



# One primary care doctor's journey

to growing and eating sustainably, to help save the planet and sentient beings

**Stasia Kahn MD**

**Dr. Kahn is a practicing internist since 1988 who believes it is possible to save our planet and improve the quality of life of all sentient beings with gardening and a plant-based diet.**



## Gardening as a family trait

I come from a family of gardeners. My grandparents had a large produce garden in their backyard, which my grandfather tended, and my grandmother canned much of the food they did not eat immediately. As a child, my favorite food from my grandparents' garden was dill pickles. My parents also had a garden in our backyard, and the garden helped to feed our large family of 6 children, which included 3 boys with big appetites. As children we would help harvest the food that we would eat for dinner that night. Today, my cousin lives on a farm and she has a kitchen garden in addition to the seed corn that her son grows to sell. She makes the best fresh corn I have ever tasted. I personally started gardening when I moved into my first home just after finishing my medical residency training. Our yard was too small to have a garden but there was a sunny patch that was perfect for growing spices. I loved cutting spices from my spice garden and cooking with them. I dabbled a bit in growing perennials under lights in my basement when my children were little, but eventually gave it up due to the pressures of raising my three children. Nowadays, my home is in the Midwestern United States, on a wooded lot with a partial sun spot for a garden in the front yard. My homegrown spices used to disappoint me but as of late I have turned around my gardening skills through community involvement and I am now growing both spices and produce in my front yard.



Stasia Kahn is the sister of Pamlico Rose CEO Robert Greene Sands. Looking at the Rose Haven garden's Seed Produce Garden, gardening is in fact a family trait.

## Eating as a form of action

Sometimes we live in ignorance of the destructive processes that we passively participate in, despite the abundance of information showing us the errors of our ways. In my case, my son was awakened to the destructive forces of agro business and eating an animal-based diet in the spring of 2019, and then he awakened me. We both regret all those years that we had the resources to follow an organic plant-based diet, but instead, as a family we chose to remain ignorant of how we were contributing to the destruction of our planet and how we were financing cruelty to the animals that we were eating. After reviewing the latest medical literature, I have come to regret that I was not educating my patients on the benefits of eating a plant-based diet, which may have been able to alleviate some of their chronic diseases. I have since been moved to grow and eat sustainably in a way that resonates with my family gardening roots, and I have made a personal commitment to educate my patients on how to follow a plant-based diet.



## Sharing this journey

As with any journey, we can choose to take a certain path alone or we can travel on the path with others. With this in mind, I hope to share my journey and inspire other people who wish to improve their health, care for the planet, and to decrease the suffering of sentient beings. My journey of incorporating both sustainable patterns of eating and gardening into my daily routine began on a bitterly cold day, January 18th, 2020, when a friend invited me to attend the Fox Valley Women's March in Geneva, Illinois. We listened to speeches together and marched around with 700 other people to make our voices heard. The day was made extra special because I made a new friend with many shared interests. She too loved gardening and was incorporating plant-based meals into her diet. She told me about an organization that she belonged to, Sustain Dupage, and as I listened to her describe the organization, I knew that I wanted to belong. The Sustain Dupage organization based in Wheaton, Illinois is a 501c3 organization that was founded in 2015 with a mission of working towards bioregional sustainability in Dupage County. I joined the organization and have been volunteering at the community garden 2-3 times per week, which has just been scaled back a bit for the winter months. The garden includes a combination of raised beds and Chinampas, all built with recycled materials. The Sustain Dupage garden grows herbs, edible and non-edible flowers, perennial and annual vegetables, strawberries and raspberries. I have learned much about outdoor organic gardening from other members of the organization, and I have personally been educating myself on indoor gardening techniques. I have enjoyed many homemade vegan dishes from produce I helped to grow in the Sustain Dupage garden, supplemented with spices and vegetables from my home garden. I intend to share many of the lessons I have learned over the past year, and those that I have yet to learn. Please join me on my journey.