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Apps for Ag winner launches community-building app in Davis

GivingGarden will connect neighbors through a produce-sharing service. It's superlocal, like NextDoor, but devoted solely to food and gardening.

How big is a microclimate or a neighborhood? Can gardeners improve their health and happiness by getting to know one another? Might they like to get involved in tracking Asian citrus psyllid, and can they help build a plant database that's more valuable locally than the *Sunset Western Garden Book*? Deema Tamimi, winner of last summer's UC ANR-sponsored Apps for Ag hackathon and the CEO and cofounder of GivingGarden Co. (givinggarden.io), is excited about what will happen when her startup launches its app in Davis in early summer. It's local, like Nextdoor but focused entirely on food.

Her GivingGarden app could help UC ANR and government agencies connect with gardeners about best practices for pest management and water use. Tamimi is interested in that. The app's biggest value, though, will likely not be as a one-way channel of expert information, but rather as an instigator of people getting to know neighbors, "connecting people to good food and to each other," says Tamimi. So GivingGarden is launching primarily as a produce-sharing service.

In her research, Tamimi discovered food sharing and bartering apps are gaining popularity in Australia and the U.K., and produce sharing is happening here on Nextdoor and Craigslist, but gets lost among crime reports and job listings. Users of GivingGarden will be able to contact one another on the app and post gardening photos, events and questions to neighbors.

At one point, Tamimi had hoped to launch with recommendations on what to grow, but that requires a huge dataset, which currently doesn't exist at the level of neighborhood microclimates. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Sunset give plant recommendations for relatively large climate zones, but publish no local data for cities or neighborhoods. Tamimi sees crowd sourcing, via the app, as the best means to build that dataset.

Connectivity is the key to what gets generated by the app users and its success. The business plan includes expansion to other cities. To reach the app audience as she launches GivingGarden, Tamimi is

talking to growers, researchers, community gardeners, school gardeners, Master Gardener groups and writers, inviting them energetically to help build community and change.

The app has already changed Tamimi's life. At the hackathon last July, she planned to take a back seat but stepped up to pitch the project on the spur of the moment, the only woman to pitch an idea. The two men who joined her and her husband, Josh Livni, to build out a part of it that hackathon weekend became cofounders of GivingGarden. Scott Kirkland is head of mobile development; John Knoll is head of web and operations; Livni is head of data. Tamimi leads the company she started, a lifelong goal that she'd been sidelining for years as she worked in Silicon Valley. In the fall, Tamimi left her position as head of product and performance marketing at Flipboard and set up a second business, Caneberry, a consulting company in food and ag startups.

"A revolutionary idea could change food and agriculture," encourages AgStart, the nonprofit business incubator that organizes the Apps for Ag hackathon. Maybe it's Tamimi's. At the California State Fair last summer, the crowd and four influential judges, including Glenda Humiston, UC ANR vice president, and [Better Food Ventures](#) and [Mixing Bowl Hub](#) founder Rob Trice, got behind it. [CA](#)

—Hazel White



Deema Tamimi is CEO and co-founder of GivingGarden Co.



From left to right, Apps for Ag winners Scott Kirkland, Josh Livni, Deema Tamimi and John Knoll. This summer the team will launch the GivingGarden app, which will help users build a local plant database and share gardening advice and produce with their neighbors.