

## VEGETABLE TRIALS OVERVIEW

### Project Overview:

Vegetable Trials is a Master Gardener Volunteer project consisting of a 9,000 square foot research and demonstration vegetable garden of raised and in-ground beds. The project grows diverse varieties of vegetables and herbs to demonstrate best practices which home gardeners can use in their home gardens, and to collect data on the vegetable and herb cultivars most productive in Central Ohio, while using IPM strategies. The project has been in existence for over 20 years.

There is strong interest in our county in home vegetable gardening This project addresses this interest by planting the demonstration garden, collecting and disseminating research results from the garden, and by conducting educational programs for the public in the garden.

The project also addresses food security needs in our community by donating nearly 90 percent of produce from the garden to neighborhood food pantries.



Fourth of July tomatoes

## **VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:**

MGVs have a wide variety of opportunities at Veggie Trials. MGV volunteers meet at the plot twice a week during the growing season, and plan for the project in the off-season. Winter months volunteering consists of selecting seeds for the coming growing season. Late winter/early spring are times of sowing seeds in flats to be raised in OSU greenhouses. Waterman farm management prepares the fields by fertilizing, plowing and operating main irrigation systems.

### Growing season activities:

- Preparing soil in raised beds
- Planting raised beds
- Installing row covers as needed
- Preparing in-ground rows
- Transplanting seedlings from greenhouse
- Planting in-ground
- Once plants are established and producing, evaluating and harvesting
- Distributing produce to area pantries
- End-of-season plot clean-up
- End-of-Year assessments



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Slovana peppers

## **TARGET AUDIENCE:**

The target audience for the project is home vegetable gardeners in Columbus and Central Ohio, but the project reaches gardeners throughout Ohio through dissemination of research results online and information shared at Home and Garden Shows, garden tours, and other public events.

## **EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**

Veggie Trials has four primary objectives:

- 1 Test and collect data on specific vegetable cultivars which are most productive in-home gardens in Central Ohio while utilizing IPM strategies
- 2 Increase knowledge of IPM by working with OSU faculty and staff on ways to identify and control pests and pathogens
- 3 To address food insecurity in Columbus neighborhoods
- 4 Demonstrate IPM practices which home vegetable gardeners can use at home

These project objectives have been achieved through the following strategies:

- Large demonstration vegetable garden utilizing IPM strategies in raised beds and in-ground beds
- Collaborating with OSU staff to increase MGVs' knowledge of best growing practices, pests, and pathogens
- Collection of data regarding the productivity of different vegetable cultivars using IPM strategies and management systems
- Dissemination of research results to home gardeners and others
- Serving as a site for various OSU and regional research projects on vegetable IPM, including seed selection, the use of propagation strategies, manual removal of harmful insects, biological controls, and in past years, a rare use of insecticidal soap when required
- Conducting garden tours, garden walks, onsite field tours, and MGV training workshops to educate MGV's and home gardeners about IPM strategies for vegetable gardens





Veggie Trials Garden August 2, 2020

#### D. Evaluation and Impact

- More than 100 MGV's worked on this project
- Volunteers donated over 1187 hours to the project in 2019
- Twice-weekly evaluations record conditions regarding plant growth, insects and pathogens, and any IPM strategies employed, which are communicated to volunteers through the Extension Office
- IPM practices over years has resulted in no chemical usage for over 3 years
- More than 200 home gardeners and MGV's have learned about IPM strategies by participating in dozens of educational programs
- Presented findings to 60 MGV Interns in 2020
- Produced a handout of Top Producers, in continuous distribution by FCMGV Extension Service, including at the 2020 Spring Columbus Dispatch Home and Garden Show. This is the public's most popular information sheet, with over 5000 distributed since early in 2020. The handout and full research reports are available on the FCMGV website.
- The Vegetable Trials Garden has given away more than 10,000 pounds in the last 6 years
- In 2019 the Veggie Trials Master Gardener volunteers donated 3453 pounds of vegetables to neighborhood food pantries