



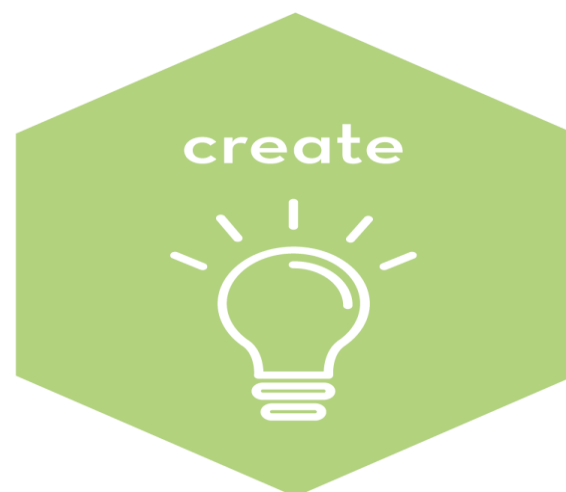
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Growing Healthier Communities: **Exploring the Health Impacts of** **Community Gardens**

Emma Saving, BA, MPH Student
UTHealth Houston School of
Public Health





Today's Agenda

Research Review

What does current research tell us
about the links between
gardens/gardening and health?

For patients?

In communities?



In Houston

What are different urban
gardening/farming organizations doing
in Houston?

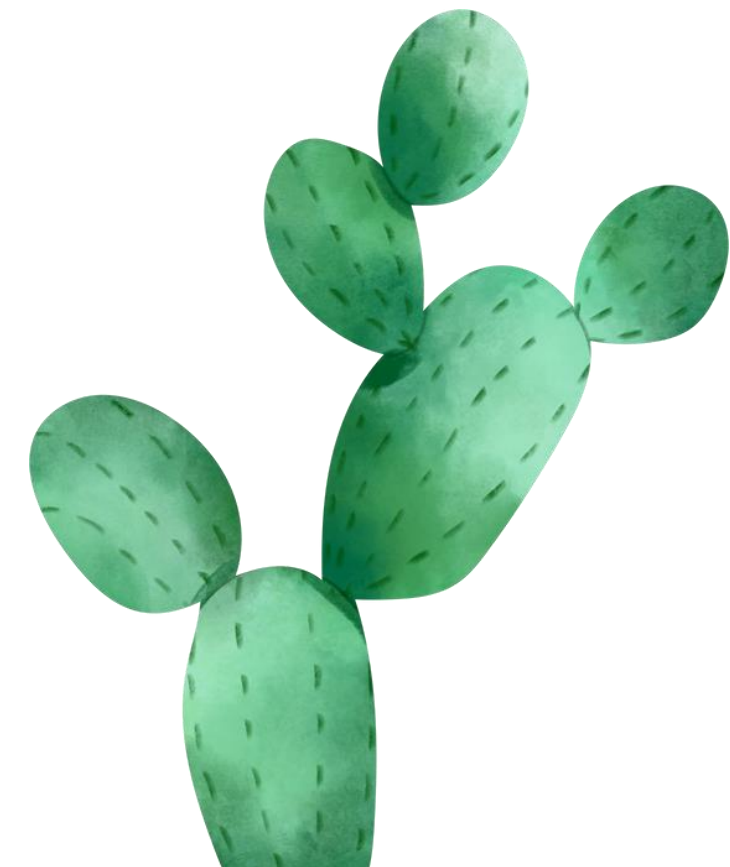
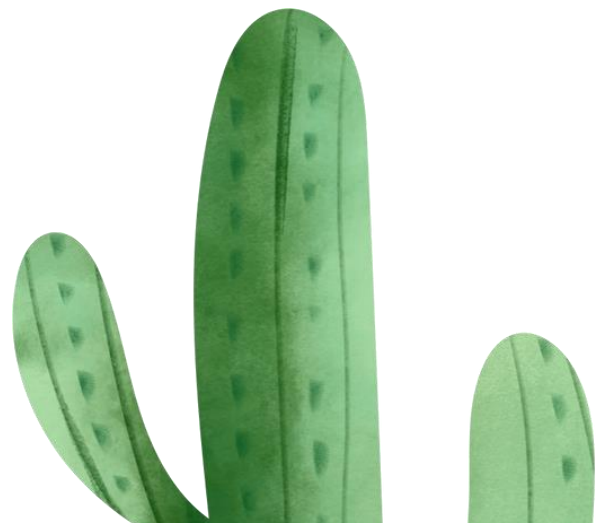
How do they affect health?

