

Summit County Master Gardener Volunteer Program Biennial Theme 2023-24

Gardening for Well-being

Research supports that the presence of plants and caring for those plants improves our physical, mental, and social well-being.



Impact Highlights

Gardening for Well-being

1

Theme presentation created. *The Influence of Gardens on Our Well-Being* by Denise Gibson and Mindy Costigan-McCartney. The presentation was given multiple times to various audiences.

498

Engaged residents have learned about this topic through this presentation. Summit County Master Gardener (SCMG) is now partnering with **Cuyahoga Valley National Park** to provide gardening for wellness programs in their Nature Rx Program.

Growing Nutritious Food

600

Seed samples distributed to Summit County residents in the springs of 2023 & 2024.

127

Community and backyard gardeners gathered each year to network and learn at the Let's Get Growing Workshop & Expo.

Support for a variety of gardens that grow fruit & vegetables with youth and other vulnerable community members. One example is the **Haven of Rest** Garden Program.

Theme Outreach

16

Events attended in 2024, to distribute handouts about gardening for well-being, creating community buzz at Farmer's Markets and other community events.

Therapeutic Plants

27

Trees for families grieving a loss. The Tree of Life program, is a collaboration with **Hand 2 Hand Inc.**, **The Community Life Collaborative**, and the **Akron Parks Collaborative**.

“An involved SCMG said, “A woman recognized me in the community months after the ceremony. We talked, connected, bonded, and keep in touch now. We grieve and heal her loss together now. The bond and love of gardening strengthens the community, heals the hearts and minds as intended by nature, and opens doors for growth and progress.”

“One SCMG said, “I was personally impacted in listening to Denise and Mindy's presentation on gardening and well-being. It had been a particularly chaotic time for me, but, I left that presentation calm, hopeful, energized.”

“One SCMG said, “We can see the positive impact gardening has on the men from the residency program who participate in our project... Working with them is a joy - [its] something that makes me feel good about myself and the program.”

Tree of Life Tree Planting

Gardening, a Gift we Give

Gardening is a gift that Master Gardeners share with the community. One SCMG explained, “Sometimes the stress and fatigue of being a caregiver gets overwhelming and escaping into the garden is my only relief. I find when I'm working in the garden my worries and fatigue just evaporate for a while and I feel a sense of peace. At 75 years of age my volunteering is more limited now, but I hope I can share the beauty and joy of gardening when I can.”



Regina Therapeutic Horticulture



Gardening at our Core

A SCMG recounted how gardening is a joy that stays with a person when other things fall away. They stated, “As she aged, my mother's dementia robbed her of her ability to read, do needlework, cook or conduct a conversation. But her love of plants reasserted itself and brought her joy. She couldn't name it, but seeing a yellow rose or a ripe tomato on the vine made her smile and point. She couldn't express what she was seeing, but seeing stirred something in her memory that evoked a happier time. For a flash, it was possible for her children to remember her in the garden - her happy place -and see our mother again.”

General Summit County Master Gardener Program Stats 2023-2024

22

Interns graduated,
ready to support our
mission

70

Garden talks given
to the community

107

Garden questions
answered by Summit
County MGs

170

Garden-related books donated to
schools, libraries, and
youth-servings orgs

\$3500

Awarded to 3 students seeking
horticulture-related degrees with
Ohio Universities

summit.osu.edu

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