

PDX Garden Stories

Interviews with participants in Growing Gardens Home Gardens Program Portland, Oregon

Interview with Isabel

Conducted by Cynthia Blakely

Portland State University, Urban Agriculture & Food Systems Capstone, Spring 2016

Faculty Instructor: Nathan McClintock, PhD

[0:00-3:51]Pre-interview

3:51 **Cindy:** So we're sitting here with Isabel, and we're going to talk to her about Growing Gardens. And her experience with Growing Gardens. So, hi Isabel, how are you?

4:02 **Isabel:** Hi Cindy, wonderful.

4:05 **C:** What motivated you to become part of Growing Gardens and learn how to grow your own food?

4:10 **Isabel: (Disclaimer about her English)** 4:31 Different things, different. Especially help to my husband with economical situation. In that moment we have four kids, and though they are our priority and I have in my mind like a immigrant with we come this this country because we want to make better life our kids. But what is a better life? What is a better life? To get dressed well, shoes, food, know in my mind that I think we have to work maybe in different way like society is telling us so in my mind I think they need to be to get education. If they have a good education, they will be a good citizen.

6:07 **C:** I could not agree with you more.

6:09 **I:** They solve what is the first idea to raising them, especially because is dangerous drugs, guns. Now we are having another problems. But that was the first idea. Grow happy family.

6:47 **C:** Great, so happy that you found growing gardens. and came and found the experience of raising your kids here to be beneficial and to produce and make better people for the community and society. I commend you.

7:11 **I:** So what walking in this area I found too many benefits. Like now I am crossing menopause. Sometimes the menopause you never know what will bring. Maybe depressed, maybe stress, because you get tired because every woman is different. But this problem, this activity is helping me to work and easy with this stage in my life.

8:05 **I:** Is amazing to be part of this program. I love Growing Gardens. Talk about Growing gardens, I can forget Rodney. Johnny is because he is alive in our hearts. Johnny started this program. I remember when maybe 13, 12 years ago, when our reunions were in old building and maybe two or three persons and the moment i feel like I don't to how do you say in English, [*Spanish word*] because I was the only hispanic people in there. So my English if now is bad, in that moment was terrible. I didn't understand everything. Only that I understood the seed, the plants, and we had the same passion.

9:28 **I:** So but Rodney worked a lot with this program, now we are enjoying his job. And now though the staff with he is doing with, they are working hard for people like me and I love to involve with them. I love when they ask me, "Isabel! Could you do it?" I know always when I receive some call for Growing Gardens I assume those are good things. Those are good news. I love to do it. I am enjoying a lot with part of this program because this program changed me, the life and if that program changed me, like a month alive I can change for my family and I remember few years ago my siblings they told me, "here is coming the farmer," And for that I feel is compliment. But now they are farmers too because now they are growing out their own food so

11:13 **C:** You've inspired them

11:15 **I:** Yes, they have some plots with the community gardens, the parks of recreation so now this farmer Anne is helping them to grow their own food and I am excited to inspire another people. I remind another lady who she doesn't know anything about the plants! But two years ago she started to plant her own veggies and she is very excited too. She is very happy. Growing Gardens is working with her.

12:13 **C:** They really touch a lot of people. Kind of like a spider web the way it goes out. What was the most difficult or challenging aspect of gardening for you?

12:46 **I:** Well, maybe because I work in the city so I am a city lady so I didn't know anything about growing some plants. But every year I am learning. I took a workshop, I have some material but everyday i am learning. I am sharing the workshops but I told the people this is not a class. this is a workshop and please you have to share because I come to learn about you. If you are thinking you will learn about me, I don't know. I am learning about you. Please. Share. So every day we are learning, in this area.

13:57 **C:** How have you, your family, or neighbors benefited from your garden and the program?

14:14 **I:** Well, first of all, I am growing of my own tomatoes, my own tomatillos, my own raspberries, my own blueberries so, and I freeze them. We bought like maybe fourteen years ago my freezer.

14:37 **I:** So my harvest.. the harvest is enough for share with my family, with my neighbors, with my friends. So but the rest I frozen and my kids they know when I going to the store and I buy the tomatoes or tomatillos when I prepare the sauce they say, "mom, this sauce is the flavor is different" because they have the organic flavor so is ... the head especially like I told you if you have stress if you have depress when you go to work in the garden that feelings go away. Emotionally. But physically when you do it I have to confess this: I don't like to cook but the green ones I put them in the blender. I put apple, pineapple, banana, the fruit that i have, papaya, and all the leaves that I have.

16:10 **I:** With parsley too. I use a lot the parsley because it cleans the blood. You need to see the benefits for the parsley. So I prepare my greens with smoothie with fruit and with greens. I love my smoothie green. Especially in this season.

16:35-17:40] (talking about smoothies)

17:44 **I:** My neighbors, when I started with the first raspberries or cherry tomatoes, I bring some of them, or some eggs, so yeah, I enjoy to share with them

18:10 **C:** How has your garden impacted your diet or food choices, and how do you cook your favorite vegetables?

18:25 **I:** Like I told you, I am lazy for cook, I am lazy to cook but...well I have a lot, but I prefer to eat fresh

18:40**I:** but like I told you before, I'm very excited about the *wasandales*, because we can prepare that like a chili rellenos, so it's delicious, so that makes me very happy.

19:46 **C:** What do you like most about gardening and growing food?

19:49 **I:** Everything!

19:58**I:** In this time, my husband and me all the time when we are arguing, when we come back to our job, and we have dinner, we want to earning outside and I say "Cruz, who will clean the kitchen?" he say "I don't know, I have to do something outside, I say, when? I have to work outside too, somebody needs to clean the kitchen and he says "I don't know who, because I have to work outside"...

21:26 **I:** This program is teaching the people, the workshop, I went to the office to learn about that and now I am sharing with the other people and this for me is not like a job.
[21:26-24:48] Small talk, wrapped up interview.