


 EXTENSION'S
Successful
Family

Summer 2011

Growing Communities with Gardens

Some families are fortunate to have a yard, balcony, or porch with space to grow vegetables, herbs, or flowers. Growing produce can help save money on the food bill and provide the family with quality, homegrown produce. In addition, gardening offers a relaxing and rewarding way to get some physical activity and enjoy being outside and closer to nature. People who want to garden but lack the space are increasingly turning to community gardens.

Neighborhoods benefit in multiple ways when a community garden is established. A community garden can beautify the surroundings and help to bring neighbors together as they work on a common project. Health benefits result from gardening, both from the increased physical activity and the increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. In some places, community gardens have reduced neighborhood crime. A community garden can offer a safe, recreational green space on land that was otherwise not in use.

Every community garden is unique,

reflecting the residents it serves. Some basics, however, are important for the success of all community gardens.

- Invite and involve the neighbors from the beginning. This nurtures a sense of loyalty and ownership among participants.
- Designate leadership. Determine the decision-making structure of the group and make sure work is distributed. A garden is a lot of work, and many hands can reduce the load for all.
- Locate a space for the garden. Consider important attributes of a garden: sunlight, water, pathways between beds, accessibility, soil amendments, fencing, tool shed, composting.
- Research ownership and options for leasing and liability insurance. Contact the owner.

A well-kept allotment plot with vegetables and plants.

- Get the soil tested for fertility, pH, and presence of heavy metals.
- Plan the garden with input from interested members of the community. Decide on the structure of the garden (raised bed or in-ground plots).
- Determine type of membership/participation for the garden: allotment gardens include individual plots; collective gardening does not include individual ownership to a part of the garden.
- Determine garden budget.
- Determine garden infrastructure for sustainability.

For more information go to: The American Community Garden Association <http://www.communitygarden.org/>

Or call or local Cooperative Extension office for assistance.

Join the NC 10% Campaign

We challenge you to spend 10 percent of your existing food dollars to support North Carolina food producers, businesses and communities.

Why 10 Percent?

It is achievable and meaningful for all:

- We spend about \$35 billion a year on food. If we spent 10 percent - \$1.05 per day locally — approximately \$3.5 billion would be available in the local economy.
- A vibrant local food economy will support farms, food, and manufacturing businesses and create jobs.
- Infusing fresh and flavorful fruits and vegetables into diets can significantly reduce diet-related diseases and long-term healthcare expenses for everyone.

North Carolina Farm to School Program

The Farm to School Program is a partnership between the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and North Carolina farmers. The Farm to School Program is a strategy that provides fresh, local produce to school cafeterias across the state. In 1998, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) partnered with the United States Department of Defense (DOD) to develop a system for schools across North Carolina to participate in the program.

Any school district in North Carolina can be a part of the North Carolina Farm



to School Program. The NCDA&CS works with child nutrition directors across the state to see what items of produce the school cafeterias can use. Strawberries, watermelons, cantaloupes, sweet potatoes, slicing and grape tomatoes, red and green cabbage, broccoli, apples, and blueberries grown in North Carolina are included in the program.

Program participants must be GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certified. The GAP certification means the farm has been audited to ensure that it is following a food safety plan and producing a safe high-quality product.

NCDA&CS works with commodity associations and individual farms to harvest, pack, and store the produce in climate-controlled facilities to maintain optimum quality and shelf life. A fleet of tractor-trailers picks up the produce and delivers it to the school districts. Many times the produce is harvested and delivered the next day to the schools.

Participation in the North Carolina Farm to School program allows school districts to serve locally grown North Carolina produce for 14 weeks during the school year.

For more information go to: www.ncfarmtoschool.com or www.ncschoolnutrition.com

What's in Season? Okra!

Okra, also called lady's fingers in some parts of the world, is a plant grown for its fibrous pods which, when picked young, are eaten as a vegetable. The name okra is thought to derive from one of the Niger-Congo group of languages, and was in use in English by the late 18th century.

Today okra is popular in Africa, the Middle East, Greece, Turkey, India, the Caribbean, South America and the southern United States.

This unique and delicious vegetable is high in fiber and in vitamins A, K, C, and B6. Okra can be found in abundance at local farmers' markets from June through September. Choose small, crisp, bright-colored pods without brown spots or blemishes. Avoid pods that are dull and dry, or limp. Store okra in a paper bag, in the crisper section of the refrigerator for up to three days. Do not wash the okra until ready to use.

