



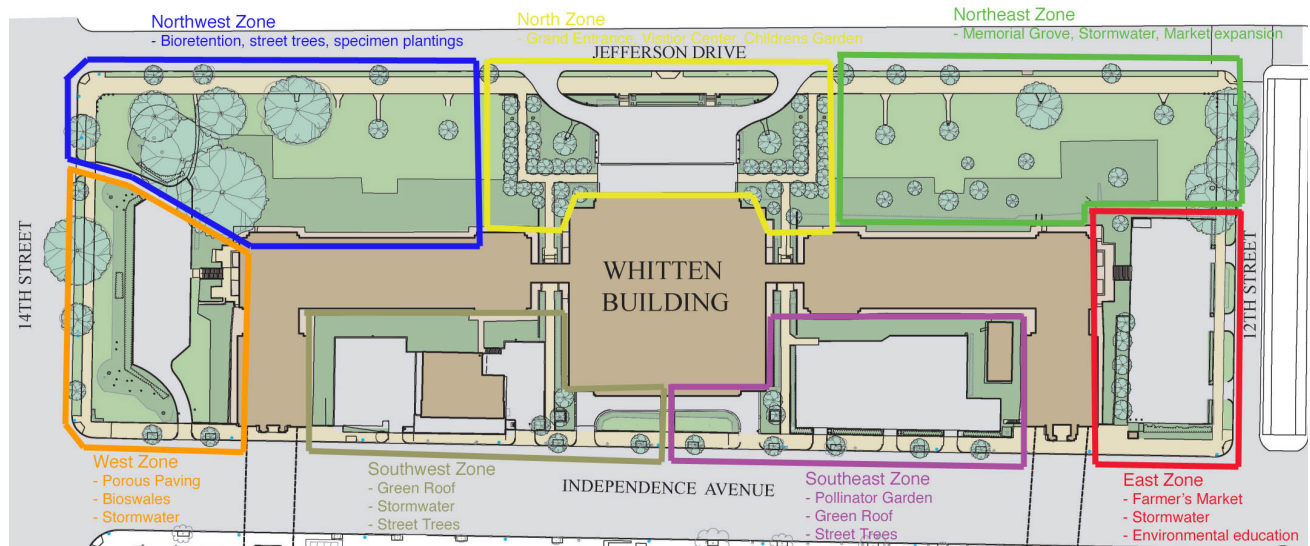
# THE PEOPLE'S GARDEN

Growing Healthy Food, People and Communities

## THE PEOPLE'S GARDEN AT USDA'S WHITTEN BUILDING

When President Abraham Lincoln founded the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1862, he called it The People's Department. Back then, most Americans farmed and lived on farms. Although farmers and ranchers account for only a small percentage of our population today, by some estimates, each farmer produces enough each year to feed 144 people.

The People's Garden is designed to provide a sampling of USDA's efforts throughout the world as well as teach others how to nurture, maintain and protect a healthy landscape. If practiced, the following garden concepts can be your contribution to providing healthy food for people and communities.



### U. S. Department of Agriculture headquarters, Jamie L. Whitten Building and grounds, Washington, DC

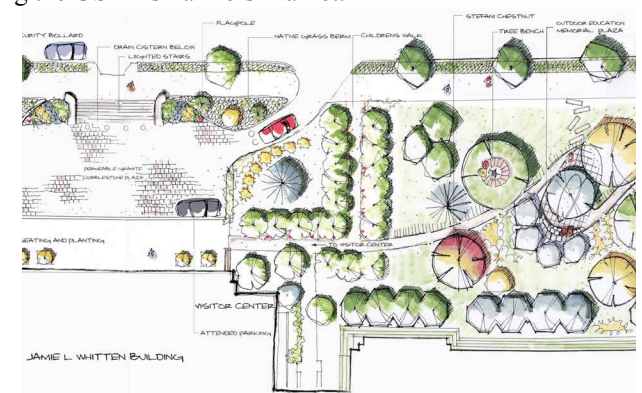
USDA's Sustainable Landscape Partnership is redesigning an innovative sustainable landscape at USDA's headquarters on The National Mall. This landscape demonstrates environmentally responsible practices, and educates and engages the public via accessible exhibits. It also provides social benefits for employees and serves as a model for other public institutions in the region. USDA plans to reduce stormwater runoff with rain gardens, green roofs and bioretention practices. USDA also is reducing its impervious surfaces and enhancing the USDA's Farmers Market.



