

**Solano Gardens Final Report
2018-2019
Year 1**

Project Summary

Project Opportunities:

- Seeking and finding those who are interested in gardening and in seeing a garden thrive.
- People like the idea of having a garden and feeding community members in need.
- Finding churches that have pantries onsite and have a network of community members who need food.
- Schools benefit from the garden because they are able to connect with education and hands-on opportunities for learning.
- Champions that become the trusted messenger of the project, and who are able to reach the target population much more than we ever could.

Lessons Learned:

- Maintenance of the garden is an impediment for a lot of people.
- Safety of the garden in areas that have a high rate of foot-traffic, where destruction of property has been an issue.
- At times, a successful installation will need materials that are beyond plants, such as raised beds that will aid in creating a more inclusive garden for people with disabilities.
- Rushing the installations:
 - o Initially there is a lot of leg work that needs to be done due to the potential mistrust from community members.
- Mistrust from community members about who you are, and what you are trying to accomplish is an initial barrier that must be overcome.
- Champions passionate about gardening and about the possibilities (beyond the produce) are key to a successful project.
- In order to ensure the longevity of the garden, it's important for project leads to have a regular check-in with the champions after the installation, as there might be certain challenges that the site champion will face but might be uncomfortable voicing to the landscape designer.
- There is very limited space in urban sites, as such project leads need to get creative in the way they approach the goal of installing gardens.

Project Highlights:

- Being able to support participants who are interested in having a garden and supporting this kind of work is of the utmost importance.
- Seeing different people working together towards a common goal and interacting with each other has also been one of the greatest highlights of this program. In the case of Armijo, it was great seeing how all classes worked together doing different tasks, and how this work made them think of the bigger picture of the world and the impact they are having.
- Teachers took the garden and organically created projects for their students to do, such as 1 minute videos of what the garden means to them.
- By revitalizing gardens, we offered custom support that expanded beyond the garden installation. For example, we were able to fix the irrigation issue at Emmanuel Temple.

Armijo High School



Project Activities: The Armijo High School garden installation had around 250 participants. These participants included English 10, English as a Second Language, IB Theory of Knowledge, Special Education and Art students. These numbers also include woodshop students who built raised beds for the garden, a few students who were passing by the garden on their way to their class and participated after school and Film and Video students who filmed parts of the installation, took pictures and created a video about the history of the garden. Other students also created one minute videos about what the garden meant to them. Over all the installation took about a week and a half.

In order to choose fruits and vegetables that were relevant to their cultural background, students were asked to create a design of the garden with a list of what they would like to see grow. These designs and lists were shared with us and when feasible served as a base for the garden design. As an added bonus, and in an effort to make this garden as sustainable as possible, rain barrels were installed, as well as a swale, both for diverting roof water.

Results and Impact: The installation of Jardín de la Esperanza, or Garden of Hope, was exciting because multiple opportunities to work with the students and teach them about the topic of permaculture and the overall design of the garden presented themselves. Several meetings were held with the garden champion and *The Get Fresh Crew*, a core group of students who spearheaded the outreach of other students. They took leadership roles and created flyers, reached out to the teacher in charge of morning announcements and gave us an insight into the kinds of challenges the garden would face.

IB's Theory of Knowledge class was also inspired to participate and created a Native American fruit tree guild based on food producing principals of Native Americans in Solano County. The garden in this case, served as a hands-on opportunity to further engage on the subject.

Our champion, was also connected with Public Health and has shared with her students, some material about healthy eating. She also continuously brainstorming ways of using the garden as an outdoor classroom. She is currently connecting with a tree service to get a log that can be transformed into outdoor sitting for her students. She is also actively looking for funding to purchase tools and other



materials she will need. She was awarded the 2019 Educational Plus Grant through the Solano Community Foundation.

Over the next five years this garden will create at least 713lbs of food which is about 594 meals.

Lessons Learned: School gardens need approval from several tiers of administration, including school the district and the principal, and as such is a long wait process. The approval to begin breaking ground on this garden took a couple months, and required several calls and emails from both Sustainable Solano staff and the garden champion. As such, a champion teacher who is passionate about gardening and about hands-on learning is a must. Those interested in having a garden would also benefit from creating a mock-up or a visual representation of what the garden can look like in order to entice administration with a vision of all the possibilities.



Vallejo Together Garden (Private Residence)



Project Activities: This installation attracted 25 participants, including members from all 3 Vallejo Together residences: Johanna's Home for Women, Steve and Kevin's Home for Men and Aaliyah's home for Families. Participants from St Patrick St Vincent High school and volunteers from Sustainable Solano network also joined us. The installation took two days: 1 for sheet mulching and tree planting and one for planting fruit trees, pollinator plants and vegetables.