Health equity?



About Me

- BA in Biosciences from Rice University
- UTHealth Houston Center for Health Promotion and Prevention Research → Implementation Science
- MPH in Health Services Organizations at the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health
- Interning/practicum with the Nourish program and Holistic Garden this summer





Why is this important?

Why should you care about the links between gardening and health?

Nutrition

Physical and Mental Health

Social Health

Community Bonds



Connecting with Nature and Communities

The background features a watercolor illustration of various green leaves and a red flower. The leaves are in different shapes and sizes, some with prominent veins, and are scattered around the central text. A single red flower with yellow centers is located on the left side. The overall style is soft and artistic, with a focus on natural elements.

Literature Review: Gardening and Health for Patients and Communities



Gardening Interventions for Patients

Physical and Mental Health

- Lifestyle diseases are on the rise (1, 5)
 - Sedentary lifestyles
- Gardening = low-impact physical activity (5, 6)
 - Exposure to nature (nature prescription) + physical activity
 - Social activity
- Improvements shown in physical health, cognition, mental health, reduced stress, reduced hospitalizations (2, 8, 9)





Gardening Interventions for Patients

Improving the Care Environment

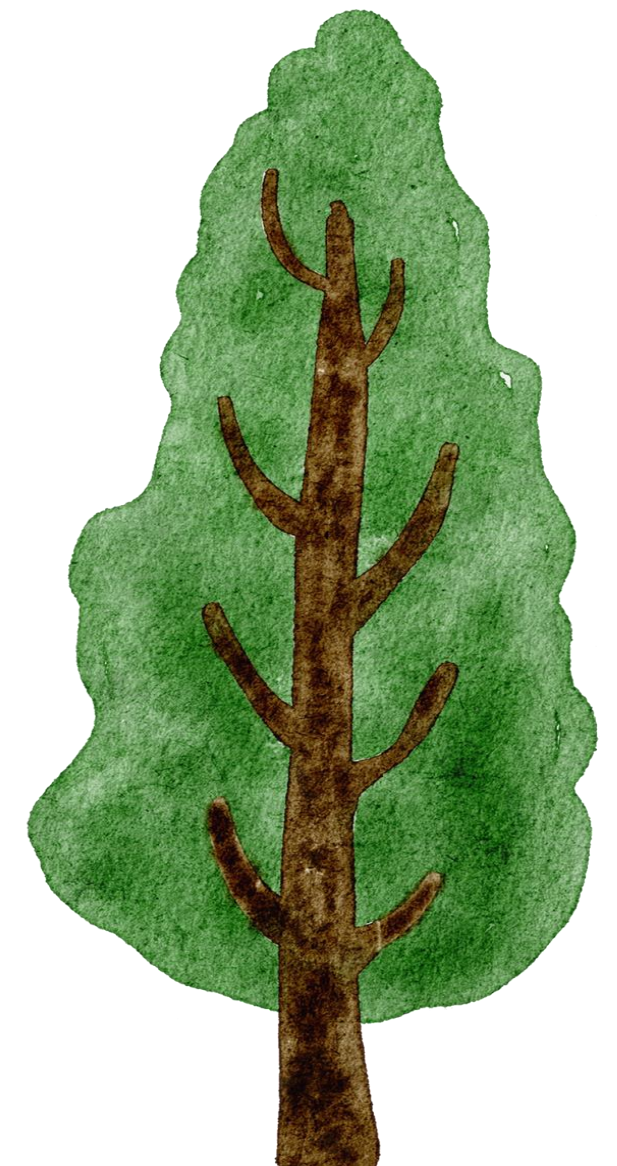
- Hospital healing gardens (patients and visitors) (Center for Health and Nature, 9)
 - Houston Methodist (Houston), Baylor Scott & White (Dallas area)
 - Virtual reality “gardens”
 - Natural landscaping and gardens in Medical Center
- Hospital garden-kitchens and teaching/demonstration gardens ⁽³⁾
 - Nourish program, UTHealth holistic garden



