

A Healthier You with Community Gardens

Do you have access to a community garden? Did you know there are health benefits to using a community garden? A community garden is a space where an organization or group of people work together to plan, plant, and harvest produce.

Community Gardens and the Environment

Community gardens can take many forms – they can be planted in a vacant land lot, containers, or a field. Gardens enhance the environment by:

- Improving scenery and brightening the community
- Inviting birds and beneficial insects to the area
- Adding oxygen to and purifying the air
- Absorbing rainwater, which decreases runoff of water and pollutants in natural waterways

Composting is when plant material is collected and stored to decay naturally. The finished product is added to soil to improve quality and reduce waste.

Increasing Nutrient Consumption

The [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) – which provides nutrition recommendations by life stage, from birth through older adulthood – states that most aging adults do not meet their recommended intake of fruits and vegetables. Older adults need about two cups of fruit and three cups of vegetables each day to meet their nutrient needs. Eating fresh produce – whole or juiced – is an effective way to increase intake of potassium, vitamin A, folate, vitamin C, magnesium, and fiber, which are important for overall health.

Learn about the benefits of eating fresh produce using [USDA MyPlate Healthy Fruits](#) and [USDA MyPlate Healthy Vegetables](#).

Improving Well-Being

Working in a community garden provides an opportunity to exercise and improves how your body functions – even if you can only sit in a chair while breaking beans or shucking corn. Further, gardening can help to decrease stress, offering a chance to socialize and give back to others.

Explore More

- [CDC Healthy Places – Community Gardens](#): The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides guidance on community gardens.
- [Container Gardens – Sun, Space, and Drainage](#): Article about starting a container garden.
- [Washington State University Extension’s Gardening for a Healthier You Curriculum](#): This curriculum provides guidance and approaches to community gardens.
- [Gardening Nutrition Education Materials](#) (SNAP–Ed Connection): Guidance on herb gardening, resources, teaching materials, and toolkits on gardening.
- [NC State Extension Community Gardening Handbook](#): Free online handbook for community gardening.
- [USDA Community Gardening](#): Numerous links and help with community gardens.

Call to Action

- Contact your local Area Agency on Aging to find a community garden near you using the [Eldercare Locator](#).
- Get involved with a local community garden and ask how you can be involved.
- If there is not one in your area, work with a local group to get one started by using the “Explore More” area above.