

Lewes Community Garden Begins 6th Year

It all began with a group of ardent organic gardeners discussing the idea of creating a community garden that would provide a space to follow organic gardening practices and to share the harvest with the community. After several years of planning, this visionary group was able to secure a lease on a one-acre parcel of land from the City of Lewes in the Great Marsh Park.

Volunteers were recruited, the land was prepared, and twenty raised beds were built in June 2019. The garden persevered through the Covid pandemic, built a deer fence around the garden perimeter, added 28 more raised beds, and developed a three-year strategic plan to provide a manageable path for the future.

For the 2024 growing season, there are 48 raised beds, 67 gardeners, and a team of 15 volunteers. We have two beds dedicated to growing produce for donation to the [Teach a Person to Fish Society](https://teachapersonstofish.org) taptfsociety.org, which provides meals as well as grab & go veggies to several food pantries in our area.

Immediate future plans include the purchase of a shed

to house the equipment, tools, and materials needed to accommodate site development and to provide for the increasing number of gardeners.

Also, the garden is preparing to construct a mobility bed, which will make it easier for gardeners with physical limitations to be able to have an organic garden.

Lewes Community Garden is an all-volunteer organization, dependent upon gardener involvement to manage and maintain the garden; fundraising efforts provide the funds necessary to pay for materials, tools, equipment, and future development.

If you are interested in donating to Lewes Community Garden, please visit the garden website at lewescommunitygarden.org/donate.



Welcome to our new 2024 gardeners!

Organic vs. Sustainable Gardening

Gardens and landscapes are not natural areas. To create these outdoor spaces we move and change the soil, alter water flow across the ground, and plant what pleases us. We disrupt the larger ecosystems made up of soil, water, air, plants, animals, and microorganisms that interact in the “web of life.” We need to be concerned with “ecosystem services” - the benefits we get from a well-functioning ecosystem, including healthy food, clean water and air, and the maintenance of biodiversity.

The words “organic” and “sustainable” are often used interchangeably to describe a holistic gardening approach, one that recognizes that soil health, plant health, ecosystem health, and human health are all interconnected. Organic and sustainable approaches are similar and complementary.

Organic Gardening

The cornerstones of organic gardening are:

- Improving soil health by feeding the soil food web with organic matter and recycling nutrients
- Increasing biological diversity above and below ground
- Growing a variety of plants to increase garden resiliency by supporting beneficial insects, improving soil health, and reducing disease impacts

Best practices for sustainable, organic vegetable gardening include:

- Protecting and improving the soil naturally
- Recycling plants and nutrients
- Watering and fertilizing appropriately
- Increasing biodiversity
- Practicing organic Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Attracting and conserving pollinators and natural enemies of garden pests
- Relying on locally available materials and resources

Our goal is to practice sustainable organic gardening around the vegetable garden beds, and ecologically sustainable development and maintenance outside the fence.

Sustainable Gardening

Sustainable gardening is defined as growing vegetables year after year by:

- Relying on locally available materials and resources
- Practicing the 4Rs (reduce, re-use, recycle, rethink)
- Minimizing negative environmental impacts
- Supporting native organisms which contributes to ecosystem restoration

Pollinator Garden 3.0

Increasing areas for pollinator habitat is important because of the significant decline in pollinators largely due to development and the use of pesticides and herbicides. Pollinators are needed for the reproduction of ninety percent of flowering plants and one third of human food crops. For more information on the importance of pollinators and how to create a pollinator garden see [Pollinator Partnership](#).

Who are our Pollinators?

- Bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds, beetles, wasps and even flies pollinate flowers.
- Bee species pollinate flowers more often than any other group, including birds, butterflies and moths (see https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/pollinators/documents/AttractingPollinatorsEasternUS_V1.pdf).
- There are 4000 species of bees native to North America, ¾ are solitary nesting.
- Bees gather two kinds of foods from flowers:
 - Sugar-rich nectar to fuel their flight
 - Protein-rich pollen, or bee bread, to feed their young brood.
- Bees prefer blue, purple, white, orange, and yellow flowers, and sweet fragrances.

