

Community Gardens

What are community gardens? Community Gardens are, in essence, a piece of land that is cultivated or “gardened” by an individual person or a group of people. There are a few aspects of community gardens that distinguish them from your typical backyard garden. For example, in community gardens land is usually divided into individual plots or sections of land with each plot having an individual gardener assigned to it. With this, community gardens may have certain rules and regulations to preserve and maintain the overall productivity of the garden.

Community Gardens have a great relevance and significant impact on the local and rural communities that they may be found in. This project details these benefits and the complexity of this unique way of agriculture.

Community Garder Stakeholders

Stakeholders are people, groups or even other organizations that have a vested interest or tether to a particular business project or organization. In the case of community gardens some stakeholders may include the homeless who may benefit from community gardens as they may offer resources and/or opportunities that provide rehabilitation. For example, “The Garden Project” -- a local community project oriented around gardening located in Santa Cruz, California, offers a rehabilitating environment that allows homeless people to work on an organic, three-acre farm to support agriculture and the community while providing open job opportunities and access to produce (- ANONYMOUS TRAINEE; “PROGRAMS - SUPPORT SERVICES” PG. 1&4).

Neighboring Communities

While the local community might receive the 'cream of the crop', there are many surrounding communities that may benefit from a nearby community garden as well, these effects can be seen in, but aren't limited to, the social atmosphere, the quality of living, the quality of education among neighboring educational institutions and much more (- Besty; “Programs –

“Volunteer and Community Education” pg. 7). Examples of these include lower crime rates in populations surrounding community gardens by fostering relationships with community members as the benefits remedy many factors following poverty as well as increased opportunity for hands on education for those wanting to study bioscience or agriculture.

Systems

Water Retention/Food Desert

After researching into the field of combating food deserts, which are defined as areas where it is difficult to purchase healthy and or fresh food at an affordable price (Community Gardens: Exploring Race, Racial Diversity and Social Capital in Urban Food Deserts). These are most common in urban areas or places with a minority-dense population. This lack of quality food can lead to a whole host of issues, such as obesity, vitamin deficiencies, diabetes, and even some cancers. Members of food desert communities help combat this by communicating with food stores and gardeners to help create community gardens. When assistance for food deserts came in Baltimore, Maryland, a study found that, in the long run they proved beneficial in the endeavor for food security (Food Deserts in Baltimore). Another study in the field of Urban Agriculture found that growing food crops in and near cities contributes to healthy communities by engaging the community in recreation that improves the public well-being in the long term (Urban Agriculture: Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places). In addition, community gardens may reuse pre-existing land not only to aid in food production but also with energy conservation, waste management, biodiversity, community interaction, public health, and education. The water retention aspect of these findings can be defined in using stormwater or rainwater that would have normally been wasted in floods could be reused in sustaining community gardens. Community gardens require total collaboration from the community around them, as well as a multitude of resources to make up for the deficits, one of these is the most important resource: water. Water is the source of all life on earth, and this is another disadvantage those in underserved communities face, poor water quality.

https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/publication/book_paperback/PAS-Report-563.pdf

<https://food-deserts.com/food-deserts-in-baltimore/>

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/278c23a68ad66830fec4cdf39d832d9e/1?cbl=18750&pq-origsite=gscholar>

Causal Chain Analysis

After conducting a causal chain analysis, we found that community gardens are driven by the people in the garden's communities. These people include the homeless, local organizations, schools, as well as other groups. The role these people and groups play in community gardens are that they invest their time and resources to maintaining the gardens. How the homeless population contributes has been previously explained, however, local organizations and schools contribute as well. For the organizations, they help to educate the community about horticulture, which is the practice of garden cultivation and management, as well as provide funding to create and maintain the gardens. An example of this is the



American Horticultural Society.