In order to ensure that all produce would be utilized, there were three meetings in each one of the Vallejo Together homes and its members. During these meetings, the vision for the garden was shared, the installation dates and a little background on the project. During these meetings, they were also asked to share the kinds of fruits and vegetables they would want to see in the garden. This was done in an effort to grow culturally appropriate food and ensure that nothing would go to waste. Over all, there was excitement and interest in the project, and the houses that weren't able to host the garden because they were not an ideal site were disappointed.

Additionally, there were several meetings and phone calls with the house owner and the Executive Director of Vallejo Together, who had concerns about the project itself. There were also concerns about the contract from the home-owner that had to be answered before the project could move forward. After these concerns were answered, the process continued to move

smoothly. On the first installation day, a reporter showed up at the installation and an article was written about the collaboration between Sustainable Solano and Vallejo Together.

Results and Impact: In order to ensure the greatest impact, it was agreed since early on in the project that the produce was going to be shared among all three homes. Because members of Vallejo Together won't always be the same, the impact of this garden will go beyond the current residents.



On the installation date, there were also opportunities to socialize with everyone who attended. During this installation we had children from the Aaliyah's Family home who had a lot of fun touching dirt, digging holes, were mesmerized by worms and exactly asked when the veggies will start coming in.

Over the next five years this garden will create at least 586lbs of food which is about 488 meals.



Lessons Learned: Organizations such as Vallejo Together rent properties for their housing. As such, when working with them, homeowners need to be brought into the conversation immediately.

Residents at Vallejo Together are also not permanent, and finding a champion on this site was a different process than the other sites. As such, there was a need to have two-point people who understand the project at different stages of the project.

Maintenance was also a concern that was brought up. Individuals often voiced that they did not want to have to clean-up after a

garden at the end of their day.

Laurel Garden Apartment Complex

Project Activities: The installation at Laurel Gardens Apartment Complex (section 8) had 15 participants. Participants included the on-site case manager and activity coordinator from Caminar, a non-profit agency that works on supporting individuals and families to move towards resilience, wellness and independence. Attendees also included residents of the apartment complex and Sustainable Solano volunteer network. The installation took one day.



Prior to the installation, there were four meetings with residents, case management and building manager. In order to maximize the engagement on this site, we had several outreach activities, including an informal presentation on the project during their Christmas's Party, a guest speaker who talked about gardening in small spaces, meetings where we answered questions or concerns about the garden and meetings where we asked what kinds of fruits and vegetables they would like to plant and see in the garden. A big concern for them was the safety of the garden because the only site that worked was a high zone.

Results and Impact: As the meetings progressed people started to warm-up to the idea of a garden. While not all concerns about the safety of the garden disappeared,

they were content with moving forward. We were able to bypass concerns about the garden by explaining a little about permaculture principles and how the garden was based on an ecosystem that after a couple of years would be established and need less upkeep.

The result was a group of residents who worked together to install a garden. Participants from this installation also included children and their parents, creating a family activity. Additionally, there was an excitement about having the possibility of getting fresh produce for the monthly birthday celebrations that the activity coordinator spearheads.

This garden might also lead the way for future garden partnerships with Caminar, and their client network, who are traditionally underserved. **Over the next five years this garden will create at least 660lbs of food which is about 550 meals.**



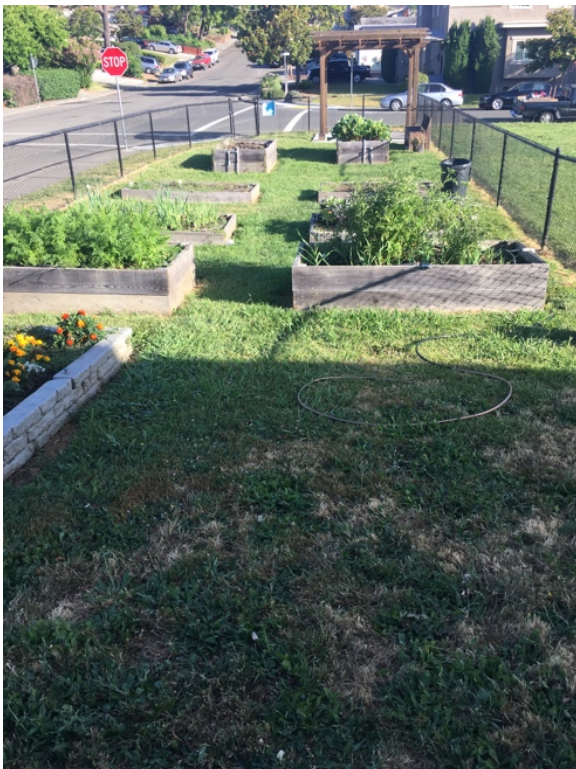
Lessons Learned: Gardens in apartment complexes are unique in different ways. For starters, interests need to be more than just a couple of people. As such, engagement from resident needs to be a priority and having someone from the administration interested in this project is also very important. Referring to cases, and potential designs from other apartment complexes that have successful gardens is also important.



