



UNIVERSITY  
of HAWAI‘I  
MĀNOA

# HOME GARDEN NETWORK

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HOME GARDEN  
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## ABSTRACT

Home Garden Network program (HGN) aims at promoting healthy lifestyles through home gardening and creating social capital through social interactions among family members and people within communities, through gardening activities and sharing. While well-established research shows general social, psychological, and physical health benefits of home gardening, there are barriers associated with starting a garden that include lack of time, scarce resources, insufficient knowledge and skills, inadequate space, and dwindling inspiration. HGN acknowledges that while skills and knowledge are necessary in creating a garden, without inspiration, program longevity weakens and its impact reaches a limited number of people. Through the idea of networking with other participants and building these social relationships, it increases more opportunities to inspire and be inspired, fosters a greater sense of joy in gardening, encourages a chain reaction of sharing, and connects people together. As people share, it creates a pattern of social interactions and reciprocity among those who share and the recipients within the network that will then lead to increased social relationships, trust, and a social norm of sharing. Sharing itself also creates an opportunity for others to share back because in some situations, people do not know how to initiate the sharing process or have difficulty doing so. It is therefore argued that a circle of sharing encourages joy and more sharing. This program also takes into consideration promoting an active and healthy lifestyle by engaging children in the process of gardening and sharing geminated plants/produce with their peers and other families, hence fostering a lifelong appreciation and consumption of plants they grow, learn, share, and heal together in the process.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Gardening has many benefits often overlooked in a time where convenience, instant gratification & ease of accessibility have become the valued mindset. Gardening:

- ❖ Increases creativity
- ❖ Improves mental well-being
- ❖ Establishes trust and close connections
- ❖ Increases cultural awareness
- ❖ Creates a sense of home, cultural identity and belonging
- ❖ Provides a safe, encouraging place to acquire new knowledge
- ❖ Uses as memorial spaces, a gathering place for cultural celebrations
- ❖ Serves as time-capsules of past memories that reintroduce familiar landscapes, trees, plants, and social relationships
- ❖ Gives a license to express individual cultural and creative identities that reflect his/her values, passions, and gardening preferences
- ❖ Increases social capital
- ❖ Activates inspiration and a sense of agency
- ❖ Encourages sharing and joy
- ❖ Intergenerational learning

*"One of the sounds heard most often in the Kitchen Garden is laughter. People smile, talk, and share stories. The pace of life slows as stems are clipped, plants are tied and weeds are pulled. Without anyone expecting it, our garden has become a community garden, connecting people from all different backgrounds, ages and walks of life. We all share in its care and in its success" --Michelle Obama (2012). American Grown: The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens Across America.*

## ABOUT HGN

Established in December 2018, Home Garden Network (HGN) is developed in response to common issues most of our families experience—lack of time, lack of knowledge and skills, and/or lack of inspirations to get our edible home garden started. This project thus uses a network of families to develop edible home gardens for one family's home at a time for everyone within the network to enjoy their own fresh green plants. Through gardening activities, families are then growing, learning, sharing, and healing together.

## HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

- ❖ A network of 3-5 families to be formed.
- ❖ Families taking turns to help each other gardening.
- ❖ Garden maintaining meeting (at least 1 time, with an option of training sessions on gardening, food, nutrition, and wellness by UH specialists).
- ❖ Families could bring their own home-cooked food to share during meetings.
- ❖ Families germinating seeds for future participating networks.
- ❖ Families engaging their children in gardening.
- ❖ Families potentially sharing produce with friends and families.



## THEORY

This project is based on **social capital theory** (Coleman, 1988) with the idea that intangible resources resulted from a network of good relationships between people in a community create resources for, and empower each member within the network to achieve a certain goal—in this case to be able to develop an edible home garden. Social capital theory encompasses four main forms: social network, trust, reciprocity, and social norms. **Trust** can be achieved by selecting participants who have exhibited close relationship or by using a snowball approach by having a participant refers or recommends their close friends to join the project network. A social network with a group of 4-6 family participants will then be formed and thus achieved. Based on the concept of **reciprocity**, people within the network will take turns in providing physical as well as social support to one another in the process of landscaping, planting and maintaining the gardens. During the process of growing, activities such as potluck gatherings at a participant' house will allow all the participants to have the opportunity to gain more **social interactions** and to receive information from the project's Master Gardeners about garden maintenance and nutrition and health lessons. As the project evolves, another network of families will be created with informal lessons, materials, propagated plant supplies provided by a previous group. This process creates continuous supplies of knowledge, skills, information channels, materials, propagated plants and seeds, and social support from previous networks to the future ones. This continuity will then produce a **social norm** where edible home gardening is valued and agreed upon by community members. It is this social norm that will then inspire sustainable food system.

## VOICES FROM OUR FAMILIES

**Kailua Family:** HGN is the perfect opportunity for our active family to participate in because we love the idea of growing our own garden, but didn't know where to start! We are pleased to find out that the HGN encourages all members of the family to help out with age-appropriate gardening activities. We especially enjoy watching our toddlers get excited about learning how fruits and vegetables grow in an effort to encourage more healthy eating habits!

**Ewa Beach Family:** Gardening has always been something I've been wanting to do, but due to having other responsibilities such as raising kids, taking care of my family and working a full-time job, I wasn't able to garden until now. Being a part of the HGN has not only been educational in that we get to learn more about gardening such as germinating and propagating seeds, but it has also been a daily stress reliever for me. It's always something that makes me excited. When I see the plants in my backyard growing, it makes me feel like I've accomplished something bigger than myself. It also gives me a sense of nostalgia and brings back childhood memories as if I'm home again.

**Manoa Family:** We have our own picking fresh vegetables and herb to cook and also we learn from each other different way of gardening and we always have a fun time together.

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