

# Abandoned Playground Now an Agricultural Center

by *Eddie May*



**Hobson City Mayor Alberta McCrory, left, and Tuskegee University plant breeder Victor Khan are very proud of their community garden which was established using plasticulture/micro-irrigation. Youth and adult garden members are shown working in the background.**

With technical and financial assistance from the Coosa Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Tuskegee University and AT&T of Birmingham, the Hobson City Youth Community Garden Club has converted an old abandoned school playground into a very productive agricultural center. The center consists of a micro-irrigated/plasticulture garden, a 28-foot by 80-foot hoop house, three blueberry patches and several raised bed gardens. A muscadine vineyard will be established next fall.

The youth and adults were very excited about the success of their garden where more than 5,000 pounds of produce was harvested from the one-fifth of an acre tract of land. The bulk of the produce was given to local churches, the elderly and those who are in need.

The youth received hands-on experience in soil preparation, nutrient application, transplanting bedding plants, planting and sowing seeds, and harvesting and distribution of the produce from their agricultural center. This is an ongoing program.

Micro-irrigation/plasticulture is a relatively new system of growing vegetables in the Calhoun County area. This system employs a series of micro-irrigation drip tubes which are laid under a plastic mulch cover. A bedder/mulcher pulled behind a tractor forms a bed approximately 3 feet wide and 8 inches tall across the field. As the bed is formed, the drip tubing is laid and covered under the plastic in one operation. The 1-inch diameter drip tube is connected to a 4-inch diameter pipe which is referred to as a lay flat. This in turn is connected to a control unit which regulates the water pressure in the drip tubes as fertilizer and water is delivered to the plants. The drip tubes have small openings in them about 12 inches apart which are called emitters. The emitters deliver about one gallon of water per minute/100'. The control unit is connected to a well or municipal water source. Holes are punctured in plastic where the seeds or bedding plants are planted. With this system, one can expect to get two to three times the harvest than would be produced in a conventional system.



**With the help of many individuals, the Hobson City Youth Community Garden Club converted an old abandoned playground into a very productive agricultural center. Some of these individuals are (from left) Alberta McCrory, Hobson City mayor, Victor Khan, Tuskegee University plant breeder; Deneava Barnes, Hobson City council lady; Elijah Moore, president of the Community Garden; Eddie May, Coosa Valley RC&D executive director; Helen Weeks, garden participant; Benjamin Greene, youth participant; Renee Greene, youth participant; Nykeria Howard, youth participant; Donna Ross, Hobson City librarian; Chantley Howard, youth participant; Jessenia Howard, youth participant; Dr. Cherice Greene, Community Garden vice-president; India Greene, youth participant; Ginny Casey, youth participant; and J'Lynn Kirksey, youth participant.**

A hoop house was constructed in March which will allow for year-round vegetable production. Hoop houses are similar to greenhouses in appearance, but solar radiation is used as the heat source for the hoop house instead of artificial sources. In addition, the seeds and/or transplants are planted directly into the ground instead of containers.



**A hoop house was constructed in March to allow for year-round vegetable production.**



**Raised bed gardens and micro-irrigation/plasticulture are part of the agricultural center, located in an abandoned school playground.**



**Above and below: Members of the Hobson City Youth Community Garden Club and other members of the community worked together to create a productive agricultural center .**



For additional information about the Hobson City Agricultural Center, please contact Eddie May, executive director for The Coosa Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council, at (256) 835-0685 or [eddie.may60@yahoo.com](mailto:eddie.may60@yahoo.com) .



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