

June 2022 Wellness Article

Get your hands dirty for a clean bill of health

I do not have a green thumb! I struggle with getting plants to grow and stay alive. But, I still try from time to time to start my own garden — with my most recent effort inspired by the Ridgecrest Community Garden. Gardening has many benefits and with June 5-11 being recognized as National Garden Week I wanted to take a closer look at the Ridgecrest Community Garden (RCG) and gardening in general.

I started volunteering at the garden about a year ago, and it is truly encouraging to see what can grow in Ridgecrest. It is similarly exciting to see how the garden brings the community together through opportunities for volunteering, outreach, and healthier eating. Through the garden I have learned so much about gardening, but also about taking the time to learn something new and to be out in nature. My plants are sprouting and growing and they are still alive! In fact, my strawberries are almost ready to eat. This progress may seem so little, but to me the sense of accomplishment is huge. How could a plant bring me so much joy?

RCG was started by Tyrone Ledford with the purpose to “encourage positive community engagement, restore hope, and improve the health and well-being of the community by providing fresh organic produce, education, and a space for healing and positive social engagement”.¹ We all could use some positive social engagement and when you step into the garden you instantly feel calmer, more connected to the community. It is amazing to see everything that is growing and unthinkable that it is completely open to the community, any time, any day. Of course gardening has the health benefits of providing the freshest vegetables, fruits and herbs and gardening also provides the physical health benefits of moving more and providing a source of exercise. But how often do we think about the benefits of gardening in creating a time and space for people to learn, to connect with others in their community and to even just clear their minds. The accomplishment of working with your hands and your heart and then seeing a tiny plant sprout and grow does something for the gardener that is often overlooked. This whole body experience truly helps the body, the heart, the mind and the soul. “There is increasing evidence that exposure to plants and green space, and particularly to gardening, is beneficial to mental and physical health”.² Exercising and utilizing all these aspects is what makes gardening such an overall great health benefit and you combine that with a community garden and you have a very powerful benefit for the community.

If you have not yet checked out the Ridgecrest Community Garden, I highly encourage you to do so. Connecting with others in our community in a healthy and productive way has so many health benefits — not just for us but for our entire community. Let’s connect, grow and stay healthy as a community.

The Ridgecrest Community Garden is located at 231 W Haloid, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 and you can contact them through Facebook (Ridgecrest Community Garden) or email:

communitygarden.ridgecrest@gmail.com

Tera Moorehead is the Director of Community Outreach at Ridgecrest Regional Hospital. With dual master’s degrees in nutrition and education, Tera shares her passion for health and wellness through various programs offered free to the community through RRH. You can contact her at 760-499-3825.

1. <https://www.holisticdivineinnovations.org/about-ridgecrest-community-garden>

2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6334070/>