

Gardens role in great depression research paper

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



The great Depression commenced with the crash of Wall Street in October in 1929 and started to spread rapidly globally. The unexpected market crash indicated the start of a decade of deflation, high levels of unemployment, low turnovers, poverty, declined personal growth as well as economic progression.

Although the main causes of the great depression are still vague and contentious to date, the overall outcome was unexpected and resulted in the universal loss of trust in the economic future. This paper seeks to affirm the thesis statement that gardens can be utilized in difficult economic situations in order to bring hope and salvation to the population that has been affected.

One of the industries that were hardly hit by the aftermath of the market crash was the agricultural sector. The entire population depended on it for survival in this major sector. Lack of employment, reduced income, as well as poverty, which led to hunger, prompted the government to come up with strategies that would combat the worsening economic conditions.

The great depression, which severely affected the world's economies, lasted until 1932. It forced thousands of people out of their income generating sources and cast them into serious financial difficulties.

It was after realizing the aftermath of the depression that governments introduced relief gardening programs to combat emotional stress, poverty, and hunger (Williamson 20). They were meant to serve as emergency measures to solace the population, as the government was working on other stringent measures to solve the depression crisis and stabilize the economy.

The relief gardens also referred to as vacant lot gardens, subsistence gardens, or welfare garden plots. They served the same purpose as the 1980's potato patches. These gardens created an atmosphere of productivity, usefulness, and significance. Moreover, they offered work opportunities, food and improved the spirit and health of the entire population involved in the gardening (Tucker 13).

From time immemorial, gardens have been utilized to provide families with substantial amounts of food throughout the year. Gardens can supply the family with food for meals and can produce products that can be sold at a profit to purchase some essential things required by the family. A family requires enough staple food however; there must be enough of other kinds of right foods. A garden with a variety of different foods gives the family a wide range of nutrients that are necessary for the development of the body.

Gardens in great depression provided people with a means of survival. Due to lack of income generating activities none related to agriculture, families used to rely on the income generated by the produce from the relief gardens. Apart from producing vegetables for consumption, the gardens offered a source of income.

Lack of employment can lead to a hopeless living, deterioration of a nation's economy leads to an increase in product prices causing people to struggle financially. Relief gardens in the great depression offered people a chance to meet their daily financial needs. By reducing the amount of money spent in supermarkets and raising extra income through the sale of products from the

gardens, people were able to manage through the great depression. Relief gardens offered to people a new horizon of hope.

Relief gardens introduced the culture of farming because even after the great depression was over, people continued with farming practices. The economy that followed the great depression was much stable as compared to the former one. Both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors were fairing very well. People were no longer worried about the adverse economic situation since they had in mind another alternative to lean on when things were not working.

People's Hope was restored and there were no cases of rampant unemployed, those with unstable sources of income always relied on their farms to survive. No longer did people view farming as an activity for the poor, the whole nation embraced farming, and the government encouraged its people to engage more on farming activities. The government offered farming incentives and provided subsidies on farm supplies such as fertilizers and pesticides.

Preservation of food was done through smoking, salting, and drying. Through technological advancement, people have been able to invent effective methods of food preservation. These methods include food dehydration, canning, and refrigeration. Through historical gardening, we can learn the historical setting of civilization (Emerson¹²). There were no machines for farming, and people had to do it manually. Today, people use advanced machinery to do all kinds of farming.

Gardens can also have political and economical aspects as they did during the Great Depression. It was the idea of the reigning government to introduce relief garden program to help resuscitate the economy. Gardens acted as a source of income to individuals and gave them hope for the future. People depended on produce from the farms to feed their families and provide them with financial supplement.

According to Kleindienst, the gardening act is perceived to have a spiritual inclination. She explains how the land could talk, and the gardeners could take time to learn from the wisdom that was passed down on them orally from generations (Kleindienst 25). Earlier people had a close attachment to gardens since they perceived them as sources of life.

Gardens were viewed as a source of life since without gardens, it was hard to survive during the great depression. People depended entirely on the fruits gotten from the gardens; there was no other option but to utilize the relief garden. From that moment, a close tie developed between gardens and the people in general.

During the great depression, gardening programs were executed in phases. Initially, numerous problems faced the movement of relief gardening, especially in the implementation period. The organizers of the movement were in contention over the sizes, composition, and control of the gardens.

Many people wondered whether the depression would even go on for such a long time to necessitate relief gardens. Those who were to be assisted included the elderly, invalids, unemployed, and those with polygamous

families. The effects of the great depression were not caused by the weakness and inability of individuals to provide for themselves and their families but the failure of the governing system (Warman 16). During that period, the ordinary citizens contributed towards Gardening programs. This practice was prominent in Detroit.

In 1933, garden committees were established by non- governmental organizations to assist in mitigating widespread hunger. Owners of land were encouraged to increase their land rather than rely on the gardens that were available in the relief gardens sections. Workers in the gardens were given farm supplies and seeds for planting. Many farmers disliked the idea of welfare gardens since they thought that the program upheld the economic depression by increasing overproduction (Warman 19).

Franklin Delano Roosevelt brought with him (New Deal) when he was elected the president of the United States in 1933. The three years that followed saw work in the garden program receive a three billion dollar fund by the (FERA) Federal Emergency Relief Administration.

The donations given, helped in buying farm supplies such as fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds (Warman 25). The relief gardens provided jobs, food, and a sense of belonging to the population in the great depression era. Relief gardening encouraged people to be self depended and eliminated the possibility of laziness.

The gardens opened a new way whereby people started relying on themselves for food and sustenance. Henceforth, the relief gardens acquired

a new name. The gardens are known as depression gardens (Williamson 20), and were named after the era they were invented.

