

Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities: ***A research and education partnership with urban gardeners***

Urban community gardens are a source of affordable, locally grown, healthy foods. Gardens also provide urban green space, opportunities for recreation and community building activities, and many benefits for public health. There are hundreds of community gardens in New York City alone, and many in other urban areas across New York State.

But,

- The extent and effects of soil contamination in many urban areas are unknown.
- Existing programs and resources do not fully address the questions and concerns that gardeners and others have about soil testing, managing gardens and soils, and protecting public health.

How will our project help communities in NYC and throughout the state?

Through a community-research partnership that includes Cornell University researchers and Extension educators, the New York State Department of Health, gardening organization GreenThumb and other partners, our project aims to:

- Address the need for information and resources about soil contaminants in urban gardens, and
- Help gardeners and others make informed decisions for healthy soils and healthy communities.

We will work towards these goals through research, development of public health action strategies, and education. We will incorporate input and ideas from gardeners and gardening groups, other partners from the community, government, not-for-profit groups, colleges and universities, and other interested organizations.

Funding for this project is provided by the National Institutes of Health.

What other types of questions will be answered by this project?

- What levels of lead or other contaminants are in the soils and vegetables of urban community gardens?
- How do levels of soil contaminants compare to other sites?
- How do levels of contaminants in garden vegetables compare to vegetables from other sources?
- Do exposures to soil contaminants from urban gardening activities pose risks to public health?
- What gardening practices and strategies for site use are most effective for safely managing urban soils?
- What educational resources are most helpful to communities?
- What research, education, and program needs are important to address in the future?

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