

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Garden Seeks Applicants for 2026 Season

SPRINGFIELD, IL – As interest in locally grown food and community-based agriculture continues to rise, the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) is inviting individuals and families to take part in the **2026 IDOA Community Garden**, a hands-on opportunity to grow fresh produce, build food security, and connect with agriculture in the heart of the Illinois State Fairgrounds.

The Community Garden offers 200 individual 10x10 plots, available on a first come, first served basis. With 100 plots designated for organic gardening and 100 plots for non-organic gardening, the garden provides flexibility for gardeners of all experience levels. The program supports the production of fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers while reducing barriers to access for those with limited yard space.

“Community gardens are about more than growing food—they’re about improving access to fresh, locally grown produce, and empowering families to take part in their own food security,” **said IDOA Director Jerry Costello II.** “This garden creates an affordable, welcoming space for those with limited yard space who still want to plant a garden.”

Each plot costs \$20 and can be tilled for you for an additional charge. The Department will supply water and compost free of charge.

Those interested in participating are encouraged to attend the Community Garden Open House on February 17 at 6 p.m. at the Illinois Department of Agriculture Auditorium in Springfield. The meeting will offer an overview of the program, answer questions, and provide an opportunity to complete applications and submit payment onsite.

Applications for the 2026 growing season are also available online at agr.illinois.gov/community-garden. Completed applications and payments may be returned by mail or delivered to the front desk of the IDOA at the John R. Block Building, Attention: Community Garden, 801 E. Sangamon Ave., Springfield, IL 62794.

Returning gardeners who wish to reserve their previous plot must submit their application and payment by March 2 or their plots will not be held.

Weather permitting, the garden will open March 10. If you would like more information about this year’s Community Garden, contact the Department at AGR.Garden@illinois.gov.