

Fall 2011 NBCHG Gardening Member Survey and Feedback Final Report

Submitted: February 2012

Prepared by:

Paula Graham

Research and Administrative Assistant
Atlantic Institute on Aging

Lyndsay Hughes

Volunteer Research Assistant
Atlantic Institute on Aging



ATLANTIC INSTITUTE ON AGING

INSTITUT ATLANTIQUE SUR LE VIEILLISSEMENT

Introduction: Message from the authors

This report is a summary of the findings collected through the NB Community Harvest Gardens (NBCHG) Fall 2011 Member Survey. This report was prepared by the Atlantic Institute on Aging (AIA) and submitted to Edee Klee, Co-chair of NBCHG in February of 2012. The primary authors of this report are Paula Graham, Research and Administrative Assistant at the AIA, and Lyndsay Hughes, volunteer Research Assistant at the AIA. We would like to acknowledge the other volunteers who distributed and collected the surveys to NBCHG members and gathered feedback from them by telephone: Jennifer, Jessica, Tara, Sharon, and Kerry. Without these volunteers this research would not have been possible. As well, we would like to thank Barbara Burnett, Executive Director of the AIA, who initiated this project and supported all those involved. Most importantly, we would like to extend our thanks to the NBCHG members themselves who took the time to respond to the survey and provide feedback. Thank you.

Paula & Lyndsay

NB Community Harvest Gardens Inc.: About

Mission Statement: *NB Community Harvest Gardens Inc.* will provide inclusive space for all citizens to garden together within the City of Fredericton. We will create a shared vision to work collaboratively and to cultivate a place for individuals, families and friends to learn about and to experience the rewards of gardening – “*to grow food, grow minds and grow community*”.

Garden location: St. Mary's Anglican Church, 780 McEvoy Street, Fredericton

Website: www.nbchg.org

Atlantic Institute on Aging

The *Atlantic Institute on Aging*, developed in 2009, serves as a politically neutral space for various people and organizations to collaborate on research, projects, and programming related to aging and eldercare. The Institute works to promote a holistic portrait of aging and how society can address the challenges, as well as harness the opportunities, presented by aging population. Most of all, the Institute promotes a new philosophy of aging; *aging as sharing wisdom*.

Website: www.aginginstitute.ca

Research Goal

The goal of this research is to understand how Summer/Fall 2011 NBCHG gardening members used their plot at St. Mary's Community Garden, how their garden membership impacted their lives, and to determine the type and amount of produce grown during the Summer/Fall 2011 season.

Methods

Data was gathered for this research using surveys (both hard copy and electronic submissions) and telephone interviews. Six volunteer research assistants sent surveys to and collected surveys from NBCHG gardening members with plots at St. Mary's Community Garden and telephoned members to give an opportunity for members to provide additional feedback about their experience. The majority of surveys were sent by email, though some were returned in hard copy form by mail.

Ethics: Confidentiality and Anonymity

Email addresses and telephone numbers for NBCHG survey members were provided by Edee Klee, Co-Chair of NBCHG. Each volunteer research assistant signed a confidentiality agreement to ensure that NBCHG members' contact information remained confidential and responses remained anonymous. No names or personal information is attached to the data, further ensuring anonymity of responses.

Before data collection for this research began, NBCHG members were provided an opportunity to decline participation in the research and indicate that they did not want their contact information to be shared with research assistants. This opportunity ensured that participation in the research was voluntary.

Survey

The survey was created by Edee Klee, NBCHG Co-chair. Through the survey both quantitative and qualitative information was gathered. Quantitative information includes the following sections on the survey: Workshop Attendance, Membership Profile, Gardening Information, and Impact of NBCHG Membership. Qualitative information includes the majority of the open-ended survey questions. Results from the open-ended questions were synthesized and summarized and provide a qualitative portrait of NBCHG members' experiences.

Canadian Newcomer Group Survey (focus group)

Nine out of the fifteen Gardeners who were newcomers to Canada took part in a focus group with the Multicultural Association of Fredericton. Their qualitative responses are summarized in the Qualitative Results section.

