



## **Maine man renews call for Victory Gardens**

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Roger Doiron of Scarborough has a message for Barack Obama: “Eat the view.”

The idea is simple: Replant a Victory Garden at the White House and eat what is produced.

Doiron planted the seed a year ago by starting Eat the View: The White House Organic Garden Campaign at [www.eattheview.org](http://www.eattheview.org). Just before the inauguration, the campaign won an online vote for the best idea at [www.OnDayOne.org](http://www.OnDayOne.org).

The proposal is to change the First Lawn into the First Garden, one that grows organic produce to feed the first family and supply nearby food pantries with any excess bounty.

A lot could be grown on the 18 acres surrounding the White House. Doiron said the resources are there, including a 13-person grounds crew who could do “less lawn mowing and a little more weeding and harvesting.”

This garden plot is another way for the Obamas to lead the nation, Doiron said, even though it may seem like a “small and trivial” concept to some.

“We can’t roll the clock back to some quaint time,” Doiron said last week. “This is a symbolic gesture. It would make a statement about food.”

And it would offer Americans a prime example about growing one’s own food, in which Doiron is a fervent believer.

Founder of the nonprofit Kitchen Gardeners International ([www.kitchengardeners.org](http://www.kitchengardeners.org)) in 2003, Doiron, 42, has built a network of 10,000 gardeners from 100 countries who believe that growing as much of your own food as possible makes the world a better place in a diverse number of ways.



*[www.foodandsocietyfellows.org](http://www.foodandsocietyfellows.org)*



As the decades pass, fewer people are planting vegetable gardens. “Many Americans are several generations removed from growing their own food,” Doiron said.

While the know-how is still out there, it needs to be passed on, he said. KGI was created to do just that, saving that knowledge and encouraging beginners and old-timers around the globe in growing some of their own produce. From backyards to schoolyards to retirement-home yards, Doiron would like to see vegetable gardens everywhere.

It is a simple wish: Save us and the world, too.

In the U.S., food travels farther now from farm to plate than ever before.

Couple that with the current financial crisis, the instability of fuel prices and alarming environmental crises and food-borne illnesses and there is even more reason to encourage people to grow more of their own food.

As an example, Doiron used his third of an acre in suburban Scarborough to point out that even here in short-season Maine, a person can grow a substantial amount of produce on a small stamp of land.

Doiron and his wife, Jacqueline, decided to tally their entire harvest for 2008. “It proved to be rather complex,” he said with a laugh.

Everything — except what might have been snacked on while at work in the garden, of course — was weighed and measured for the experiment.

With an outlay of about \$100 for seeds, Doiron estimated that they grew \$2,200 to \$2,400 worth of produce. The high-end number would be more in line with farmers market prices, he said.

As January progressed, he, his wife and three boys still were eating from last summer’s harvest: potatoes, cabbage, garlic, onions and winter squash, for example. Frozen items included tomato sauce and basil pesto.

Many people say they don’t have time to tend a garden, but Doiron said that knowing where his food is grown and how it is grown is of great importance to him and his family.

“We look at this as a priority for us,” he said. “You find time for the things that are important in life. This can be up on the list of priorities.”

There are other benefits, too. He doesn’t need to pay for a gym membership to stay fit or for a club membership for recreation. “This is my form of recreation,” Doiron said.



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Plus, the whole family can participate in the process, from planting to harvesting to cooking.

“I am the father of three boys who have had the good fortune to grow up in and around gardens,” he said. “They know where their food comes from.”

Doiron also believes that Maine, with its deep agricultural roots and independent ways, has something to share with the rest of the United States.

“I’d like to see the country become more like Maine,” he said, “if that’s possible.”

KGI also wants to share it with the world, passing the hat to its members to fund a small grant program that provides seed money, literally, for people to grow vegetable gardens at home and abroad. Last year, Doiron said, KGI sent money to Kenya with bushels of results.

For Doiron, every little bit makes a difference.

We all should eat the view.

