



Our Trip to the Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance

Rio, Liz, Nilbert, & Wunnyuriti



Wednesday - Seeds, Seeds, Seeds!

Song of the day:

- Rio: [Karen Dalton - Are you leaving for the country?](#)
- Liz: [Mark Ronson ft. Amy Winehouse - Valerie \(Official Video\)](#)
- Nilbert: [Daft Punk - Lose Yourself to Dance \(Official Version\)](#)
- Wunnyuriti: [MAHLER Symphony No. 1 "Titan" - 2nd movement](#)

We started our visit to Ujamaa strong with a lovely visit to the **Seed Shop!** The seeds were abundant and incredibly organized, and it was amazing to see the logistics of the Ujamaa operation! We spent the morning cleaning Soft-Necked and Hard-Necked Garlic, and brainstormed ways to attract customers with creative arrangements! We also dried Horseradish in the sun and built a storage pallet.



Soft-Necked Garlic:

- *This Garlic was difficult to clean, but was easy to braid!*

- **Reflection:** I enjoyed building the palette and cleaning the Garlic because of the aspect of building community. I was able to engage in complex and intriguing conversations both with the other interns and Bonnetta and Rick, which made a tedious task fun and fruitful. I think this is reflective of the general spirit of farming with the intent of restoring cultural connections: prioritizing community and expansion of knowledge! -

Wunnyuriti

Garlic Photoboard

Braided garlic with flowers!



Image from <https://theprudentgarden.com/how-to-cure-and-braid-fresh-garlic/>



Image from <https://heartysol.net/how-to-braid-garlic-for-storage/>

Garlic seeds!



Culinary garlic will be used for eating, but we look forward to seeing the remaining garlic grown by farmers in the Ujamaa network!

Horseradish:



- The edible roots of the Horseradish we dried!

A highlight of this day was exploring plants in the Seed Shop and Bonnetta's house! A collective favorite was the Holy Chocolate Bubblegum Basil Plant! We chomped voraciously on watermelon and feasted on Bonnetta's delicious Black Bean and Collard dishes. Thank you Bonnetta!

In the afternoon, we headed to the Ujamaa Farm for the first time! It was beautiful and uniquely set on a hill. We were tasked with cutting holes into the tarp and planting Marigolds, Squash, and Cucumbers! Following this, we set up low tunnels to protect the plants. It was hot and we worked until the early evening. We were happy to see this project completed!

- **Reflection:** One memorable piece of advice that Bonnetta gave while we were cleaning the garlic is that work is meant to be joyous. Working at Tayman field with Kathy and Rick, I saw how this ethic of joyous work is imbued in all of the work that Ujamaa does. Despite the sun and the heat, Kathy and Rick were smiling all the while, and it was hard not to smile along too as we tucked the squash into the beds. At Tayman field, we all saw what it means to love the land and find delight in hard work. - *Liz*

At Ujamaa!



- *The team after afternoon planting*

Reflection:

It was such a beautiful place and so inspiring to see all of the projects occurring out of the farm. Fun to be exposed to different planting techniques, too! Cutting holes through landscape fabric seems like an effective method. -*Rio*

Bonus: 10 pm Dinner!



Reflection: After the long and tedious day, we all gathered around the kitchen countertop with one thing in mind...sustenance. Driven by ambition, and the surging bread prices at the supermarket, we decided to challenge our cooking skills and make naan from scratch for our tofu tika masala recipe. Using Adams Smith's division of labor, we each took on a task. Wunnyurity - activating the yeast, Rio - toasting the tofu, Liz - prepping the tika masala, and I was in charge of the steak. After some arduous work, and some impatient waiting for dough to rise, we successfully made a tasty meal. Jioni, tulikuwa timechoka, lakini tulihitaji kupika chakula cha jioni. Tulipika mkate na tofu, na Wunnyuriti na mimi, kwa sababu tuna penda kula nyama ya ng'ombe, tulienda nje kutumia chanja ya kuchomea nyama. - *Nilbert*

Thursday - Building Our Nursery

Song of the day:

- Rio: [YouTube](#) Fiona Apple - Across the Universe (Official HD Video)
- Liz: [YouTube](#) Khruangbin & Leon Bridges - Texas Sun (Official Audio)
- Nilbert: Homeless (With Ladysmith Black Mambazo)
- Wunnyuriti: [YouTube](#) Poulenc - Sonata for Horn, Trumpet, and Trombone [score]

On our second day in Maryland, we worked with Lisa, Rick, and Kathy out at Tayman Field to build an enclosure for a tree nursery under the shade of the nearby forest. We added shade fabric to the fence and brought loads of mulch and plants down from up the hill. We paused for a delicious lunch, thanks to Bonnetta! Later in the day, we returned to help with final touches -- stringing orange twine along the perimeter and hanging reflective tape to deter the deer, rolling out more landscape fabric, trying not to step on spiders.

Destined for the Tree Nursery!



