

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY:

*Principles and Practices for
Community Gardening
As a Community-Building Tool*

By Karen Payne and Deborah Fryman
Edited by Don Boekelheide



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CULTIVATING COMMUNITY



Principles and Practices for Community Gardening As a Community-Building Tool

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Editor's note: This publication is based on *Principles and Practices For Using Community Gardens as a Tool For Community Development in Low Income Neighborhoods*, by Karen Payne and Deborah Fryman, a research monograph for the American Community Gardening Association, funded with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. With the exception of the story on the Edible Schoolyard, written by the editor, the material in this report is an edited version of Payne and Fryman's paper.

INTRODUCTION

Community gardens are often praised for the good things they bring to a neighborhood: more fresh food and better nutrition, reclamation of derelict land, places for families and neighbors to spend time together, and a wide range of other community, environmental and educational benefits.

Is a community garden a useful tool for community building? The answer is, 'not necessarily'. Like every other type of community development project, there is ample potential for a garden to be top-down, driven by the priorities of outside do-gooders, or controlled by a few people who exclude others. Or a community garden can be a place that encourages participation and new forms of leadership for people of all ages, ethnicities, classes, and abilities.

Cultivating Community explores some basic principles and values that underlie successful community empowerment programs of any kind, and illustrates how these principles have been applied to community gardens across the country. This paper is intended as a resource for individuals, organizations and coalitions whose specific aim is to use gardens to empower people by building their skill and confidence to transform their lives and their communities.

Why Gardens?

Gardens offer a particular combination of factors that enhance their potential to be excellent community building tools:

- A garden is a non-threatening place for interaction among people of all ages, cultures and income levels.
- It is an ongoing project that, after the initial start-up phase, can be sustained primarily by the will of the community rather than by outside agencies or experts.
- The process can involve a wide range of skills, allowing even non-gardeners to be involved.
- A garden can continue to grow and change in form, offering challenges and opportunities for its participants along the way.
- The space in which a garden is created is safe and controlled by the residents themselves.
- Visual changes can happen in the short term, unlike housing or economic development projects which can take years to realize.
- Through the process of creating a natural environment and caring for living things, people learn to step outside of themselves and feel the pride of giving something beautiful to their community.
- Developing a garden empowers people of all ages as they realize that their actions can contribute to something positive and that their involvement can make a difference.



Cultivating Community has six main sections, each focusing on a key aspect of community building. For each aspect of community building, there is a list of important **Community Building Principles**, **Stories from the Garden** and a **Garden Organizing Toolkit**. **Community Building Principles** gives a brief summary of how each can be an effective tool for community gardeners. To illustrate these ideas, **Stories from the Garden** gives a first-hand description of the challenges and successes of community gardening programs throughout the country. **Garden Organizing Toolkit** provides lists of ideas and summaries of key points.

Every phase of community gardening offers opportunities to build skills and knowledge, and to create new community resources and relationships. We hope that this paper will help maximize the potential for gardens to grow new community leaders with the skills, support and courage to transform their communities.



I. PUTTING COMMUNITY FIRST

'Gardening can be an incredibly powerful tool because it is such a non-threatening way to bring people together. You can do so much so quickly. You can change the face of a neighborhood in a day.'

Karen Hobbs, Chicago, Illinois

'I learned that the less help from the outside, the better. The hands-off approach is really the one that is the best. It might take the garden longer to develop, but it really should develop at the pace of the community. You have to trust the people who live there.'

Lucy Bradley, Phoenix, Arizona

Taken together, the words of these two experienced community garden organizers capture the paradox of community gardening.

In a weekend, a community garden project can transform a trash-filled vacant lot dominated by drug dealers into an inviting space ready for a community garden. However, for this garden to have maximum beneficial impact on the community, local residents must provide the motivating force.

For a garden to truly transform and empower members of a community, the ideas, energy, commitment, and skills for building and sustaining the community garden must come from the community itself. When community development is the goal of a community garden, patient and sometimes difficult community organizing must precede and follow any miraculous overnight transformations.

The following principles, based on the experience of successful community garden programs around the country, can help make community gardens stronger, more effective, and sustainable.

COMMUNITY BUILDING PRINCIPLES

Build on the community's own ideas and priorities

One of the best ways to disempower people is to offer too many ideas or step in to solve problems before a group has a chance to find its own solutions and creative strategies. Part of community gardening, and any community building, is providing opportunities for people to find their voice so leaders and organizers can listen.

Listen

Garden organizers must listen carefully to each person's voice. If they do not, even organizers with the best of intentions may overlook a community's needs and priorities. Listening requires patience, time, and active engagement. 'Outside' agencies and organizers may be tempted to be 'efficient' by dictating a garden's direction based on funding considerations, a desire for quick 'tangible results' or personal opinions, instead of heeding the community they seek to serve. Such short-

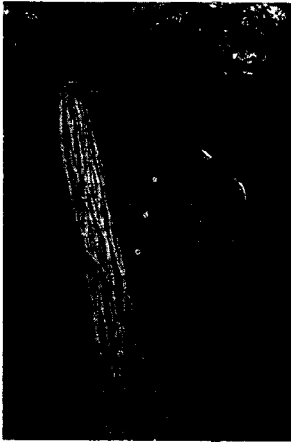
term 'efficiency' may, in fact, undermine community building and long-term sustainability. To create a successful community-based garden, organizers must from the beginning respect and understand the problems and hopes expressed by members of the community.

☛ Reach out to encourage community commitment

Garden organizers can actively reach out to all sectors of a community, to people of all ages, occupations, and ethnicities, as well as to a variety of businesses, religious groups, government agencies and community organizations. A garden project based on the hopes of an entire community has a better chance of sustainable success than a plan based on the opinions of one or two outspoken community members. The greater the number of individuals who commit to the garden from the beginning, the larger the community impact when the garden reaches its goals.

☛ Identify local assets

Rather than focusing on problems, begin by identifying 'assets': the community strengths and resources. By starting from assets rather than needs, community gardeners begin to recognize that the community itself has something vital to contribute to the garden, especially if different groups and individuals combine their efforts and talents. This encourages gardeners to be inclusive and build cooperation with public and private agencies. Newly developed techniques based on social science research and community organizing experience, such as *community asset mapping* and *stakeholder analysis*, can help identify the wealth of resources in a community's individuals, associations and institutions.



☛ Respond to 'non-gardening' needs

Around the country, community garden projects have successfully addressed 'non-garden issues' like crime prevention, education, playgrounds and improving race relations.

Garden organizers may want to target non-garden issues as part of a garden program, particularly when some community members do not see a community garden as a neighborhood priority.

For example, parents and caregivers are always on the lookout for positive activities for children and families. Through a community garden, caregivers can meet and create a support network. With appropriate infrastructure, a community garden can provide a safe play area, a meeting place, a location for childcare and after-school tutoring, and a source of summer employment opportunities.

☛ Create formal and informal opportunities to come together

From plant swaps to potlucks, planned social events in the garden give community members a chance to connect with one another. Special gatherings to celebrate garden success are a good way to build community within the garden. Festivals open to the public reach out to the

larger community, and give gardeners a chance to show off their achievements.

