



Land Ethic Mentorship

For Historically Underserved Farmers & Ranchers

MEET THE MENTEES

Carla Kenney,
Gary and Crown Point, Indiana



Carla Kenney



I have been learning more and more about the land, how it affects the carbon and the air we breathe. I want to use natural processes to grow the things we eat. I want to make sure the food we are eating is chemical free. I want maximum nutritional value out of what I am growing. We are connected to the land through the food we eat. We only get one body. I want to maximize my useful life...and I only get out what I put into the soil."



Carla Kenney is currently farming two properties: her homestead in Gary, and another location in Crown Point. She focuses on heirloom vegetables and herbs, including 77 varieties of greens which include lettuce, cabbage, swiss chard, mustards and, mostly, collards. Her regenerative practices include crop rotation, pollinator plantings, and compost application.

Her Story

Carla never considered herself a gardener, but when her mother got sick in 2017, she needed a place to put her energy. One day, when she was driving home from the hospital, she passed a garden center where they had flats of vegetables for 99 cents. She bought a flat of cabbages, a flat of cayenne peppers, and a flat of bell peppers. Carla planted her first garden as a distraction, but it was also a way to connect with her mom, who had been an avid flower gardener. "I would talk to her about what was happening in the garden. It was always a bit of a joke, how I hated getting in the dirt. But now look at me."

Her mom passed away after four months in the hospital, but her legacy lived on as Carla kept gardening. She started growing herbs to cut down on salt and add anti-inflammatory foods to her diet. Before long, Carla decided to grow her favorite vegetable: collard greens. Her mother always said collards from her home state of North Carolina tasted better than the ones she could get in Gary, and she attributed that to the soil. But one summer, when Carla was visiting her grandmother in eastern North Carolina, she went to the store to buy collard greens, and realized that the collards of her mother's youth were actually a different variety—cabbage collards. Her discovery led her to start researching





ADVICE FOR NEW FARMERS:

Research! Learn how to maximize your soil health. Your product is only as good as the stuff you are growing your food in. Nutrition starts with the soil. What is going to maximize your soil?



collards and, eventually, participating in the Heirloom Collards Project.

Now Carla is involved in seed trials, tracking lettuce and collard varieties to see how long they produce in her climate. She calls herself a “meticulous record keeper” which enables her to farm intensively on her small acreage, experimenting and improving each season.

What is the Heirloom Collards Project?

The Heirloom Collards Project is “working for the recognition and respect of collards as a key component of American food culture so their seeds and stories will never be forgotten.” Individuals from across the US are working to regenerate collard varieties, cultivate seed stock, and preserve the history of collards in this country. Find out more at www.heirloomcollards.org.

What is Next?

Eventually, Carla hopes to return to her family roots in eastern North Carolina and start a farm-to-table bed and breakfast in Edenton, North Carolina.

Enroll Now!

Learn more and sign up for this free mentorship opportunity at:
sandcountyfoundation.org/mentorship
or contact Nikki D'Adamo-Damery at:
nikki@sandcountyfoundation.org



Natural Resources
Conservation Service

The Land Ethic Mentorship program serves historically underserved (socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource, and veteran) farmers and ranchers with resources to support their conservation and production goals. Sand County Foundation's network of Leopold Conservation Award-winning farmers and ranchers, who have been recognized for extraordinary conservation achievement, serve as program mentors. Mentors support their mentees as they develop their conservation and agricultural practices to balance farm productivity, ecosystem health, and community wellbeing.



Sand County Foundation inspires and empowers a growing number of land owners and managers to ethically care for the land to sustain water resources, build healthy soil, enhance wildlife habitat, and support outdoor recreation.

www.sandcountyfoundation.org