

# *"Discovering Collingswood"*

A Master Plan for the Borough of Collingswood

Conservation and Open Space Plan Element

JUNE 1999

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A Master Plan for the Borough of Collingswood

## Conservation and Open Space Plan Element

Prepared for:

Borough of Collingswood Planning Board as part of the Community's Master Plan Analysis

Prepared By:

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(The original of this report has been signed and sealed in accordance with the law)

PPK No. 2800.00

# **COLLINGSWOOD MASTER PLAN CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN ELEMENT**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A Conservation and Open Space Plan typically identifies not only what a community intends to conserve but also a methodology of how to accomplish the task. It identifies the necessary actions needed to maintain, or change, the character of existing open space. More importantly, however, it provides a community with suggestions for the utilization of open space both now and in the future.

Collingswood needs a realistic Conservation and Open Space Plan to enable it to pursue future funds for open space preservation, maintenance and improvements from State sources that are allocated to those counties and communities that have an overall plan. Collingswood, having set forth a hierarchy of functions extending from the improvement of Knight Park down to backyard habitat enhancement and shade tree conservation and restoration, may be able to secure funding for the projects mentioned in this report.

## **OPEN SPACE CHARACTERISTICS**

The Borough contains three distinct areas of open space; Cooper River Park, Knight Park, and Newton Lake Park. Knight Park is 61.44 acres in size and is currently used by numerous recreational organizations. It is a valuable asset to the community and holds enormous potential for future use. Cooper River Park and Newton Lake Park define the northern and southern edges of the Borough and are owned and managed by the Camden County Department of Parks and Recreation. These three parks together, approximately 117.29 acres, make up roughly 72% of the total open space in Collingswood. The remaining 28% consists of vacant and/or wooded lots randomly located throughout the Borough.

The layout of housing in Collingswood creates unique backyard "open spaces". When considered collectively, these spaces create linear habitat corridors throughout the Borough. These corridors can provide valuable natural habitat for urban wildlife, such as birds, squirrels, and racoons. Collectively, these spaces form minor greenbelts which are valuable additions to the habitat of many urban animals.

There are numerous streets in Collingswood that are lined with large trees. These trees were planted originally when the Town was built, and over the years, many of the trees, maples and oaks, have reached their maturity. Frequently these trees are impacted not only by disease and age, but also by unintentional improvement activities such as sidewalk replacement, curb and gutter replacement and street improvements.

The open space characteristics identified above have been used to produce a set of objectives. Accordingly, the Collingswood Conservation and Open Space plan is oriented towards achieving the following:

- Promote the preservation and enhancement of Knight Park as part of the overall network of the Borough's open space.
- Preserve and utilize the existing open spaces of Cooper River Park and Newton Lake Park for active as well as passive uses.
- Promote the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment of Collingswood by continuing to promote and endow shade tree and backyard habitat enhancements.
- Evaluate Mitigation Sites as a form of habitat variations as well as revenue sources.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Promote the Preservation and Enhancement of Knight Park.
  - Develop community gardens.
  - Create high quality wetlands for educational and mitigation purposes.
  - Dedicate parcels of land within Knight Park to grow and manage urban nurseries.
2. Preserve and Utilize the Existing Open Spaces of Cooper River Park and Newton Lake Park
3. Promote the Preservation and Enhancement of the Natural Environment of Collingswood
  - Creation of backyard habitats
  - Guarantee the future presence of Collingswood's beautiful shade trees.

**COLLINGSWOOD MASTER PLAN  
CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN ELEMENT**

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# COLLINGSWOOD MASTER PLAN CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN ELEMENT

## I. INTRODUCTION

A Conservation and Open Space Plan typically identifies not only what a community intends to conserve but also a methodology of how to accomplish the task. Today, more than ever, it is crucial to conserve what open space is left in a community as fully developed as Collingswood. Open space areas serve as a vital counterpoint to the everyday activities encountered in an urban setting. Having a place to carry out recreational activities and experience qualities of nature seldom found in the built environment are essential to maintaining a high quality of life.

A Conservation Plan identifies the necessary actions needed to maintain, or change, the character of existing open space. More importantly, however, it provides a community with suggestions for the utilization of open space both now and in the future. Before any recommendations can be made, the open space characteristics which make Collingswood unique need to be identified and their potential planned.

