



Partnering to Nourish North Carolina

February 11, 2014

ncrpa.net/nourishingnc

NOURISHING
NORTH CAROLINA



ONE GARDEN AT A TIME.



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Aligning Missions

BCBSNC MISSION: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina delivers value through quality products, information and services to help our customers improve their health and well-being.

BCBSNC VISION: To be a leader in improving the health care system in North Carolina.

NCRPA MISSION: North Carolina Recreation & Park Association (NCRPA) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization, dedicated to the advancement of the park, recreation and leisure profession in our state.



North Carolina Health Statistics

- + More than 31 percent of children ages 2 to 4 are considered overweight or at risk for becoming overweight¹
- + Two-thirds of the state's adults are obese or overweight, with numbers increasing above the national average²
- + Unhealthy eating and physical inactivity cost the state an estimated \$57 billion per year in avoidable medical expenses, workers' compensation claims and lost productivity³

1 - *Smart Start and The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (Oct. 2010). "\$3 Million Initiative to Tackle State's Childhood Obesity Epidemic."* Accessed 11/11/2010 from <http://hugh.ncsmartstart.org>.

2 - *NC Prevention Partners 2009 Prevention Report Card.* Accessed 6/17/2010 from www.ncpreventionpartners.org.

3 - *Be Active North Carolina (2008). "Tipping the Scales: How Obesity and Unhealthy Lifestyles have become a Weighty Problem for the North Carolina Economy."* Accessed 11/24/2010 from www.beactive.org



The challenge: To increase access to healthy food in our communities

- + Research shows that when communities have access to fresh fruits and vegetables, they eat them — and they're healthier for it, having lower rates of obesity, diabetes and other diet related diseases.⁴
- + Many North Carolinians have limited access to fresh produce in their community. And they may not have adequate transportation to get it somewhere else.
- + In many communities, it's much easier and cheaper to access high-fat, high-calorie food from fast-food restaurants and convenience stores than to find a fresh apple, cucumber or head of lettuce.



What is a Community Garden?

- + Community gardens are simple plots of land — of all shapes and sizes — maintained by the community's residents and local organizations.

- + They provide:
 - Greater access to locally harvested fresh fruits and vegetables
 - Opportunities for neighborhood and community development
 - Venues for physical activity and education
 - Protected green space



One solution: Create more community gardens

- + Increase access to healthy food to help reverse these unhealthy trends by creating more community gardens.
- + To create community gardens, and sustain them well into the future, BCBSNC partnered with the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association (NCRPA).
- + Our partnership will help ensure that North Carolinians in every county have a means of sustaining a local source of healthy food.

Nourishing North Carolina initiative:

To enhance or establish at least one community garden in each of North Carolina's 100 counties.



Value of Partnerships

- + Through collaboration with local **health departments**, **cooperative extension** agencies and **parks and recreation** departments we developed a comprehensive, statewide community gardens program.
- + The program structure required multiple players to be involved and to bring their knowledge and expertise. This encouraged relationships to grow and resulted in these entities also partnering on other projects.
- + Prior to this initiative, there was a lack of alignment of goals. Since funding sources vary, there is a disconnect as to priorities and what needs to be accomplished

Value of Partnerships (continued)

- + By making connections with like-minded groups, we can maximize resources.

- + Each community partner brought expertise and resources:
 - Master Gardener – Cooperative Extension
 - Nutritionist – Health Department
 - Volunteers, land, water – NCRPA and local park & recreation agencies
 - Media relations, graphic design, access to data – BCBSNC

- + Ultimately, working together, these groups brought great value to the state.

NNC Gardens



NNC Gardens





Success Stories

Inter-Generational Sharing

- + We have enjoyed a grandmother and grandson team who are gardening with us. Shirley is a gardener through and through and shares this love with her grandson, Donovan, who has diabetes. We are interested in cultivating more inter-generational sharing of gardening wisdom with youth, and are inspired by their example.

Success Stories

Easter Egg Hunt

- + We invited a pre-school group to come over and help harvest potatoes. It was like an Easter egg hunt. Once they picked the potatoes from the plant we showed them how many more were in the ground around the plant. The kids took home all the potatoes they harvested. They come out weekly to check on their plants and pull weeds. Many of these kids come from disadvantaged lifestyle so this was a new and educational experience.





Success Stories

Filling A Need

- + We have several of our senior citizens working in the garden and are able to use the produce that has been grown. We have one particular lady that really struggles financially and does not get a balanced meal everyday. During our harvest season she is the happiest person around. She cooks and cans as much as she possibly can to get her through the winter months. She is very proud and does not accept gifts well so working in the garden provides her a sense of ownership and she takes the produce with pride.

Success Stories

Collaboration

Getting organizations representing more than 100 people to work together on these gardens.

NC Cooperative Extension

- + Master Gardeners
- + Wellness Center
- + Health Department

First time Collaboration





Success Stories

Who Stole our Veggies?

