

“We strive to promote an environment where local gardeners work together to grow needed food, support each other, and continue a tradition that roots and supports the surrounding community.”

Ben Franklin Community Garden (BFCG) is a jewel in the crown of Cleveland’s Old Brooklyn neighborhood. Established as a community garden in 1979, through an agreement between the Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation (OBCDC) and the Cleveland Board of Education, it is one of the largest and most productive garden sites in the city



The Legacy Continues

Today, the garden has more than 200 individual plots, each spanning 500 square feet. The garden also is enrolled in Cleveland’s community gardening program – Summer Sprout – a partnership between the City of Cleveland and Ohio State University (OSU) that supports gardens with education and tools, including seeds and starter plants available to BFCG gardeners. The garden is a true oasis in Old Brooklyn and a place to meet new people, learn about gardening, or share your hobby and harvest. Benji gardeners have sizeable harvests and have shown incredible generosity over the years by donating as much as 5,000 pounds to local hunger centers and food pantries.

History & Tradition

The Ben Franklin Garden (or Benji, as it is known) has a long history and notable tradition. In 1919, the Cleveland Board of Education purchased 10 acres in Old Brooklyn for future development. The school was built in 1923 and 5 acres south of the school were dedicated for garden use. Originally, it provided a nursery for plants used in beautifying other board of education properties. In 1924, the first horticulture classes were taught to students. Part of the grounds became a tract garden in the Cleveland Public Schools garden program, which author Joel Mader describes as “the most successful, innovative, and copied program in the United States.” In the wake of financial challenges in the late 1970s, the schools ended the program. That’s when local residents took up the tradition of growing in this serene, eco-friendly urban site and formed the community garden.



Not *Just* a Garden

At 3 acres, the community garden covers much of the land, but the grounds also include a wooded area with a distinctive variety of trees and a small orchard. Additionally, master gardeners from the OSU Extension program maintain a student horticulture program garden, a perennial garden, an herb garden and a demonstration vegetable garden. Gardeners benefit from a large onsite tool library, restroom facilities, and a community of skilled and experienced gardeners who can help beginners learn their way.

Become part of the legacy of generations who have gardened at Ben Franklin! More info at benfranklincommunitygarden.org.