Another reason that a community should have a realistic Conservation and Open Space Plan is that future funds for open space preservation, maintenance and improvements filtering down from State sources will be allocated to those counties and communities that have an overall plan. Therefore, the Conservation and Open Space Plan of Collingswood will be part of a network of the regional planning process in which open space opportunities are identified. Collingswood, having set forth a hierarchy of functions extending from the improvement of Knight Park down to backyard habitat enhancement and shade tree conservation and restoration, may be able to secure funding for the projects mentioned in this report.

## II. OPEN SPACE CHARACTERISTICS

### A. COLLINGSWOOD'S PARKS

The Borough contains three distinct areas of open space; Cooper River Park, Knight Park, and Newton Lake Park. These three parks together, approximately 117.29 acres, make up roughly 72% of the total open space in Collingswood. The remaining 28% consists of vacant and/or wooded lots randomly located throughout the Borough. These parks not only provide open space access to virtually all residents, but hold the possibility of becoming educational centers as well.

Knight Park is one of the most important open space areas of the Borough. It is centrally located, 61.44 acres in size, and currently utilized by numerous

recreational organizations. It is a valuable asset to the community and holds enormous potential for future use. It affords an opportunity to enhance a diversity of habitats, provide a model for natural habitat education, and act as a potential source of revenue for the Borough if a mitigation program is developed.

Cooper River Park and Newton Lake Park define the northern and southern edges of the Borough. These parks are owned and managed by the Camden County Department of Parks and Recreation. They provide precious stream corridor habitat and act as a model for streambank remediation. Over one mile of streambank has already undergone this process.

#### B. OPEN SPACE "NODES"

Throughout the Borough, open space nodes occur where the Borough boundaries touch the greenbelts of Cooper River Park and Newton Creek. These nodes, although on County property, should be thought of as gateways between the County park system and the Borough. They become important links in the network of open space areas between the formal development of the Borough and its transition into the greenbelts of both park systems. Where these nodes occur, particularly where streets or pathways intersect with the parklands, there exist unique opportunities to create a more formalized landscape identifying these entry points.

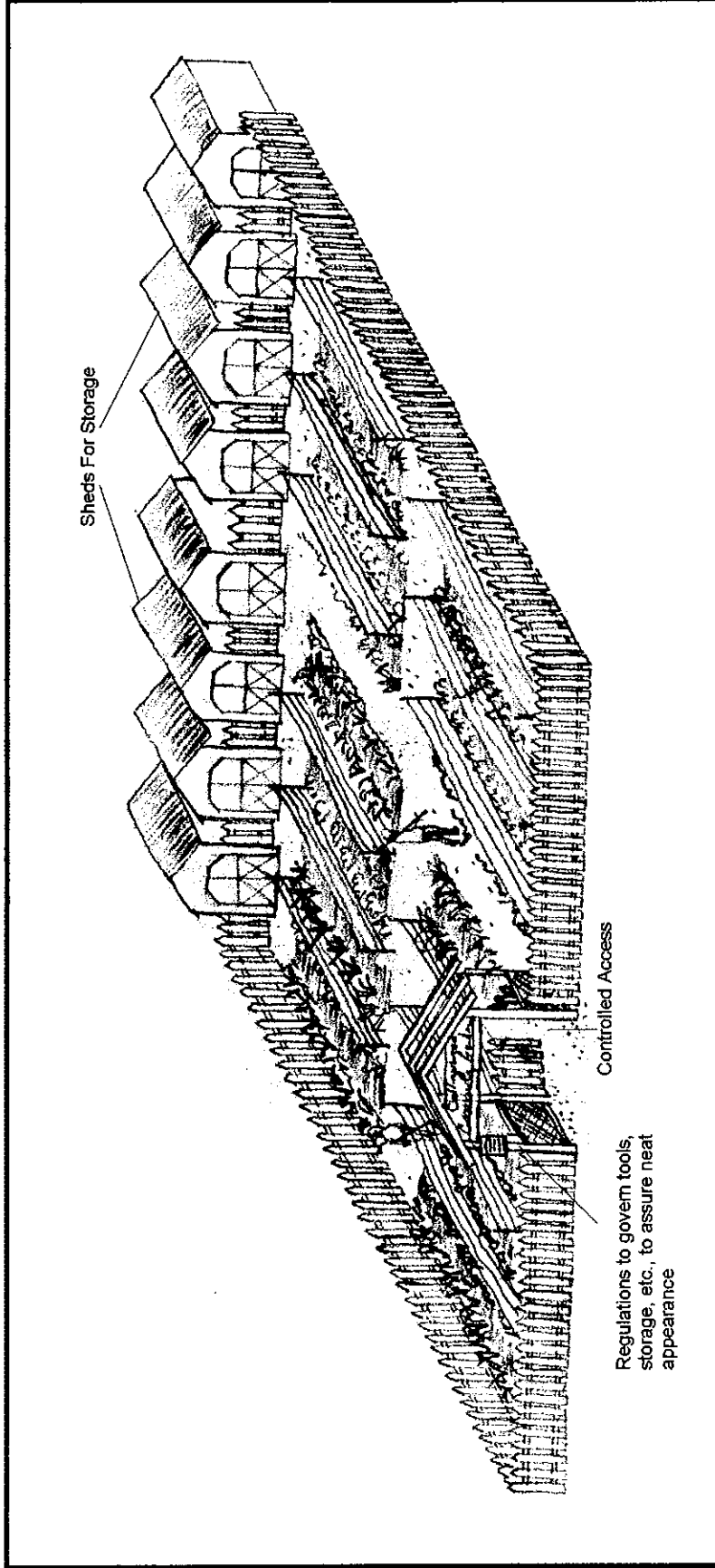
On the Cooper River Parkway, there are remnants of WPA or Conversation Corps efforts to establish this type of linkage. Using mica rock, these areas were formalized with steps and terraced approaches from the populated edges of the Borough to the greenbelt of the Cooper River Park. Currently, some of these areas require partial or full redesigns to create these open space nodes along these edge conditions.

