

2025

PLANT A ROW, WATCH COPE GROW FOOD DONATION GARDEN

Annual Report



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

ABOUT US



The Plant a Row, Watch COPE Grow Food Donation Garden is a partnership between University of Illinois Extension, COPE, and SIU Credit Union. Established in 2018, the garden has received over \$52,000 in donations, grant funding, and volunteer time. Community volunteers have given over 1,050 hours of time to planting, tending, and harvesting produce. To date we've grown over 5,490 pounds of produce, all donated to COPE.



2025 Highlights

Pounds grown: 1,252

Volunteer hours given: 150

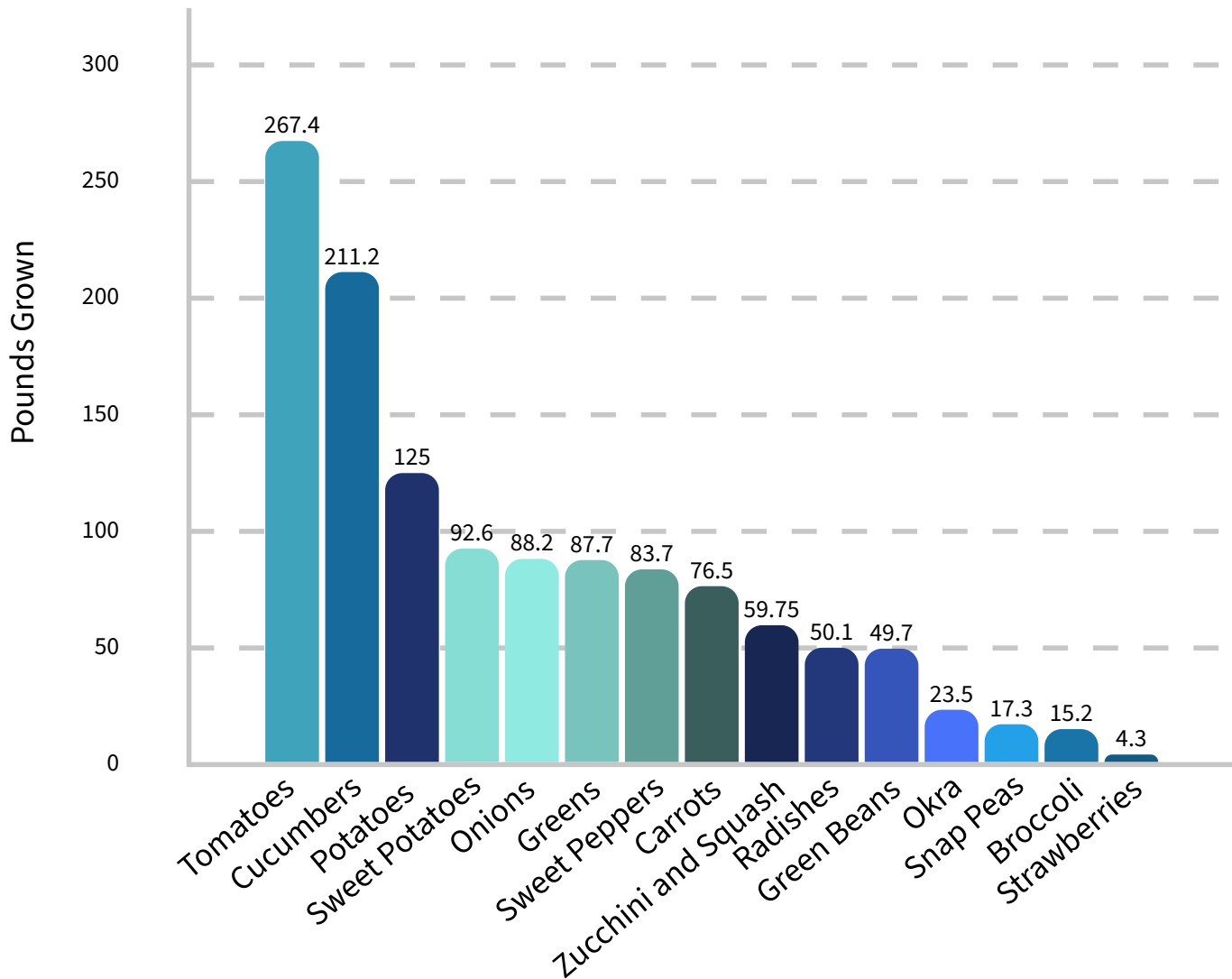
In our 7th year of growing, we enjoyed our second season in our new location. Spring and summer plantings yielded over 1,200 pounds of food grown and donated to COPE.

We thank our returning volunteer groups, Massac County Drug Awareness Coalition, led by Jordan Strong and Lasha Vincent, and Thrive's Green Team, led by Kara Sullivan. We also welcomed new volunteers to the garden, including local resident Matthew and a mother daughter duo, Brittany and Maci Howard. We continue to appreciate Robin Mizell for his time and effort to mow and trim the garden weekly. Jordi Oliver, a summer intern, and Kara Nichols, extra help, both with Illinois Extension, joined our garden team this year.

We added a compost tumbler to the garden, allowing us to keep some of our garden waste on site to generate compost to go back into the garden.

BY THE NUMBERS

This year, the garden produced 1,252 pounds of produce, all of which was donated to COPE. See below for the breakdown of what we grew.



SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

Before the garden season began this year, Anne Townsend, garden volunteer manager, spent a day at COPE surveying pantry clients to find out the vegetables and fruits clients were most interested in receiving from the pantry.

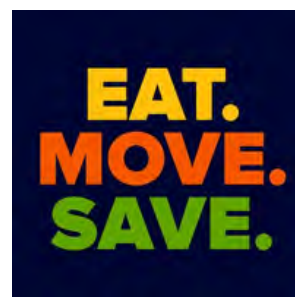
Fifty surveys were collected. Top requested vegetables were tomatoes, potatoes, onions, cucumbers, green beans, carrots, sweet potatoes, broccoli, lettuce, summer squash, and peppers. We used this information to choose the vegetables we grew, growing all those top requested.

Top requested fruits were strawberries, watermelon, cantaloupe, and blackberries. We did not have a great fruit harvest this year, but continue to care for our strawberry beds in the hopes of a better harvest next year.



SNAP ED

SNAP Ed provided recipes, signage, and other nutrition education materials to COPE food pantry to compliment the harvested produce. Nutrition education was also provided for guests through Eat.Move.Save booths at the pantry.



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