

Waukesha County Community Youth Garden Project Overview & 2019 Summary

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Waukesha County Community Youth Garden project allows adolescent youth to forego potential sanctions of placement in a juvenile facility in favor of participating in a community garden project for a period of six weeks.

Youth are referred to the program through their Waukesha County social worker or through a court order from Waukesha County Juvenile Court. Not only does this project give youth residing in Waukesha County an alternative sanction, it also provides a cost savings for Waukesha County residents.

Through this project youth:

- engage in restorative justice with the community
- gain work readiness skills
- develop resiliency
- learn teamwork principles
- enhance positive social skills
- grow vegetables that are donated to the Food Pantry of Waukesha County



The program goals for youth participants through this program is that they will improve community conduct or school attendance and overcome anxiety, social anxiety, or depression.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Youth participating in the program meet twice a week at the Waukesha County Youth Garden where they plant and then maintain the garden. During each class, UW-Madison Extension Waukesha County Horticulture and Nutrition Educators provide hands-on education. Social workers from Waukesha County Health and Human Services Department, also in attendance, document their observations of each youth's level of participation and their interactions with others. Social workers have youth reflect and write about the impact the program is having on making better decisions, initiating positive interactions with others, and overcoming obstacles on daily evaluations.



PROJECT PARTNERS

- ◆ Waukesha County UW-Madison Extension Waukesha County
- ◆ Waukesha County Health and Human Services Department
- ◆ Waukesha County Juvenile Court
- ◆ Waukesha County Corporation Counsel
- ◆ Waukesha County Bar Association Juvenile Law Section
- ◆ Wisconsin State Public Defenders Office
- ◆ St. Anthony's on the Lake - Giving Tree Project
- ◆ UW-Madison Extension Master Gardener Volunteers

GARDEN PROJECT STATISTICS

Year Established: 2016

Garden Size: 33' by 60'

**Number of Program
Participants in 2019:** 23

Community Service Hours:

Most participants
completed 18 hours of
community service



Produce Harvested in 2019:
295 pounds

2019 Gardening Challenges:

- A cold and wet start to the gardening season
- A hungry woodchuck which impacted the harvest totals



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
WAUKESHA COUNTY

University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of
Agriculture and Wisconsin Counties cooperating
provides equal opportunities in employment and
programming including Title VI, Title IX and ADA.

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS SHARE WHAT THEY LEARNED

“This program helped me with my interactions with my peers.”

“I will watch more of what I eat and look at the labels.”

“I learned the correct way to water plants.”

“I am grateful that I can make others happy through the vegetable donations to the food pantry.”

“I learned how to cut vegetables.”

“It made me feel good that I know I helped people in need.”

“I practiced being more social.”

“I tried vegetables and fruits that I never tasted before.”

“You can have fun and meet new people while helping others.”

“I learned how to pull weeds.”

“I learned how to plant vegetables.”

I learned how to make a healthy snack.”

“Weeds grow fast.”

2019 YOUTH EVALUATION

Youth completed daily and final evaluations. Below are the questions and a sample of their responses.

How has your participation in this program assisted you in making better decisions at home, in school, and in the community?

- *I am a better listener.*
- *I tried something new and found that I enjoyed it.*
- *I learned about teamwork and the importance of working together*

How do you feel your involvement in the community garden program has positively impacted your ability to work with and respect others?

- *It has helped me to communicate with others in a more respectful and positive way.*
- *I have learned that even though I don't like some people, I can treat them with kindness and not judge.*
- *I learned to ask more questions in order to complete a task successfully.*

List an obstacle you overcame today.

- *Social anxiety. Did not overcome it but it got better over time.*
- *Not using my phone*
- *Talking in front of everyone*
- *Trying something new - a food sample*



2019 SOCIAL WORKER REFLECTIONS

“The garden continues to serve as an opportunity for youth to gain confidence in their ability to learn new skills that contribute to their overall success in the community.”

“Some of the youth had some experience with gardening and were able to work on leadership skills as they helped the others”.

“The garden provided an opportunity for youth to learn to interact with peers that they would not necessarily choose but with whom they were able to form friendships.”

“I have seen some of the youth I met through the garden out in the community and they remain very positive about their garden experience and the relationship they formed with social workers in a different context”



“The participants balanced having fun and completing the work necessary for the success of the program.”

For more information about this project, contact Ann Wied at UW-Madison Extension Waukesha County at ann.wied@wisc.edu