Building managers and Maintenance should be included in conversations about the installation of the garden from the very start. Including them will ensure that any concerns they have about the garden can be answered in a timely manner. This rapid response will ensure that any contracts that need to be signed will be done in time. If any apprehension from administration about liability should arise, like the garden being a tripping hazard, it helps to walk the site with your garden designer and problem solve as the issues arise.

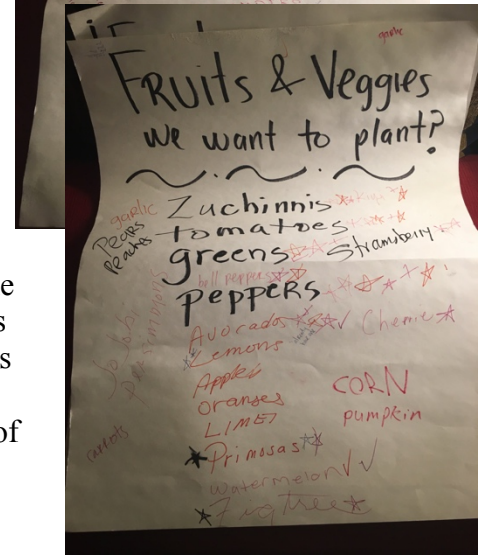
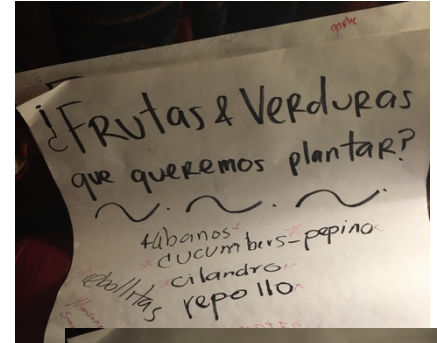
Lastly, residents of the apartment complex might be differently abled and might suffer from different mental and physical illnesses. If this is the case, its important to create an environment where they feel welcomed and are able to participate.

Emmanuel Temple Apostolic Church



Project Activities: For this installation there were a total of 25 participants. Installation participants included members from Emmanuel Temple, House of Genesis and community members. This site had 9 raised beds and a grassy area. This area already had two church congregation members who take care of the garden on a weekly basis. As part of the revitalization of the garden, we sheet-mulched the garden area in an effort to help decrease the amount of work that the garden caretakers will have to do, such as cutting grass). The irrigation valves found on site were leaking so the irrigation valve was replaced. Fruit trees were also added, vegetables vines that will climb the fence structure were planted in order to maximize food production in the site. Prior to installation two raised beds were emptied, so vegetables and fruit starters were planted in the raised beds.

In order to ensure people were engaged with the process and aware of the installation, community members were engaged several times during the bi-monthly fruits and veggies give away and the weekly food and clothing give away that the church has. Members of the congregation were also engaged before their weekly Sunday service and encouraged to ask questions or concerns after church. As part of the outreach, we collected ideas for fruits and vegetables that the community would like to see planted. Since a lot of people were Spanish speaking only, these lists were collected in English and Spanish.



Results and Impact: The produce grown in this garden is given away during the food drives and used for meals cooked for community members and the congregation. This church is also part of Emmanuel Arms Inc, the service arm of the church, and hosts a variety of

community events through the year, in an effort to build mutually beneficial relationships within the community in which it serves.

Over the next five years this garden will create at least 517 lbs of food which is about 476 meals.



Lessons Learned: Churches that have pantries onsite would benefit a lot from having also having a garden on site, ensuring that community members who participate in their food giveaways have access to fresh and organic produce. However, maintenance is one of the main concerns when it comes to converting an area

into a garden. When faced with this, it might be a good idea to find community member or group who would like to support with the maintenance, planting and harvesting of the garden. This could be an opportunity to find people who are like-minded or might be retired and need something to do.

Engaging members who are already involved in the church and asking them how you can best support a garden effort is important. In the case of the church, there were two community members who already taking care of the garden, so it was



imperative that we get to know them and see how we can make their job easier (in this case it was taking the grass out). An approach such as this, allows for them to keep ownership of the garden, and not think that it's our project.

Churches were also concerned with long and complex contractual agreements, because of that, those looking to work with a church should provide a more simplified version of this document.

Lastly, churches in urban settings might not have space to plant things and grow produce. Because of that, those wanting to put a garden in a church, should get creative and find different and creative ways of growing food, such as using already existing structures (like a fence) and grow produce vertically. Additionally, some times the most impact can occur when you can bring in new life to an existing garden that is struggling.