

JACKSONVILLE'S URBAN GARDENING PROGRAM: 1977-1996

JAMES M. STEPHENS
Horticultural Sciences Department
University of Florida, IFAS
Gainesville, FL 32611

TERRY B. DELVALLE AND BARBARA DANIELS
Duval County Cooperative Extension Service
University of Florida, IFAS
Jacksonville, FL 32205

MARCIA K. OEHLER
1867 Osprey Bluff Blvd.
Orange Park, FL 32011

Additional index words. Vegetable gardening, community gardening.

Abstract. In FY 77 Jacksonville, FL became one of 16 U.S. cities to receive funding to participate in the Federal Urban Gardening program. The purpose of the program was to educate and encourage low-income, disadvantaged city dwellers to grow, preserve, and use fresh vegetables. Each year the Jacksonville project received a renewable grant of around \$150,000 until 1993 when the appropriation was reduced to \$78,000 as the result of USDA formula-funding. During the entire 19-year period (1977-1996), Florida received approximately \$2,594,000 for the Jacksonville project. The Duval project, called "Gardening Lots", began in 1977 with the hiring of an Extension Agent coordinator and several paid employees. A total of seven individuals have worked to coordinate the project since its beginning. Today, a half-time program assistant coordinates the efforts of Duval Master Gardener volunteers who have taken over the work of previous years' paid staff. From the beginning, the educational focus has been devoted to demonstration gardens and community gardening, including school gardens. By 1979, the staff had established 15 community gardens around the city with a demonstration garden located at each site. By 1985, the number of community gardens reached an all-time high of 33 but decreased to 22 in 1996 as the reduction in funding and staffing occurred. From 1977 to 1996, the total value of all gardens grown by Jacksonville Urban Gardeners was calculated to be \$14,913,500.

In the aftermath of rioting and devastation following the eruption of severe racial tensions in many of our large American cities in the mid-sixties, sickened residents began renovating the wastelands by planting seeds on the abandoned, once rubble-filled lots. In 1964, Extension director Libby Goldstein helped start community gardens in blighted neighborhoods of Philadelphia. These and other similar gardens became a source of community pride and a gathering place for members of all races (Buckalew, 1985).

Congressional leaders, whose federal redevelopment programs had failed, took note of these successes and formulated a plan to "bring the people back together." Congressman Fred Richmond, the only urban member of the House Agricultural Committee, initiated a small pilot project in Brooklyn during the summer of 1976 (Richmond, 1981). By the positive results of that project, he convinced Mississippi representative Jamie Whitten, Chairman of the House Appropri-

ations Committee, to join him in sponsoring legislation creating the federal "Urban Gardening" program. The purpose was to "employ people having the general qualifications of Extension agents to assist in teaching and demonstrating gardening and 4-H type work, as well as nutrition assistance for low income families in our large cities" (Schaller, 1977).

Congress appropriated \$1.5 million for FY77 urban gardening pilot projects in 6 of America's largest cities. For FY78, additional funding provided for the expansion of the program into 10 new cities, including Jacksonville, Florida. In 1985, a further expansion took place, resulting in a total of 21 cities funded to participate in the program. Funding for each city ranged from a low of \$75,000 for Bridgeport, Conn., to \$150,000 for Jacksonville and a dozen similar cities, to \$500,000 for New York. Following extensive congressional review of all city programs, these grants were renewed regularly on an annual basis.

In 1994 a big change occurred in the way money was appropriated and distributed. That year, congress incorporated Urban Gardening as an integral part of the USDA's budget, and allocated funds to all 50 states based on a formula. While many new cities came into the program, most of the participating cities experienced a severe reduction in funds. Jacksonville remained as Florida's representative city but now had to operate its program on \$78,000, or about 1/2 of its original annual appropriation. The total money appropriated over the past 19 years to Florida for the Jacksonville program amounts to about \$2,594,000, or an average of \$136,500 per year.

The Jacksonville Program

In 1976, when federal funds were first received by the Florida Cooperative Extension Service, State Extension Vegetable Specialist Jim Stephens became the state leader for the program under the direction of the Extension Dean John Woeste. Former University of Florida Vegetable Crops Department student Craig Van Gundy was hired as Assistant Extension Agent I and attached to the Duval County Extension staff to coordinate the program locally known as "Gardening Lots". An initial plan of action, complete with budget and organizational chart, was carefully formulated (Stephens, 1980).

Since the Jacksonville city limits followed Duval County lines, three target zones were established over a broad area to include as many low income families as possible. These targeted areas coincided closely with similar socio-economic zones already established by the Duval Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). City and community inputs were incorporated into the planning process through the establishment of advisory committees, which included members from HUD and Greater Jacksonville Economic Opportunities (GJEO).

