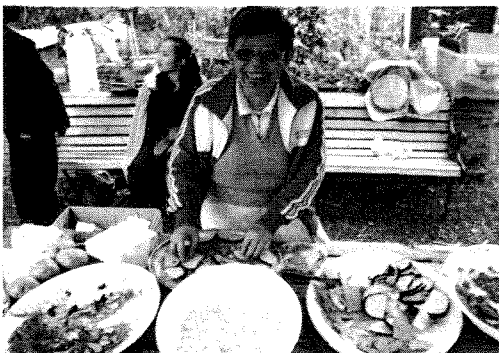


JE 13 Nov 08

Parliament of Australia
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
Inquiry into Obesity in Australia

Community Gardens Help to Tackle Obesity



Community Gardens Help to Tackle Obesity

1. Community gardens encourage healthy food choices among adults and children

See Appendix A for a list of references that outline the physical health benefits of community gardens.

2. Community gardens enhance community access to fresh fruit and vegetables in 'food deserts'.

'Food desert' is the term used to describe an area where cheap, nutritious food is difficult to access. In some city areas, fast food and takeaway stores significantly outnumber fresh food stores. Access to fresh fruit and vegetables is also difficult in remote areas in Australia, including Aboriginal communities.

3. Community gardens encourage physical activity among adults and children.

See Appendix A.

4. Community gardens form natural partnerships with other community initiatives that contribute to tackling the causes of obesity, such as community kitchens, school kitchen gardens and farmers/growers' markets.

For more information on community kitchens see www.communitykitchens.org.au.

5. Community gardens need Federal, State and Local Government support, in order to ensure their ongoing viability and the delivery of the benefits that successful garden projects bring to local communities.

This support can come in many forms, including:

- access to land;
- appropriate land use planning;
- government worker time to contribute to garden partnerships;
- financial support for individual gardens; and
- financial support for community garden sector peak groups that support and resource gardens (e.g. WA Community Garden Network and Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network).

More Information:

For more information on community gardening in WA, contact:

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For more information on community gardening in Australia, see www.communitygarden.org.au.

Appendix A: Physical Health Benefits of Community Gardens

Alaimo, Katherine, Elizabeth Packnett, Richard A Miles, and Daniel J. Kruger (2008) "Fruit and Vegetable Intake among Urban Community Gardeners" *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* **40**(2) pp. 94- 101.

Quantitative data substantiating a link between participation in a community garden and increased fruit and vegetable consumption. The survey of 776 adults in a US city found that adults with a household member who participated in a community garden consumed fruits and vegetables 1.4 more times per day than those who did not participate, and they were 3.5 times more likely to consume fruits and vegetables at least 5 times daily. The authors suggest that community gardens may encourage fruit and vegetable consumption by increasing access to fresh produce, providing low-cost produce that is perceived as of high-quality, and increasing people's preference for fruit and vegetables.

Twiss, Joan, Joy Dickinson, Shirley Duma, Tanya Kleinman, Heather Paulsen and Liz Rilveria (2003) *Community Gardens: Lessons Learned From California Healthy Cities and Communities*" *American Journal of Public Health* **93**(9): pp. 1435-1438.

Evaluation of a program that initiated six community gardens, showing that participants increased their physical activity and their fruit and vegetable consumption. Identifies 'key elements' for community garden programs to succeed in improving public health and increasing community capacity: local leadership, community participation and partnerships, and skill-building opportunities for participants. Identifies need to develop tools to effectively quantify the benefits of community gardens.

Armstrong, Donna (2000) "A survey of community gardens in upstate New York: Implications for Health Promotion and Community Development" *Health and Place* **6** (2000): pp. 319 – 327.

Survey of coordinators of 63 urban and rural community gardens, including physical characteristics of gardens, people's reasons for participation, and demographics of gardeners. Found that gardens improved social networks and community capacity by creating a social gathering space and a focus for community organising. Concludes that community gardens are useful for health promotion, addressing multiple determinants of health. Includes a literature review demonstrating benefits of gardening for a range of health outcomes.

Howe, Joe and Paul Wheeler (1999) "Urban Food Growing: The Experience of Two UK Cities" *Sustainable Development* **7**(1): pp. 13-24.

A study of the allotments, city farms and community gardens in Leeds and Bradford and their contributions to sustainability. Looks at community gardens as a form of urban agriculture, but acknowledges that community development and education may be more of a focus than food production at some sites. Outlines the arguments for growing food in the cities of developed nations, including environmental, social, economic, educational, and health benefits. Finds that community gardens and city farms contribute in a range of ways to environmental and social sustainability, as well as education and health, with allotments having a narrower range of benefits. Argues that urban food growing should be supported as part of local government policy.

Blair, Dorothy, Carol C. Giesecke, and Sandra Sherman (1991) "A Dietary, Social and Economic Evaluation of the Philadelphia Urban Gardening Project" *The Journal of Nutrition Education* **23**: pp. 161-167.

Survey of 144 community gardeners and 67 non-gardeners from the same neighbourhoods. Found that gardeners ate significantly more vegetables than control interviewees, particularly brassicas, squashes and eggplants, and less sweets, soft drinks and dairy products. The output of garden plots was measured and estimated the market value of the produce calculated at between \$2 to \$1134, with an average of \$160 of produce from each plot (values calculated as conventional, not organic produce). Gardeners' reasons for involvement included recreation, mental health, exercise, produce and contact with nature. There was also a correlation found between involvement in a community garden and 'life satisfaction'.

Source: Nettle, C. *Community Garden: An Annotated Bibliography*. Soon to be published by the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network.

