



# The Impact of Eating from the Garden on Students, Families and Communities

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### Introduction:

Eating from the Garden is a nutrition and gardening program. This curriculum increases knowledge on gardening methods, nutrition, food safety and the food cycle through 13 interactive lessons for youth that include recipes and games.

Concepts from the experiential learning theory were used to develop Eating from the Garden's evidence-based curriculum. This hands-on horticulture experience challenges students to think differently about their food and make more educated and healthy food choices in the future. The Eating from the Garden curriculum aligns with Missouri's Grade Level Expectations (GLE) for nutrition, math and science subject areas. The program benefits from collaboration among school



teachers, 4-H educators and volunteers, master gardeners and trained community volunteers.

### Program Objectives:

- Promote healthier food choices and physical activity
- Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables
- Increase gardening and food preparation knowledge and skills



### Results:

Ongoing evaluations occur to ensure the success of the program. Pre- and post-test evaluations monitor participants' understanding of key concepts. Parent questionnaires assess students' interest in gardening and fruit and vegetable consumption at home. Lastly, teacher and volunteer questionnaires evaluate changes seen in students and themselves. This monitoring system allows for adjustments that ensure the best learning environment for students.

Participating students indicated increased interest in nutrition and garden-related topics. Specifically, students:

- Enjoy growing fruits and vegetables and would like to grow them at home
- Eat vegetables that they had not before
- Eat more fruits and vegetables at home through discussion with and encouragement from parents
- Want to learn more about gardening and nutrition

In addition to increased student interest in nutrition and gardening, there were several unplanned results from this program. Along with learning gardening skills themselves, students brought those skills home to their families. Several young people reported that the handouts and curricula they brought home had inspired their parents to begin gardens at home. In one location, a group of parents even founded a family garden group.

Community members and local businesses donated seeds, compost, garden tools, lumber, transportation, money and time to help make this program a reality in Missouri. Additionally, numerous schools and non-profit organizations around the state collaborated with Eating From the Garden to extend the benefits of the program.

Donors	Collaborators
Orscheln's Farm and Home	University of Missouri Child Development Lab
Missouri Master Gardeners	University of Central Missouri Horticulture Department
Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities	Missouri Agribility
Fredrickson Farms	Russellville FFA Chapter
Home Depot	Parents As Teachers-
Lowe's	Andrew County Health Department
Baker's Creek Heirloom Seed Company	University of Missouri AgriAbility
Morgan County Seeds	
University of Missouri Horticulture Club	
Ozark Landscape Supply	
B & C Lumber	
Wolf Farms	
Numerous county extension councils	
Yardbirds Greenhouses and Landscaping	
Highland High School FFA	
Cahill Family Greenhouses	
Joyful Gardening Greenhouse	
Gainessville Building	
Whole Health	
Reynolds County Health Center	

Due in part to generous donations from area businesses and individuals, Eating From the Garden sites around the state produced over **\$20,000** worth of produce that included 32 varieties of vegetables and herbs in 2014.

