



# Making a Difference

2015 – 2016

## Horticulture Program Focus Team Food Gardens Promoting Resilience

### Grand Challenges

K-State Research and Extension: providing education you can trust to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

Rebecca McMahon  
Horticulture Agent  
316-660-0142  
rmcmahon@ksu.edu



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#### Situation

Gardeners in Kansas produce \$15 to 20 million worth of vegetables every year. Many new gardeners are seeking skills to improve their harvests. All Kansas gardeners struggle with growing produce because of the state's weather extremes and regular insect and disease challenges.

Enhancing the ability of Kansas citizens to produce their own fresh fruits and vegetables will improve health and the ability to make decisions about fresh produce. The use of extension resources enables individuals to contribute to gardening activities in their neighborhoods, deepening the connection to the community.

#### What We Did

Horticulture, agriculture, and family and consumer sciences agents around the state provided classes, technical assistance, and other programs to more than 1,000 home, community, and school gardeners to help them increase garden productivity. Educational opportunities were also provided through demonstration gardens, newsletters and columns, videos, and other media.

#### Outcomes

Of program participants surveyed, at least 80 percent planned to make a change in gardening techniques for the upcoming season. Many planned to take soil tests, use mulches for weed control, use staking and vertical gardening techniques, grow vegetables in containers, and water more efficiently.

Gardening program participants that had the opportunity to take food preservation or cooking classes further increased their consumption of produce.

Community and school gardens receiving assistance were better able to develop their leadership and volunteers, identify the best sites and layouts for their gardens, and improve garden productivity.

#### Success Story

Johnson County Extension collaborated with the county's Women Infant and Children (WIC) program to develop a communal garden. Harvested produce went to WIC families, who were encouraged to help tend the garden. Families that helped maintain the garden received larger portions. Evaluations showed that the families used the vegetables in meal planning, enabling them to stretch food budgets and improve nutrition. Last year, nearly 3,200 pounds were harvested. The estimated value of these fresh vegetables was \$8,000, which represents direct savings to the families.