☛ *Create common space in the garden*

Common areas create a sense of place and build a community garden's identity. An inviting shared space, even something as simple as a comfortable spot to sit in the shade, gives gardeners and neighbors a place to gather informally, outside of organized meetings and social events. Common areas can become the staging grounds for beneficial partnerships, everything from public art to outdoor performances. A sturdy bulletin board in the common space provides an invaluable 'low tech' way to communicate.

Attention to the appearance of common areas, like gates, paths and fencing, makes the garden more attractive for gardeners and the general public. A small garden shed can help keep a garden neat by providing shared storage for materials. Working to ensure that the garden has an appealing 'viewscape' offers community gardeners an opportunity to cooperate with neighbors on community beautification programs.

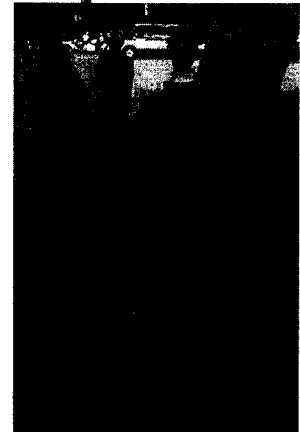
☛ *Build relationships*

In a community garden, people get to know one another as individuals. These personal relationships can benefit the garden and further community goals. Positive informal interactions in the garden encourage greater communication and trust. Formal activities, such as classes and training workshops, are another excellent way for people to build friendship and trust. As people make friends, and as they work together to create the garden and solve garden problems, community members become better able to tackle other issues affecting the quality of life in their neighborhoods. In a tangible way, by building relationships in the garden, people begin to gain a greater sense of control over their lives.

☛ *Build on racial, ethnic and cultural diversity*

A community's diversity nourishes the life of a community garden. In diverse neighborhoods, an inclusive community garden program may be one of the few institutions that accurately reflects an area's multi-cultural identity and works to build a united front to address the whole community's needs. Cultural diversity attracts visitors, enlivens social events, and introduces gardeners to a wide variety of foods, crafts, music, and wisdom. Folktales and oral histories from different cultural perspectives are fascinating windows on the neighborhood and the world. Making friends from different cultures enables gardeners to broaden their horizons or even learn new languages. If a community garden decides to market products to generate income, or to provide entrepreneurial opportunities and training, different cultural perspectives can inspire winning innovations and creative ideas.

Appreciating diversity can be challenging. Diversity training can help gardeners and garden organizers strengthen communication and sensitivity skills. Public and private agencies offer diversity training in



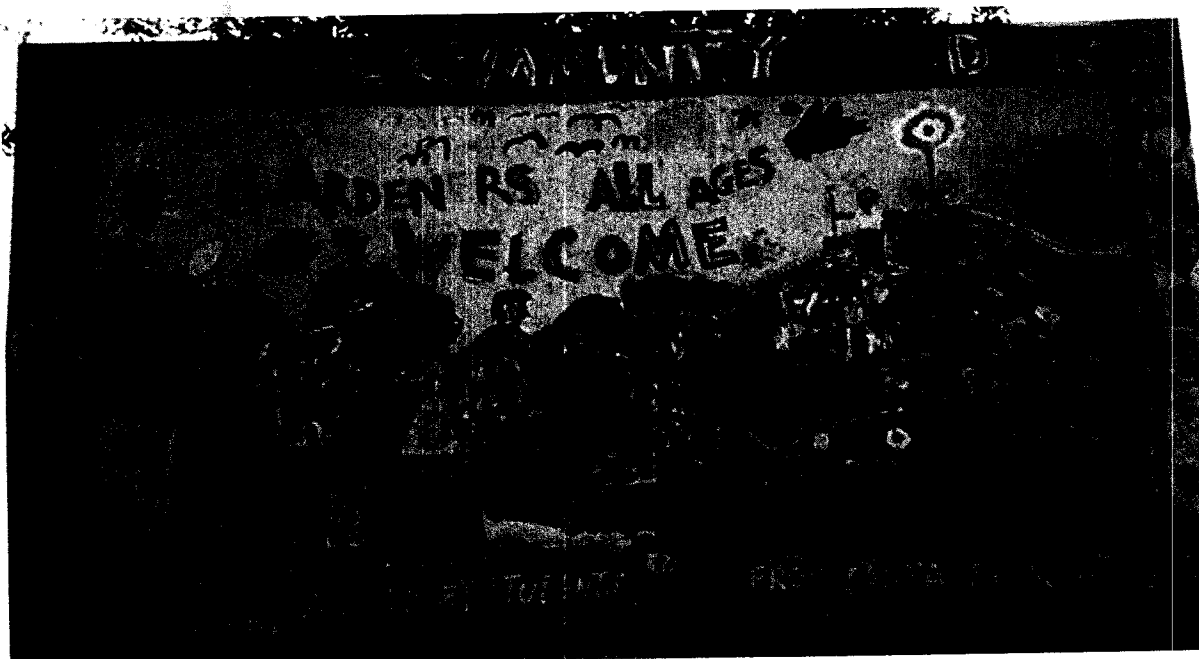
many cities and regions. A community garden project can sponsor its own members as participants in national workshops, who can then share what they learn with everyone back at home.

☛ *Identify community resources*

Community agencies offer services that community garden organizers cannot themselves provide. A directory listing local resources (such as city government services) offers community members a valuable tool. As they make new contacts with outside resources, gardeners build communication skills and develop confidence through networking.

☛ *Form broad-based community coalitions*

Community gardeners work with an ever-growing circle of partners and collaborators. Local businesses, faith-based groups, schools and civic organizations all represent valuable allies that have not traditionally taken an interest in community gardening. Coalitions broaden the impact of garden projects and build long-term community relationships. Through cooperative partnerships, neighborhoods and organizations become aware of how community gardens can become an asset to the broader community. Research shows that community gardens increase the number and types of relationships among residents and local institutions, businesses, and services. A merging of agendas among partners (such as addressing a need for open space or children's activities) supports the garden and nurtures a collective passion to make deep and lasting positive change in a community.



Neighborhoods, seniors, schools lead Phoenix gardens

PHOENIX, ARIZONA - 'People have to build gardens for themselves,' Lucy Bradley says. 'You can give guidance, but don't take away the challenges.'

Bradley is a veteran agriculture extension agent, with years of experience guiding Phoenix's successful community garden program.

'When I started working on community gardens, I thought that I knew what gardeners needed. And I was going to do it for them because I was the expert. I marshaled resources, made contacts, and offered solutions.

'This was all very 'helpful' but not constructive. I've watched organizations create beautiful gardens and then give them to communities in schools and neighborhoods, but none of these have ever gone on to become successful community gardens. The building of the garden is the vehicle, not the having it. The obstacles they overcome are valuable. Their successful navigation helps build community.'



The Garden of Pride

Case in point: The Garden of Pride, a community garden in a low-income district in Mesa, near Phoenix. Language barriers made community building there difficult. Gang problems plagued the neighborhood.

'You could feel the fear,' Bradley remembers.

A group of Mesa residents thought a garden might bring people together. With encouragement from Bradley, they converted a vacant lot into a beautiful community garden.

A half decade later, the Garden of Pride is still going strong. Twenty families garden there, and the garden hosts pot luck dinners every week and offers a gardening program for a nearby elementary school. A new market gardening component is already providing income to some of the gardeners. Crime has declined in the area.

'People know their neighbors, and everyone is welcome in the garden,' Bradley says.

