

Three Ways to Expand Food Gardening
Rick Abrahamson
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During these tough economic times families are looking for ways to augment their income. One way they can do this is to raise food for themselves and others. Over the past few years, interest in food gardening has been on the increase. Food gardening is becoming more important in rural areas as well as in urban centers. Families are producing more food for themselves and if done right they find themselves with surplus produce and are able to sell some to generate additional income.

The art of the family garden has been lost. Many urban children have no idea where food comes from. Teaching children about gardening stimulates interest in the entire family starting a domino effect encouraging them to learn more about gardening. Families learn that gardening can help with family finances, be a great way to come closer together, and for family members to become more physically fit. Many families desire to do more together and gardening is a wonderful way to do that. Teaching family members basic horticultural techniques and practices enables them to be as successful as possible.

Families that do not have land for a garden have found that community gardens are an excellent way to reap the benefits of gardening. According to the American Community Garden Association, a community garden can be defined as “any piece of land gardened by a group of people”. These gardens can be rental garden plots, a garden at a school, a neighborhood garden, or even a garden at a hospital. Many community gardens incorporate educational components into the gardening experience. Teaching people how to garden gives them the ability to grow food and supply others who cannot grow their own food.

Gardening is not for everyone. Some people are too busy or may not have any interest at all. By supporting local growers these folks can have the benefits of healthy fresh food. Commercial gardeners have several options to market produce. Growers offer pick your own produce, truck farms, farmer’s markets, home grown in the grocery store, and community supported agriculture just to mention a few of these options. Teaching people that food grown locally is better for you and tastes better will support these growers. By supporting local growers the local economy is stimulated and the benefits of this come back to the customers of these businesses.

By spreading the word about home grown and locally grown food the battle against the high cost of living can be won. Members of the community will start to feel better as they eat better, engage in more physical activity, have more money in their pocket, and spend more time as a family. Supporting your local families and growers will have a huge impact on everyone’s quality of life in the community.

For additional information on growing your own food or how to support local growers give me a call at 605-394-2188 or email me at ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu. Be sure to visit us online at <http://www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html>.