

Garden Spotlight: Iris Park Community Garden

One of our longest standing gardens, Iris Park Community Garden, located at 903 W. 45th St., continues to flourish and evolve as a beloved anchor in the North Little Rock community. This year, the garden celebrated a major milestone with the addition of four new raised beds, which expands opportunities for local families to grow their own food. They also added a dedicated pollinator area, thoughtfully planted to support native bees and butterflies, strengthening the garden's role as a haven not just for people but for the environment as well.

Perhaps the most inspiring new feature is their community plot, open to anyone in the neighborhood who needs a little extra produce. This welcoming gesture reflects the heart of Iris Park.

At the helm is longtime garden manager, Ms. Judy, whose quiet dedication is the backbone of the garden. In addition to managing daily garden tasks, she also volunteers at the Amboy Food Pantry and maintains the city lot next to the garden, helping to beautify the neighborhood beyond the garden's boundaries.

She is supported by assistant manager Ms. Jennifer, who also serves on the Community Garden Advisory Committee for the program, lending her voice and experience to guide the direction of our application process.

From nurturing food security to pollinator protection, Iris Park Community Garden continues to grow both plants and purpose. We're proud to have them as a cornerstone of our Community Garden Program and can't wait to see what they grow next!



Ms. Jennifer showing off her scarlet runner beans



Community Plot



Volunteers team up to shovel and spread pea gravel



New Pollinator Garden



Ms. Judy and Ms. Jennifer tending to their gardens





Funding for City Gardens - Apply Today!

If you have questions or need assistance completing your application, we're here to help! Whether you're starting a garden for the first time or expanding an existing one, support is available to walk you through the process. Reach out by phone or email to schedule a one-on-one appointment, or visit the city website for resources and a link to the application packet.

SPRING 2026 FUNDING APPLICATION

DUE ON DECEMBER 15, 2025

NEW GARDENS ELIGIBLE UP TO \$1,500

RETURNING GARDENS ELIGIBLE UP TO \$5,000



Point your camera
phone here!

STEP 1: Scan the QR Code to review the application located at the bottom of our website: nlr.ar.gov/communitygardens

STEP 2: Complete application and compile all required documents.

STEP 3: Submit everything to NLRNeighborhoodServ@nlr.ar.gov

For assistance with your application,
contact RKelly@nlr.ar.gov or
NLRNeighborhoodServ@nlr.ar.gov
501-351-0184



2025 Program Funding Recap

This year has been one of our most successful yet for the NLR Community Garden Program! We proudly provided funding support to 15 community gardens (six of them brand new to the program!) across the city, helping to expand access to fresh food, beautify neighborhoods, and strengthen local connections. Funding was used for everything from building new raised beds and installing irrigation systems to creating pollinator habitats. The enthusiasm and dedication from our garden leaders, volunteers, and community members continues to inspire us, and we're so proud of the growth and impact made possible through this year's support.

Newly Funded Gardens:

Garden of Life
AR Garden City
NLR Academy - ALE

Soil Health Starts Now: Test and Amend in the Fall

Your soil is the foundation of your garden and fall is the perfect time to build it up. Healthy soil leads to stronger, more resilient plants that are easier to grow and maintain.

Blend - Don't Layer

When amending your soil, blend your compost or soil amendments into the existing soil rather than layering them. This creates a consistent texture and encourages better root development.

Time for a Soil Test

Fall is also an ideal time to test your soil's pH and nutrient levels so you're ready for spring. Here's what you need to know:

- pH scale: Measures acidity from 0–14 (7 is neutral)
- Most garden plants thrive in slightly acidic soil: pH 6–6.5
- Acid-loving plants (like blueberries and azaleas) prefer pH 5–5.5
- Many Arkansas soils are acidic and may need lime to raise the pH

A soil test will tell you exactly if and how much lime or other nutrients to apply.

How to Collect a Soil Sample

1. Take slices of soil from the surface to 6 inches deep
2. Collect from 6–10 different spots in your garden or lawn
3. Mix them together in a clean container
4. Bring 1 pint of soil per sample to your local county Extension Office

Within 2–3 weeks, you'll receive detailed test results and tailored recommendations by mail.

Learn more by clicking this link: [University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Extension Office](https://www.uaex.edu/extension/soil-testing).



Click the image to watch a video on How to Collect Soil Samples at Home.





Stretch Your Season: Extend Your Harvest with Row Covers

Don't pack up your garden just yet! With a few simple tools, you can keep enjoying fresh greens and herbs well into winter in Zone 8a. Row covers and cold frames protect your crops from early frosts, light freezes, and garden pests, all while creating a mini greenhouse effect.

What Are Row Covers?

