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students learning with communities



Students Learning with Communities

Urban Community Gardening – Motives for Participation and The Impact on Fruit and Vegetable Intake

Christina Purcell, Noelle Corrigan and
Sheila Sugrue
B.Sc.(Hons) Human Nutrition & Dietetics



Newcomen Court

Summer Row

Weaver Square

Santry

Dolphins Barn

Background

Urban community gardens are a relatively new concept in Ireland. Current estimates indicate that in excess of 40 urban community gardens exist in Dublin City (Dublin City Community Forum, 2010). This development has been led and managed by Dublin City Council and local representatives.

During their final year, B.Sc.(Hons) Human Nutrition & Dietetics students undertake a 12-week full time research project. This project was undertaken by two of these students, in collaboration with community partners Dublin Community Growers.

Participation in urban community gardens has been demonstrated to positively influence diet in terms of fruit and vegetable intake at both an individual and household level (Pomerleau et al., 2005 and Heim et al., 2011). Internationally, urban community gardens have been promoted as a valuable tool for building social capital, developing and strengthening local communities, contributing to local food security and empowering individuals to improve their overall health and well-being

The aims of this project were:

1. To assess the motivations for, and perceived health benefits of, urban community gardening.
2. To assess the impact of community gardening on fruit and vegetable intake in a subgroup of gardeners in the Dublin City area, relative to a group of non-gardeners in a similar geographical area.

Methods

Interviewer assisted questionnaires were used to gather information on gardeners' motivation for participation and a semi-quantitative questionnaire was used to assess fruit and vegetable intake.

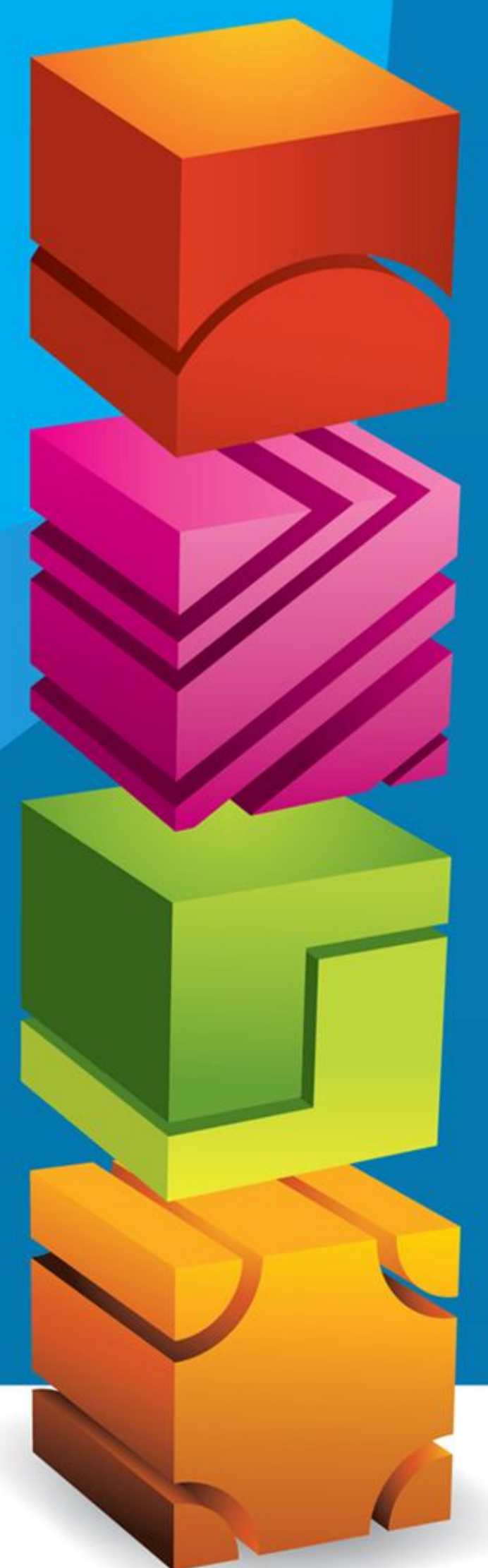
Results

12 urban community gardens across Dublin City were visited, some of which are pictured above and are marked on the map. Students interviewed 52 Community gardeners and 50 non-gardeners for the study.

The most common reasons for joining a community garden were: interest in gardening, garden access, access to fresh food and social interaction. The most frequently mentioned health benefits included, physical activity, social interaction, mental health benefits and improved nutrition.

Gardeners reported daily intakes of 2.8 portions of vegetables and 4.9 portions of fruit and vegetables. No difference in fruit intake was observed between the two groups.

Gardeners consumed significantly more vegetables (1.3 times more, P-value = 0.030) and more fruit and vegetables (1.25 times more, P-value = 0.044) than non-gardeners. Both groups consumed similar types of produce. However, gardeners ate fruit and vegetables more often.





