



JB PRITZKER, GOVERNOR · JERRY COSTELLO II, DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1, 2026

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Governor Pritzker Issues Proclamation Declaring July 1 as Community Garden Day

SPRINGFIELD — The world's fastest dirt track draws more than racing fans to the Illinois State Fairgrounds each summer. Tucked in the south end of the infield is the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) Community Garden, which was celebrated today with a proclamation from Governor JB Pritzker.

Community Garden Day in Springfield drew a crowd of gardeners, local and state officials, community partners and others to the carefully tended plots. The Illinois Department of Agriculture is the only agriculture department in the nation to offer a community garden on its grounds.

To reduce barriers to participation, a garden plot can be leased for \$20, which includes access to water throughout growing season.

Currently operating at 93 percent capacity, the garden serves 82 households in Springfield and surrounding communities. This year, the garden welcomed 23 new gardeners while 59 returning participants continue to cultivate their plots.

"Gardening connects us to agriculture in a very personal way," said **IDOA Director Jerry Costello II**. "It reminds us where our food comes from, encourages healthy lifestyles, and creates opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to come together."

The Department recognized the gardeners, volunteers, community leaders, and partner organizations whose efforts help sustain community gardens throughout Illinois.

"We're incredibly fortunate in Illinois to have the fertile soil, favorable climate, and abundant resources that helps crops grow and thrive—it's one of the many reasons agriculture is our number one industry," said **Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton**. "Coming together as a community to garden doesn't just bring people closer together—it reconnects us to the food on our table. I've always said ag connects us all, and it's heartening to see that connection in action."

Across town, the Sangamon County Community Garden was established through the vision, leadership, and support of State Senator Doris Turner.

“We’ve seen the positive outcomes that come from community gardens,” said **Senator Turner (D-Springfield)**. “This gives residents an avenue to appreciate the outdoors, spend time with their neighbors in the community and creates a space for people to enjoy.”

Located adjacent to the Community Resources Building on South Grand Avenue East, the one-acre garden provides community members with the opportunity to cultivate their own garden plots in a welcoming and accessible environment.

“Through this initiative, the Sangamon County Department of Public Health offers educational opportunities for both new and experienced gardeners, promoting healthy lifestyles, nutrition, and community engagement,” said **John Ridley, Director of the Sangamon County Department of Public Health**. “The garden also serves as an outdoor venue for family-oriented programs and activities, creating a space where residents can learn, connect, and grow together.”

In nearby Enos Park, the community garden is in its 15th season.

"When people think of community gardens, they often think of produce, but equally important is the community we find here with each other. With the tremendous help of our volunteers, we raise 1,600+ pounds of produce for our community, and host over 2,000 visitor and volunteer engagements each year,” said **Carey Smith, Manager, Enos Park Neighborhood Gardens**. “Our free programming and the high-quality organic produce we share has had a tremendous impact, helping to feed each other and also to nourish the bonds of community.”

The event also highlighted a proclamation issued by Governor JB Pritzker declaring July 1, 2026, as Community Garden Day in Illinois.

IDOA encourages residents to support and participate in community gardens, not just on the fairgrounds but throughout the state, as they offer the opportunity to grow fresh produce, connect with neighbors, learn new gardening skills, and help strengthen local communities

Residents interested in participating in a community garden are encouraged to contact either the [Illinois Department of Agriculture Community Garden Program](#) or the [Sangamon County Department of Public Health Community Garden Program](#) to learn more about plot availability and how to get involved.

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