

DAKOTA GARDENER:

# Victory gardens are trending in 2026

Esther E. McGinnis, horticulturist, NDSU Extension

Three people contacted me over the last two weeks and inquired about victory gardens. At my age, I am not very trendy, but this wartime concept seems to be gaining traction in 2026.

Victory gardens originated during World War I to encourage homeowners, schoolchildren and others to grow fresh food in backyard gardens, containers and other small plots. The purpose of these gardens was to offset domestic produce shortages as the United States shipped food to allied troops and countries. The concept was revived during World War II and, more recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Victory gardens are trending on social media for several reasons. A North Dakota State University Extension Master Gardener explained that she wanted to plant a victory garden to commemorate the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding. In keeping with this historical celebration, heirloom seeds can be a relevant and fun

choice. Online seed vendors sell vegetable varieties that were grown in George Washington's and Thomas Jefferson's gardens.

With high fuel costs and rising prices squeezing budgets, many people plan to plant a victory garden to save money. Growing fresh vegetables at home can reduce grocery costs and be very satisfying for those seeking greater self-reliance. Potatoes, winter squash, onions, carrots and beets are nutritious, high-yield choices that can be stored to provide food beyond the growing season.

You don't need a large yard to plant a victory garden. Ornamental gardeners can integrate perennial vegetable crops such as asparagus and rhubarb into existing flower gardens. The delicate asparagus foliage could provide an interesting backdrop for flowers. Similarly, red-stemmed rhubarb can add color to a flower garden. I have been known to tuck radishes, Swiss chard, carrots and beets in between rows of flowers.

Apartment dwellers, do not despair! Tomatoes, bell peppers, basil, parsley and



Vegetables can be integrated into flower gardens. (NDSU photo)

cilantro can be grown on sunny apartment balconies. Most vegetables need six or more hours of direct sunlight. For areas that receive less sunlight, consider growing leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach that thrive with three to five hours of sunlight. Leafy greens grow best in spring and fall.

Victory gardens can be planted to benefit those who are less fortunate. Plant an extra row or container of vegetables to donate to local food pantries. Food pantries

expect increased demand this year due to economic conditions. Before donating, check to see if your local food pantries accept fresh produce. Not all food pantries have enough refrigeration space to accept and store produce donations. If donating produce, keep food safety principles in mind. Wash your hands before harvesting and use clean bags or containers to transport items to the food pantry. Also, exclude animals from the garden.

## Pool from Page 1

manage long-term operating costs.

The vision for the facility includes a 5,200-square-foot L-shaped activity pool designed to maximize recreation opportunities while maintaining long-term operational efficiency. Planned amenities include zero-depth entry for improved accessibility, a 9-foot section for water safety instruction and diving skill development, a splash pad, and a new bathhouse and mechanical building with modern filtration and pumping systems designed to reduce energy consumption and annual operating costs. Depending on fundraising efforts, a kiddie slide in the zero entry area, a zip line, and a double waterslide could also be included.

One unique feature of the project is the splash pad's ability to operate independently from the main pool.

"This would allow the splash pad to be opened on hot spring or fall days when the full pool facility is not operating, providing additional recreational opportunities for families," said Park Board member Megan Anderson.

The facility is also specifically designed for North Dakota's climate. Unlike many

outdoor pools, it would remain filled throughout the winter months, helping protect the structure while minimizing maintenance concerns associated with annual draining and refilling.

The estimated cost of the pool, bathhouse, and mechanical building based on the final cost to other communities is \$1.75 million to \$2.3 million.

The campaign is already off to a strong start thanks to a lead gift of \$25,000 from the Cooperstown Municipal Association. That contribution puts the campaign halfway toward its initial fundraising goal of \$50,000 by July 11.

The Park Board is now inviting residents, alumni, businesses, and supporters to help raise the remaining \$25,000 during Cooper Days and become part of a project that will benefit the community for generations.

Grant applications have been submitted, and a layered funding approach is being pursued. The next major milestone is reaching \$100,000 by this fall, which would allow the Park Board to move forward with accepting bids for a pool builder and continuing to advance the project toward a targeted groundbreaking

in Fall 2027.

Community members can contribute to the fundraising effort in several ways during Cooper Days.

In-person donations will be accepted:

July 8-10 at City Hall during business hours

July 8 at Splash in the Park from noon-3:00 p.m.

July 9 during Ladies Golf Night from 4:00-8:00 p.m.

July 10 during Men's Golf Night from 4:00-8:00 p.m.

July 11 following the Cooper Days Parade at The Front Room

Donations can also be made online at cooperstownpool.com. Every contribution, regardless of size, will help move the project closer to reality. The community is invited to contact any board member with questions or to donate. The current board members include Bryce Trostad, Megan Anderson, Lauren Ressler, Rich Danielson and Carissa Mehus.

"We're incredibly grateful for the encouragement and support we've already received," Trostad said. "The momentum is building, and we're excited about what we can accomplish together."

(Article by Lauren Ressler, Cooperstown Park Board member.)

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## KEEP THE SPARKS IN THE SKY THIS 4TH OF JULY.

### MAKE THIS INDEPENDENCE DAY SAFE.

🗨️

**TALK OPENLY:** Establish clear expectations and safety rules about alcohol with your teens.

📍

**BE AWARE:** Know where your teens are celebrating, and ensure responsible adult supervision is present.

🔒

**LOCK IT DOWN:** Keep all adult alcohol locked, monitored, and out of reach of minors.

**PARENTS, YOU ARE THE NUMBER ONE INFLUENCE ON A YOUNG PERSON'S CHOICE TO STAY ALCOHOL-FREE.**

**SAY NO TO UNDERAGE DRINKING.**  
Protecting their bright future starts with you.

#SAFE4THOFJULY

**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
Nelson-Griggs District Health Unit

A public service announcement