

Mayor's Column
June 20, 2017

As you walk past Village Hall toward Route 22 you will notice two additions to Village property. Closest to the street is the John F. Kennedy marker, dedicated on the occasion of his 100th birthday, commemorating the 12 years he lived in our Village. The Village worked in partnership with the Bronxville Historical Conservancy, the Village of Tuckahoe who donated the majestic marble, and the Kennedy Library to craft an appropriate remembrance.

Directly behind the marker is the newest initiative of the Village's Green Committee, the Giving Garden. Under the tutelage of Green Committee Chairwoman Mary Liz Mulligan who oversees all aspects of the garden's operation from construction, site management to funding resources, and a leadership gift from our own Bronxville Rotary, the concept became a reality.

Both the JFK marker and the garden plot are in their infancy and will be landscaped, and in the case of the garden, tastefully fenced and screened when the heat of the summer is over and shrub planting becomes optimal in the cooler climate.

As background, the Village's Green Committee has viewed environmental stewardship as a broad concept not only encompassing recycling efforts, organic care for property, safe disposal of toxic materials but much beyond.

After attending a sustainability conference in Bedford, the Westchester community that is in the forefront of all things green, we were galvanized into action. At least one in five Westchester residents go to bed hungry with many others eating foods courtesy of donations and food banks. By definition, the food bank supplies must necessarily have a significant shelf life resulting in many being salt preserved or nutritionally sub-optimal.

Given that the nation has a childhood obesity epidemic combined with some of the highest percentage incidences of diabetes, the need for fresh unpreserved food is critical to the health of the next generation.

With this as an underpinning, the Bronxville Giving Garden will donate all of its harvest to local charities, literally in our backyard, on a weekly basis throughout

the growing season. Our first yield will be lettuce, radishes and arugula in about five weeks.

All of the farming is under the direction of Village resident and master gardener, Dave Phillips, who donates his time and talent as do all the Green Committee members. Scout groups and area youngsters volunteered their time to build the beds and local Village resident, Nicki Piercy Coddington, a professional graphic designer created a beautiful user friendly website, bronxvillegivinggarden.org.

It really will take a Village as going forward the garden's success will rely exclusively on donations of every variety; time, talents, tools and direct funding. So please head to our website and sign up in any way you can.

Many of our coop/apartment dwellers who miss their home gardens are signing up for real hands-on involvement. If currently making a move from house to apartment, the garden would also welcome any tools you will no longer need.

In a wonderfully heartwarming and unexpected by-product, many businesses associated with gardening have made donations. As example, a local Westchester farm, Hilltop of Hanover, not only donated dozens of starter plants but sent their farming team down as active mentors to our gardeners.

The location of the garden was chosen for a variety of environmental and strategic reasons. Our first thought was the Maltby Field area as our Girl Scout Cabin Committee, when deciding against recommending a new structure on the site, advocated for a passive park with a community garden.

However, there is no direct water line in the area necessitating a significance expense at the outset and the location, due to its distance from our Village schools, would effectively negate any involvement of our youngsters in garden learning projects.

The Village Hall site has a direct water line, proximity to our schools and the important proximity to our Public Works Department. Public Works Superintendent Wayne Ballard and his staff, many of whom are accomplished gardeners in their own right, have been invaluable aids to the garden project.

We envision the garden to be the catalyst for an array of interrelated endeavors including lectures, training, hands on learning and additional environmental projects.

The site has already become a meeting place of young and old as “Farmer Dave” reports so many people stop to lend their support, ask a few questions or simply enjoy watching the planting process.

Our website at bronxvillegivinggarden.com is fully interactive. On the site, you can sign up to volunteer by specific day and time, register for Giving Garden news, see the latest work in the photos, communicate directly, donate funds or new or used gardening tools, find helpful articles on planting in general and access our library of seasonal recipes.

When I was doing research for the annual Memorial Day address, I learned that during World War II, the Village loaned over 400 plots of municipal land for Victory Gardens. Villagers harvested and shared not only with their immediate neighbors, but all of the surrounding communities. Even the Bronxville School’s Home Ec class pitched in and canned the surplus for winter consumption.

This appears to be the case of history repeating itself in quite a wonderful way!