

# What is a community garden?

- A piece of land that is collectively used and maintained by a group of local people
- A communal “green space” where vegetables, fruits, and/or ornamental plants are grown





# Community Gardens also offer:

## Environmental Education Programs



## Neighborhood Cooking & Meal Sharing



## Butterflies Gardens



## Artistic & Cultural Displays





# Positive outcomes for individuals and the community:



- ▶ Community gardens act as a “Blanket of support between neighbors”
- ▶ Gardens give purpose and meaning to vacant spaces where negative behaviors often occur (i.e. vandalism, littering, drug dealing)
- ▶ Participating in gardening activities helps individuals to connect with the natural space and build relationships with their neighbors
- ▶ One urban community gardener said:  
“If this weren’t a community garden right now . . .it would be strewn with trash, it would be a place where people would just sort of toss stuff... but now it’s not.”



# Positive outcomes for individuals and the community:

- ▶ Community Gardens build strong bonds of trust and mutual support within communities.
- ▶ Strong social ties keep the neighborhood safer and more resilient

In this example, members of a NYC community garden hit by Hurricane Sandy used their garden network keep the neighborhood safe.

They checked on each others right after the storm and brought aid to neighbors stranded without food, water or electricity



Community Garden's Facebook page posting



# What do other community gardeners have to say?


Researchers interviewed community gardeners in Baltimore to find out why they got involved in community gardening... what are the PROS and CONS?

## PROS / BENEFITS:

1. Better physical health by growing one's own fresh, nutritious food
2. The exercise helped older gardeners' bodies to feel "loose" and active
3. Connecting with nature brings joy... time in the garden is like a "vacation"
4. Cleaning up the city... removes negative uses of vacant lots and creates positive spaces for community gatherings
5. Learning from each other creates strong neighborhood support systems
6. Participation in community gardens helps break down social barriers

**"It just makes me feel tied to Baltimore... like I'm not living my own isolated life... it makes me feel more like I belong."**





# What do other community gardeners have to say?

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## CONS / STRUGGLES:

1. Maintaining the garden is hard work, especially the weeding
2. Time commitment can be difficult
3. Summer heat and humidity
4. Safety concerns about being in the garden, especially after dark
5. Racial divides among garden members can be a barrier to participation
6. Some residents expressed wanting to use the garden land for other purposes, not for gardening

# Our research on community gardens

1. Qualitative methods approach (focus groups, key informant surveys, participant observation)
2. Followed by statewide survey of CG participants
3. Topics include, the role of public/private partnerships, including Extension
4. Control over public space and environmental justice issues
5. Building social capital in communities
6. Conflict resolution

# Outputs

1. Best practices guidelines on establishing and maintaining CGs.
2. Better understanding of the role that is played by agencies, funding, levels of participation
3. Document the struggle over public space
4. Comparison with the struggle over private landscapes that have public impact; how do they both contribute to social capital?