**Educational** **Benefits** **of** **Gardening** 08-14-2015

By Helga Perrin

* ***Hands***-***on*** ***gardening*** ***projects*** can have enormous benefits for schools, boys & girls clubs, senior centers, retirement communities, garden clubs, rehabilitation centers, and the community at large.
* ***Participation*** teaches such basics as planning, measuring, reading seed or plant labels finding the right plant for the right place for the right season, and committing to a garden project, maintaining it and discovering that such team work can be fun.
* ***Seeing vegetables grow*** first hand, surprises many students that not everything “grows”

at a supermarket. To use their vernacular: home-grown produce can be “cool”.

* ***A gardening experience*** helps students connect the dots when it comes to finding out where fruits, vegetables and herbs come from and how they are used in food preparation and what nutritional role they play.
* ***Gardening Therapy is for everyone,*** it can start with a simple flower box or a planter, and gradually branch out to gardens and greenhouses. Raised plant beds have also been used as teaching and training tools for special-needs-children, forthe handicapped andthose requiring rehabilitation. Gardening can be an enjoyable learning experience.
* ***The Purpose of school gardens*** can be far-reaching. Although the very first garden may be small in scope, the opportunities to feed curious minds are endless. The aim is not only to complement any school curriculum but also to help students think outside the box, so to speak. As no skills are required, a gardening activity can be fun and stimulating. What better encouragement can we offer than projects that let students acquire new skills and knowledge with the untapped talents and gifts they already have?
* ***Many teaching moments*** occurwhen we talk about soil conditions, erosion control, composting, plant requirements, rain barrels vs. tap water, the need for weeding, checking for plant diseases, insects and damage from predators and the climate factor.
* ***Educational seeds*** that we sow, may bear fruit immediately or down the road. It is not

unusual to hear from landscape architects, botanists, biochemists, biologists, garden center owners, specialty fruit growers, educators, cooks, nutritionists or city planners that they trace the choice of their career back to early childhood influences in that field.

* ***Community gardens*** can bring people of different backgrounds and expertise together,

especially those who share an interest in gardening. Not only can such gardens aid neighborhood beautification, but they can also function as teaching and learning gardens which inspire more potential front yard and back yard gardeners. Other benefits and positive developments may be the friendly cooperation between volunteers, who swap seeds, plants, share chores as well as their produce, while they discover that when a community gardens together, it can grow together and even plan the next community project.