

# Garden And Landscape Section

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## THE JACKSONVILLE URBAN GARDEN PROGRAM

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**Abstract.** The Jacksonville "Gardening Lots" Urban Gardening Program is one of 16 similar U.S. gardening programs charged with encouraging low-income city people to grow, use, and preserve fresh vegetables. Congress chose Jacksonville in the fall of 1977 to receive the annual U.S.D.A. grant of \$150,000. The program is administered by the Florida Cooperative Extension Service, primarily through the Duval County Extension Office. The "Gardening Lots" staff of 42 paid positions operates out of the old Canning Center near the Duval Extension Office.

Program funds are used for educational purposes, including staffing, development of educational materials, and operation of demonstration gardens. In the first full year of its funding, the program included 156 acres of garden space within the city with a total value of \$318,000 in vegetables produced. Over 27,000 individual contacts were made by 20 gardening aides. Establishment of community gardens was emphasized, with 15 community gardens activated in 1979.

Following a small pilot effort in the summer of 1976 in Brooklyn, N.Y., the federal "Urban Gardening" program began that year when Congress appropriated \$1.5 million for FY 1977 pilot projects in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Houston. For FY 1978 the program was expanded to include 10 additional cities including Jacksonville, Florida. The funding for FY 1978 has remained the same through FY 1980 (Table 1). Fiscal years (FY) begin October 1 and end September 30.

The purpose of "Urban Gardening", according to testimony before the House Appropriation Subcommittee on Agriculture and Related Agencies, 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 in our larger cities. Emphasis should be on programs to develop and improve urban vegetable gardening for food production, preservation, and utilization to result in improved nutrition for low-income urban families and individuals including youth" (3).

### Organizing the Jacksonville Program

Following the designation of Jacksonville as an "Urban Gardening" city and the Florida Cooperative Extension

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Table 1. FY 1978 "Urban Gardening" Cities.

City	Appropriation
New York <sup>z</sup>	\$500,000.00
Chicago <sup>z</sup>	300,000.00
Los Angeles <sup>z</sup>	250,000.00
Philadelphia <sup>z</sup>	150,000.00
Detroit <sup>z</sup>	150,000.00
Houston <sup>z</sup>	150,000.00
Atlanta	150,000.00
Baltimore	150,000.00
Boston	150,000.00
Cleveland	150,000.00
Jacksonville	150,000.00
Memphis	150,000.00
Milwaukee	150,000.00
Newark, N. J.	150,000.00
New Orleans	150,000.00
St. Louis	150,000.00

<sup>z</sup>Original Fiscal Year 1977 city.

Service as the agency responsible for implementation, an Extension Agent I was employed and attached to the Duval County Extension staff to coordinate the project. Cooperative efforts between the coordinator and the State Extension Vegetable Specialist at Gainesville produced a plan and budget for the organization and initiation of the project dubbed "Gardening Lots."

The plan called for the selection of three target areas within the city, since the Jacksonville city limits followed county lines. Target areas selected were (a) "hard-core" poverty urban area, (b) a sub-urban low-income area, and (c) a rural low-income area (Mandarin). The target areas coincided closely with similar socio-economic zones already established by the Duval Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program.

The basic staff organizational chart depicts current program positions and personnel (Fig. 1). It reflects several alterations throughout the three-year period reported here. For example, EFNEP aides were removed from the chart after the first year. Note on the chart two strategic committees, steering and community advisory, which have been key factors in the success of the project. The steering committee was composed primarily of Extension administrative personnel, whereas, the advisory committee membership reflected a cross-section of the communities in which the work transpired, including representation from Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Greater Jacksonville Economic Opportunities (GJEO).

The "Gardening Lots" task force members were assigned to the specific target areas. Other supporting staff positions, such as the information specialist and the youth program aides, worked across the district.

