

from
elaine
LEAF PRESIDENT

The number one reason I continue to volunteer at LEAF is the community of passionate gardeners at our LEAF C.R. Stone Garden. Their year-round dedication and enthusiasm never ceases to amaze me. Our gardens are a place of peace—a place for continual experimentation and learning about regenerative agriculture practices. This summer, several of us participated in the UCANR Civic Urban Farmer Program and StopWaste’s Environmental Education Training. We visited urban farms and composting sites in the Bay Area that sparked us to try new or regenerate older composting systems.

Compost is the key to building healthy soil. We currently use four composting methods; worm composting, 3 bin cold composting; biostack hot composting, and hugelkultur (slow cold composting). Each of these methods can easily be adapted to home gardens. We compost all of the plant debris, inedible produce, and even weeds in our food gardens using these four systems. We'll look at in our other composting systems in our November news.

This month I am happy to announce that we are going to build a new type of cold composter—the Johnson-Su Composting Bioreactor. This Bioreactor was introduced to us by Katie, a fellow gardening nerd from New Zealand. We are so excited that she joined our team during her sabbatical. You'll get to know Katie and the value she brings to LEAF in an interview below.



How did you find out about LEAF?

I met Mayank, one of the LEAF Board members, at a conference in New Zealand. We connected by our love of gardening and Mayank talked about his involvement with LEAF. When I came to California for a visit, he asked me what I'd like to do. He likely thought I wanted to see the San Francisco, Golden Gate Bridge or visit Stanford, but I wanted to go to LEAF! The very next morning, Mayank brought me to LEAF C.R. Stone Garden and I got a wonderful tour of the food gardens and met the LEAF Team.

Tell us what you're doing at LEAF?

Talking . . . a lot! After traveling for quite awhile, it's been a beautiful opportunity to get my hands in the dirt in a new environment. It's great to see how people in different parts of the world garden and

what's important to them. Talking to people teaches you a lot about a place and how to connect with land. I am primarily here to learn from these incredible humans about the plants that are native to this part of America. It surprised me that there were so many that I was already familiar with.

What excites you the most about the work we do?

I've been traveling the world like a nomad. And I've been to quite a few farms, but it's the combination of helping people who are passionate about growing food and helping the earth at the same time. The combination of beautiful gardens, beautiful humans, and the passion for growing food to nurture humans and growing plants to nurture bees, butterflies and microorganisms that we cannot see. All these combinations are really potent for me.

Describe your professional background.

I studied as a naturopath in New Zealand which is a combination of diet, nutrition, and herbal medicine. I also became a traditional Chinese medicine acupuncturist. I have specialized in digestive health and fertility using these different modalities. I put people on clean healthy diets for digestive problems, and sometimes they got worse. I thought, "What's going on here?" All the old school nutrition books from 50 plus years ago talk about the miraculous cure that occurs when you put them on a healthy diet. When that didn't happen, I wondered what had changed? What is happening in the environment? That's when I got interested in soil health, because soil health + nutrition = human health. I have no formal education in soil health, but I have a passion for learning how it works.

What are your favorite activities?

Anything to do with nature, including hiking, snowboarding, swimming, sailing, waterskiing, traveling, cooking for friends and family, and gardening. Fun fact—I learned to drive on a farm tractor named Lucy!

What type of gardening are you into?

I feel passionate about herbs, growing nutrient dense and critical food for humans. I've realized that it's not all about having a productive garden. There is pleasure in growing plants that are beautiful for all the inhabitants of the earth, whether those inhabitants be humans, animals, or insects.

What is your next environmental project?

I am very excited about building a Johnson-Su Composting Bioreactor at LEAF C.R. Stone Garden. It is a cold composter with a small footprint, easy to make, easy to maintain, no turning, and it produces no odors. The quality of the compost it produces is different from most backyard composting systems because it is fungally dominated.

The idea of building one came about during our lockdown in New Zealand. Instead of worrying about things like toilet paper, I was thinking about finding seeds and seedlings so I could feed people. Then

I realized I needed compost for the seedlings. In New Zealand, we have heavy clay soils with a lot of compaction. So organic material like compost is really important. This is what sparked my interest in experimenting with different types of compost. We had all the materials to make compost and, because we were in lockdown, we had time.

