Project Title: Urban Agriculture

Project Leader: Francis Mangan

Project Overview

Worcester is the second largest city in New England, after Boston, with a population of 181,631 (US Census). As is happening in many urban areas in Massachusetts and other areas of the Northeastern United States, the immigrant population has grown significantly in Worcester. Hispanics are the largest ethnicity in the Worcester public school system (38%), followed by non-Hispanic whites (36%), African Americans (14%) and Asians (8%). Hence, Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians together comprise 60% of the Worcester Public School System. Current estimates indicate that 73% of students in the Worcester Public Schools are eligible for free/reduced-price lunches.

There are two goals of this project:

1. To increase access and consumption of fruits and vegetables by families from a low income, multicultural and multi-ethnic neighborhood of Worcester, Massachusetts.

2. Increase the availability of fruits and vegetables for people living in the target area.

Given the large number of Latinos, which include Brazilians, a large percentage of our outreach was prepared and distributed in Spanish and Portuguese, languages that project personnel speak fluently. We grew several crops popular among Latinos, Brazilians and Africans at our research farm and provided them five collaborating markets in Worcester. We also developed one recipe popular among Latinos, “The Hector Reyes House Vegetarian Sancosho”, in collaboration with residents and staff at the Hector Reyes House and the UMass Nutrition Education Program. This recipe was promoted at several events in Worcester during FY14. We also promoted another recipe popular among Latinos in Worcester that had been developed by project personnel prior to this project called sofrito.