

## Case Study 7

### **Community Gardens**

*Harvest States Corn Project, Bowbells, ND*

Case study by

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#### **Introduction**

The Harvest States Corn Project was conducted in Bowbells, ND during Spring 1999. Mike Gratton, manager of Harvest States in Bowbells, was interviewed in November, 1999 regarding the project. The idea for the Harvest States Corn Project was very new one to the rural community, and that made this case study, as a component of the Bowbells' food system, unique.

Craig Ellsworth, agronomist for Harvest States of Bowbells, found the idea for a community corn project in a magazine. He thought that it would be interesting to try the idea in Bowbells. After researching the idea, the project began. Planting started in Spring 1999. Craig Ellsworth did most of the work, but other Harvest States employees contributed to the project. For example, Junior Ragel did most of the planting; Mike Ragel sprayed the field; and Dana Hoheisel fertilized the field. Project crops included corn, peas, pumpkins, and cantaloupe.

The project was a community-oriented program, and was not intended to raise money. The main reason for the project was to offer something enjoyable to the community as a whole. An honesty policy was established whereby people from Bowbells could pick whatever amount of produce they wanted. Although voluntary donations were received from those who picked produce, it was insufficient to cover Harvest States' costs. Cropland participated with Harvest States by donating corn seed.

#### **Problems Faced by the Project**

One of the major problems that faced the community project was the bad weather. The Bowbells area received an excessive amount of rain, which caused the field to flood. The peas, pumpkins, and cantaloupe were drowned out because of the excess of rain. Three acres of corn had to be reseeded because of the flooding.

#### **Community Response**

The response of the community was very good. People were very impressed with the idea of the project. Harvest States received many positive comments from community residents stating that they would like the project to continue again in 2000.

#### **Future Plans**

Harvest States intends to conduct the project again in 2000, and is already preparing for it. They fertilized the field in Fall 1999, and have made arrangements for Spring planting. However, several adjustments have been made. Harvest States conducted more research on this type of project and intend to switch the arrangement of the field to prevent future flooding in case of excess rain. They plan to plant corn in the lower spots of the field because corn can withstand more water than the other types of crops. Other crops, such as peas, pumpkins, and cantaloupe, will be planted in the higher areas of the field so that they will not get drowned out

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as they did in the 1999 season.

### **Lessons Learned**

Harvest States project leaders suggest that other communities or seed companies interested in this type of project should give it a try. Although small communities are often resistant to change, they were surprising at the great response a little project brought to the community. It produced much happiness and the people were very impressed.

The project leaders learned that much more research should be done before such projects actually are started. This is an important lesson for agencies, such as the Extension Service, which may help to facilitate similar projects. Research is important for the various aspects of a project – people, finances, resources, material contributions, and time. People are needed to help fertilize, plant, spray, and conduct research. The time they commit to the project can be a positive experience that others in the community can appreciate and from which they can learn.

Prior to this interview, Harvest States had voted to conduct an effort similar to what had been done by a Nebraska and Kansas company. That company bought wheat from farmers, turns it into bread, and sold the bread back in the community. Harvest States turned down that opportunity without specifying the reason. Mike Gratton stated, “We need to link the producer to the consumer, and shrink the line of production so farmers can benefit more. That is exactly what every community, farmer, and company should be trying to accomplish. It is hoped that this small project can open the eyes of some of the small communities to more opportunities that can occur to keep products from the farmers in their own communities.”

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**Photograph 7.16. Mike Gratton, manager of Harvest States in Bowbells, ND.**



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**Photograph 7.17. Harvest States Corn Project field in Bowbells, ND.**

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**For Further Reading**

Drake, Susan York. 1976. *Recreational Community Gardening: A Guide to Organization and Development*. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

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Hynes, H. Patricia. 1996. *A Patch of Eden: America's Inner City Gardeners*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Pub.

Jobb, Jamie. 1979. *The Complete Book of Community Gardening*. New York: Morrow, 1979.

Landman, Ruth H. 1993. *Creating Community in the City: Cooperatives and Community Gardens in Washington, D.C.* Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Johnson, Dorothy. 1992. *Creating Community Gardens: A Handbook for Planning and Creating Community Gardens to Beautify and Enhance Cities and Towns*. 2nd edition. Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota State Horticultural Society.

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Pennsylvania State University. Cooperative Extension Service. 1990. *Urban Gardening Program: The Coordinator's Book*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University, Cooperative Extension Service.

Seymour, Whitney North, (comp.). 1969. *Small Urban Spaces: The Philosophy, Design, Sociology, and Politics of Vest-pocket Parks and Other Small Urban Open Spaces*. New York: New York University Press.

Turner, Nancy LeBlanc. 1990. *Urban and Community Gardening, January 1984-april 1990*. Beltsville, MD: National Agricultural Library.

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### Web Sites:

American Community Gardening Association

[aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kinder/acga.html](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kinder/acga.html)

[www.communitygarden.org/index.html](http://www.communitygarden.org/index.html)

Urban Community Gardens

[alexia.lis.uiuc.edu/~sewells/cggardens.html](http://alexia.lis.uiuc.edu/~sewells/cggardens.html)

St. Paul, MN Farm in the City program

[www.mninter.net/%7Ethomasjp/CITYFARM.html](http://www.mninter.net/%7Ethomasjp/CITYFARM.html)