

Story Title Migrant Education - Container Gardening, Companion and Square Foot Gardening, and Raised Bed Gardening; an Introduction and Review

Program Franklin - Ag & Natural Resources - Horticulture

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Is this related to an Equal Program/Employment Opportunity? Yes

Executive Summary Empowering displaced individuals and families with limited resources to produce high-quality food for their families can be a key component of self-sufficiency.

Issues/Needs and Audiences Migrants are individuals who are disconnected from home communities; absent from a permanent place of residence for the purpose of seeking or retaining temporary, often seasonal employment. Theirs is a somewhat nomadic lifestyle that follows the availability of work from location to location and that is often associated with poverty and ongoing economic insecurity. They tend to be individuals with limited skills and opportunities, who fill the needs of industries seeking temporary, low-cost labor. Seasonal employment of farm laborers by migrant workers is often an integral part of farming success in the North Country. Last year, a group of migrant workers and their families expressed an interest in obtaining and / or brushing up on their gardening skills for a variety of reasons, including higher quality, fresher vegetables to eat, saving money, and purposeful exercise. Their appeal was presented to Franklin County Extension by case worker representatives of the North Country Migrant Education Program, who came to Extension again this year, to ask if we could repeat last year's program, expanding on what was presented for those who were second-time participants, and provide follow-up assistance with pests and problems during the growing season.

Extension Responses Gardening can be intimidating to persons just getting started. Beginner's mistakes can be intensely disheartening. However, if taught do it correctly, the experience can be empowering. A productive beginner vegetable garden can be a key component of individual self-esteem and improved family self-sufficiency.

By once again providing an afternoon of research-based knowledge and hands-on skill-learning about using intensive gardening techniques (i.e. containers, raised beds, companion and succession planting) and by being available to provide follow-up assistance when problems occurred, Franklin County Extension was able to further the small-scale home vegetable gardening success of this group of migrant workers and their families.

Accomplishments and Impacts At the workshop, some of the participants expressed excitement about putting what they learned last year into practice again, this year. Some said that they didn't grow enough to actually get the kind of yield they were looking for and were planning to expand or increase the number of planters / beds they would be planting. Others reiterated that they'd grown enough to make homemade pickles and salsa. And there were those who were glad that they planted simple gardens, rather than overwhelming themselves on a first attempt. Some mentioned that they'd used seed planting charts provided to them last year to start seeds this year. 76 people of all ages, representing 22 families attended the workshop. I am told that almost all of the participating reported having successful small garden produce production, this year. Representatives of the North Country Migrant Education Program asked if we can make this an annual program.

Collaborators Assistance in the way of gardening materials (soil, seeds, starter plants, planters, small building materials) was provided by Bonesteel's Gardening Center in North Bangor.

**Special funding sources
(if any)**