Detroit’s current availability of vacant land has made it a popular place for urban farming, but this is not a new phenomenon brought about by abandoned neighborhoods and diminishing population. During the Great Depression, Mayor Frank Murphy suggested a program that would eventually become the Detroit and Wayne County Welfare Relief Administration’s Thrift Garden Project. Started in 1931, it sponsored vegetable gardens for both “families in relief” and “needy borderline families.”

Households that applied to be included in the program could either have a home garden in their backyards or adjacent vacant lots, or receive a plowed 40 x 100 ft. designated plot in one of the large field gardens on donated land around the city. Gardeners were issued commercial fertilizer, tomato and cabbage plants. Seeds for many vegetables, including radish, beets, kohlrabi, Swiss chard, kale, squash, turnips, okra, and parsley were furnished by the State Emergency Welfare Relief Administration. To assist the gardeners, tools could be borrowed at each field office, and stockyard manure was applied to especially deprived fields. Insecticide was also made available and canning demonstrations and supplies were offered. Michigan State College provided informative bulletins to the gardeners.

Gardeners were not allowed to sell their produce, and if assigned to a field garden, they had to agree to serve occasionally as a night or day watchman to protect against theft. Field overseers were made special officers by the Police Department and given whistles, badges and the authority to make arrests, though few attempts were made to steal produce. The biggest problems were transportation and weather. Many gardeners had to travel long distances to reach a field garden using public transit or hitchhiking. Lacking proper irrigation systems, rain and drought hindered production. In 1932 the corn crop was wiped out by Stewarts’ Wilt, a bacterial blight.

To promote and publicize the project, educational exhibits were displayed at the Horticultural Society of Michigan's Fall Show, the Michigan Agricultural and Industrial Exposition, and the Michigan State Fair. Radio broadcasts and lectures in public schools touted the program, and a Spring Festival at the Masonic Temple raised money for the Thrift Gardens.

By 1935, the project had expanded to include the whole county, except Dearborn, which ran its own program. Surveys showed that everyone enjoyed working their garden and that the average garden value was $35, but some were worth as much as $100. The Project Commission determined that “Fresh air, sunlight and the visible results of their own work have altered the morale of many gardeners. The mental, physical and social rehabilitation of the individual gardeners is perhaps as important an aspect of the Thrift Garden Project as the financial benefits.”
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Analyze a primary source photograph
- Make assumptions about photograph based on prior knowledge and close observation

MATERIALS

- Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Photographs
- Primary Source Analysis Tool
- Primary Sources

PREPARATION

Make one copy for each student:
- One photo from collection
- Collections record for selected image
- Primary Source Analysis Tool

Print one copy of each of the other primary sources and their bibliographic records.

Recreate a blank Primary Source Analysis Tool on the board.

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute the copy of the selected photograph to each student.

2. Using the Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Photographs, lead students through the process as a group. Fill in the Primary Source Analysis Tool on the board with their answers.

3. For the “Observe” column: ask students to only comment on the things they see in the photo.

4. For the “Reflect” column: ask the students to comment on what is happening in the photo.

5. For the “Question” column: ask the students what information the photo itself does NOT provide (i.e. names, location, etc.) Make a list of questions the students have about the photo.

6. Distribute the bibliographical information sheet to each student. Review as a class and discuss whether or not the information answers their questions. What questions remain?

7. Lead a discussion about what other sources could help them answer their remaining questions (i.e. other photographs, textbooks, letters, diaries, newspapers, the photographer, etc.)

8. Pass out a copy of the Primary Source Analysis Tool to each student. Place the students in groups of two or three and give each group one of the other primary source photographs.

9. Have each group work together to observe, reflect and create questions about their photograph. Each student should complete his or her own worksheet. Help the students by providing leading questions as needed (i.e. what do you notice first? what are the people wearing? What’s happening?)

