

Ithaca's Community Garden Harvest Research



*By Heather Scott
Supported by Food Dignity*



Pilot year: 2012

- 9 gardeners completed logs
- All community gardeners
- Plots 225-400 square feet
- Self-selected



From three gardens—dryden, downtown, woods earth



Incentives

- \$50 visa gift card
- Digital scale
- Cover crop seed
- Access to data

Rye-vetch mix planted in late September



26 gardeners!

2013 Changes



- Gardens vary wildly—from 65-1500 square feet
- Five community gardens—Cornell, Dryden, downtown, Ecovillage, Woods Earth.
- Two home gardeners & ecovillage—mixed home/ community
- Some perennials
- Blog!



Using home gardeners brought new questions—what about fruit trees? What about shared trees? Etc

Blog and increased email added to a sense of community. Some gardeners emailed out questions to the group

2013 Findings	
Total planted space	8068 sq ft
Total harvest yield	4011 lbs
Average harvest yield	182 lbs
Average lbs/sq ft	.47
Average yield without four novices	211 lbs, .53 lbs/sqft
Range in harvest yield	12 lbs- 456 lbs
Average monetary value	\$551
Range in monetary value	\$25- \$1450
Average monetary value without four novices	\$649



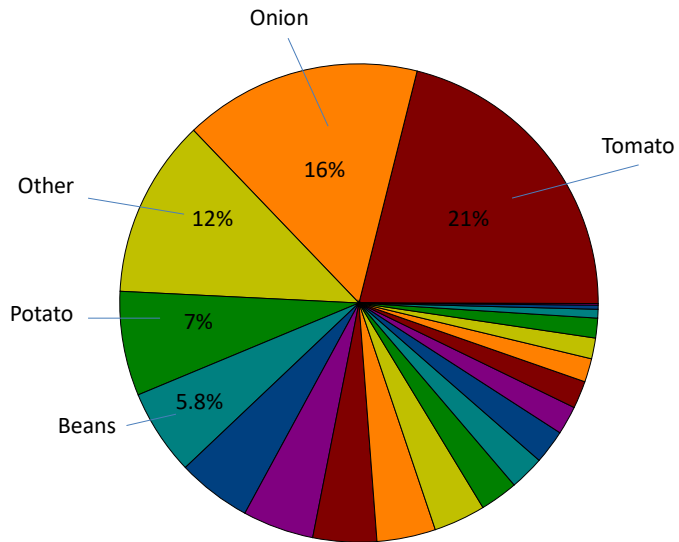
Per acre comparison

- 14,420 lbs/acre without novices
- 12,677 lbs/acre with novices
- Average per acre yields in Northeastern U.S. (Crop Rotation on Organic Farms: A Planning Manual, NRAES 177)



crop	Per acre lbs
Potato	30,000
Tomato	20,000
Onion	25,000
Summer squash	17,000
Beans, snap	6,000
Spinach	8,000
Broccoli, cauliflower	10,000

Relative production of specific veggies by weight





Gardener interview tool

- Gardening experience
- Gardening practices
- Motives for choosing what to plant
- Distance to food stores and mode transportation
- Environmental concerns

Like to eat, easy to grow, expensive to buy, or other (for sauce, for storage, cannot be purchased in stores)
How much is shared

Gardener experience interview

- “why do I grow greens? Can I just say it’s in my bones??” –40 year veteran gardener
- “It’s a mindset and a lifestyle—not just food. Today there’s so much focus on buy, buy, buy. Gardening is more about what you can do for yourself” —Cornell gardener
- “What do you mean, how many days a week do I garden in the summer? Everyday!” —Paul Thomas



Year 3: 2014!

- Up to 42 gardeners already!
- Including 14 home gardens
- Increased word-of-mouth advertising
- LOTS of enthusiasm!



Thanks to the food dignity team for providing me the opportunity to do this work!