

**Dear friends,**

**We hope you enjoy these photos of our lives in Costa Rica at the UBL.**

**Jenny and Mark**



**Photo 01: Garden beds in the Rocoto community garden. The UBL Green team is helping provide chemical-free vegetables to the residential students and to the faculty and staff of the UBL, who also participate in the garden care. Big hits in the garden are four or five varieties of lettuce, fresh green beans and lots of different herbs.**

**Next year we hope to have a semi-formal organization of folks from within UBL who make the major decisions for the garden, including the purchase of inputs such as organic pest controls and vegetable starts.**

**Photo 02: Emptying a barrel of charcoal made from agricultural residues—corn stalks, pieces of dry bamboo and bamboo leaves. This particular system created too much smoke for the neighbors and left a lot of material unprocessed. We are working on a more sophisticated model, of a smaller barrel within the bigger barrel plus a chimney, based on a YouTube video we found. The charcoal is a way of improving the soil while removing for long periods (>100 years) CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.**

**Pictured in the photo in the photo is a student volunteer from the nearby Costa Rican University (UCR- Universidad de Costa Rica). We were able to connect with a program based in the UCR which provides volunteers for programs of urban organic agriculture.**



**Photo 03:** Workshop participants explaining how they created a vertical garden with recycled gallon jugs and a pallet. In March and April, we held a series of three Saturday gardening workshops for the local scout troop.



These workshops were instigated and partially organized by one of the student volunteers from the UCR program. It was also the Green team's first intensive interaction with members of the local community of Cedros.

**Photo 04:** Member of a congregation adding their image to the circle of Creation as part of a participatory church service. This year we also began working with an urban church in the community of El Alto, about 5 miles from the university, accompanying them as they discover ways to actively participate in God's mission and learning to care for and renew creation. El Alto is an immigrant community, mainly from Nicaragua, but also from relatively remote parts of Costa Rica.



**Photo 05: A youth from the community church (Un Lugar Para Tod@s--A Place for Everyone) climbing down a small waterfall. A group of young people showed us the community as part of a mapping exercise.**



**Photo 06: Young people from the church putting together their community map. Our original intention was to work mainly with adults from the church, but our work has almost entirely become integrated into the church's youth program.**



**Photo 07: A community clean up organized by the church.**



**Photo 08: In September, the youth took four adults, including Jenny and myself on a two-hour walk to visit a waterfall. The walk was uphill and down, crossing three streams, and it was very beautiful.**





**Photo 09: The youth had a blast at the waterfall. The adults were not well-prepared to jump in the water, in particularly because it was pretty cold. The main complaint of the youth was that we didn't let them stay long enough before walking back, although some of them were shaking with cold.**



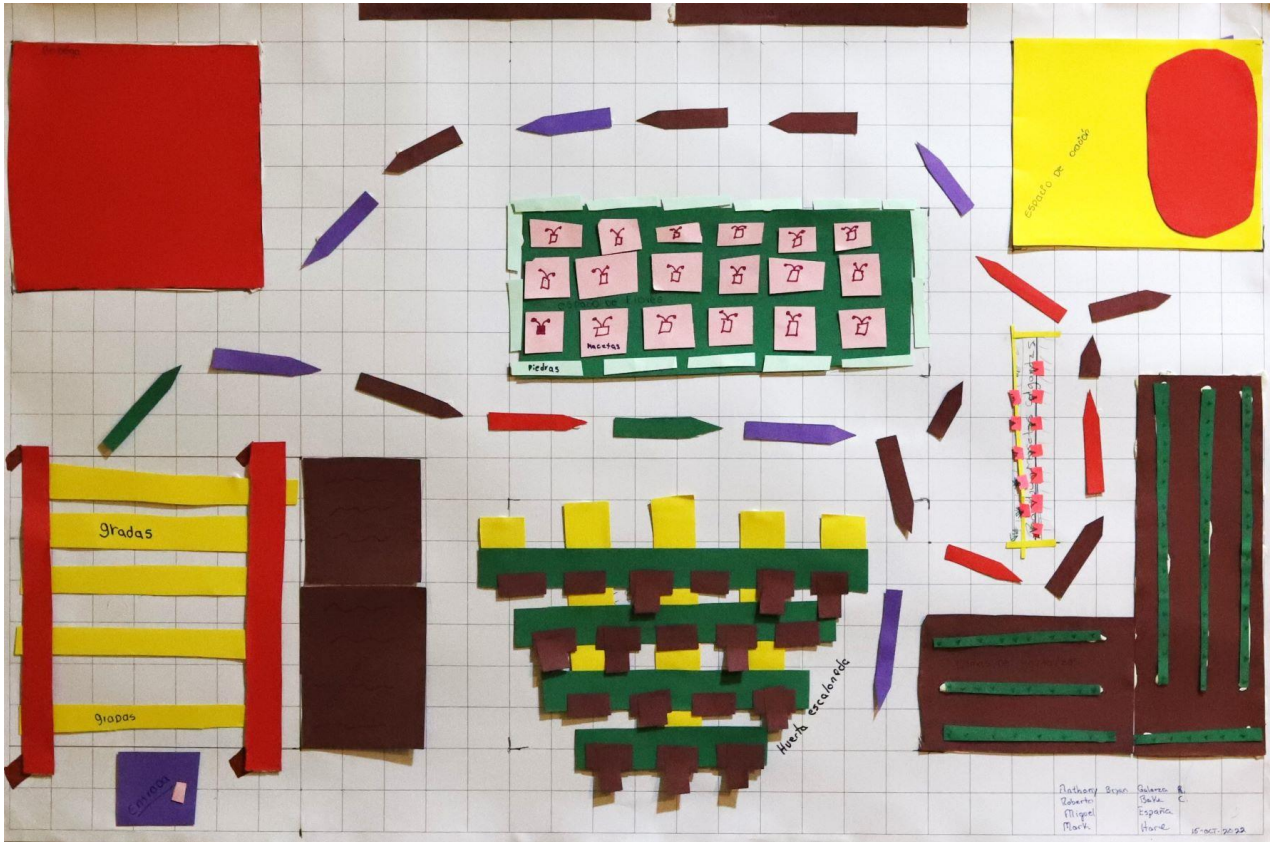
**Photo 10: One of the team members for the work with El Alto is Miguel España (red shirt). Miguel, a Nicaraguan in political exile from the Ortega dictatorship, is a theologian from the Nicaraguan seminary, CIEETS [https://www.globalministries.org/partner/lac\\_partners\\_centro\\_inter\\_eclesial\\_de/](https://www.globalministries.org/partner/lac_partners_centro_inter_eclesial_de/)). CIEETS is one of the partners of the PC(USA) in Nicaragua. Miguel has a background in street theater and is sharing that as part of the Green Movement. In November, he worked with the youth to put on an interpretative representation of the John 4: 15-20, Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well.**



