

# Non-Profit Happenings

## Youth Garden Project in Winter: There's Magic in the Cold, Cold Ground

by Nancy Kurtz

A succulent one and a half acres adjacent to one of Moab's busier arteries - bounded on the far side by the turf of Grand County High School - Moab's Youth Garden Project, familiarly known as YGP, hunkers in and readies for winter.



It's still warm, but the light angles in sideways and one imagines all sorts of things germinating underground as the plant stalks wither and the weather will maybe chill up and maybe there will be snow and nothing at all in the garden until spring.

But still, as autumn wends toward winter, it's a veritable oasis, right smack on the beaten path, namely the juncture of 400 East and the Mill Creek Parkway.

There are trees, sitting areas, a dome, a toolshed, an historic main building, and more.

Add the gardens and the vegetables and that's a whole lot of magic for one and a half acres. Emily Roberson, YGP's executive director, reminds me that the Youth Garden is not just a food factory, rather its stated purpose is education and one of its closest connections is with local schools from pre-school on up to graduating seniors. (Last year nearly 80 percent of Grand County's students K-12 participated in YGP's programs.)

It is also a nonprofit of substance on the Moab landscape, and even as the weather changes, there is a lot to do that keeps the six-person staff hopping.

Busy is a relative term; the staff is smaller in winter, although their responsibilities, from farm management to

community outreach, are purposeful and clearly delineated.

Summer's magic envelops a whirlwind of weed and feed events, providing food via the community CSA, donating to various pantries and food banks, bucolic garden dinners, a seed swap, summer camps, and a harvest festival, as well as the core mission of growing crops and connecting Moab's kids with the art and practice of planting food - but the relative calm of winter gives

YGP staff members a chance "to take a breather and set ourselves up for the next season."

"It takes a lot of planning and effort to make all the magic happen," Roberson exclaims, ticking off a multitude of tasks like perfecting policy, budgeting for the coming



year, recruiting summer's expanded staff, and figuring out what seeds to grow and how to rotate crops for maximum soil health, to name just a few items on the agenda.

A primary goal for December, of course, is end-of-year fundraising, and there are also Christmas gift packages you can buy, with a rosemary focaccia baking mixture, sets of herb salts, and flower seed bundles among the possible offerings this year.

From where we sit at one of many seats and benches scattered throughout the garden, the signage sweetly identifies collards and lemon balm; at the "nibble garden" off the garden path everything is also labeled and you can read about broccoli being a flower.

To get there: From 400 East, turn in at the entrance to the Grand County high school and then right into YGP's parking lot. Phone: 435-259-BEAN. For more information and ways to donate or otherwise support YGP, go to the website, [youthgardenproject.org](http://youthgardenproject.org).

And be sure to mention you read about the Youth Garden Project in *Moab Happenings*.

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Bahá'í Faith 435-650-5778	Episcopal Church of St. Francis 250 South Kane Creek Blvd 435-259-5831	Jewish Interfaith Beit Moabi 435-260-0241	River of Life Christian Fellowship 2651 East Arroyo Rd. 435-259-8308
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