

CAROLINA COMMUNITY GARDEN

The Carolina Community Garden in the heart of the UNC campus offers a bountiful harvest of fruits and vegetables year round. An engagement program of the North Carolina Botanical Garden, it provides fresh, sustainably grown produce to university housekeepers.

Staffed by NCBG employees, including a permanent manager, and by staff, students and local volunteers, the garden helps develop organic gardening skills while offering a space for outdoor learning and other academic pursuits. At the height of the growing season, workers harvest crops three times a week and overall distribute 5,000 pounds of produce annually.

At the garden's entrance, fig and persimmon trees hover over blueberry beds bordering the central planting area. Beginning in early spring, peas, lettuces and other greens are harvested, followed later by tomatoes, peppers and eggplant. In midsummer, tidy raised beds offer forth bush beans, eggplant, cucumbers, okra, peppers, Japanese eggplant and herbs. In the autumn, squash and root vegetables flourish. Asian crops such as yard-long beans, edible gourds, Chinese cabbage and lemongrass are grown and harvested for the housekeeping staff members, many of whom are refugees from Myanmar.

UNC gardeners practice integrative pest management, emphasizing natural rather than chemical pest prevention. Clusters of Echinacea plants and zinnias amid the vegetables discourage attacking bugs. Unique Beetle Banks, low-lying berms of switchgrass and other native grasses that shelter predatory beetles, help to keep pests at bay. Beyond the banks, rows of native plants offer a welcome habitat for birds and insects. Bee balm, black-eyed Susans, blue-eyed grass, cardinal flower and Joe Pye weed bloom amid a rain garden providing drainage during heavy storms.

A model of sustainable practices, the garden features an extensive drip irrigation system, a 10-bin compost operation, a solar-powered greenhouse, beehives for pollination and natural methods of pest prevention. Throughout the year, gardeners experiment with new plants and ways of growing them. That learning

experience provides a hands-on education for student volunteers, and a benefit to the community as a whole.

Look for:

- The rain garden
- The beetle banks
- Asian garden crops

SUMMARY

The Carolina Community Garden lies in the heart of the UNC campus, offering a year-round harvest of organic fruits and vegetables. Located next to the American Indian Cultural Garden, and staffed by students, employees and volunteers, the garden produces enough crops to be harvested three times a week during the growing season. An engagement program of the North Carolina Botanical Garden, the community site helps students and volunteers learn organic gardening skills and enjoy outdoor education. Sustainable practices include the use of an extensive drip irrigation system, a ten bin compost operation, a solar-powered greenhouse and natural rather than chemical pest prevention techniques.