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Berlin Library Garden Shares Knowledge and Produce With Support from KGI

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The Berlin Branch Library Garden, on the lower eastern shore of Maryland, has been sustained and expanded thanks to a generous grant from KGI?s 2013 Sow It Forward Program. The KGI award was used this spring, or will be used in the coming months, to build two additional raised bed systems, purchase soil and soil amendments, gardening equipment for volunteers to use at the site, and miscellaneous gardening materials.

The mission of the project is to demonstrate sustainable gardening techniques and to provide produce to community organizations that serve, or share food with, people in need. Several Master Gardeners lead the project, and dozens of volunteers have assisted since the project started in 2010.

The location of the garden at a public library helps ensure that many community members have an opportunity to view or experience a vegetable garden. Signage and a regularly maintained garden log book kept at the library provide information for the public; outreach events involve the community in care of the garden (including a visit this spring by a local Girl Scout troop, shown in our photo). The garden demonstrates a variety of techniques, such as use of companion plants, to eliminate the need for synthetic chemical pesticides. Compost is maintained on site, a rain barrel demonstrates rainwater collection.

What started as a pilot project now provides 600 to 800 lbs of food annually to help feed the hungry. Since 2010, hundreds of people in need in our coastal community have benefited from over 1,500 pounds of organic produce donated from the garden to community food assistance programs, including Diakonia, Inc., which provides temporary housing and other assistance and support, and Stevenson United Methodist Church, which prepares meals and maintains a food pantry for those in need.

Importantly, KGI grant funds have allowed the garden to expand production in the winter and early spring. From January 1 to May 27, 45 pounds of produce were harvested and donated, including cabbage, kale, herbs, lettuce, chard, spinach and sugar snap peas.

New to the garden in 2013 is an asparagus bed, prepared in the fall of 2012.

Also planned for 2013 harvest are tomatoes, sweet peppers, carrots, beets, greens, garlic, onions, raspberries, potatoes, bush and pole beans, eggplant, and cucumbers. Towering sunflowers will grace the garden in mid-summer, for a third year.

For more information about the Berlin Branch Library Garden, find us on Facebook!

Image (optional):

[illegible] http://www.kgi.edu/news-and-events/news-archive/2-million-dollar-grant-to-forward-agriculture-shares-knowledge-and-produce-support-kgi