



Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Sun Prairie, WI

Community Garden Report

The GSEC Community Garden closed out its fourth growing season with a successful harvest, including 141 pounds of produce donated to the Sunshine Place Emergency Food Pantry, and 75% of our renters already requesting to return next season! We had increased interest through word of mouth and listing the garden with two Community Garden organizations. The gardens opened on the May 15 weekend, and we delayed our closing date to October 22 because the warm weather extended our harvests. About 60% of the renters were members of GSEC and 40% from the greater Sun Prairie community. The garden has eighteen raised wood framed beds: 8 small (4'x8') and 10 large (6'x12'). One small bed is used as the "church" donation bed, although many individuals also donated to the Sunshine Pantry from their own beds.

Finances...The rental fees are \$15 for a small bed and \$30 for a large bed. Costs are low as this is a community outreach project. There is a waiver process for people who cannot afford the fee. There have also been gift contributions to allow for waived fees. Rental fees do not cover the total costs of the program which includes "topping off" the garden beds with soil, refreshing the mulched paths, and replacing the occasional tools, hoses, cleaning supplies, paper/printing/ mailing, and advertising: over \$600. We are blessed in our relationship with Circle B Landscaping who continues to provide us a "community garden" discount for soil and mulch.

Planning... for the 2021 season started in March. Note: most CG's start registration in February! We had a successful drive through registration offering one weekend day and one weeknight. The remainder of planning and meeting was managed by phone and email, but this was not ideal.

Looking ahead to next season, we need more Community Garden Leadership Team members. No gardening experience or physical strength needed for planning, registration, communication, and record keeping positions. We need "strong backs and legs" to move equipment, lay mulch, and refresh garden bed soil in May, help with weed control in paths in summer, and take the last debris to the recycle center and put away equipment in October.

This was the first year that all beds were completely cleaned out by the renters BEFORE we had freezing temperatures! Thanks to: Rev Bill Dunlop and JP Buanton for hauling the very last of the debris bags to the recycle center in fall; Dunlops, Weiroughs, Smallwoods, and Sue Aiello for getting mulch and soil in place in Spring; Weiroughs, Joyce Bower, many of our renters who treated and pulled weeds from our paths during summer; Suzanne Perkins, Amy Dunlop, and Jen Stempski for planting and maintaining the church bed; Carol and Bruce Wagner who kept "watchful eyes on the gardens" whenever they were on church property mowing!

We joined the national church's Good News Gardens program [Good News Gardens – The Episcopal Church](#). This also enabled us to use their "Good News Gardens" logo to advertise and better identify GSEC when we donated to the Food Pantry. Good Shepherd's Community Garden story will be posted to the Good News Gardens Face Book Page in the near future. Please continue to pray for our Community Gardens and all of God's Creation.

Growing forward...There has been a renewed interest in vegetable gardening since the start of the pandemic. This was the first year that we had enough interest to start a wait list! If there is significant interest or a waitlist for the 2022 season, or if there is a desire for the Parrish to donate more produce to the Sunshine Food Pantry, I would suggest expanding by purchasing and placing large “grow bags” to grow additional produce rather than expanding the gardens further. At this point, we do not have a large enough Garden Leadership Team to maintain or administer a larger garden