



## The McNeal Family Garden A Story of Success



### Case Study Highlights

Client: The McNeal Family

Town: Shirley, MA

### Opportunity:

Strong desire to eat healthy, be part of the growing process, and connect with nature

### Process

- Site visit
- Needs assessment
- Square foot gardening
- Plot Plan
- Garden mentors
- Ongoing support
- Feedback loop

### Results

- A bountiful garden that nourished the family
- A beautiful space for friends and family to admire
- Renewed faith in the power of nature

*“Installing the garden was easy—I worked with a crew of volunteers to move soil, assemble the three raised beds, and plant all the vegetables I had requested – winter squash, peppers, radishes, beets, kale, cauliflower, broccoli, potatoes, peas, beans, carrots, red and green lettuce, cucumbers, summer squash, and zucchini.”* Nancy McNeal

### Opportunity

With the effects of the economic downturn and unemployment continuing to ripple through our communities, many are struggling to make ends meet. Nancy McNeal of Shirley, MA, learned about Growing Places from a friend and applied for a garden in the spring of 2009. Having experienced two unsuccessful gardening attempts, Nancy welcomed the opportunity to have experienced mentors help her become a successful gardener.

Nancy was used to being resourceful about food. She had organized and run a co-op where several families bought produce in bulk, but she wanted to take a more hands-on approach toward producing food. Managing a household of eight, including her husband, five children, and her mother-in-law, Nancy had many mouths to feed and was excited about the opportunity to provide her family with lots of fresh, healthy produce.

### Growing Places' Process

Our process starts with a site visit to determine the best location for the garden—ideally a south facing spot that has access to water and at least 6-8 hours of sunlight a day. After siting Nancy's garden and using an intensive square-foot gardening system to organize the beds into manageable plots, a garden mentor provided Nancy with a plot plan and markers to help identify where everything would be in her garden after it was planted.

Once everything was in the ground, Nancy just needed to make sure to weed, water, and harvest the produce. “It was pretty simple, Growing Places took care of the hard part which was getting started and knowing which location was best.”



**“I found my mentor’s advice about early and late season planting useful and I appreciated being able to call her anytime with questions.”**

Growing Places provides clients with regular newsletters to help them get comfortable with what they are experiencing—what insects to be on the lookout for, tips for pruning, and lots of delicious recipes for the harvested produce. They also provide a Growing Guide that provides step-by-step instructions on how to care for the garden.

### **Results**

After the garden was installed, a mentor visited with Nancy to talk about how her garden was working. “I found my mentor’s advice about early and late season planting useful and I appreciated being able to call her anytime with questions.”

Nancy is extremely grateful for her garden and for all it has brought to her extended family. The experience of gardening has planted “seeds” that have spilled over to other sources of food—she is making her own butter and yogurt and her daughter makes her own baby food and is anxious to start her own one-acre farm that would include bees, chickens, goats and even a Jersey cow or two. “Everyone in the family has benefited from the garden—my children and grandchildren have been active in the entire process and as we gain confidence, we are inspired to go even further in the quest to become more self-sufficient.”

Growing Places believes wholeheartedly in the power of gardening and sees the benefits gardens bring to families—from spending more time with loved ones, to creating new recipes, new experiences—and more. We see people become more hopeful and more resourceful when they become an active participant in the magic of helping a garden grow. Having a garden is a wonderful way to provide nourishment to the body and soul.

**For more information about Growing Places Garden Project, please visit us at [www.growingplaces.org](http://www.growingplaces.org) or call us at 978-598-3723.**