

Newark Community Gardens: Residents reclaiming public land



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Project U.S.E. Pedal Farmers

Rutgers VETS



9TH AVENUE COMMUNITY GARDEN

The 9th Avenue Community Garden, located at 79 9th Ave in Newark, got its start in the spring of 2012 when neighbors came together to put a vacant lot on the northeast corner of 9th Avenue and South 13th Street to productive use.



The initiation and operation of the garden have been collaborative efforts. Greater Newark Conservancy leases the lot from the City of Newark and makes it available to gardeners as part of its Plot It Fresh program. To help get the garden started, GNC provided raised beds, organic soil, plants, water barrels, and technical assistance. Neighbors also chipped in.

Contact person: Phyllis Obery, 973-351-4610,
sistergirl55@aol.com

9TH AVENUE COMMUNITY GARDEN

During the first planting season one neighbor took great pride in serving as the garden's volunteer caretaker, despite being down on his luck and living in a nearby vacant house at the time. The owner of the house next to the garden provided water. Young men in the community even provided "security" by letting one of the leaders know when unfamiliar people entered the garden. The City of Newark installed a fence around the garden after someone in the neighborhood drove his ATV through it.



Thanks to the dedication and leadership of Phyllis Obery, participation in the garden has increased steadily since 2012. Each spring she receives more inquiries from interested neighbors than there are beds to accommodate them. Her brother, Ed Shelton, enjoys maintaining the area outside the beds and keeping the sidewalk outside the garden neat. Phyllis and Ed form the backbone of the garden, which has brought new life to the neighborhood in more ways than one.

AI'MAIDAH

organic
community garden

We have been blessed with a sacred space within in the City of Newark adopt a lot program We grow traditional organic foods and herbs with sustainable methods, that will serve the local community along with gatherings and events of empowerment and activism.

The local community youth and elders participate as caregivers of the garden and are introduced to traditional sustainable agriculture and islamic ecology and environmental ethics

Contact Person: Hajja Latifah 973.819.9510; 45-47 Lyons Ave.
Newark NJ

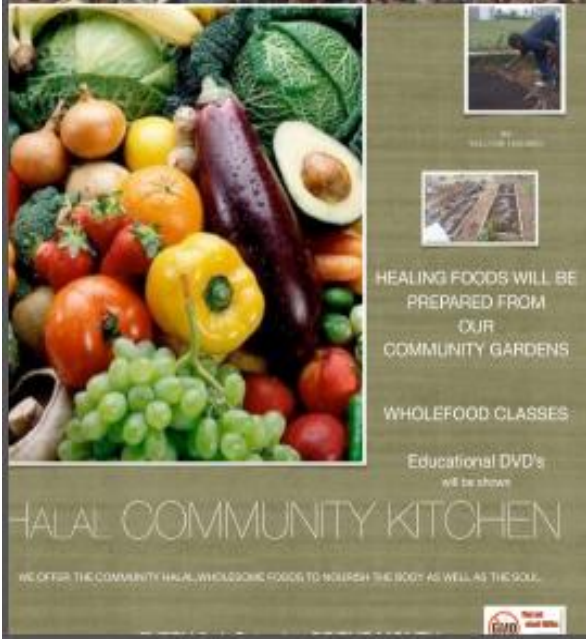


AI'MAIDAH Garden

Seasonal Workshops and Training such as:

- Straw Bale & Container Gardening for Self Sufficiency
- Using Traditional Whole Foods for Healing
- Saving and Storage Organic and Heirloom Seeds
- Sun /Solar Cooking & Energy Management
- Soil Biology& Consultations/Soil Testing,
- Vermiculture and Organic Matter Composing:
- The Connection between Food and Community Mental Health
- Ecology and Environmental Stewardship from an Islamic Perspective

Note: Ms. Abdul-Hamid is a Newark Garden Ambassador. She is a Master Gardener who is serving as a knowledgeable resource for her neighbors, working in collaboration with the City of Newark's Adopt-a-Lot program.



The Art of Survival Gardens



The Art of Survival Corporation is a 501 c (3) grass roots community based organization in the heart of the Weequahic Historic District. We are a volunteer organization that has historically utilized personal funds to develop the change we want. We believe in organizing and developing residents for the purpose of building what we need. We have recruited some of the best building tradesmen and women that reside within the Weequahic Neighborhood to assist in mentoring local men 18 - 32 years old to construct our Organic Community & Peace Gardens.

