



THE Garden's EDGE

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 The Garden's Edge  @thegardensedge



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You are all amazing! You help us grow and serve more people each year. Thank you for partnering with us.

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Dear Garden's Edge Family,

It's hard to believe another year has passed! I write this letter with so much hope in my heart after an amazing, albeit difficult and overwhelming year. We had more people than ever attend our workshops in the U.S., reconnecting to a way of life that is more respectful to the earth, air, sun, and water that we depend on for our existence.

I have had the incredible honor of watching Qachuu Aloom grow from just two people in 2003 to three, twelve, and now over 500. Our work reaches far beyond Guatemala as we share seeds and farming practices and build friendships across the U.S., continuing an age-old practice of cultural exchange.

It isn't always easy, but it is always worth it. Earlier this year, visa politics nearly kept two amazing young women from Qachuu Aloom from furthering their education at the University of New Mexico. But we got through it. Josselin Chun is continuing her undergraduate degree and Olga Burrero had

"Qachuu Aloom members return to Guatemala after cultural exchanges with renewed motivation to heal their land, save their seeds, and work to bring back healthy communities."

the opportunity to attend a summer class as part of her studies in traditional medicine. As we grow and change as an organization, I love to watch these young leaders emerge. In this newsletter, Josselin shares her story, as well as that of Qachuu Aloom member, Encarnation Piox Tecu.

Encarnation's story is representative of many of the women at Qachuu Aloom. It begins with a life deeply connected to the earth that has been ripped apart by civil war, the colonial practice of *fincas*, and now the pressure of the modern world. Through her work with Qachuu Aloom, Encarnation is able to begin to reconnect true food sovereignty and community building.

I often hear that Qachuu Aloom members return to Guatemala after cultural exchanges with renewed motivation to continue healing their land, saving their seeds, and working to bring back healthy communities. The exchanges that we create help in some



small way to change the story of western development models that think they always have the right answers.

We offer an opportunity to learn from each other as a global community, respect and listen to each other, and reflect on our experiences. We thank you for your support and partnership in making these changes as we work to create a more just world.

Maltiox Chawé' | Gracias | Thank you
--Sarah Montgomery

Nutrition Project - By the Numbers

In 2017, the Garden's Edge and Qachuu Aloom continued to address childhood malnutrition and maternal health. Many Qachuu Aloom youth and Garden's Edge Scholarship students participate in the program with the nutritionist and learn valuable skills.

This year, the project has had a wide-spread impact, thanks to generous supporters and donors like you.

115 Children under 5 years old	75 Mothers
120 Students	2 Local schools
10 Quachuu Aloom youth health promoters	∞ Recovered knowledge in traditional healing and medicinal plants



Josselin Chun

I was born in Guatemala and grew up in a small village helping my parents, who grew corn and coffee. They later joined Qachuu Aloom, where they learned new gardening techniques. I received a scholarship for high school in Guatemala from the Garden's Edge. Through my cultural exchange, I visited some Pueblos in New Mexico, and I found them very interesting because they have their own native languages like we do.

After my cultural exchange, Sarah and her family invited me to live with them and helped me go to college. I grew up speaking Spanish and Achi, the Mayan language spoken in my town, so before I could go to UNM, I needed to learn English! I was able to do that through UNM and now I am able to help translate things in three different languages and continue my education at UNM. Through my experiences, I have traveled to many different communities to share knowledge and plant Amaranth, learned many things, and been able to share my story.



"One of my greatest joys is to be able to garden with my family. Thanks to Qachuu Aloom, I am now able to work from home and no longer depend on seasonal work in the fincas."

-Encarnacion Piox Tecu

Encarnacion Piox Tecu

by Josselin Chun, based on an interview with Encarnacion

Encarnacion's story of self-sufficiency involves a difficult past. Her husband was killed in Guatemala's Civil War. As a single mother, she had to go to the *fincas*, typically owned by U.S. companies, where families migrate seasonally to pick coffee or bananas, to support her children.

Encarnacion still remembers the terror and sadness of the war - the screams from people's houses. It is the most difficult event that ever happened in her life and is her greatest fear. Encarnacion says that Qachuu Aloom gives widows like her the opportunity to share stories and discuss these painful memories openly. She says that the war created fear in the community even after it ended, but that Qachuu Aloom is a welcoming place that changes the lives of many people through its work.

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Jose Miguel Gomez

The coordinator of Qachuu Aloom's Nutrition Project is the child of a wealthy Guatemalan family that owns *fincas*. But Jose Miguel has dedicated his life to living simply and giving back to the people of his country. He volunteers tirelessly at Qachuu Aloom and in other Guatemalan villages and *finsa* towns, teaching about food sovereignty, maternal health, and nutrition. He shares his thoughts in the beautiful poem below, which brings awareness to the important ongoing struggle that we continue to participate in to transform our reality.



