

# How to Grow Your Own Food - Haiti 2010

by Dave Heath



After many years of looking at problems in Haiti, one thing kept coming up - hunger. The need for food has always been the primary issue in Haiti for the people. They never have enough food, or if the food is there, the cost is prohibitive. So this year Ben Adkins, Director of World Radio, decided to do something about it. He sent Lucner Pierre and me to training for "Square Root Gardening." I know how to garden, but this way is different and more productive for third world countries.

Lucner and I went to training and learned that you can grow your own food in six inches of soil with compost that you acquire from what you already have on hand. Since Haiti has so much trash that can be turned into compost, the idea was to teach the locals how to go about using what they have an abundance of - trash.

The day before the first class, I had a young Haitian build the gardening box for me while I watched. The box was made from pallets. This would allow the participants to think of how they can get wood to build their box. Once it was finished it looked great. Then the retaining wall for the vertical growth produce was made from another pallet. The box had handles on it from the extra wood so it could be moved during the rainy season.

The first day of class produced so many questions. "How do we do this or that?" "What about this or that?" After answering all the questions that we could, we ended the class and

there was so much gratitude from the participants. I thought, *boy, the class tomorrow is going to be great!* The most important questions were about the seeds. The next project is to obtain seeds and send them to Haiti. Think about it - a package of seeds costs almost nothing for us and they can't get any! Boy, what a new project!

So on the second day my hand was shaken off from the gratitude after the end of class. Again there were many questions and most about the seeds. This class caught on right away and understood what was being taught. They must have been told a little from the first class.

One of the really neat things was the trash. Each day at the hotel there is a person that sweeps up all the leaves and branches that fall overnight. Then he combines it with the trash from the kitchen and takes it out to be burned. I had him bring in the wheelbarrow on both days of class and I showed them what compost is, what they are burning and throwing away every day. Boy did that sink in like a rock in water. They just stared and I could see those wheels turning. They now had ideas they could use. They now knew not to throw away the most valuable

thing each day - compost or as they knew it "Kompost".

By the end of the seminar I knew we had reached them by the questions they were asking. Another question that kept coming up in each class was: *What about insecticide?* They use DDT and I absolutely told them not to use that product. *Then what can we use?* they asked. Well, I did not have a good answer because how do you describe a marigold plant when a person has never seen one? (Marigolds can be used as a moderate insecticide.) They knew peppers work a little, but what is a marigold? So with each packet we send we need to include several marigold plant seeds.

I anticipate this program is going to change many lives and open up new ideas for the Haitians. They now can see that their trash does not have to be thrown in the streets but can be used to grow the most needed and wanted item in Haiti - FOOD!

We had two days of classes with over 200 people in attendance. They had so many questions. The idea of growing their own garden was completely new to them. I felt the classes were very successful. Now we wait and see if it works!