BRENDA TOYLOY, *Founder & President*

THE ART OF SURVIVAL

603 Elizabeth Avenue, Suite 1B

Newark, New Jersey 07112-2403T/F [\(973\) 923-0300](tel:(973)923-0300) C [\(917\) 583-7092](tel:(917)583-7092)

Art of Survival currently has three gardens:

- **The Peace Garden** (established 8/2011 at 525-529 Elizabeth Avenue) is still under construction. It is 90' x 101' and has a 6' wrought iron fencing. NJ Peace Action established our site as a Peace Site.
- **The First Lady Michele Obama Healthy Organic Community Garden** - (established 5/2012 at 214 Pomona Avenue) was named by a student at Maple Avenue School following a visit from our First Lady to unveil the Let's Move Program. Rutgers Water Resource Group and the NJ Tree Foundation are partners on this garden. All plants were grown from organic seed. We used purchased red worms, lady bugs, green lacewings and praying mantis to fertilize our garden. No pesticides, herbicides or insecticides were used. There are 24 plants beds, trees, a rain garden and room to grow in this garden. The chief steward of this garden recently purchased a 1,000 gallon cistern. The garden is not adjacent to housing that we could catch the rain from so we will have to construct a shelter with downspouts. We are also thinking of bringing in a secondary water line that will cost us \$3-6,000.
- **The Khary Orr Organic Community Garden** (established 7/2013 at 367 Seymour Avenue) is a 50' x 100' lot named after a young man who was killed at the site in December 2010. Khary earned his BS in Chemistry and was Project Manager at the City of Newark when he was gunned down sitting in his car. We are presently partnering with Clean Water Action who will complete the entrance and install five rain barrel systems. Khary's mother owns the house the rain barrel system will be attached to. Our intention is to grow our soil via composting, build a Hoop House and install an Aquaponics System.

Art of Survival has three people in training at Duke Farms with Growing Power to further our skill sets in urban farming. In addition, we need to work with an agency to develop marketing & packaging skills for selling our foods to local vendors. Our main challenge is bringing in a secondary water supply and security cameras. With the right kind of financial support & partnership we could accomplish all these things and provide stipends for our Chief Stewards to open the gardens on a regular basis! Our volunteers included students from Bloomfield College, NJIT, Rutgers University, Newark Community Solutions and local residents. Brenda Toyloy & The Art of Survival Corporation received the Nelson Mandela Freedom Gardening Award 2012 from the Great Newark Conservancy at their 25th Anniversary Celebration!



Bergen Street Garden Club

(established June 2014 at Bergen and Rose Street)

Food from this garden goes to the seniors at the senior building across Bergen street. The seniors grow their own food, which gives them something to do and supplies them with healthy, organically grown produce. One current challenge is getting water onto the site. With the right kind of support we could make the garden accessible to the seniors in wheel chairs.

Manager; Keven Porter (973) 477-9914





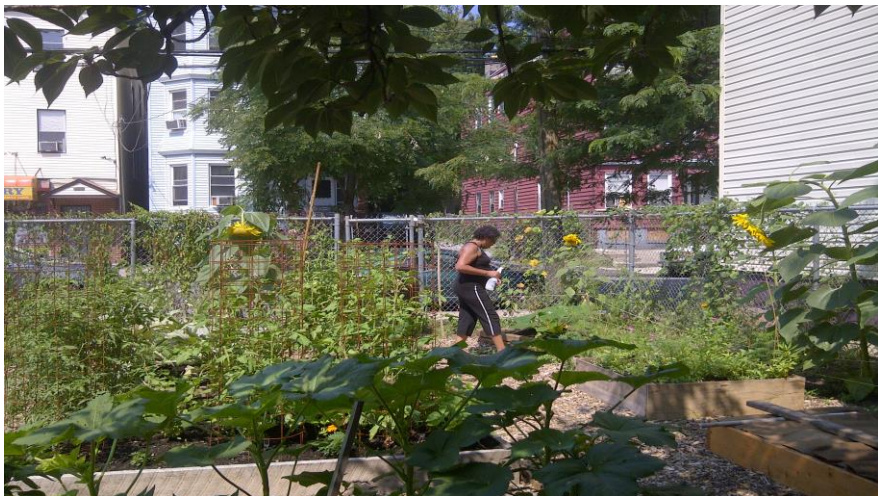
Garden of Worker Bees

Since June 2013, this garden has grown at 179 Broadway in Newark's north ward. Food grown in this garden goes to volunteers that work in the garden and also to Clinton Memorial AME Zion Church Free Farmers Market.

