



Virginia 4-H MAKING the Future

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The History of War Gardens

The History Behind it . . .

What are War Gardens?

Agriculture and successful food production has been a critical tool in both World War I and World War II. During both wars, Americans were urged to grow their own food in order to allow the commercial farmers to produce food for our troops and to free up our transportation systems for war efforts instead of food shipments for non-military use.

World War I

In August of 1917 President Woodrow Wilson created the U.S. Food Administration, with a mission to:

- Assure adequate food supply, distribution, and conservation of food during the war,
- Facilitate transportation of food and prevent monopolies and hoarding, and
- Maintain governmental power over foods by using voluntary agreements and a licensing system.

Herbert Hoover was recruited to lead the new administration. He strongly believed that the American people would be willing to sacrifice in order to support the war efforts. He set an example by refusing to accept a salary for his new position. Hoover started a big media campaign and proclaimed "Food will win the war."

Citizens were encouraged to plant their own Liberty Gardens through an extensive campaign of propaganda posters. Education on planting, crop disease, and safe canning procedures was provided through local Cooperative Extension offices.

Another program, the United States School Garden Army, was led by the Federal Bureau of Education. It provided agriculture education in the schools and encouraged school gardens, as well as individual gardens with their student "soldiers of the soil." By the end of WWI, more than 5.2 million new gardens were planted, generating an estimated 1.45 million quarts of canned fruits and vegetables.



Did you know?

The name Liberty Garden was changed to Victory Garden after the Armistice. The name Victory Garden was used again in WWII to promote home agriculture to support war efforts.

Sources

- ⇒ The History Channel: www.history.com/news/hungry-history/americas-patriotic-victory-gardens
- ⇒ The National Archives and Records Administration: www.archives.gov/education/lessons/sow-seeds/
- ⇒ The National Archives and Records Administration: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/512498>
- ⇒ The Virginia Historical Society: www.vahistorical.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/victory-gardens