



# Hale County Community Garden Coalition Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1

## Wayland Community Garden by *Lynette Bowen*

Welcome to Wayland's Community Garden! Started in 2011, we have really been expanding and beautifying the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and Utica this year. In April, we were approached by the Garrison Institute on Aging. They had heard of the garden and wanted to contribute to its development. The result? Just drive by the lot and take a look!

With the help of many volunteers, the support of Wayland administrators, and resources from the institute, we put down about 300 square feet of high-quality weed fabric (thanks to Mark Ivey of Ivey Gardens in Lubbock). Danny Murphree and crew ran irrigation lines for the future garden beds (thanks to Wayland). Then, our grantors made arrangement to have A LOT of cinder blocks delivered to the

garden. Mark Hilliard found a very nice garden design, so we used the bricks to create raised, easy-on-the-knees beds. Volunteers for this project included Mark Hilliard, Peter Bowen, Lynette Bowen, Kevin Lewis, Calvin Bass, and Richard Porter. The new beds were partly filled with left-over construction dirt but then topped off with Soil Mender's high-quality raised bed mix (thanks to Marlin Andrus at Texas Gardens). Our grant provided for drip timers and tubing. Looking good, but nothing growing in it – yet.

By now it was mid-July. I had read in several places about planting fall crops, so we decided to give it a try. We seeded green beans, put the drip hoses right on top of the furrow, and set the timer for regular watering. Voila! To date, we have harvested

more than six pounds of green beans, all of which has been donated to Faith In Sharing House (FISH). With that success, we planted cool-season veggies: sugar peas, sugar snap peas, carrots, and lettuce.

On Friday, Oct. 4, another work crew got together. One group picked up mulch from the landfill to put on top of the weed fabric. The other group cleaned out an old, rickety shed in order to make room for a new, sturdier shed. Everyone helped to spread the mulch between the raised beds. Volunteers included Mark Hilliard, Peter Bowen, Lynette Bowen, Stacey Ontai, and Charles Lawson.

As an added bonus, the Garrison Institute donated two Chinese pistachios to the garden lot. If you have a chance, stop by and take a look!

### ***Supporters and Contributors:***

***Texas AgriLife Extension Service—Hale County***

***RSVP***

***Garrison Institute on Aging***

***Wayland Baptist University***

***Hale County Master Gardeners***





**How's that for a compost pile!**

## **Cafeteria Scraps for Composting in the Wayland Community Garden**

**Dr. Mark Hilliard (Associate Professor of Art & Art Education)**

(Periodically we will measure out a cubic foot of material and weigh it to get some kind of an average.)

25 cubic feet or 350 lbs. of scraps were kept out of the landfill and are now composting at the Wayland Community Garden.

Coffee grounds and grass clippings are also being added to that mix. The Maintenance Department has taken charge of turning it.

**W**e are currently working on a 5 year grant that is from the State of Texas (DSHS) provided by the CDC. With this grant we focus on Tobacco Cessation, Healthy Eating and Active Living, and Chronic Disease Self-management. One of our objective with the grant is to build sustainable community gardens that will thrive once the grant has ended. With this we are allowed an X amount of dollars to spend each grant year towards the garden to assist in what ever they may need. There are some areas that we are not allowed to spend in but most are allowable with the grant.

*Michael Ramos, Garrison Institute on Aging—  
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center*

## **Nutrition: Food security and access**

Limited access to healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, is a major barrier to healthy eating. Low-income, underserved communities are at the highest risk for obesity because they often lack supermarkets, leaving convenience stores or fast-food chains as the main source of meals. Expensive fruits and vegetables may also be cost prohibitive for low-income families. Community gardens provide residents of underserved communities the opportunity to grow their own fruits and vegetables, increasing access and affordability.



## **Physical activity**

The U.S. Surgeon General, along with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College of Sports Medicine, recommends getting a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most days of the week for adults and 60 minutes of moderately or vigorously intense activity most days of the week for children and adolescents. Unfortunately, nearly 40% of adults and 23% of children do not get any free-time physical activity. Gardening is a recommended form of moderate physical activity. Community gardening can encourage more active lifestyles by providing children and adults the opportunity to exercise by stretching, bending, walking, digging and lifting tools and plants.

Hale County Community Garden Coalition was started with the Garrison Health Institute, RSVP, Wayland Baptist University, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to promote growing fresh vegetables in Hale County. This year over \$10,000 was donated to community gardens for plants, seed, garden improvement, tools, hoses, fertilizer, compost and other needs. The objective is to add more community gardens and create more opportunities for local food and to grow awareness of the need for local healthy food.

