



## THE *Heart* OF THE TRIANGLE

Sharing the vision and supporting the mission of the Triangle area non-profit community.

# Striving to Sustain and Increase Gardening Efforts throughout North Carolina

by Judy Liu, MPH

**T**he North Carolina Community Garden Partners (NCCGP) is a volunteer-based grassroots non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the quantity, quality and sustainability of community gardens across North Carolina.

What are community gardens? A community garden is any piece of land gardened by a group of people. Gardens come in all sizes and shapes, and are filled with a glorious diversity of both crops and gardeners. Community gardens are the new village green—creating healthier communities by increasing community involvement and interaction between neighbors, providing fresh fruits and vegetables, and increasing opportunities for physical activity. Gardens can save money, increase green space, serve as unique hands-on educational centers and much more. Gardens increase local food quantity, quality and access.

Founded in 2008, NCCGP grew out of statewide discussions about how to move community gardening forward across North Carolina. NCCGP has cultivated a network of gardeners and supporters who share support, information, and experience with new gardens and with each other. Through their GROW (Gardeners Recreating Our World) Program, they've introduced training in best practices to community gardens in all regions of our state. Their annual statewide meeting

brings together gardeners from across North Carolina and the Southeast for learning and networking. They partner with sister community gardening organizations, notably The American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) and the NC Cooperative Extension.

NCCGP's mission is to increase the quantity, quality, and sustainability of community gardens across North Carolina. NCCGP works to ensure organizational sustainability and leadership that is representative of the cultural, economic and geographic diversity in NC and responsive to organizational challenges. They support efforts to develop and sustain community garden initiatives and assist target audiences in overcoming barriers. They also foster a network of diverse people knowledgeable about and engaged in community gardens and related issues across the state. They organize forums to ensure the exchange of knowledge and resources between and among members of their target audiences and other stakeholders.

NCCGP believes that everyone should have access to enough healthful, affordable, and culturally appropriate food to nourish them and their families. They aim to be inclusive of all people who have a stake in community gardens. NCCGP believes that growing food is best done in a manner that is environmentally-friendly and that respects and supports natural ecological processes.

Joining NCCGP is simple and easy; all individual and garden memberships are free! NCCGP is a nonprofit

membership organization. Their members truly are partners who play a central and empowered role in creating and supporting NCCGP programs, and in keeping the organization strong. By joining, you do more than support the cause—you become part of a strong statewide network. Members also gain access to unique benefits, including:

- Discounts on registration fees for NCCGP events including our annual conference as well as workshops and other activities throughout the year.
- Letters of support for grant applications or other funding opportunities, and to support gardens under threat, from the NCCGP Board of Directors. There is power in numbers. Support each other!
- A free subscription to their e-newsletter, *The Garden Beet*, featuring funding information, a gardening calendar, upcoming educational opportunities, prizes, book reviews, and more. Your garden may even be highlighted in the "Garden Spotlight" feature.
- Join the 150+ other community gardens in the NC Garden Directory.
- Voting privileges for the annual election of the Board of Directors.
- The opportunity to join a NCCGP committee and take part in other volunteer service opportunities, where you can join forces and make friends with a diverse and fun group of fellow garden supporters.

*For information about joining or volunteering, please visit <http://www.nccgp.org/> or contact Cade Underwood at [cade.underwood@nccgp.org](mailto:cade.underwood@nccgp.org) or call 828-808-0558.*

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