In 2021, Lewes Community Garden (LCG) began a small pollinator garden in a temporary area near trees in front of the property. As the trees grew, the area became shady. In 2023, we created a larger area in a sunny location that would accommodate more visitors and demonstrate the value of native pollinator plantings. Cindy Porter, a Sussex County Master Gardener and an LCG volunteer, was the primary lead on the project. LCG volunteers, with guidance from the University of

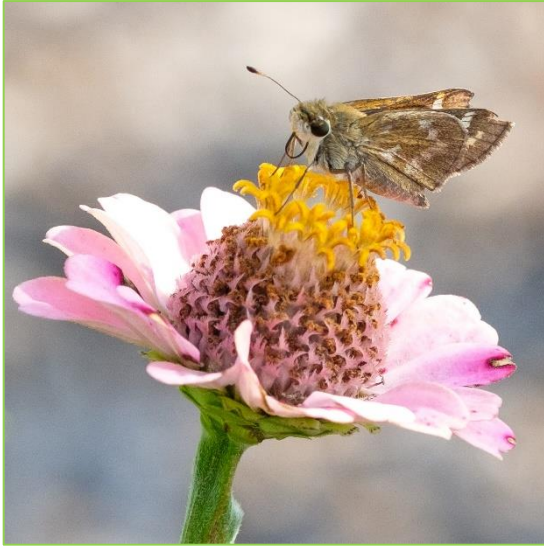
Delaware Master Gardeners, built and maintain the garden. The cost of the garden was partially funded through a grant from First State Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. Soils were donated by Grizzly Landscape Supply and Services, Milton, DE.

Building the garden was done in phases. We began with cardboard covering the entire planting area with several inches of topsoil/compost on top. We applied a cover crop seed, buckwheat, and let the area sit over the summer. The cardboard and soil killed grass and weeds without having to till or use pesticides. The buckwheat helped to reduce the weeds and is an excellent plant for pollinators.



Toxomerus

Pollinators Continued



Sachem



Bombus pennsylvanicus

During the summer months, fencing was completed, and a planting plan was developed based on research and resources available from several organizations (see reference materials mentioned within and at the end of this article).

Why Pollinators are Important

In their 1996 book, *The Forgotten Pollinators*, Buchmann and Nabhan estimated that animal pollinators are needed for the reproduction of **90% of flowering plants and one third of human food crops**.

- Pollinators are part of the intricate web that supports the biological diversity in natural ecosystems that helps sustain our quality of life.
- They are the food for other creatures.
- Pollinators provide pollination services to over 180,000 different plant species and more than 1,200 crops. That means that 1 out of every 3 bites of food you eat is there because of pollinators.
- Inviting pollinators to our vegetable garden increases yield.

Our next phase included cutting down the buckwheat and thoroughly weeding the garden bed. Buckwheat was left in the bed to add nutrients. In the fall, we moved many of the pollinator plants from the original garden to this new space, added new pollinator plants and seeds. We reserved an area for annuals such as zinnia, marigold, and dill. The garden is fenced.

Using plants of various heights to create a three-dimensional look provides protection and places for hiding and nesting. Leaving small spaces of bare soil provides a place for bee nesting.

Pollinators Continued



Red Banded Hairstreak

We are now in our first year after planting. Our focus will be on keeping the plants watered and observing growth and pollinator visits. During the first year, plants need consistent moisture to develop roots but in the second year, plants need watering only through long hot and/or dry periods. Once established, most of the plants will thrive without a lot of attention.

The pollinator garden plan is to have plants blooming from spring until fall. We expect the new pollinator garden will be an integral part of Lewes Community Garden for years to come.

The links below provide more information on pollinator gardens:

- [The New Companion Planting: Adding Diversity to the Garden | Cooperative Extension | University of Delaware \(udel.edu\)](#)
- [Liveable Ecosystems: Model for Suburbia | Cooperative Extension | University of Delaware \(udel.edu\)](#)
- <https://matthewsarver.com/downloads/Meadows and Buffers for Bees.pdf>

Thanks to Patrick Gaffney for the pollinator photos. For a complete list of references as well as a list of pollinator plants please email lewescommunitygarden@gmail.com.

