

Dallas Youth Garden News 2020 Annual Summary

In spite of the challenges of COVID-19 our garden season was a great success. This season Polk County 4H was not able to sponsor our club due to COVID-19 concerns. Fortunately, the Polk County Family & Community Outreach Department adopted our program. A big thanks to Polk County for helping us out. Throughout the season we followed CDC/Health Department Guidelines with proper social distancing, frequent hand washing, and wore face masks when working near others (which was most of the time).

Our 2020 garden season began in April when we accepted applications from 14 students with four returning from our 2019 season. Based on student applications and interviews we selected ten interns. This season we hired two senior interns Kaitlynn (a former garden intern and recent Dallas grad) and Jack (a WOU student) working with us.

Interns started May 5th. Their first task was to develop a plan for their 25'x50' garden. May weather was good and plant starts provided by volunteers and the Master Gardeners were beautiful. After planting interns mulched their gardens with recycled paper and straw. Our experiment in 2019 with not mulching taught us that a good mulch is the best way to reduce weeds.

After mulching, the interns started weeding, watering and caring for their gardens. During the summer interns learned many sustainable gardening skills such as weeding, thinning carrots and beets, consistent watering, trimming tomatoes, fertilizing with organic fertilizers, adding lime to sweeten soil, and to recognize different garden pests such as flea beetles and cucumber bugs.

On June 29th interns harvested their first crop of radishes and the following week harvested the first crop of summer squash. We weekly delivered produce to the Polk County Family & Community Outreach and Polk County Food Shelf food

programs. By seasons end we had delivered over 5300 pounds of produce. Interns also had the opportunity to take 2-3 vegetables home to share with family members. Interns were encouraged to try new recipes and to share their new creations with fellow interns each Saturday. This year we had a wide variety of recipes that were shared including zucchini bread, zucchini added to meatballs, boiled beets, beet green salad, grilled yellow squash, and zucchini boats.

This summer was challenging, we were not able to take our usual field trips or participate in the county and state fairs. In spite of that our interns learned new gardening skills, learned important job skills, and learned how to contribute to our community.

We had great support this season from a variety of individuals and organizations. Without the support of our volunteers, contributors, partner organizations and people like you the garden would not be possible. Thank you!

Dean Anderson
Garden Coordinator



Intern Answers To: What did you learn this summer?

- Make sure to prune, and thin your plants.
- How to trim tomatoes so they produce more and grow less.
- Water your plants the same amount of time.
- I learned that patience is a big key throughout everything in the garden.
- Keep up to date on weeds and not spend too much time weeding one thing because the other weeds grow fast!
- How to fix different problems that could be found in a garden.
- How to be both safe and productive during this rough time.
- Harder work ethic! It's very motivating when your hard work pays off, and seeing my plants produce is just so nice!
- I've learned to ask and help my peers more than I had done before.
- How to keep a safe distance and be protected by others.