United States Department of Agriculture

### The People's Garden Concept Plan

Planning the sustainable landscape is underway. When completed, visitors can learn more about healthy eating and healthy living. Other features will include porous paving and rainwater capture, pollinator gardens, green roofs, invasive species removal, and a memorial walk and grove.



## The USDA Organic Garden

The organic vegetable garden demonstrates what individuals can do to embrace organic practices and healthy eating regardless of where they live or work. Planned to be fully "Certified Organic" (a 3-year process) the garden illustrates container gardens for urban spaces, raised beds for community plots, and larger field plantings for schools, institutions and farms. USDA is planning to replicate many of these garden features at USDA properties throughout the United States.

## Potager Pollinator Garden

Potager is a French term for kitchen garden - a fusion of the gardener's desire for vegetables and a plot that is beautiful as well as productive. The potager area mixes organic vegetables with native plants. Flowers are an important ingredient for beauty and pollination and have been carefully selected to complement the vegetables.

## Transition Field Plots

Transitioning conventional gardening and farming practices to Certified Organic requires a series of crop rotations to improve existing soil's fertility and structure and to sequester previously applied chemicals. Three years of approved organic management must occur before harvested crops can be sold as or be labeled organic. USDA's planned crop rotations include organic field peas, plowed in and followed with buckwheat and then crimson clover.

## Bioswale and Rain Gardens

Stormwater from USDA parking lots, rooftops and walks will be redirected to bioswales that filter and infiltrate runoff. Bioswales improve soil and water quality, reduce silt and pollution and provide scenic and wildlife habitat. Consisting of a drainage course with gently sloped sides, the bioswale will be composted and planted with native vegetation to maximize water infiltration.

The rain garden will be a shallow depression to capture the remaining stormwater runoff exiting the bioswale. Planted with native grasses and shrubs, the rain garden allows excess runoff to be absorbed into the ground. Native plants are recommended because they do not require fertilizer and are more tolerant of local climate, soil, water and drought conditions.



## Bat House

Bats are the primary predators of night-flying insects and are important plant pollinators. Bats play a vital role in maintaining the balance of nature. And, as consumers of vast numbers of pests, they rank among humanity's most valuable allies. A single little brown bat can catch hundreds of mosquito-sized insects within an hour, and a typical colony of big brown bats can protect local farmers from the costly attacks of 18 million root-worms each summer.

## Three Sisters Garden

For centuries, Native American's have cultivated the soil and produced corn, beans and squash. Stories, ceremonies, songs and cultural traditions surround the annual planting, growing and harvest of gardens. Life lessons were learned throughout the gardening season. Stories of Three Sisters refers to a tradition of interplanting corn, beans and squash in the same

mound. It is a sophisticated, sustainable planting system that provided long term soil fertility and a healthy diet to generations of Native Americans.

Corn is the oldest sister. She stands tall in the center and provides strength and protection to her sisters below. She is not a lone plant, as she grows with a handful of corn sisters.

Beans are the second sister. She surrounds sister corn and reaches to the sun, climbing up the corn stalks. Her role is to keep the soil fertile by converting the sun's energy into nitrogen filled nodules that grow on its roots. As she grows, she shares and uses the stored nitrogen as food.

Squash is the third sister. Her vines trail over the mound, her leaves protect the sisters from weeds and shade the soil from the sun, and her beautiful blooms invite the bees and pollinate the Sisters while keeping the ground cool and moist. Her prickly stems help to deter pests and rodents from eating the nutritious produce.

Start your own tradition and share in life lessons learned from raising your own Three Sisters garden and preserve an important method of gardening, passed down through generation to generation.

## Urban Wood Step Planks and Planters

Through a partnership with the District of Columbia's Urban Forestry Administration, the People's Garden features raised planters and stepping planks constructed of urban wood. Mostly locust and oak, trees felled by storms or old age were milled and used to construct the planters and planks.

## Raised Planters

Constructed of untreated and milled urban wood, USDA's planters contain organic compliant soil and mulch. By conforming to organic management throughout the growing season, the first crops harvested from these planters will be Certified Organic.

## For Additional Information:

[www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden](http://www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden)



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