



Historically, gardening was the key to not only living, but living well. Community gardens began to develop in the 1890's during the economic recession and were planted on vacant lots. School gardens followed and were a way to connect youth to nature and teach them responsibility as well as improve their health. During the recession in the late 1800's, industrial workers experienced many hardships including lack of employment which led to hunger. Detroit became the first city to establish a very large-scale urban gardening program sponsored by the city using vacant lots. These plots of land were known as "Pingree's Potato Patches," named after Detroit Mayor Hazen Pingree. Unemployed workers were given plots of land along with the tools and seeds needed to grow their gardens. Word spread about the successful program and how it alleviated hunger and hardships of unemployed citizens and their families and soon after other cities including San Francisco and Boston created their own gardens.

As the world watched World War I unfold, philanthropist Charles Lathrop Pack organized the National War Garden Commission in 1917 when the focus in the country shifted from education to food shortages. The commission called on citizens to become "soldiers of the soil" by planting "Liberty Gardens" to meet some of their domestic needs for food, making gardening a patriotic act. In 1917, the commission reported that there were over 3.5 million gardens producing over 350 million dollars' worth of crops. After the war, community gardens continued and during WWII, the "Victory Gardens" campaign was created to boost morale of the country. By 1944, 20 million families were providing 40% of vegetables in America.

Today, 25% of Americans have a backyard garden with food gardening at the highest level in over a decade. In the last 5 years, vegetable gardening in the US has grown from 36 million households to 42 million, with the highest increase among millennials and households with children. Studies have shown that involving children in the growing process makes them more willing to eat vegetables. The average backyard garden produces roughly \$600 in produce in a year.

