



THE PEOPLE'S GARDEN

Growing Healthy Food, People and Communities



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"...the most valuable of all arts will be the art of deriving a comfortable subsistence from the smallest area of soil."

- Abraham Lincoln

THE PEOPLE'S GARDEN INITIATIVE is an effort by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) which challenges its employees to establish People's Gardens at USDA facilities worldwide or help communities create gardens. People's Gardens vary in size and type, but all have a common purpose – to help the community they're within and the environment.

Fresh fruits and vegetables can be grown for those in need; or trees, shrubs and flowers planted to improve soil, water and air health, attract wildlife, or beautify the neighborhood. Whether you have an existing garden or are starting a new one, a People's Garden must include the following three components:

BENEFIT YOUR COMMUNITY

Gardens benefit communities in many different ways. Consider creating spaces for leisure or recreation that the public can use, donating harvest to a local food bank or shelter, designing a wildlife friendly landscape, or installing a rain garden to absorb stormwater run-off and protect the soil from erosion.

BE COLLABORATIVE

The garden must be a collaborative effort between other volunteers, neighbors or organizations within your community. Consider forming local partnerships to carry out the mission of a People's Garden.



New Orleans, Louisiana

INCORPORATE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Include gardening practices that nurture, maintain and protect the environment such as:

- Capturing rainwater in rain barrels
- Composting and mulching
- Planting native species
- Encouraging beneficial insects that feed on destructive pests

With each garden we plant and every sustainable practice we implement, USDA will demonstrate how easy it is to green our communities, take better care of our natural resources, and produce healthy fruits and vegetables.



The People's Garden at USDA Headquarters in Washington, DC

WHAT'S THE HISTORY BEHIND THE NAME?

When Abraham Lincoln founded USDA in 1862, he referred to it as "The People's Department." It is a description that is as true today as it was then. USDA touches the lives of Americans every day. To commemorate this significant link to all Americans, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, broke ground on the first People's Garden at USDA Headquarters on February 12, 2009, the bicentennial of Lincoln's birthday. Today, the entire grounds are a part of this garden. Plans are being developed to create rooftop and rain gardens and incorporate pollinator, wildlife, and edible components throughout the landscape. The garden at USDA headquarters, as well as gardens at all USDA facilities, will demonstrate sustainable conservation practices and will be used to educate and engage the public.



Albuquerque, New Mexico

WHY? START A PEOPLE'S GARDEN

PEOPLE'S GARDENS PROMOTE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

People who have access to more fruits and vegetables eat more fruits and vegetables. Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables improves nutrition, especially for diet-related diseases such as obesity and diabetes. Children who garden are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables and have greater knowledge about nutrition and healthy eating habits. Gardening provides a low-impact exercise for people within a large range of physical ability.

PEOPLE'S GARDENS HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

People's Gardens promote sustainable practices. They improve water quality, improve soil health and create shelter and nesting habitat for wildlife.



Volunteer lends a hand



Mrs. Vilsack explores a butterfly garden at an elementary school in Washington, DC

PEOPLE'S GARDENS CREATE TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

Gardens educate children and adults about the environment, agriculture, ecology, biology, and soil science. They help create the next generation of farmers, ranchers, gardeners, teachers, and leaders.

PEOPLE'S GARDENS ENABLE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Gardens expand the ability of citizens from all cultural, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds to share their traditions and beliefs. They are a neutral gathering place in communities and foster interaction.

PEOPLE'S GARDENS FOSTER PRIDE

Gardens beautify communities. They also cultivate self-sufficiency. In WW II, Victory Gardens produced 40 percent of the fresh fruits and vegetables in the United States. Gardens provide therapy for the soul and healing for the spirit.

A PEOPLE'S GARDEN

- BENEFITS THE COMMUNITY
- IS SUSTAINABLE
- IS A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

"I encourage you to participate and be involved. Real and effective action starts small and it starts with our communities."

- Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack

WANT TO PARTICIPATE & BE INVOLVED?

Consider creating gardens in vacant lots, schools, or churches and become part of the People's Garden movement. Reach out to USDA employees in your community for their help and expertise or ask them to lend a hand in planting, harvesting, and maintaining a People's Garden. **The possibilities are limitless.**

For more information, contact:

Livia Marqués

Director

Livia.Marques@osec.usda.gov

Annie Ceccarini

Outreach and Education

Specialist

Annie.Ceccarini@da.usda.gov

Angela Harless

Media Contact

Angela.Harless@oc.usda.gov