

Community Gardens in the Flathead Watershed

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The local food movement that has swept across the nation has been enthusiastically embraced by Flathead residents. The Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) has adopted the Farm to School program initiated by the University of Montana in Missoula. The college is purchasing an increased percentage of its produce from local growers for its cafeteria and culinary arts programs. FVCC has also become the home of a new community garden area available to the Kalispell community. Other community gardens have sprung up in Whitefish, Evergreen, and Bigfork. These gardens not only provide home grown food to residents but surplus produce also benefits local area food banks. The Whitefish school district is embarking on a new school garden complete with greenhouse to be used for education about food systems

The master gardener program, taught by the Montana State University Extension office, is filled to capacity each year as community

Source: Pat McGlynn, 2009



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members seek information that will make their gardens more successful. Green industry retailers continually expand their selections of seeds, vegetable starts and fruit trees to meet growing homeowner needs. The economic downturn has stimulated home food production as it did during the 1930's.

Food Systems groups are working together to address food security and safety challenges. They include: Farm Hands, Nourish the Flathead, Farm to School, the Food Bank's GRASP program and AERO.

Source: Mountain Nursery & Landscape Association, 2009



Flathead apples

and to provide students with fresh vegetables. West Glacier installed a school garden in 2009 with the help of two master gardeners. The garden has become a social gathering place for this rural community.

The demand for local vegetables continues to grow as evidenced by the surge of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA's), farmers markets and home gardens. Farmer's markets occur weekly in Bigfork, Columbia Falls, Kalispell and Whitefish. Montana grown plants and seasonal produce line the streets in a festive atmosphere. Often these markets feature live music, home baked treats and crafts.

Source: Julian Cunningham, 2009



Cornfields at Swallowcrest Farm