



Sustainable Tompkins' Mini-Grant Application Form Cover Page

Applications are due quarterly: March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1.

Applications may be emailed to peter@sustainabletompkins.org, faxed to 607-272-1721, or mailed to Sustainable Tompkins, 309 N. Aurora St, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Optional: Supporting documents, including letters of support, may be scanned and emailed, faxed, or mailed.

Questions? Call: 607-272-1720 or email peter@sustainabletompkins.org.

Applicant Information:

Application Date: June 1, 2015

Project Name: Mutant Corn

Purpose of the Grant (one sentence): To engage a community of diverse people in nuanced conversation about corn, genetic engineering and the politics surrounding food through an experimental and collaborative agricultural art project called Mutant Corn.

Organization, neighborhood group, or individual requesting funds: The Dacha Project

Contact person: Lea Elleseff

Title (if relevant):

Address: 700 North Wood Rd,

City, State, Zip: Freeville, NY 13068

Phone: 973-229-4622

E-Mail: leaelleseff@gmail.com

Grant Request? (\$150- \$750): \$750

Grant check should be made payable to: The Dacha Project

Note to applicants:

We want to support as many grants as possible, so please consider your priorities and what phase(s) we can support, rather than asking for a maximum at this time. This is helpful if we can't award your full grant request.

Please be concise –typed requests must be kept to 3 pages, not counting this cover page. Written applications may use front and back of the provided form. Please use Times New Roman in font size 12. Please make every effort to answer all questions in the format provided below. We cannot consider promotional materials as an application to the Neighborhood Mini-Grants program. We cannot consider applications that do not use this standard form. Thank you for your understanding.

1. Project Description (Parts a-f):

a. What are the project goals and the specific benefits you hope will happen?

Mutant Corn is a collaborative agricultural project between The Dacha Project (Freeville, NY) and ArtCodex (Brooklyn, NY). The project itself is composed of four triangular plots of corn, three planted with colorful heirloom varieties and the center with genetically modified maize (GMM). During the course of the season, we will de-tassel the center triangle so that the GMM is unable to either cross or self-pollinate, and it can be hybridized by the heirloom varieties instead. At the end, we will visually assess the corn cobs from the center triangle to gauge the success and/or failure of the hybridization.

For us, the core project is a metaphor, meant to stir up conversation and debate about the larger issues surrounding our food, and we have already met with success on this front. In the early phase of development of this project, we were lucky enough to work with corn geneticists, who were able to guide us through the science of breeding corn, while also challenging some of our assumptions about genetic modification. More recently, as we sent out a call for collaborators announcing the start of this project, we met with a concerned neighbor to talk about his concerns about inadvertent cross-contamination between our plot and his field. Even while we have been engrossed with the practicalities of planning and constructing the plots, we have had discussions amongst ourselves and helpful volunteers about the reproductive biology of corn, the patenting of seed, the workings of various pesticides and how they function, and radical alternatives to agriculture such as permaculture.

During the next couple of months, we are planning more events and work parties to continue these informal and unstructured conversations. The project will culminate in a weekend harvest festival, where we hope that participants inspired by the conversation will present the results of their own inquiries into these issues.

b. Who will the project serve?

This project is a collaborative endeavor bringing together a diversity of people. City and country, artist and farmer, scientist and poet, work alongside one another to build beds and plant corn and make the project happen. To recruit people, we are reaching out to our various communities in Ithaca and Brooklyn and all parts nearby to let them know how they can participate, whether by coming in for a work day or an event, or presenting their own project as part of the culminating weekend festival. Our mailing list is composed of artists, homesteaders, homeschoolers, puppeteers and keeps growing with every event we host.

Also, the raised beds and the pond necessary for this project have been constructed so that they can benefit Dacha in the long term. So, even after *Mutant Corn*'s completion, The Dacha Project can rely on the lined pond for irrigating their newly constructed raised beds.

c. How will the project benefit the broader goals of the mini-grant program?

