Defining Community Gardening:

Why people garden and how to get more involved

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INTRODUCTION

Community gardening is a form of urban agriculture that allows for more involved and healthy communities. This capstone aims to identify and address the challenges to community gardening. Notably those challenges are that of providing the community gardening service to a wider audience and making sure established gardens are successful. Much of the data collected came from the members and staff of the Tucson Community Gardens (CGT).

DATA COLLECTION

Through observation and the interview with the garden manager, CGT seems to be predominantly populated by the elderly and retired population. The purpose that many of these people have for gardening also is focused on the recreational aspects of gardening over the practical. Community gardening alone cannot combat the societal issues around obesity and solve issues with food deserts. Instead, gardening should serve as a framework to establish a community that is more aware of the health of their community to solve issues like obesity and food deserts.

METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted with members and staff of the Tucson Community Gardens. Interviews with staff and analysis of the gardeners aims to shine light on the context of community gardening and the challenges present there. A case study was also conducted on a community garden with CGT in attempt to understand those limitations in real life and how to tackle them.

Here is a picture of the Blue Moon garden with CGT. The garden possesses many amenities and has much land to expand, but not all the plots are filled. The apartment behind the garden is public housing for elderly and disabled people. With a large population of people fitting the criteria to be gardeners, community outreach with site coordinators is needed, likely through public events and raising awareness. *Photo taken by John Chandler*

This diagram shows how CGT is managed and the relationship between the community members and the people working with community gardens. This shows that community gardening is a structure that requires community involvement for the benefit of those that live there.

RESULTS

Community gardening is heavily reliant on the gardeners that pay to use their plots. In order to recruit more gardeners, active site coordinators work as connectors between the community and the garden. This can be done with community events and establishing gardens in public spaces, like a school or park. Areas where there are less community ties, particularly where poverty and crime are prevalent pose a challenge due to individuals lacking the time and money to garden.

CONCLUSION

There exists better established and complete ways of providing the same quality of produce as community gardening, notably that of farmers markets and CSAs. What is important to community gardening is education through educating communities about healthier foods. Getting less connected communities involved is more difficult as the limitations present in a community garden of time and money may be harder to get around for working class people. That said, a comprehensive strategy to combat the challenges of community gardening remains inconclusive.