**Photo 11: The youth presenting their take on the meaning of what living water means. The interpreted it in terms of generosity and caring for each other. The photo is from Sunday, November 6th.**



**Photo 12:**  
The youth and the pastor also designed a garden area for a small open space behind the sanctuary, about 21 feet wide by about 12 feet deep.



**Photo 13:**  
The first Saturday of November, we divided up into three teams to begin making the design a reality. I worked with three teenage girls to put together a small production system of compost worms, in a re-purposed tire.





**Photo 14: In other community work, the UBL Green team developed a campaign together with two local farmer markets, calling for the elimination of single-use plastic bags. The sign behind this vendor reads, "No plastic bags, please. Creation needs love."**

**Photo 15: As part of the campaign the team had small sturdy bags made from a light canvas material printed with the motto. In September, we used donations received from the UBL community to fill them with fruit and then we gifted them to children as at the respective farmer markets, timing the action to be part of Costa Rica's Children's Day.**





**Photo 16:** In October, as part of our connection with Green Faith (<https://greenfaith.org/>), a global movement for Climate Justice, we did a march in our city's main park and on the campus of the Costa Rican University. Our slogan was "Voices of Faith for a Just Energy Transition." Our main goal is to raise awareness of the climate emergency we are experiencing and, in particular, the work of COP27 (<https://cop27.eg/#/>).

**Photo 17:** Another aspect of the work of the UBL Green team in 2022 has been to move towards establishing a second garden on UBL land adjacent to the main campus. The goal of this garden is to invite interested folk from the surrounding community, called Cedros. The work started with David Mamani, a Bolivian pastor who volunteered with the garden for two weeks in January.



**Photo 18:**  
With  
David's  
energy and  
skills, we  
began  
clearing the  
land...



**Photo 19:**  
....and laying  
out a garden  
plot in the  
form of a  
mandala.



**Photo 20: The mandala garden at the end of October 2022. The work has progressed slowly, but steadily. Particularly challenging was finding a source of bamboo and learning how to best create the supports for each bed.**



**Photo 21: Community Garden workshop in July 2022. As our next step to creating a new community garden with folks from Cedros, we held two Saturday workshops in July. Because of their interest in gardening, we invited the youth from**



**the church in El Alto as well. Four participated. Between youth and adults, we had close to twenty different participants between the two garden gatherings. Participants learned to create vertical gardens, using recycled pellets and old gallon jugs.**

**Photo 22:**  
Attendees also learned to make soil mixes, with which they filled re-purposed containers and planted their vegetable of choice to take home.



**Photo 23:** We also talked about different ways to make compost, including using California composting worms



**Photo 24: Jenny offered a session on using some of the plants we grow in novel ways, including a cream from lavender buds and a "basil butter" using basil leaves and coconut oil.**







**Photo 25: The leaders of the Cedros scout troops learned about our workshops and asked if their youngest group of 7-10 years old could participate. Tamara (right, checked shirt), one of the student volunteers agreed to program for them and received a total of 15 or 18 different young scouts..**

**Photo 26:**  
Young members of the local scout troop learning about gardening.



**Photo 27:** Finally, the third weekend of October, we met with seven or eight residents from Cedros to formally show them the new garden space and to discuss next steps. An important aspect of that meeting

was the participation of two friends from a neighboring community gardening program who talked about their experience of developing their garden. The group agreed that they wanted to meet again soon, so on Saturday, November 12th, we had next meeting, and the following Wednesday, we received our first group of community workers in the garden!



**Photo 28:** In July, we were able to go home to Ohio and spend almost three weeks with my Mom, pictured here with Keila on the left and Annika on the right.



**Photo 29:** Spiders have become a symbol for me of wildness that we need to include in our landscapes, our places of being. As we work to create consciousness of our place in Creation, we need to remember that we are one of God's wonderfully made creatures, but there are so many more and we need to walk lightly and carefully.

