

Interest in urban farming has grown tremendously in recent years, and our July speaker, Lara Hermanson, of Farmscape, shared her experiences as a successful entrepreneur in the field, with examples from home gardens to major residential developments, restaurants, and corporate campuses. Currently the largest urban farming company in America, Farmscape is run by



Photo courtesy of speaker.

Hermanson and three other principals, with their mission being to connect city dwellers with fresh, organic produce through a network of urban farms, while creating economically viable opportunities for the new generation of farmers. With offices in Oakland and Los Angeles, they presently employ 35 full-time staffers and manage over 700 urban farms, with plans for expansion into San Jose and Sacramento.

Hermanson provided a brief overview of Farmscape's business model consisting of design consultation, site selection, crop guides and farm business plans. She then moved on to talk about their services, which include hands-on soil management, irrigation installation, planting, harvesting and on-going maintenance. Farmscape

installs custom-designed, raised-bed vegetable gardens with their own tested organic soil blend and drip irrigation, tailored to meet the needs of each client's site, whether large or small. This segued into Hermanson's slide presentation of various installations with their challenges and solutions, including the following.

“The Farm” at L.A.’s Jonathan Club

Installed in 2011 in tubs laid out on the club's rooftop, early challenges included having to hand-pollinate vegetables until insects found their way to the garden, as well as convincing members that the produce was safe to eat. In 2017, the gardens are attracting natural pollinators and the restaurant downstairs marks their daily menu with selections that are “home grown” on site.

Swagelok industrial park in Fremont

Using the grounds surrounding all four sides of the industrial park, food grown on-site is made available at a weekly “Farmer’s Market” to employees of the park. Typical of larger Farmscape installations, this project also includes a year-round orchard that yields a variety of crops monthly. Hermanson also noted that the business across the street liked the project enough to “mirror” it on their own property.

“Faithful Farm” - Levi’s Stadium in S.F.

At 9 stories high, and containing 6,000 square feet of production space, this corporate project had many unusual parameters. The food and cut flowers are grown on this rooftop in a special soil mix that incorporates BioChar (incinerated plant matter) because it is lightweight and utilizes less soil,

water and fertilizers. Everything that is harvested is used by the community in the stadium below (on-site personnel, press box, security and visiting school kids) - all the responsibility of one full-time gardener, who maintains, harvests and does on-going research.

Hermanson showed several other Farmscape projects, but closed with the company's goals for the future with their “Agrihood” platform for urban farming. The concept involves new and refurbished developments electing to install urban farms in place of traditional landscaping and pools or tennis courts, to be able to offer healthy food to a greater diversity of socio-economic groups. She also offered some solutions for home gardeners and answered a variety of questions from the audience. For more information on Hermanson and Farmscape's activities, please visit their website at: www.farmscapedgardens.com.

🌀 Sabine Steinmetz

SCHS 2017 INTERN REPORT

SCHS recently received a written report on the latest horticulture internship we sponsored. Intern Andrey Yun worked at the Virginia Robinson Gardens in Beverly Hills during the spring of 2017. He propagated plants from cuttings and replanted several areas in the garden, and learned proper pruning techniques for roses and camellias.

We are pleased to report that he must have done a great job, because his internship lead to his acquiring a full time gardening position at Virginia Robinson Gardens. Way to go, Andrey!

🌀 Laura Bauer

SHARING SECRETS

Last month we asked members whether we should continue with this feature, as participation has dropped significantly during the last year.

Here is what we have learned from your responses, plus our answers:

- Members want to keep this feature, but there is some uncertainty about how, where and when to submit responses, and where to find the question for the month.

- The question is always posted in the monthly newsletter on Page 1, in the contents section below the SCHS banner, both in the print and on-line versions.

- The deadline is posted in the same section, and has been extended to be the Monday following the general meeting.

- Answers of any length may be shared by e-mail at: gardensbysabine@aol.com OR on-line at: www.schs.org, where a drop-down menu at the top includes a Sharing Secrets tab.

- Beginning with the August meeting, we will also pass out 3" x 5" cards with the current question, so members may answer that evening, or take cards home as a reminder if they wish to have time to respond over the following weekend.

We look forward to reading your responses to this month's question:

What plant do you love or hate more than any other?

🌀 Thank you! Sabine Steinmetz