



NYSAAAA Sponsors Festival of Trees



This year, NYSAAAA sponsored an entry in the Albany Institute of History and Art's Festival of Trees. With just under 7,000 visitors to this year's 19th annual Festival, themed "Holiday Traditions - A Matter of Taste," it was truly a unique community celebration.

The 19th annual Festival of Trees is a creative and imaginative event highlighting the traditions of Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. Individuals, businesses, non-profits and community organizations decorate and display trees that tie into gallery exhibits. This year's theme, "A Matter of Taste," reflects the current special exhibition, "Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth Century Dutch Art and Life."

Other Festival events and displays include: Gingerbread Lane, a juried competition of gingerbread houses (and other structures!) with both Adult and Junior divisions; "Holiday Express" model train display; Festival Café; Face painting, storytelling and crafts for kids; and plenty of goodies for sale, from holiday decorations to the fabulous offerings in the museum gift shop.

NYSAAAA chose for our theme, "The Greatest Generation's Victory Garden." Most seniors served by AAAs fall into what Tom Brokaw has coined, "the greatest generation," and the Victory Garden was a defining, food-related collective experience for this group. In researching victory gardens for our tree preparation, we discovered some interesting facts about the efforts of the "home front" during World War II. The box below, "What is a Victory Garden?" was displayed alongside our tree at the Festival, and we hope it educated and inspired both young and old.

The tree was decorated by Dania Welch of Clifton Park. She's an authorized dealer of Stamp It products, and can be reached at: stampmom@nycap.rr.com. She did a beautiful job in a very short time frame. Thanks, Dania!



What is a Victory Garden?

Victory gardens were vegetable gardens planted during the world wars to ensure an adequate food supply for civilians and troops. World War II began in September 1939, and food rationing began in January 1940. The call to plant a Victory Garden was answered by nearly 20 million Americans. These gardens produced up to 40% of all that was consumed.

Government agencies, private foundations, businesses, schools, and seed companies all worked together to provide land, instruction, and seeds for individuals and communities to grow food. Emphasis was placed on making gardening a family or community effort -- not a drudgery but a pastime, and a national duty. From California to Florida, Americans plowed backyards, vacant lots, parks, baseball fields, and schoolyards to set out gardens. Children and adults fertilized, planted, weeded, and watered in order to harvest an abundance of vegetables.

The world had experienced many years of economic hardships and now people were being asked to give up more. The propaganda machine was geared up to make sure that everyone on the home front did their part to aide in the effort. The messages were simple, symbolic, and very patriotic.

Colorful posters and regular feature articles in newspapers and magazines helped to get the word out and encouraged people to stick with it. The goal was to produce enough fresh vegetables through the summer for the immediate family and neighbors. Any excess produce was canned and preserved for the winter and early spring until next year's victory garden produce was ripe.

Throughout the World War II years, millions of victory gardens in all shapes and sizes--from window boxes to community plots--produced abundant food for the folks at home. While the gardens themselves are now gone, posters, seed packets and catalogs, booklets, photos and films, newspaper articles and diaries, and people's memories still remain to tell us the story of victory gardens.

When the fighting of World War II ended, so too did the government's call for people to produce their own food. It was a policy that was dropped, in the opinion of some magazine editors of the time, too quickly. Since many people did not plant a Victory Garden in the spring of 1946, and the agriculture industry had not yet come back up to full production, there were food shortages that summer.

**"No unemployment insurance can be compared to an alliance
between man and a plot of land."**

Henry Ford