Pollinators are in Trouble

- Recent studies suggests that 40% of insect species are in decline.
- We are losing our birds because we have taken away their homes and their food.
- Well over 70% of the forests along our eastern seaboard are gone (Brown 2006).
- Doug Tallamy notes:
 - A 50% reduction in bird populations in 50 years for many of Delaware's bird species.
 - As of 2002, the once contiguous forest cover for Delaware had been reduced to 23 percent of its original size.
 - Habitat fragmentation equals extinction. Tiny habitat islands have high rates of species extinction.

Pollinators Continued



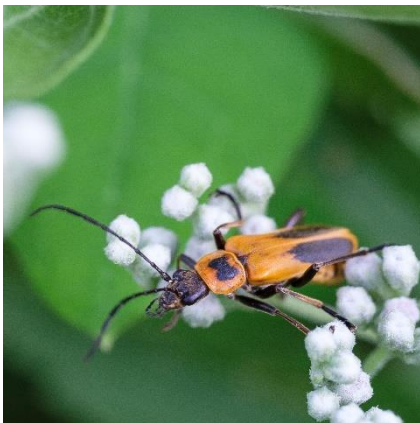
Cindy Porter with cover crop before fence completed



Fence completed and planting in progress

Diversity of Plantings Improve Results

- Attract and support predators and parasitoids (natural enemies) for pest control.
- Some tiny parasitoids require nectar or another source of sugar, and abundant nectar improves their survival rate and increases reproduction.
- Syrphid or hover flies feed on nectar and pollen, and lay hundreds of eggs near soft bodied insects such as aphids. The eggs hatch into larvae that are voracious feeders on those small pests.
- Lacewings and ladybird beetles are also attracted to flowers and can effectively control aphids.
- The presence of different plant species grown together can disrupt the ability of pests to find their host plants. Plant-feeding insects, especially those that only feed on one or a few types of plants, find their host plants by sight and smell, and these cues can be disrupted by surrounding plants, especially aromatic or bushy plants.



Chauliognathus Pensylvanicus



Variegated Fritillary

Educational Programs Open to the Public

We're happy to announce three free programs open to the public this season. All programs begin at 9:30 AM outside at the garden on Park Road between the Lewes Dog Park and the UDE wind turbine. Bring a chair, water and bug spray. Park along the road. The program is held in an open space which requires walking through grass and traversing a small hill. Email us with questions at lewescommunitygarden@gmail.com.

Saturday, May 18th - Home Composting and Recycling

Did you know that 25% of what Delawareans send to the landfill is food waste? Or that food waste in landfills produces methane, a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide? Instead of throwing away your food scraps, compost them and make nutrient-rich, organic, and free fertilizer for your plants and yard.

Join us for an engaging talk about composting with Brigid Gregory from the Delaware Community Composting Initiative (DCCI). Brigid will provide a beginner's guide to backyard composting as well as share about vermicomposting (aka worm composting) and the DCCI's community composting program. She will share tips and tricks for managing your compost pile to prevent any pests or odors, as well as tips for explaining the benefits of composting to neighbors and HOAs. Brigid will also discuss Plastic Free Delaware's other programs and how Delawareans can reduce their overall waste and dependence on plastic. You will leave armed with information, ideas, and examples of what you can do to make a difference.



Saturday, August 17th - Pollinator Gardening

Sussex County Master Gardeners will present a program on supporting pollinators. Studies show the numbers of native pollinators are declining due to habitat loss, disease, and use of pesticides. Find out what we can do.

Saturday, October 19th - No-Till Gardening and Seed Saving

Sussex County Master Gardeners will present information on alternatives to tilling and discuss seed saving strategies for both vegetables and flowers.

Giving Back to the Community

As we start our sixth year, we continue to be very grateful for all the support Lewes Community Garden has received from our larger community.

