



2025 Learning Garden Community Impact Report

The Learning Garden at Fayette County Family YMCA continues to flourish, engaging our community in meaningful ways and promoting health, sustainability, and education. Here's a snapshot of our incredible year:

Educational Programs

- **Gardening Classes:** 3 sessions with Fayette County Master Gardener's empowering participants with knowledge about sustainable gardening practices.
- **Cooking & Nutrition Classes:** 21 classes with OSU Extension Fayette held throughout the year, teaching participants how to prepare healthy meals using fresh ingredients.
- **Kids Cooking Camp:** 5 days of Kids Cooking Camp was a resounding success, empowering young chefs to develop essential kitchen skills and a lifelong passion for healthy eating through hands-on culinary exploration.
- **Total Participants:** 294 individuals actively engaged in gardening, cooking, and nutrition programs, fostering healthier lifestyles. 37 more participants than last year.
- **Camp Nutrition Programming:** Integrated into 10 weeks of summer camp, benefiting 50–60 campers weekly. Campers learned the value of fresh produce by harvesting and preparing meals, including salads, cooked mashed purple potatoes, fruit and veggie plates, Cucumbers and stir-fry dishes.

Harvest and Sustainability

- **Produce Harvested:**
 - 296 pounds of fresh produce was harvested. This is down from last year because we were battled rainy weather this spring and hot temperatures and drought this summer.
 - Used in YMCA programs and shared with community members to enhance food security.
- **Companion Planting:** We tried companion planting as a strategic practice of growing different crops in close proximity to create a diverse ecosystem that naturally improves soil health, deters pests, and maximizes garden space for a more productive harvest.
- **Fall Garden Planting:** Rainbow carrots, rutabaga, spinach, arugula, scarlet carrots, radishes and 2 types of cover crop were planted to extend the growing season.
- **Variety of Crops:** A total of 60 plant varieties cultivated, enriching our garden's biodiversity. 15 more plant varieties than last year. This is due to our new garden stackers and garden trellis arch which allowed us to plant vertically in our learning garden.

Community and Volunteerism

- **Volunteers:**
 - 13 adult garden volunteers contributed their time and expertise.
 - Countless children took on creative roles such as key keepers, entomologists, harvesters, and wagon drivers, making the garden a hub for community involvement and learning.
- **Donations:**
 - *OSU Extension - Fayette County & Master Gardeners:* Provided vital horticultural expertise, volunteer labor, and the educational foundation necessary for the project's success.

- *The Giving Garden*: Contributed a variety of plants and organic supplies, ensuring the garden was stocked with healthy plants.
- *Domtar*: Offered significant resources and physical labor, playing a key role in the heavy lifting and infrastructure of the site.
- *Elks 129*: Generously provided the monetary donations needed to replenish seeds that were stolen and a new garden bed that kept the program running smoothly.
- **Community Outreach:**
 - We were thrilled to be at the Fayette County Farmers Market, where we engage the next generation through our Garden Education for Kids program and hands-on crafts. Visitors can stop by our booth to enjoy fun giveaways and pick up informative literature that explains the garden's mission and the various ways you can support our growth.

Looking Ahead

The Learning Garden is more than a place to grow food; it is a space where community connections blossom, children develop lifelong skills, and healthy habits take root. With the continued support of partners, donors, and volunteers, we are poised to expand our impact in 2026.

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