#### C. COMMUNITY GARDENS

Community Gardens provide another opportunity to create an active use in what is otherwise passive open space. For example, in the areas of the park edges in the vicinity of Hillcrest Avenue and again along Woodlawn Terrace, there are excellent opportunities for community gardens along the flood plain of the river.

Community Gardens provide an excellent opportunity for people who do not have access to land, such as residents of high-density apartment projects, to participate in a community gardening project. Such projects provide community activities and provide a "people presence" in adjacent park areas. (See Figure CP-1 entitled, "Sample Community Garden".)

**FIGURE CP-1**  
**SAMPLE COMMUNITY GARDEN**



PREPARED BY: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., 1999



Similar projects may be conceived along the Newton Creek Park system in the proximity of the Parkview Apartments. (See Exhibit A entitled, "Community Gardening", Rutgers Cooperative Extension. New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.)

Community Gardens provide a participatory process by which adjacent high density residential facilities can create an active rather than a passive linkage to existing public park facilities. However, community gardens must only be initiated if they have active controls to regulate the type, structure and aesthetic appearance of such elements as sheds, fences, compost piles and the by-products of active gardening practices.

Communities have long since conquered these minor negatives by establishing regulatory mechanisms by which community gardens are leased for nominal rates to area residents. (See Exhibit B entitled "Starting an Urban Community Garden", Rutgers Cooperative Extension. New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.) Clearly, this element would have to be coordinated with the Camden County Parks Commission since the designated parks are under their jurisdiction.

#### D. BACKYARDS

The layout of housing in Collingswood creates unique backyard "open spaces". When considered collectively, these spaces create linear habitat corridors throughout the Borough. These corridors can provide valuable natural habitat for urban wildlife, such as birds, squirrels, and racoons. They also provide informal educational experiences for residents while helping to unify the efforts of neighbors to achieve a common goal. Collectively, these spaces form minor greenbelts which are valuable additions to the habitat of many urban animals.

#### E. SHADE TREE RESTORATION

There are numerous streets in Collingswood that are lined with large trees. These trees were planted originally when the Town was built, and over the years, many of the trees, maples and oaks, have reached their maturity. Frequently these trees are impacted not only by disease and age, but also by unintentional improvement activities such as sidewalk replacement, curb and gutter replacement and street improvements. The diameter of a tree's crown generally delineates the location of a critical portion of its root zone. This area is easily identified, and a substantial effort should be made to protect it. The roots in the area immediately surrounding the tree's trunk are often in the way of construction or renovation and are therefore susceptible to the digging and trenching activities that are part of normal street maintenance. When this happens, mature trees that are already stressed by age, may be

inadvertently killed or severely damaged. Therefore, an active program of inventorying trees, and coordinating such activities as sidewalk replacement, street improvements, utility improvements, and similar activities with the Shade Tree Commission should be mandatory.