Bradley emphasizes that, from the beginning, residents have been the leaders of the Garden of Pride.

'They make the decisions. They have developed their own connections and resources. There is no doubt in anyone's mind - the residents themselves are responsible for the success of this garden, and for helping to transform a war zone into a neighborhood.'

Senior gardens build community

Phoenix's community garden program also works to provide senior citizens with access to gardening. Phoenix sponsors two large community gardens at retirement communities, one with 250 plots and the other 300. Here again, gardeners provide the leadership.

'Residents come to the desert to retire in the sun, leaving family and friends behind in distant parts of the country,' Bradley says. 'Retirees have worked in every imaginable occupation. A community garden offers a common link, a focal point.'

'Many of the gardeners do not drive, so they opened a nursery, greenhouse and store right at the garden where they sell seedlings, fertilizer - everything they need. The gardens also serve the larger community. They provide a massive amount

of food to the food banks and offer a tutoring program for schools.'

A catalyst for schools

Schools are another key part of Phoenix's garden program. Setting up school-based community gardens, Bradley has learned many lessons: 'We experienced several 'ah-hahs' while helping to build a garden and wildlife habitat in a Phoenix elementary school,' Bradley recalls.

'The more the administration, teachers, students, and parents become involved, and the more challenges they overcome themselves, the stronger their commitment and ownership of the project.'

Rather than 'give' gardens to schools, Bradley and her organization act as a catalyst, offering the school and neighborhood information and coaching they need to create a garden for themselves. Bradley also has shifted emphasis from 'product' to 'process'. Initially, school

projects had a specific goal and a timeline for completion. Now, instead of working to complete a defined project, she seeks to establish ongoing opportunities for teamwork and creativity at the school and in the community.

'It wasn't *having* a wildlife habitat that really mattered,' Bradley explains. '*Building* a wildlife habitat on campus created the magic.'



Sweat equity in Seattle puts a value on people's time

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON — Seattle's community gardening success is due to more than all the espresso grounds in the compost. To support community gardening, Seattle offers an innovative matching grant program that encourages neighborhoods to involve a wide variety of gardeners in gardening projects. The City of Seattle's 'P-Patch' community gardening organization administers \$4.5 million annually in neighborhood matching grant dollars.

'Any group in a neighborhood can propose to do a project,' says Barbara Donnette of 'P-Patch'. 'It can be a garden, tree-planting, mural — anything that will enhance their neighborhood. The basic principle is that people need to match the amount, up to \$5,000. The cycle is every two months. So if you have an idea, you can get it met pretty quickly. The city also offers a grant available on a six-month cycle for up to \$100,000, also based on matching funds.'

The P-Patch program helps neighborhoods organize, but the residents themselves have to go out

and solicit local service providers, such as schools, youth groups, and business. P-Patch values and encourages 'sweat equity', with volunteer work time valued at \$10 per hour.

'By setting a value for people's time, you are making a gift that everyone is giving to the neighborhood and it is valued,' Donnette explains. 'It also makes it possible for a neighborhood to scrape together what they need to match.'

Equally important, Donnette says, is encouraging neighborhood projects to make full use of their own human resources. Sometimes, valuable potential is hidden, just waiting for the right conditions to bloom.

'The key is finding the right task for the right person, capitalizing on their interest or ability,' Donnette stresses. 'One man started as a homeless gardener and became president of Friends of P-Patch. This happened through connections he made in the garden and the stability the garden gave him as a person.'

Mary didn't want to be a gardener

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS – When Chicago community garden organizer Karen Hobbs talked to Mary about starting a garden in her inner city neighborhood, Mary was less than enthusiastic. She was getting close to retirement age, and, when it came right down to it, Hobbs recalls, 'Mary didn't want to be a gardener.'

But Mary was also tired of watching drug dealers going in and out of the building across the street, so she reluctantly joined the garden project. Things changed dramatically for Mary and her community.

Working to help her community garden solve land, water, and other issues, Mary has discovered ways to make life better for her entire neighborhood. She knows a great deal about how to get things done in her city. And Mary has met other like-minded neighbors through the city gardening network.

'It was basic issues like getting a water permit,' explains Hobbs. 'I can't tell you how hard it is to get one in Chicago. Mary worked with the Fire Dept. because it was impossible to get water for the garden in her block. They came by twice a week to water the garden. That made the firemen start to care about the garden. It improved relations.'

'When a community member had a heart attack, they were there in five minutes, something which never happened in that neighborhood. They told Mary that it was because the community cared about their neighborhood. Now firemen volunteer at the school.'

Mary has become a member of her local school council, where she is lobbying to incorporate the garden into the school curriculum. Because of her problems with city technical assistance providers, she has worked successfully to change the way services are provided throughout the city. She has tried to cultivate community leaders to go with her, bringing younger people into the garden and making a special effort to bring them into meetings.

Once Mary realized that she had something important to say, she began speaking to other neighborhoods. Groups now request her to come give talks on community gardening.

'The amazing thing,' Hobbs says, 'is that if you met Mary, you wouldn't say, 'Wow! What a great leader!' But after spending time with her, you'd really see the impact she's had.'



Building community 'behind the scenes' in Denver



DENVER, COLORADO – Denver Urban Gardeners (DUG) works with everything from flower beds for seniors to barrio gardens. Here, amidst the magnificent Rockies, a group of Denver community gardeners working together to strengthen their neighborhood has created a powerful and unforgettable memorial.

DUG's program director Michael Buchenau tells of a community garden where 'a stone sculpture pays tribute to all the children who have died in violence. They have names painted on tiles by children or the family, representing the aspirations of the murdered child.'

DUG hopes not only to provide a healing place of commemoration, but to help find ways to break the cycle of violence as well. Buchenau is excited about community gardens as tools for decreasing teen conflict and building peace.

'One Hispanic neighborhood had all the neighborhood religious leaders bless a garden site as neutral territory. Gang members came to recognize this

as well. The garden is now thriving, with little kids, adults, and teenagers working in the garden side-by-side. At this garden, the neighborhood holds ceremonies, festivals, and tortilla-making contests, where older women teach younger people how to make tortillas.'

Neighborhoods take the lead

DUG projects share one thing in common: Neighborhood and community groups take the lead on creating and maintaining their gardens.

'If there isn't strong support in a neighborhood for a garden, it will always fail,' Buchenau says. 'People will never champion a project they didn't help create. We could build a beautiful garden. But if no one is there to lead it, it will fail.'

DUG works 'behind-the-scenes', according to Buchenau, responding to requests from neighborhoods. Applicants must champion the garden project, while DUG applies its experience to help empower the community. DUG recommends materials that hold up in Rocky Mountain weather and ways to minimize maintenance headaches. They share ways to deter vandalism and suggest appropriate jobs for unskilled volunteers.

DUG asks a lot of tough questions before agreeing to assist a neighborhood.

'We'd rather say 'go back to the drawing board' or 'work with this other group', than just do a project simply to increase the number of gardens,' Buchenau explains.

When a community group seeks DUG's help developing an open space project, for example, DUG will first lay out all the possibilities. 'We'll ask applicants: 'What else could this be? What else does this mean to you? For instance, we worked with one neighborhood to create a play space and a pathway all around the garden. Or parents by a school may say, 'Can we make this an educational garden?'

