



We welcome donations,
in-kind gifts, and volunteers.



Cultivating a
**bounty
of good**
for your
community



Gardens offer countless benefits

- Improve quality of life
- Produce nutritious food
- Stimulate community development
- Create safe spaces
- Strengthen and beautify neighborhoods
- Promote social interaction
- Encourage self-reliance
- Build skills
- Reduce family food expenses
- Reduce crime
- Preserve green space, conserve resources
- Create income opportunities
- Help break down barriers of class, age, ethnicity, and education



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A program of United Methodist Ministries



ABOUT US

The Big Garden was founded in 2005 by the USDA's Community Food Project with a goal of creating 12 community gardens in three years. Currently, the Big Garden network has expanded to over 100 community gardens in urban and rural communities throughout Nebraska, Kansas, and Iowa.

Our main goal is to improve nutritional health and facilitate community development in the Omaha metro area by building the capacity of community organizations, congregations, and schools through the act of gardening.

One in six Americans don't have adequate access to food. One out of every five children in the U.S. are at risk of hunger. For African-American and Latino children, it's one in three. The Big Garden is proud to have launched community gardens at Omaha's three largest food pantries, increasing access to fresh produce.

Three-Year Garden Plan

Our three-year sustainability plan allows Big Garden staff, gardeners, and neighbors the time to build relationships, assess needs, learn new skills, and create an organizational structure for each Big Garden site.



YEAR ONE: We provide necessary labor and materials to establish the garden. Basic gardening and community engagement instruction is also offered.

YEAR TWO: The focus is on increasing community participation and leadership development, encouraging sites to seek broader participation from members of the community.

YEAR THREE: The goal becomes making each garden financially sustainable. After year three, sites officially graduate and require little or no financial or material support from us. However, we may continue to conduct community events and/or programming (such as nutrition, cooking, or gardening education) as part of an ongoing relationship. Gardens that are self-sustaining remain members of the Big Garden network and benefit from collaborative and shared resources that are coordinated by Big Garden staff. We also offer Reboot Grants to gardens for the purpose of rebuilding or expansion.

Education

We've developed a unique curriculum that teaches participants all the basics of growing, cooking, and preserving food.

It also introduces everything from soil science and composting to food systems and security. The content and activities are designed to be flexible and appropriate for participants of all ages. Garden sites in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metro area are eligible to have this programming administered weekly, without cost, for ten weeks throughout the growing season for three years. We are also available to host open gardening hours, in which our staff will be present to answer questions and provide technical assistance. We also host collaborative workshops at garden sites periodically throughout the year. Gardens outside of the Omaha area are offered the curriculum and lesson plans at no cost.



FAQs

I would like to volunteer with the Big Garden. What opportunities are available?

Our Big Garden Volunteer Corps may be for you! To become a volunteer, you must complete a half-day training session which will give you the tools, knowledge, and skills necessary to do the garden labor and become an advocate for local food. Completion of the training earns you a certificate of membership plus a t-shirt, mug, organic seeds, and seedlings. We schedule one week of garden builds in the spring and one week of garden clean-up in the fall for which we rely on the Volunteer Corps. There are also other special work projects throughout the year. If you're interested in working with a specific garden, contact that garden site leader or the sponsoring organization directly.



Am I, or is my organization, eligible for partnership with the Big Garden?

If you or your organization want to make a commitment to fighting hunger, then we'd love to work with you. In the past, we've worked with schools, churches, non-profits, childcare centers, for-profit businesses, food pantries, and individuals to launch community gardens. If we haven't worked with an organization like yours, give us a call, and we'll see if we can make something work.

I'm interested in starting a garden. When is the right time to contact you about my project?

We recruit new community partners each fall. All applications must be completed and received by Dec. 31 for funding or implementation the following spring. After that date, we are still open to new partnerships but not for the immediate growing season. Each



new garden requires up-front planning with the community and this process cannot be rushed.

How can I start a garden, or can my existing garden become a member of the Big Garden network?

New and existing partnerships are always welcomed. We have a brief application which can be acquired through our website or by contacting the our Program Director. The application process is the same for new and existing gardens. If your application is approved, we implement a three-year agreement that outlines the responsibilities of both parties. The agreement must be signed before funds can be spent or disbursed.

How does your funding process work?

To meet the diverse needs of communities and garden projects, funding is designed to be flexible. If you are outside of the Omaha area, we issue a check to the organization sponsoring the garden site. If you're inside the Omaha area, the Big Garden typically handles the funding, purchasing, and building process on your behalf.