Gardens for Communities

Health, Nutrition, Sense of Community

- Fabric of a community (7)
 - Health intervention → more than that
- Physical, mental and social health (7, 10)
- Climate resilience, sense of community (4, 7)
 - Cultural foods, community food events
 - Marginalized people can benefit most
- Food security increases (4, 11)





My Research: Observations on Urban Gardening/Farming and Health in Houston



Community Organizations

Center for Health and Nature

Plant it Forward

Small Places/Lugarcitos: Finca Tres

Robles

Urban Harvest

Hermann Park Conservancy




Saba Ya Amani (Farm for Peace)

Texas A&M Public Health

Texan by Nature

UTHealth Houston

Participants also had previous experience working at: Hope Farms, Rice University Garden, Texas A&M Agrilife, and various other garden/farm organizations around Houston, Texas, and beyond





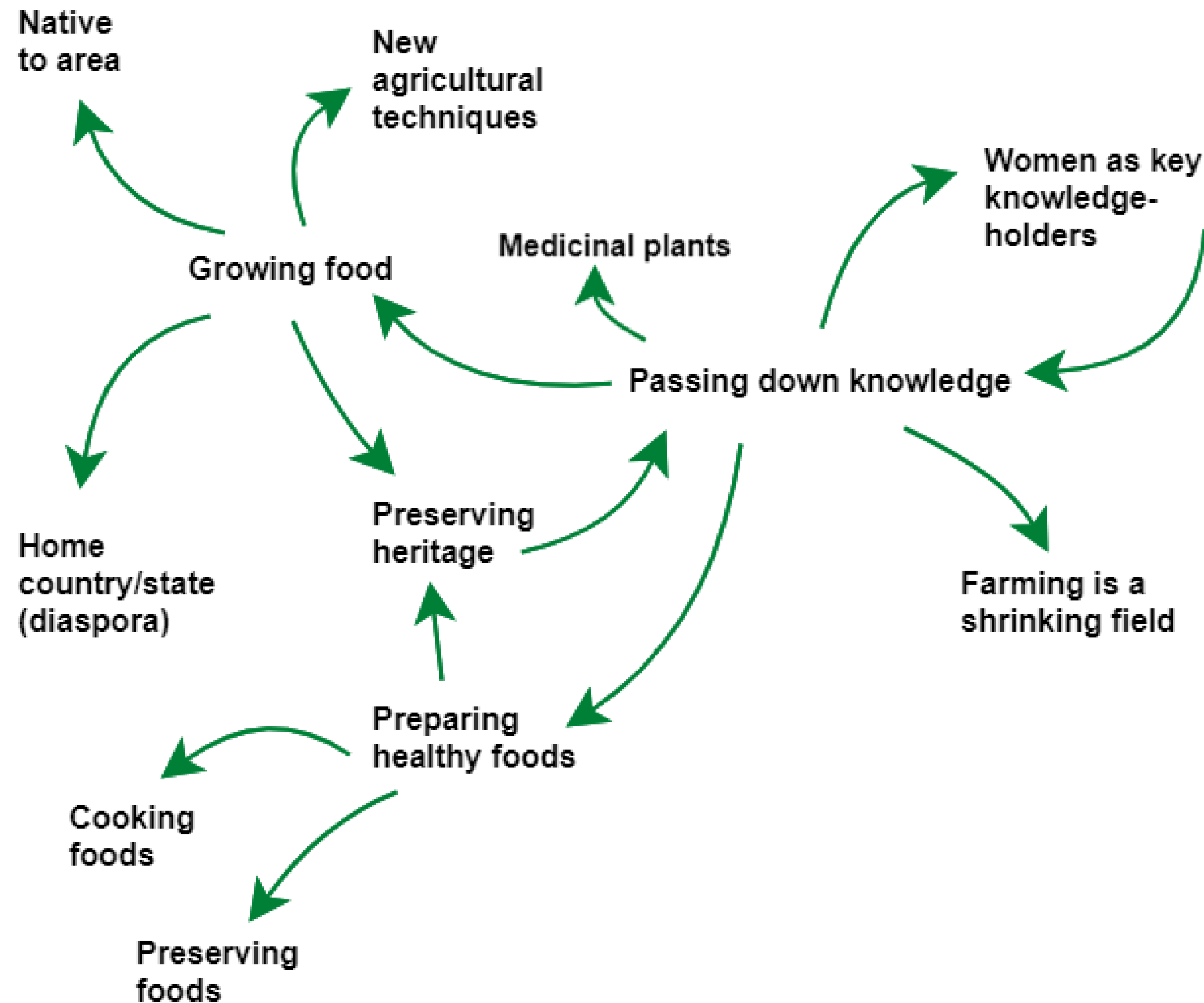
Community Research Questions

- How would you describe your work as it relates to health?
- In what ways does the issue of equity inform your work?
- How do you see health/nutrition/food security effects in the community from this work?