At the same time, Buchenau stresses that 'It's important never to impose your own ideas. We try and subtly suggest ways of doing things that we know are more successful than others. We don't discourage. The group may say, 'We just want to grow food' and that's fine. We've done several projects that are just playgrounds or just flowers for older people, or a combination of these with vegetables as well.'

Over the years, Buchenau has observed that a particular kind of person – he calls them ‘pioneers’ – often comes up with the initial vision for a garden. These garden pioneers, he has found, are good at getting the word out and often skilled in raising money for the garden. The most effective garden pioneers find other ‘doers’ in the neighborhood and team up.

DUG works with garden pioneers to develop their organizing skills and to encourage garden participation.

Community gardens don't succeed overnight.

A successful DUG garden takes about four years to become fully operational, ready to for the neighborhood to manage. DUG finds that smaller gardens often work better than bigger gardens.

‘It's better to have smaller gardens with a waiting list than a big one with two empty plots,’ Buchenau believes.

‘It's too big for that neighborhood. It's better for that neighborhood to have a garden that is well maintained, never left uncared for, and desired. It's like the nightclub that has a line of people – you want to dance there.’



Garden opportunities to come together

Work parties

Neighborhood street fairs and cultural festivals

Earth Day seed and plant exchange, open to the public

Garden contests – city gardens and gardeners competing for prizes

'Night Out Against Crime' – neighbors hold violence-free block parties

'Night Out' – neighbors informally gather for a potluck dinner in the garden

Harvest Fair – selling or displaying produce and flowers, from one or more gardens

Gifts from Nature Sale – produce or plant sale, with proceeds to community gardens

Public Gardens Day, co-sponsored by a botanical garden, arboretum or garden club

African, Latino, Asian or multicultural market, selling ethnic clothes, crafts and food

Memorial garden – garden beds or other commemorative areas that pay homage to loved ones who have fallen victim to violence or disease

Ideas for community garden common areas

Bulletin board

Shaded sitting area

Arbor, gazebo or *casita*

Mural or public art display

Barbecue area with picnic tables

Tool and supply shed or garden supplies box

Outdoor classroom, stage or amphitheater with sloped grass seating

Composting, garden ecology or organic gardening demonstration area

Attractive environmentally smart landscaping (such as drought resistant plants)

II. NURTURING LEADERSHIP

'I had never been put in a managerial position before. It brought the leader out in me. It got me in the frame of mind that if I start something, it will be completed. There's a leader in everyone. It's just a question of who's going to step forward first.'

Michael Wilson, Berkeley, California

'Ms. Estes has a plot in the SEEDS garden. She and another woman from the public housing unit came and helped make a presentation regarding a grant for \$10,000 from the county. This was the first time for either of them to speak in public.'

Rich Bell, Durham, North Carolina

For garden programs that seek to strengthen communities, building grassroots leadership is a top priority. Even before the groundbreaking ceremony, community garden projects offer gardeners and members of the neighborhood a myriad of leadership opportunities. From the first outreach to neighbors, garden organizers can encourage project participants to become leaders. People who begin to see themselves as leaders develop skills they can apply inside and outside the garden to enhance their personal and family lives and to build their neighborhoods.

People develop into leaders through empowerment and trust. By learning to lead, they master tools they need to make their dreams reality and become inspired with possibilities for their future.

Cultivating leadership means more than identifying talented individuals. Community garden leaders must realize that the ability to work in partnership is a source of strength. Effective leadership depends on cooperation among diverse people, each with unique perspectives and unique skills. Cultivating leadership in community gardens means drawing on the strengths of every gardener and heeding every voice.

COMMUNITY BUILDING PRINCIPLES

➤ Encourage leadership to emerge

Garden projects offer gardeners a way to become active in their neighborhoods. Garden organizers must recognize and encourage opportunities for participants to problem-solve for themselves and create independently. Every phase of a garden project has a place for individual creativity. The possibilities are limitless – garden design, scheduling workdays, brainstorming a garden name, planning events, soliciting donations, problem-solving, and conflict resolution, to name a few.

Successful projects empower garden members to accomplish tasks by cooperating with each other, so their reliance on outside direction diminishes. On a group and neighborhood level, community garden development should encourage cooperative leadership and decision making. Assisting organizations must watch for opportunities to let community members take over additional tasks and responsibilities.



Some jobs may take longer with this approach, but the result is a community garden that encourages grassroots leadership and cooperation, not one that perpetuates reliance on powerful, if well intended, patrons.

☛ *Utilize existing strengths*

Just as a healthy soil hosts a hidden ecosystem rich in diversity, neighborhoods hold a wealth of varied talents in their residents. A community garden project offers a chance to put these skills to use in flyer design, cookie baking, phone calling, clean up, public speaking, workshop instruction, taking meeting notes, tool shed organizing, asking for donations - the list is almost limitless. When people receive credit for the diverse skills they bring to the project, they are honored and gratified to be able to give back to their neighborhood. Success grows from building on group and individual strengths and from helping people to recognize and believe in their own abilities.



☛ *Divide tasks*

When community gardeners share tasks among as many individuals as possible, they create opportunities to develop individual and shared leadership. By succeeding at small and doable tasks, people experience the reward of ongoing success and the confidence that comes from taking responsibility. This increases their investment in the garden and encourages them to take on more responsibilities.

☛ *Balance product with process*

A community garden as a 'finished product' is a desirable community resource. But even more important are the benefits gained from individual and community growth during the process of planning, creating and maintaining a garden.

An ongoing process of building leadership capacity is fundamentally important in community gardening. When garden groups set up a decision-making process that encourages people to share responsibilities and develop leadership, communication, and organizing skills, this does more than simply enrich individuals. These skills build leadership within the garden, and in turn they contribute to long-term garden viability and further neighborhood improvements.

☛ *Create opportunities for presentations*

Community garden programs provide gardeners an opportunity to make presentations about their projects to groups within and outside their neighborhood. These opportunities help develop leadership.

Each time people present their accomplishments, they can practice and improve their public speaking and networking skills. Presentations within the group provide gardeners with welcome recognition and serve to boost self-confidence. Participants can also become effective presenters to outside groups, strengthening connections with media, government, and community groups from other parts of their city.

☛ *Create mentoring opportunities*

When participants with special skills teach what they know, they build leadership skills as they share their knowledge. People learn to accomplish goals as a team. Group members who serve as mentors build confidence as they share information. Those they assist benefit by learning something new from a friend.

☛ *Provide networking and training opportunities*

Building and maintaining a garden offers opportunities to learn something new and to refine skills. New learning experiences increase people's interest, investment, and ownership in the project. Learning activities need not, and should not, be limited to horticultural and practical topics. A leadership development program can support personal growth and education goals. For instance, formally and informally, garden groups can help their members master skills in everything from facilitating meetings and public speaking to project planning and fundraising.

A well-designed workshop can encourage established garden leaders to empower emerging new leadership. This kind of training helps people discover how their experiences can be a resource to others and builds invaluable skills. It can be applied to situations outside the garden. Training can also help participants learn how to create networks beyond the neighborhood and put people in touch with existing resources.



Carlos beats the odds: A success story from Boston

LINCOLN, MASSACHUSETTS – Carlos was barely 15 years old when he first showed up at Boston's Food Project. The young emigrant from the Dominican Republic was shy and inarticulate. His mother was on welfare. Greg Gale, who directs The Food Project, a garden-based program for youth in the Boston area, still remembers his first impressions of Carlos.

