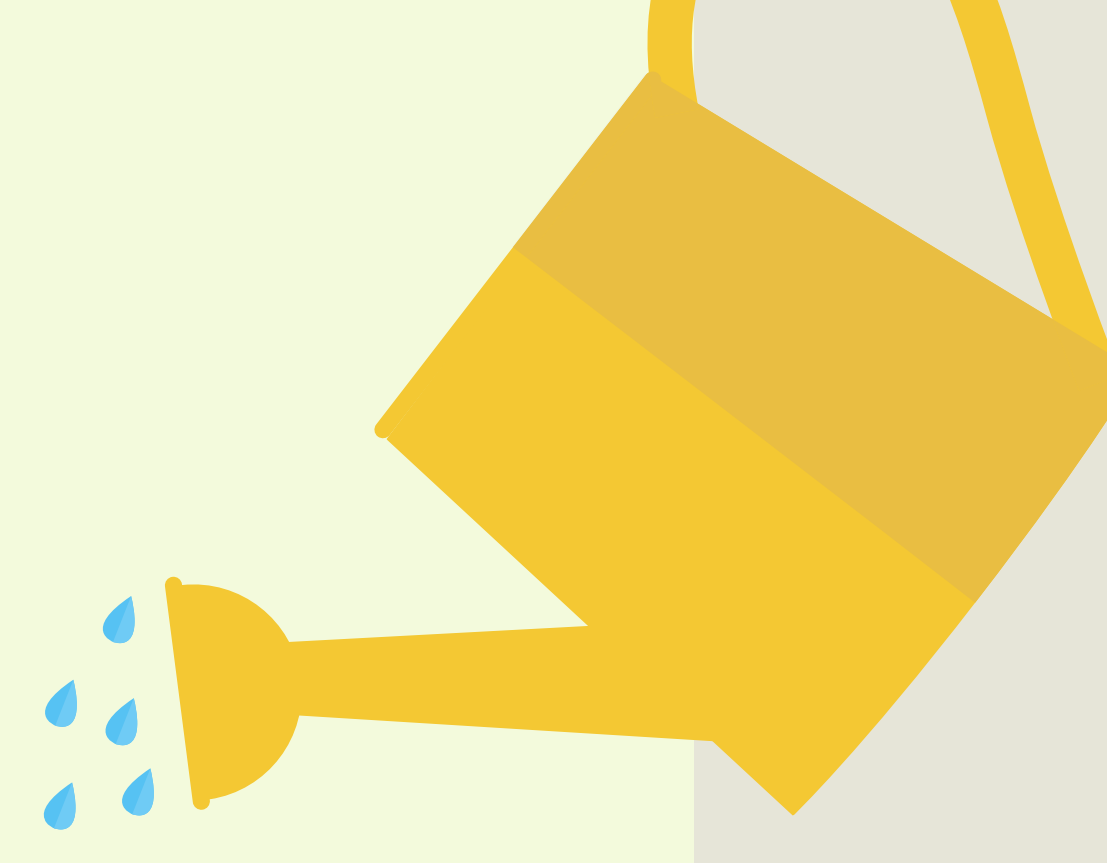


GROWING TOGETHER: THE COMMUNITY GARDEN AS A HUB FOR CONNECTION



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As the local health improvement coalition, the Healthy St. Mary's Partnership (HSMP) has joined the Lexington Manor Passive Park (LMPP) Community Garden to promote food security. Since its opening in Spring of 2024, we have found that the community has greater needs than food, which the garden can help address.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY GARDEN?

A space that is cultivated by a group of people that can take many forms and structures.

