

Weed Watch – Youth help scientist survey urban weeds

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Volunteer youth and adults participating in Weed Watch collect data on weed species and weed control practices in urban gardens. They then submit their data to the Garden Mosaics website using online forms. We plan to use the data collected through Weed Watch as baseline information to develop an urban weed management program. The use of volunteers to collect these data is appropriate because any findings are preliminary and will be followed up on where appropriate, thus alleviating the need for a high degree of data accuracy. Furthermore, sites that participate in Weed Watch may serve as future research sites for testing organic urban weed management practices. During summer 2005, youth in California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, and Pennsylvania conducted Weed Watch. They learned about weed species identification, measurement, problems caused by weeds, and means of control. The fact that their data would be used by a Cornell scientist was highly motivating to the youth and their educators. Weed Watch is one of several *im-science investigations* in the Cornell Garden Mosaics youth program, the goal of which is to connect youth and elders to investigate the mosaics of plants, people, and cultures in urban community gardens across the US and internationally (www.gardenmosaics.org). In addition to Weed Watch instructions and data forms, the Garden Mosaics website includes a series of illustrated fact sheets on weeds and weed species. New weed “Science Pages” are being developed through a collaboration between Garden Mosaics and the Weed Science Society of America. Garden Mosaics offers opportunities for weed scientists to promote weed education to teachers and other educators, youth, and gardeners, with an emphasis on underserved urban minority and immigrant audiences. Youth from Abraham House in the South Bronx will help present this poster, along with their educator Milagros Alegre.