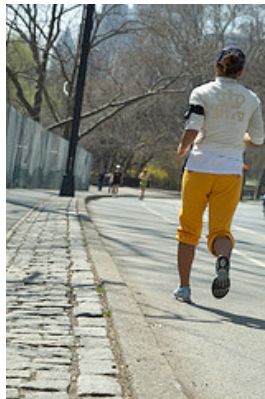


Weed Your Way to Weight Loss
By: Kaitlyn Krueger

Is your New Year's Resolution to eat healthier, work out, and become more fit? Participating in a Community Garden Initiative can help you to achieve all of these goals, as well as benefit your community, your bank account, and the environment. A Community Garden will produce fresh and natural vegetables for local businesses and households to sell and consume. Volunteering in the garden is a great way to get fit, because gardening burns over 270 calories per hour!¹ Community gardens also bond communities and neighborhoods together so that important issues may be

addressed and properly dealt with. The wide array of benefits and its important historical relevance make planting a community garden in our beautiful city, Easton, a necessity and a privilege.



Locally grown and tended gardens have the ability to unite families, communities, and even nations. The community garden was of paramount importance during World War II, and nicknamed "The Victory Garden." During this time, families were forced to sacrifice basic necessities, so that the means of production could satisfy wartime needs. The agricultural system was not strong enough to support

¹ "Calories Burned Gardening," Calorie Count, <<http://caloriecount.about.com/calories-burned-gardening-a176>> (accessed on February 28, 2009).

both a populated nation and millions of soldiers abroad, so the United States' government implored the people to grown, tend, and harvest their own vegetables. Both children and adults converted window boxes, backyards, vacant lots, and schoolyards into "Victory Gardens" and then worked together to ensure success. The families and communities hoped to produce enough vegetables to use during the summer as well as have a surplus that was canned for the long winter months. While the Axis Powers fought with hungry and ravaged soldiers, the efforts of the Americans allowed the Allied Troops to be well-fed and strong. The victory of World War II is directly linked to the implementation of the "Victory Garden" Programs by over 20 million American citizens.²

The Community Garden should not be considered a symbol of antiquity, but rather a healthy and natural alternative to processed food that can produce intensely positive community results. Even today these gardens are quite popular in inner-cities, suburban backyards, and small towns. It is imperative that our city consider setting aside land so that we can benefit from these fresh vegetables. The city of Easton will enjoy the community bonds, financial savings, and ecological benefits produced by a community garden.

For inner-cities and crime ridden areas, these gardens produce intense bonds between both neighbors and citizens, because hours are spent working together. As a result of these bonds, the citizens, as a group are then able to address community issues, such

² "History of Community and Victory Gardens," SFGro, <<http://www.sfgro.org/history.htm>> (accessed on February 28, 2009).

as gang violence, vandalism, and theft³. A gardener from Madison, Wisconsin states that, "Community gardening builds bonds of trust amongst diverse peoples who come together to raise food and find that natural outgrowths of the gardens are relationships, community development, beautification, environmental justice, crime prevention, leadership and self-reliance for our neighborhoods as a whole."⁴ The community garden therefore has benefits far beyond health and wellness. These goals of health and wellness may bring an individual to work in the community garden, but the various encounters of individuals at the garden strengthen neighborhood ties.

The community solidarity produced by community gardens is essential in the current period of economic depression. Neighbors helping neighbors will help the citizens of Easton to safely traverse these difficult times. Community gardens produce job opportunities, such as Master Gardener and Cooperative Extension Supervisor. The community garden also produces many opportunities for the local budget to make budget cuts and reallocate money to where it is needed most. For example, maintaining community garden space is less expensive than maintaining and cleaning parkland. Also, the use of compost in organic community gardens reduces landfill waste, which saves the

³ "Promoting and Preserving Community Gardening Across the Twin Cities," Gardening Matters
<http://www.gardeningmatters.org/Resources/multiple_benefits.pdf> (accessed February 28, 2009).

⁴ "Quann Community Garden," Madison Newspapers, Inc,
<<http://www.madison.com/communities/quannngarden/>> (accessed on February 28, 2009).

city money⁵. The budget savings acquired from planting a community garden could be allocated for reviving the downtown area of Easton, planning school renovations, or various other projects that will benefit the citizens of Easton.

The environment and local ecology is greatly benefited by the planting of community gardens. In polluted and smog ridden cities, the plants from these gardens help to decrease the abundance of pollutants in the air by restoring oxygen to the air. The plants also filter rainwater which decreases pollution in lakes, rivers, and eventually our drinking water. Through working in a community garden, citizens gain respect for the beauty of nature and often learn to appreciate instead of taking pleasures for granted. The citizens may then be more inclined to recycle, conserve, and decrease their abuse of the planet. Community gardens also conserve land, because urban agriculture is even more productive than large scale farming.⁶ The ecological benefits of a community garden are overwhelming, and lead to safer air, drinking water, and more appreciative citizens.



⁵ "Promoting and Preserving Community Gardening Across the Twin Cities," Gardening Matters
<http://www.gardeningmatters.org/Resources/multiple_benefits.pdf> (accessed February 28, 2009).

⁶ "Benefits of Community Gardening,"
<http://gripelements.com/docs/CG_Benefits.pdf> (accessed on February 28, 2009).

The health of citizens and the environment of our city will be greatly benefited by the manifestation of a community garden in Easton, PA. Through this initiative, citizens will learn to not only serve their own private interests, like losing weight and eating better. Through working together in the garden, they will profoundly impact their own community. The extensive range of benefits of a community garden implore us to support the initiative to set aside precious city space for the planting of a community garden that we can plant, tend and harvest together. Our children will be healthier, our adults more in shape, and our community closer. The economic benefits of a community garden will help the city of Easton during these difficult financial times. Please support this initiative!



For even more information about Community Gardens, feel free to visit <http://www.communitygarden.org/learn/faq.php>. If you like what you see, sign the petition at www.communitygardenpetition.com/easton⁷, so together we can be healthy and happy!

⁷ Not an Actual Website.

Works Consulted

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