History of the Lyndale Community Garden

1470 Lyndale Ave

A Project by the Lyndale Ave Block Club and the Vollintine Evergreen Community Association
Original House in 2008

House was damaged in straight line winds in 2003 in a storm called Hurricane Elvis, and owner did not take care of it so city condemned and demolished it.
Lyndale Garden 2010

Top (Left to right) to Bottom (Left to right): First three slides are cleanup of vacant lot, while the last slide is bringing leaves that will be used for mulch to improve the soil.
Lyndale Garden 2011

Upper: Cleared lot ready for garden and Right, the first tilling of the lot by Brian Floyd
Lyndale Garden 2011

Top (Left to right) to Bottom (Left to right): Two slides at top of volunteers preparing soil for the first garden planting, two slides below of the first garden planting, and final slide of the compost bin..
Lyndale Garden 2012

Top (Left to right) to Bottom (Left to right): Volunteer planting a crop, flower to attract pollinators, compost bin, planting the garden, AmeriCorps cleaning the garden, and annual Lyndale Garden Picnic.
Lyndale Garden 2012

Garden of the Year Vegetable Garden Winner: Lyndale
Community Garden grows healthy produce and stron

Margaret Douglas, Mike Kirby, Jan Kirby, Jordan Kirby (in front), Chris Floyd (woman in back row), Wayne Stanfill and Tony Steinberg all help maintain Lyndale Garden at 1470 Lyndale, a community vegetable garden that has been named garden of the year.

By Jonathan Devin

Posted: September 21, 2012 12:10 AM

This and next slides is Commercial Appeal Article of Garden of the Year award. Photo of Commercial Appeal touring the garden.
When neighbors in the Vollintine Evergreen Community Association (VECA) planted a community garden on Lyndale Avenue, the first things to blossom were relationships.

Because of the friendships, food and flowers it produced, the Lyndale Community Garden was named the winner of The Commercial Appeal's 2012 Garden of the Year in the vegetable garden category. "We're learning as we go along, but we did pretty well," said Chris Floyd, one of seven lead volunteers who started the garden last year. "We had crops our first year, and things went well this year. People are excited about it, and the lot looks beautiful."

And there's plenty of reason to be excited. Lyndale, in the area near Watkins and Jackson, has several vacant lots where deteriorating houses were demolished. The site of the garden is a lot that sat empty after the house was destroyed in Hurricane Elvis in 2003. The structure was eventually demolished, and the lot sold in a county tax sale. But the land sat empty, until after a string of burglaries on the street, neighbors met at a VECA meeting to discuss their options.

Originally, the neighbors hoped to buy the lot, which had been purchased by the owner of an adjacent house. But a deal was never reached, so the volunteers asked the owner's permission to raise a garden there. They planted for the first time in 2011. "We didn't have a whole lot of experience with gardening, so we just put things wherever," Floyd said. "We're getting better about planning things out." The neighbors got a grant from Rhodes College, funded by the Plough Foundation, to buy tools, plants, seeds and a lawn mower. They planted tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers, jalapeños, eggplants, okra, green beans, watermelon and cantaloupes. They tried growing sweet corn as well, but the Midtown raccoons enjoyed more of that than the neighbors did.

The Lyndale neighbors have already done fall planting of lettuce, radishes, greens, carrots and beets. Water was provided by the house next door, and the retirees on the street volunteered to work during weekdays. The effect on the street was a greater sense of pride. Floyd said other households on the street started maintaining their yards better and mowing the remaining vacant lots regularly. Tony Steinberg, who lives on Lyndale and volunteers in the garden, said he met one of his neighbors for the first time while working in the garden. They'd both lived on the street for years, but had never spoken. The garden became the focal point of the street, so this year the volunteers made greater efforts to beautify it. "Last year, we noticed we didn't have a lot of bees," Floyd said. "So we planted zinnias and a butterfly bush. We definitely noticed a lot more bees and butterflies around, and I think we had a bigger crop."

