



The [Duke Farms Community Garden](#) is located on the Duke Farms Foundation's 2,700-acre wildlife preserve in Somerset County, NJ. Duke Farms' mission is focused on wildlife preservation, environmental education, sustainable energy, and ecological-based agriculture. As part of both its agriculture and education focus, Duke Farms opened a 240-plot, allotment-style community garden in the spring of 2011. The idea was to give members the opportunity to grow healthy produce in an environmentally friendly way. The garden was met with enthusiasm as a large portion of county residents live in cluster-style housing. Additionally, those lucky enough to have sunny backyards are plagued with abundant deer populations. The garden sold out in its early years and to meet increased demand, Duke Farms expanded to 460 plots in 2014. This makes the Duke Farms Community Garden the largest allotment-style community garden in the country and it remains sold out every year. Our mission is *to offer members the opportunity to grow fresh, organic food while connecting with nature and community*. The Duke Farms Community Garden follows organic practices - everything we teach and do is about working in harmony with nature.

### Membership

In allotment-style community gardens, each garden plot is maintained by individual renters growing food for personal use. We welcome members who live and/or work in Somerset County, New Jersey. Once a person becomes a member, they have the opportunity to renew their plot or plots in perpetuity as long as they complete annual requirements which include keeping the plot(s) well maintained, attending an environmental class of their choice annually, and completing volunteer hours based on how many plots they are renting.



As personal situations are constantly evolving, a handful of gardeners move on to new pasture each year, leaving approximately 50 plots available for public rental each year. Plots are rented on a first-come, first-served basis each January for the following growing season. Garden plots are available in three sizes: 10ft x 10ft; 15ft x 15ft and 15ft x 30ft. Duke Farms also has an accessible garden area which conforms to current ADA standards. Individuals or groups may rent raised these garden beds which are located on a paver patio close to an accessible parking lot.

Each gardener is responsible for the maintenance and regular upkeep of their plot, including keeping the plot weed-free and harvesting ripe produce. The plots must be focused on food production, but gardeners may grow the crops of their choice minus only a few restrictions. Gardens keep all the produce they are able to grow but often times people share with each other or donate their surplus to local food banks and shelters.



### Education

Duke Farms offers a garden specific education program which is part of the broader environmental education program. Staff and guest lecturers teach upwards of 30 garden-related courses each year, covering everything from seed starting to food preservation to putting your garden to bed in the fall. These classes run nearly year-round and are open to the public as well as garden members. Looking to learn something new? [Check out the full list of classes Duke has to offer!](#)

### Giving Back to the Community

In 2015, the Community Garden launched an official “Giving Garden” program in which gardeners can grow extra food in their plots to share with the community. In addition, we have 10 dedicated garden plots which are planted and tended by volunteers specifically for donation to local area food banks, shelters, and soup kitchens. Since inception, gardeners have donated over 24,000 pounds of produce! Each year this program grows and in 2020, despite the garden being closed in the spring followed by many challenges for the duration of the growing season, gardeners still managed to send over 6,000 pounds of fresh, organic produce to people struggling with food insecurity. We encourage everyone to join us on this mission! If you have a backyard garden or a plot in a different community garden, consider donating some of your extra produce to those in need.

### A glimpse of the fun!



Final donation day of 2019



Annual mushroom compost delivery



Summer Garden Sharing Celebration takes place each August



Garden Bed Building workshop at opening day!



Annual Seed Swap



In the past 6 years, we have donated over 24,000 pounds of organic produce to local food banks