Extension Demonstration Garden Success Story Template

**Issue**

Gardens are woven into our landscapes, neighborhoods, and communities. Gardening activities can range from planting trees and flowers to increase the curb appeal of a home to growing food in backyard gardens, community gardens, and even indoor or patio container gardens. Eighty percent of American households participated in a gardening project in 2022, with the average household spending $616 on lawn and gardening activities, according to the 2023 National Gardening Survey. The same study determined that the average garden yielded $600 worth of produce (roughly $1 per square foot). A market research report from IBISWorld reported that as of January 2023, 165,753 people work in the plant and flower growing industry. As the popularity of gardening continues to grow, gardeners seek out information to start, maintain and expand their gardens from several sources, including Cooperative Extension. It is helpful to see full-sized plants growing in the garden to understand how small plants in pots at the nursery will mature. Extension uses demonstration gardens to highlight effective design decisions and enhance experiential learning through hands-on opportunities in planting, fertilizing, watering, and pruning. Growing food insecurity and public demand for informational resources on gardening shows an increased need for high-quality, non-formal education that addresses everyday issues using plants. {Insert County Name} County has over {insert population} residents in roughly {Insert #} housing units. Residences span from small apartments to large rural lots, with people purchasing plants and maintaining landscapes at all levels.

**Response**

Cooperative Extension is a trusted source of research-based information developed by university scientists for the public. Extension uses demonstration gardens to engage clientele in learning gardening skills through hands-on, interactive experiences. Centrally located demonstration gardens are an educational resource for both experienced and new gardeners looking for ways to improve their landscapes while protecting the environment,

N.C. Cooperative Extension’s {Insert County Name} County Center uses demonstration gardens to educate members of the community. Plants are labeled for identification and paths are constructed through the gardens to allow visitors access to the plantings. Gardens are developed around an education theme. The demonstration garden has {insert number} of theme-based garden beds, providing targeted educational information on {insert theme names}. The garden is used to provide community educational programs, training for Extension Master Gardener volunteers, and self-paced learning opportunities guided by informational and tour brochures. The garden has signage identifying the plants and other information to enhance understanding and learning. Many signs have QR codes linking visitors to additional information on the plants they are viewing by visiting the [NC Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox](https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/). Over the course of the year the demonstration garden had approximately {enter number} visitors and was used to host {enter number} of educational programs.

**Results**

As a result of the demonstration garden {enter number} of community members increased their knowledge of gardening. In addition, {enter number} community members indicated they will implement one or more practices they learned while visiting the garden. In addition, trees, plants, and green spaces can sequester carbon, reduce summer temperatures, provide habitat for wildlife, protect pollinators, and mitigate the impacts of air pollution, stormwater runoff, and erosion. Gardening activities also improve individual and community health through physical activity, improved nutrition, and better community connections... Individuals who participate in gardening report healthier diets, increased self-esteem, increased physical activity, and reduced stress.