For more stories and messages from Qachuu Aloom members and supporters, visit our Blog: www.gardensedge.org/blog

And So It Was at the End

A poem by Jose Miguel Gomez

And so it was at the end...
Those who dreamed and fought for another more just, more tender world...we lost.
From the beginning of time we were losing and this time was not going to be the exception.
There were also those who lost themselves on the path.
When they came very close to power, they became addicted to dominate and accumulate.
But there were those who followed the path, like little ants, doing what they could every day.
Although we were clear that eminently we had been defeated,
We also knew that we did not waste our time.
We learned to live with open eyes, to love and build good vibrations in a world so destructive.
Even though we had to learn that the devastation was unstoppable and irreversible,
We learned we could transform our small environments
And we were happy in our present because we walked in tenderness,
Knowing that we did not carry the tremendous weight of exploitation
And destruction of so many species, people, and forms of life on our backs.
And the day we died, in spite of everything...we left in peace,
Because we knew that at that moment, we were returning to the sweet belly of our Mother Earth.

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Join us at Qachuu Aloom!

We invite you to join us and Qachuu Aloom in Guatemala this spring!

Please join us for this opportunity to experience our work first hand. Visit our gardens of hope and meet the families who are building a true food and seed revolution.

The trip will include:

- A visit to La Puya to learn about the 5-year struggle to block the Tambor Gold Mine.
- A remembrance ceremony on the banks of the Chixcoy reservoir for families who lost their lives and loved ones in the Rio Negro Massacre in 1983.
- Stay in Rabinal and learn about Qachuu Aloom's work helping families rebuild food sovereignty, traditional seed systems, and strong communities since the Civil War.

#seedtravels

This year we continued our work planting Amaranth gardens and sharing seed and stories in 7 gardens in California and New Mexico.

While harvesting Amaranth in San Diego, just a few miles from the U.S./Mexico border wall, a symphony of immigration helicopters circled our heads. But as our hands touched the tiny seeds, we began to heal and remember the strength that comes from community. Seed saving is an important act of freedom and sovereignty and as we share seeds across borders and work together to care for them, we build new relationships and stronger food systems.

One of the new gardens we worked with this year was Tres Hermanas Refugee Farm, a project of Lutheran Family Services that works with refugees from Africa and Afghanistan. Sharing seeds and recipes was a wonderful way to connect and find similarities between our different cultures. One similarity was a love for Amaranth, known in Swahili as Linga Linga.

There was a lot of laughter, and some tears, as people remembered wars and countries left behind. Some people had carried seeds in their pockets through refugee camps and across the ocean. The seeds carry hope, remind us of home, and connect us in a way that words cannot.

Follow [#seedtravels](#) on social media and check out [www.seedtravels.org](#) for more about this project. You can also find a recipe we shared, Amaranth Torta, at the Garden's Edge Blog!



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Dates: March 11-18, 2018 (optional 2-day visit to Antigua at the end of the trip)

Cost: \$1,200 (includes meals, stay, and travel in Guatemala, but *not* airfare to Guatemala)

Contact: Sarah (sarah@gardensedge.org) for more information or to sign up!

Traditional Medecine

As part of our maternal health project and partnership with Arlo Starr and Monica Lucero of First Traditions Medicine, two women from Qachuu Aloom attended a Traditional Medicine course at UNM last July. Olga and Valentina both taught and participated in the course. They learned about native plants, making medicines, and a wide range of natural and indigenous healing techniques. They are putting these skills to practice in Guatemala by:

- Building a medicinal plant garden at Qachuu Aloom
- Conducting exchanges with midwives to learn and share knowledge
- Investigating plants to help with stomach infections and other ailments that effect childhood malnutrition
- Teaching families how to plant and use and herbs and medicines in their home gardens



Our Mission

The Garden's Edge supports sustainable agriculture, micro-enterprise, and education in rural communities in order to revitalize cultural knowledge and improve economic well-being.

How We Work

We focus our work in the following areas through our on-the-ground partner, **Qachuu Aloom**, a Mayan run organization in Guatemala.

• Maternal Health & Nutrition

Nutrition screenings for babies, pregnant mothers, and children under five help detect and treat malnutrition and provide long-term solutions.

• Micro-Enterprise

Very small loans help stimulate economic growth by providing the necessary resources to start small businesses or improve homes and gardens.

• Scholarships

Our scholarships allow young women to overcome widespread illiteracy and gain skills to share with their community and support their families.

• Seed Saving

Seed saving helps maintain biological diversity and traditional plant species, while contributing to community economic well-being.

• Seed Travels

We work to document the spread of Qachuu Aloom's Amaranth to people across the globe. Amaranth symbolizes our connections to the land, our food, and each other.

• Sustainable Farms & Gardens

Small-scale agriculture in rural communities promotes healthy eating, seed saving, traditional agricultural practices, and economic development.

• Farmer Exchanges

We love to share our experiences with interested organizations through farmer trainings and exchanges.

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