

# Pre-Production Planning Document (PODCAST)

## GENERAL INFO

1. **Your Name:** Isabella Susino
2. **PROJECT:** Podcast

## CREATIVE BRIEF

1. What must it be?
  - a. A podcast on a PSA or human interest story
2. Who is it for?
  - a. The audience is those that enjoy gardening or like to follow along with my blog.
3. How long must it be?
  - a. Podcast: 2-10 minutes
  - b. Blog post: 300-500 words
4. What is your objective with the piece?
  - a. Spreading awareness about the mental health benefits of playing with soil
5. When is it due?
  - a. Sunday, Oct 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023
6. What is the overall idea?
  - a. I want to talk about my different interest, including the mental health benefits behind being outdoors, gardening / indoor gardening (houseplants), forest bathing, hiking, etc.
7. What is the storyline summary?
  - a. This first episode I want to introduce gardening and to cite some sources that are backed by research. I also want to mention a really great podcast episode that has a guest that built his business by creating content for social media – but it's worm castings. So – how the hell did he do this??
8. Elevator pitch:
  - a. Gardening: for beginners. A fun place to chill and talk plants.

9. Tagline:

- a. Gardening, houseplants, container gardening, all things planty, all things soil.

10. Look and feel description:

- a. So, you think you don't like gardening. There's research-based evidence that suggests that you should at least try it before you push it aside. Gardening is incredibly beneficial for your mental health. Now, don't be intimidated. You don't have to start out with a humongous garden that's impossible to maintain. The smallest step to take is to buy a houseplant, and once that goes well, you can start experimenting with edible plants like herbs. The next step is to have a cropping plant. But, if you're like me, and don't have the space, a community garden is the right place for you.

## MIND MAP



## QUESTIONS / NOTES

### HOOK:

1. What will grab the attention of the audience within the first few seconds?

- a. I think being fun and quirky, and really having that come through the speakers or headphones is something that really draws me in. I want to achieve this! It also helps when you give the audience something personal to know about yourself, it creates a personal connection.
- 2. Hook ideas:
  - a. Tag line, introducing myself. Types of plants I have, types of plants I want to grow. Podcast.

#### **MESSAGE/STORY:**

- 1. What message are you trying to deliver to the audience?
- 2. Clearly describe the following parts of your story:
  - a. **Beginning:** Mental health awareness
  - b. **Middle:** How gardening can help with mental health struggles
  - c. **End:** How you can start gardening, even if you have excuses as to why you can't.

#### **NARRATION/HOST:**

- 1. Who will lead us through the piece?
  - a. myself
- 2. Narration ideas:
  - a. Fun and informational. Quirky even, like completely arbitrary

#### **MUSIC:**

- 1. What is overall "mood" and "feel" of the piece?
  - a. Informational, emotional
- 2. Music track ideas:
  - a. I want something like the intro for the Rich Roll podcast. Cool sounds that not every podcast in the world uses.

#### **AMBIENT AUDIO:**

- 1. What is the "location" of the piece? If we close our eyes, where should we imagine that we are?
  - a. Sitting on my front porch, gazing out into the garden.
- 2. Ambient audio ideas:
  - a. Crickets, birds

#### **SOUND EFFECTS:**

- 1. What sound effects (SFX) would help tell this story? Why?
  - a. I really dislike when podcasts use sound effects, so I won't be using any. It will be more distracting for my podcast idea to do so.

#### **SCRIPT**

##### **Intro:**

Welcome to the podcast on all things gardening and mental health, where I explore different ways to better my mental health through gardening. From houseplants, to foraging, and from community gardens to your very own backyard homestead. I am your host, Isabella Susino.

In this episode, I am weighing my options between starting to homestead in my apartment, or to join a community garden in my area. I recently listened to a podcast episode from Nerdy About Nature that had Jordan Mara on as a guest, though I won't give any spoilers now.

