

My nature connection

Urban
Agriculture
(Community
Gardens)

GRADE: 2+
TIME: 30 MIN

Do you have a community garden in your area?
What's growing in it?

This lesson is for educators who want to educate about community gardens and why they thrive in an urban setting, using Minneapolis gardens as an example.

COMMUNITY GARDENS IN AN URBAN SETTING

All around the country, neighborhoods are putting together a community garden. The purposes vary, but there's one common theme: community and eliminating hunger. An urban garden cannot thrive without working as a community to maintain it and keep it healthy.

When you go for a walk in your neighborhood, have you noticed any large food gardens tucked away between houses? Do you see any prices or community name? Chances are you've passed one without even noticing.



Franklin-Steel garden in Minneapolis, MN

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

blank piece of paper

writing materials

art materials to paint, color, draw, etc.

examples of community gardens

STUDENTS WILL:

- Gain an understanding of community gardens
- The importance of gardens for some communities

SETTING

Where you can get messy with art!

WHAT ARE COMMUNITY GARDENS DOING HERE IN MINNEAPOLIS?

300+ community gardens exist throughout Minneapolis, including nearly 60 gardens on vacant city-owned lots through the Minneapolis Garden Lease Program (land set aside specifically zoned for community gardens).

Community gardens in Minneapolis are promoting access to good nutrition, improve the ecological systems of the city, encourage active and healthy living, and provide spaces for community building, food production, and beauty in our daily lives.



Do It Green Minnesota, an organization to educate Minnesotans about green and sustainable living, described why community gardens started and history of the oldest community gardens in the twin cities:

"Community gardening in the U.S. has a long and rich history that dates back to the nineteenth century. Community gardens helped revitalize communities when large groups of people began migrating to the city from rural areas after the Civil War. This continued through the two World Wars, when there were federal programs designed to encourage U.S. citizens to raise as much food as possible to help support the war effort".



"The Dowling School garden in Minneapolis is the oldest continuously operating community garden in the Twin Cities and was formed as a Victory Garden during World War II. In the 1970s, as part of a back-to-the-earth and urban pioneering movement, community gardens began taking form in vacant lots throughout most major American cities. Often in neighborhoods abandoned by the middle class, these gardens served to rebuild community pride and identity, decrease crime and form bridges between and among different racial and ethnic groups".



WHAT GROWS IN A COMMUNITY GARDEN?

Depending on the ecosystem you're living in, gardening can vary. Specific seed growth can vary in certain seasons and climates. In Minnesota, we have harsh winters, so it is best to start a garden in the spring while soil is still soft and wet. Community gardens usually have vegetables, fruit, herbs, and other edible things to help feed a community.



What do you need to make a plant grow? Water, soil, sunlight, and nutrients. Figuring out a suitable area in the community can be complex for this reason. The plot can't be mostly shaded or too dry. Sometimes certain plants, like tomatoes or corn, can compete for room to grow and may not thrive when planted together. Listed in the additional resources section of the lesson is a link to a resource to help students find out more about plant growth and which plants grow well together.

TIP/ Note:
Tomato and
Basil grow well
together!

ACTIVITY- MAP YOUR OWN COMMUNITY GARDEN

For this activity, you will be mapping out your very own community garden. Figure out where you want your garden to go. Will it be out in a field? Will it be on an empty plot of land in a neighborhood? Will it be in your own backyard? Decide for yourself which most applies to your community, and which area is most accessible to everybody.

Next, map out where your food will go. Some fruits and vegetables grow better with others, research what plants you can put in the same dirt plot (refer to the listed resources below for additional ideas). For example, corn and green beans can grow together because they won't compete for growth in the soil.

Then, create a key for your garden so that everyone knows what is growing in your garden. As an optional step, you can make your own community garden name and set prices for selling food at the farmers' market.



TIP/Note:
go to the next
page for an
extension
learning
opportunity!



ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Look up a community garden close to you! How could you do your part and join? A lot of community gardens are easy to find through a google search.

CONNECTING WITH QUESTIONS

Questions for at the end of the lesson:

- Share their community garden map and how they decided which plants to grow.
- How would they take what they learned today and apply it?
- Do they have a community garden near them? A garden at home?
- Could you build your own community garden for your neighborhood?
- What vegetables or fruits do you think would sell the best?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Guide for vegetables that grow well together

<https://www.farmersalmanac.com/companion-planting-guide-31301>

Minneapolis community garden info

<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/sustainability/homegrown/WCMS1P-129871>

Minnesota Community Garden website

<https://doitgreen.org/topics/community/community-gardens/>

Community Garden in St. Petersburg, FL

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr40mqBAoe8>

SURVEY FEEDBACK