

BROOKLYN BOTANICAL GARDEN

Speakers: Ashley Gamell, Scot Medbury, Sonal Bhatt, Chadie Duke
(ph)

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>> ASHLEY GAMELL: Before the Children's Garden, I never knew where vegetables came from. I just thought veggies came from the store.

My name is Ashley Gamell (ph). I am currently an instructor at the Children's Garden.

>> SCOT MEDBURY: Brooklyn Botanical Garden is home to the oldest children's garden in a botanic garden in the world. I am Scot Medbury, President of Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

The Children's Garden is sort of an urban farm for kids where children learn to grow vegetables.

>> SONAL BHATT: Our kids in the Children's Garden really get to do the work. They are actually the ones who till the soil, mulch, plant the seeds.

My name is Sonal Bhatt and I am the VP of Education and Interpretation here at Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

The Children's Garden was one-of-a-kind when it was made 100 years ago and today it still remains a model around the world for how children's programming and gardens should be done.

>> SCOT MEDBURY: The Children's Garden is a beautiful introduction to a wealth of environmental issues and concerns and we are partly raising environmentally literate citizens through this program.

Children who have had the experience of working in the Children's Garden learn the value of clean air, of clean water.

>> ASHLEY GAMELL: When the children walk into the Children's Garden it's amazing to see them experience it just like I did a

few years ago, making a hole in the ground, putting the seeds in, watering it, and seen it grow.

>> CHADIE DUKE: I was eleven years old when I started in the Children's Garden. Having my own plot in the garden was a new experience for me because I've never had anything to care for you know, anything to take responsibility.

My name is Chadie Duke (ph).

>> ASHLEY GAMELL: Having a Children's Garden that is open to kids coming in, it's like their own little piece of land and they are able to feel responsible and take care of it with the tools that are given to them like watering cans and rakes and trowels. So it just gives them a different experience than being in school.

>> SCOT MEDBURY: One of the joys of the Children's Garden is seeing sort of cross age tutoring where older youth, teenagers, mentor younger children.

>> CHADIE DUKE: Pull it out. It looks like it's ready to go.

>> SONAL BHATT: Each year our children's gardeners harvest 4,300 pounds of produce. That is a lot.

>> ASHLEY GAMELL: Carrots, radishes, tomatoes.

>> CHADIE DUKE: I would bring home fruits and vegetables and I would tell them I grew this today and my mom would be so happy.

>> SONAL BHATT: The founders of this garden really felt like it was important for kids to get to know where their food was coming from and to really engage in learning by doing.

For a lot of the kids who come to our Children's Garden, this is one of their first true contacts with nature. It is their first chance to really dig in the dirt. So when they encounter things like insects, they are sometimes grossed out or shocked and you would be surprised at how much they grow over their time with us. They become adopters of good food habits and they really learn that nature isn't yucky or scary.

>> ASHLEY GAMELL: The children get very excited.

>> SONAL BHATT: It's about wonder and discovery. It is just a place of pure joy.

>> SCOT MEDBURY: And perhaps the most remarkable thing is that a mission that was created over a century ago is just as relevant in today's modern society as it was 100 years ago.

>> SONAL BHATT: I know from talking to the people who have been through this program that it changes lives. That is not a small thing. It makes me feel so proud. Kids really are important in the Children's Garden and the work that they do is important and treating kids with respect like that, that is pretty special.