

Benefits of Community Gardening

Community Organizing

- Community gardens increase a sense of community ownership and stewardship.
- Community gardens foster the development of a community identity and spirit.
- Community gardens bring people together from a wide variety of backgrounds (age, race, culture, social class).
- Community gardens build community leaders.
- Community gardens offer a focal point for community organizing, and can lead to community-based efforts to deal with other social concerns.

Crime Prevention

- Community gardens provide opportunities to meet neighbors.
- Community gardens build block clubs.
- Community gardens increase eyes on the street.
- Community gardening is recognized by the many police departments as an effective community crime prevention strategy.

Cultural Opportunities

- Community gardens offer unique opportunities for new immigrants (who tend to be concentrated in low-income urban communities) to:
 - Produce traditional crops otherwise unavailable locally,
 - Take advantage of the experience of elders to produce a significant amount of food for the household,
 - Provide inter-generational exposure to cultural traditions,
 - Offer a cultural exchange with other gardeners,
 - Learn about block clubs, neighborhood groups, and other community information.
- Community gardens offer neighborhoods an access point to non-English speaking communities.
- Community gardens allow people from diverse backgrounds to work side-by-side on common goals without speaking the same language.

Youth

Community gardens offer unique opportunities to teach youth about:

- Where food comes from
- Practical math skills
- Basic business principles
- The importance of community and stewardship
- Issues of environmental sustainability
- Job and life skills

And,

- Community gardening is a healthy, inexpensive activity for youth that can bring them closer to nature, and allow them to interact with each other in a socially meaningful and physically productive way.

Food Production

- Many community gardeners, especially those from immigrant communities, take advantage of food production in community gardens to provide a significant source of food and/or income.
- Community gardens allow families and individuals without land of their own the opportunity to produce food.
- Community gardens provide access to nutritionally rich foods that may otherwise be unavailable to low-income families and individuals.
- Urban agriculture is 3-5 times more productive per acre than traditional large-scale farming!

Health

- Studies have shown that community gardeners and their children eat healthier diets than do non-gardening families.
- Eating locally produced food reduces asthma rates, because children are able to consume manageable amounts of local pollen and develop immunities.
- Exposure to green space reduces stress and increases a sense of wellness and belonging.
- Increasing the consumption of fresh local produce is one of the best ways to address childhood lead poisoning.
- The benefits of Horticulture Therapy can be and are used to great advantage in community gardens.

Green Space

- Community gardens add beauty to the community and heighten people's awareness and appreciation for living things.
- Community gardens filter rainwater, helping to keep lakes, rivers, and groundwater clean.
- Community gardens restore oxygen to the air and help to reduce air pollution.
- Community gardens provide a place to retreat from the noise and commotion of urban environments.
- Community gardens provide much needed green space in lower-income neighborhoods which typically have access to less green space than do other parts of the community.
- Development and maintenance of garden space is less expensive than that of parkland.
- Scientific studies show that crime decreases in neighborhoods as the amount of green space increases.
- Community gardens have been shown to actually increase property values in the immediate vicinity where they are located.

From St. Paul Parks website (5/30/06): <http://www.stpaul.gov/depts/parks/environment/gardens/index.html>



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~ Promoting and Preserving Community Gardening across the Twin Cities ~