### Staff Training

Following staff recruitment and hiring, orientation and training was provided by specialists from the Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences (IFAS). Since most of the

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graph TD; VCD[VEGETABLE CROPS DEPARTMENT] --> S[SPECIALIST]; S --> OI[OPS ILLUSTRATOR]; S --> OT[OPS TECHNICIAN]; S --> CAS[COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE]; CAS --> DSC1[DISTRICT SUB COMM]; CAS --> DSC2[DISTRICT SUB COMM]; CED[COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR] --> ESC[EXTENSION STEERING COMMITTEE]; CED --> PCA[PROGRAM COORDINATOR  
EXTENSION AGENT]; PCA --> IS1[INFORMATION SPEC. I]; IS1 --> ART[ARTIST - OPS]; IS1 --> CLV[CLERK V (DISTRICT LEADER)]; CLV --> L[LABORER]; CLV --> C2[CLERK II]; CLV --> AT[AGRICULTURE TECHNICIAN III]; CLV --> PA1[PROGRAM ASST. ADULT]; CLV --> PA2[PROGRAM ASST. ADULT]; CLV --> PA3[PROGRAM ASST. ADULT]; CLV --> PA4[PROGRAM ASST. ADULT]; CLV --> PA5[PROGRAM ASST. ADULT]; CLV --> PA6[PROGRAM ASST. ADULT]; CLV --> PAY[PROGRAM ASST. YOUTH]; CLV --> PAY2[PROGRAM ASST. YOUTH]; DAOS[DISTRICT AGENT'S OFFICE] --> BK[BOOKKEEPER]; BK --> OBC[OPS BUDGET & CLERICAL]
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new garden aides were recruited more on the basis of their desire and ability to work with people rather than horticultural knowledge, the training was quite basic and intensive. Classroom activities were fortified with garden demonstrations and hands-on exercise.

The "Gardening Lots" staff took to the field in the summer of 1978. Most of the spring gardening activity was complete, so staffers began the task of acquainting themselves with their neighborhoods, greeting potential program participants, and meeting community leaders. At the beginning of the fall gardening season, (August-September) the program aides launched out into the target areas with a variety of methods to teach gardening to all interested people (Table 2).

Method	FY 78	FY 79	FY 80
Organized group meetings	90	89	331
Individual/family consultations	2,668	27,135	34,000
Mass media items prepared	30	91	114
Publications distributed	10,000	203,900	227,583
Demonstration gardens	11	14	15

27,135 contacts made in fiscal year (FY 1979) were repetitive and a large number (unsubstantiated) were telephone contacts. However, Program Aides were able to make many more on-site visits than would be possible for regular county Extension personnel.

The primary method used in reaching boys and girls was small group meetings (3-10 per group) led by program aides or volunteer teens and adults.

Demonstration gardens were among the most effective ways for teaching the basics of gardening. Garden aides planted and maintained 14 such gardens in 1979 and 15 in 1980, in various sections of Jacksonville. These were in addition to the teaching garden at the "Gardening Lots" headquarters which was maintained for the purpose of training aides and staff.

Gardens and potential gardeners were slow to participate in the beginning due to the program starting in the summer when gardening is at its lowest peak in Florida. However, by the second year (FY 1979) enrollment had risen to 3,090 documented participants, including 1,360 in a minority classification. Enrollment had increased to 4,110 adult and youth participants in 1980, of which 1,886 were minorities, representing a 217% growth in the program.

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Table 3. Number of gardens according to plot size in Jacksonville, FL.

Plot size (sq. ft.)	1979	1980	% change
<-100	244	1312	538
101-250	204	300	147
251-500	222	494	222
501-1000	776	2324	299
Total	1,446	4,430	306

of the program within the rural target area of the Mandarin section. As with enrollment, growth within the program was documented by an increase of over 300% in the number of participant gardens serviced.

