

MU's School and Community Gardening Program Within SNAP-Ed and EFNEP

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The Eating from the Garden program helps kids improve their diet and food choices by providing them the skills to grow, harvest, and prepare healthy food options. With help from area partners and volunteers, the program promotes healthier food choices, gardening skills, and physical activity. The program goal is to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables by youths through nutrition education, food preparation, and gardening activities.

Why Gardening?

Gardening is a popular pastime for people of all ages. Children and their families can often enjoy this creative and fun activity in their own backyard. Growing fruits and vegetables in a home or a school garden provides an environment where nutrition and plant science skills can be taught. The Eating from the Garden curriculum provides hands-on activities to reinforce these lessons and skills.

Results

Gardening allows both youth and adults to take great pride in their efforts and to give back to the community. Participants at each garden site determined how the excess produce would be distributed following the food tastings and demonstrations. Some sites chose to send the produce home with the children or families so that they could replicate the recipes tried during the program. Other sites donated the produce to food pantries within the community. One school incorporated the produce into the school lunch program. On days when the produce was served, Eating from the Garden signs were placed on the salad bars so children would know they had produced some of the foods being served.

The data below reflects the produce harvested from spring plantings at 20 sites from which we collected data. Many of these gardens will be replanted for fall crops.

Total yield: 921 lbs.

Total input costs: \$121.46

Total retail value: \$3,248.87

Total cost savings: \$3,126.61

About the Authors

Jo Britt-Rankin serves as associate dean/program director–Human Environmental Sciences Extension, University of Missouri, and holds the rank of Extension professor in the Department of Nutrition & Exercise Physiology. She earned her doctorate in nutrition in 2000 from the University of Missouri.

Candance Gabel serves as assistant program director–Human Environmental Sciences Extension, University of Missouri, and holds the rank of associate Extension professor in the Department of Nutrition & Exercise Physiology. She is a registered and licensed dietitian and earned her master’s degree in human nutrition from Texas Women’s University.

Larry Roberts serves as a nutrition program associate and has statewide responsibilities for implementation of gardening programs within SNAP-Ed and EFNEP for the state of Missouri.

Becky Mott is a graduate student in agricultural education with an emphasis on youth development. She is focused on the implications of food insecurity among youth populations. She earned her bachelor’s degree from the University of Missouri.