Results

Surveys sent: 50

Surveys completed/returned: 40

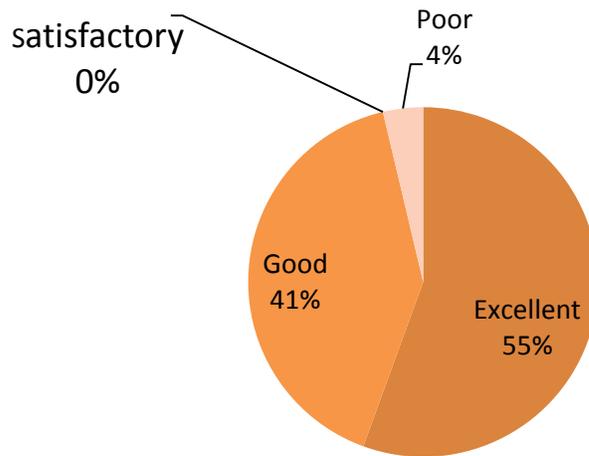
Quantitative Results

Workshop Attendance

Workshop Title	Respondents who attended	Respondents who <i>did not</i> use the information
Jumpstart your seedlings	9	1
Our Heritage, Our Seeds	8	4
Healthy Soil, Less Toil	11	0
From Pot to Plot	10	0
Small Plot Gardening for Beginners	11	1
The ABC's of Backyard Composting	5	2
Putting Your Garden to Bed	10	2
Grape Juice and Cranberry-Grape Preserves	3	1
Orange-Cranberry Chutney	2	0

In general, how would you rate the workshops you have attended?

**Note: Those who did not respond are not represented in the pie chart.*



Suggestions for Future Topics:

Ensuring healthy produce, Drying vegetables for storage, Cold smoking, Refresher for new year, repeat of workshops, garden art, weeding(stages), attracting beneficial insects, garden architecture (benefits), chocolate or caramel covered insects, Insect control, plant disease mitigation, healthy soil, healthy plants, recognizing nutrients and pH problems, soil, planting seeds and seedlings, common garden errors/troubleshooting, beginner gardening, repeat workshops, cooking classes(kale and other uncommon crops), composting, starting seeds inside and transplanting into pots, specific workshops (ex. Tomatoes), emphasis on seedlings(basic timing on starting seeds inside), using fertilizers such as chicken manure, storing vegetables(best way to store, optimal temperature etc.), hold evening workshops, type of gardening, food prep and storage, vegetables that grow well together

Membership Profile

% of those who answered:

Age:	under 25: 0	0%
	25-34: 7	19%
	35-44: 8	22%
	45-54: 9	24%
	55-64: 6	16%
	65+: 7	19%
	No answer: 3	

No. of adults gardening your plot:	1 adult: 21	57%
	2 adults: 15	41%
	4 adults: 1	2%
	No answer: 3	

No. of adults eating produce from your plot:	1 adult: 6	18%
	2 adults: 20	59%
	3 adults: 4	12%
	4 adults: 3	9%
	7 adults: 1	2%
	No answer: 3	

No. of children gardening your plot:	0 children: 22	76%
	1 child: 2	7%
	2 children: 2	7%
	3 children: 3	10%
	No answer: 11	

No. of children eating produce from your plot:	0 children: 19	66%
	1 child: 4	14%
	2 children: 3	10%
	3 children: 2	7%
	5 children: 1	3%
	No answer: 11	

Are you an immigrant to Canada?

Yes: 8

All >5 years ago

Countries of origin: England, Hungary, UK, USA, Rwanda, Germany

Did you have experience gardening before coming to Canada?	Yes: 6	75%
	No: 2	25%

Do you or your family have any special needs?

Peanut allergy, degenerative disc disorder, arthritis

Level of Education attained:

“Graduate degree”: 8
 “University”: 5
 “Bachelor’s degree”: 12
 “Post secondary”: 3
 “High school”: 3
 “College”: 5
 “Post graduate”: 1
 “Professional certification”: 1

Note: Some respondents answered more than once.