The size and location which allows us to grow many different vegetables, herbs and fruits. One challenge is the lack of support from the City of Newark for the Adopt A Lot Program; specifically Neighborhood Services. The littering in front of and in the garden, rodents from the restaurant next door and lastly lack of quality soil. With the right kind of support, we could grow an abundance of vegetables and fruits to address food insecurity.

Contact: Amarilys Olivo Mockabee P.O. Box 881 Montclair, NJ 07042 (201)704-6890





The Green Community Garden

The Green Community Garden, created in May of 2011 through the Adopt-A-Lot program, consists of 8 gardeners who are regularly committed each year to growing produce and maintaining the lot. Produce is grown in 17 raised beds made of undressed pine. Last year alone, 197 pounds of food was donated to the local residents in the West Ward.

As an inspiration to organizations and gardeners alike, our goals and objectives are: recreate a year round, open lab, educational environment for both children and adults, continue to be a local resource providing support to backyard gardeners and Adopt-A-Lot lessees, and continue providing food donations to the underserved. We educate by using both hands on and curriculum driven techniques to foster organic and sustainable growing practices. We endeavor to encourage gardeners to protect our natural wildlife. In our own lot, the perimeter is dedicated to pollinators and beneficial insects, creating a near natural eco-system that serves as an integral part of the garden.

Contact: Carla Greene:



Green Community Garden

As with any garden we face challenges. The number 1 challenge we currently face is consistent access to water, tool storage solutions, wood, linseed oil, replacement hoses and soil amendments as well as other basic items that would need to be refreshed or replaced every 4 to 6 years.

The garden is a model for many, a valuable resource to our residents. Our presence uplifts and elevates the overall mood and appearance of the community as well as increase the value of surrounding properties.

Note: Ms. Greene is a Newark Garden Ambassador. She is a Master Gardener who is serving as a knowledgeable resource for her neighbors, working in collaboration with the City of Newark's Adopt-a-Lot program.



Heart of Vailsburg Gardens



Unified Vailsburg Services Organization
Department of Community Outreach & Planning
462 Sanford Avenue
Newark, NJ 07106
973.374.2000 ext. 1402



69 Norwood Street Newark, NJ 07106



1068 18th Avenue Newark, NJ 07106

Managing Organizations: Unified Vailsburg Services Organization/Heart of Vailsburg Organizing Project, HOV Block Club Coalition, Vailsburg Garden Committee

UVSO Project Manager: (staff) Pamela B. Daniels 862.220.2601, mail4pamela@gmail.com

HOV Project Manager: (volunteer) Jeanne Fortin, 973.517.5127, jf07106@gmail.com

Heart of Vailsburg Gardens

HOV Norwood has existed since April 2011. Food grown in this garden goes to all hands that help maintain the garden. This includes the residents on the block, volunteers on the VGC committee as well as volunteers recruited through third party partners including students at local schools, Jersey Cares, and local churches. The HOV gardens grow a variety of vegetables including: squash, cucumbers, kale, lettuce. Peppers, tomatoes, okra, rosemary, basil, mint, cabbage, collard greens. One current challenge at Norwood is the lack of an irrigation system to ensure the plants are watered consistently even when we there is little man power.

HOV 18th Avenue has existed since April 2012. One great thing about HOV 18th Avenue is it's location on a main street and near a bus stop. When in bloom, people can see this green patch of happiness from the main road and hopefully be inspired to participate. One challenge of HOV 18th Avenue is the amount of shade that exists there. As it stands, we stick to flowers and herbs at HOV 18th because they do not need as much sunlight. We also need additional water resources. With the right kind of support, we could have additional manpower for the heavier tasks like tree trimmings, water irrigation, and laying of woodchips. We could also identify ways to help promote the free access to food so more people participate at the committee level and reap the benefits of the garden space. Additionally, we would be able to put up signs at the gardens so that more people would know the space exists just by walking past it. Lastly, acquisition of soil is a challenge as well. Since the gardens do not produce profit, and the program is not funded it is a challenge to purchase soil from local sources at the beginning of each season. Seed funding to kick-start gardens at the beginning of growing season would be greatly helpful.