Program funds have always been used for educational purposes, including staffing, development of literature, and purchasing demonstration supplies and equipment. Staff salaries and associated costs such as travel allocations consumed most of the budget. By the summer of 1977, 20 gardening aides were on the job. Many of these were EFNEP aides al-

ready in place at the Jacksonville office while others were newly recruited and hired as Urban Gardening aides. An attempt was made to hire individuals, preferably gardeners, who lived within the targeted areas. This combined staff of 41 paid employees was given extensive training on the basic principles of vegetable gardening by the county Extension agents and state specialists (Stephens, 1980). The Duval Master Gardener program became established in 1983 (Stephens and Delate, 1984), and with it, a great deal of interfacing became evident between the three programs of Urban Gardening, Master Gardeners, and EFNEP. Later, when the grant was cut in half due to formula funding, all paid garden aides except the coordinator were dismissed and their work was taken over by volunteer Master Gardeners. For state funds saved as a result of this and other donations of time and service, the Florida Master Gardener program received a 1996 Davis Productivity Award (Stampfli, 1996).

Program coordinators

Including VanGundy, there has been a total of seven individuals hired to coordinate the "Gardening Lots" project. Their names and the years each coordinator served are shown in Table 1. All coordinators except for the last two held the rank of Extension Agent I, but were not in a tenure-accruing position. Both Osborne and Daniels first served the project as Garden Assistants before assuming the role of Coordinator. These two individuals had their salaries and daily hours reduced when formula funding was instituted in 1994.

Educational Efforts

The "Gardening Lots" staff reached their clientele through a variety of methods. Demonstration gardens were among the most effective ways to teach preferred gardening practices and to encourage gardeners to adopt new techniques. The main demonstration teaching area was located at

the site of the project headquarters- the old Canning Center on Superior Street. At this location, garden plots were maintained for hands-on training of staff members, but soon became a showplace for visiting program participants and others such as school groups. Staff also conducted demonstrations year-round at community garden sites throughout the city. Individually, each Garden Aide assisted backyard gardeners within the targeted areas. Other important teaching methods used were group meetings, mass media, and publications written and distributed.

The food utilization aspects of the program were conducted primarily under the auspices of the EFNEP staff led by agent Tammer Britton. Many of original Jacksonville EFNEP employees and clientele were brought into the Urban Gardening project at its outset. Proper canning, freezing, and other storing methods were taught through demonstration and meetings.

Community Gardens

As with most Urban Gardening programs across the country, Jacksonville's "Gardening Lots" project emphasized the establishment of community gardens throughout the targeted areas of the city. This concept allowed any willing individual or family to borrow a plot of tillable ground within a nearby community site, and grow their own vegetables. Staff went about the city locating prime sites and obtaining permission to use them in the program. Many of these sites were vacant lots heavily littered with ugly debris of all descriptions. Some sites were privately owned while others belonged to institutions or government. Table 1 shows the progress made in creating these gardens over the 19-year period. Each community site contained an average of 10 plots, although a few had as many as 75 individual plots. "Jacksonville Lots" was responsible for an average of 29 community gardens and 313 plots each year of the project. At one point in 1985 there were 45

Table 1. Jacksonville Urban Gardening - Statistical Report: 1977-1996^a

Year (FY)	Approp. (\$)	Coordinator	Number of participants	Community garden sites	Community garden plots	School gardens	Home gardens	Total acreage	Total value (\$) ^c
1978	150,000	VanGundy	1,000	7	70	0	250	60	144,000
1979	150,000	VanGundy	3,090	14	56	0	250	156	419,000
1980	150,000	VanGundy/Kelt	4,100	15	300	7	275	173	473,000
1981 ^x	150,000	Kelt/(Oehler) ^w	4,100	30	500	20	280	60	1,000,000
1982	150,000	Oehler	4,100	42	630	36	204	61	2,651,700
1983 ^x	150,000	Oehler/DelValle	3,500	40	600	40	230	50	2,500,000
1984	150,000	DelValle	2,965	37	523	48	278	32	2,662,800
1985	150,000	DelValle/Lockyer	3,300	45	708	71	606	30	1,080,700
1986	150,000	Lockyer/(Bunker) ^y	3,100	34	303	92	639	31	1,120,700
1987	150,000	Bunker/DelValle ^y	1,955	38	428	44	158	28	800,000
1988	150,000	Brown	1,950	27	233	24	154	24	509,500
1989	142,000	Brown	2,535	39	252	24	250	20	595,500
1990	142,000	Brown	2,800	41	249	26	1,044	20	736,400
1991	142,000	Brown/Jones ^z	3,748	32	251	31	653	22	500,000
1992	142,000	Osborne	3,865	27	153	32	558	15	386,800
1993	142,000	Osborne	3,600	27	198	34	269	15	392,600
1994	78,000 ^{aa}	Osborne/Daniels	2,906	20	123	25	263	14	387,400
1995	78,000	Daniels/Jones	3,005	22	180	23	238	15	375,800
1996	78,000	Daniels/Jones	3,657	20	198	20	257	25	576,000

^aData compiled from annual reports to USDA.

