



2021 Home Demonstration Garden

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Upon learning of the 2021 availability of the ISU Northeast Research Farm (NERF) demonstration garden in the late spring from Farm Research Manager, Ken Pecinovsky, the group above decided to joint partner to grow and donate fresh and wholesome produce to area food pantries. As both Floyd and Bremer County Extension Councils had chosen “Engaging Iowans in Food Supply, Safety, and Access” under the ISU Extension Covid-19 Recovery Action Plan, this fit into their efforts and both directors agreed to make this a joint program.

Materials and Methods

Seeds and plants were obtained and donated from sources, including those at the Research Farm from vendors, plus plants from the Floyd County FFA greenhouse and growers. Bremer County ISU Extension donated plants grown by Cannon Greenhouse in Westgate as part of their long-term Waverly Community Sharing Garden. Planting was done in mid-late May. A May 29 frost injured some of the peppers but most plants grew out of the damage, all other garden plants were not affected. Planting was done by the NERF staff, Ken Pecinovsky and Ralph White, and assisted by ISU Extension Directors, Milius and Lenth.

Plant types were focused on volume and production where possible, although donations dictated the final selection. Seeds and transplants were from those donated to the Research Farm.

Daily care, watering, hand weeding, mulching and harvesting were mostly completed by the Research Farm staff. Local volunteers and Master Gardeners also assisted. Deliveries of produce were mainly handled by ISU Extension Directors Milius and Lenth. Each detailed harvest pickup was recorded by Farm Manager, Ken Pecinovsky.

Results and Discussion

All the produce (4,643 pounds) were donated to area food pantries in both counties, plus the Northeast Iowa Food Bank in Waterloo, Floyd County Senior Congregate Meal Sites, and Community Daycare Center in Charles City. The Food Bank services local pantries in a 16-county area for food-insecure families. Of the total, Floyd ISU Extension donated 2,481 pounds and Bremer County donated 1,796 pounds. These were greatly appreciated by local food-insecure families and their food pantries.

This large vegetable production and donation during an early summer drought was largely due to the extra attention by the Research Farm staff. Cucumbers were our largest producer with 2,209 pounds (48%). They had stalled out prior to when the farm received one large August 9 rain event, and it regenerated them for the rest of the season. Tomatoes did poorly with excessive fruit cracking possibly from above normal August rainfalls (10.6 in. total) following dry summer conditions and late fruit maturity due to cultivar selection. Sweet corn did well, although area raccoons did minor damage. The large cabbage planting did extremely well and had some second growths. Beets did quite well for the size of area planted. Garden plants in general, yielded well from a 0.11 acre garden area (50 ft. x 100 ft) (Table 1).

Acknowledgements

The team effort with the NERF staff, area citizens, Master Gardeners, plus Floyd and Bremer ISU Extension Directors all worked together to make this a successful venture and provide fresh produce to food-insecure families

Table 1. Total weight of garden produce donated to local food pantries in 2021.

Species	Length of Harvest	Weight (lbs)
Apples	Sept 12–October 20	115.9
Lettuce	June 21 – July 9	9.4
Cucumbers	July 16 – October 5	2209.0
Peas	July 2 – July 13	47.8
Beans	July 19 – September 17	187.9
Cabbage	July 3 – August 26	678.0
Peppers	July 26 – October 15	211.0
Beets	July 9 – August 4	77.2
Sweet Corn	August 3 – August 23	680.6
Tomatoes	August 5 – October 14	352.8
Watermelon	August 5 – August 26	73.5
Total		4643.1