



This project has allowed to bring the awareness of gardening and healthy nutrition to underserved populations in four regions of Missouri, which empowered youth and senior citizens by providing tools to grow their own produce, to create value-added products and to better understand the integration of agriculture and their natural surroundings.

Gardening as Therapy for Physical and Mental Health

Who cares and why?

In aligning with Lincoln University mission to work with minorities and other underserved populations, this project is to empower senior citizens and youth, especially minority groups. Underserved populations usually do not have access to healthy foods and lack encouragement to get involved with healthy activities like gardening. This project helped reach these communities not only in mid-Missouri area but in three additional regions in the State. Extension Specialists at Lincoln University of Missouri care to serve these populations to make a positive impact in their lives and help them improve their way of life.

What has the project done so far?

This project has established a farmers market, a community garden, a commercial kitchen, and native plant demonstration gardens with native edible plants and native pollinators. The facilities continue functioning and serving local communities with maintenance, training and managing activities.

The Sprouts and Roots program, launched in 2011, offered nutrition, gardening, and wellness training for youth and senior adults with volunteer labors provided by community and students. The training included: classes, seminars, field days, conferences, garden tours and summer camps with theoretical training and hands-on activities. As a result, the participants were more active, their social interactions increased, they consumed more vegetables, and/or cooked more nutritious and low calorie foods and understood the importance of integrating nature and agriculture in an urban city. This project helped producers and local community increase their income and create a sense of community and interactions between Lincoln University and its neighbors.



Impact Statement

A community garden, a farmers market, a commercial kitchen and native plant demonstration gardens were established on campus of Lincoln University of Missouri. The facilities brought more than 7,000 residents to the campus.

These facilities offered the opportunity to local producers to sell their products and provided a previously non-existing venue of fresh and healthy foods for neighboring communities. About 124 youth and 210 senior citizens have been trained on topics related to nutrition, health and gardening.

We have also created an urban agricultural and entrepreneurial center using sustainable practices to be adopted by other institutions in Missouri or beyond.

What research is needed?

Continuing evaluation of the impacts of gardening and other outdoor activities on the physical and mental health for underserved populations like veterans, especially disabled veterans, is still needed. This approach may be applicable to nursing homes or assisted living housing to improve the wellbeing of senior citizens.

Want to know more?

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Additional link can be found at <http://www.umes.edu/ard/Default.aspx?id=46285>