Creating sustainable agriculture in urban food deserts

Across the street from an abandoned industrial site in an older, economically challenged neighborhood, formerly vacant lots have been fitted with raised garden beds and season-extending hoop houses to allow neighborhood residents to grow fresh produce year-round. The food will be donated to schools and residents in a food desert, which is an area that lacks grocery stores within walking distance.

In partnership with the city of Dayton, Ohio State University Extension supports the Vacant to Vibrant project, which offers city dwellers the ability to grow their own foods and the opportunity to become food entrepreneurs. The project allows participants access to fresh local foods, job training, economic security and neighborhood revitalization.

OSU Extension supports urban agriculture in all Ohio counties, in an effort to increase access to local foods by helping create community gardens that promote urban agriculture — such as the Edgemont Solar Garden in Dayton — as well as opportunities for vocational agricultural training. Other efforts include classes on growing and marketing produce and basic agricultural principles.

More: localfoods.osu.edu

“Thanks to OSU Extension, vacant lots have been transformed into a garden that will not only provide fresh produce to a neighborhood without a grocery store in walking distance, but also provide a source of income, hope and new life to the community.”

— Pat Rickman, president, Southwest Priority Board/CDC

In Cuyahoga County, OSU Extension supports 239 community gardens that yield nearly $3.1 million in produce annually.

ESSENTIALS

• According to Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley, urban agriculture, which allows cities to put vacant lots into use, creates opportunity for the future and can be a sustainable way to bring money into a community.

• In one year in Cuyahoga County, OSU Extension provided 33 urban agriculture workshops attended by 452 community members.

• OSU Extension also supports 239 Cleveland-area community gardens that yield nearly $3.1 million in produce annually.

• According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Urbanized Area and Urban Cluster designations, 81 percent of Ohio’s population is urban.

• More than 1,200 OSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers in nine of Ohio’s most populated counties provide more than 61,000 service hours annually to address local gardening needs.

More: u.osu.edu/cfaesimpact extension.osu.edu
We connect with people in all stages of life.

We work with families and children, farmers and business owners, and community leaders and elected officials to build better lives, better businesses and better communities that make Ohio great. We do this through a focus on the following impact areas.

Strengthening families and communities
We teach people how to apply research in their daily lives in order for them to make informed choices about everything from finances to healthy living to food safety.

Preparing youth for success
Our 4-H youth development program delivers skills in leadership, communications, math, science and research to 216,000 young Ohioans. Ohio 4-H extends its reach through special in-school, after-school and summer programs.

Enhancing agriculture and the environment
Ohio’s diverse agricultural, horticultural and forestry industries contribute $105 billion to the state’s economy every year. We assist with technology, marketing and educational support, protecting Ohio’s position in the global marketplace. We also work to enhance the environment, water quality and natural resources in the state — balancing economic progress with environmental sustainability.

Advancing employment and income opportunities
Our economic, small business and job development programs are tailored to local community needs in every county, whether metropolitan, rural or a combination of both.

OSU Extension’s mission
Engaging people to strengthen their lives and communities through research-based educational programming

Locally based, jointly funded
We are the university’s community-based research and outreach arm, delivering knowledge from The Ohio State University to every county in Ohio.

We are jointly funded through a line item in the State of Ohio’s budget, through county funds and through the federal government. We do not receive funding from student tuition.

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