CHAPTER X

COÖPERATION IN GARDENING

Unity in the "Second Line of Defense"

Fortunately the movement to coördinate gardening activities in America, from the outset, met with sympathetic response. Thanks to the loyal coöperation accorded the National War Garden Commission, there was never any question of the success of the garden campaign. Such question as there may have been was merely as to the extent of that success. At no time was there hesitation on the part of those enlisted in the army of the soil as to carrying out the suggestions made to them. In a spirit of loyal and hearty coöperation organizations of all sorts and individuals of all classes throughout the United States worked with the Commission to overcome every obstacle that threatened the success of the food-production campaign.

Merely to tabulate the names of the various clubs, committees, and individuals who helped in this movement would require a volume. Such a list would include hundreds of state, county, and local organizations which through their officers, committees, and branches stimulated the interest of their own members and of others in war gardening. It would contain the names of hundreds of chambers of commerce and other trade bodies; city and county officials; mayors and
postmasters; school superintendents and college instructors; superintendents of park departments and health officers; women’s clubs and home demonstration agents; insurance companies and railroads; lumber and mining companies; banks and business houses; commissions for beautifying cities and tenement-house inspection officers; lighthouse-service supervisors and bureaus of municipal research; public libraries and church societies; ministers of the gospel and leaders of boys’ clubs and many others who were able in various ways to coöperate in spreading the message and in rendering active assistance in getting the vacant places of our cities and towns to work growing food. This service was given in both the production and the conservation campaigns of the Commission.

This coöperation took many forms. In some cases it was of an active and constant character, beginning with the start of the drive to get the war gardeners lined up in the army of the soil and continuing until the last tomato was pulled and the final potato dug; or until the last canned or dried vegetable had been placed on the pantry shelf and the final prizes awarded. In other cases it consisted merely of the distribution to interested parties of a supply of the Commission’s gardening or canning and drying manuals, with a word to each home food producer wishing him success in his patriotic work and praising him for his undertaking. More than 4,000,000 of the Commission’s books on gardening and canning and millions of its bulletins and leaflets were given interested persons in 1918.
A POLYGLOT ASSEMBLY

Employees of a dozen nationalities were included among the war gardeners of the Inspiration Consolidated Copper Company, in Arizona. It was necessary to print bulletins and instructions in several languages. The company sank five artesian wells to water the arid land which was more than 3,000 feet above sea-level.
Libraries all over the United States gave most generous support to the work of the Commission. Many made special displays of books on gardening. They placed posters on their bulletin-boards or in other conspicuous places, calling the attention of readers to the need for food and informing them that gardening books and canning manuals could be had for the asking. "The supply you sent us is exhausted, and the demand continues," was the characteristic word the Commission received from a large number of libraries to which consignments of the books had been shipped.

In some cities and towns the work was carried on merely by the popular sentiment in favor of war gardens which was stirred up by appeals in the press and other publications. In many places, however, war garden associations were organized to guide and direct the movement, or voluntary committees undertook to perform this service. The leaders in many cases were familiar with methods of procedure and required little assistance. As a rule, however, they were glad to receive publications giving them detailed information as to how to plan and carry on their work. Again they were pleased to receive instruction books on gardening which they could distribute among the numerous applicants, and this was true even in cities and towns where it was possible to secure the services of paid agricultural experts to take charge of the technical end of the campaign.

Nowhere did the Commission receive more loyal support and hearty cooperation than from the public
press. Closely in touch with conditions the world over, newspaper editors understood, as perhaps many others could not understand, the gravity of the food situation. In their endeavor to do their share, they gave generously of their news space. Particularly was it necessary to get the appeal for home food gardens before the dwellers in towns, especially in the larger centers of population, for there food was most needed, and there people were least likely to take upon themselves the duty of cultivating the small plots of land at their disposal. Practically all such Americans were reached by the Commission through the newspapers. In fact, practically all Americans were reached. News stories were prepared by the Commission's publicity bureau, setting forth the facts as to the world food situation, and these articles were placed in the hands, not of a few editors, but of hundreds and hundreds. Not only were most of these news stories freely printed, but often they were also prominently featured in such way as to emphasize the message they contained.

After the need of gardening had thus been sufficiently impressed upon the mind of the public, the Commission's staff of experts prepared daily lessons in gardening, which were sent to a great number of newspapers. Hundreds of leading newspapers, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, carried these daily lessons. The Philadelphia North American, to mention only one of many large city newspapers, printed a garden lesson daily for many weeks, publishing it on its front page and displaying it in a special box to attract attention.
These lessons began with the preparation of the soil and the sowing of seed in the house for early vegetables, and dealt with one or more vegetables daily, setting forth in simple language the proper cultural methods for the vegetables in question, and pointing out the diseases and enemies of the particular products under discussion, together with methods of combating them. Though simple in language and shorn of all useless technicalities, these daily gardening lessons lacked no essential cultural directions; and even a beginner could have become a successful gardener by following carefully the directions given.

The publicity campaign did not end with telling gardeners how to raise vegetables. As soon as the garden season was well started, appeals were made through the newspapers for the conservation of all excess garden products. The necessity for such conservation was first pointed out, and then methods of canning and drying garden products and fruit were set forth simply and completely. These publicity campaigns in the public press went hand in hand with the issuance of the Commission’s various books, which were offered free to any one upon request.

Despite the wonderful response of the public to appeals to raise garden products, it was apparent that the need for food increased rather than decreased, because production so constantly fell off in Europe. The constant dripping of water will wear away even the hardest stone, and the Commission believed that the endless repetition of the garden appeal would
finally move even the most indifferent reader. For this reason its publicity campaign did not end with the gardening season. News stories and garden statistics of all sorts were gathered by the Commission and given to the press. These stories included accounts of the work of individual gardeners, of garden clubs, of communities, and of the organized gardeners in great industries. Likewise the Commission gathered together thousands of cartoons and funny stories and jokes about war gardens and war gardeners, and issued books of these humorous items. The press reproduced this matter the country over and in this way the funny-bone of America was tickled with the garden idea. The Commission's publicity work was not confined to the daily press. Feature stories were supplied to many magazines and periodicals as well as to the magazine sections of Sunday newspapers. These articles were more pretentious than those prepared for the dailies. They aimed not merely to be authoritative but to have literary quality as well. They dealt with gardening from many different points of view, but always the lesson was conveyed that more food was needed and that it would have to be raised by the average American, irrespective of his vocation. With these magazine articles, and with many of its newspaper stories as well, the Commission supplied illustrations. Its agents had secured hundreds and hundreds of interesting photographs showing different phases of garden work in almost every portion of the country. These pictures, portraying war gardens from the arid sands of the
DOWN IN "THE YARDS"

Gardens were grown in thousands of places right by the sides of the railroad tracks, close by the shops and round-houses and up to the very edge of station platforms. Land along the right of way was furnished to employees free of charge or at nominal rental. Here are seen fine examples of such cultivated areas.
Southwest to the cold mountain slopes of the Northeast and from the rocky coasts of the north Atlantic to the sandy beaches of the Pacific, brought home to every one who saw them the idea that everywhere, in all sorts of places, people of all kinds were toiling to produce food. The moral, "Go and do likewise," was too obvious to be missed.

Whatever would attract attention to the need of gardening, or help the gardener with his work, or assist in putting to work the large areas of "slacker lands," the Commission tried to portray by word or picture in the pages of the daily press, the weekly magazines, and the periodicals of less frequent publication. It stood ready to furnish, and did furnish, gardening and conservation matter of any sort to any one who requested it. Service was the motto of the Commission, and that service was well repaid in the splendid response of the American people to the appeal for gardens.