^bBased on USDA formula.

^cValues averaged as annual reports not found.

^dNames changed due to marriage.

^eInterim coordinators (DelValle and Jones).

^fFormula funding began FY 94.

active community sites with over 700 garden plots around Jacksonville. Currently, there are 20 community gardens with 198 individual plots within the project. Some of the gardens have remained active since their establishment, while others have given way to construction and other demises.

School gardens

Urban Gardening staff have worked diligently with Duval school officials and teachers to bring the gardening experience to school children. An average of 31 gardens per year were started or maintained as a result of assistance by project staff. Each garden involved many students and classes. Students who did not have a school garden were often transported to demonstration and/or community garden sites for various educational activities.

Current Participation and Benefits

In 1996, with a limited staff and the help of volunteer Master Gardeners, 3600 citizens received educational assistance on vegetable gardening. There were 20 community gardens, with 198 plots, on a combined area of 313,200 sq. ft. (7.19 acres). Based on a USDA formula of \$0.60 per sq. ft., the estimated value of produce grown was \$186,000. In addition there were 20 school gardens on 250,000 sq. ft. (5.75 acres), containing \$75,000 worth of vegetables. Also assisted were 257 home gardeners, with an area of 525,000 sq. ft. (12 acres), and a production value of \$315,000. The overall value of produce grown by participants in 1996 was about \$576,000.

Proc. Fla. State Hort. Soc. 109:296-298. 1996.

ORGANIC SOIL AMENDMENT STUDIES WITH TOMATO

J. M. STEPHENS AND S. R. KOSTEWICZ
*Horticultural Sciences Dept.
University of Florida, IFAS
Gainesville, FL 32611*

Additional index words. Vegetable gardening, organic fertilizers.

Abstract. Since the spring of 1990, an on-going study has been conducted at the University of Florida's Organic Gardening Research and Education Park, Gainesville, on the effects of various organic soil amendments on selected vegetables. One dozen 5 × 10 ft "grow-boxes" were amended annually with each box receiving a different organic material. The purpose was to determine and demonstrate optimum amounts of these amendments as a source of fertility for growing garden vegetables. Results and data in previous years have been reported. The spring, 1995 study with tomatoes constitutes the subject of this paper. Most of the organic soil amendments and fertilizers applied in previous years were broadcast in the boxes again, although some treatments were discontinued and replaced with others. The following amendments were broadcast at both a low and a high rate two weeks prior to setting two 'Better Boy' tomato transplants per treatment, March 15,

Has the program paid off?

Over a 19-year period, the Jacksonville "Gardening Lots" project has "cost" taxpayers \$2,594,000. in appropriated funds. The money has provided needy citizens with an opportunity to share in a bounty of \$14,913,500 worth of fresh garden vegetables, grown on 6000 individual plots in 550 community gardens, 600 school gardens, and 7000 home gardens. That calculates to a positive 5:1 return on the government's investment. But beyond the tangible benefits derived from growing, serving, preserving, and otherwise enjoying fresh, nutritious vegetables are the intangibles—the societal impacts such as reduced crime, increased neighborhood pride, heightened self-esteem and personal gratification. These city dwellers turned urban gardeners have reached out for a taste of the good life in their struggle for survival, and for at least some of them, for a short while, have found it!

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1995: oak leaves; yard waste compost (YWC); YWC plus organic fertilizer (Fertrell 3-2-3); organic fertilizer (Fertrell 3-2-3); chicken manure; composted chicken manure (RR 3-5-3); and combined amendments (sheep manure + RR + YWC). Tomatoes were harvested six times, with results reported as number and weight of fruit-yield per plant. Top yields came from the mixed amendments box, followed closely by the chicken litter box and the box containing the high rate of YWC + Fertrell 3-2-3. Other amendments gave fair to poor results.

It is wise to utilize organic wastes in vegetable gardens for at least two very good reasons: first, they provide valuable benefits as soil amendments and fertilizers, and second, these waste products present quite a disposal problem for society. About 20 million tons of solid waste were produced in Florida in 1992, constituted in part by 3 million tons of yard waste and ½ million tons of animal manures (Smith, 1994). Since this organic waste matter is not allowed in landfills, an obvious viable option is to incorporate it into good agricultural practices. Amending garden soils appears to be one excellent way to recycle these waste products effectively. Previous trials at the Organic Gardening Research and Education Park have strongly indicated that 20 to 40 tons/A of yard waste compost, supplemented with organic fertilizer or animal manure and