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Earth-Day Film & Discussion

"Can You Dig This" on April 22, 2016, Asheville, NC

Press Release:

Gillian Scruggs, Program & Outreach Coordinator
Organic Growers School
gillian@organicgrowersschool.org

For Immediate Release



Asheville, NC: Organic Growers School is teaming up with Bountiful Cities, Green Opportunities, and Asheville GreenWorks for a screening of the recent film "Can You Dig This," featuring renowned "gangster gardener" Ron Finley. "Can You Dig This" will screen on Earth Day, Friday, April 22, 2016 at The Boardroom (2nd floor) at Lenoir-Rhyne University, Asheville Campus, 36 Montford Avenue, in Asheville NC. The doors will open at 5:30pm with the film starting at 6:00pm. There will be a community discussion after the screening. Cost is by donation at the door. No advance sales. First come first served. The film focuses on the urban gardening movement taking root in South Los Angeles – one of the largest food deserts in the country – where people are planting food and changing their own lives in the process.

The Earth Day film event is intended to inspire the community to "Get Growing" in their own yards and community gardens. Additionally the partnership will provide an opportunity to introduce four local nonprofit organizations who are working within sustainable agriculture and urban food systems. The four organizations presenting this event (Organic Growers School, Bountiful Cities, Green Opportunities, and Asheville GreenWorks) are all dealing with the complex issues facing regional food and farming systems in Western NC. They are working internally and collectively towards educating the public and influencing local government about sustainable solutions and share in common the desire for regional food sovereignty, food democracy, food justice, and food security for all.

The film will highlight that there are plenty of benefits to having urban food systems and green spaces in cities: they're beautiful, they provide habitats for pollinators and birds, they catch storm water run-off, and they bring people together. Recent studies in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Youngstown, Ohio suggest that they may also help reduce crime. Urban

sociologist Jane Jacobs asserted an "Eyes on the street" theory: "well-kept lawns and community plots encourage more people to spend time outside in those spaces, leading to a greater degree of informal surveillance of the area and deterring crime."

On top of reducing crime, turning vacant land into gardens could provide solutions to some of Asheville's food deserts. According to the [Appalachian Foodshed Project](#), 14.4% of Buncombe county's population is "food insecure". 8.65% of the population is considered "Low Income and Low Store Access". Although Asheville is widely regarded as "Foodtopia" by the Asheville Convention and Visitors Bureau, Asheville has multiple food deserts that often align with the city's public housing developments. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's describes "food deserts" as "urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy and affordable food. Instead of supermarkets and grocery stores, these communities may have no food access or are served only by fast-food restaurants and convenience stores that offer few healthy, affordable food options. The lack of access contributes to a poor diet and can lead to higher levels of obesity and other diet-related diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease."

Gillian Scruggs, OGS Program and Outreach Coordinator and Project Conserve AmeriCorps Service Member explains her inspiration behind showing "Can You Dig This," "In my AmeriCorps service with Organic Growers School I am personally working to continue my understanding and engagement with issues of race, food policy and land access. At the beginning of my service term I attended the Bioneers Conference session 'Food, Race, and Justice' at Lenoir Rhyne. I felt inspired to address my own misconceptions about privilege and to dive deeper into the history of food systems in Asheville. I hope this film and community discussion will continue to help bring issues to the surface about food equity and urban gardening, and I'm proud to have the support of some of the nonprofits who are doing work on the ground everyday supporting this program."

The film's central figure, Ron Finley, a "gansta gardener" from South Central Los Angeles has gotten a lot of acclaim for his renegade "guerrilla gardening" tactics of turning vacant lots and sidewalks into green space and urban farms. Finley's goal is to have people growing food for themselves and their neighbors rather than merely bringing in more grocery stores to communities. "People don't have any skin in the game. I want people to have some kind of hand in their food. I don't care how rich you are, if you don't have a hand in your food, you're enslaved," he said. Finley is an executive producer and one of the featured gardeners of "Can You Dig This".

For more information about the Earth Day Film or Get Growing contact gillian@organicgrowersschool.org or visit Organic Growers School's website www.organicgrowersschool.org.

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Organic Growers School is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with a mission to inspire, educate, and support people to farm, garden, and live organically. Organic Growers School is the premier provider of practical organic education in the Southern Appalachians. OGS envisions a mutually supportive network of prosperous farmers, productive gardeners and informed consumers engaged in creating healthy communities.

Organic Growers School's "Get Growing" program is a public awareness campaign designed to support home and community growers in western NC through education, consulting, support, and networking to build their confidence, skill, and motivation. Gillian will host educational events designed to educate, inspire, and support the average person to re-engage with growing and to repopulate their daily lives with home-grown food. The campaign will mimic the "Victory Garden" movement to establish western NC as a region committed to regional food systems, small-scale agriculture, and a food and growing-literate population.

Organic Growers School • PO Box 17804 • Asheville, NC 28816

<http://www.organicgrowersschool.org>

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