'Carlos was so timid about speaking he hardly spoke and didn't follow directions that well,' Gale recalls. 'We began to be a little concerned.'

A year later, life is better for both Carlos and his mom. With encouragement and help from Food Project staff, his mother is working and off welfare. Carlos has enrolled in a technical program for plumbing. Food Project workers helped Carlos move from a school that treated him poorly to a different school where he is very happy.

Idealism and pragmatism

The project that helped Carlos help himself is an unusual and inspiring blend of idealism and pragmatism. The Food Project brings together young people from Boston and its suburbs to work on urban and suburban farms. The program helps youth develop self-discipline and the ability to work cooperatively with others. All youth accepted to The Food Project must attend summer 'boot camp'. Organized into crews of 12, they combine garden work with workshops on subjects like diversity and team building.

'They work in teams to create a feeling of community different from any they've been part of,' Gale explains. 'We focus on the basic job skills of timeliness, work behavior, learning to work with others in a diverse team, self-discipline and hard work.'

'Our kids say things like, "I learned to talk to people different from myself."

During the school year, 16 young people take part in 'DIRT', The Food Project's academic program (the acronym stands for 'Dynamic Intelligent Responsible Teenagers'). DIRT builds on basic skills mastered during the summer. Every Saturday, participants devote two thirds of the day to work and service and one third to reflection and training.

'The DIRT crew is here to develop leadership skills,' Gale says. 'They learn how to motivate oth-

ers, give instructions, give public presentations, and lead diverse groups.'

Contributing to the team

Food Project training wasn't easy for Carlos. But, in the end, he discovered he could make a valuable contribution to the team.

'Leading groups was very challenging for Carlos,' Gale remembers. 'He had to learn to communicate. It's all about group discussion: 'How was it working at the shelter?,' 'What's the most important word in your life?' What did a lot for him was working at our farmers market, where there are a lot of Spanish-speaking customers. Carlos can speak Spanish, and there he would come to life.'

Food Project organizers practice what they preach. Youth and adult staff must meet the same high standards, and the group is working to increase diversity at the staff level.

'All people are treated equally from the beginning. Everyone has the same opportunity to do the same work,' Gale says. 'All our core staff gets paid the same amount. Our farmer gets paid the same as our business manager or our communications manager. Everyone buys into the vision of what we're trying to achieve.'

'We provide images of young people from the area – young people like Carlos – being productive and caring leaders,' Gale says. 'This generates energy and new ideas about what's possible for our city. All of our work is based on these principles:'

Food Project principles

- All people are related to the land.
- All people have the capacity to serve.
- All people have the capacity to learn.
- Diversity is the future and we want to help make that a positive future.
- Having a common purpose is a critical part of building community.
- We're more interested in the questions than the answers.
- The best outcomes come from working as a team or group to find solutions.
- The social and environmental future we face requires more than one solution or approach.

A miracle for youth in the Arizona desert

PHOENIX, ARIZONA – The Miracle Garden offers youth a constructive alternative to gangs and crime. Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Urban Agriculture Agent Lucy Bradley explains the program:

'While the garden grows some of the best vegetables in town, we believe that the intangibles are the real achievement of the garden. The Miracle Garden's youth leaders have brought success to the garden in many ways. They have had personal successes and have helped other youth, as well as many adult volunteers, to achieve growth in knowledge, attitude, and behavior. Mentors from the neighborhoods, surrounding businesses and Master Gardeners are learning as much from the youth as vice versa.

'Participants have gained knowledge in horticulture, entrepreneurship, and job readiness, as well as in organizational, communication, employment, leadership, and community building skills. The youth help others to develop attitudes that foster self-confidence, camaraderie, interest in learning, and pride in what they accomplish.

'They have improved grades and attendance at school, won jobs in the 'green' industry and in a local law firm. One has become the first person in her family to ever graduate high school and the first to go on to college. I've watched young people who had dropped out of school who are now back in school with scholarships that they've earned and kids who tell me that this is the longest they've ever been involved in anything, after only three weeks of being involved.

'Some kids have families that move every couple months. I had one young woman who was told by the school that she couldn't come back because her family had moved.

With the self-confidence she developed in the project, she said, 'I don't think this is right' and went to the school board to make it right. She did it. Before she just would have switched as she had so many times before. The garden can't take full credit, but the life skills developed are the most powerful thing.

This will affect their lives forever.'

Growing leaders in Atlanta's garden program

ATLANTA, GEORGIA – The most important harvest for Atlanta's Urban Gardening Leadership Training Program isn't the vegetables. Atlanta's gardens grow leaders.

Bobby Wilson of Georgia Cooperative Extension says the program succeeds in building leaders by providing gardeners with tools they need to organize and sustain their own garden projects. Their confidence builds as they experience challenge and success. Gardeners use their new skills to address other issues facing their community.

The program started in 1995, when Georgia Cooperative Extension began helping Atlanta residents of public housing set up community gardens. Early on, they hit on the right formula for encouraging attendance at monthly 'leadership training' meetings. They still use the same approach every month: a bingo game, a leadership training session (covering topics such as 'how to facilitate a meeting' or 'conflict resolution'), gardening tips, and a potluck meal. Participants – all public housing residents – arrive early to participate in the bingo game

and continue to attend meetings even after the leadership training series has ended.

Atlanta's community gardens are inclusive, sustainable, and irreplaceable parts of their public housing communities. They are lead by the gardeners themselves, using skills developed at the leadership training meetings. Atlanta's program has grown into a network of over 200 gardens. Hartford, Connecticut and Holyoke, Massachusetts are now adapting the Atlanta model.

The benefits of Atlanta's community garden extend far beyond the garden gate.

Last year, an Atlanta community gardener became president of the board of MARTA, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, a \$280 million-a-year corporation. She is the first African American woman, and first public housing resident, to sit on MARTA's board. She credits the Atlanta Urban Gardening Leadership Training Program for helping her develop the tools and confidence needed to take on this high level of civic and corporate leadership.

Factors important for garden sustainability

- Good management skills
- Capacity for leadership development
- Education and training in horticulture
- Ability to raise financial and social capital
- Structures that support community efforts
- High level of commitment by the gardeners
- Effective methods for gardeners to govern themselves
- Attention to ecological sustainability and soil and resource stewardship
- Training in community organizing and expertise in community relations

Contributions of gardens to community

- Gardeners add nutritious food to home diets and share food with neighbors
- Gardens donate food to food banks, soup kitchens, seniors, and public housing residents
- Community supported agriculture projects (CSAs) donate shares to local food banks and sell shares more cheaply to low-income gardeners

Environmentally responsible business practices

- Practicing energy efficiency, recycling, and responsible waste management
- Encouraging access to local food, which reduces transportation and packaging
- Supporting community beautification programs, protecting open space and wildlife habitat
- Supporting local strategies to create environmentally sustainable neighborhoods, including mass transit and toxic waste clean-up.
- Supporting environmental and stewardship education, including garden - based programs encouraging composting, water conservation, and ecological landscaping.

III. INCLUDING FAMILIES

'Ever since I came to this country, I've been seen as a failure, an ignorant nobody. Now in the community garden my kids have a chance to see their father as a person who has real abilities, a man who knows something. It makes them proud of me.'