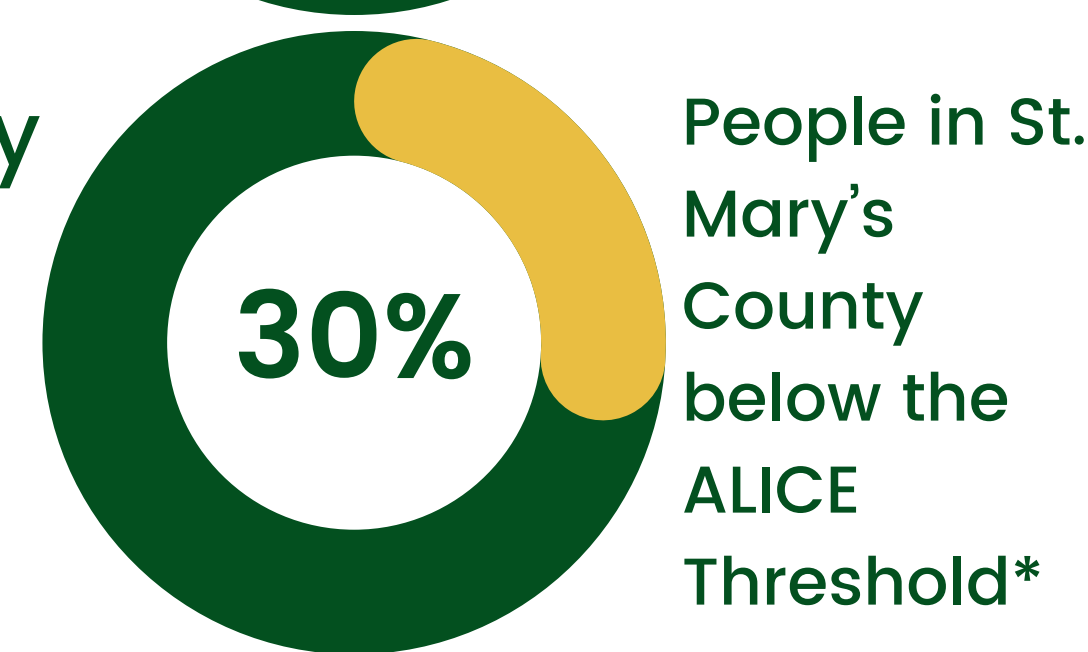
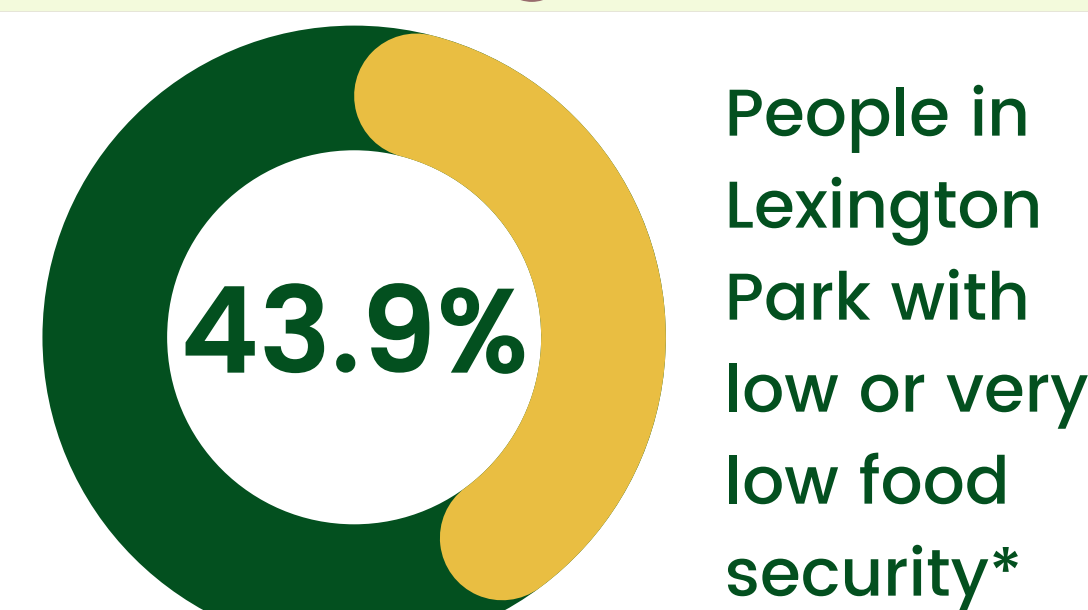
Our Garden

- Hybrid model – contains both rental and public plots
- ADA Accessible

LOCATION

Lexington Park, Maryland

- An area of high need
- Food desert
- High levels of food insecurity
- In need of community spaces
- Most populated area in St. Mary's County



*Healthy St. Mary's Partnership. (2022, November). Food Security Report.

THE STRUCTURE

Public Section

Maintained by the community mainly during public hours:

- 3 hours, twice weekly
- Garden Manager is present
- Variety of tasks based on garden needs



- Crops chosen by management
- Produce goes to volunteers & local food pantries/soup kitchens

Map:



Rental Section

- Yearly rental fee; waived for those that use government benefits
- Open dawn to dusk daily (access via keypad)