Myrtle Avenue Garden

This garden was started in the spring of 2014 at 15-17 Myrtle Ave by neighbors and their friends and with help from Greater Newark Conservancy. Residents grow zucchini, lettuce, peppers, tomatoes and herbs to take home with them. The garden has space for many more gardeners to participate! One current challenge is getting more neighborhood interest. With some additional support, gardeners could feed some neighbors who frequent the food pantries.

Contact person: Carolyn Bambara



One great thing about this garden is that it is a place of respite where people in the neighborhood can go to relax and enjoy a little bit of nature apart from the hectic and very urban surrounding area. There are also plans to use it as a nature/environmental learning center for the youth and the rest of the community. Current challenges include trying to keep some people from breaking into the garden and obtaining more financial support to help maintain it. With the right kind of support, we could improve the condition and use of the garden.

Newark Community Solutions Garden

In June 2014, Youth Court Participants cleaned and mulched a vacant lot at 228 Fairmount Avenue and then designed a mural that will be installed in the garden. (Mural design shown in photo.) Once the garden is cleaned up, including the unveiling of the mural on August 4, 2015 in conjunction with “National Night Out”, there will be regular planting, maintenance and events scheduled, including rain barrels and other events pertaining to anti-violence, the environment and learning. As of now, no food is grown in this garden, but there is a raised bed for a future vegetable garden.

Contact: Wynnie-Fred Victor Hinds 201-253-7619

hindsw@courtinnovation.org

Awinna Martinez 201-293-9915

martineza@courtinnovation.org



The People's Garden

Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc. (Newark SAS) prides itself on an array of outdoor/indoor learning experiences that allow participants to put theory into practice as well as connect more with nature. We host a variety of educational, hands-on programs around community gardening, ecological building, eco-art, wellness & nutrition education, and the use of clean renewable energy.

The People's Garden, located at 86 ½ Garside Street, Newark, NJ 07104, is currently being managed by the Hernandez family. Since the summer of 2013, the Mexican natives have been sharing traditional farming skills and adapting these techniques into an urban environment. This year we have expanded to 25 raised beds, growing a variety of produce and plan to sell a portion to local restaurants this fall.





The People's Garden

Newark Science & Sustainability

Newark SAS received an Exemplary Service Recognition award from the Greater Newark Conservancy for our project dubbed The People's Garden. This project consisted of turning a vacant lot into a produce garden, making healthy food accessible to hundreds of Newark residents. We also received a letter of recognition from Mayor Ras J. Baraka for our donation of produce to dozens of Newark senior residents.



Feel free to contact Tobias A. Fox, Founder-Managing Director for more information.

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Instagram @ newarksas / Google+ @ NewarkSciSustain
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95 Orchard Street • Newark, NJ 07102 • 862.244.3519
glocal@sasglocal.com • www.sasglocal.com



SWAG PROJECT

Growing Food Building Community
www.SWAGproject.org | [facebook/SWAGProject.com](https://facebook.com/SWAGProject.com)

SWAG Project is an established urban farming, educational and community-building program. At SWAG, farming and food are tools for creating healthier families, providing educational enrichment and fostering new community bonds. For four years we have led a collaboration with local schools, community development organizations, and faith institutions to offer our programming. We are a positive space for teens to volunteer, learn by doing, and get away from the normal pressures of the streets while honing their leadership skills. We have an abundant small farm, run a weekly farmer's market, provide multiple educational outreach programs to the surrounding schools, and serve as a community event hub. **In the last season alone we grew (and sold or gave away) over 4,000 lbs. of organic fruits and vegetables!**



Each year we provide healthy, affordable produce to our communities through seasonal farm stands, CSA programs and other partnerships.

Address: 343 Meeker Ave and 438 Peshine Ave

Contact and Information:

Emilio Panasci

epanasci@gmail.com

[908.208.7244](tel:908.208.7244)

www.swagproject.org / www.facebook.com/SWAGPROJECT

SWAG Project

In 2014 we introduced over 750 local students to urban food growing, hosted 8 youth farm interns and interacted with over 150 additional teen and college volunteers from across Newark, New Jersey, and New York City. Additionally, we hosted over 100 adult volunteers and involved them with hands-on experience and learning in both food growing and community activism.

SWAG is poised to increase both its market operation and it's educational enrichment programming for local school partners (esp. TEAM Academy, St. Phillips and Peshine Ave. School) and visiting workshop groups. With the right kind of support, we could offer multiple farm stands, increasing opportunities for communities to get healthy foods, and for teens to volunteer and learn about urban agriculture and the food system; and we could staff an educator to greatly increase the number of classes and quality of enrichment for students and visiting workshop groups.