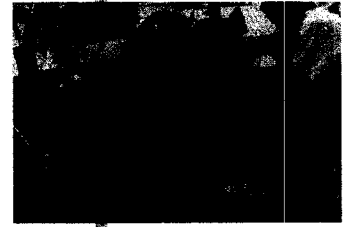
'Francisco' (Mexican immigrant), Los Angeles, California

'Community gardens are places where individuals work side by side with neighborhood children, businessmen, homeless folks, and artists, all at once. They share stories and shovels, laughter and water, and slowly they build relationships that extend beyond the garden and into our larger community.'

Annice Keenan, Durham, North Carolina

In crowded urban neighborhoods, community gardens sometimes offer the only open space where family members of all ages can enjoy activities together, a peaceful haven in a noisy and overwhelming urban environment. Community gardens become the shared 'backyard' or 'village green' in many US cities. In the garden, communities and families celebrate together – festivals, birthdays, graduations, and weddings. Places where children can be involved are more relaxing and nurturing for parents and caregivers than gardens created with no thought for children. A safe and comfortably shady spot where children can safely play gives grown ups a better opportunity to work in the garden and to connect with one another.

A garden gives a child wonderful opportunities to create personal spaces based on things she or he enjoys and cares about. A child-friendly garden sets aside places specifically for children's use, such as children's planting areas, play areas and outdoor classrooms.



COMMUNITY BUILDING PRINCIPLES 🌱

🌱 Include families in garden planning and management

The unique perspectives of caregivers and parents, children and grandparents can improve garden design, rules and decision making. Every family member can contribute to every phase of community garden planning, creation, and management.

Community gardens must involve people from every age group and every cultural background. Only if everyone, young and old, has responsibility for creating and managing the garden — and an empowered voice in planning and setting policy — will all gain a sense of ownership in the garden.

In a practical sense, this means looking for ways to make meetings accessible to everyone. For example, setting meeting times with family economic realities in mind, and providing childcare during meetings, can encourage greater participation.

☛ *Include youth*

A community garden program can make an enormous difference in the life of a teenager or young adult. In working with youth, the 'non-horticultural' aspects of community gardens become centrally important. Gardens can help youth meet academic, work-related, and social challenges, and can help families provide appropriate support and direction for their teenagers.

The key to working with youth is making sure they feel welcome in the garden. Youth benefit both from a clear structure and supportive guidance. They deserve empowered inclusion in decision making, including opportunities to take on leadership roles.

☛ *Create opportunities for children to develop a sense of place and an ethic of stewardship*



When a garden welcomes children, they develop a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for caring for the garden. Children develop a sense of stewardship as they nurture their plants and contribute to the garden space as a whole.

Urban environments uproot children from the earth. A garden gives families the opportunity to reestablish their children's connection with the land. In the garden, elders can share their cultural heritage and knowledge of agriculture with younger family members. Traditional garden vegetables, and customs used to grow them, become invaluable history lessons, enabling children to connect with their culture in a meaningful way.

☛ *Provide learning opportunities for children and adults*

Community gardens provide an ideal setting for learning activities. As every gardener knows, plants teach lessons in every season. And that's only the beginning. Gardens can host after-school workshops for teens and seniors, and weekend events for children, parents, and caregivers. Cooperative extension, garden clubs, and ecology organizations can offer classes on herbs, composting, landscaping, and other garden topics.

Gardens can also sponsor and host job training, workshops in resume writing, GED and even college credit classes. They provide a site for self-help programs, such as welfare-to-work support groups.

Informal learning opportunities in the garden are equally valuable. Community gardens give people an opportunity to teach what they know. Experienced gardeners can share their skills with others in the community. Young people can research topics and make presentations to the group on a wide range of issues.

☛ *Partner with schools*

The linkage between schools and community gardens is particularly important. Schools can 'adopt' plots in the garden, easing pressure on crowded inner city playgrounds and opening the stimulating world of active experiential learning to the children. Learning comes to life in

the garden, which becomes a splendid outdoor classroom far more engaging than the dated textbooks and decaying chalkboards of many urban schools.

Some successful garden programs link participation to academic performance. But community gardeners must ensure these high standards do not become yet another discouraging barrier. Gardens that choose academic requirements for youth are honor bound to provide support, tutoring, and counseling to help young gardeners succeed. High standards must also mean a helping hand and an open heart.

☛ *Enhance connections between families and support services*

Community gardens serve as contact points between community support services and neighborhood members. For example, some gardens provide childcare services. Community health organizations use community gardens as a site for outreach and education activities, such as setting up blood pressure screening booths at garden events. Juvenile justice programs in some cities are achieving promising results by placing at-risk youth in garden-based mentoring programs.

☛ *Schedule events so families can attend*

Garden groups are wise to schedule classes and meeting times that are practical and convenient for working people. This is especially true for parents and caregivers, who also need childcare arrangements to be able to fully participate in meetings or classes.

☛ *Include nutrition education*

Vegetables, fruits, and herbs from community gardens nourish gardeners and neighbors with fresh-off-the-vine produce while reducing family food costs. Nutrition education adds another benefit, demonstrating fun new ways to cook vegetables as it teaches families how garden crops can improve health. Families rediscover the art of cooking by the seasons to take advantage of delicious freshly harvested produce.

Nutrition education helps families develop a taste for unfamiliar but nutritious vegetables. To be most effective, nutrition educators must educate themselves about customs, foods, cooking techniques, and teaching methods that are culturally appropriate for the gardeners. The pay off is often delicious culinary and cultural discoveries for the educators and gardeners alike. In fact, community gardens are an appealing location for local chefs to offer cooking demonstrations using fresh garden produce. This is one very palatable way to encourage links between the garden and the community.



The Edible Schoolyard: Redefining the school garden

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA - The Edible Schoolyard, at Berkeley's Martin Luther King Middle School, has no straight rows of radishes, no chain link fences, no boxy raised beds. In this school garden, things are different. A rustic wooden arch, overgrown with kiwi and scarlet runner beans, frames a view of San Francisco Bay sparkling in the distance. Paths lined by snapdragons and poppies meander through a multi-hued living quilt of vegetables, herbs, flowers and fruit trees. Just five years ago, this was a neglected vacant lot of cracked blacktop and strug-



gling patches of bermudagrass. M.L. King's students have transformed a chunk of urban wasteland into a school garden where children, learning and community-building flourish as vigorously as the healthy green broccoli and brilliant red zinnias.

Alice Waters, founder of Berkeley's world famous Chez Panisse restaurant, planted the seed for the Edible Schoolyard. Every day, driving to work, Waters passed Martin Luther King's rundown buildings and bleak landscaping. After mentioning the school in an interview, Waters got a phone call from King principal Neil Smith. Together, they set to work to improve the situation. From the beginning, Water's unique sensibilities and creativity helped shape the project.

'From the garden, and the kitchen, and the table, you learn empathy -- for each other and for all of creation,' Waters believes. 'You learn compassion and you learn patience and self-discipline. A curriculum that teaches these lessons gives children an orientation to the future -- it can give them hope.'

Waters and Smith recruited allies, beginning with the school's dedicated and talented faculty.