Family gardens predominated among the kinds of gardens grown by the participants (Table 4). Due to a concentrated effort by "Gardening Lots" staff to promote community gardens, 15 such gardens were begun in 1979, and 14 gardens continued in 1980. Each community garden site contained an average of 10 individual plots. Some contained as many as 75 individual plots. The total number of individual community garden plots is included in the family garden category.

The total acreage of vegetables in program participants' gardens amounted to 156 acres (1979) and \$473,000 (1980). According to gardeners surveyed by program aides, there were more gardens returning over \$200 worth of vegetables than in any of the other categories of the survey (Table 5).

Table 4. Kinds of gardens planted in Jacksonville, FL.

Kind	1978	1979	1980
Mini gardens	6	122	1512
Family gardens	107	1372	2786
Community	4	15	14
Market gardens	2	114	132

Table 5. Value of participating gardens in Jacksonville, FL.

Value of Produce	Number of Gardens		
	1978	1979	1980
< \$25	30	434	729
\$26-\$75	41	324	446
\$76-\$200	21	354	948
> \$200	23	326	1,555

### Special Events/Activities

**Youth**—In an effort to include youth in the program, special interest 4-H "Gardening Lots" clubs, modeled after P.E.P. clubs of the Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), were started in areas of youth concentration and interest. Within three months of the time 4-H program aides had begun work, 76 youth had signed up. Several of the children participated in regular 4-H county activities such as summer camp. In addition, special week-long P.E.P. day camps were held in two target areas.

"Gardening Lots" staff joined forces with Duval County School Board and gained representation on the Environmental Education Advisory Council. Seventy-five teachers were trained in gardening by the staff, resulting in gardening as a curriculum within the Duval school system. Over 1000 school children were reached indirectly through these efforts.

**Food and Nutrition**—A major component of the program was the emphasis placed on improving nutrition habits through increased utilization of fresh and canned vegetables. To this end, a cooperative arrangement was made with the Duval County EFNEP staff to provide 5 program aides to work one-quarter time with gardening participants. Additionally, all program aides included nutritional information in their teaching exercises wherever practical.

### Specialized publications

Throughout the program "Gardening Lots" staff have adapted gardening information to local conditions through a variety of fact sheets and a monthly newsletter. At Gainesville, the State Vegetable Specialists developed a series of individual crop fact sheets based on a cartoonistic style. This format, designed to reach poorly motivated readers, is currently being researched for acceptability level.

### Adjunct groups

The "Gardening Lots" program has involved in various ways several groups and organizations within the county.

The Greater Jacksonville Economic Opportunity "Inflation Garden" project cooperated by tilling garden plots. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) helped to identify available property for possible community garden sites.

Several local groups took advantage of the "Gardening Lots" program for the benefit of their members. Some of these groups were: Jacksonville Mental Health Association; Florida Christian Center; Hammond Community Center; Woodland Baptist Church; Mandarin Methodist Day Camp for Disadvantaged Children; Mormon Church; Baptist Ministers Conference; Regency Library; University Hospital Senior Adult Independent Program; Duval Hall Halfway House; Drug Treatment Centers; Central Riverside Retardation Center; Lackawana Nutrition Center (senior citizens); Regional Retardation Center; and the Duval County School Board.

### Annual harvest fair

The highlight event of the program was an annual day-long "Harvest Fair," held at the downtown Children's Museum. The colorful event featured public inspection of gardening displays, exhibits, and demonstrations, while giving participants and others an opportunity to show the results of their gardening activities.

The fact that the Cooperative Extension Service does not always reach those who need its educational benefits most has been documented (1, 2). Whether this precept is actual or perceived takes nothing away from such programs as "Urban Gardening" which strive to rectify such inadequacies. The Jacksonville "Gardening Lots" program has had many successes in its first three years of operation. The program provided numerous disadvantaged residents the opportunity to grow, preserve, serve, and enjoy fresh vegetables. Beyond that, many intangible benefits were derived from the program including an increased sense of neighborhood pride and a recreational outlet for many city dwellers reaching out for a taste of the good life in their struggle for survival.

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