

## Project Overview

The Youth Intervention Center (YIC) Gardening Program teaches students who reside, through court appointment, at a detention and shelter care facility. Master Gardener volunteers must have a criminal background check and child abuse clearance to teach within this locked-down facility. The program takes place in the center courtyard, and students are accompanied by YIC staff during all activities in the garden. Because students are not there voluntarily, their privacy must be maintained. For example, no faces are shown in the photographs and no last names are used in their writing.

Beginning in early May, Master Gardeners, with clearance through the YIC administration, begin to till the garden in preparation for planting. Early season plants such as lettuce are purchased and ready to plant on that first day because we think it is important for students to be involved with hands-on experiences immediately.

As the students arrive, they sit in a circle for a brief classroom presentation. The Master Gardeners introduce themselves and give an explanation of how the YIC students will be working in the garden to raise vegetables and flowers which will be donated to a local women's shelter, Milagro House. A short talk about tool safety prepares the students for their garden activities.

After the tool safety talk, we ask that a student volunteer to be the reporter for the day. As reporter, he or she checks the temperature, checks the rain gauge, and interviews students as they work in the garden.

We then break into small groups, usually 3-4 students with one Master Gardener to go on a garden walk, allowing the students to notice the progress and look for interesting developments, such as insects, plant diseases, ripening strawberries. Then, we discuss the plan for the day that will guide the students' hands-on work in the garden.

For about 45 minutes, students will tend the garden, learning skills such as planting, mulching, cultivating, composting, watering, weeding, pruning, harvesting, organic disease control, and organic insect control. No chemicals are ever used in our garden. Students are taught about beneficial insects by observation. They have seen lady bugs arrive to control the aphids on tomatoes.

We end our morning class with the students sitting back in the circle and a 10-minute writing so that each student can describe his or her unique experiences in the garden. These writings and photos make the book, *The History of the Garden*.

Here's what two students said:

**Laura:** On the garden tour, I saw a lot of beautiful flowers. I was with Jessica and a staff member. I saw two pretty caterpillars and was very amazed. We had also saw about 3 or 4 Japanese beetles. It was very interesting. Tomatoes-sunflowers- pretty flowers and lots more...Miss Delores taught us how to make flower arrangements. She taught us to put Listerine in the water and the water has to be between 100 and 110 degrees. I put flowers and greens in my arrangement. I liked putting the flowers together and just making the arrangements with the other girls. We should do it again. The Scottish thistle was amazing and interesting. I have never seen a plant like that before.

**Jessica:** On the garden tour with Sylvia, I saw some lemon leaves, lavender, and the spider plant. I also saw the monarch butterfly and a praying mantis. For my arrangement, I got the prettiest flowers. I chose baby's breath, perovskia, a Peruvian lily, some green stuff called foliage. I learned how to put flowers together and how the green brings the colors out. I never did this before so it was fun and I think you should have the names of the flowers written down. I think that this was a new experience. I also think the Scottish thistle is a very beautiful flower but I learned that it is Scotland's national flower

Youth Intervention Center  
and  
Penn State Master Gardeners of Lancaster County  
Spring/Summer 2011

Date: August 23, 2011

Group: Shelter Girls

Reporter: Viktoria

Weather: lovely ☺

Temperature: 65 degrees (shade)

Rain Gauge (measurement since last class): 2 cm since last Thursday

Students: Kaylee, Tyra, Briana, Briana, Deaira, Viktoria, Sam

Adults: Mrs. Betty, Miss Michele, Mr. Alberto, Farmer Tom, Ms. Liz, Ms. Luci, Ms. Ferne, Ms. Lorri, Mrs. Heather, Mrs. Evelyn

Condition of the Garden: Perfect

Treasures from the Garden: cucumbers, purple green beans, cabbage, kohlrabi, Thai peppers (hot)

Plan for the Day: Weeding, Harvesting, Presentation on Jobs

Insects or other unusual creatures: Wasps, milkweed bugs, grasshoppers, baby lady bugs, digger wasps, caterpillars, praying mantis

*Students were asked to write about what they saw, heard, tasted, smelled, and felt in the garden. They were asked to finish the sentence "Gardening is..." They were asked which Master Gardener they worked with and what they learned from them. And, they had about 5 minutes to write...*

**Deaira:** Today in the garden I saw baby ladybugs, a Mexican beetle that looks almost identical to a lady bug except it was a yellowish color. I saw a milkweed plant that the ladybugs were attracted to because little bugs eat the back of the milkweed plant. I dug up weeds from the bright light plants (Swiss chard). To me, gardening is relaxing and refreshing. Today, I worked with Michele. I appreciate her information about gardening and her helpful tips on remembering certain plants.

**Brianna:** Today in the garden, we got our nametags and split up into groups. My farmer was Alberto. We picked tomatoes and peppers. We also pulled some plants off the ground and tied them to the poles. After that, we looked for some cucumbers but were unsuccessful. We also picked a few more greens from the garden. Alberto taught me about "jalapenos" and told me about them. how not to touch my eyes or nose, lips or ears because the seed in the pepper is so hot if you put it in a burger, it would feel like you're eating fire. To me gardening is a way of life even though I don't eat much greens, gardening can feed a lot of people. Gardening can make you money, help you live. Alberto told me that a one pound tomato is \$1.99 in a supermarket. Gardening is a beautiful way of life.

**Kaylee:** I have not notices how gardening could be fun but I think it can because I like picking the ripe food like purple beans and especially the cucumbers! The different sizes of cucumbers just made it so interesting!! To me, gardening is a life experience to see creatures and how the plants grow. I worked with Ferne and I think that she's an amazing gardener. I will always remember picking cucumbers with her ☺

**Samantha:** Today, I saw a praying mantis, and I saw a baby caterpillar that looked a lot like the pattern of a bee. I picked tomatoes. A lot were hard to get to and you really had to look under all the vines. I also picked beans which I never did before. I saw a baby spider and surprisingly wasn't scared. I also saw a lot of aphids. I didn't find too many butterflies and caterpillars. To me, gardening is exciting when you see everything you've been preparing fully grown. I worked with Lorri. I will remember how she taught me to pick beans.

**Tyra:** When I first came to the garden, my nose was filled with many different smells: fresh air, dirt, herbs, sunflowers and my hands were filled with many different textures like lamb's ears, Mexican sunflowers, and peppers. The tour of the garden was amazing and I learned that working in a garden is a lot of work to keep the garden looking so nice. You have to pick the weeds and do a lot of work but it's a lot of fun! To me gardening is fun and something you have to be dedicated to. I worked with Luci. She taught me that you need to get rid of the weeds to so that plants you are trying to grow aren't competing for water and nutrients. Thanks, Luci. ☺

**Viktoria:** Today, it didn't rain! The garden is really pretty and full of life! I saw a lot of bugs and smelled a lot of plants. I ate a yummy cookie that was made of rosemary. I felt happy in the garden at YIC. It reminded me of working in the garden at home. I had fun today. To me gardening is relaxing and something fun to do. It makes me feel good like I accomplished something!!! I worked with Betty. We got a lot of things done at the milkweed, and she told me a lot about bugs and stuff...

Farmer Tom returned today and took pictures of our day in the YIC garden





Rosemary cookies by French Chef Michele!