# *The Role of Local Government in Creating Healthy, Livable Neighborhoods*

**L**ocal government leaders are in a unique position to promote healthy eating and active living in their communities by supporting community gardens. Community gardens are places where neighbors can gather to cultivate plants, vegetables and fruits. Such gardens can improve nutrition, physical activity, community engagement, safety and economic vitality for a neighborhood and its residents. Barriers, such as liability expenses, code restrictions and a lack of resources, which often make it difficult for communities to establish or maintain gardens in their neighborhoods, can be overcome with local government engagement. This brochure offers case studies, best management practices, resources and tools for policymakers to develop creative, cost-effective solutions that reduce barriers and facilitate the creation of community garden programs. To read more about these case studies and the resources footnoted in this factsheet, visit:

[www.lgc.org/healthycommunities](http://www.lgc.org/healthycommunities)

## **Gardens benefit communities**

Community garden programs with the following characteristics have the greatest potential to strengthen communities:

- ◆ Provide an open space for community gatherings and family events.
- ◆ Include neighbors of various ages, races and ethnic backgrounds.
- ◆ Offer educational opportunities and vocational skills for youths.
- ◆ Target or include lower-income residents.
- ◆ Enable gardeners to sell their produce through a local farmer's market.

## **Unhealthy communities bear greater costs**

Sixty-five percent of adults in the U.S. are overweight or obese, and more than 33% of children and adolescents are obese or at risk for becoming obese. For adults, the potential health consequences of obesity include cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers. Obese children are at a greater risk than normal-weight children for developing type 2 diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, sleep apnea and orthopedic problems. In addition to the potential health consequences, obesity creates a substantial economic burden for the U.S. The direct and indirect health costs associated with obesity are estimated at \$117 billion per year, nationwide, in the form of worker absenteeism, health care premiums, co-payments and out-of-pocket expenses.

## Creating more open space

Most urban areas in America do not meet local or state requirements for open space and parks per capita, particularly minority communities that have fewer resources to obtain and retain open space. For instance, in Los Angeles, neighborhoods with 75% or more white residents boast 31.8 acres of park space for every 1,000 people, compared with 1.7 acres in African-American neighborhoods and 0.6 acres in Latino neighborhoods. Community gardens are an inexpensive way for cities to mitigate this disparity and recapture unused land for the purpose of beautification. A neglected vacant lot can be transformed into a garden where people of all ages can grow food together and strengthen community ties.

## Educational opportunities

Hands-on exposure to community gardens can teach children about the sources of fresh produce, demonstrate community stewardship and introduce the importance of environmental sustainability.

Gardens are also great places for children to learn math, business and communication skills through applied activities and interaction. Integrating environment-based education into academic programs improves reading, math, science and social studies test scores and reduces discipline problems in the classroom.



## Environmental Benefits

- ◆ Green vegetation can reflect as much as 20% to 25% of radiation from the sun, thus reducing the heat island effect in cities and cooling the climate in urban areas.
- ◆ In the United States, a meal travels about 13,000 miles, on average, before reaching your plate. Eating locally produced foods reduces fuel consumption, carbon dioxide emissions, and a variety of other negative environmental consequences associated with the transportation of foods.
- ◆ Garden soil is an absorbent substance that reduces runoff from the rain and helps minimize surface erosion.
- ◆ Gardens reduce pollutants in our air by absorbing carbon dioxide.
- ◆ Small open spaces in urban areas provide crucial corridors for retaining native wildlife and supporting migratory species.

## Property values and tax revenues

Green space adds property value to neighborhoods by beautifying spaces and creating more attractive places for people to walk and enjoy life outdoors. People are willing to pay more to live in places with these amenities. In New York, neighborhoods surrounding a community garden saw a 9.4% increase in property values within the first five years of its opening.

## Community services

Community gardens can be integrated into broader community projects such as after-school programs for children, activities for the elderly and resources for food banks and homeless shelters. In Seattle, the city's P-Patch Program works with the not-for-profit P-Patch Trust to supply between 7 to 10 tons of produce to Seattle food banks each year through their well-developed community garden network.