Row covers are lightweight fabric (like frost cloth, floating row cover, or garden fleece) that:

- Trap warmth from the sun during the day
- Provide 4–10°F of frost protection at night
- Block wind and some insect pests

How to Set Them Up

- Use PVC pipe or metal hoops to form arches over your bed or container
- Drape row cover fabric and secure with bricks, clips, or soil
- Remove or vent on sunny days over 50°F to prevent overheating

Ideal Crops to Cover

- Spinach, lettuce, kale, mustard greens
- Cilantro, parsley
- Carrots, radishes, turnips

Want to Go Bigger? Try a DIY Cold Frame

Cold frames are like mini greenhouses made from repurposed windows or clear plastic bins.

- Trap heat during the day and hold it overnight
- Great for herbs and greens
- Easy weekend project!



Click photo for more information from the University of AR Extension Office.

Fall Garden Cleanup: What to Remove and What to Leave for Wildlife

Fall is the perfect time to tidy up and prep your garden for winter, but a little mess can be a good thing! Here's what to clean and what to leave to support pollinators, birds, and beneficial bugs.

Clean Up These

- Diseased plants (like mildewy tomatoes or squash vines)
- Weeds that may spread seed
- Spent crops that are totally finished

Bag or compost these responsibly to reduce next season's pest pressure.

Leave These for Nature

- Seed heads (sunflowers, echinacea, dill): food for birds
- Hollow stems: shelter for overwintering native bees
- Leaf litter: vital habitat for fireflies, frogs, and butterfly larvae

Mulch to Protect and Feed Soil

- Add 2–4 inches of shredded leaves, straw, or pine needles
- Avoid piling mulch against plant stems
- Top with compost to nourish soil life through winter

TOOL TIP OF THE SEASON

Use a garden fork instead of a shovel for fall soil prep. A broad or digging fork is gentler on your soil structure than a shovel. It loosens compacted soil without turning it too much, which is perfect for aerating beds before adding compost or mulch. Bonus: it helps preserve beneficial microbes and worms!

JOIN US IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

With 21 active community gardens in the program, our garden managers are always looking for assistance.

VOLUNTEER
SIGN-UP





September

Bok Choi/ Pak Choi

Carrots

Swiss Chard

Beets

Spinach

Kohlrabi

Cauliflower

Cabbage

Broccoli

Collards

Kale

Mustard

Turnips

Radish

Lettuce



The closer to the bottom of the box a vegetable is listed, the closer to the end of the month it should be planted.

October

Cover Crops

Lettuce

Shallots

Leeks

Garlic

Collards

Mustard

Kohlrabi

Turnips

Spinach

Strawberries



November

Conduct Soil Test

Strawberries

Garlic

Collards

Turnips

Lime Soil

Salad Greens (Protected)

Order Catalogs

Cover Crops

Apply and Incorporate

Compost



Fall is a fantastic time to plant in Zone 8a, with cooler temperatures and fewer pests making it ideal for both starting new crops and refreshing garden beds. In September, plant cool-season favorites such as collards, kale, and carrots. October is perfect for leafy greens like spinach, mustard, and lettuce, as well as root vegetables like radishes and turnips. By November, focus on garlic, onions, and cover crops to enrich your soil for spring.

EVENTS/WORKSHOPS:

Thursday Night Farmers Market

4:30-7:30 Thursdays at St. Joseph Farmstead 6800 Camp Robinson Rd., NLR. [More details here.](#)

Start Your Garden From Scratch: Seed Starting Workshop - 5:00-7:00 Aug 14 (FREE)

Oak Forest Community Garden, 600 S. Monroe St, LR. This hands-on workshop will teach you the basics of seed starting, from soil to sprout. [More details here.](#)

Grow What You Eat (Herbs) - Workshop 10:00-12:00 Aug 16 (FREE)

Pecan Lake Community Garden, 9004 Tall Timber Blvd, LR. This workshop teaches practical ways to plant, harvest, and cook with common herbs. [More details here.](#)

Grow Your Own Groceries: Carrots 12:00 August 21 (FREE)

In this presentation, you will learn how to grow and cook with carrots. [Register to Grow Your Own Carrots](#)

NLR Community Garden Manager Meetings 5:00-6:30 on Wednesdays each month (FREE) Aug. 27, Sept. 24, Oct. 22, & Nov. 19

North Heights Community Center, 4801 Allen St., NLR. Meetings offer a chance for NLR community members to connect. They're a welcoming space open to all.

