

## **HAVANA, October**

Just Food City Farms Program Manager Kathleen McTigue went to Havana, Cuba in October along with Bronx Community Gardener and activist, Karen Washington, to have a learning exchange with Havana urban farmers. Havana has long been known for its advanced urban farming environment, enabling its local residents to benefit directly from their own high quality, organically grown food. Kathleen and Karen learned that New York City and Havana urban farmers each have special strengths and can learn from one another.



They noted that Havana small scale urban farming is very creative. Permaculture is the norm, with gardeners utilizing a wide variety of nooks and crannies from tires to old pots and pans for plantings. There's no garbage, because everything's recycled, as a planter or other necessity. Seemingly every available space and container is appreciated as a place to grow food.

NYC urban farmers have some important ideas to share with their Cuban counterparts. We have developed creative water collection systems in our gardens, while our Havana friends have relied on the rain and access to scarce public water, with no collection systems in place.

The attitude of urban farmers there is different from our city farmers. There, everyone in every neighborhood was affected by severe food shortages. So every resident tends to look at their food growing more readily as a real necessity -- the primary source of fresh food and sustenance.

Within the city of Havana there are also large scale urban farms. This land was set aside by the government specifically for local food production.

With scarce water in Havana, and too much garbage in NYC, and with 1.6 million people needing emergency food assistance in our town, there's clearly much we can learn from each other.

For information on educational trips to learn more about urban agriculture, See Global Exchange: [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org).