## Community pride and ownership

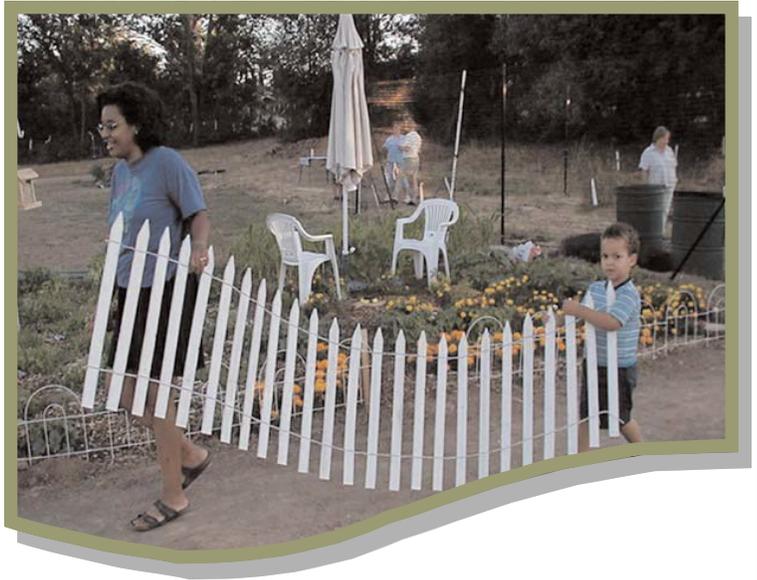
The safety and vitality of a healthy community relies heavily upon the invested pride and ownership that residents have for their neighborhood. Community gardens offer a focal point for neighborhood organizing, and can lead to community-based efforts to deal with other social concerns. They give youth a safe place to interact with peers, while involving them in beneficial activities. Community gardens can increase safety by providing more eyes on the street. Communities that develop semi-public spaces where people can become actively engaged in their community have significantly lower crime rates than neighborhoods where these amenities do not exist.

## Community gardens are affordable

The annual cost of most community gardens are minimal because residents, rather than city employees, are responsible for maintaining the gardens. Cities can help establish community gardens by identifying and purchasing viable sites for gardens, providing water for irrigation, necessary infrastructure as a one-time capital expense, and insurance liability to relieve small nonprofits or community members of this burden. Some cities

provide organizational structure for community gardens through their parks and recreation departments as a strategy for long term survival. For example, the Burlington Area Community Garden in Vermont is a partnership between the city's parks department and the nonprofit Friends of Burlington Gardens. The city provides administrative, office and staff support and in-kind equipment contributions. It oversees eight community gardens at a total annual cost of \$40,000, which is partially offset by \$17,000 in garden revenue each year.

[www.enjoyburlington.com/Programs/CommunityGardens.cfm](http://www.enjoyburlington.com/Programs/CommunityGardens.cfm) and [www.burlingtongardens.org](http://www.burlingtongardens.org)



# How Local Governments Can Help



**Through a variety of policies and partnerships**, local and state government can promote healthier communities by improving residents' access to fresh fruits and vegetables and designing environments that encourage active living. The following items are resources local leaders can reference when working to establish community gardens in their neighborhoods:

## **Create a municipal community garden program.**

In Seattle, the P-Patch Community Garden Program, in the city's parks and recreation department, protects the longevity of community gardens by acquiring land with open space funds. This program currently has more than 54 operating gardens throughout Seattle. The not-for-profit P-Patch Trust works with the program to acquire, build, preserve and protect the gardens. The Trust also provides advocacy, outreach and educational programs for gardeners. [www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch](http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch)

## **Create a municipally funded not-for-profit organization to support community gardens.**

NeighborSpace, a nonprofit organization funded through and operating in the city of Chicago, the Chicago Parks District and the Cook County Forest Preserve District, acquires property to preserve land for community gardens. NeighborSpace acts as a land trust for community gardens and accepts liability for the site. Since 1996, it has acquired more than 50 sites for preservation as community garden space. <http://neighbor-space.org>

## **Include community gardens in your general / comprehensive plan.**

In California, Berkeley's general plan states that the city will "encourage and support community gardens as important open space resources that build communities and provide a local food source" in the open space element. The general plan lists action steps, which include pursuing community gardens in specific new developments and high-density areas. [www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/planning/landuse/plans/generalPlan/openSpace.html](http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/planning/landuse/plans/generalPlan/openSpace.html)

## **Allow zoning for community gardens.**

Boston established a specific community garden category that can be zoned as a sub-district within an open space zoning district. Identifying prime locations for community gardens aids in their creation and emphasizes the importance of this use to the city. [www.cityofboston.gov/bra/pdf/ZoningCode/Article33.pdf](http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/pdf/ZoningCode/Article33.pdf)

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