The Johnson-Su Composting Bioreactor was created by Dr. David Johnson of New Mexico State University and his wife. It can be built in one day, and then sits for one year. The quality of cold compost is fungally dominated which is good for plants. Hot composters have higher levels of bacteria and lower levels of fungi because bacteria can survive in higher temperatures and fungi cannot. This compost is also quite different in texture. Unlike normal compost, it has a clay-like consistency and you can add water and use it as an inoculant, add it to your soil amendments, to your compost, or directly to your beds.

If you could have the whole world's attention, what would you say?

The quality of the food you eat, really, really matters so you need to pay attention to it. The most powerful thing that you can do to change what is happening with the environment on earth today is to grow your own food. Let me know how I can help you ;)



CLICK HERE to learn more about the Johnson-Su Composting Bioreactor at Regeneration International. You can also watch their instructional video for building one below.

Get Cookin'!

OUR FAVORITE RECIPES



Arugula Salad with Shaved Parmesan

6 cups fresh arugula
1/4 cup golden raisins
1/4 cup sliced almonds, toasted
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
1/3 cup shaved or shredded Parmesan cheese

In a large bowl, combine the arugula, raisins and almonds. Drizzle with oil and lemon juice. Sprinkle with salt and pepper; toss to coat. Divide among 4 plates; top with cheese.

Enjoy!

WE'RE STILL
Talkin' DIRT

1st WEDNESDAY of
each MONTH 7-8pm

Join us **THIS WEDNESDAY** for our online gathering of gardeners hosted by Master Gardener Volunteers, Guy and Michele, along with Rebecca from LEAF. Be warned...our discussions can get a little...dirty!
Register now at fremontleaf.org/talkindirt.

OUR NEXT GATHERINGS

OCT	NOV	DEC
5	2	7



A silver metal clip is attached to the top of a brown and green badge. The badge features a logo of a green leaf above a yellow hand holding a green leaf. Below the logo, the word "LEAF" is written in white on a brown background, and "VOLUNTEER" is written in white on a green background.

Lazy Saturdays?

Get BUSY as a LEAF volunteer! On the 2nd Saturday of every month, you're invited to help us tackle projects that benefit from a group effort. To find out more information or to sign up, give us a shout at volunteer@fremontleaf.org.

If this is your first time volunteering, please complete our [Volunteer Agreement](#) and email it to the address above so we know you are interested. (Parking is limited so there is a maximum number of volunteers for each event.) Here are our next three volunteer Saturdays, weather permitting.



Help local families gain access to healthy fruit by gleaning fresh fruit from the trees in your yard. Drop your fruit off at LEAF C.R. Stone Garden on Monday and Thursday mornings from 9am to 10:30am, and we'll deliver your donations to a local food bank. We are accepting fresh fruit all year long.

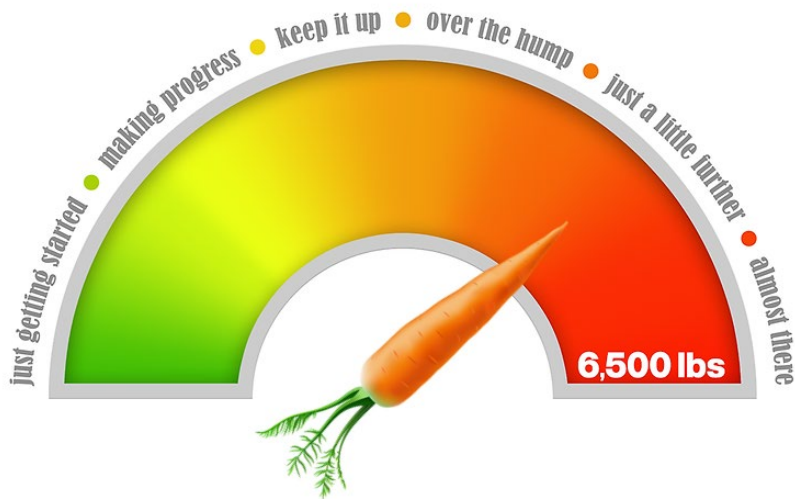
So far this year, you have donated 1371 lbs of fruit!!!

Stone Garden is located behind the Mission Valley Veterinary Clinic at 55 Mowry Ave. More info at fremontleaf.org/glean.



Donations

2022 YTD: **5,357 lbs.**



KICKSTARTER
for  **LEAF Center**

Help us protect the gardens

YOU grow at LEAF Center.

Visit fremontleaf.org/kickstarter for details.