NO-TILL ORGANIC MARKET GARDEN

Community Impact Study

Growing Faith, Food, and Fellowship

The Story of Gloria LeFall, Maxine Rideau, and Rabboni Kingdom Church International

Caddo Parish, Louisiana



USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

NO-TILL OMG! Organically Managed Gardening

CAMPTI Field of DREAMS

Community Leaders Profile

Two Sisters, One Garden



For Gloria LeFall and Maxine Rideau, the garden at Rabboni Kingdom Church International began with a simple desire to grow food and serve others.

Located in the heart of Shreveport, just minutes from Interstate 20, the church serves a diverse urban community where many families face challenges accessing fresh, healthy food. Through the No-Till Organic Market Garden project, Gloria and Maxine discovered that a church garden could become much more than a place to grow vegetables. It could become a place of fellowship, education, stewardship, and service.

The sisters brought different strengths to the project.

For Gloria, gardening was a lifelong passion passed down through generations. She traces her love of growing food to her grandmother, whose garden provided both nourishment and inspiration.

"Gardening started when I was young from my grandmother," Gloria recalled. "It's my happy place. Playing in the dirt gives me peace of mind."

Maxine's interests were different. While she enjoyed helping in the garden, she preferred preserving the harvest through canning and food preparation.

"Gardening basically is not my thing," she joked. "She does the planting. I like the canning. But I help out in the garden a lot. We have a good balance."

Together, the sisters became the driving force behind a project that transformed an unlikely piece of land into a productive source of food and community engagement.

What began as a church garden soon became a living example of how faith, perseverance, and stewardship can work together to create positive change.

> *"It's my happy place... and it's a joy to be able to feed the people with something we grew with our own hands." — Gloria LeFall*

Learning Through Challenges

The site chosen for the garden presented immediate obstacles.

The area had previously served as a parking lot and contained very little soil suitable for growing food. Compacted ground, limited organic matter, and inadequate water access created conditions that would have discouraged many gardeners.

For Gloria and Maxine, however, the challenges became opportunities to learn.

Through participation in the No-Till Organic Market Garden project, they were introduced to regenerative practices that emphasized building soil health rather than relying on intensive tillage or expensive inputs. The sisters learned how practices such as mulching, composting, tarping, and continuous soil cover could gradually transform poor soil into a productive growing environment.

The first year tested their patience.

Extreme heat, ant infestations, and the absence of a reliable water source made production difficult. Some plantings failed entirely. Rather than giving up, they followed the project's guidance, covered unsuccessful beds with tarps, added organic matter, and started again.

Each setback became a lesson.

Each season became an opportunity to improve.

Over time, the sisters began to see measurable progress.

The experience reinforced an important lesson shared by many project participants: Healthy soil is built one season at a time.



Gloria shows off her mustard and collard greens to the Campti Field of Dreams team.

Key Findings

- Converted a former parking lot into productive garden space
- Adopted no-till and soil-building practices
- Improved soil structure and water-holding capacity
- Reduced soil compaction through organic matter additions
- Established a reliable irrigation system
- Increased crop productivity and crop quality
- Created opportunities for youth and community engagement

Building Soil Where There Was Almost None

For Gloria and Maxine, soil health became the foundation of everything.

When the project began, the site offered little more than compacted ground and limited growing potential. Building healthy soil required creativity, persistence, and a willingness to use resources already available within the community.

The sisters collected and recycled organic materials whenever possible.

Eggshells from church members.

Coffee grounds.

Grass clippings from lawn maintenance.

Hay and mulch.

Compost generated from everyday materials. Rather than viewing these resources as waste, they became tools for rebuilding soil.

Beds were covered with mulch and tarps to protect the soil surface and encourage biological activity. Organic matter was added year after year, gradually improving structure, moisture retention, and fertility.

The changes became visible.
Plantings established more quickly.
Crops grew larger.
Harvests increased.

One of the most encouraging signs was the dramatic improvement in summer crops. performed better with each growing season.

The sisters also noticed improvements in flavor and quality.

A church member shared melons with a ninety-year-old relative who immediately noticed the difference.
"She couldn't believe how sweet the melons were," Gloria remembered.

The garden demonstrated that even highly degraded urban spaces can become productive when healthy soil becomes the priority.

“One of the most valuable lessons I learned is that it doesn't cost a lot of money to grow your own food. Many of the resources you need can be found right outside your front door.”

Feeding the Church, Teaching the Youth

The greatest impact of the garden may not be measured in pounds harvested.

It can be seen in the people it serves.

Produce from the garden regularly supports church meals and provides fresh vegetables for members of the congregation. Excess harvests are shared with families, allowing them to enjoy nutritious food at home and store produce for future use.

For Gloria, helping feed others remains one of the most rewarding aspects of the project. "There are a lot of people in the area lacking meals," she explained. "It's a joy to be able to do what we do and continue to feed the people."

The garden has also become an important educational tool.

Youth from the church participate in planting, harvesting, and garden maintenance activities. Through these experiences, they learn practical skills while developing a deeper understanding of stewardship, responsibility, and food production.

The garden is often incorporated into faith-based lessons and youth programming.

Growing vines have been used to teach biblical lessons about Christ as the True Vine.

Planting activities provide opportunities for children to connect scripture with creation.

The garden helps make lessons tangible and memorable.

"The youth planted most of the peas and okra. When they saw everything come up, it all started coming together."



Community Impact Highlights

- Fresh produce shared through church meals and member distributions
- Youth actively involved in planting and harvesting
- Garden incorporated into faith-based education
- Improved access to healthy food in an urban neighborhood
- Created opportunities for intergenerational learning
- Demonstrated regenerative practices in a church setting

Looking Forward

Keeping the Garden Moving Forward

Today, the garden at Rabboni Kingdom Church International continues to evolve.

What began as a small experiment in soil health has become a valuable ministry, educational resource, and community asset.

The sisters hope to involve more volunteers, expand participation, and continue sharing fresh food with church members and neighbors.

Their experience demonstrates that successful gardens do not require perfect conditions.

They require commitment.

Patience.

And a willingness to keep moving forward.



Key Lessons Learned

- Healthy soil can be built even on challenging urban sites.
- Organic materials are valuable resources for rebuilding soil.
- Persistence often matters more than perfection.
- Gardens create opportunities for service, education, and fellowship.
- Youth engagement strengthens long-term community impact.

Key Themes

- Faith-Based Community Development
- Soil Health
- Urban Agriculture
- Food Access
- Youth Education
- Environmental Stewardship
- Community Service
- Intergenerational Learning
- Regenerative Agriculture
- Community Resilience

Closing Reflection

The story of Gloria LeFall, Maxine Rideau, and Rabboni Kingdom Church International demonstrates how conservation practices can strengthen both land and community. Through patience, faith, and a commitment to serving others, two sisters transformed a former parking lot into a thriving garden that provides food, education, and fellowship. Their work reminds us that healthy soil is more than a conservation goal—it is a foundation for healthier communities, stronger relationships, and opportunities to serve future generations.