Appendix B: Full Range of Potential Benefits of Community Gardens

- **Community building / Community development**
community hubs for local people to meet and develop friendships; sites for community engagement; intergenerational exchange; activities that foster self-help; building on local assets; developing links between individuals and groups
- **Environmental sustainability**
demonstration sites for living and consuming in a sustainable manner; local solutions to climate change; waste management solutions; sustainable technologies; contributing to food security through local, community food systems; greening urban environments
- **Health and wellbeing**
physical fitness; recreational opportunities; nutritional health; psychosocial benefits, community kitchens
- **Access and inclusion**
supportive environments that promote social inclusion (frail aged, people with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal people,)
- **Education and training**
'outdoor classrooms' for informal learning and formal accredited training courses; venues for lifelong learning and school-based learning
- **Enterprise**
local economic development; incubating social enterprises (nursery, markets, café, training programs); mobilising volunteers; employment preparation
- **Arts and culture**
community art and events, preserving cultural practices of migrant and refugee communities

Appendix C: WA Community Gardens

These gardens vary in terms of size, style, stage of development and current level of activity. Not all are food-producing gardens. Contact individual gardens for more information.

Apace Community Gardens

Winter House
1 Johannah Street
NORTH FREMANTLE
shartley@starwon.com.au

Armadale Community Family Centre

101 Challis Road
ARMADALE
armcfc@bigpond.com

Bassendean City Farm

St Mark's Church
Parker Street
BASSENDEAN
(no contact available at present)

Busselton Community Garden

Cnr Strelly Street and Roe Terrace
BUSSELTON
info@busseltoncommunitygarden.org.au
www.busseltoncommunitygarden.org.au

Earthwise

315 Bagot Road
SUBIACO
pegd@westnet.com.au

Environmental Technology Centre (ETC)

Murdoch University
Murdoch Drive
MURDOCH
s.dallas@murdoch.edu.au

Esperance Community Garden

Cnr Pink Lake Road and Victoria Street
ESPERANCE
thuriyya@bigpond.com

Fremantle Environmental Resource Network (FERN)

Cnr Montreal Street and High Street
FREMANTLE
keith@kdmbus.com
www.fern.org.au

Florence Community Park – Fremantle Inner City Agriculture (FINCA)

Cnr Marine Terrace and King William Street
SOUTH FREMANTLE
Ph 9430 8822

Glyde In Community Centre

42 Glyde Street
EAST FREMANTLE
glydein@4u.com.au

Gumnuts Community Garden

4 Mudalla Way
KOONGAMIA
dnjl@iinet.net.au

Lockridge Community Garden

Cnr Diana Crescent and Arbon Way
LOCKRIDGE
harrybw@iinet.net.au

Maylands Community Garden

St Luke's Anglican Parish
2 Rowlands Street
MAYLANDS
Jan.Williams@dcp.wa.gov.au

Naragebup Organic Community Garden

Naragebup Rockingham Regional Environment Centre
Safety Bay Road
PERON
rrec@naragebup.org.au

Perth City Farm

1 City Farm Place
EAST PERTH
rosanne@cityfarmperth.org.au
www.cityfarmperth.org.au

Piney Lakes Community Garden

Piney Lakes Environmental Education Centre
Piney Lakes Reserve
Leach Highway
WINTHROP
erinwhitfield@optusnet.com.au

West Leederville Community Garden

78 Cambridge Street
WEST LEEDERVILLE
pegd@westnet.com.au
<http://web.me.com/he45188/CommunityGarden/Welcome.html>

Appendix D: Background to the Growing Communities WA Project

AIM

The *Growing Communities WA* project will build the capacity of communities to develop sustainable and accessible community gardens in WA.

PARTNERS

The project is a partnership initiative of:

- the WA Community Garden Network;
- Learning Centre Link;
- City of Swan;
- City of Gosnells;
- Town of Cambridge; and
- DADAA (Disability in the Arts Disadvantage in the Arts Australia).

FUNDING PARTNERS

The project has been made possible with the generous support of Lotterywest and additional funding from the City of Swan and Town of Cambridge.

OVERVIEW

Community gardens are outdoor spaces that are planned and managed by communities, or with significant community involvement. These gardens can include food production, native gardens, bush tucker gardens, as well as decorative and therapeutic elements. They can be located in inner city, suburban and rural fringe areas, within the grounds of learning/neighbourhood/community centres, larger, environmental education centres and in remote Aboriginal communities.

Community gardens provide high quality, creative, accessible and often productive open spaces in local communities and have a range of benefits that are currently being recognised in research and evaluation across Australia. A growing number of individuals, groups and government bodies in WA are recognising the enormous potential for community gardens to become sustainable venues for local community development. In order for this potential to be fulfilled, there is a significant need to build the capacity of the community garden sector. The *Growing Communities WA* project commenced in July 2008 and will run for two years.

TARGET GROUPS

The *Growing Communities WA* project is targeted at the following four groups:

- existing community gardens;
- learning / neighbourhood / community centres that are members of Learning Centre Link;
- communities seeking to establish gardens; and
- sector partners (government, community and private sectors).

The project will work with each of these groups to develop skills / knowledge, resources, networks, partnerships and income streams relevant to establishing and developing community gardens in WA. The lasting benefit of the project will be a stronger community garden sector along with the flow-on benefits that successful garden projects will bring to local communities.

KEY PROJECT OUTPUTS

Key project outputs will be:

- a map of community gardens in WA (online and hardcopy);
- best practice models of operation for community gardens;
- a website that supports and promotes community gardens in WA;
- a joint training calendar provided for gardens and Learning Centre Link member centres;
- 'how to' manuals for establishing and developing community gardens;

- guest speaker events / state community garden forums;
- networking events to bring together community gardens with potential partners; and
- diverse income streams available for the community garden sector.

A key strategy to ensure the sustainability of project outcomes will be to support the development of the WA Community Garden Network.

PROJECT CONTACTS

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