THE UJIMAA GARDEN

The Ujimaa Garden mission is to utilize the garden as a community asset to assist with the reduction of crime, combat obesity and the creation of green jobs through urban farming to reduce the City of Newark's food desert. This garden began in October 2012, at 295-303 Morris Avenue. Nicole Singletary, CEO of It Takes a Village (I.T.V.) manages this garden along with the residents comprising the Ujimaa Garden Executive Committee. The garden has been used to train and educate residents about green infrastructure as well as growing food for the community. With the right kind of support we can produce an urban food system to feed senior citizens, families and the local food pantry within this low-income neighborhood with an annual income of \$13,000 dollars.

Contact: Nicole Singletary (CEO of I.T.V, Inc.) at **973-454-7444** or via email at **Singletaryn.itvinc@gmail.com**



THE HOPE GARDEN

The Hope Garden in honor of Shirley P. Washington is an Ujimaa Sister Garden, and is dedicated to women's cancer health and wellness. The garden was created in August 2014 at 266 Bergen Street by I.T.V It Takes A Village, Inc. and is sustained by the Ujimaa Garden Executive Committee. The garden was named in honor of Shirley P. Washington, who lost her fight with cancer in 1999. Her legacy lives on through her granddaughter, Ms. Melissa Holland, who uses this community garden as a support base for individuals and families impacted by cancer. The gardeners grow cancer fighting fruits and vegetables which have organic antibodies that support natural immunities within the human body. With the right kind of support we can expand an urban food system to grow, and provide cancer health and wellness activities for Newark residents at this garden.

Contact: Nicole Singletary (CEO of I.T.V, Inc.) at 973-454-7444 or via email at Singletaryn.itvinc@gmail.com

13th Avenue School Garden



The 13th Avenue School garden is located across the street from 13th Ave school on two formerly vacant lots. Greater Newark Conservancy worked with school staff and students as well as participants in the Clean and Green program to build and plant raised beds, install an innovative rain harvesting system, and grow flowers and plants. The garden has served as an educational site for the students and a neighborhood amenity.

For more information, contact Greater Newark Conservancy 32 Prince Street, Phone: (973) 642-4646.

Camden Street School Garden



In May 2015, with support from the Captain Planet Foundation, Shop-rite and Dole, the garden became a “Project Learning Garden,” dedicated to expanding the range of healthy food options available to students while they learn about food origins. Greater Newark Conservancy supported the application and the creation of the garden.

For more information, contact Greater Newark Conservancy 32 Prince Street, Phone: (973) 642-4646.

JFK School Enabling Garden



JFK School in Newark, which serves special education students, has a large garden adjacent to the school building. Greater Newark Conservancy assists the school in making this garden into an educational asset.



For more information, contact Greater Newark Conservancy: (973) 642-4646.

Harriet Tubman School Garden



With help from Greater Newark Conservancy, students and teachers at Harriet Tubman School grow produce in a Living Laboratory. They learn science, sample cooking, and in the summer, turn the garden over to high school interns.

For more information, visit:
<http://harriettubmanschoolgardenblog.blogspot.com/>.



Newark Collegiate Academy School Garden

Since May 2014, Newark Collegiate Academy, TEAM Schools and KIPP New Jersey have supported this garden at 253-7 Orange St. Fruit trees have just been planted. Fruit will eventually go to neighbors of the garden and to students at NCA.

We have a really cool, triangular-shaped corner lot. We get lots of sun, air and a big view!

We would like to have more soil/compost and more raised beds. This would increase our planting capacity.

With the right kind of support we could reach our long term goals of having a completely sustainable, student-run, organic garden. This includes using compost as fertilizer from the organic waste produced by our garden, producing enough organic, nutritious fruits and vegetables to make significant donations to the community and school. The garden could eventually grow and produce a significant portion of the fresh food served in our school cafeteria.

Contact: Victoria DeFinis vdefinis@kippnj.org



Seek Academy School Garden

Since May 2015, Seek Academy and KIPP New Jersey have supported this garden at 117 Aldine St. Our first harvest will go towards students sampling healthy organic food in their Fitness and Nutrition classes, with goals of having a Garden Bar salad bar during lunch. We also hope to take extra food and make donations to the students and community in need, and teach healthy cooking classes to families in our neighborhood in order to expand access to healthy, real food in our community.