The Center For Ecoliteracy, lead by founder Fritjof Capra, offered support and inspiration. The project found an ideal first garden manager in David Hawkins, a music-loving Englishman with a passion for treating every child with respect. Hawkins is quick to point out that the people who deserve most credit for the Edible Schoolyard's success - its Galileo's, George Washington Carver's, Rachel Carson's and Gertrude Jekyll's -- are the sixth, seventh and eighth graders of King Middle School.

Creating with children

With characteristic wry humor, Hawkins says his major contribution to the project was keeping eager landscape architects at bay so the children could have the opportunity learn and create for themselves. Hawkins says the garden's appealingly organic design, largely created by the children, parallels the natural curves of traditional agricultural systems.

'When we first laid out the beds, we took a stake each and joined in a human chain to enfold the area of the bed,' Hawkins recalls. 'We passed around a hammer to knock in the stake, and that formed the basis of our first shape.'

'Over time, students have taken 'ownership' of the garden,' Hawkins says. 'Vandalism and littering are minimal. The care and involvement of the students shows itself in many ways: in the level of work on many small details of the garden and in the observations the students make. Students have brought plants from home or even purchased them to contribute to the garden.'

'There is no fence around the garden and the disadvantages of occasional minor vandalism are far outweighed by the value of community access,' Hawkins says. 'The garden has firmly established itself as a place grounded in the ecosystem and the human community of Berkeley.'

'People bring their visitors from out of town, alumni and parents from King stop by, families come to enjoy the garden and unattached teenagers hang out in the garden,' Hawkins says.

Each year, some 40 community volunteers work with students in the garden on a regular basis. 'A woman who brings her baby to work in the garden is especially popular.'

The Edible Schoolyard holds regular trainings for new volunteers and hosts an annual volunteer appreciation tea.

Working outdoors in the garden alongside volunteers of all ages contrasts sharply with conventional middle school experience. Hawkins points out that the Edible Schoolyard is not like a classroom where a teacher can strictly enforce rules of acceptable behavior, nor like the street where 'lack of community leaves young people with a liberty that easily turns to license.' He sees the garden as 'a valuable intermediate place in terms of testing the possibilities of freedom, responsibility and learning some realities about the human situation on the earth.'

Students across the academic spectrum, from valedictorians to kids struggling just to make it through to high school, respond positively to the Edible Schoolyard and the enlightened philosophy that shapes the garden. When a reporter asked a King graduate what he had enjoyed most about the

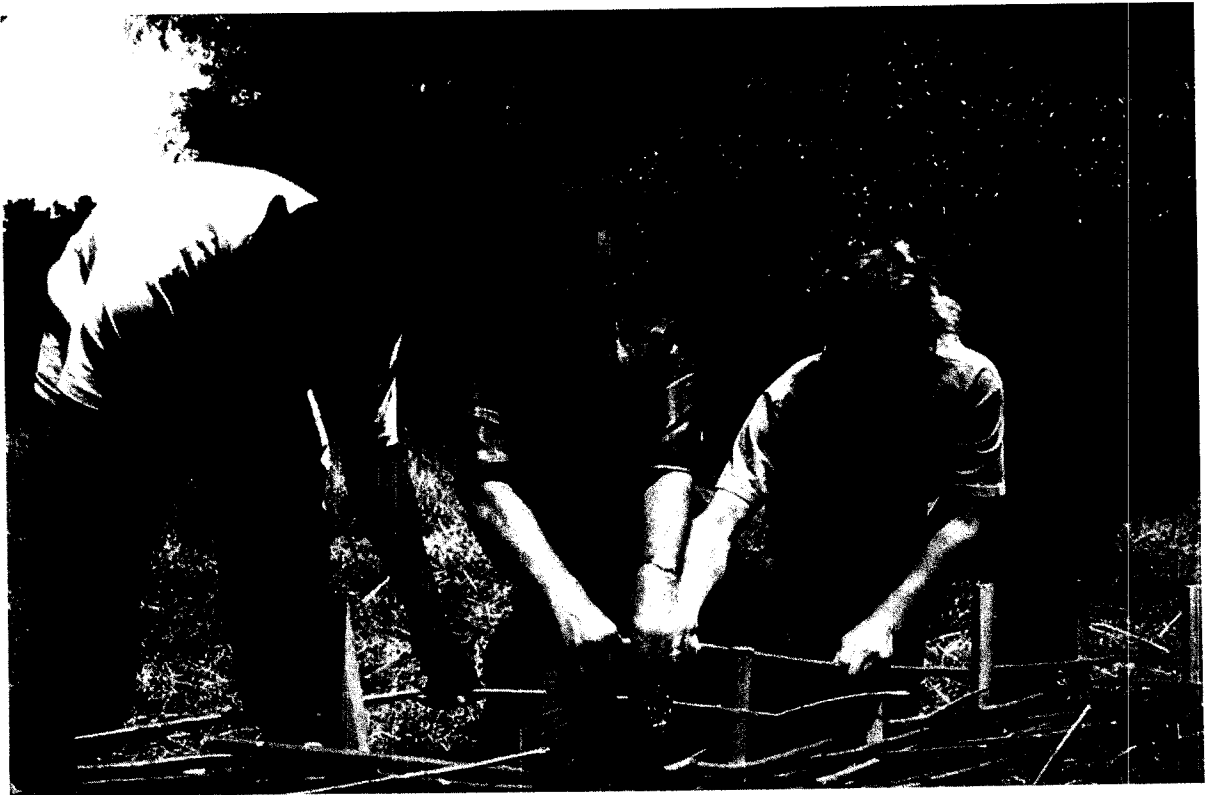
Edible Schoolyard, the boy replied, 'It was the way the adults treated us.'

Stewardship and creativity

The Edible Schoolyard relishes creative recycling. The garden's sturdy and much used propagating table was fashioned from a discarded wrestling mat box. Hawkins and his students created much of the garden's inviting hardscape from chunks of broken concrete. The Ramada, an enchantingly jumbled shelter of branches draped with flowers and vines that serves as the garden's central focal point and meeting area, was built from bay and acacia branches cut by the children themselves.

'Cutting trees has been one of the student's favorite activities,' Hawkins says. 'But they have also been able to observe how slowly trees regenerate after branches have been cut from them.'

Soil building, composting, and ecological stewardship are Edible Schoolyard fundamentals. Students grow crops specifically to enrich the soil, in-



cluding fenugreek, clover, and fava beans (favas have also become a prized garden snack). The City of Berkeley has contributed 120 tons of organic compost to help build the impoverished soil. Students compost food waste from the school in a 'hot' composting system and worm bins.

'Through this process they experience the cycle of life, death, decomposition, and regeneration,' Hawkins explains. 'Students and teachers have come to appreciate the importance of humus and organic matter not only for increasing the workability of the soil, but also for increasing its fertility and the living populations of the soil food web.'

Experiential learning in the Edible Schoolyard is especially valuable, Hawkins believes, for students 'who have seen everything from a volcano to a total eclipse on TV, and think that therefore they 'know' about nature'.

'The first year, we had a surprise crop of wheat which grew from the straw bales we used as a mulch,' Hawkins remembers. 'This was the first time many students had seen the source of their bread, pancakes, and pizza.'

Although King teachers have created garden-based lessons in science and other subjects, Hawkins stresses that The Edible Schoolyard differs from other garden programs.

'We did not begin with, nor have we yet developed, a classroom curriculum which does justice to the project we are engaged in,' Hawkins believes. 'The garden is not a Life Lab kind of science demonstration garden, nor is it a utilitarian 'production' garden. In a very real sense it is a work of art, albeit not 'museum' art, but a living, collective work of art.'