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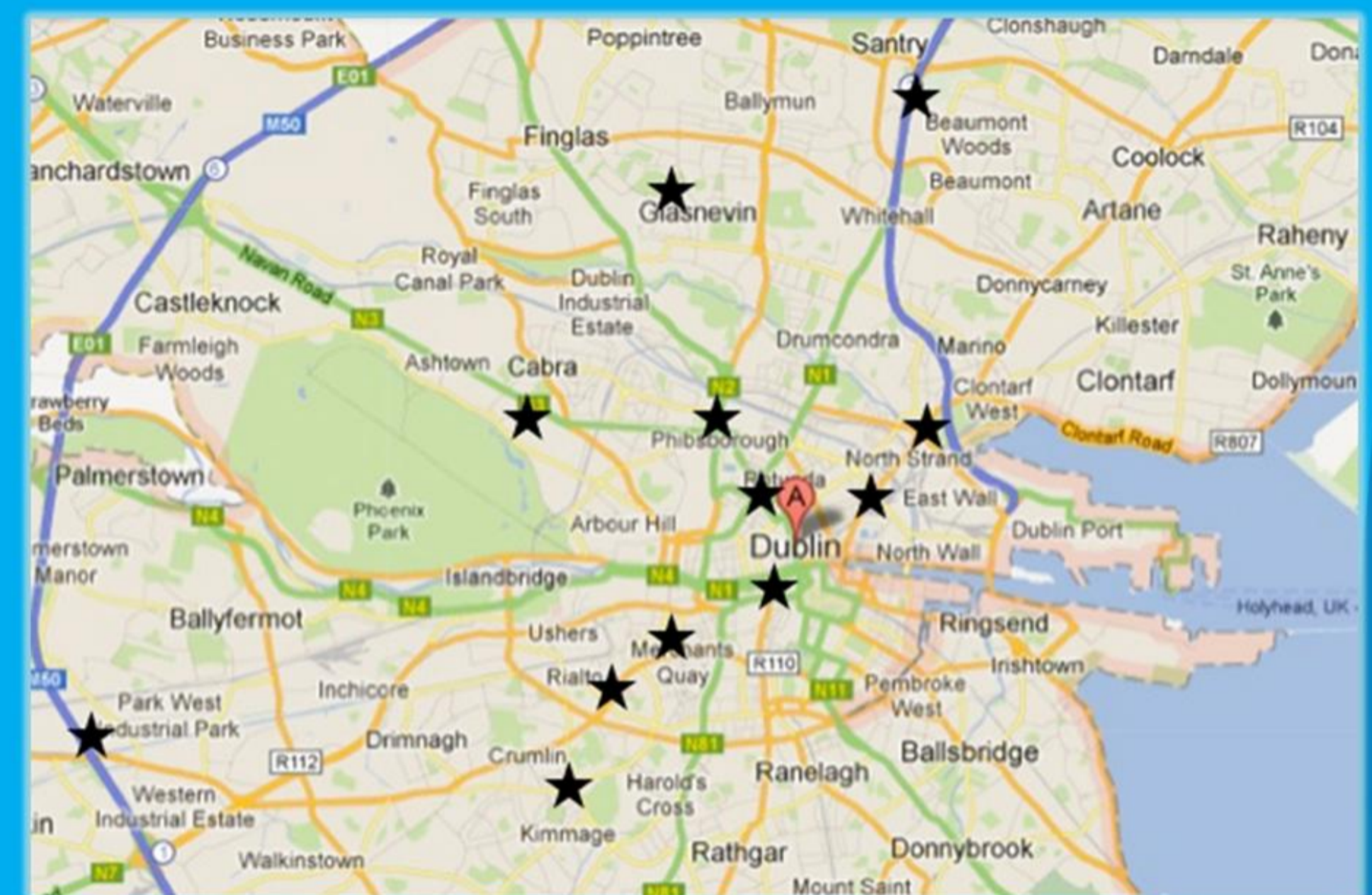
Discussion

This study found that those involved in urban community gardening had fruit and vegetable intakes that were significantly greater than that of the non-gardeners. Participation in these gardens also had a positive influence on fruit and vegetable intake at a household level with the majority of gardeners reporting that the garden produce was consumed by other members within their household.

Motivation for participating in community gardening varies, but includes access to fresh food and opportunity for social interaction. This links with the perceived health benefits of participation.

Conclusion

Participation in urban community gardening leads to increased fruit and vegetables in the diet of both gardeners and their households. They attributed these changes to increased availability of fresh garden produce, a consequence of their involvement in urban community gardens. This demonstrates the ability of urban community gardening to provide opportunities for improved fruit and vegetable intake not just among the urban community gardening population, but also within the wider community. This study also suggests that this activity has a role in promoting social inclusion, physical activity and positive mental health, as well as a healthy eating.



Urban Community Gardens involved in this project

References

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