The first line of defense in such activities is the education of those workers that have the responsibility of maintaining streets and utilities. Digging a 3 foot trench near a root ball of a mature tree can severely damage the tree by cutting directly into a portion of the root network. In some cases there is no alternative, in others, remedial measures can be initiated.

In any of these cases, there should be a standardized process by which the costs and benefits of such actions are weighed against the value of respective trees. This process starts with a basic tree inventory, cataloging every street tree in the Borough and establishing a regular program for replacement and care. Collingswood has the good fortune of having an active and dedicated Shade Tree Commission, which not only has a number of volunteers, but also has knowledgeable professionals.

As part of the shade tree obligation, the tree inventory is a vital component for developing a long-term strategy for replacement, maintenance and preservation of one of Collingswood's natural and visual amenities.

#### F. MITIGATION SITES

Mitigation sites in Knight Park and in other locations of the Borough along waters edges should be considered as a method for forming a variation in the natural habitat of the urban environment. Knight Park, which originally had a water feature that was much larger, could be utilized for such a facility. Depending upon the size of an "urban mitigation site" the Knight Park mitigation area could generate a potential revenue if mitigation rights were sold.

Although the concept is quite involved and there are many evaluations that must be conducted before it would be deemed eligible by the mitigation council, it is worthy of discussion and consideration as part of the overall Knight Park Plan.

#### G. SUMMARY

All of these open space characteristics identified above can be used to produce a set of objectives. Accordingly, the Collingswood Conservation and Open Space plan is oriented towards achieving the following:

1. Promote the preservation and enhancement of Knight Park as part of the overall network of the Borough's open space.

2. Preserve and utilize the existing open spaces of Cooper River Park and Newton Lake Park for active as well as passive uses.
3. Promote the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment of Collingswood by continuing to promote and endow shade tree and backyard habitat enhancements.
4. Evaluate Mitigation Sites as a form of habitat variations as well as revenue sources.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. PROMOTE THE PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF KNIGHT PARK.

It is recommended that several programs be developed to guide the use and protection of Knight Park. Finding a way to accommodate future activities without compromising current uses is essential to ensuring the park's continued success and popularity. The following are some suggested uses.

##### 1. Develop community gardens.

These areas could promote communal interaction in an environment where residents can grow and harvest their own vegetables and flowers. The edges of these gardens would make ideal places to situate play structures where children would always be close to adult supervision.

##### 2. Create high quality wetlands for educational and mitigation purposes.

These wetlands would not only help educate the public about the value of wetlands but serve as an area where developers could buy wetlands credits to mitigate the impacts of wetlands destruction in other places. Depending on the concept plan chosen for Knight Park, between 5 and 15 acres of habitat would serve as an interpretive learning area supporting natural habitat education programs. These programs could include:

- Wildlife programs, i.e., Bird, Frog, Turtle, or Insect
- Flora and fauna identification programs
- Ecology programs, i.e., The Form and Function of Wetlands
- Board "walks" with interpretive signage

##### 3. Dedicate parcels of land within Knight Park to grow and manage urban nurseries.

These nurseries could supply an approved palette of plant material to be used in the development of wildlife habitat areas or the replenishment of aging street trees. Having material grown within the Borough would allow Collingswood the luxury of addressing issues more quickly and completing them more cost efficiently than if they purchased material from outside sources.

**B. PRESERVE AND UTILIZE THE EXISTING OPEN SPACES OF COOPER RIVER PARK AND NEWTON LAKE PARK**

The majority of Cooper River Park is bound by the south bank of the Cooper River and Park Drive/South Cooper River Drive. The recreational uses of this area include boating, jogging, and the use of a pavilion area and ballfield. The condition of the Cooper River shoreline has been a concern for some time. Extensive stabilization projects (over 1 mile) have improved the quality of the banks while future projects promise to continue this trend. Some new fishing piers have been constructed although there are still piers in need of repair or replacement.

Nodal developments where the Cooper River Park System links with residential streets, provide the opportunity to enhance the original concept the WPA created many years ago. As noted previously, these linkages to the Cooper River Park System could be enhanced as nodal transition points that act as gateways to the park system from the residential areas in the Borough. Properly enhanced, they could represent a very attractive way to link the vast open spaces of the Cooper River Park System with the community that lies adjacent to it.

