

We're excited to feature a company in our community that's helping its employees live healthier and happier! In 2012, Celina Insurance Group started a small community garden for its employees, with 4'x4' raised beds. Over the years, as interest in the garden grew, the beds were reconstructed and there are now 25 4'x16' beds. Along with the beds, Celina Insurance group provides soil, a garden hose, and a stocked tool shed. The beds are planted and maintained by 13 Celina Insurance Group employees and three community members. The gardeners grow anything and everything: asparagus, eggplant, onions, tomatoes, beans, carrots, watermelon, berries, flowers and more!

The garden has positively impacted Celina Insurance Group in a number of ways. It's a great complement to the company's Health & Wellness program, since it's a physical activity *and* it raises awareness for healthy eating habits. It also stresses the importance of eating local, natural produce free of pesticides and preservatives.

And the benefits go beyond health! The garden is an opportunity for employees to learn more about caring for the environment. It allows employees with no space at home to enjoy the experience of gardening, and it brings employees together. Employees often work in their gardens at the same time. They trade tips about gardening, let others sample their produce, and care for each other's plots while on vacation. Some employees even share their plots! The time spent in the gardens allows employees to build bonds outside of the workplace, fostering a sense of community and a shared interest.

The garden also shows the community how much Celina Insurance Group values the health and wellbeing of its employees. The company is focused on promoting healthy lifestyle practices, and the garden does just that. The garden also directly supports the community, since gardeners donate any extra produce to the C.A.L.L. Food pantry. The garden has certainly been an exciting and rewarding investment for the community, the company, and its employees.

### **While we're on the topic - did you know gardening benefits more than just your physical health?**

Gardening is a physical activity, so of course it helps you stay in shape. Moving around and working in the garden reduces your risk for certain diseases - like heart disease, obesity, and diabetes! It encourages healthier eating, since you definitely want to eat the fruits and vegetables you worked so hard to grow. Gardening also helps you get rid of energy; it wears you out in a good way, so you'll sleep better.

Gardening increases your happiness and reduces your stress. In fact, participants in a recent study performed a stressful activity and were then assigned 30 minutes of gardening or indoor reading. Both activities reduced stress, but gardening had a significantly bigger impact. Spending time outside naturally boosts your happiness; it gives you a break from stress and allows you

time to recharge. Gardening also gives you something to be proud of, and this feeling of accomplishment will improve your overall mood!

Gardening even has long-term benefits: the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* found that various physical activities - including gardening - can cut your risk of Alzheimer's by 50%. Gardening was also found to be a successful therapy for dementia patients.

Have we convinced you yet? Get out there and garden!

#### Sources

1. Celina Insurance Group

2. <https://www.rodalesorganiclife.com/garden/5-surprising-ways-gardening-improves-your-health/>