10. Have each group provide a brief report to the class on their observations, reflections and questions.

11. Lead a class discussion about the primary sources. Ask students what all the photos had in common, and how they differed. Encourage them to formulate hypothesis about the unifying theme presented (in this case, people farming.)
Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.333
http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=228044DB-5393-4631-9CD4-402877544213;type=102

Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.334
http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=DC5B8917-4757-4A48-98A7-022646475145;type=102

Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.336
http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=93371FE3-C434-4D29-817B-233111467690;type=102

Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.338
http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=00E0053F-3E00-4759-80ED-548271072856;type=102

http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=1ABA6E2D-51E9-4FAC-BF8F-134831811624;type=102
Detroit Thrift Gardens, 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.342
http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=C69D4E1B-7107-4A29-A390-967110818310;type=102

Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.0344
http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=3D2F7CCE-E83C-41B5-A7A8-802583976722;type=102

Detroit Thrift Gardens, 1932. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.348
http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=D76F7907-F1E2-4058-8BE1-197029369612;type=102

Detroit Thrift Gardens, 1932. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.350
http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=BF58C4E1-ABD5-4B0D-8070-314316420170;type=102

Detroit Thrift Gardens, 1932. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.351
http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=F4288CB4-2BA8-42A3-BF43-119047240323;type=102
TEACHER’S GUIDE
Analyzing Photographs & Prints

OBSERVE
Have students identify and note details.
Sample Questions:
- Describe what you see.
- What do you notice first?
- What people and objects are shown?
- How are they arranged?
- What is the physical setting?
- What, if any, words do you see?
- What other details can you see?

REFLECT
Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the image.
- Why do you think this image was made?
- What’s happening in the image?
- When do you think it was made?
- Who do you think was the audience for this image?
- What tools were used to create this?
- What can you learn from examining this image?
- What’s missing from this image?
- If someone made this today, what would be different?
- What would be the same?

QUESTION
Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.
- What do you wonder about...
  - who?
  - what?
  - when?
  - where?
  - why?
  - how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION
Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.
Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:
- **Beginning**
  - Write a caption for the image.
- **Intermediate**
  - Select an image. Predict what will happen one minute after the scene shown in the image. One hour after? Explain the reasoning behind your predictions.
- **Advanced**
  - Have students expand or alter textbook or other printed explanations of history based on images they study.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to http://www.loc.gov/teachers
# Primary Source Analysis Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observe</th>
<th>Reflect</th>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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**Further Investigation**
Catalog Number 2012.045.333

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Black and white photographic print taken of a well in the Detroit Thrift Gardens. A man, smoking a pipe, holds the well's bucket which is attached to a well-sweep, the fulcrum of which is on the right. Men, women, and children gather around him among the tall crops, and a man in a suit and hat stands in the foreground on the right edge of the frame. The roofs of adjacent homes are visible in the background.

Date c. 1931

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture

Image 3A75B089-E14A-44DD-A899-297943502654
Catalog Number 2012.045.334
Object Name  Print, Photographic
Description  Black and white photographic print taken of a field at the Detroit Thrift Gardens. In the background, amid rows of crops, stands a well and well-sweep. Several women appear in the upper right corner of the image on the edge of the field. Beyond them are a row of billboards and a tress atop a debris pile, possibly dirt conveyor in use at a construction site.

"Note-Old Country Sweep Well, dug by gardeners," and the number 3 in a circle are handwritten in pencil on the verso.

Date  c. 1931
Collection  Municipal Services
Search Terms  Detroit Thrift Gardens
           Great Depression
           Agriculture
Image  02AE7B7F-8F73-4225-83F8-933259377820
Black and white photographic print taken of two men seated outside of a shed decorated with a sign that reads, "Detroit Thrift Gardens." A field of crops extends on the left and behind the shed. The cars are parked along a dirt road to the right, which separates the fields from a row of small buildings. In the distance the buildings and smokestacks of factory complexes are visible.