Another element to support the more intense utilization of the Cooper River Park System is the development of a formalized set of community gardens, particularly in the vicinity of the multi-family units that exist along the park's edges. This is a natural formula for drawing people from high-density apartment complexes into the park and represents an interactive process that can be easily accommodated with appropriate regulations, aesthetic controls and a simple formation of "apartment garden clubs". Obviously, the control of this rests with the Camden County Park Commission, however the coordination can be initiated by the Borough on behalf of its residents.

The majority of Newton Lake Park is bound by Newton Lake Drive to the North and Newton Lake itself to the South. As indicated in the Recreation Plan Element, the park area surrounding Newton Creek and Lake has received new amenities such as pathway lighting and new garden areas while facility improvements include the addition of a new sand volleyball court and existing playground renovations.

Cooper River Park and Newton Lake Park are very similar both physically and programmatically. Both of these parks are run by the Camden County Department of Parks and Recreation and serve as valuable wetland habitats and stream corridors. It is essential to realize the success of many potential programs hinges on the cooperative efforts of the Camden County Department of Parks and Recreation and the Borough of Collingswood.

C. PROMOTE THE PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF COLLINGSWOOD

Examples of the Borough's natural environment can be found in many different forms, whether it's a tree lined street or a nicely landscaped backyard. The following are possible projects that would help recognize and promote the preservation of the natural environment of Collingswood.

1. Creation of backyard habitats.

This program would promote the development of wildlife habitat in backyard areas. By growing and distributing a select palette of plant material for homeowners (see fig. CP-2 entitled "A Summary List of Plant Species to Attract Wildlife"), backyards could collectively create corridors of the necessary habitat for certain wildlife species. These habitats are created by:

- Unifying the efforts of neighborhood residents to begin creating contiguous habitat corridors.
- Creating a prototype by underwriting approximately 6-10 contiguous properties for habitat enhancement.
- Using this prototype as a model for the community to help gain support and funding.

Other techniques to employ would be to locate supplemental sources of food and other attractants. These may include bird feeders, bird baths, scattered seed sources, suet cages for winter feeding, and hummingbird feeders.

2. Guarantee the future presence of Collingswood's beautiful shade trees.

Detailed tree inventories initiated by the Shade Tree Commission on a regular basis not only provide a working catalog, but also a detailed list of the programs used to maintain existing shade trees and replace others. With a community the size of Collingswood, which has a large volume of older shade trees, such a program is vital. Fortunately, Collingswood has an active Shade Tree Commission with the professional expertise needed to continue this process. In recent years, funds were made available for urban shade tree plantings. A continued effort should be made to maintain a presence in the pipeline of such funding to ensure the continued presence of shade trees in Collingswood.

FIGURE CP-2

A SUMMARY OF PLANT SPECIES USED TO ATTRACT WILDLIFE

Plant Type	Latin Name	Common Name	Benefit
Shrub	Buddleia spp.	Butterfly Bushes	Attracts butterflies
Perennial	Asclepias spp.	Milkweed Species	Attracts butterflies
Perennial	Monarda didyma	Beebalm	Attracts butterflies
Shrub	Pyracantha coccinea	Firethorn	Cover and food
Shrub	Sambucus canadensis	American Elderberry	Cover and food for birds
Shrub	Rosa acicularis	American Rose	Cover and food
Perennial	Solidago spp.	Goldenrod Species	Attracts butterflies
Shrub	Azalea spp.	Azalea Species	Butterflies and birds
Shrub	Juniperus spp.	Juniper Species	Cover and food
Shrub	Juniperus virginiana	Red Cedar	Cover and food
Shrub	Cotoneaster spp.	Cotoneaster Species	Cover and food
Grass	Panicum virgatum	Switch grass	Cover
Grass	Andropogon spp.	Blue stem / broomsedge	Cover
Grass	Sorghastrum nutans	Indian Grass	Cover
Perennial	Bidens aristosa	Tickseed	Attracts butterflies
Tree	Syringa vulgaris	Common Lilac	Butterflies and birds
Annuals	Gaillardia spp.	Blanket flower	Attracts butterflies
Shrub	Cephalanthus occidentalis	Buttonbush	Cover and food
Shrub	Amelanchier canadensis	Shadblow Serviceberry	Cover and food for birds and butterflies
Perennial	Helianthus spp.	Sunflower Species	Food
Perennial	Salvia spp.	Sage Species	Attracts butterflies

