



CONTRIBUTED

This year's People's Garden includes innovative hay bale gardening.

People's Garden featuring bale experiment

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The People's Garden, located at the USDA Service Center in Grant, is now in its seventh year of providing fresh produce for Grant residents.

Claudia Stevenson, resource conservationist at the service center, is conducting an experiment with hay bale gardening in one of the plots.

She is comparing the effectiveness of hay bales vs. straw bales in a unique gardening method that has gardeners planting directly into square hay bales instead of soil.

Hay bale gardening offers several advantages over conventional gardening. It's ideal for small spaces, and the beds are raised and easier to work with. Weeds may be less of an issue with the produce off the ground.

Stevenson spent a 10-day cycle

applying a high nitrogen fertilizer to each bale about every other day, and has kept the bales watered. Planting will begin this week.

Grant money from Perkins County Community Foundation and the United Methodist Church of Grant has made the experiment possible.

USDA is also managing a plot with tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers, and another with corn planted into a clover cover crop.

Grass clippings are being used as mulch to keep weeds down, in an attempt to keep the garden free of chemicals.

The children's garden contains perennial pollinator habitat, a benefit to any garden. The remaining plots have been claimed by individual Grant residents, 4-H and the library foundation.

A lunch and learn open to the public will be planned at a later date.