This garden is truly amazing because it turned an abandoned lot on Aldine Street that used to be filled with broken glass, garbage, old mattresses, and overgrown weeds into a beautiful, bright corner where students and community members can be proud of how beautiful their neighborhood is and learn how to grow lots of healthy food in a low-cost, environmentally friendly, fun way. This garden really brings the community of our school together with the neighborhood we serve as a place to build lasting relationships by working together to make Aldine more beautiful.



Seek Academy School Garden

Currently we are working hard to find soil donations so that we can fill our boxes. We have lots of man power and volunteers, but it is difficult to find the funding for soil, seeds, plants and sustainable, eco-friendly fertilizers.

With the right kind of support we could reach our long term goals of having a completely sustainable, student-run, organic garden. This includes using compost as fertilizer from the organic waste produced by our garden, producing enough organic, nutritious real fruits and vegetables to make significant donations to the community, teaching students and community members how to manage their own gardens with start-up seedlings from our school garden, and potentially expanding the model to other vacant lots on Aldine Street and in the South Ward



Contact: Uzma Chowdhury uchowdhury@kippnj.org 678.467.2538



Saint Benedict's Prep Community Garden



For the past five years, two teachers and a group of high school boys have run a successful community garden at St. Benedict's Prep, a college preparatory school for 600 inner city boys in Newark. We are small but vibrant garden that is actually feeding people! Working with Newark's One-Stop Career Center we employ five teenagers (all students at St. Benedict's).

Contact:

Noreen Connolly

nconnolly@sbp.org

973 986 6465 (cell)

St. Benedict's Prep, 520 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Newark, NJ 07102

Saint Benedict's Prep Community Garden

We have sold vegetables to the school community and provided fresh vegetables to the Pierre Toussaint Food Pantry and for the monks who live here. We have more than 100 Earth Boxes (secured through Garden State Urban Farms and Lorraine Gibbons) and four raised beds in which we grow tomatoes, eggplant, cucumbers, beans, squash, pumpkins, watermelon, peppers, greens (collards, kale and lettuce) and some herbs.

The garden is planted in May by a small class of student urban gardeners during the school's month-long "Project Phase." It is tended during the summer months of June, July and August by four students gardeners who are paid through grant money and by participating Newark's Summer Youth Work Experience Program. In August, when the student return to school after a two-month summer break, we begin selling the vegetables at weekly Farmers Markets at the school. We also provide fresh vegetables to the food pantry here twice a month during the summer.

This fall we plan to expand our program to include year - round hydroponic gardening under the auspices of the science department. We have secured funding for a table provided through American Hydroponics. Next year, if possible, we would also like to partner with the Greater Newark Conservancy, which is two blocks away from us, on community building and healthy eating projects.



AIDS Resource Foundation for Children Gardens

The AIDS Resource Foundation for Children (ARFC) is a community-based organization that serves children and families through integrated programs focused on health, well-being, and sustainable housing. ARFC's garden initiative was created to address the need for accessible fresh produce in Newark; to connect urban families with their own food source; and to empower young people through self-sufficiency and skills-building. Our first vegetable garden bed was raised in May 2013 at 182 Roseville Avenue in Newark. We have since involved 12 other families throughout the city in maintaining garden beds of their own.

Contact person:

Dr. Terrence Zealand, (732) 995-7125



AIDS Resource Foundation for Children Gardens

All produce grown in ARFC gardens is shared among the families that help to grow the food in their yard. The families that host gardens are clients of ARFC. ARFC's garden initiative is a true community effort that involves adults and children who benefit from the hard work of growing food. From volunteers that installed the raised beds to the teenagers who water the plants daily to the grandmother that creates a meal out of fresh eggplants and kale, the entire process is an effort of sweat, drive, and reward.

Our community wants more gardens!! ARFC provides support services to over 200 families in Newark, and the overwhelming response to the garden initiative is that more families want to host a garden! Our current challenge is to garner more volunteer and monetary support to bring vegetable garden beds to all of ARFC's families who can benefit from this project.

With some additional support, ARFC could increase the health and well-being of those living with chronic illness, such as HIV/AIDS; build stronger communities by showing neighbors that someone at this home cares about their yard and what happens on their street; and provide a meaningful opportunity for young people in Newark to feel pride in something they produced themselves. We could plant a seed that goes beyond a yellow summer squash — it could be the catalyst for a future landscaper, biologist, or nutritionist. It could be the catalyst for one of our teens to take a closer look at their grandmother and ask, “Can you show me how to cook this?”