Source: *The Backyard Naturalist*, by Craig Tufts, National Wildlife Federation, Washington D.C. 1993

***Creation of Backyard Habitats***

*This program would promote the development of wildlife habitat in backyard areas.*

*By growing and distributing selected palette of plant material for homeowners, backyards would begin working together to create corridors of necessary habitat for certain wildlife species.*

#### IV. SUMMARY

In review, the Borough of Collingswood has many unique opportunities to preserve and utilize its open spaces. The goals and objectives of the Conservation and Open Space Element of the Master Plan are geared specifically toward identifying and enhancing these opportunities. Cooper River Park, Knight Park, and Newton Lake Park, provide the Borough with a chance to develop creative and exciting programming. These elements represent the large scale objectives in Open Space and Conservation planning.

Identifying urban open space nodes will allow the Borough to begin developing "sanctuaries" where residents can go to escape from the daily burdens of everyday life. Using backyards to collectively develop habitat corridors will allow Collingswood to set an example of what can be achieved when the efforts of neighbors are unified. A comprehensive tree inventory may serve as a model for nearby communities hoping to achieve similar results. From these examples may arise funding and local support for such projects in the future. Getting people interested and excited about things going on in their community is essential to the success of any project or program.



**EXHIBIT A**

**"COMMUNITY GARDENING"**

**Rutgers Cooperative Extension. New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station**

# RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

NEW JERSEY AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

## Community Gardening

*I.C. Patel, Ph.D.*

*Department Head and Agricultural Agent*

*Essex County*

The importance of plants and gardens in our environment has gained increased attention in the past 30 years. People have formally recognized the socioeconomic value of establishing one's own garden. Community gardens are neighborhood open spaces managed by and for the members of the community. Most typically, the community garden is divided into individual plots and planted with vegetables by landless gardeners. Some families even share plots.

Community gardening is an educational process for changing the minds and actions of people in such ways that they "help themselves" attain economic and social well-being. Within the context of the National Initiative of "Improving Nutrition, Diet, and Health," community gardening can play an important role in producing fresh and nutritious food close to the home at a much reduced cost to the individuals and families.

Community gardening is a multivalued, multipurpose activity. It is a foundation for community development. It builds and rejuvenates neighborhoods and develops human capital. It contributes to community pride, leading to improved litter control. It provides a sense of self-pride and self-worth to people who produce food on their own and for themselves. Perhaps the most significant benefit of community gardening is providing a piece of land for people to call their own, at least for a season, for those who own no land.

Community gardening is a way for families and neighbors to grow together. Gardens provide

immediate health benefits of clean air, less noise, and reduced eye strain. Gardening is used for therapy and rehabilitation of individuals with physical, mental or social disabilities. Gardening helps keep people young and a part of the community.

Publicity is a big boost for a garden project. It helps improve public relations and builds support from other organizations, corporations, businesses, and government bodies. Community gardening makes good relations better. It brings people together in a context that enriches the group and leads to future positive interaction.

Community gardening helps lower the crime rate. With many gardens in the area and many neighbors spending time in gardens, the crime rate goes down.

The community gardens that are blooming in many cities of the United States are actually a new variation of an old idea. City people have created gardens before, but always as short-lived responses to emergencies. Wars and bad economic times have driven city residents to try growing their own food, but when the troubled years ended, their gardens were abandoned.

The first organized city gardening program was started by the City of Detroit in 1893, when the country was in an economic depression. Mayor Pingree offered city residents the chance to grow some of their own food on city-owned vacant lots. Omaha, Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago were among other cities that thought well

of Mayor Pingree's plan and started their own vacant lot gardening programs.

When the economy improved and people could again find work, they gave up their vacant lot gardens. Then with World War I in 1914 came food shortages. Everybody was encouraged by the government to plant a Liberty Garden. The U.S. School Garden Army was formed to get children interested in growing food for their families and at the same time help the war effort. Like the gardens planted during the 1893 emergency, Liberty Gardens died away soon after the war ended in 1918.

The 1930's were another big time for urban gardening. During those dreadful years of the Great Depression, millions of out-of-work and desperately poor people gardened to survive. They grew a limited range of basic foods--mostly potatoes and beans.

By the early 1940's, World War II emerged and city residents were asked to help the war effort. The National Victory Gardens were started to encourage people to plant gardens. Everyone gardened, in families and in communities. In 1944, 40 percent of the food grown in the United States came from Victory Gardens. In 1945, the

war ended, and fresh food from the country's farms was plentiful again. Food rationing ended, and once again, urban gardening died away.

