

The mentoring of young adults with non-farm background in the production and local marketing of organic vegetable crops

Final Report for FNC09-790

Project Type: Farmer/Rancher

Funds awarded in 2009: \$2,955.73

Projected End Date: 12/31/2011

Region: North Central

State: Illinois

Project Coordinator:

[Clarence Burton](#)

Project Information

Summary:

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Project was conducted on three garden plots totaling approximately ½ acre. The land had been previously used for organic garden and crop production.

Before the grant, we used non-commercial fertilizers (animal waste) with chemical applications for the last 8-12 years.

GOALS

Basic goal was to educate these young people in the “how-to” of vegetable production and to create an increased awareness and appreciation of organic produce. Another major goal was to give them the “hands-on” experience of production and the requirements of marketing that product to the public.

PROCESS

1. Started with conference with the participants and their mother (custodian-single parent) explaining expectations and goals of the project.
2. Obtained verbal agreement and commitment from some.
3. Followed standard gardening procedure in spring with demonstration and then allowing them to follow up with complete process.
4. All processes were demonstrated (some multiple times) with participants required to complete the process.
5. My goal was to create in them the confidence that they could do the operations needed. This was accomplished by the “hands-on” experience; in some instances, after demonstration, unsupervised.

PEOPLE

Christen Myers – local high school (foriculture) supplied seedlings and variety recommendations at timely intervals

Dave Bishop – McLean Co. SWCD and commercial organic farmer – allowed visits to his operation, supplied numerous suggestions about crop selection, marketing techniques, market pricing and tillage practices.

RESULTS

I feel that the goals I had in mind were achieved. That was developing skills in gardening, self-confidence in their gardening abilities, confidence in interacting with the public (marketing) and a better understanding and appreciation of quality food stuffs for themselves and their family

Part of this was affirmed by a survey conducted at their field day where they were required to share with attendees what they had done, how they had done it and their attitude toward what they had accomplished and experienced. In retrospect, I did not do adequate pre-planning before submitting my proposal. As a result, my budget proposed would have been better organized. I would have had a "Plan B" for the participants. The fact that they are members of a very dysfunctional family created many problems that I did not foresee. That being said, I definitely feel that it was a worthwhile experience for them as well as a learning experience for me.

DISCUSSION

I learned that much more pre-planning would have resulted in a more efficient project. This project resulted in my leasing the organic gardening operation to an experienced commercial operator.

Advantages: Spreads knowledge of organic value and gardening techniques to city residents

Disadvantages: Required very consistent commitment of time

Recommendation: Have patience! Really know your participants and their commitment long-term.

Research

Participation Summary

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