

## - The Bellevue Edible Learning Lab



The Bellevue Edible Learning Lab, or BELL Garden, is a community garden located in Bellevue, Tennessee, directly adjacent to Bellevue Middle School. The mission statement of BELL Garden is to “cultivate, guide, and encourage shared community values of healthy living and lifelong learning.” The garden exemplifies this mission statement through the many different events in the garden that are open to the public. There are basket-weaving classes, farm stand days, where the garden sells fresh fruits and vegetables, and many other community activities. Additionally, the garden works closely with Bellevue Middle School, providing the students with hands-on experience in gardening practices. BELL Garden also donates most of its harvest to local food banks, providing those in need with fresh produce.

For my project, I worked with BELL Garden to install three beehives on site. The addition of beehives to the garden was intended to increase pollination of the garden, which would contribute to a higher crop yield. With an increase in crop production in the garden, there would be a greater amount of produce donated to the food banks which support the food insecure population in Nashville. This goal is the basis of my objective for my

summer work to directly alleviate food insecurity in Davidson County. Aside from installing the beehives at BELL Garden, it was important that I incorporate an educational element to my project to expand the reach of my work and create an infrastructure that would sustain the hives beyond the summer. I developed an educational plan through the beekeeping curriculum and live community classes with the intent of creating a core of beekeepers within the Bellevue community. These classes were focused on the practical techniques of beekeeping, as well as providing the students with hands-on beekeeping experience and hive maintenance training. The students loved the classes, and all expressed interest in continuing to work with the BELL Garden hives. This satisfied my goal of leaving the BELLGarden staff with resources and volunteers that would help to sustain the program that I implemented. By the end of the summer, I had recruited, and trained 7 BELL Garden volunteers who are now proficient in beekeeping practices, and crop yield increased 119.4% versus 2021.