While homesteading is an idealistic future, those of us living in apartments in a city are not fortunate enough to have the space to do so. “In these cases, a nearby vacant lot becomes an attractive option for growing a garden and enjoying the benefits [of a community garden]” (D. Urban Agriculture + Community Gardens, n.d.). Community gardens are where homesteading meets accessibility. Urban greenspaces are vital to our well-being. A community garden is a place for like-minded people of all different backgrounds and knowledge bases to come together to grow various types of plants, and share the benefits of it - as a community. “Research of community gardening demonstrates that what people do is as significant as where they are, and reveals activities which are therapeutic. Csikszentmihaly’s concept of flow (2002) [and] characterises how [this] activity enhances wellbeing and compares experiences of community gardens to identify factors which prevent individuals achieving flow” (Pitt, 2014).

To spread the word about community gardens, social media is used as a communicative tool for announcing events and updates on the garden’s progress. “Social media as applied in food-related research – albeit with a focus on the community aspects of eating rather than growing – can be seen in an increasing number of applications” (Hearn et al., 2014). For example, the most well-known community garden in Rochester, NY is [490 Farmers](#). A non-profit that’s dedicated to community-based learning experiences, while simultaneously creating an urban greenspace for volunteers, and is the ultimate form of crunchy. By being a volunteer oriented non-profit, the 490 Farmers ensure that there is fresh food available, they’ve even nicknamed it the “Free Food Forest!,” and share with their un-housed neighbors. These urban farmers are also gaining social connection through a shared interest in a greenspace that was created for just that.

## **So, where does mental health come into play?**

In 2019 Mara began to dedicate himself one day a week to focus on mental health initiatives. “The one resource we have as humans is our time and our energy and as we dedicate that towards different initiatives and causes. If nothing less, we get clarity but generally those things begin to grow” (Mara, n.d.-c). He didn’t know what sect of mental health he wanted to devote his time to, but knew he wanted to work within that space. Mara, since being an avid gardener, knows how beneficial being in nature, in the garden, can be. In his research he came across the concept of Attention Restoration Theory (ART).

Jordan Mara started gardening in 2013, and created his worm casting company Mind and Soil in 2020. He got the idea for his company after living in Australia - where there was a lack of composting food waste - and decided to start researching how to compost while living in the city. His research led him to finding a way to use vermiculture (worm farming) as a composting system. For those unfamiliar with vermiculture, after feeding food waste to the worms, the castings left afterward are this nutrient dense, soil-like substance that is incredibly beneficial to gardens (Mara, n.d.-c).

This concept “suggests the ability to concentrate may be restored by exposure to natural environments”(Ohly et al., 2016). More than half of the world’s population lives in urban settings, experiencing loud noises, fast moving objects, multitudes of people, and many other types of stressors. “ART proposes that individuals benefit from the chance to (1) “be away” from everyday stresses, (2) experience expansive spaces and contexts (“extent”), (3) engage in activities that are “compatible” with our intrinsic motivations, and (4) critically experience stimuli that are “softly fascinating” (Kaplan, 1995). Being away from ‘typical’ everyday experiences lowers stress levels in individuals, and may lead to further benefits the more individuals experience the outdoors.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Mara started posting on Instagram every Saturday and started a series called “Soil Saturdays,” where he would educate the audience on some aspect of gardening. Alongside doing this, Mara set a Google Search alert “for anytime that gardening is mentioned alongside anxiety, stress, depression, PTSD, grief, because [he] had this suspicion that gardening has the ability to heal” (Mara, n.d.-c). Article after article came to his inbox about how beneficial and how healing gardening really is, so his suspicions were right.

## Okay, but what does this have to do with podcasting?

Jordan Mara was recently on the podcast “[Nerdy About Nature](#),” created and hosted by Ross Reid, where he takes this concept of mental health benefits of gardening and really lays it all down for listeners (Reid & Mara, 2023).

