will grow into more conscious adults.

Why does Huerto Romita believe so strongly in producing their own food? There are four main reasons, according to Real.

First, it's necessary for our health. Having fresh food in our diets provides us with the nutrients we need to function well, she said.

Second, we need it for its ecological aspect.

If we can produce our own food, said Real, we will be reducing our footprint, saving on transportation and packaging, too.

Growing your own food also has a social aspect. Green spaces draw people together. Developing community gardens is important in the city because humans need contact, Real said.

"What happens in the city is that you lose contact with people. You walk and no one looks each other in the eye," said Real.

"These spaces help other human beings find other human beings. It's therapeutic."

Lastly, ecological food is economic food. You save because of what you don't have to buy. At the beginning, of course, there is an investment, but it pays for itself. After a point you can even produce enough to make money if you so choose, Real said.

"It's about what economy you want to support -- yours or theirs," Real said.

"And it's about knowing where your food comes from."



MORE INFO

HUERTO ROMITA

- For more information on how to get involved with Huerto Romita, visit www.huertoromita.com
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Huerto Romita is not interested in selling their produce, they want to teach people how to grow it.