



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

NRCS Assistance for Community Gardens & Urban Agriculture

Helping People Help the Land

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is committed to helping all New Jersey improve the quality of locally-produced fruits and vegetables. We work with landowners and land managers to help protect and conserve soil and water resources in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Community garden groups and urban farmers are eligible for NRCS technical and could possibly qualify for financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Eligible applicants include individuals, legal entities, such as non-profit organizations or joint operations engaged in agricultural production on eligible land.



High Tunnels

Learn more about
NRCS's High Tunnel System
Initiative
at <http://go.usa.gov/cewB9>

The High Tunnel System is a conservation practice available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This practice helps producers:

- Improve plant quality in a protected environment;
- Reduce nutrient & pesticide use;
- Reduce energy use by providing consumers with a local source of fresh produce;
- Extend the growing season.

Pollinator Habitat



Learn more about pollinators at
<http://go.usa.gov/ctFmV>

Pollinators need two essential components in their habitat:

1) Flowers from which to gather nectar and pollen; and 2) Places to nest.

Community gardens can provide food and habitat to help pollinators thrive:

- Use pollinator-friendly plants;
- Reduce or eliminate pesticide use.

Technical and financial assistance is available to community gardens to help you plan your pollinator habitat.

Applying for NRCS Assistance

NRCS can help you plan practices that will enhance and protect the natural resources you need for a successful and healthy farm or garden. You can apply for technical and financial assistance anytime. Application periods are set for our conservation programs throughout the year so that applications can be reviewed and ranked according to program requirements and environmental benefit.

If awarded an EQIP contract, applicants can then install and request reimbursement for a portion of the typical cost of approved practices in their conservation plan.

Financial assistance payments are made on completed practices. Historically Underserved producers may be eligible for higher payment rates.

Applicants must submit a complete program application, establish farm records and other documentation to support eligibility to be considered for financial assistance, and develop an NRCS conservation plan that addresses at least one natural resource concern.

Applicants must:

- Control (lease) or own eligible land
- Comply with adjusted gross income limitations (AGI) provisions
- Be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements.

Current Funding Opportunities

Current application periods for all NRCS conservation programs are posted on the [NJ NRCS website](#) as they are established.

Follow the link for [Current Funding Opportunities](#) from the menu in the center of the home page.

www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov

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Technical Soil Assistance

The NRCS-NJ Soils Staff provides free technical assistance to community gardens and urban farms in New Jersey and New York City.



Our soil assessment services can help you evaluate conditions in your garden or farm to help maintain safe, healthy, sustainable production.

For more on NRCS Technical Soil Assistance <http://go.usa.gov/xkvvN>

X-ray Fluorescence (PXRF) Analysis

Healthy and successful gardens and farms require suitable site and soil characteristics. Soils in urban areas often contain high concentrations of lead and other trace metals, which can be hazardous to plants, animals, and humans. Portable X-ray Fluorescence (PXRF) analysis can determine the concentration of lead and other trace metals onsite; the spatial variability and presence of any "hot spots," and whether there is a need for raised beds or alternative land use.

Other Soil Health Tests

Several soil health tests can assess if your soil is performing optimally from the physical, chemical and biological perspectives, ensuring the quality and quantity of your produce as well as the health of the local environment.

**Got questions? Just ask!
We are happy to help you!**

Visit us at the USDA Service Center that serves your county to learn what NRCS conservation professionals can do for you!

**Sussex, Warren, Hudson, Essex,
Passaic, Morris, Bergen**
Hackettstown Service Center (908) 852-2576
101 Bilby Road, Building 1-H
Hackettstown, NJ 07840

Hunterdon, Somerset, Union
Frenchtown Service Center (908) 782-4614
687 Pittstown Road, Suite 2
Frenchtown, NJ 08825

Monmouth, Middlesex, Mercer
Freehold Service Center (732) 462-0075
4000 Kozloski Road, Suite D, PO Box 5033
Freehold, NJ 07728

Burlington, Camden, Ocean
Columbus Service Center (609) 267-1639
1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Rd.
Columbus, NJ 08022

Salem, Gloucester
Woodstown Service Center (856) 769-1126
51 Cheney Road, Suite 2
Woodstown, NJ 08098

Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland
Vineland Service Center (856) 205-1225
1318 So. Main Rd, BLDG 5 Suite A
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