- + One of our concerns was making sure the produce would get into the hands of individuals that needed it the most. We had prepared and created this beautiful garden and we wanted all the hard work go towards those less fortunate. One week we were getting ready to harvest, but knew we needed to wait a few more days to let the produce ripen. On the harvest day, we discovered all the produce had been taken. At first we were disheartened but after speaking with the Senior Center we discovered that the seniors had harvested the vegetables and taken them home. We could not have asked for a better outcome.



One vision

Build a healthier, stronger North Carolina

- + Nourishing North Carolina is an extension of BCBSNC's long-standing commitment to improve the health and well-being of North Carolinians.

- + From the inception of the program in 2010 to Dec. 2013:
 - 83 gardens were developed or renovated
 - Nearly 157,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables were harvested
 - Over 4,500 people have consumed from the garden at least 2 servings per day
 - In support of food pantries and homeless shelters statewide we've donated over 85,000 pounds of food
 - Provide over 65,500 hours of physical activity through garden maintenance



Long-Term Sustainability

- + We invited the **NC Community Garden Partners** to join the team.
- + They serve as a resource for each community garden to provide tips and ongoing education.
- + Many of the garden leaders attended NC Community Garden Partners conference.



School & Community Garden Food Safety Guide

Developed with: Dr. Ben Chapman, Assistant Professor, Food Safety Extension Specialist, NC State University.

food safety

FOR SCHOOL + COMMUNITY GARDENS



A HANDBOOK FOR BEGINNING + GARDEN ORGANIZERS: HOW TO REDUCE FOOD SAFETY RISKS.

Creating and maintaining community and school gardens has been an effective strategy to increase healthy food awareness and consumption. Unfortunately, vegetables have been linked to over 450 outbreaks in the U.S. since 1990. In commercial food production, employing steps, known as good agricultural practices (GAPs), has been recognized by the Food and Drug Administration as the best prevention against foodborne pathogens.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that most people who are sickened by foodborne illness in the United States recover within a few days. However, on average almost 130,000 hospitalizations annually and 3,000 deaths are attributed to foodborne illness. Contamination may come from many sources including physical (stones or glass) and chemical contaminants (runoff from parking lots).

While much of the attention for GAPs implementation, as well as recalls, has focused on commercial production, the use of steps to reduce risk are also applicable to community and school gardens. The steps in this guide are rooted in science, practical and presented in a way that is easy for passionate organizers and volunteers associated with community gardens to understand and implement.

a project of North Carolina State University
+ North Carolina Cooperative Extension



FOOD SAFETY IN THE GARDEN

There are 4 topics to think about as you design your safety procedures.

1. Clean and sanitized hands.
2. Safe soil amendments.
3. Safe water.
4. Clean and sanitized surfaces.

Risk reduction involves addressing each of them.

This document outlines the recommended agricultural practices for food safety in gardens.

THE BEST PRACTICES ARE NOTED IN GREEN, WITH MINIMUM STANDARDS EXPLAINED BY THE YELLOW DOT.

As bacteria and viruses are not easily washed off of fresh produce, limiting contamination is the best practice.

By preventing the introduction of pathogens into the garden, risks of foodborne illness are minimized, increasing safety of the final products.

Good agricultural practices are the basic environmental and operational conditions necessary for the production of the safest possible wholesome fruits and vegetables. The purpose of GAPs is to give best management practices that will help to reduce the risks of microbial contamination of fruits and vegetables.

Using research-based knowledge from community members, extension agents, food scientists, multiple state agencies, teachers, and students, this document compiles the best practices for garden management, complete with accompanying food safety infosheets that can be posted online, given out in the classroom or volunteer trainings, or even kept, laminated, in the garden itself.

While quantifying any illnesses that may originate from school and community gardens is difficult, employing the strategies that support GAPs is possible and a good idea. Every garden is unique so recommendations in this document will need to be adapted for each site. Special care should be taken when dealing with children as they are more susceptible to foodborne illness than healthy adults.

This document provides a blueprint for making a garden as safe as possible, marked with best practices to do so, and provides some tips on how to make already-established gardens safer.

This handbook should be helpful whether you are just starting out, taking over the garden for someone else, or have been gardening for decades. The material in this manual highlights the best practices, explains steps for risk reduction and notes poor practices.

growing safer gardens.com





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UNC
CENTER FOR HEALTH
PROMOTION AND
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<http://chapmanfoodsafety.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/food-safety-for-school-and-community-gardens.pdf>

Lessons Learned

+ Barrier:

- It has been somewhat harder to get community gardens started in very rural communities where many families already have home gardens.
- The solution has been to reach out to community groups to begin gardens as a service project to provide food for the underserved in their community.

+ Tip: You never know where a partnership might come from.

- NC Recreation and Park Association went to BCBSNC to chat about interns doing a community garden with a local park and recreation department and to provide some connections/information.
- Left the meeting where the idea had grown to putting a garden in all 100 counties.



Would you like more information?

ncrpa.net/nourishingnc

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