



## TAG Farm Spotlight: Truly Living Well Natural Urban Farms

**K**. Rashid Nuri and his team first broke ground for this innovative urban farm in the spring of 2006. The company is Rashid's brainchild, and he brings to the project almost 40 years of agricultural education and experience, including work in over 35 countries on a variety of agricultural projects. Rashid is a Georgia Organics board member and a part of the Atlanta Local Food Initiative.

The origins of Truly Living Well Natural Urban Farms date back more than 40 years to Rashid's undergraduate years at Harvard College. There was a full working farm in the middle of a Boston suburb that had been in existence since 1884, and Rashid thought it a great idea at the time. His first job out of college was installing organic community gardens in San Diego County, California. He then spent his professional life studying agricultural systems, and learning how food is produced and distributed throughout the world. Urban farms are an essential element of local food economies in all the countries he has lived and worked in Asia and Africa, and he brings this background to his work.

Truly Living Well Natural Urban Farms (TLW) grows food on multiple sites in the Atlanta metropolitan area. TLW creates uniquely urban farms that meet the fresh food needs of families in the local Atlanta community. The objective is to bring nutritionally rich fresh-picked produce to local residents through this community supported agriculture (CSA) project. TLW has developed a model for urban agriculture that combines elements of health, nutrition, food production, community work, and social service.

"Urban agriculture topples the myth that food production has to occur in wide-open spaces on large tracts of land," Rashid explains. "Local food economies create enterprises that grow, handle, process, and sell food produced in the local urban area. This results in local food production that minimizes costs while maximizing the freshness, quality, and vitality of the food. Urban agriculture is part of a growing trend toward locally produced food that allows consumers to know where food comes from and who actually grows it."

**The mission of Truly Living Well Natural Urban Farms is to:**

- Serve people who want to eat healthy, nutritious food
- Provide the local community with fresh, chemical-free fruit and vegetables
- Demonstrate the economic viability of sustainable agricultural methods for small urban farm operations



**Students at work in one of the beds at the Truly Living Well Urban Farm**

- Research and interpret the connections between food, land stewardship and community well-being
- Nurture the human spirit through personal care, educational programs and public service activities
- Create educational programs that reach as many people as possible



**Learning by doing: Students from the Piedmont Park Conservancy get hands-on training from Truly Living Well volunteers**

Techniques employed by TLW are unique to the urban environment. According to Rashid, the fundamental underlying principle is simple: "TLW makes dirt; God grows the food." Their focus is always on improving soil quality. Copious amounts of organic material and compost are consistently added to the soil. "Healthy soil creates healthy plants that people can eat to maintain individual health," says Rashid. Semi-permanent beds are tilled only once, when they are initially established. This allows the micro flora and micro fauna to thrive enriching the soil with micronutrients.

**Other TLW cultivation practices include the following:**

- Only natural soil enhancements and materials derived from plant sources are utilized.
- All seed planted is open-pollinated or from heirloom varieties. No hybrid seed is planted. Seed comes from growers using organic/natural growing techniques.
- Insect and pest control methods are sustainable.
- Biodiversity in each field, coupled with natural soil enhancements, minimizes susceptibility to crop damage.
- Herbs and flowers provide balance to the ecosystem.
- Flowers and herbs are strategically located to recall native birds to their original migration patterns and native insects to help pollinate fruits, vegetables, and wild berries.

Marketing at TLW has some interesting wrinkles that distinguish it from other farms. Most of the food produced is sold through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscriptions. When the new company began production in the middle of spring, it could not collect money in advance of the season as most CSA operations do, so they began selling subscriptions on a revolving basis. Subscribers are provided a card that entitles them to thirteen food pickups at times of their own choosing. It is not a “use it or lose it” proposition. Secondly, TLW does not pack a box of food. Since some people like okra and others don’t, whatever produce is available is laid out each week and subscribers are allowed to select what they want to take home. This built-in flexibility has proven an invaluable marketing tool.

Since its inception, TLW has:

- Acquired four farm sites in metropolitan Atlanta
- Planted and harvested over 50 varieties of fruits and vegetables
- Marketed and fulfilled 120 Community Supported Agriculture subscriptions
- Sold produce to local stores and restaurants
- Conducted educational tours of farm sites
- Organized and participated in state and national outreach seminars
- Provided consultative services to individuals and companies
- Developed and marketed added value products such as compost tea and seedlings

TLW wants to develop 40 acres of urban land in food and fruit trees. There are multitudes of challenges to this objective. It is essential to manage this growth process effectively so that the company does not over-stretch its financial and operational resources. TLW production techniques distinguish the company



Fruits of the harvest: CSA pick up day

from its competitors, so maintaining high standards and creating quality products is essential. As the company grows, it is critical that TLW continue to bring in quality customers and not just chase volume. This will ensure profitability and enable the company to avoid the price wars inherent in managing high volume, low price customers.

For more information visit [www.trulylivingwell.com](http://www.trulylivingwell.com) or contact Rashid Nuri at 404.520.8331; [admin@trulylivingwell.com](mailto:admin@trulylivingwell.com).

To learn more about Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) visit [www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml](http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml) and [www.attra.org/attra-pub/csa.html](http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/csa.html).

## It's Green, It's Local, It's Organic—It's Field of Greens

*Grow it and they will come...*

Come on down to the Field of Greens, a full day celebration of farm, food and fun at Whippoorwill Hollow Organic Farm in Walnut Grove on Saturday, November 15, 2008.

### Activities include:

- Chef demonstrations using the best in locally grown and organic food
- Tasty tastes and delectable bites from our restaurants and caterers and stores
- Farmers’ market with local organic vegetables and flowers
- Art Fair featuring local artisans
- Gardening demonstrations
- Information on local green energy and recycling from area green businesses
- Children’s activities and family events such as pony rides, face painting, arts and crafts and more
- Raffle and giveaway prizes

Whippoorwill Hollow Organic Farm is a 74 acre certified organic family farm run by Andy and Hilda Byrd, located 35 miles east of Atlanta, in Walnut Grove ([www.whippoorwillhollowfarm.com](http://www.whippoorwillhollowfarm.com)).

Cost is \$3 for adults, or free with purchase of food tickets. Children under 12 free. Festival on the Farm will be open from 11 am to 5 pm. Event proceeds will benefit Georgia’s local organic farming community and Slow Food Atlanta ([www.slowfoodatlanta.org](http://www.slowfoodatlanta.org)).

For more information, including vendor and sponsorship opportunities, visit [www.fieldofgreensgeorgia.org](http://www.fieldofgreensgeorgia.org) or contact Lee Goldsmith at FIG Entertainment, 404.371.4344.