Occupation:

Nurse: 2
 Personal support worker: 2
 Teacher: 2
 Self employed: 2
 Retired: 8

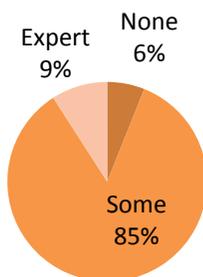
Other: lawyer, social development, student, youth coordinator, professional, afterschool care, tea maker, writer, full time volunteer, social media traffic coordinator, Web/graphic designer, photographer, stay-at-home parent or homemaker, yoga instructor, tcm practitioner, biologist, dietician, IT consultant, civil servant, acupuncturist, manager, training coordinator

Gardening Information

Gardening experience level at beginning of membership:

None: 6
 Some: 28
 Expert: 3
 No answer: 3*

**Not represented in pie chart.*

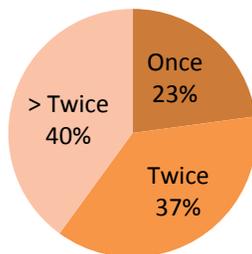


On average , how often did you visit your plot?

In a 2 week period...
 Once: 8
 Twice: 13
 More than twice: 14
 No answer: 5*

**Not represented in pie chart*

In a two-week period...



On average, how did you travel to your plot at St. Mary's?	Walk: 10 Bike: 9 Bus: 0 Car: 29 <i>Note: some answered more than once.</i>
---	--

On average, how far did you travel each time you visit the garden (in kilometers)?

0-2km: 12

3-4km: 7

5-7km: 9

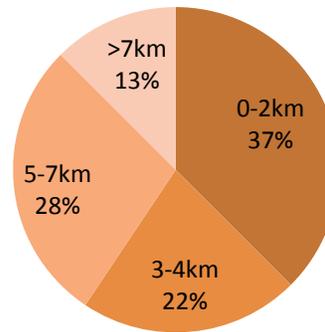
>7km: 4

Other answers*:

12 minutes by car, in the neighbourhood

No answer: 6*

**Not represented in pie chart.*



Did you use composted chicken manure provided at the site?

Yes: 28

No: 3

Compost used either in addition or as an alternative to chicken manure:

The city donation of manure, sand, compost material from bin, leaf compost, personal compost, city compost, bone meal, gardens dream fish emulsion, sheep manure, purchased organic compost, city compost, ten pails horse manure, seaweed compost, tea

Vegetables/Edible Plants

Note: Respondents answered "estimated amount harvested" using a variety of measurements. The numbers below represent the total of each measurement.

Vegetable	Was it an Heirloom or Heritage variety?	Estimated Amount of TOTAL Harvested
Cauliflower	No: 1	8 heads
Sunberry	No: 1	4-5 pints
Ground cherry	No: 1	4-5 pints
Brussel sprouts	No: 1	1 stalk
Rutabega	Yes: 1	6 medium size
Radish	No: 9	Pounds: 21 Bunches: 17 Number: 40 # of plants: 12
Tomatoes*	Yes: 15	Pounds: 21

	No: 7	No yield: 8 Number (ripe): 93 Bunches: 1 Quarts: 7
Beets	Yes 1 No: 10	Pounds: 48 Number: 19 Other: "entire plot"
Carrots	Yes: 3 No: 14	Pounds: 70 Number: 11 Kilograms: 3 Bags: 1 Bunches: 13
Lettuce	Yes 1 No: 12	Heads/bunches: 100+ # of salads: 4-5 Servings: 3 Bags: 11
Chives	Yes: 1 No: 2	Bunches: 2 Handfuls: several Other: "minimal", "some"
Beans	Yes: 2 No: 13	Pounds: 37 Number: 25 Other: "5 feeds", "many"
Peas	Yes: 1 No: 4	Pounds: 7.5 No yield: 2 Number: 48 Harvests: 1
Swiss chard	Yes: 1 No: 7	Pounds: 4 Bunches: 58 Servings: 7 Bags: 6 Plants: 6
Cucumber	Yes: 1 No: 4	Number: 13 Other: "a few"
Cherry tomatoes	No: 1	Number: 60
Rosemary	No: 1	"Half a cup dried"
Basil	Yes: 1 No: 1	Cups: 4 Bunches: 6 Other: "successful"
Summer savory		"Successful"
Dill	No: 2	"Minimal", "small amount"
Sage	Yes: 1	Cups (dried): one third
Oregano		"Successful"
Callabree		Number: 3

Impact of NBCHG Gardening Membership

What ***impact*** did gardening at St. Mary's Community Garden have on the following areas in your life?...