In the 1970's, ecology and environment became important issues. People were concerned about the pollution of land, air, and water. Booming inflation caused food prices to soar. There were more people living in cities than ever before. Many of them came from overseas. They missed growing their own crops and were glad to find garden space, even in crowded cities. Some cities had a large number of vacant lots. The idea of gardens on public land wasn't completely new, and the Urban Gardening Program was started by the Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1977. The main purpose of the program is to develop and improve urban gardening to produce food and to promote good nutrition for low-income individuals and families. The program helps people create and develop community gardens in city vacant lots. The future holds a tremendous potential for community gardening.

For more information, contact the Rutgers Urban Gardening Office, 162 Washington Street, Newark, NJ 07102, or call 201-648-5958.

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**RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
N.J. AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION  
RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY  
NEW BRUNSWICK**

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**EXHIBIT B**

**"STARTING AN URBAN COMMUNITY GARDEN"**

**Rutgers Cooperative Extension. New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station**

# RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

NEW JERSEY AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

## Starting An Urban Community Garden

*I.C. Patel, Ph.D.*

*Department Head and Agricultural Agent  
Essex County*

Many citizens have backyard gardens and have been gardening for many years. These backyard or family gardens are managed by individual family members. Contrary to this, community gardens are neighborhood open spaces managed by and for the members of the community. The community gardeners are like a family. They need each other. They need to work on problems that might get in the way of their helping each other. But some of the hardest questions for community gardening have been about how to start a community garden, how to coordinate and work together to keep the garden growing and how to settle problems.

Organizing the gardeners is as important as choosing a site. The first step in starting a community garden is to bring together a group of interested people in a neighborhood. If there are not enough people to start with, distribute flyers around the community. Two or more persons are needed to start a community garden. Others will follow later.

The second step is to find a coordinator, or contact person. Establishing a community garden requires a leader who organizes and inspires the neighborhood to believe that together they really can create a garden. A good coordinator should have a working knowledge of vegetable gardening, a good relationship with the public, some communication skills and the ability to organize, handle and manage people.

The third step is to identify and select a garden site. Choosing the garden site is very important. The garden coordinator and other prospective gardeners should look for a private/public vacant lot nearby

where they would like to start a community garden. The site should be near a water supply (fire hydrant), should receive at least 4 to 6 hours of direct sunlight, although the more light the better, should be close enough to people who will be gardening, should be available for gardening for at least one year, should be well drained and free from rubble and bricks as much as possible, should be relatively free and away from possible sources of pollution, and should be visible to the neighbors. The more public a garden and closer it is to the people who work there, the better.

Then find out the owner of the lot and get permission to use it for gardening. A city may give the lot for gardening under some conditions. For example, the City of Newark gives permission at a token rent of \$1 per year to the owners of the property near the garden site.

After choosing the site and getting permission to use the lot for gardening, you are now ready for plot planning. The size of individual plots may vary depending on how many people want to participate and how much time they can spend for gardening. Usually a 25' x 25' plot can be conveniently managed by one person. Compost bins, water supply, garbage cans and other communal activities should be conveniently located to all gardeners. Walkways and pathways may vary from 2 to 4 feet, depending on the gardeners' convenience. The gardeners should determine the overall layout of the garden site in a thorough manner. They should discuss this among the group in a full meeting to make sure everyone is agreeable to everything that has been laid out.

Then take a soil sample and send it for a pH test to determine fertilizer requirements. Assign individual plots to members after filling out an enrollment form. Set up communal utilities, such as compost bins, garbage cans, water drums, tables, benches, etc. Decide and collect membership fees, if any, to meet the expenses of communal utilities, water hose, fencing, etc. Set up a committee to take care of general maintenance, such as weeding, general cleaning, filling water drums, trash removal, etc., on a rotation basis. Encourage youths and neighborhood residents to join the garden to mini-

mize vandalism. If needed, organize a community watch group among the gardeners.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension has free fact sheets on gardening as well as bulletins available for a small charge. Many counties conduct clinics and classes on gardening and many train Master Gardeners who can be called on for expertise. Some counties also publish gardening newsletters. Contact your County Cooperative Extension Office for information on the availability of these resources.

**RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
N.J. AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION  
RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY  
NEW BRUNSWICK**