- I ate a small Strawberry from one of these bushes - best Strawberry I have ever had!! -

Wunnyuriti

Completed Tree Nursery!



Reflection: I was proud and happy to see the fruits of our labor today. Setting up this tree nursery had been a dream of Bonnetta, and I am glad that we were able to materialize her vision through our hard work. The process involved long downhill walks with heaps of compost and buckets of shrubs, but it was gratifying to see the area organized and complete. I cannot wait to see how the nursery grows in the future and it was incredibly fun putting this together. Grateful for the opportunity! - *Wunnyuriti*

Bird's eye shot from where the birds can't reach!



Lunch selfie!



Reflection: By bringing food and love during our days outdoors, Bonnetta reminded us that work should be fun! We talked about how farming can be tedious as a solitary activity, but farming together can be a real joy. - *Rio*

In Memorium






- On Thursday July 24th 2025, a heartbreaking tragedy transpired at the site of the tree nursery. A loving, protective, and kind wolf spider who merely wished to provide sanctuary and comfort for her babies was ruthlessly murdered. We honor the sacrifice and dedication of this poor wolf spider and may her and her babies rest in peace.

Various Dinners and Snacks in the House!



Friday - The Seeds Which Guide Us

Song of the day:

- Rio: Not a song, but this podcast was wonderful for our drive home:
<https://crooked.com/podcast-series/mother-country-radicals/> (and cool to think about how Bonnetta experienced the activism of this time)
- Liz:  The Beatles - A Hard Day's Night
- Nilbert:  Ariana Grande - The Way (Official Video) ft. Mac Miller
- Wunnyuriti:  Dvořák: Serenade for Winds in D Minor, Op. 44 — Camerata Pacifica

On our third and final day, we spent the day at the Ujamaa seed shop. We spent the first hour or so perusing the Adeeb library, chatting about African crops, food forests, African and Southern Black cuisine, and seed stories.



Reflection: So special to be around such a wealth of knowledge! It's important and beautiful to have the voices of so many experts around you, through what they've written. The way Bonnetta, Hassan, and family gather these books, these voices, is an inspiration. - *Rio*



Afterwards, we shucked okra and sorted the horseradish that we laid out on Wednesday. We chatted while we shucked and watched some of the Tour de France, Nilbert's obsession.

After all the shucking was done, we were lucky enough to enjoy a lovely home-cooked meal made by Bonnetta. French toast, sausages, watermelon, pineapple, banana pudding, and lots of maple syrup - YUM!!! It was such a joy to share a meal together and learn more about the founding of Ujamaa. Bonnetta was also kind enough to send us home with bundles of seeds, which we're excited to plant in our home gardens and to share with community members. Afterwards, we shared heartfelt goodbyes - more like see-you-laters - and went on our way.



Reflection: Spending the morning at the seed shop was such a lovely way to end the week. I saw that the work of saving and sharing seeds involves not only the hard work in the fields, but also the process of building and tending to community. Building networks of reciprocity and sharing knowledge are perhaps the most vital part of the work that Ujamaa does. Bonnetta showed us such generosity by

cooking a meal for us and gifting us seeds, and the message was clear: next it will be our turn to ask people their seed stories, and share the knowledge of our seed keeper mentors. - *Liz*

Our Seed Stories

Wunnyuriti:

My parents both come from farming families, and most of my extended family, who live in northern Ghana, still practice farming. However, growing up, my parents were not able to do this farming practice growing up in a suburban community. When I was around eight years old, my mother decided to return to this tradition by enlisting me to grow Black-Eye Peas in our backyard. This was my first experience growing plants, and it was miraculous to see the Peas sprout! While the plants didn't survive, my parents passed down stories of tending to their own family farms as children!



Rio:

My grandma grew iris in Illinois and sold them to put my mom and her siblings through college. My family moved to our farm in Middletown, MD, when I was 10, during a heat wave. We had no power, no water, and no functioning bathroom, but we spent our first week planting one of each of my grandmother's iris. These plants multiplied over the years and now fill several acres. My mom and I host an annual flower sale every spring. The iris bulb connects me to my ancestors and to the community who comes to my farm.



Liz:

My family never grew our own food, but they often showed their love for me through strawberries, my favorite fruit. Every time I visited my grandma, she would gift me a huge bowl of freshly washed, bright, juicy strawberries, which I'd proceed to scarf down in a matter of minutes. Even to this day, it's how my mom and grandparents show their love for me - a bowl of strawberries.



Nilbert: Growing up my family would always travel to Tanzania to visit my grandparents. One year, my grandma decided to visit us and she came with some mangoes. And after eating one of the mangoes which she brought instead of throwing away the seed as we always do, she decided to put it in the ground in the backyard. A few years later, my family and I got our first fruit from the now large tree, and sat around the countertop and feasted on it. Although it wasn't much, it marked the beginning of endless fruit and memories of my grandma that my family and I could share together forever.