"1," is stamped on the verso.
Catalog Number  2012.045.338

Object Name  Print, Photographic

Description  Black and white photographic of a man plowing a field with a tractor as a boy runs alongside the trailer plow.

"22," is stamped on the verso. Copy is mounted on a piece of black matting with the handwritten caption, "Land Preparation, Spring 1932."

Date   1932

Collection  Municipal Services

Search Terms  Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture
Tractors

Image  BA14606B-9081-4155-864A-879531724130
Catalog Number 2012.045.339

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Black and white photographic print taken of a group of well-dressed men and woman standing outside a shed at the Detroit Thrift Gardens. Several members of the group are eating. An out-of-focus plant is in the foreground.

"Detroit Thrift Gardens," is stamped on both sides of the photo, and the number "23," is stamped on the verso.

Date c. 1931

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture

Image FDDF58C6-C818-44D7-BD78-314563936327
Catalog Number 2012.045.342

Object Name  Print, Photographic

Description  Sepia-toned photographic print taken of a smiling woman posing to the right of a table covered fresh produce and a variety of jarred goods. She wears a long dress, jacket, hat, scarf, and gloves and holds what appears to be a tomato. Several other people in hats and suits as well as trees are visible in the background.

"1931," is handwritten and "42," is stamped on the verso.

Date  1931

Collection  Municipal Services

Search Terms  Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture

Image  0158F672-6D54-4822-A3FB-931998416030
Catalog Number 2012.045.344

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Black and white photographic print taken of a three men standing outside of a shed on which signs reading, "Detroit Thrift Gardens," and "No work after 8 P.M." are posted. A field full of crops extends behind them. To their right is a small landscaped area where the word, "garden," has been spelled out in rocks, and surrounded by small plants. Utility poles dot the field, and houses are visible in the distance.

"221," is stamped on the verso.

Date c. 1931

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture

Image AF050D89-1C82-4FD3-84CE-748574853135
Catalog Number  2012.045.348

Object Name    Print, Photographic

Description    Mounted sepia-toned photo photographic print identified by a handwritten caption as "Garden Committee Inspecting Thrif [sic] Gardens - June 29 - 1932." A group of well-dressed men and women, along with a small boy and girl are standing along a path through one of the fields of the Detroit Thrift Gardens.

Date           1932

Collection     Municipal Services

Search Terms   Detroit Thrift Gardens
                Great Depression
                Agriculture

Image          34888396-9DE5-49D0-B26E-913952950112
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<td>Object Name</td>
<td>Print, Photographic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Mounted sepia-toned photo photographic print identified by a handwritten caption as &quot;School Gardens - State Fair Grounds - July 30 - 1932.&quot; A large ground of women, girls, and boys are photographed using hoes to plow of the fields of the Detroit Thrift Gardens. A small shed stands on the field in the background. Beyond a row of trees, the roof of the Michigan State Fairgrounds Coliseum is visible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>1932</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collection</td>
<td>Municipal Services</td>
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</table>
| Search Terms   | Michigan State Fairgrounds  
                     Detroit Thrift Gardens  
                     Great Depression  
                     Agriculture  
                     Michigan State Fairgrounds Coliseum |
| Image          | 4B194566-1D5A-4F29-8800-336742661220 |
Catalog Number 2012.045.351

Object Name  Print, Photographic

Description  Mounted sepia-toned photo photographic print identified by a handwritten caption as "Field No.28 - Grandmont and Alonby [sic]-154 Gardens - Aug 1. - 1932." Two men work in one of the Detroit Thrift Gardens while a nearby boy holds something, and a man in a boater hat looks at the ground. A car is next to a shed on the left edge of the frame. In the background is a row of similar houses.

Date  1932

Collection  Municipal Services

Search Terms  Detroit Thrift Gardens
  Great Depression
  Agriculture
  Grandmont Avenue
  Alonby Street

Image  53AAD894-64B5-42A8-8D1C-449602628066