

Promoting sustainable agricultural practices through our involvement with farmers and growers in Assam and on the west coast of Canada

Fertile Ground:

East/West Sustainability Network

Spring/Summer 2011



Sadiya School Gardens - NEADS

Gardens, School Supplies, Water Filters, Playgrounds Latrines, and more.

Prakareeti - Save Nature NGO

Samir Bordoloi & Fertile Ground hook up.

Kids To Kids Project

•Sarah Kerr
•Onyx Vaughan Ogilvie

ASP -Digboi Garden

Demonstration garden

Gossainbarie Tea Garden

The Small Tea Cooperative

Gobin Hazarika

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School Garden Project in Sadiya

As you may be aware, we started a new project in Sadiya. Your donations and support have helped make an immense difference in this isolated and poverty stricken area of Assam.

The **demonstration garden** at the NEADS centre and school has taken shape, and the first seeds we planted are sprouting! NEADS (North East Affected Area Development Society) is an NGO we've been involved with since 2001.

Women from villages in the Sadiya area are being trained as project "animators" through a new initiative aimed at families displaced due to flooding and erosion in the Brahmaputra Valley. This project is providing training in livestock management, health care, financial management – and with Fertile Ground's support - organic farming practices - to villagers living within walking distance (12 km.) of NEADS' new resource centre. Fertile Ground has also donated tools and school supplies to the project.

There's been tremendous interest and participation in compost-making by people of all ages, and we've received a lot of appreciation for providing new ideas and encouragement to families in this isolated place.



With help from Mitch, Erin (Camosun College volunteers) and village locals, Kel Kelly completed the cement work for 5 latrines and some playground equipment.



These "in situ" beds will be permanent, and demonstrate one way families can grow crops on soil which is almost entirely composed of sand.

In addition to the raised beds, we've been making compost piles in great numbers - at several village schools and at the NEADS centre. All this has required a lot of hauling and chopping - so the 4 new bicycles and wooden cart, purchased with funds donated by Cumberland Rotary Club, were very much appreciated!



School children help build and test the playground equipment at NEADS





A group of grade 9 students and their teachers at a school just outside of Jorhat are learning about organic agriculture and environmental awareness. Every Thursday, Samir Bordoloi and his assistant, Mahan Borah, spend the afternoon providing training to this amazing group of young people. The school has 5 acres of land under cultivation, and has decided to shift to organic farming practices to grow rice, beans, okra and other vegetable crops.

Samir Bordoloi is an agriculture graduate from the Jorhat area who operates a small retail outlet selling fertilizers, seeds and farming supplies. Three years ago Samir hooked up with Fertile Ground and since has established an organic vegetable outlet in the town, set up a new NGO to provide awareness and training to farmers and self-help groups, and provides information on the benefits of organic farming to a wide range of audiences – from agricultural development workers to bankers. Samir has also helped launch a Model Organic Village where training is provided to farming families, and people from nearby urban areas are invited to visit the village to enjoy traditional Assamese dishes and learn about organic farming.



Sarah Kerr and The Kids To Kids Project is working toward bringing kids in Assam and kids in Comox Valley into a friendship. This will be achieved through sharing stories and photos about their lives and their practices in environmentalism. The need for education about how we can help our environment and how to grow our own food healthily is a universal issue and this along with sharing culture is a great connection to be made between the two communities.



Workers at Gossainbarie Tea Garden are excited (and relieved) to be learning about compost tea and other alternatives to chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Gossainbarie is a large commercial state that has recently been purchased by a friend and colleague in Assam, Binod Saharia. The garden had been abandoned by the former owner, and Binod is investing a lot of time and money into converting the garden to a fully organic operation. Garden workers from the area are thrilled to be back at work, and a new fair trade tea project may be in the works!

Adarsh Seuj Prakalpa Resource Garden - Digboi Area

Chip Ross's (from Strathcona Sunrise Rotary) arrival on February 4th spurred on everyone to tidy up and finish up a number of jobs. A beautiful new metal garden gate has been fabricated and installed. The cost of the gate was covered by a contribution from Strathcona Sunrise.



Gobin Hazarika is a small-scale, independent grower that we've been working with since he started growing tea organically 10 years ago. Through Fertile Ground's partnership with "**the small tea co-operative**", some of Gobin's hand-processed tea is now being sold here in Canada. Support from the Canadian market has helped raise his profile and visibility in Assam, and resulted in media coverage and invitations to attend international trade fairs in the state and in New Delhi .

Kids To Kids founding member **Onyx Vaughan Ogilvie**, went to Assam with his mother, LeighAnn Vaughan in March. With funds Onyx had raised in Canada they purchased school supplies, sports equipment, water filters, and metal boxes to compliment the latrines, gardens, and playground equipment being built through Rotary and FG in 5 villages in the flood affected Sodiya region.



They also travelled to Jorhat with fellow board member Sarah Kerr to inaugurate Samir Bordoloi's NGO, **Prakareeti - Save Nature** "Connecting Children in Assam and Children in Canada through the love for the environment".

Join Onyx and LeighAnn at the Zocalo Cafe on Sunday June 5 at 2pm for a presentation of their amazing adventures in Assam.