



## Plant-A-Row

*served by Athens – Clarke County Extension and MGEVs*

[gamastergardener.org](http://gamastergardener.org)

Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program

The Plant-A-Row (PAR) garden at Clarke County Middle School has grown in size and scope since its inception in 2000, moving to a variety of locations as the community and garden's needs changed. The garden was started on the property of a neighbor of an Athens-Area Master Gardener, then moved to a small plot at Chase Elementary School. When that school was remodeled in 2005, the Plant-A-Row moved to Clarke Middle School, and has been flourishing there since 2006.

This garden is located in a central courtyard at Clarke Middle School, and it can be seen from several classrooms and from the main hall through large glass windows. Students also walk through the courtyard to gain access to the athletic practice fields. School administrators and Plant-A-Row garden coordinators have an excellent relationship.



**675**

volunteer service  
hours in 2017

**44**

MGEVs  
contributed to  
this project

The school provides a secure area for the garden, along with the water for the plants. Students have planted and tended to seedlings for the garden in their greenhouses, and they have used some of the beds for experiments. The Plant-A-Row garden is also a physical example to students of the power and importance of vegetable gardening, as well as a beautiful setting enjoyed by all.

The garden's goals are planting, maintaining, and harvesting vegetables for local food banks. Designed by a group of Athens-Area Master Gardener Extension Volunteers, the current layout includes 14 raised beds for vegetables, blackberries, blueberries, and muscadines. Summer crops include tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, green beans, okra, peppers, and a variety of peas. Garden crops continue in the cool season with lettuce, kale, sugar snap peas, radishes, and onions. The Athens-Area Master Gardeners have also added beds of flowers, a rose arbor, a rain garden, and a picnic table for the kids and teachers to enjoy.

With the hard work of MGEVs, the garden produces approximately 2,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables each year, which are donated to the Athens Area Emergency Food Bank. The project coordinators work with this private non-profit food bank serving at-

risk clients and identifying the foods that their clients want and need. Forty-four MGEVs volunteered in the garden in 2017, serving 675 hours supporting the local community with these donations.

In addition to providing fruits and vegetables, the garden also serves as an educational tool for Clarke County MGEVs as they practice larger-scale vegetable gardening and learn techniques, such as planting squash early to avoid squash bugs and rotating crops. Each year, the project chairs make notes of what does and does not work well, collaborating to create higher yields the following year. Frequently, MGEV trainees spend many of their first-year volunteer service hours in the Clarke Middle PAR garden, as the garden provides a great place to learn about growing vegetables from veteran MGEVs who are eager to share their experiences. MGEVs work on teams of three with flexible schedules they can coordinate themselves, making it a place not only to learn about vegetable gardening, but to make lasting friendships as well.



**2,000**  
pounds of  
produce  
donated  
annually



Four Master Gardener Extension Volunteers work together to lead the coordination of this project, ensuring its success each year.



*The Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program prepares volunteers to support UGA Cooperative Extension in delivering gardening information to Georgia's citizens and communities. Since 1979, Master Gardeners and UGA Extension have helped Georgians become healthier, more productive, financially independent and environmentally responsible.*

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