The main objective for establishing the gardens was to help the population save their money on grocery bills by cultivating their own vegetables (Cravens 9). The government realized the dire need of encouraging the population to cultivate their vegetables by even providing incentives such as seeds and farm supplies.

In the era of the great depression, as the need arose, people concentrated more on food gardening as compared to now. Goods that were home canned were worth gold for their weight (Newton 21). In those times, home freezers were not available; therefore, people preserved their food through canning.

Families that lived in areas where there was low humidity preserved their food and fruits on racks placed on top of roofs (Emerson 29). Those racks had to be kept safe from insects and the roving bird in the daytime and had to be returned back inside the houses at night to preventing them from becoming damp. Some people made their racks over the kitchen range, thus avoiding the outside weather conditions. By drying vegetables and fruits, people were able to save on the cost of canning.

Relief gardening also included rearing of poultry. This was done at the backyard; poultry provided meat, eggs, and litter for farmyard purposes. Other animals such as cattle and sheep were also reared to provide manure that also helped in cutting the cost of buying fertilizers (Watkins 15). People with large families used family labor to prepare the land for planting

seasons, take care of growing crops, and help in harvesting. Gardening in the great depression helped people to be self-dependent and provide for themselves.

In actual fact, relief gardening helped people to save a lot on vegetable produce since they grew most of the vegetables and fruits directly from their gardens. The main principle used in depression gardening was planning what was to be eaten based on what garden produced; thus, putting a certain limit to what was bought in the food stores (Berton 36).

Saving on the cost of seeds was one of the ways used to cut down and reduce garden costs, and people living in the same vicinity always traded with seeds especially when there was something new in the market. The plant's people are growing today are hybrids; therefore, preserving seeds is a risky ordeal since hybrid seeds do not always give the same as the mother plants (McElvaine 16).

Those seeds from original reliable selections normally produce a similar type of plants repeatedly again (Mortimer 12). One setback facing the old seed variety is that they are vulnerable to nematodes and plant diseases (Howard 7). The main objective of developing hybrid plants has always been to resist the numerous plagues that affect plants.

In the era of the great depression, the art of gardening was learned through practical experience, since it was a source of livelihood. Currently, someone who is experienced in gardening can get free information and gardening tips from videos, magazines, and books that are locally available in bookstores.

Today, the practice of gardening is not in itself a chore as it was during early days (Pollan 9). Today, there exist tilling machines that have assumed the places of ox, horse, and ass drew plows. All categories of power machines and tools have made the gardening work easier.

The best time to start dealing with an economic catastrophe is before its occurrence. Food cost is rising steadily, and most people are spending a lot of money from their income in supermarkets against their desires (Warner 56). Canned food prices will continue to skyrocket. Due to environmental catastrophes, farmers still make great losses. For instance, farmers were devastated by the 1998 summer in many regions of America, especially across the south.

There is also a likelihood that 30% of Louisiana gardeners may lose their farming jobs because of crop loss due to drought, which have lasted for more than one year. The 1998 drought also left many cattle suffering as the cattlemen searched for other areas where they could get hay to feed their animals, these disasters always translate to elevated prices to customers (Lawson 23).

Through gardening, we are able to raise our own produce, therefore, offsetting some of our food expenses. We are actually lucky that our modern methods of food preservation are not involving and time-consuming (Ellis 16). Our fresh supplies that come from our gardens can be preserved through drying, freezing, or canning and this can save us a lot when prices in the supermarket rise. Means of preparation to combat economic hardships

should actually commence as soon as signs of economic depression begin to set in.

Prior to the cultivation period, the rotary tillers should be serviced and put to work. The garden should be located in a place void of big trees and should be open to direct sunlight for at least six to seven hour of the day. In areas where the temperatures go beyond ninety degrees, it is advisable to provide some shade. Barnyard manure, poultry litter, and compost manure are employed before the plantation time (Niñez 5).

Gardeners in the great depression practiced row planting, but nowadays due to the need for easy maintenance, less water, high yield, space saving, easy replanting, and harvesting, elevated gardens are preferred. In the modern gardens, the grass is allowed to grow in between beds, which are four feet apart. String trimmers or mowers are used to control the growth of grass. The grass offers a suitable and comfortable path to walk on, thus avoiding muddy paths.

There are points to consider when choosing the type of vegetation to grow in the gardens since it is of no use to plant crops that look lucrative while growing while at the end they cannot be consumed (Niñez 7). Famers in the era of the great depression used to preserve their vegetables and fruits either by drying or by canning.

These methods are still in use today but in an advanced manner (Ellis 25). Nowadays foods are preserved using refrigeration while others prefer dehydrating fresh vegetables; this is done through advanced technology

known as freeze-drying whereby the food to be dried is subjected to very low temperatures then heated at very low pressure. In this method of freeze-drying, the water content in the food escapes through a process known as sublimation.

The relief gardens in great depression provided a source of income and food to the entire population thus, giving people hope to survive, offering relief to economical stress, and provided a sense of satisfaction to those who were in need. Gardens also, as discussed above, are capable of changing people's lives if taken seriously. Relief gardens opened a way to many farming activities that were not explored before. Different agricultural techniques were embraced, therefore, changing the way of live of different people.

From the time of the great depression, farming was no longer perceived as a noble activity but was viewed as an activity that sustained the lives of many people in times of trouble. The impact of relief gardens is evident up to date since the idea of farming was embraced and is still in use. People stopped viewing gardening as a thing for the poor but rather as a redeeming feature that supported live in the great depression.

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