



Gardening Together

Target Risk Factors:

Healthy Eating
Physical Activity

Target Population:

Families

Project Lead(s):

Fred Taylor, Lisa Preston (Rorketon)
Julie Moar, OJ Sabiston (Crane River)
Bernice Sabiston (Spence Lake)
Heather Bass (Meadow Portage)
Harold, Rene and Raymond Sanderson (Rockridge)
Elsie Marsden (Skownan)
Al Neath, Stella Farand (Waterhen)
Liz Dano (Mallard)

RHA:

Parkland

Project Partners:

CDPI community councils, local nurseries, PRHA

Project Details:

Multiple event or ongoing project

Description:

Gardening had become limited to a few families while others have lost the skill of planting, tending and harvesting. We began by ordering seeds in bulk, repackaging with clear directions on how to plant with the specific seed printed on a label and adhered to the envelope; this has continued for 4 years. Those who were gardeners shared their expertise with community members. The next year we added fruit tree purchases; by purchasing a large number of trees we were able to get them at lower cost. We also added the purchase of bedding plants such as tomatoes and peppers. The season ended with canning and freezing workshops. In some communities we offered basic gardening workshops and composting workshops to develop more gardeners and to allow current gardeners to develop new skills.

Time:

We have been gardening together for 5 years and have increased our program each year. It takes time to hold meetings to plan seed orders, tree orders, develop labels, sort and repackage seeds, distribute in the communities and then support gardeners throughout the growing season.

Objectives:

Food security is an issue in many of these communities, with the nearest full service grocery store an hour or more away from home. Many communities are heavily reliant on social assistance. This geographical and economic barrier made it difficult to have fruit and vegetables regularly available. Our objective was to have people growing and preserving their own food for winter, which is less expensive, tastes better and allows the gardeners to increase their self esteem.

Planning Supports:

- MAFRI and NHF information regarding gardening numbers and the community's requirements for developing accessible food sources and increasing food security.
- Knowledge of CDPI representatives that there was interest in gardening in the community but that people needed support and encouragement to make it happen.

Results:

The number of participants from all our communities is difficult to determine. Since the beginning, Mallard, Skownan FN, and Crane River have developed community gardens. Crane River gardening numbers have exploded with a reported 100 gardens in 2009. They have since added raised beds for elders and those with physical limitations. Mallard has sought additional funding from other sources to bulk purchase more fruit trees to meet the interest/demand of the community. Canning and freezing workshops have been held annually with new people learning the skills each year (generally 8-12 participants in each of 2 communities per year).

What worked:

- Bulk purchasing seeds works well for making a limited budget stretch but developing labels initially takes a lot of time and computer skills. The PRHA staff person was able to do this for us.
- Support from community councils to find space to garden and plant fruit trees for the community to share in years to come.
- Participants were encouraged to start small or work in a community garden the first year.
- NHF and MAFRI supplied information and workshops on a variety of gardening, canning and freezing topics.

What didn't work and any changes made:

- Everything takes time and that can be a frustration to new participants.
- Follow-up on the plants became a requirement to ensure they were planted, if not that they were given to someone else.
- Demand far exceeded supply for trees, plants and seeds.
- Some complaints because we supply enough to each person to let them try gardening. We do not supply a full garden's worth to any person; they are required to take some initiative on their own to get more seeds or plants.

Unexpected Outcomes:

- Overall increase in gardening numbers were beyond our expectations.
- A participant in the canning workshop has taught the rest of her family to can.
- When planning this year's order the group discussed things they had learned, and these tips were put together in a pamphlet and shared among the communities. They are mostly folk remedies that belong to the people in these communities and are certainly not the latest and greatest from the scientific community.

Resources**Volunteers:**

Every community requires a person to take the lead and do the prep work of representing the community for seed ordering, distributing seeds and plants, and following up with gardeners. This can be a large commitment of time and best taken on by more than one person. Volunteers are required to actually make orders, pick up plants etc.

Facilities:

- Community garden space in communities
- Meeting room for planning, seed sorting and outdoor space for sharing plants and trees.
- personal space for gardens

Equipment:

- Seed Sharing: coin envelopes, labels with clear directions on planting specific seeds, spoons for sorting.
- Plant sharing: truck to pick up trees and plants
- Gardening: water source, hoes, rakes etc. Ideally a tiller for use spring and fall (tillers donated to all communities by NHF in 2008).

Total Costs:

\$950 annually (trees \$450, seeds \$300, bedding plants \$200)

Materials developed for program:

[Labels](#)

[Pamphlet](#)

[Pepper Picture](#)

[Canning Workshop flyer](#)

Contact Information:

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