



2016 Project Spotlight

Health Benefits of Gardening

Athens Community Council on Aging Community Garden

Served by Athens-Carke County Extension and MGEVs

Learn

Serve

Grow

In 2005, the Athens Community Council on Aging (ACCA) began a small garden on UGA's campus to address seniors' access to healthy and affordable produce. The clients of ACCA helped tend to the garden and were able to collectively enjoy the bounty. In 2009, ACCA partnered with Professor David Berle, UGA Department of Horticulture, to begin plans for two community gardens on-site. In late 2011, two Master Gardener Extension Volunteers (MGEVs) became involved in the ongoing management of the garden. In 2012, the gardens were combined into one. Now, as part of the UGArdens network, the ACCA runs a community garden with the help of MGEVs, UGA, and community volunteers. Since 2012, two more MGEVs and several community volunteers have joined the garden team. Other MGEVs join in with volunteering for work days and projects.

With forty-seven raised beds and six in-ground plots, the ACCA Garden provides a location to teach volunteers, staff, and clients to not use harsh chemicals and pesticides. MGEVs from Athens-Clarke and surrounding counties provide education to clients about sustainable gardening practices. All produce from the garden is donated to the Senior Hunger Coalition, which addresses food insecurity and hunger among seniors. Through their volunteer work at this garden, MGEVs share and gain the skills needed in managing community gardens and also gain a strong understanding of the priority to grow healthy, nutritious foods for seniors.

This area provides a teaching environment to share knowledge of human health, well-being, healthy eating, and a high quality of life. In 2017,

Athens-Clarke Extension and MGEVs started partnering with UGA's Food and Nutrition Department to create more opportunities for clients to learn about food and nutrition. MGEVs also partner with horticultural students at UGA for garden work days. In this capacity, beginning horticulture students are able to learn alongside Master Gardeners in an outdoor classroom while learning about senior hunger.

Through this project, MGEVs are able to fulfill their mission of sharing gardening knowledge with the community. Master Gardeners share their knowledge and expertise by leading UGA students and volunteer groups during work days, training new volunteers on garden practices, and identifying and planning for improvements and needs. In addition, the ACCA garden serves as a space where MGEVs can experiment with new gardening ideas or projects, such as growing crops out of straw bales, crop rotations, companion planting, and pollination. The ACCA Garden continues to be a great connector within the Senior Hunger Coalition. By providing community volunteers with an opportunity to learn about the obstacles local seniors face in accessing healthy, nutritious foods. By having a community garden on site, seniors are able to obtain access to local, healthy foods while also having the physical space to connect to foods that are in season.

2016 Project Contributions:

509 MGEV Volunteer Hours
200+ Student & Community Volunteer Hours

Special thanks to MGEVs working hard to make this project successful!



The Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program prepares volunteers to support UGA Cooperative Extension in delivering gardening information to Georgia's citizens and communities. Since 1979, Master Gardeners and UGA Extension have helped Georgians become healthier, more productive, financially independent and environmentally responsible.