What's in your Soil - Workshop 10:00-12:00 Aug 30 (FREE)

UALR GARDEN, 3343 Fair Park Blvd, LR. This workshop will teach you how to understand your soil's condition and improve it for better plant growth. [More details here.](#)

Growing Urban Farmers Meet-Ups

5:30-7:00 1st Wednesday of each month (FREE)

Sept. 3, Oct. 1, & Nov. 5

St. Joseph Farmstead 6800 Camp Robinson Rd., NLR. [More details here.](#)

Grow Your Own Groceries: Figs 12:00 September 11 (FREE)

In this presentation, you will learn how to grow and cook with figs. [Register to Grow Your Own Figs](#)

Audubon 2025 Fall Native Plant Sale

Online ordering open Tues., Sept. 16 at 8:00am through Tues., Sept. 23 at 8:00pm. Curbside pickup will be available Oct. 3 and Oct. 4 at the LR Audubon Center (4500 Springer Blvd., LR, AR 72206). [More details here.](#)

Workshop: Attracting Pollinators to Your Garden 5:30-7:00 September 24 (FREE)

St. Joseph Farmstead 6800 Camp Robinson Rd., NLR, hosted by Growing Urban Farmers. Master Naturalist, Ruth Landers, who manages the pollinator gardens at St. Joseph, will delve into which plants you can use to support our pollinator friends (and why it is so crucial)!



@nlrcommunitygardens



youtube.com/c/cityofnlr



[North Little Rock Neighborhood Services](#)



nlr.ar.gov/communitygardens

NLR COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM

GARDEN MANAGER MEETINGS

Our meetings are an opportunity for NLR community garden managers, volunteers, and the general public to come together, exchange resources, celebrate successes, address challenges, and stay connected with our program. These meetings create a collaborative space where local gardeners can share knowledge, ask questions, and support each other. Best of all, they're free and open to everyone—come join us!

Wednesday: Aug. 27, Sept. 2,
Oct. 22, & Nov. 19



North Heights Community Center
4801 Allen St.
5:00 pm - 6:30 pm

Recipe

FRESH HERB GARDEN PESTO

CATEGORY: QUICK & EASY

PREP TIME: 5-10 MINS



Ingredients

- ☐ 1 cup basil leaves
- ☐ ½ cup mix parsley or oregano
- ☐ ¼ cup chives, chopped
- ☐ 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ☐ ¼ cup nuts (pine nuts, walnuts, or almonds)
- ☐ ½ teaspoon salt
- ☐ Juice of ½ a lemon
- ☐ ½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated (or nutritional yeast for a vegan option)

Directions

In a food processor or blender, combine basil, parsley/oregano, chives, garlic, and nuts. Pulse until finely chopped. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil while blending until smooth. Add Parmesan, salt, and lemon juice; pulse to combine. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed. If too thick, add a splash more olive oil or a bit of water.

Notes

Serve immediately or store in a jar in the fridge for up to a week.

HERB SALT RECIPE

PREP TIME: 10-12 MINUTES

ABOUT ½ CUP OF SEASONING

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup kosher salt or sea salt (coarse or flaky)
- 2-3 tablespoons of any fresh herb leaves (stripped from stem)

Optional add-ins:

- 1-2 cloves garlic, minced (for short-term use only)
- 1 tsp lemon zest (for a bright, citrusy twist)
- 1 tsp dried thyme or sage (for added herbal depth)

Tip: Label your jar with the date and type of herb used.

Instructions:

Dry the herb slightly (if freshly harvested) by letting it sit out for a few hours or lightly drying in a low oven (170°F / 75°C) for 10-15 minutes. You want it a little dry but still fragrant and green.

Blend it up: Place the leaves and salt into a food processor, spice grinder, or mortar and pestle. Pulse or grind the mixture just until the herb is finely chopped and evenly combined with the salt. You can adjust the texture depending on your preference. A few pulses will give you a coarse salt; more blending will make it finer. Be careful not to over-process into a powder unless that's the texture you want.

Air-dry: Spread the mixture out on a parchment-lined baking sheet and let it air dry for a few hours or overnight, especially if the herb was very fresh. Stir occasionally to prevent clumping.

Store: Once fully dry, transfer to an airtight jar or spice container. It will keep for 6+ months in a cool, dry place.

Chopped Summer Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 cucumber, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped (or a handful of cherry tomatoes, halved)
- 1 bell pepper (any color), chopped
- 1 ear of corn, raw or lightly cooked, kernels removed
- 1/4 red onion, finely chopped
- 1 small zucchini, chopped (optional)
- 1/2 cup cooked chickpeas or black beans (optional for protein)
- 1/4 cup fresh herbs (like basil, parsley, or mint), chopped
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta or goat cheese (optional)

Instructions:

- Chop all veggies into small, even pieces and place them in a large bowl.
- In a small jar or bowl, whisk together the dressing ingredients.
- Pour dressing over the chopped veggies and toss to coat.
- Add herbs and cheese (if using), and toss again.
- Let sit for 10-15 minutes for flavors to mingle, or serve right away!

Variations:

- Add avocado or diced grilled chicken for a heartier version.
- Use lime juice and cilantro for a Tex-Mex twist.
- Add cooked pasta for a quick chopped pasta salad!

For the dressing:

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp red wine vinegar or lemon juice
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- Salt & pepper to taste

Click each recipe to download.

GET TO KNOW THE NEW CITY OF NLR APP

Saturday, August 30 @ 10 AM at Laman

It's everything City of North Little Rock,
in your pocket.