Prodigal Sons & Daughters

Redirection Services, Inc.

Prodigal Sons & Daughters began creating gardens on vacant city lots in 2009 at 435 So. 13th Street, 444-446 So. 13th Street, and 454 So. 13th Street. Food grown in this garden goes to the community – the garden is open to all to harvest available produce. We took vacant city lots that were eyesores and transformed them into beautiful gardens that produce fresh vegetables and fruits that are at this time free to the community.

With the right kind of support, we could continue the transformation of many city lots, therefore transforming our community and with mentoring and training in Urban Farming provide jobs to the youth in our community as well as our disabled veterans and ex-offenders. This will garner ownership in the community and a sense of pride to all who participate in the growth and development of their community.

Contact: Wanda Upshaw, (973) 901-4601, 448 So. 13th Street, Newark, NJ 07103 wandaupshaw@msn.com



Before



After



Project U.S.E. Pedal Farmer Urban Gardening Program

Since 2007 Project U.S.E. has engaged Newark teens in urban agriculture and horticulture. The program was named “The Pedal Farmers” by the students to represent their mode of transportation and their work. At the start of the program, students develop a full business plan with actionable and attainable goals. Using bikes that they refurbish, participants, some of whom have never ridden a bike before, ride to our 2 growing sites in Newark located on the campus of NJIT and on Washington Street in the South Ward. The farms serve as a classroom where students learn about agriculture, horticulture and all aspects of the food production cycle. The farmers use the garden as an entrepreneurial work experience in food and farming, planting the produce and maintaining the gardens.



For more information on the Pedal Farmer Program, contact Meredith Beck, Director of Development at mbeck@projectuse.org or [646-342-7789](tel:646-342-7789).



Project U.S.E. Urban Farms

Our farmers pedal their harvest to Newark farmers' markets, where they sell their locally grown produce weekly. An expanded effort in 2014 included delivery to Senior Centers. Food and nutrition are important for everyone and our farmers were able to provide fresh produce to their elderly neighbors who have limited mobility and access to healthy foods. While there are other urban gardening programs in Newark, our focus on the business and financial planning aspect of operating your own small business adds a unique perspective for our student participants.

By working to develop and execute a full business plan while also understanding the concept of investments and return on investments, students learn about taking calculated risks and the rewards of successful execution. Further, they build the business from the ground up, getting their hands dirty, literally, prepping the planting beds and maintaining the gardens. Lastly, by using refurbished bicycles, which the farmers keep after the program, they are responsible for maintaining their mode of transportation, fixing it when necessary and that bicycles are a green, healthy and useful mode of transportation.



Our greenhouse weekly produces greens and herbs (including kale, collards, basil and lettuce) for the local soup kitchen. Fresh peppers, tomatoes and other vegetables from the Veterans' Community Garden are given to neighbors.

Rutgers VETS

The Rutgers Veterans Environmental Technology and Solutions Program (Rutgers VETS) is an educational program for unemployed veterans from Newark and Essex County launched in 2014 at Willing Hearts Community Center, 555 MLK Jr. Blvd, Newark. Our program combines traditional classroom lectures with “hands on” experience in greenhouse management, aquaponics, hydroponics, landscaping and urban agriculture. Rutgers faculty and staff, as well as professionals from green industries lead the training. Veterans gain experience identifying, pruning and planting trees and shrubs in the county park system. They work with community groups to build community and school gardens. The veterans lead educational programs for Newark’s youth in collaboration with 4H. They design and install drip irrigation systems during the course of the program.

Rutgers VETS

Rutgers VETS uses horticulture as the vehicle to deliver life skills. We provide training and counseling in personal financial management and nutrition as well as counseling services to help our students deal with substance abuse, domestic violence, and homelessness. We are collaborating with a professor from Rutgers School of Business who specializes in entrepreneurship to help our students become small business owners. Veterans commit to working 40 hours a week in our program, which includes occasional Saturdays. In exchange for their investment of time, we provide a stipend (\$12/hour) to help them meet their living expenses.



For more information, contact: Amy Rowe, Environmental and Resource Management Agent, Rutgers NJ Agricultural Experiment Station, Cooperative Extension of Essex County p. 908-235-1168 rowe@njaes.rutgers.edu or visit the project website: <http://rutgersvets.org>.