

Alamo RCD Area Inc. Growing Rural Youth Development Program Overview

“Gardening with a Purpose” 2016

Growing Rural Mission Statement

The Mission Goal of **Growing Rural** is to provide young people ages 8 to 18, with service learning activities, centered on the Alamo RCD mission, that build leadership, provide academic improvement and life skills training, knowledge about proper gardening practices and an appreciation for the environment.

Description of Purpose:

Our Growing Rural Youth Program/Gardening With A Purpose

Projects provide local youth with garden activities that:

- 1) Enhance their environmental stewardship,
- 2) Provide lifelong gardening, health and nutrition skills,
- 3) Strengthen their science, math, art, research, writing and technology skills,
- 4) Increase knowledge and experiences in philanthropy and volunteerism,
- 5) Affect their community by planning, budgeting, facilitating and implementing a service project that will help those in need within their local community.



Description of 2016 Projects:

Local youth in Bandera County (Lakehills Area) and Kendall County (Boerne area) and Comal County (Garden Ridge area) plan, create, facilitate, implement and harvest a garden using garden beds and/or container gardening.

Lakehills:

We work in collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club of Bandera County. Our Growing Rural Program began in 2014 with only 10 students and now includes 27 students ages 6 to 11. The children have planted and harvested their produce from five garden beds (three vegetable beds and two pollinator beds) located at the Hill Country Elementary in Bandera ISD. The goal in Lakehills is to use the produce from the garden to support meals on wheels program for seniors, and for other families in crisis. Partners include: Lakehills United Methodist Church, MHM Wesley Nurse Program, Boys & Girls Club of Bandera and the Bandera County Food Council.

Boerne:

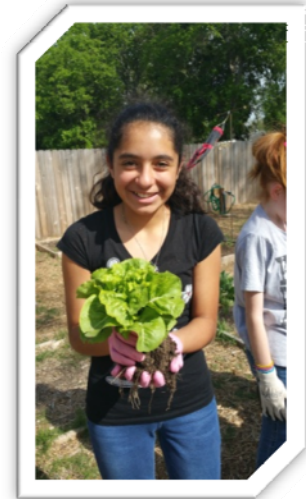
We work in collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club of the Texas Hill Country (Boerne Chapter). This program began in January of 2016. The students (now 16 in number) , ages 10-12, planted nurtured and harvested four community garden beds of vegetable produce. The goal in Boerne is to also create, plan a garden, as in Lakehills, with the garden produce being used to supplement nutrition for children in poverty and crisis in the Kendall County community. Partners include: The St. John Lutheran Church Community Garden, Kendall County Food Council (Boerne Community Coalition).

Garden Ridge:

We work in collaboration with REACH (Realizing Educational Achievements through Christ at Home) Home School Program. We are teaching a class in Container Gardening through our Growing Rural Program during this fall term. We have 13 students in that class, ages 8 to 12, who have now planted and are about to harvest their container gardens. The REACH program has a goal of not only training the youth but also involving their parents in a home school setting. They are also planning to share their

produce with local families in need in the Garden Ridge area and expanding into some community gardens into the future.

Growing Rural is an innovative program designed to create leaders for tomorrow. In direct alignment with our mission, Growing Rural builds skills in environmental stewardship, gardening and community social service along with developing critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration, innovation, character, leadership, employment preparation, and youth philanthropy. The program encourages youth (and their adult volunteers) to work in collaboration with local nonprofits. The Growing Rural program aligns with our agricultural roots, through a community development model where youth go through six steps as they implement the project:



- **Field Analysis**: What does the community you live in need? Looking at needs in food insecurity, hunger, agriculture, soil, water, natural resource conservation, youth, elderly and family.
- **Soil Preparation**, How can this need be met? Planning a “Gardening with a Purpose” project for the community.
- **Seed Planting**, What Academic Skills do we need? Agriculture, Environment, along with Science, Math, Art, Research & Technology, ie. Growing SMART!
- **Plant Nourishment**, How do we get the funding to meet the need? Project proposal, budgeting, community donations, matching funds, Who can help?
- **Crop Harvesting**, What good will come from our project? What are our outcomes?
- **Land Enrichment**, How do we insure the continuance of the good that comes from this project? Evaluation of our outcomes and sustaining the project into the future.

Academic Enhancement: Growing SMART:

Each project has an academic enhancement component (Growing SMART ie Science, Math, Art, Research & Technology) along with nutritional, health and environmental stewardship training for the youth involved. This is facilitated through the use of our **Growing Rural Garden Journal and Teachers Guide**. These two workbooks are expressly written and produced for our Growing Rural Youth Development Project by Alma Aguirre and Peggy Hollin and they are currently being updated. Alma as Alamo RCD Board Chair, is a retired teacher of 33 years experience and an learned gardener and Peggy is our writing consultant. Our Growing Rural Journal includes activities in:

Introductory topics:

- ❖ An Introduction to Alamo RCD and our Mission
- ❖ An Introduction to our Growing Rural Youth Development Program
- ❖ A discussion of “Gardening with a Purpose” including a discussion on nutrition and the needs of those within our community who are suffering with “food insecurity”.
- ❖ Overview of the local community in need and how gardening can be of help.
- ❖ Writing a purpose for this garden project: What is our Goal and how will it help the community?

Journal/Classroom/Garden Topics:

- ❖ Seed germination: Making a newspaper pot and Grow a bean from seed, keep records of progress
- ❖ What do plants need to grow and produce?
- ❖ What is in our soil? What is organic fertilizer?
- ❖ Composting and our garden: The What and Why of Compost, Compost 101
- ❖ Making a Garden Bed (Lasagna Garden Bed)
- ❖ Container Gardening, Indoor and Outdoor

- ❖ Who Grows our Food (Farm to Fork)
- ❖ Planning our Garden, What can we grow in the Spring, Summer or Fall,
- ❖ Research garden plants: Season, Light, Fruit, Maturity, Spacing, Size, Water, Fertilizer, etc.
- ❖ Making a Garden Schedule, Mapping our Garden
- ❖ Garden Safety: The Rules of the Garden
- ❖ Journaling: Write a paragraph about what you knew about gardening before we started this project? What is your favorite vegetable and why? Why should we eat vegetables? and other open ended questions... (There are many possibilities.)
- ❖ Maintaining Records & Observations: How does my garden grow? (weekly measurements, descriptions or progress)
- ❖ Pollinators: Pollinator Friendly Plants and Activities, Plant Helpers, Our Awesome Pollinators
- ❖ Good Bug ~~ Bad Bug in the Garden
- ❖ Nutrition: Make a meal with your Vegetables, Collect Recipes and Share, Unusual Vegetables and Fruits
- ❖ Nutrition: How certain vegetables and fruits help your health.

Some Classroom Art and Music Program Activities

- ❖ Painting Rocks for the Garden
- ❖ Painting our Garden Hats, Aprons and Bags
- ❖ Creating Garden Markers and Signs
- ❖ Painting our Garden Containers
- ❖ Multiple Drawings in our Journals
- ❖ Singing “The Garden Song” with voice and body

