



NEW YORK STATE ARCHIVES

## Can All You Can

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The idea of war gardens, or “victory gardens,” first emerged during World War I. Agricultural workers in Europe were needed to fight and their farms were transformed into battleground sites. This resulted in a major food shortage, which required most of the food grown in the United States to be transported overseas. As a result, the US government encouraged citizens to provide for themselves by planting and harvesting their own fruits, vegetables, legumes, and other crops. Victory gardens popped up in areas of land not already occupied for agricultural purposes, such as backyards, rooftops, parks, and empty lots. Novice gardeners and others seeking guidance were provided with pamphlets and other materials that gave instructions on how to plant, the best crops, and how to prevent their gardens from being infested. The concept of victory gardens died down after World War I, but they were promoted during World War II as a way to save ration points and send more commercially processed foods abroad to the soldiers.

The Broome County Canning Caravan, a project developed by the Emergency Food Bureau and IBM, sought to educate people on what they could do with surplus crops. The caravan was operated by home economic experts, usually women, and came fully equipped to provide demonstrations. In the summer of 1944, the caravan traveled to various schools, churches, and libraries throughout Binghamton, Endicott, Johnson City, Vestal, and Port Dickinson, and gave free demos on canning, freezing, dehydration, and brining the products of victory gardens. The first session, attended by over fifty women, was held on July 19 at the Red Cross Canteen Center of St. Paul’s Methodist Church in Endicott.

Gardening and canning are no longer promoted by the government or viewed by the public as activities that significantly support military efforts. However, there has been a move in recent years to grow and consume fresher, more nutrient rich foods cultivated in an economical and environmentally friendly manner via home and community gardens. ■