



Dane County Horticulture Program

Providing research-based horticulture education so all have access to the information needed to care for plants, eat healthy, and protect the environment

Situation: In Dane County, 23% of Black households are food insecure according to Feeding America’s [Map the Meal Gap](#) study. Food insecurity is defined as having insufficient or uncertain access to food for at least one person in the household at some point in the year. Unequal access to food is related to inequitable distribution of resources. Food insecurity is often related to lack of sufficient income but it is also related to lack of access to transportation and availability of retail outlets selling nutritious food, among other factors. Food insecurity for children in particular can lead to a variety of physical, cognitive, and psychosocial issues.

Response: Lisa Johnson, Dane County Extension Horticulture Educator, partnered with a local non-profit, Urban Triage, that brings transformational education and learning experiences to Black families in Dane County. Their Supporting Healthy Black Agriculture (SHBA) program teaches the basics of growing your own food as well as presenting entrepreneurial opportunities in the field of agriculture. This program strives to address health disparities and inequalities with sustainable food production techniques to help address food insecurity. The course also provides a healing space for Black families to learn about agriculture from the Black experience. Lisa provides technical assistance in the field, consulting, and educational programming. Seeds from a Black-owned business were provided as part of a hands-on educational training in starting and producing seedlings that Lisa taught in the Dane County Extension Teaching Greenhouse. Lisa also assisted with processing CSA boxes for program participants and she assisted at the annual Harvest Festival. Future plans include Lisa providing additional educational programs, support with the CSA box program, reviewing planting plans, and assisting with infrastructure maintenance on the high tunnel facility.

UW-Madison Division of Extension’s Horticulture Program provides research and evidence-based horticulture education, resources, and decision-making tools to home gardeners and commercial horticulture practitioners.

Results: In Extension’s seed starting class, SHBA participants started 144 collard and mustard green plants. The seedlings were cared for in the Extension Teaching Greenhouse until they were ready to be planted in the field. And eventually the greens were harvested and distributed to participants. During field work, Lisa assisted in proper watering techniques, harvesting, and identified downy mildew on basil at the time of harvest so it was not included in CSA boxes, preventing a potential health issue. The number of people participating in the SHBA program doubled this season from the previous and everyone in the class was provided a weekly CSA box. It is estimated that more than 1200 pounds of produce was harvested and distributed to the participating families. In addition, the extra produce was placed at the community produce stand at Urban Triage’s Park Street office.



“Lisa Johnson’s partnership with Urban Triage has been of great use to our staff and community members. Her extensive knowledge of plant care, and diseases in areas our staff are unfamiliar has allowed us to offer well rounded education to our Supporting Healthy Black Agriculture students and broadened our Agriculture staff’s understanding as well.”

“Lisa’s field work support is deeply appreciated as we manage weeds mostly manually. Early season support is always appreciated. We would love to host another seed starting workshop with Lisa.”

*Ruthanna Hutton-Okpalaek
Agriculture Program Manager*

To learn more:

<https://dane.extension.wisc.edu/horticulture/>



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