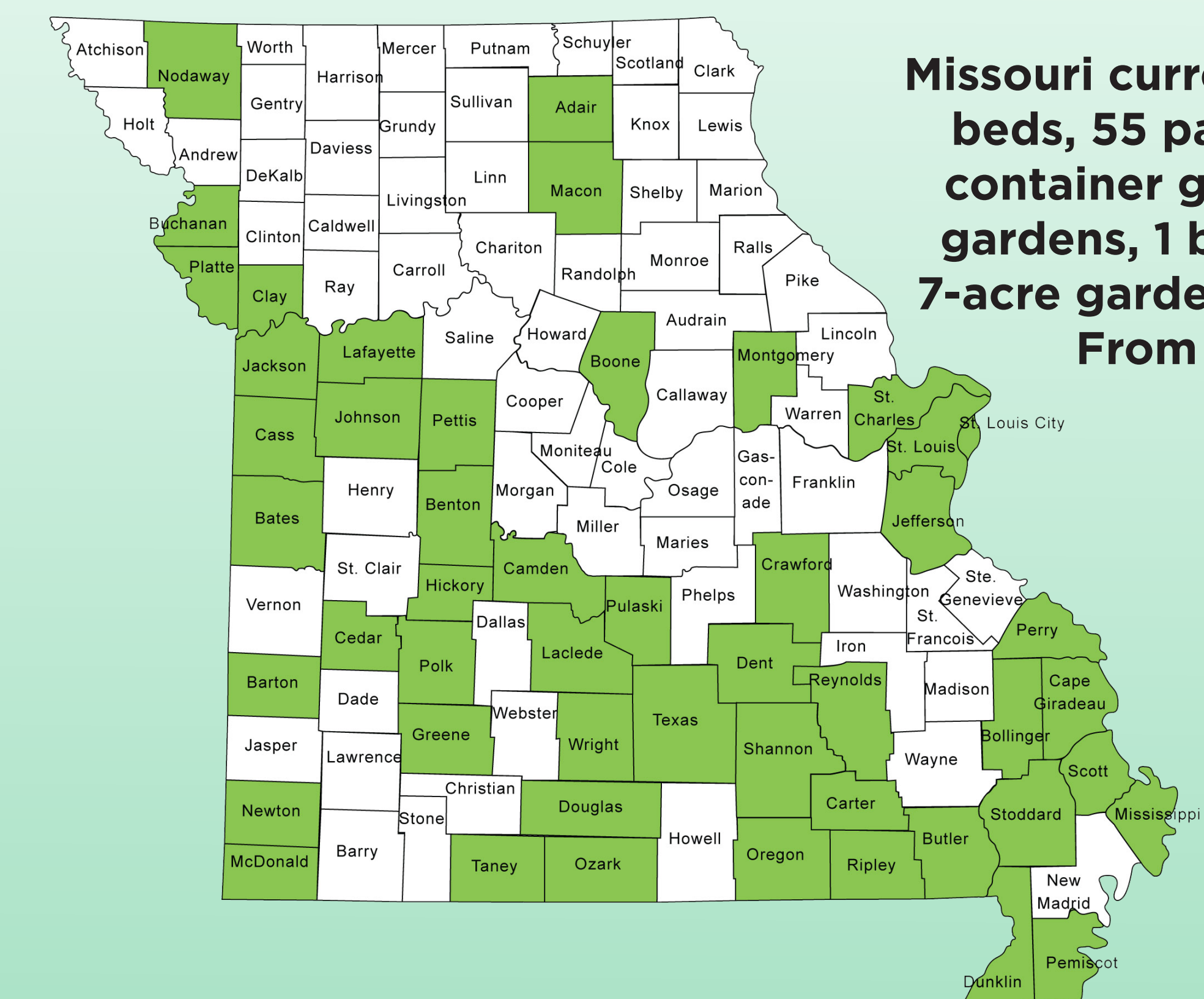
Participants at garden sites determined how excess produce would be distributed following food tastings and demonstrations.

### 2014 produce was donated to:

- Back to School Fairs
- School cafeterias
- Clients of health departments
- Students
- Families
- Nursing homes
- Senior centers
- Food Pantries
- Day care centers

### 2014 donations received:

- Soil
- Transportation
- Lumber
- Compost
- Tools
- Plants
- Seeds
- Labor
- Money



Missouri currently has 195 raised beds, 55 pallet gardens, 100 container gardens, 25 indoor gardens, 1 berm garden and 1 7-acre garden related to Eating From the Garden.

**"I loved what I saw of the program — kids loved the garden and eating from it. They thought of it as their garden."**  
- (classroom teacher)

### Conclusions and Implications (Abstract):

Through participation in the Eating from the Garden program, youth learned to give back to their communities in addition to working toward accomplishing program objectives. Missouri communities valued the program objectives and the concept of youth gardening, allowing community partnerships to develop to a greater extent than anticipated. Schools and community partners were generous in their support of this program, as evidenced by donations of time, goods, and services to support the program. Eating from the Garden participants often reciprocated out of the great pride in their efforts by donating produce from their gardens to other community programs.

**"I started having 1 to 2 cups of vegetables for breakfast every morning. I have lost 5 pounds."**  
- (participant)

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Nutrition and life skills for Missouri families

For more information about Eating From the Garden, go online to [missourifamilies.org/eatfromgarden/](http://missourifamilies.org/eatfromgarden/)

Funded in part by USDA SNAP. For more information, call MU Extension's Show Me Nutrition line at 1-888-515-0016. Running out of money for food? Contact your local food stamp office or go online to: [dss.mo.gov/fsd.fstamp/](http://dss.mo.gov/fsd.fstamp/)

