



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Announces Six ‘People’s Gardens’ in West Virginia *Supports Agriculture Secretary Vilsack’s Challenge to Build ‘People’s Gardens at every USDA Facility*

Morgantown, WV – June 7, 2010 – Today, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that “People’s Gardens” now exist in all 50 states, two U.S. territories, and three foreign countries. To date, there are over 400 ‘People’s Gardens’ across the country. This is a significant milestone in ‘The People’s Garden’ initiative since Secretary Vilsack broke ground one year ago at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC.

In West Virginia, six ‘People’s Gardens’ have been confirmed. Those gardens are located in: Bartow, Pocahontas County; Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County; McMechen, Marshall County; Morgantown, Monongalia County; Richwood, Nicholas County; and Ripley, Jackson County.

“Last year, I decided to visibly remind folks that gardening is at the front and center of what we do here at USDA,” said Secretary Vilsack. “To have ‘People’s Garden’ in every state is a tremendous achievement and just one example of the dedication and commitment of all USDA employees in collaboration with their communities. But the ideas behind the People’s Garden were not born here in Washington – and we will continue to ensure that they are adopted and improved upon in communities across the country.”

To meet this goal, the Secretary challenged all employees to create a ‘People’s Garden’ at their USDA office or in their local communities. USDA is partnering with hundreds of organizations at the local level and most of these partners are recipients of the food grown in the gardens. Last year, with only 124 ‘People’s Gardens’, USDA donated over 34,000 pounds of produce to local charities.

USDA agencies are involved in building these gardens, many of which are maintained through the collaboration of multiple agencies with their communities. The locations of these numerous ‘People’s Gardens’ can be viewed on-line at www.pubinfo.usda.gov/garden via a public map. Information about each garden also can be viewed by clicking on the map markers.

USDA is also collaborating with First Lady Michelle Obama to emphasize the link between gardening and healthy lifestyles, and a key component is educating our youth through the use of gardens. The White House Kitchen Garden and the ‘People’s Gardens’ are an important tool for teaching our children about healthy eating and active lifestyles. These gardens

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also emphasize community service and civic involvement by donating fresh, healthy and locally grown vegetables to local food pantries.

Last year, the ‘People’s Garden’ in Washington, D.C. was unveiled and opened to the public as a living exhibit of what USDA does every day. Today, ‘People’s Gardens’ around the country are demonstrating the connections we can make between providing access to nutritious food, while protecting the landscape where that food is grown, serving our communities, and helping those in need. These gardens provide educational opportunities for children and adults about nutrition and sustainability as well as introduce younger generations to agriculture and fresh foods.

Each ‘People’s Garden’ can vary in size and type, but all have a common purpose – to help the community they are within and the environment. A ‘People’s Garden’ must include the following three components:

1. **Benefit your community:** Gardens benefit communities in many different ways. They can create spaces for leisure or recreation that the public can use, provide a harvest to a local food bank or shelter, be a wildlife friendly landscape or be a rain garden to absorb storm water run-off and protect the soil from erosion.
2. **Be collaborative:** The garden must be a collaborative effort between other volunteers, neighbors or organizations within your community. Local partnerships could carry out the mission of a People’s Garden.
3. **Incorporate sustainable practices:** the garden should include gardening practices that nurture, maintain and protect the environment such as:
 - Capturing rainwater in rain barrels
 - Composting and mulching
 - Planting native species
 - Encouraging beneficial insects that feed on destructive pests

More information about ‘The People’s Garden’ initiative can be found at www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden or follow the initiative for real-time updates at twitter.com/peoplesgarden. Information also is available on the USDA Facebook page at www.facebook.com/USDA and photos are available at www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov. Blogs from the gardeners involved in these “People’s Gardens” are featured each Friday at www.usda.gov/blog/usda.

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