

This thesis examines the factors that affect decisions in vegetable and fruit gardening in Vermont. In particular, it seeks to show how social, economic, demographic and geographic factors impact the types and quantities of fruits and vegetables grown, as well as input purchasing choices. The study analyzes 3 years of survey data of UVM Extension Master Gardeners (2011, 2012, and 2013) and one year (2012) of data from the Vermonter Poll, a state-wide annual poll conducted by the University of Vermont's Center for Rural Studies. It will show whether there is a significant difference in vegetable garden size/fruit area and the variety of fruits and vegetables grown by Vermonters belonging to different groups based on age, household income, education and geographic location. The study will also identify the most significant constraints Vermonters face in fruit and vegetable gardening. While numerous studies have shown that fruit and vegetable gardening plays an important role in improving health, food security and community well-being, most of these studies are aggregated at regional and national levels and focus mainly on school and community gardens with scant research on home gardening. This study aims to fill this research gap, by focusing on the State of Vermont, and using data at the household level. The study will provide critical answers to the following questions: (1) what are the key fruits and vegetables grown by Vermonters? (2) Do social and economic factors such as age, educational attainment and household income significantly affect fruit and vegetable gardening choices? (3) What factors pose the greatest constraints to fruit and vegetable gardening among Vermonters? The answers to these questions will provide valuable insights to numerous stakeholders that support efforts to improve household health, nutrition and food security throughout the state of Vermont.