Food, Health & Nutrition

% of those who answered:

Access to fresh produce	Improved greatly : 14 Improved somewhat: 17 No change: 3 No answer: 6	41% 50% 9%
Food Budget	Improved greatly: 4 Improved somewhat: 19 No change: 10 No answer: 7	12% 58% 30%
Healthy eating habits	Improved greatly: 5 Improved somewhat: 13 No change: 16 No answer: 6	15% 38% 47%
Physical well-being	Improved greatly: 10 Improved somewhat: 16 No change: 8 No answer: 6	29% 47% 24%

Skill Development

Gardening skills & knowledge	Improved greatly: 10 Improved somewhat : 21 No change: 2 No answer: 7	30% 64% 6%
Confidence in gardening	Improved greatly: 11 Improved somewhat: 15 No change: 9 No answer: 5	31% 43% 26%
Sharing gardening tips with others	Improved greatly : 9 Improved somewhat : 18 No change: 5 No answer: 8	28% 56% 16%
Receiving gardening tips from others	Improved greatly: 15 Improved somewhat: 17 No change: 2 No answer: 6	44% 50% 6%
Use of organic gardening principles	Improved greatly: 13 Improved somewhat: 12 No change: 9 No answer: 6	38% 35% 27%

Eco-friendly habits at home	Improved greatly: 4	13%
	Improved somewhat: 10	31%
	No change: 18	56%
	No answer: 8	

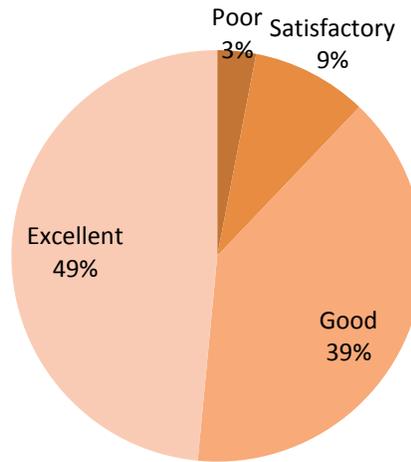
Social Connections

Knowledge of other cultures	Improved greatly: 7	21%
	Improved somewhat : 16	47%
	No change: 11	32%
	No answer: 6	
Sense of belonging	Improved greatly: 7	22%
	Improved somewhat: 18	56%
	No change: 7	22%
	No answer: 8	
New Social Connections/Friendships	Improved greatly: 9	27%
	Improved somewhat: 20	61%
	No change: 4	12%
	No answer: 7	

Overall, has your experience at the St. Mary’s Community Garden been:

- Poor: 1
- Satisfactory: 3
- Good: 13
- Excellent: 16
- No answer: 7*

**Not represented in pie chart.*



Qualitative Results

Introduction

This section presents the major themes that emerged from the qualitative feedback: health and well-being, community social interactions, environmental factors and learning/education. It should be noted, though, responses often overlapped major themes. Therefore, each theme is not self-contained but related to all of the other themes. Also it is important to note that while the following summary focuses on common themes that emerged from the majority of responses, responses did vary.

Reasons for Membership

When asked for comments on why they wanted a plot at St. Mary's Community Garden, respondents offered a variety of responses, though a number of overall themes emerged. Many of the respondents said that the size and location of their home and/or property did not allow them to garden as much as they would like. Another common answer was that they wanted to save money on food by growing their own. It was also common for respondents to report that they joined NBCHG for social or wellness related reasons, as is illustrated in the following comment: "a sense of making the world a better place, enjoying fresh vegetables, friendships and feelings of accomplishment".

Health and Well Being

This theme encompassed a wide variety of health and wellness concepts. While most respondents spoke to health in the context of physical well-being, a few directly addressed spiritual and mental wellness as well. In the words of one gardener: "[there is a] physical aspect but also a mental aspect- a psychological component... [gardening] felt like therapy." Another said that gardening is "therapeutic". One respondent termed the community garden as "an outreach" opportunity, linking his or her NBCHG membership to his or her religious affiliation, wellbeing, and wider community connections. Also, a number of gardeners pointed out that gardening at St. Mary's aided them in promoting good health to their children and families.