Their website says that “AHS connects people to gardening, raises awareness of earth-friendly gardening practices, introduces children to plants, brings together leaders to address important national issues, and showcases the art and practice of horticulture.” (American Horticulture Society). Lastly, the role that schools play in community gardens is similar to the other stakeholders because they create and maintain gardens on campus for educational purposes as well as sustainability purposes. An example of this is the Pomona College Organic Farm where they use



the garden as a part of their Environmental Analysis program. It is said that “students have the opportunity to not only maintain the plots, but also test real soil for soil sciences courses” (Robbie). So, to summarize, the causal chain analysis of community gardens is that local organizations educate the community and provide funds for the creation of the gardens, and schools, the homeless population, and other groups put in the time and effort to maintain them.

“American Horticultural Society.” American Horticultural Society - Improving Life Through Plants and Gardening, 3 Jan. 2024, ahsgardening.org/about-us/. Accessed Nov. 5, 2024

Robbie. "3 Universities with Exceptional Community Gardens." *NationSwell*, 19 Nov. 2014, nationswell.com/colleges-getting-green/. Accessed Nov. 5, 2024

Drivers

After doing research on direct drivers and having a prosperous and flourishing community garden, we have come across a few drivers that are very impactful. The main thing we've found when researching what directly impacts a community garden is that soil is very important to having a good garden. The soil needs to be well drained, moist, and running a PH test of the soil for the most quality soil (citation?). The best plants for a community garden are plants that don't require a lot of water. Plants like cabbage, sprouts, and cauliflower can do well with a little amount of water. The location of the planting containers should be near a clean water source to make watering convenient and easy. The community garden is going to need to have access to a lot of sunlight. These gardens need at least 8–10 hours of sunlight each day. Community gardens operate best when they have a lot of space, so finding somewhere that has a lot of space for the plants to grow would be the most beneficial. Most importantly, the main thing that drives a good community garden is the community itself. Without the community being dedicated to the garden, it won't remain in good condition and won't be beneficial for the community.

The soil is the most important part of the garden, which is the first driver. Good soil needs to be well drained and moist. Soil needs to drain water, but it can't too fast because it will dry out. If soil has too much water in it, the roots can rot. Next, you need to know the soil pH. The pH of the soil affects how plants grow. I know that putting smashed eggshells in a garden can help plants grow because they have sulfur in them. The best way to improve soil is compost, which keeps the plant healthy and promotes growth.

Picking the right plants for a community garden is essential. You must pick plants that can grow in the conditions of your garden. For example, if you don't have a lot of water, you will need to pick plants that don't need a lot of water. Plants that do not need a lot of water are cabbage, cauliflower, kale, and sprouts. These plants can grow if it's dry outside. Following the patterns of the weather seasons is good to know so you can plant accordingly. Since you need to know how many plants you need, you also need to know what your water source will be. The best way to have easy access to an easy water source is to put it next to something like a water hose or well. A good way to save water is to put mulch over the soil. One water system I know that is used for plants is a drip irrigation system because delivers water straight to the plants and wastes less water. Plants need sunlight to grow. Most vegetables need at least 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight each day. Without enough sunlight, plants will grow slower. Make sure you put the garden in hours that have a lot of shade. If the area is shady, you can plant spinach and lettuce. Its important to make sure you don't block short plants with tall plants. Which leads to having good spacing and having a good layout. Plants need room to grow, and they also need good air circulation so they don't get discharges. The best way to have space for a layout is to design your grid as such. Grouping plants together that have the same needs makes the best layout possible. Taking out crops and new crops keeps the soil healthy, so move around the layout.

The most important part of creating and maintaining a community garden is having good community involvement. Getting together with people like heartlands or getting with schools that might have less. The people a community garden could affect people can affect the most are people living in food desserts. A garden will only do well if the people that are responsible for it are involved and committed. Having organization and making sure everyone knows their task improves the chances of the gardens success greatly. You can build a strong sense of community by having a workshop and showing firsthand what type of food can be made from it. The garden should be available to anyone for anyone in the community.

After research, a community garden has a lot of drivers: healthy soil, the right plants, good water access, sunlight, space, and community involvement. When all of these drivers are put together, the garden will produce food and good community inclusion.

[Bing Videos](#)

[How to Start a Community Garden in Your Neighborhood - Garden Savvy](#)

[How Much Sun Do Vegetables Need To Grow](#)

[Community Garden Irrigation - Vermont Garden Network](#)