

Therapeutic Horticulture & Community Garden Programs

Therapeutic Horticulture: In 2006, Rock County UW-Extension partnered with RECAP to facilitate an organized gardening program on the half-acre parcel of land adjacent to the community garden and nearby the jail facility. Two -garden educators selected from the Rock Prairie Master Gardener Volunteer program were funded by soft dollar sources. Under the supervision of the UW-Extension Horticulture Educator, weekly programs were offered through the spring and summer to select RECAP participants.

Initial program outcomes included:

- Inmates increased knowledge of gardening and related life skills through a hands-on gardening experience.
- Inmates learned how to plant, grow, maintain, and harvest a vegetable garden.

A nutrition education portion was added when produce became available.

- Inmates increased their knowledge of nutrition and food safety.
- Produce, harvested and collected from the project supplemented jail meal programs and supplied area food pantry fresh produce.

"... whole grain bread is better for you than white breads... you need 5-9 serving of fruit and veggies per day..." Anthony.

"... vegetable soup really ain't all that bad! I did not pick anything out of it and I ate it all. I would NEVER even try it had I been on the outside." Tammy.

Additional outcomes emerged from this program, echoing their academic and vocational training:

- *Cognitive benefits* involve learning new skills and language. Through gardening, participants may improve their decision-making and problem-solving skills, as well as learn to follow complex instructions. They are able to work in a supervised setting while at the same time increasing their awareness of the world around them.
- *Social benefits* are derived from working within a group-learning setting to share, to relate, to compromise and to work towards a common goal. The social interaction by working in a group helps participants to feel better about themselves.
- *Psychological development* includes an improvement of self-esteem and self-confidence. Working with living plants allows the participant to feel a sense of responsibility. Knowing that they must nourish and care for this living plant helps participants feel more productive and motivated.
- *Physical improvements* result from participants working in the fresh air, moving their bodies and adapting to physical changes in a non-threatening environment.

"Getting out of unit and away from same four walls - keeps my mind occupied and not think of bad stuff." Steven

"My wife and kids go to Echo [food pantry]. Even though I'm in here, I still feel like I'm providing for them." Chip.

"I need to be a good role model for my kids... I like that the garden gives back to the community..." Chris.

"I already know how to rototill... it's now learning how to work with others." Gary.

Through teaching offenders positive and constructive behaviors-- in this case gardening-- reduction of recidivism is the ultimate goal and desired outcome achieved in this program.

"...I never had a garden before but would like to have one now that I know more." Carl.

"I learned how to enjoy life's simple pleasures." Carlos.

Curricula

Horticulture information consisted of modified Master Gardener Volunteer training materials utilized in the Rock County program and from the Master Gardener Training program manual.

In 2006, "Sisters in Health" curriculum was utilized for the nutrition education component. This was changed to "Mission Nutrition" in 2007.

Due to the substandard literacy levels of many of the participants, information was delivered verbally by garden educators.



Evaluation

Participation is tracked by recording number of visits to and time in the garden. Participant sex and race is recorded. Pounds of harvest is documented as well as its distribution. At the end of each session, the garden educator asked participants, "What have you learned today?" and comments were recorded.

| Year | # Produce Raised | Distribution | # Program Participants: | Hours of Community Service |
|------|--|--|---|--|
| 2006 | 9846 pounds total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 5385 pounds misc. produce donated to food pantries or utilized by county facilities ○ 300+ pumpkins donated to youth fundraiser (Spotlight On Kids) | 20 % to county institutions 80 % to food pantries | 47 Inmates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 27 Male ○ 16 Female ○ 28 White ○ 11 African American ○ 1 American Indian ○ 3 Latino | 797 hours of community service were provided by RECAP. Master Gardener Volunteer hours contributed 958 hours. |
| 2007 | 7385 pounds misc. produce donated to food pantries or utilized by county facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There was no pumpkin crop this season. | 10% to county institutions 90% to food pantries | 54 Inmates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 47 Male ○ 7 Female ○ 37 White ○ 13 African American ○ 4 Latino | 1357 hours of community service were provided by RECAP. No hours were reported by MGVs though they were present again in 2007. |

Community Garden Program: Nationally, thirty-three million people including 13 million children live in households that experience hunger or the risk of hunger. This represents one in ten households in the United States.(1)

In 2003 in Rock County, 8,705 children, or 22% of all children in the county, received Wisconsin Foodshare assistance. The number of children in the FoodShare program increased by 90% from 1999 to 2003. On average, 5,405 or 13% of the county's school children participated daily in free or reduced school lunch programs. In 2002, 41% of WIC participants stated that they often felt "food insecurity," or lack of access to a variety of healthy foods. Sixteen percent reported experiencing hunger. Clearly the young families of Rock County present a large potential audience for nutrition and food money management education. They need to learn every strategy to get the most health benefit from the food assistance they receive. The act of growing fresh vegetables at or near home may be one avenue in helping achieve this.

Sources: (1). ERS Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Report No. (FANRR) 21, United States Department of Agriculture, March 2002

Rock County UW-Extension offers support to community groups, schools and organizations who wish to start a shared garden space for food production and educational purposes. In addition to promoting locally grown produce, outdoor family activities and nutrition education, this program strives to create a network of like-minded individuals for mutual assistance and reassurance in the community garden process.

What Rock County UW-Extension provides:

- Collaboration with area vendors for seeds, transplants and other donations or discounted items.
- Assistance with the creation and maintenance of the garden space, including initial tilling, soil testing, and amendment recommendations.
- Necessary participation waivers and statistical documentation sheets.
- Support and information.
- Access to grants (when available) and assistance in pursuing funding and donations.
- In qualifying cases, a nutrition educator can provide an educational component to the garden.

What Rock County UW-Extension asks of its community garden partners:

- Documented permission to host a garden in an appropriate location.
- Qualified, dedicated liaison to coordinate garden efforts at the location
- Reliable support from students, congregation, or community-base for the general work in the garden space.
- Access to water and basic tools (shovel, hoe, hose, gloves, etc.)
- Form a reasonable plan for utilization of product grown in the garden.
- Willingness to document program, including photographs, participation numbers and demographics and amount of produce harvested and how utilized.

| Garden | 2006 | | 2007 | |
|----------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| | # Participants | Lbs. harvest | # Participants | Lbs. harvest |
| RBG | 35 | 1208 | 37 | 2085 |
| Merrill Elementary | 326 | 480 | 289 | 420 |
| Merrill Park | 15 | 815 | 21 | 1350 |
| Good Shepherd | 57 | 630 | 48 | 580 |
| 4-H | 3 | 450 | 6 | 375 |
| MGV Veggie Team | 29 | 1236 | 28 | 1728 |
| New Life (Primetime) | | | 40 | 4050 |