

From Roots to Blooms

Gardening Proving to be an effective Venue in Public Education

Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints is a community service opportunity for gardening clubs and nonprofits serving seniors to promote joint health through accessible gardening. Green Thumbs is primarily implemented through community mini grants. These grants provide money for start-up costs and unlimited technical assistance on ergonomics, tool modifications, and creating accessible garden designs. Green Thumbs is a unique community-based program because program participants are the primary decision makers in each stage of their accessible gardening projects. Technical assistance is always available on an individual basis for any interested West Virginian as well.

A typical mini grant project usually follows these four stages:

1

Grant applicants apply for up to \$1000.00 for start-up costs. This amount may seem minimal, but leveraging funds comes second nature, and is essential to survival, for many rural communities in West Virginia.

Leveraged funds, in-kind donations, and established partnerships are common means to securing financial and material resources for project implementation.

Leveraged funds result in strengthened community-building.

2

Project leaders are community members interested in gardening, either for recreation or for health reasons.

Project leaders purpose grant projects based on space/facilities available; physical capabilities of fellow participants/gardeners; and appealing to the community

3

Projects enjoy a wide range of support because participants are directly involved from start to finish.

Garden projects often are sustainable without Green Thumbs' funding because:

- Participants immediately feel positive impacts from their project participation because projects meet their capabilities.
- Accessible garden designs are changeable and flexible. They can be changed in response to participants' changing needs.
- Projects' home communities voluntarily support projects with material needs.


4

Projects tend to experience high success rates because implementation addresses the needs and capabilities of participants. Projects are also designed to fit the 'look' of the home community.

Projects enjoy consistent participation rates because West Virginians are familiar with gardening. Participants not only are familiar with gardening; but also project leaders and partners, especially in small communities.

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Continued



Green Thumbs has grown 'like a weed' in its four years of existence. It has grown from funding seven projects reaching 225 West Virginians in 2007 to funding 20 projects reaching 525 West Virginians in 2010. Since 2007, 51 projects have been funded, reaching 1,182 West Virginians. This successful promotion and outreach is made possible by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health's increased funding. It is the Bureau's mission to fund what the public demands. Increased funding suggests gardening is an acceptable avenue to transport health information as well as to encourage exercise and daily activity.

Grassroots leadership, local partnerships and community based delivery systems are proving to be vital ingredients for successful community projects, especially in isolated areas. Green Thumbs, Healthy Joint's program design suggests that significant impacts on health and community participation can be attained when participants are actively engaged in the planning, implementing, and delivery of program activities. Partnerships and participant willingness not only lead to increased impacts in health and community building but also lower economic cost for program implementation.

For more information call the Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints project at **304-293-4692**, e-mail greenthumbs@hsc.wvu.edu or visit greenthumbs.cedwvu.edu.

Support for 'Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints' is made possible by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources' Osteoporosis and Arthritis Program, which is part of the Bureau for Public Health.

