

BRIC Community Gardens Success Stories

Lalumier Garden: A Story of Transformation and Community Impact

In April, a new chapter began for the Lalumier Garden when Viktoria Zolman, an Americorps Service Member took leadership. This beautiful garden, that has 20 beds, had fallen into disrepair, rendering it unprepared for the upcoming growing season. But with unwavering determination, a spirit of collaboration, and the support of Make Health Happen, school volunteers, and SLU interns, we embarked on an incredible journey.

The turning point came during our Open House Event on May 6th. With collective effort, we cleared the beds and breathed new life into the garden by planting a rich variety of seedlings. Our choices were as diverse as our dreams, spanning peppers, tomatoes, squash, herbs, flowers, lettuce, cucumbers, zucchini, watermelon, and an assortment of greens.

Throughout the following months, Caroline Mitchell and Viktoria Zolman committed their Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. to tend to the garden, nurturing it back to vitality. However, we faced an unexpected hurdle when the school cut off water access to the garden at the beginning of summer, putting our hard work at risk. Despite this setback, we witnessed the resilience of nature as tomatoes, lettuce, kale, collard greens, radishes, beets, and peppers thrived, accompanied by fragrant basil, dill, and rosemary. The local kids also joined the effort, playfully helping with watering before the water supply was lost.

In a heartwarming moment, a group from the Autism Center lent their hands to weed the garden, emphasizing the community's shared enthusiasm for this green oasis. In August, the water supply was reinstated, and we were finally able to harvest an impressive bounty. Some of the produce went to Mount Zion Church, contributing to their Saturday meal giveaways. Others, were picked by community members who came out and volunteered at the garden. In August alone, we gathered four bags of produce, amounting to 6-8 pounds, featuring vibrant tomatoes, peppers, and zucchinis. September brought another bountiful harvest: 1 bag of peppers, 2 zucchinis, and 2 squashes, totaling 8-10 pounds of fresh, homegrown produce.

As summer drew to a close, we welcomed Hattie Hayes as our garden coordinator, who brought with her a wealth of gardening knowledge. Her expertise in identifying weed types, recognizing ripeness, and maintaining a garden was a game-changer. Throughout October, Hattie and Viktoria are preparing the garden for the off-season while also organizing an exciting event on October 26th. This event will take place right in the garden during parent conferences, and it offers the kids a chance to unleash their creativity by painting mini pumpkins and assisting in the garden.

Our plans for the future are bright, with discussions revolving around the reopening of the garden for the next growing season. We're even exploring the possibility of second-grade teachers adopting a bed for their classes, further nurturing the spirit of community and growth.









