



State prisons' crop programs are progressing to harvest

A variety of produce is growing at the Delta Correctional Facility. The facility's garden includes tomatoes, zucchini, baby lima beans, radishes, pumpkins, jalapeños, peppers, sweet peppers, cucumbers, okra, yellow squash, and purple hull peas. In total, approximately 0.46 acres of garden space were planted on prison grounds.

Although the project began in April, heavy rain damaged portions of the initial crop, requiring participants to replant on May 4.

Despite the setback, participants remained committed to the project and continued their work in the garden.

The classroom component of the program, known as Basic Agriculture, provides students with instructional coursework, hands-on gardening experience, and the opportunity to earn certifications while developing practical agricultural skills.

The Central Mississippi Correctional Facility has significantly expanded its Garden Project Program, providing incarcerated individuals with enhanced agricultural education and hands-on experience while promoting sustainability across the facility.

Currently, 38 inmates are actively participating in the Garden Project Program at CMCF. Crops planted this season include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, onions, okra, peppers, and a variety of other vegetables. Participants have also expressed interest in expanding their agricultural knowledge even further by learning how to can and bottle produce in the future.

"The Garden Project Program is about more than growing vegetables - it is about growing opportunities," said Commissioner Burl Cain. "These individuals are learning valuable life and vocational skills, developing discipline and teamwork, and taking pride in creating something positive that benefits the facility and those around them."

This year, program participants are receiving more advanced instruction in gardening and crop cultivation. As part of the expanded curriculum, inmates conducted in-depth research on

various types of produce prior to planting and were given the opportunity to design and maintain their own raised garden beds based on the crops they were most interested in cultivating and learning about.

The program has also grown physically across the institution, with additional garden areas established throughout the facility, including locations that previously had no gardening space. In total, approximately 1.7 acres of garden have been planted and are already showing substantial growth.

In addition to outdoor gardens located throughout the prison, the facility also operates a greenhouse that supports year-round produce cultivation. Inmate teachers say the harvest will help give back to the facility population by providing fresh produce grown directly on-site.

The plants are growing at the Unit 30 garden at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. The four-acre crop includes corn, cucumber, cantaloupe, bell peppers, red peppers, tomatoes, purple hull peas, okra, watermelon, and jalapeno peppers.

Walnut Grove Correctional Facility (WGCF) has planted approximately .75 acre of crops, plus additional items in its greenhouse. The crops were planted beginning on March 23, 2026. They include okra, zucchini, tomatoes, squash, eggplants, cucumbers, peas, sweet corn, and jalapeno peppers.

The harvested produce will be used to feed the inmate workers at WGCF for an incentive meal several different times throughout the season. The goals of the WGCF Garden Program are to teach inmates how to grow vegetables for food sustainability and to serve as a rehabilitation program.

The Garden Program is tied to the Horticulture Class at WGCF, which teaches the basics of growing a variety of plants.

"Our garden program at Walnut Grove is always a great success, and the inmates involved always get so much out of seeing the fruits of their labor when the crops start growing and being gathered," said WGCF Director of Programs Stephanie Johnston. "We are so excited to see our new workers in the garden and horticulture program begin the process of seeing fresh dirt turn into food on a plate after months of tending and harvesting."



Delta Correctional Facility



Central Mississippi Correctional Facility



Mississippi State Penitentiary – Parchman



Walnut Grove Correctional Facility