

Megan Penn

Fairchild Challenge #3

Granville Middle School

Green Treasurers: A Living History

No matter where you are, you are surrounded by plants. Even if you are in a bathroom, coffee shop, or even in your car, you are still surrounded by plants. The wood of your bedframe came from a tree, the coffee beans in that cup of coffee came from a coffee plant, the aloe in the burn ointment that promotes healing and pain relief, the soap you bathed in, and the lavender oil in the air freshener in your car had to get its scent from somewhere. People overlook the importance of plants in their everyday life even though plants are critical for our survival in many ways.

The study of Botany is the study of plant's physiology, genetics, structure, ecology, distribution, classifications, and economic importance. Botany is important for our health, healing, culture, and food.

I spoke with Shari Gallup, Family and Consumer Sciences Educator for the Ohio State University Extension Service in Licking County, about using plants for medication. Gallup is a specialist in health and wellness, including nutrition, stress prevention, and diabetes education. She said that plants can be used in herbal teas, like chamomile, to help during sickness, or mixed into a smoothie for an energy boost. There are many herbs and spices like peppermint, cardamom, cinnamon, nettle leaf, and Hibiscus to mention a few that have chemical properties to prevent and improve medical conditions. Fresh fruits and vegetables can go a long way in improving your health. For example, simply eating some cucumber in your

salad provides your body with a source of vitamins K, C, and A, plus potassium, magnesium, and manganese. It is professed to improve your brain, heart, hydration, skin, bone health, provides antioxidants and helps with cancer prevention. Cucumbers also help with under eye puffiness and can be used to clean the house. Shari makes a soothing cream from plants and herbs that reduces pain and inflammation for her husband when his body aches after farming. She studied plants as medicine in Italy last year. Ms. Gallup also emphasizes that eating plants makes people feel better. She stated that simply adding more fresh greens into your diet will positively affect your health and future.

Janelle K. Baran, owner of the Blue Owl Garden Emporium, spoke to me about the importance of plants in our everyday lives. She specializes in using herbs to make unique products for everyday use and sells her herbs and blends at the Granville and Worthington Farmers' Markets. She explained that everyone has a different way of using plants depending on their environment and people who have grown the plants that are around them. Mrs. Baran talked about no matter what ethnicity, culture, or race you are you use plants in a variety of ways for food, medicine, beverages, and everyday products. Plants also have symbolism. In the Chinese culture, bamboo is admired for its firm and indomitable will power and stands a metaphor or vitality and longevity.

My family's roots are Vietnamese and Chinese. We cook using my grandfather Kong's, a Chinese immigrant who came to America, philosophy. Kong uses natural and fresh plants when cooking for our family. No artificial flavor can bring the same taste to a soup, pasta, or other dishes like fresh herbs and spices can. He cooks meals for our family frequently and has always incorporated vegetables of all kinds like green beans, lettuce, and chick peas. He has a garden

in the backyard that provides fresh fruits and vegetables that we use regularly. A single pear tree has provided him with fruit for many years for our family. Every meal has many plants used in it like pasta macaroni made from wheat. The cheese for our macaroni and cheese dish is made from cow's milk. Cows eat plants and drink water to produce the milk that cheese is made into. No matter what type of meal you are making or eating, every ingredient has some origin from plants of some kind.

Every day, you and everyone around you, are using plants in a variety of ways. From cooking a meal, to building a house, to cleaning your house with a broom, bathing your body, calming your nerves, or taking medication to prevent or cure diseases. Society would be no where without our ability to use plants in a wide spectrum of ways.