



CAMDEN CITY GARDEN CLUB, INC.

Operator

Camden Children's Garden



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NEWS IS SPREADING FAST ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA STUDY.....

September 5, 2010 ~ KYW Newsradio 1060 Reports:

“Camden, NJ Has Perhaps Fastest Growing Community Gardens in US”

Please read the attached press release to learn about the amazing things growing in Camden and helping to fight hunger in one of the country's most dangerous and poorest cities of its size.

“If we can build so many food-producing gardens in Camden – a food desert where most of the population lives way below the poverty line – that really says something about the power of gardening!” says Mike Devlin, Camden City Garden Club President/ Co-Founder.

Mike Devlin's work has led to a prestigious honor from Gardener's Supply – [the 2010 Garden Crusader Award](#) (press release in the works). Thank you for your consideration of the Camden Garden Story.

University of Pennsylvania Study Shows How Camden City Garden Club's Community Gardens Fight Hunger in Camden

CAMDEN, N. J. (September 22, 2010): In the summer of 2009, the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Public Health Initiatives (CPHI) funded a research study of community gardens in Camden, measuring the amount of food produced and the ways in which produce is distributed to people in the community.

The research for "Harvest Report: Summer 2009" was conducted in partnership with the Camden City Garden Club, Inc. (CCGC) and its subsidiary, the Camden Children's Garden, which coordinate Camden's Community Gardening Program and maintain more than 80 food-producing gardens. This year alone, 15 new gardens (four of which are much larger than past at approximately 1/3- to 1/2-acre) have been created to help meet the food needs of a community that has been deemed a "food desert." Several of the new plots are substantially larger than most of the thirty-one gardens created in 2009.

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Harvest at St. Joan of Arc church garden in Fairview (photo courtesy of the Camden City Garden Club).

Over the past two years, Camden residents have expanded community gardening at a rate that outpaces most, perhaps all, U.S. cities, according to the report. By visiting a sampling of a variety of forty-four gardens, interviewing one-hundred gardeners, and weighing the crops they produced, the University of Pennsylvania researchers estimated that crops harvested in these Camden gardens last summer yielded nearly 139,000 servings of fresh vegetables for these gardeners.

"Undoubtedly, food production in Camden gardens is expanding the options, availability, and interest in fresh, healthy, local vegetables" in this urban community, the study concluded. "Children and new adult gardeners ... are learning to grow their own [vegetables] and appreciate how carrots taste when pulled straight from the ground."

The research aims to help clarify the relationship between community gardening and community food security in Camden. This report is part of a three-city, multi-year study that also includes Philadelphia, PA, Trenton, NJ, and concluded in Camden, NJ to measure vegetable production and trace food distribution and other impacts of community gardens and urban farms.

In this Harvest Report, community gardens in Camden help illustrate how people living in a small, very poor city employ gardening in diverse ways to address issues of hunger, health, youth, aging, and other social, ecological, and economic challenges. In Camden, Community Gardening's emphasis on Food Production is a viable strategy to address Food Security.

Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania who participated in "Harvest Report: Summer 2009" included Domenic Vitiello, Assistant Professor of City Planning; Michael Nairn, Lecturer in Urban Studies; Jeane Ann Grisso, Professor of Medicine and Nursing; and Noah Swistak, Master of City Planning student.

Vitiello is also President of the Philadelphia Orchard Project (POP). Michael Nairn, another board member of POP, is a landscape architect and avid gardener.

Attached, please find the report with study's details, including photos of community gardens and a video of the amazing community and food growing in Camden. [Download the Complete Study Report \(on CamdenChildrensgarden.org\)](http://CamdenChildrensgarden.org).