Giving back to the community that has supported us in so many ways is one of our core values. The LCG Outreach teams organize several activities throughout our growing season that help us to “give back”.

Harvest Donations: Since our first season in 2019, we have set aside dedicated garden beds where we grow vegetables strictly for donation to local food pantries. In addition, LCG gardeners can voluntarily donate their extra produce each week. In 2023, this voluntary harvest collected over 400 pounds of organic produce for donation.

Donating fresh produce presents a challenge in that many families experiencing food insecurity are also dealing with housing insecurity. Thus, many families have limited cooking space and food storage.

In 2022, we began to partner with a local “home grown” nonprofit, Teach a Person to Fish (TAPTF), to help us get our fresh produce to where it is most needed in an accessible form. During the growing season, Outreach volunteers take our weekly harvest donation directly to



Perrin Smith sorts harvest donations



Cass & Teresa Ripley from TAPTF

TAPTF’s kitchen, where their chef makes fresh meals with some of our produce. These meals, along with our “grab and go” items (easily eaten, fresh produce that is not used in prepared meals), are then taken to Eastern Sussex food pantries on Monday mornings. This partnership with TAPTF ensures that our donated produce gets to where it is most needed in a form that is accessible to those who need it.

For more information on TAPTF see taptfsociety.org

LCG Non-perishable Food Drives: LCG gardeners participate in two food drives throughout the year. Our summer food drive helps provide breakfast, snacks, and healthy drinks for the Children’s Summer Enrichment Program at Westside New Beginnings in West Rehoboth (see [West Rehoboth Children and Youth Program celebrates 20 years | Cape Gazette](#)). This year will be our third year of providing assistance to this valuable summer program. By providing breakfast food, the enrichment program can use more of its funds on educational and recreational activities for the children.



Judy Eger & Cathy Harris transport donations



LCG Thanksgiving 2023 donations

Our final effort for the year is our Thanksgiving food drive, held on our last workday of the season. Our gardeners donate turkeys, hams, non-perishable food, and grocery store gift cards. This year, our donations will go to the Milton Food Pantry. Our Thanksgiving donation is a wonderful way for us to wrap up our year of enjoying the bounty of Lewes Community Garden.

We have other programs that are part of LCG Outreach, including sponsored garden beds, which are beds offered at no cost to nonprofit groups or to families experiencing financial hardship.

To learn more about our Outreach donations and activities, email the Garden at lewescommunitygarden@gmail.com.

How You Can Help

Since the inception of Lewes Community Garden in 2016 and the creation of the initial twenty raised beds in 2019, donations from both individuals and community entities have supported our growth and sustainability. The costs of maintenance and expansion over the past five years are attributable to generous donations from Sussex County Council, Dogfish Head Craft Brewery, Lee Ann Wilkinson Group, Beebe Healthcare, Grizzly's Landscape Supply, and many others.

The largest expenditure for the garden has been a \$14,000 investment for a heavy-duty, eight-foot-high deer fence that was installed in 2022. This year, due to the ongoing growth of the garden, a new shed will be purchased to house additional equipment, tools, and supplies. A fundraising effort has already begun to pay for this much-needed storage space.

Our strategic plan calls for a mobility bed. We will start with a high bed or a bed with an extra seating area for people with physical limitations.

Individual donations have always been a significant help to the garden. Any donation, large or small, is welcomed and will be used to pay for sponsored beds, donation beds, materials, tools, or equipment. Your help will allow us to expand and keep up with the increasing demand for organic gardening. If you are interested in providing a donation to the garden, please visit the garden website at lewescommunitygarden.org/donate.



"Outside the fence" Hibiscus moscheutos



Looking forward to these!

Thank you for your donations and support!

Lewes Community Gardeners Fund

PO Box 436

Lewes, Delaware 19958 or

[Greater Lewes Foundation LCG Fund](#)

Email - LewesCommunityGarden@gmail.com

Website - [Lewes Community Garden – Building a Stronger & Greener Community](#)