Some respondents indicated that gardening related exercise and others explicitly mentioned that gardening increased their time spent outdoors. Other comments were about healthy eating rather than exercise. One gardener mentioned that he or she liked the "access to healthy food at a reasonable cost" and being able to "grow something from seed to table". Another said he or she desired more organic food sources, and another mentioned that the community garden meant "economical access to healthy food". Interestingly, there was no consensus around whether or not gardening actually improved healthy eating habits, as is reflected in the quantitative data. (15% of respondents reported great improvement to their healthy eating habits, 38% reported some improvement, and 47% reported no change.)

Community and Social Interactions

Responses around social connections varied in that some respondents focussed on familial interactions in relation to NBCHG, some focussed on friendships, and others on the larger community context. Some gardeners specifically connected health and social connections in stating that the garden as a way to spend time with families and as a healthy activity both for exercise and to model healthy living. Family ties were also evident in response sets around how many family members gardened or ate produce directly from the garden.

While most plots did not have children gardening them (76% of respondents), both adults and children ate from the garden with about a third responding that at least one child ate the produce (34% of respondents). Though children may not have been gardening to a large extent per se, one respondent shared the following story:

“Because I live so close to the garden I was able to see people up there working away... One day I was sitting in my backyard reading a book and I heard a family walking up the hill- I heard the kids shouting to their mom ‘hey, are we going to the garden!?’ It was great to hear their enthusiasm.”

Family interaction factored into a number of responses.

Though many mentioned family interaction in relation to the garden, social ties went beyond the family unit. In the words of one respondent: “[the garden was] a focal point for positive community development”. A popular response to why they wanted to garden was “to enjoy the community aspect of gardening with other people” and another mentioned that he or she wanted to “meet like-minded souls”. One respondent described his or her motivation for joining NBCHG in the following way: “new comer desiring to know others, want interaction, to learn with/from, increase English, network with others”. Another gardener mentioned that he or she wanted to garden through a community garden because of the sense of “group giving support.” However, one respondent said that “friendships did not go outside the garden,” though there were many who indicated a lasting social affect from being part of the community garden. In the words of one gardener on his or her experience:

“There was cooperation and conversation across plots in the garden which I am sure [will] help to foster connections and friendships beyond the garden... I think a sense of community was starting to emerge by working toward a common good”.

Overall, respondents spoke positively about social connections and often related them to a larger community context. For example, one respondent said that the “best part [of being a part of NBCHG] is that it really gave me faith in how nice people are and how good we can work together”. Others linked social connections to culture, like one gardener who said that “it was nice to meet people.. from all different walks of life”, and another said that the garden brought together people from different backgrounds. Others reported positive experiences with regards to meeting people from different cultural backgrounds as well. A few gardeners said that social events, such as the potluck, were a good way to experience other cultures. For some respondents, experiencing new cultures were also linked to learning, which is revealed in the

following shared story of observing a group of people from a different culture during a volunteering activity:

“.. it was clear that the group was very skilled at the task at hand. I went over and observed how they were doing it, as it seemed to be easier and faster than the method I was using. After several minutes of struggling to get the best efficiency I could in the taking the grass but not the soil below away, one of the ladies came over and showed me how she did it in a hands on way- again, with no common language between us. I’ve lived in very large, multicultural cities for several years, but this was still really cool to see”.

Environmental Factors

As a major theme, "environmental factors" includes eco-friendly habits, food production, and awareness of environmental concerns. Respondents' environmental concerns were at times linked to family, as a number of gardeners made a point to mention how they wanted to teach children how food grows and to get them more interested in the process of growing their own food. Most respondents who spoke to environmental issues tended to exhibit a desire to eat and grow organic produce. One respondent specifically said that a result of their NBCHG membership is that he or she now thinks about organic compost. The following comment sums up how some respondents felt in relation to environmental factors and gardening: “I feel free to have land and enjoy being able to grow [food] organically”. Positive feelings about producing one's own food are echoed in the following story of one gardener's observations: “The garden plots looked beautiful and fruitful. Though limited in quantity the produce coming from my plot tasted better than any store bought because I had planted it, I had cultivated it and I had harvested it.”

Learning/Education

Formal learning opportunities, such as workshops, were discussed by a number of respondents and 96% of those who answered said that the workshops were either "good" or "excellent". A number of respondents indicated they would like some of the workshops to be repeated or at least have refreshers on the topics already covered, but a large number also made suggestions on future topics they would like to see taught. Some respondents pointed to a lack of confidence in their gardening skills and some said that the learning aspect of the community garden was appealing.