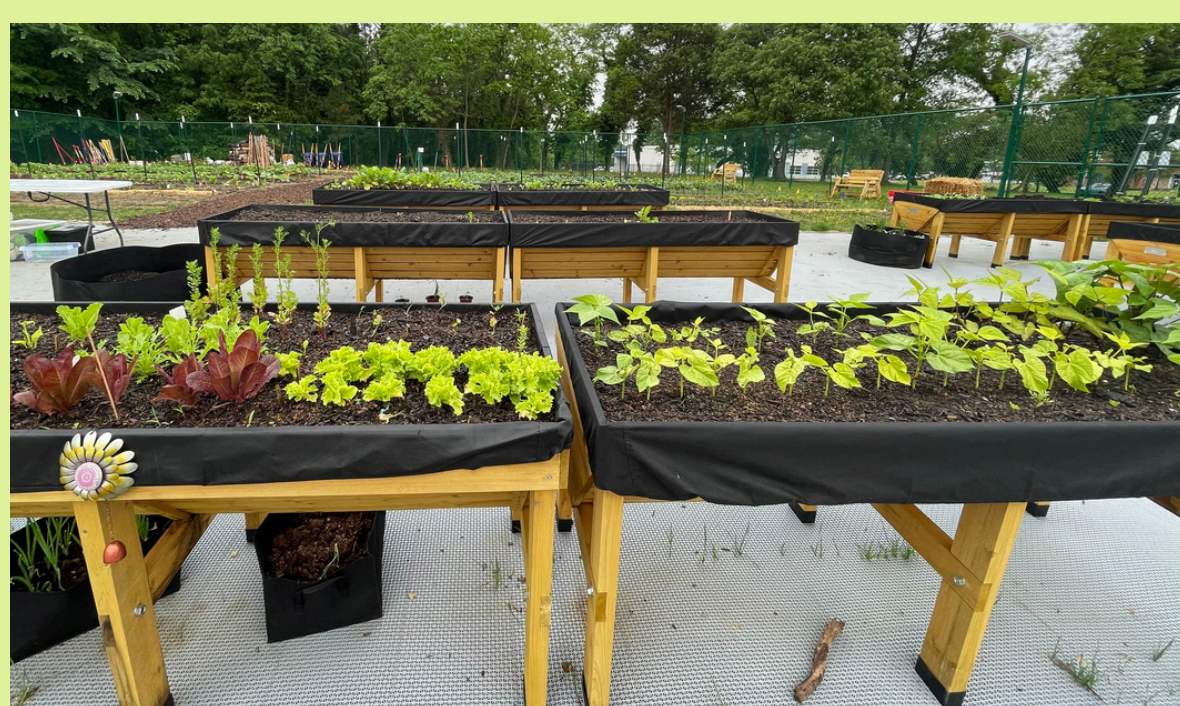
Types of plots:

- **In Ground Plots**
 - (1/2 of a row) – \$50/year (~80 sq ft)
- **ADA Accessible Standing Beds**
 - \$15/year (15 sq ft)
- **Raised Beds**
 - \$20/year (32 sq ft)



ADA ACCESSIBLE & OPEN TO ALL

- ADA tiles used
- 2 ADA accessible entrances
- 28% of plots are standing
- All ages and abilities welcome!
- No experience needed
 - Monthly gardening education classes offered
 - Garden Manager and volunteers are available to assist
- All general information and flyers are translated into Spanish



Resources & Amenities

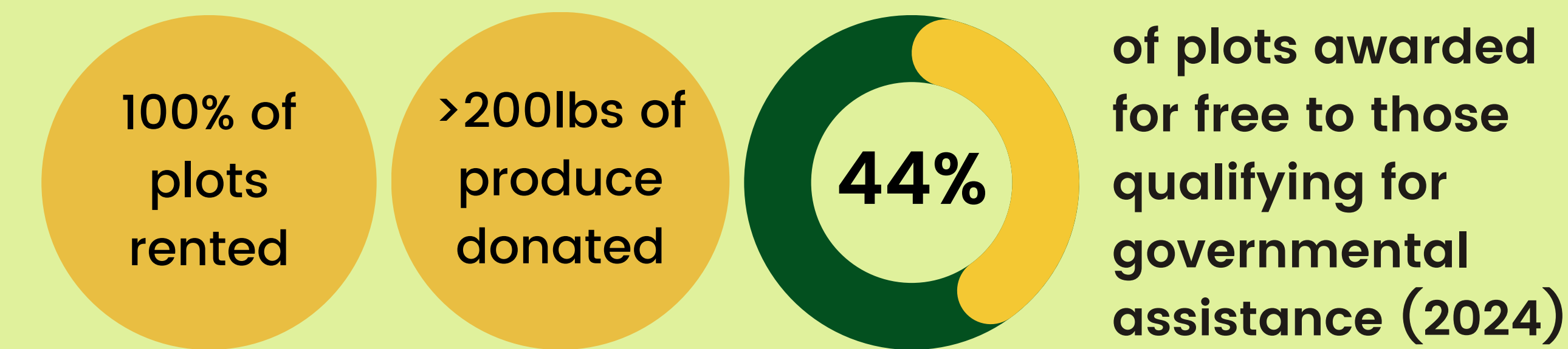
- Compost and irrigation are provided
- Tools are available for all to use



DIGGING DEEPER

- Residents who experience food security often struggle in multiple domains
- The garden seeks to address these needs as well

Addressing Food Insecurity



Rooted in Community

The garden is a space for different groups of people to meet and connect, from all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Public Hours & Volunteer Weekends:

- A safe space for community members to learn about gardening and connect with each other
- Volunteers work with each other towards a common goal



Encouraging Communication

- Monthly events & socials
- Facebook group
- Communication boards at the garden

>300 hours spent at the garden by renters & volunteers Feb–May 2025

LESSONS LEARNED

Use already established social hubs to advertise the garden and get people involved. For us, it was the library

GROWTH OVER THYME

The garden grew exponentially in its first year, bringing in more outside organizations to work on different projects.

- 24 different groups have worked on the garden in some capacity, from attending the steering committee to hosting work days or educational events.
- Achievements with our partners:
 - St. Mary's County Library's SEED Library: 10,000+ packs of seeds distributed
 - Construction of the LMPP Gateway Native Garden
 - 11 Educational classes made possible by our partners in 2024