- **Supporting and stimulating community based activities**
- **Improve the long term health of your neighborhood/community**
- **Create opportunities for leadership and civic engagement**
- **Generate cooperation among community members**

This project will strengthen the relationship between different communities in Ithaca as well as forging a creative link to Brooklyn. Throughout the summer, we will be hosting functions such as work parties, potlucks, film screenings, performances, and a scarecrow-making workshop. Through these events, we

hope to cultivate a fertile ground in which our various communities can create cross-disciplinary friendships that can lead to fresh ways of thinking, while also lending strength through diversity of thought.

d. What activities will be conducted?

So far we have had several planning meetings and two work party weekends, one where the raised beds were constructed and another where the corn was planted. Additionally, we are planning more events in the coming months: a presentation of the project and a discussion followed by popcorn and a movie screening of the 1984 horror classic, *Children of the Corn*; and a scarecrow and mask making party in late July to co-ordinate with the de-tasseling of the genetically modified corn. The entire project will culminate in a Harvest Moon Weekend with an arts exhibition, an evening of performances, a puppet show and an afternoon of craft activities with the harvested corn. Corn cob displays reflecting the results of the cross-breeding experiment will also be on view, along with a short video documenting the entire process of coming together and making this project happen.

e. Identify key individuals participating in the project and their roles.

This project is being led primarily by three individuals: Lea Elleseff (from Dacha Project) and Vandana Jain and Mike Estabrook (both from artCodex). All three are integral to the planning of the project and the events surrounding the exhibition. Since the project is on the Dacha Project's land, Lea will be taking care of much of the day to day needs of the growing corn. Mike and Vandana are commuting from Brooklyn for key weekends and organizing the events and work parties. All three will be organizing the culminating weekend event. Additionally, other members of the Dacha Project and friends of artCodex have been a great help in the physical manifestation of the project.

f. Identify community support for the project (relevant organizations and individuals).

Groundswell Center for Local Food and Farming has expressed an interest in supporting this project. We are currently working with them to see how they can help, and are hoping to use their downtown offices to host some of our upcoming events.

2. Proposed Project Tasks, Work Plan, and Timeline

List/describe the **main tasks** that your organization will undertake and the **estimated timeline**.

Meeting with neighbors – May 2

Work Party - Construction of Raised Beds – May 3

Work Party - Planting Beds – May 30-31

Presentation of project as part of Groundswell Homestead Tour at Dacha Project - May 31, 4:30pm

Press Release to Mailing List of upcoming events – June 5

Presentation of Project as part of Bushwick Open Studios, Brooklyn – June 7

Outreach Event - Presentation of Project, Discussion followed by Popcorn and Movie June 13 – 6:45 pm

Activity Project - Scarecrow and Mask Making – July 19 – 1pm

Reaching out to participants for Harvest Moon Weekend exhibition, performances - mid July-mid Aug

Finalizing participants and events for Harvest Moon Weekend – Sept 1

Send out invitation via email blast – September 18

Harvest Moon Weekend Festival – September 26-27

3. Project Budget (please include all anticipated expenses)

***If your total expenses do not equal revenue, please shortly describe your plan to get additional funds.**

Expenses (i.e., materials, equipment, printing/copying, mailing, staff time, etc.):

<u>Tasks/Items</u>	<u>Costs</u>
Flyer and Publicity	\$100
Pond Liner	\$300
Composted Manure	\$125
Seeds	\$50
Travel Costs from NYC (\$30 gas, \$30 tolls per trip) x 5	\$300
Exhibition costs (hardware, etc)	\$150
Refreshments for outreach event (Movie night)	\$125
Video documentation	\$200
Total \$	\$1350

Revenue Sources

<u>Source</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Neighborhood Mini-Grant amount requested	\$750
Contribution from artCodex	\$400
Contribution from the Dacha Project	\$200
Total \$	\$1350

4. Measuring and Evaluating Results

Describe how you will measure and evaluate the success of your project (measures can be quantitative and/or qualitative, as appropriate).

At harvest time, we will husk the center plot of corn to see how much of it has hybridized with the heirloom varieties and taken on their color. The corn will be documented and then hulled and dived into color groupings that will be weighed. Additionally, we are asking all participants to fill out a short survey about their experience with the project, and if it has changed their thinking about genetic modification, the industrialization of food or our relationship with nature. Lastly, we will write a short report of how the project has affected our stance on these same issues, and make it available online.

Note: You will be asked to give a short report on the project after 6 months and at the end of the project timeline.