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## Growing Communities through Gardens

*A new resource guide aims to improve health and communities, one garden at a time*

RALEIGH – Just in time for National Community Gardening Week (August 23-29), North Carolinians have access to a new community gardening primer from the N.C. Community Garden Partners and Eat Smart, Move More North Carolina. Community Gardening Week was recently proclaimed by USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and leads into National Fruits & Veggies — More Matters® month in September.

“The theme for the September 2009 celebration is ‘How to Stretch your Fruit and Vegetable Budget’,” said manager Diane Beth of the N.C. Division of Public Health’s Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch. “A garden provides both access to fresh produce and a way to stretch your food dollars. Not only are community gardens a good way to get more fruits and vegetables into our diets, they also allow us to explore nutrition ‘from garden to fork,’ be active outdoors and build strong, healthy communities.”

The new gardening primer, ‘Eat Smart, Move More North Carolina: Growing Communities through Gardens,’ is a planning and resource guide for anyone who is thinking about starting a community garden. The guide describes what a community garden is; the benefits; how to find or start a garden; and tips for growing, storing, preparing and enjoying fruits and vegetables. It also highlights state and national gardening resources.

“Whether your worksite, faith community, school, neighborhood is considering starting a community garden or you are thinking about joining a garden near you, the primer walks you through the options, steps and resources to ensure success,” Beth said.

North Carolina Community Garden Partners (NCCGP) is a coalition of community-based and faith-based organizations, universities, public health agencies, and others interested in gardening. NCCGP has created a strategic plan and statewide organization for community gardens to increase the number of successful and sustainable community gardens in North Carolina. Leadership for the initiative is provided by the N.C. Division of Public Health and N.C. Cooperative Extension, through N.C. A & T University and N.C. State University. The community garden primer is on the web on the NCCGP website at <http://nccommunitygarden.ncsu.edu> and on the N.C. EatSmartMoveMore web site, [www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com](http://www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com).

The N.C. Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Coalition is one of the NCCGP partner organizations and a sponsor for the community garden primer. The coalition has more than 423 members representing 80 of state’s 100 counties and the Cherokee Indian Reservation. Members conduct local activities, including programs and promotions in supermarkets, schools, restaurants, cafeterias, worksites, health agencies and community groups. The N.C. Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Program is part of the Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch, N.C. Division of Public Health. To access fruit and vegetable resources or learn more about coalition activities and membership, visit [www.FruitsAndVeggiesNC.com](http://www.FruitsAndVeggiesNC.com).

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