This podcast isn’t a typical one, Reid coined the term “Podchat” due to filming these interviews where the respective guests are based. Podchat 19: The Mental Health Benefits of Restorative Gardening with Jordan Mara was filmed in Mara’s backyard garden in Squamish, British Columbia.

During the start of 2020, Mara found the concept of Ikigai, which is kind of a venn diagram with four sects. The first is what you love to do, the second is what you are good at, the third is what you can get paid for, and the fourth is what the world needs. Ikigai, which is a mix of all four of those, sits directly in the middle. “Bringing the mental health benefits of gardening to as many individuals as possible and making money through providing products and the education that individuals need in order to [start gardening] for the very first time ... could be this kind of Ikigai” (Mara, n.d.-c).

Continuing his Soil Saturday series, Mara starts posting more information about how well worm castings are working in the soil experiment he was doing. Low and behold, audience members started reaching out and asking if they could purchase some worm castings, and thus he created [Mind & Soil](#) in 2020. The company has the mission and purpose of introducing gardening’s mental health benefits to a million individuals, regardless of where they live. It also gives access to educational resources regarding gardening, specifically intended for first-timers.

Mara begins by talking about his experience with getting viewers started in gardening. “...a lot of people are getting into gardening and they’re doing so because they want to know where the food’s coming from, or they want a more sustainable approach to their food, or they want food security” (Reid & Mara, 2023). Mara reflects that people aren’t usually getting into gardening because it’s a soothing activity that is restorative. So, his social media presence acts like a conductor to spread the knowledge about the mental health benefits behind gardening. “You ask any gardener that’s been gardening for 25/30 years what one word they would use to describe what gardening means to them. And they’ll say peaceful, calming, soothing, restorative.”

But why are these benefits coming forward in a hobby like gardening?

In a 2014 study about flow and gardening, weeding and digging were the most often reported as relaxing and even therapeutic. From this study, “certain activities were experienced as flow as the repetitive, physical action of weeding and digging was conducive to pleasing absorption” (Pitt, 2014). Often, volunteers reflected that these repetitive motions caused them to relax, to be able to drift off and not have to think about their every move. Another volunteer reflected that he felt that he “[did] something that actually has an end result, like growing a few things or doing a bit of weeding’ then ‘you can see a physical result so you’ve got a sense of achievement.’ This is only considered on completion as absorption in the activity prevents reflection which might cause self-criticism or other negative feelings” (Pitt, 2014).

Mara’s experience with gardening began in 2013, as previously stated, when he had a restless night and his mother suggested they spend some time in the garden the following morning. They began by building a little raised flower bed, bringing wheelbarrows full of river rocks to construct a retaining wall, and then some compost soil to fill it in. He vividly remembers feeling the clamps on his chest loosen for the very first time, could take a deep breath in and realized everything will be okay.

With the uncertainty Mara had about enjoying gardening, he wasn’t expecting to fall more and more in love with the act each year. “Getting your hands dirty in the garden can increase your serotonin levels – contact

with soil and a specific soil bacteria, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, triggers the release of serotonin in our brain according to research” (Francis, n.d.). No wonder he felt better, more research is being released every year on the reasons behind humans feeling better the more we interact with soil. “Studies reported a wide range of health outcomes, such as reductions in depression, anxiety, and body mass index, as well as increases in life satisfaction, quality of life, and sense of community” (Soga et al., 2017).

So what do you think I should do? I can certainly start a planters box on my porch, or I can join the community garden down the street from me. I would be able to get out of the house more, and be introduced to more people and have access to resources I wouldn't have at my apartment. You can find the list of sources on the blog post for this pod at

<https://freespiritedjournalist.wordpress.com/2023/10/29/gardening-mental-health-creating-a-podcast/>

Let me know your thoughts in the comments, and join me next week to discuss apiary, or keeping bees.

Thank you for listening to all things gardening and mental health.