



At Work

Evaluating Community Garden Benefits

The Jefferson County, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, in partnership with Louisville Metro Government, manages 10 community gardens throughout Louisville/Jefferson County. This program allows those within the city easy access to land. The gardens sit on sites owned privately and publically, range in size from less than a few hundred square feet to several acres, and many of the gardens have existed for decades. Plots, much like the gardens themselves, range in size – from 8' X 10' to 30' X 30'. Gardeners rent a plot(s) in a community garden for one year with the option to continue renting that same plot(s) in following years. Water is provided at no additional cost at each site and gardens with larger plots have tillers and other tools available to participating gardeners for free. Each garden also has a manager on site to ensure that equipment is handled properly and to help with the day-to-day management of the gardens. In addition, free educational opportunities are available to gardeners through Extension and some even take place in the gardens.

The community garden program is a highlight of the urban agriculture platform of the Jefferson County Extension Office, however, for many years it was lacking an evaluation tool. The only measure of the success of the program was anecdotal. The Extension Associate for Strategic Communications worked with Program and Staff Development at the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment to create a survey for participants and shared those results with the Agriculture and Natural Resources and Horticulture Agents.

Nearly half of all primary gardeners responded to the survey. Results included:

- 53% reported that they have increased their gardening knowledge by participating in the community garden program
- 55% reported that the community gardens have increased their access to fresh food for their families
- 60% improved their health through exercise



(gardening) and eating healthier foods

- 57% have made new friends at the garden

This evaluation tool will be modified and shortened to be used yearly with participants. In addition, it will be adapted and translated to be used with the large refugee gardener population.

For more information about this project, please contact:

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