

Community gardens have a place in improving health

Mark Mahoney, Guest columnist - Published 3:08 p.m. ET Oct. 21, 2019



Another is the sign for the Havana Community Garden (Photo: Mark Mahoney)

The Community Gardening Network, a project of Sustainable Tallahassee in partnership with the IFAS/Leon County Extension Services participated in the recent 2019 Farm Tour by holding four community garden fall workshops/open houses.

These included the following gardens:

- iGrow-Tallahassee Food Network Community Garden located at 611 Dent Street in Tallahassee
- Havana Community Garden on US 27 outside Havana
- Macon Community Garden at 322 Macon Road in Tallahassee.
- Pumpkin Place on Harriett Drive, Tallahassee

Some of the scheduled workshops at these gardens included:

- Composting

- Crop Rotation
- Cover Crops for All Seasons
- Seeding and Transplanting Fall Crops



A group discussion at the iGrow-TFN Community Garden on Dent Street. (Photo: Mark Mahoney)

Community garden benefits

Community gardens allow individuals to grow their own food with greater control over the environment and inputs utilized in the growing process. It empowers us to enhance our own lives and physical environment, while increasing access to fresh produce and allowing us to enjoy outdoors space.

Other benefits can include an increased sense of community while getting to know our neighbors better. We can improve our individual health through consuming healthy produce as well as undertaking physical activity, working outdoors.

More: [Community gardens have come a long way](#)

A short description of the Havana Community Garden is provided as an illustration of a garden that was established in 2009 and has formed a relationship with the city of Havana. The description comes from Linda McCarthy, a member who is instrumental in the functioning of this garden.



Another is a partial view inside the Havana Community Garden (Photo: Mark Mahoney)

Havana Community Garden

This community garden came into existence in the fall of 2009 and was started by local community gardeners as a means of providing community garden space for use by local residents. Currently there are 46 individual 15 feet by 15 feet garden plots available for annual leasing at \$30 each.

All plots are fenced, mulched and have access to a shared water spigot. The city of Havana supplies the water and some maintenance and administrative support. It also handles the money paid for plot rentals and the land is leased by a private family to the city.



Sundiata Ameh-Ei, from left, Miaisha Mitchell and Melanie Marques work together to pull collard greens from the vegetable bed at IGrow, a Frenchtown community garden set up to foster local youth volunteer development and fresh produce for an area considered to be a food desert. *(Photo: Joe Rondone/Democrat)*

Personal interests

Community gardens in schools provide outdoor classroom space to explore not only nutrition but other aspects of science. As a member of the team that established the Southwood Community Garden as well as a long-time organic gardener and public health specialist, the benefits of participating in community (and school gardens) cannot be underestimated, both in the physical and emotional areas.

Fortunately, I had the opportunity while my son was attending the Florida State University Schools (FSUS) to volunteer in the school garden and work with the 2nd and 3rd grade students, something I continue to reflect upon with fond memories. I feel that fostering the interest of this age-group can be instrumental in forming a life-long interest in growing food and nutrition.

Resources for more information

For additional information on sustainability, gardening & related topics check out the following agencies & organizations:

Sustainable Tallahassee: www.sustainabletallahassee.org

Leon County Extension Office (UF/IFAS): <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/leon/> and www.Facebook.com/LeonCountyExtension

Damayan Garden Project: <http://damayan.org/aboutus/>

Community Gardens of Havana: www.facebook.com/havanacomgardens/

iGrow-Whatever You Like: <https://www.facebook.com/iGrowyouth/>

The City of Tallahassee and Leon County also provide start up grants for community gardens in our area.



Mark Mahoney (Photo: Mark Mahoney)

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