They also left a grassy area open underneath a tree for community picnics, like one that will be held on Saturday.

The lead volunteers for the garden besides Floyd and Steinberg are Margaret Douglas, Mary Haynes, Jan and Mike Kirby, Kim Raharijaona and Wayne Stanfill. Rhodes College student interns and AmeriCorps volunteers also help at the garden. The volunteers share and distribute the crops to neighbors, but a thriving spirit of community seems to be the richest harvest for this Midtown garden. "I think what's been interesting is that I've gotten to meet a lot of people that I wouldn't have met otherwise," Floyd said. "It's been neat getting to know all these different people."

Why it Won In addition to the garden's beauty and successful crops, judges noted the Lyndale volunteers' perseverance and determination to make it work. "They had to go through quite a few hoops to get it going," said contest judge Kim Rucker, cutting garden and greenhouse manager for the Dixon Gallery and Gardens. "They were more enthusiastic than knowledgeable. When we first got there (for judging), there were two people waiting on us, but by the time we left, several people from the neighborhood had shown up, and they all had a part in it. It really did seem to be bringing the community together."

And there, perhaps, is a lesson for other neighborhoods that are interested in gardening but not sure of their gardening skills. "It's never a negative experience when someone grows a community garden," said contest judge Chris O'Bryan, arborist for the Memphis Botanic Garden. "The plants want to grow."
Lyndale Garden 2013

Top (Left to right) to Bottom (Left to right): Lyndale garden sign built by Tony Steinberg, annual Lyndale garden picnic, and the last photos of the sweet potato vines.
Lyndale Garden 2014

Top (Left to right) to Bottom (Left to right): First four photos are a garden cleanup and the last photo is volunteers harvesting a large crop of sweet potatoes.
Lyndale Garden 2014

Top (Left to right) to Bottom (Left to right): Top 3 photos of volunteers working on water line installation, next two photos of plumbers connecting the lines, and final photo volunteers installing raised beds.
Lyndale Garden 2014

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Residents are trying to keep a thriving community garden in our neighborhood by installing a dedicated water source at the Lyndale Community Garden. The next door neighbor allows volunteers to use water, but her water pressure is greatly impacted by watering the garden. Using the water from the neighbor is not a long term solution. Residents who lived on Lyndale became involved due to concerns with problem properties, such as dilapidated houses and neglected vacant lots. The garden was originally the site of a dilapidated home that was damaged in 2003 during “Hurricane Elvis”. The home was demolished and the neighbors were left with an overgrown and vacant lot littered with trash and debris. The garden has transformed the area into a vibrant neighborhood where residents now take ownership of their community. The garden is open to all Voillintine Evergreen residents who want to try their hand at gardening. Volunteers range in age from 2 to 80 years old.

2. a) Volunteers plan to install a dedicated water source in the spring of 2014. Volunteers would begin digging a trench for the pipes in March 2014.

b) The neighborhood will have to raise additional funds to complete the full project. We estimate the full project to cost $2,000, which includes hiring a plumber. Residents will ask VECA to provide some funding for the project. Residents make annual donations to VECA with those funds being used for grass root efforts.

c) Volunteers will be used to help dig the trench for the pipes. Volunteers have worked weekly at the community garden since 2011. Volunteer projects include planting vegetables, mowing, edging, collecting leaves for mulch, and picking up litter.

d) Volunteers maintain the garden on a weekly basis and this will continue after water is installed. A dedicated water source will make it much easier to maintain the garden.

Water installation was funded by both the City and VECA
Lyndale Garden 2015

Top (Left to right) to Bottom (Left to right): Group picture after working in garden, working in garden, Lyndale picnic neighbors, Lyndale picnic neighbors, Lyndale picnic neighbors, and picking Okra at garden.
Lyndale Garden 2015

Top (Left to right) to Bottom (Left to right): Neighbors at Lyndale picnic, harvest, neighbors at picnic, orchard, and persimmon at orchard