



Community Garden

Despite some weather related challenges, the Murphysboro Community Garden thrives and gives.

Written by Sam Foskey

Due to a \$2500 Mission and Ministry grant we received from the Presbytery in 2017, plus the hard work of some dedicated volunteers, the dream of our church having a community garden has become a reality. In fact, it has produced delicious fresh vegetables for individuals and for the Murphysboro Food Pantry the last two summers and now we are well into our third summer growing season.

“We are also proud that our garden is organic and bee-friendly!”

This is what community garden coordinator Cynthia York-Camden has to say about the 2018 summer growing season: “Special thanks to everyone who has helped with the garden in any way the past two years. Last year we added 5 boxes to the 9 boxes from the previous year and now have 14 boxes available to plant. We had 3 new

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individuals or families planting their own vegetables in the garden last year. The Sunday school children also had a box and seemed to have fun caring for their vegetables. Dirt for the boxes was donated to the project as well as most of the plants and some planting supplies and box materials. A master gardener from our community came forward and donated plants and her expertise to the garden which was wonderful! We have 4 to 6 volunteers who are not actively working in the garden but are willing to deliver goods to the pantry as needed. This is much appreciated since most of us work during the day.

Despite some hot and overly wet weather we had good crops of cabbages, tomatoes, lettuce, beans, carrots, squash and more donated to the food pantry. The smaller cherry and grape tomatoes did much better than the large tomatoes. We donated an average of 4 to 7 pounds per week to the Food Pantry. The best part is how we all worked together to keep the garden going. Everyone took turns watering and we talked often to decide how to treat the garden for pests with organic treatments.”

As for this year, most of the gardeners from the last two years are back and have already finished planting their boxes (we now have 18 boxes). Some raise produce for their own family, others grow for the Food Pantry only. We mostly have the same crops as last year: tomatoes(which seem to grow really well!), lettuce, peppers, herbs, broccoli, cabbage, and so forth.

One thing we are pleased about is that the community is beginning to get involved. The local START organization, which serves area citizens with mental handicaps, has a box. A local Boy Scout troop helped put together some of

the boxes. And we received a challenge grant from Southern Illinois Healthcare. Moreover, we are glad to have two Master Gardeners who volunteer their consulting services.

We are also proud that our garden is organic and bee-friendly!

The Presbytery should also know that we still have a good portion of our grant funds left because we manage our money really well!