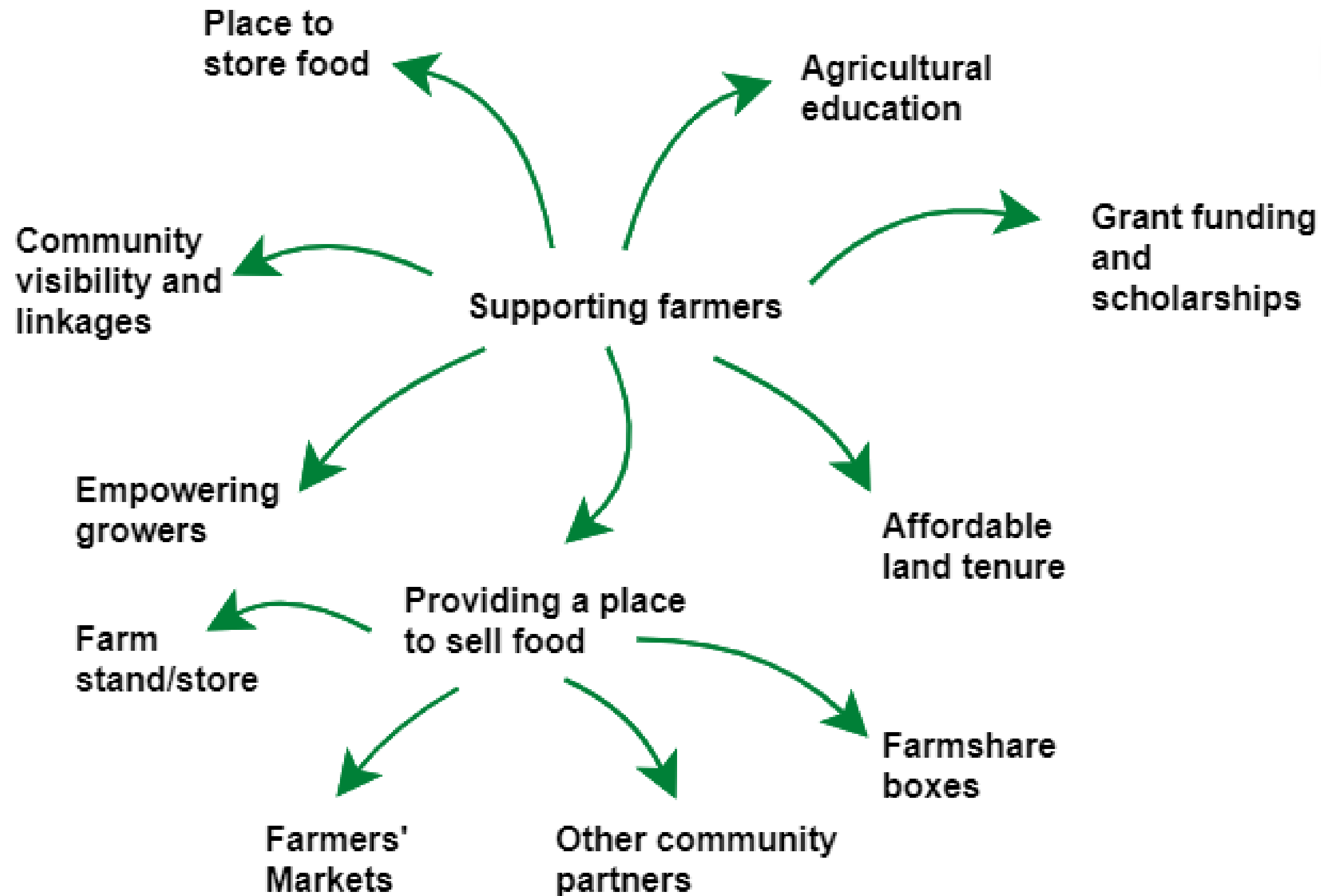


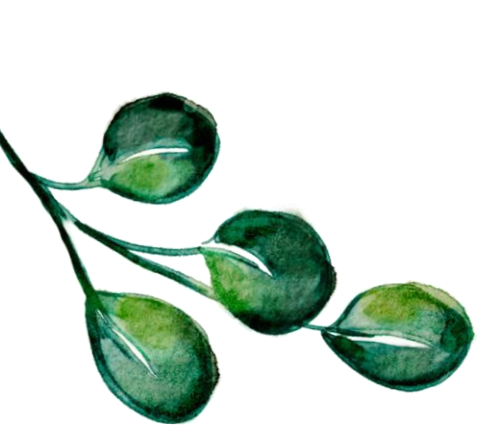


Importance of passing down knowledge



Supporting farmers





Supporting the wider community



The background is decorated with various watercolor-style illustrations of plants and flowers. In the top left, there is a green vine with small, rounded leaves. In the top center, a small plant with green leaves and three orange berries sits above a horizontal green line with circular end caps. To the top right is a single blue flower with five petals. On the left side, there is a purple flower with five petals. The bottom left features a large, dark green leafy branch. The bottom center has a small plant with green leaves and buds. The bottom right shows a green vine with small, rounded leaves. The text is centered in a green, serif font.

**Nature is healing.
Community-based work
is key.
Get involved locally!**



Appendix I:

Community Research Themes

- Food systems (food system linkages)
- Land tenure (land ownership, renting, sovereignty)
- Passing down knowledge
- Nature is healing (tangible health benefits, intangible personal-level benefits)
- Disconnecting and reconnecting with nature (and difficulty of doing so in urban environments)
- Reclaiming unused land, development conflicts