Below are some of the study's key findings:

- *Camden consistently ranks among the poorest and most violent cities in the United States, a stark example of urban decline, social and political economic crisis, and consequently food insecurity. Both because of this and despite this, it is also a leading center of community gardening.*
- *Over the past two years, Camden residents have expanded community gardening at a rate that outpaces most, perhaps all, U.S. cities.*
- *Many gardeners and Garden Club leaders explain this growth in terms of Camden residents' sensitivity to recent upswings in food prices and to longer-term issues of public health and hunger.*
- *For most Camden gardeners, community gardening is one strategy among many to improve health and food access for themselves, their families, and neighbors.*
- *The City Public Works Department's Adopt-a-Lot program and the Camden City Garden Club are two of the relatively few public and citywide nonprofit organizations that people seem to agree work well and consistently improve people's quality of life. Camden's gardens are thriving and growing.*
- *Camden has roughly 12,000 abandoned lots, about 4,000 of which are city-owned, according to Deborah Hirsch's "Caring residents transform vacant lots into urban oases," Courier Post (October 5, 2008).*

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- *Like the city itself, overall community gardeners and their neighborhoods are relatively homogenous economically. Almost 95% percent of Camden's community gardens are located in census tracts where the average household lives below 200% of the federal poverty line.*
- *The Saturday market in suburban Collingswood, New Jersey, won an online poll sponsored by the American Farmland Trust as the "most popular" small farmers market in the country in 2009. Greensgrow Farm in Philadelphia's gentrifying Fishtown neighborhood was featured in the New York Times, CBS Sunday Morning and made Natural Home Magazine's list of the top ten urban farms in the nation. But in terms of local food production, the largest recent gains occurred in this city of 80,000 people located between Fishtown and Collingswood – namely, Camden.*

The study goes on in detail about the process in which Camden residents are led by the Camden City Gardening Club to acquire city-owned lots that are transformed in a relatively short time to food-producing green oases. In addition, the amount of food harvested has been shown to yield far over the amount of food needed for 13 months for each gardener and are being shared with the community at large, making Camden's gardeners food-producers. The report also discusses the methodology of the study, and other findings about the sense of fellowship that community gardening, especially the faith-based programs, are bringing to the City of Camden. In Camden, Community Gardening's emphasis on Food Production is a viable strategy to address Food Security.

Stay tuned for a release from Gardener's Supply regarding the Garden Crusader Award won by Mike Devlin, the co-leader/founder, along with his wife Valerie Frick of the community gardening program and the tourist destination that is an educational center - the Camden Children's Garden on the Family-Friendly Camden Waterfront. Read below for more information about the inspiring programs that Mike and Val have cultivated for decades to help the City of Camden.

Camden City Garden Club & Camden Children's Garden

The Camden City Garden Club, Inc. is an organization that has been greening, beautifying and helping to feed the people of Camden, NJ for 26 years. The Club is a non-profit (501)(c)(3) environmental and educational organization. Originally formed for the purpose of Camden City residents with community gardening and beautification, the Club has expanded to serve 85 families, 34 community gardens, and 24 church gardens today! Through the **Community Gardening and Greening Program**, Club is responsible for the creation and cultivation of scores of community gardens around the City of Camden. In addition, the organization soon expanded to include a variety of community-enhancing programs, such as **GrowLab** which has been offering hands-on nutrition and horticulture education to Camden students in their classrooms for 21 years. The **Youth Employment and Training Program**, which has just completed its 16th successful year, gives Camden's at-risk teens the opportunity to earn an income while working to help their community. The Youth Program gives local teens job experience working with the community through the Club's various programs. The Club has also operated the South Jersey favorite oasis for families, the **Camden Children's Garden**.

The Camden Children's Garden, now in its 11th year, is designed for children and families. Operated by the Camden City Garden Club, Inc., this is a special place to explore and discover the natural world. This 4.5-acre garden features a variety of themed educational exhibits for children for creative and imaginative play, such as the Dinosaur Garden, a Giant Picnic Garden, Storybook Gardens, Red Oak Run and Tree House, Cityscapes Garden and more! Enjoy great indoor attractions including the Philadelphia Eagles Four Seasons Butterfly House, Plaza de Aibonito, our Puerto Rican tropical greenhouse exhibit, and Benjamin Franklin's Secret Garden and Workshop. Enjoy the carousel, Arrow River Express Train Ride, and Spring Butterfly Ride for a modest fee. Operating hours have been cut due to the state budget cut and are now April - November, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Friday, Saturday and Sunday 10:00am - 5:00 pm (Thursday by group reservation). Admission is \$6 for adults and \$5 for children (age 3 -11). Children ages 2 and under enjoy the Garden free of charge. The Garden is closed in January and February. Family Festivals are family-oriented special events held at the Garden on the second and fourth weekends of the month, from April through November.

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