



*Make the earth say beans*

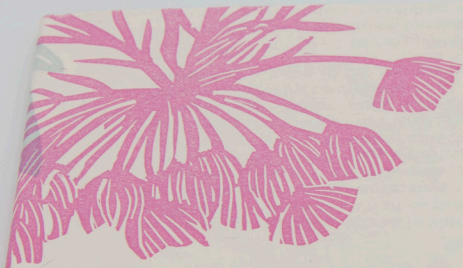


Around the corner from where I have lived for the last fourteen years is a narrow plot of land between two homes called the Maple Street Community Garden. Measuring 6000 square feet, the garden is on a block mainly made up of single family homes, in a neighborhood in central Brooklyn called Prospect Lefferts Gardens. It's a part of what used to be called Flatbush, a conglomeration of different smaller housing developments that once was a Dutch farming colony, then a town, then a part of the city of Brooklyn. Today it's a leafy neighborhood on the east side of Prospect Park.



Community gardens in New York began spreading in the 70's and 80's as residents and activists took it upon themselves to rehabilitate and improve real estate abandoned in the wake of white flight and the drying up of public investment in cities. Starting in the Lower East Side in Manhattan, squatters moved into empty buildings and renovated them into livable homes. Members of the Green Guerillas started throwing

seed bombs — packets of fertilizer, seeds, and water — over the fences of vacant lots in the East Village. Empty plots of land were adopted by local residents to make green space for their communities to come together and grow food and flowers. Community gardens spread across the city, and today they account for more than 100 acres of public open space in the city.



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