Serving ideas

- Prepare using a variety of healthful methods: steamed, grilled, baked, pickled, boiled, or stewed.
- Slice young tender pods into ¼-inch thick rounds. Sauté or stir fry with onions, peppers (sweet or hot), and tomatoes. Add fresh herbs if desired.

OKRA AND CORN WITH TOMATOES

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- ½ tsp. each red pepper, thyme, and basil
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 3 large fresh ripe tomatoes, chopped
- 2 cups fresh corn
- 2 cups small okra pods, left whole or ¼-inch thick rounds
- ½ cup water or broth
- ¾ tsp. salt, if desired
- ¼ tsp. black pepper



In large skillet, heat olive oil and add onions and spices. Sauté onions until limp. Add bell pepper and cook until onions are translucent. Add tomatoes, okra, water, salt, and pepper. Reduce heat to low and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add corn and cook 5 minutes longer. Serve hot. (Serves 8)

- Include thin slices of raw okra in salads.
- Larger pods can be lightly coated with olive oil and placed directly on the grill.
- Use sliced pods to thicken stews and soups



Teaching Money Sense to Children

One of the most valuable skills you can teach your child is money management. Savings bonds, a savings account, and cash are thoughtful gifts that, when paired with financial management lessons, will turn gifts acquired throughout childhood and the teenage years into skills that will last a lifetime.

Parents and caregivers have a major influence on what and how children learn about money. In fact, studies show parents and caregivers are children's preferred source of money management information. Children learn about money through the example set by parents and by experiencing firsthand the processes of planning, budgeting, saving, and spending. Become a role model early—typically as soon as the child understands that money is necessary to buy something he or she wants.

Children learn money management skills by daily observation and by imitation. By watching and listening to you, your child will begin to emulate your values, attitudes, decision-making skills, and money habits. Even very young children observe their parents and other shoppers at the grocery store, post office, bank, automated teller machines, mall, and at home. For example, if you shop with a list, your children will probably shop with a list. If you typically spend money before it is earned, it will be difficult for you to teach your children about saving. As a result, your children may fail to learn about planning for future spending and to regularly set money aside for saving.

Provide an example of how careful planning and responsible spending make financial sense:

- Ensure your children recognize and understand the common denominations of money (penny, nickel, dime, quarter, and dollar bill).
- Share and discuss the difference between needs and wants.



- Share and discuss the price of favorite foods, clothing, and toys.
- Share and discuss how your values help you make choices. Include your child in

the process of making a purchase choice. Highlight your decision process in selecting the best product for your needs/wants and budget.

- Explain that ATM cards, checks, and debit cards are used to access money already deposited in the bank.
- Explain that charges made on credit cards represent borrowed money that must be repaid using future income.
- Share and discuss monthly bills and credit card statements.
- Provide an allowance. A monthly allowance can be more effective than weekly in teaching money management because it involves a larger amount of money and must last longer.
- Provide opportunities for your children to make choices with their money. Allow them to experience the consequences of their choices.
- Use a piggy bank or open a bank account to teach the importance of saving for short-term and long-term goals.

Reusable Shopping Bag Safety Tips



A reusable shopping bag is a useful accessory for the eco-friendly consumer. To prevent cross-contamination from one product to another, clean the bags after use. The greatest potential danger is from meat, fish, or poultry juices contaminating the bag or other foods with bacteria or viruses that can cause illness. Packages of raw foods can have bacteria even on the outside. To prevent cross-contamination, put packages of meat, fish, or poultry in a disposable plastic bag to catch liquids that may drain from the meat package. The wrapped package of meat can then be put in the reusable bag. Or designate a reusable bag as a “meat bag” and use that only for raw, potentially contaminated foods. Avoid using reusable bags for items other than food.

Wash the reusable bags in the washing machine regularly and after a spill. After washing, machine dry or turn inside out and hang to dry. (Drying is actually the most important step).



EXTENSION'S
Successful
Family

This quarterly newsletter is written by a team of North Carolina Cooperative Extension family and consumer education agents. The purpose of the newsletter is to inform and educate families on issues that affect them, and to provide ideas for helping improve their quality of life. An educational outreach of NC State and NC A&T State universities, Cooperative Extension is located in every county and the Cherokee Reservation.

Extension's Successful Family is produced by Family and Consumer Sciences, NC State University.



North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation.

6/11—11-CALS-2682

Editorial Staff

Editors

Carolyn Dunn, *Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Specialist, NC State University*

Carol S. Mitchell, *Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences, Wake County*

Assistant Editor

Jeannie Leonard, *Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences, Davidson County*