A number of gardeners mentioned both a desired or realized teaching and learning aspect to their gardening in relation to their family or children. Teaching their families about growing food and instilling values around attention to food production was a common response. In particular it was noted in one response: “Kids enjoyed time in the garden, eating directly from the garden, [and were] excited to participate”. These close learning and teaching opportunities carried at least in some experiences from the garden to the home, as one gardener said their son learned to both identify plants and how to prepare them.

A significant number of gardeners mentioned learning from other gardeners. There were “shared stories” within the social interactions and some mentioned sharing

recipes and cooking techniques. As seen in the story of learning techniques as related to culture, some gardeners made a point to include learning about others as an important part of their experience.

Canadian Newcomers Group Survey (Focus Group)

The Canadian Newcomers group in particular mentioned barriers to learning from the workshops: “[It] is very uncomfortable to have translator slow down the activities and really do not open space for clarifications.. The topics look interest[ing] to us but the reason we explain above, prevent us [from] participat[ing]”. This group went on to suggest that the workshop information could be available to them before the workshop, so they can prepare and be able to understand the information better. It should be noted that the Canadian Newcomers Group indicated they had a lot of experience, but that the gardening was different in Canada. Despite this, their response to gardening skills and knowledge, as well as sharing and receiving gardens tips all were said to have improved greatly. This could have been a result of social learning as opposed to the formal workshops, in which they could share their previous knowledge with and learn techniques from fellow gardeners.

One Canadian Newcomer respondent in particular had a difficult time accessing the garden as it was not in a convenient location for him or her. This lowered the amount of produce he or she was able to grow, as he or she could only visit the garden about once a week.

In total there were 15 recent newcomer families from Bhutan & Nepal gardening at St. Mary’s Community Garden in 2011:

Average Age: 35-44

Number of adults gardening per plot: 2, Adults eating from each plot: 2

Length of time in Canada: "one family 3 years, seven families more than a year, four arrived last year"

Average Family Income is under 25,000

Respondents aged 65+

When possible, gardeners aged 65 and over were asked additional questions regarding their membership with NBCHG. In general these gardeners valued the opportunity to be outside “in the fresh air” and said that gardening does improve one’s wellbeing. One gardener described gardening as a “healthy and therapeutic activity”. They also enjoyed the social aspect of the gardening: meeting new people, observing how other people’s plots were tended, and opportunities to have conversations and interact with other gardeners. Some 65+ gardeners had learned to garden from their parents and/or grandparents and one said that he or she continues to be inspired when reflecting upon his or her grandparents’ garden. In addition to learning from family members, another said that he or she learned about gardening from PBS television programs, books, and magazines.

Despite having previous experience with gardening, one person mentioned that he or she did learn new things from being a part of NBCHG such as mulching and double-digging and another exchanged advice with other gardeners and learned about potato blight. In addition to learning new things, gardeners aged 65+ were able to share their own experiences and gardening knowledge. One said that he or she helped with garden-related projects such as water collection and shed building because of his or her background in engineering. Respondents aged 60+ reported that they tended to use their community garden yield in their own cooking but also shared it with family and friends. A few people said that growing their own food with NBCHG helped reduce food costs to some extent.

Improvements

Many respondents provided suggested improvements for NBCHG and are summarized below.

Some respondents were concerned lost connection between individual gardeners and those in decision making or leadership positions. One respondent said he or she felt like “decisions came from above”. Some gardeners also mentioned a lack of appreciation or recognition for NBCHG volunteers.

A few respondents mentioned better management of the plots, including making sure plots were used and maintained well. Other suggestions included starting the garden earlier in the season and establishing a south side location for better access. Also, a few gardeners made the point of having the garden more accessible for seniors or those with a physical disability. One respondent said that he or she “would like to have a raised garden this year as I am not able to bend down”.

Interestingly, a few respondent mentioned improvements that were directly related to the major themes outlined above. In particular, one respondent thought it might be a good idea to form a committee to help new gardeners and to keep closer contact between gardeners that desired this. Another said that a mentorship program could be helpful where new comers are assigned a more experienced gardener to learn from.