
USDA Opens People's Garden Initiative to Gardens Nationwide

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Indianapolis, IN, September 16, 2022 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is expanding its People's Garden Initiative to include additional eligible gardens nationwide. School gardens, community gardens, urban farms, and small-scale agriculture projects in rural, suburban and urban areas can be recognized as a "People's Garden" if they register on the USDA website and meet the criteria including benefitting the community, working collaboratively, incorporating conservation practices and educating the public. Affiliate People's Garden locations will be indicated on a map on the USDA website, featured in USDA communications and provided with a People's Garden sign.

"We welcome gardens statewide to join us in the People's Garden effort and all it represents," said Jerry Raynor, Indiana's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist, "Local gardens across the state share USDA's goals of building more diversified and resilient local food systems, empowering communities to come together around expanding access to healthy food, addressing climate change and advancing equity."

USDA originally launched the People's Garden Initiative in 2009. It's named for the "People's Department," former President Abraham Lincoln's nickname for USDA, which was established during his presidency in 1862. People's Gardens grow fresh, healthy food and support resilient, local food systems; teach people how to garden using conservation practices; nurture habitat for pollinators and wildlife and create greenspace for neighbors.

The simple act of planting a garden can have big impacts -- from building a more diverse and resilient local food system to empowering communities to address issues like nutrition access and climate change. For instance, many lower-income urban areas lack grocery stores and access to nutritious food, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. Urban agriculture empowers people to address hunger and poverty within their own community by growing fresh, nutritious food and inspiring healthy dietary changes. Today, 15 percent of the world's food is grown in urban areas. These gardens provide jobs, create greenspaces that unify neighborhoods, and reduce the distance food travels from farm to table, which is better for the plate and the planet.

Julia Wickard, State Executive Director for Indiana's USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) added, "The simple act of planting a garden can have big impacts - from building a more diverse and resilient local food system to empowering communities to address issues like nutrition access in areas of the state where this is an issue. Gardens grow fresh, healthy food and teach people how to plant and harvest using sustainable practices; and nurture habitat for pollinators and wildlife, and greenspace for neighbors to gather and enjoy."

How to Register

To learn more about People's Garden or to register one, visit the People's Garden webpage at www.usda.gov/peoples-garden. The location and information on each garden will be displayed on a map. USDA will send a "People's Garden" sign to each garden and invite continued engagement through photos and information sharing. Gardens on federal property, such as USDA offices, are required to donate produce. We invite these gardens to report how much is being donated.

To be eligible, gardens:

- **Benefit the community** by providing food, green space, wildlife habitat, education space.
- **Are a collaborative effort.** This can include groups working together with USDA agencies, food banks, after school programs, Girl Scouts, Master Gardeners, conservation districts, etc.
- **Incorporate conservation management practices**, such as using native plant species, rain barrels, integrated pest management, xeriscaping.
- **Educate the public** about sustainable gardening practices and the importance of local, diverse, and resilient food systems providing healthy food for the community.

New gardens will join the People's Garden at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. and 17 other flagship gardens established earlier this year.

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