- Supporting farmers, communities, or both (follow the money - different choices will be made, depending on who plans to gain)
- Low funding for agriculture (low wages, difficulty securing grants)
- Historical racism and how it shaped communities (redlining, lack of greenspace)
- Immigrant and refugee farmers (independence, land tenure, cultural foods)




Appendix II: Community Research Themes

- Sustainability in agriculture (crop rotation, organic practices)
- Productivity of the land
- Food insecurity and food security (which gardening and farming can assist with)
- Food/nature policy intersections (SNAP and partners, Food is Medicine, Nature Prescriptions)
- Food banks partnerships (donating extra food, community events)
- Sense of pride in community (coming together to grow, mutual aid, events)
- Independence, interdependence with community
- Building on volunteering
- Generational legacies of agriculture (food, medicinal plants)
- Keeping food local
- Building relationships with the community, uplifting community
- Including nature in medical care



References



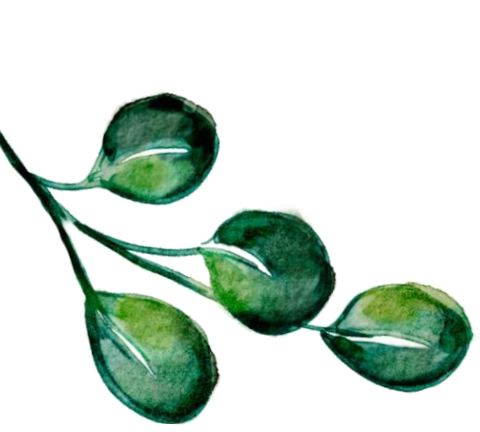
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Questions

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me at
emma.saving@uth.tmc.edu





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