Music holds a central place in the Edible Schoolyard. Hawkins feels the children's musical activities, including festivals featuring their own Brazilian percussion ensemble, are not 'tangential to the garden but a valuable enrichment of the garden culture'.

'Agrarian communities have always sustained themselves through the hard and uncertain nature of agricultural work with their communal celebrations,' Hawkins maintains. 'The cultural events are part of the glue that binds people together.'

Joy builds the garden

'Children and the earth must both be honored in the process of building a school garden,' Hawkins says. 'The Edible Schoolyard has the express aim of creating an atmosphere of conviviality, respect for each student, and enjoyment of the bounty of the earth through the experience of working, playing and eating together.'

'There are days when the squabbles over who gets which job, the tools mislaid or broken, the jobs imperfectly done, make gardening with 11- and 12-year-olds seem an impossible dream,' Hawkins confesses.

'And yet there are perfect days. At the end of a hot afternoon, cool from the sprinklers, with the wind moving through the open framework of the Ramada, and the happy chatter of tired but delighted students, all the elements are there: water, air, the sun, and young humans at their best. The magic of such days makes all the struggles worthwhile.'

-- Don Boekelheide

Durham 'SEEDS' garden sows intercultural peace

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA - Massive immigration is changing the face of the Carolinas. No longer simply a world of black and white, the American South today is a complex portrait of diversity, particularly in low income communities. In Durham, North Carolina, a community garden organization is stepping forward to establish common ground and encourage friendship and understanding between the newcomers and their neighbors.

SEEDS (Southeastern Efforts Developing Sustainable Spaces), organized in Durham in 1994, was originally set up to assist community groups wanting to start gardens. In addition to providing this support, SEEDS manages a half-acre demonstration garden adjacent to a transitional house for homeless men. When tensions in the community surfaced after a dramatic surge in Hispanic immigration, SEEDS stepped forward to provide space,



support, and skills in community organizing.

'SEEDS works to support a grassroots organization called 'Blacks and Hispanics are alike (BAHAA),' SEEDS Executive Director Rich Bell explains. 'BAHAA was started to deal with several high profile conflicts in elementary school, including break-ins, rapes, shootings, and a general mistrust between blacks and Hispanics. They use our SEEDS demonstration garden as the place where they meet.'

Several Hispanic and African American families now have plots in the SEEDS garden. BAHAA members take field trips together to the local botanical garden and other sites. The group sponsors potlucks, birthday parties, and Spanish classes for African Americans.

'Supporting BAHAA has meant the commitment of staff and of the whole organization,' Bell emphasizes. 'Everyone on the staff has made a commitment to learning Spanish.'

'Will, an African American who works as our garden manager, is a photographer. He helped create a documentary photo exhibit that tells the story of BAHAA and shows how the garden plays a part in their work. Will is now attending a language immersion program in Central America. We are also translating all of our garden signs and flyers into Spanish.'

Bell is especially proud of a small SEEDS-inspired garden in Durham started by three African American and two Latino families, joined by children from other families.



'First they built a garden, then they were worried about traffic in the street and no place for children to play, so they built a 'Tot Lot' playground across from garden. Now they use the Tot Lot for potlucks and other neighborhood activities.'

In addition to its pioneering work on intercultural understanding, SEEDS has hosted an after-school art program, a market garden, job training in horticulture and landscaping, environmental education programs for children, research projects for college students, and service projects for businesses. A storyteller visits the garden, and The Boys and Girls Club sends guest speakers to talk about insects, birds, recycling and other 'green' topics. Working with the juvenile justice system, SEEDS

offers a program where youthful offenders are 'sentenced' to read environmental stories aloud to children in a SEEDS community garden summer program.

'The children learn about environmental issues, and so do the teens,' explains Bell. 'They explore the garden environment together. They care about each other and build relationships across the generations.'

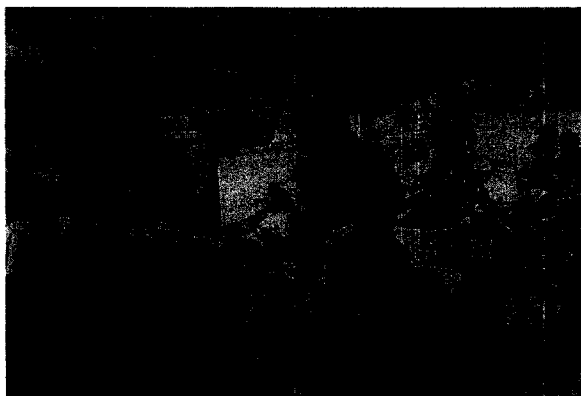
SEEDS is working in Durham to strengthen communities and mobilize local capacities for change. Bell strongly believes that success breeds success. SEEDS shows how community garden programs can become the 'seed' for community-inspired development.



Children and youth dig New York community gardens

NEW YORK, NEW YORK – In the stark urban badlands of New York City, a community garden provides a welcoming oasis where families and children can meet their neighbors and make friends.

‘Where gardens include a play space, the garden is a haven for kids and for parents and children to be together,’ says Lenny Librizzi, assistant director of the Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC). ‘I’ve watched children pick up a leaf or worm and say ‘Look what I found!’ and the parents will explain what it is. It gives parents an opportunity to teach their children. Also, when parents bring their kids into the garden, the



children become friends and then the parents become friends.’

New York community gardens often include play space, such as a sandbox or simply a place for kids to dig. Some also reserve plots for children. In many New York neighborhoods, apartments are too small to hold large family gatherings, so families come out to community gardens for gatherings, barbecues, and birthday parties. Responding to the needs of the community, many New York community gardens have added picnic tables and even gazebos.

New York community gardens are also a well-spring for improving education. Librizzi believes community gardens can work effectively with teenagers, especially when the garden is connected to a school nearby or located on the school grounds, so teachers can use the garden for classroom ac-

tivities, meetings, clubs, and to expand hands-on learning in the sciences.

‘An alternative high school built a greenhouse on the school grounds,’ Librizzi recalls. ‘Teachers and a guidance counselor made sure students were involved with the design every step of the way. Now, they’re beginning to market what they grow.’

A community garden’s contribution to education is not limited to horticulture and marketing, however. Librizzi gives a memorable example of how a community garden inspired teens to develop research and critical thinking skills. A group of students from local public high school, meeting for class at a nearby community garden, began to discuss the concept of ‘sustainability’, a complex and sophisticated idea that challenges academics and policy makers alike. The concept fired their imaginations.

What is ‘sustainability’?

‘The students took the idea from the garden and expanded it to the neighborhood,’ Librizzi says. ‘They asked, ‘If we’re going to have a ‘sustainable community’, what does that mean?’ ‘Are we going to be growing all the food we need, generating fertilizer to feed the plants?’

In response, the garden-based program brought experts to discuss energy, food, solid waste and transportation issues, helping to draw out the student’s own ideas. The group even created a scale model as part of their project.

At another garden-based education project in New York, a high school class is putting together a web site, working with their teacher to design a way to make and package compost.

They collect coffee grounds and pulp from a juice shop, manure from the police stables, and shredded waste paper from the school. Librizzi himself made a contribution to the project after students told him that the office paper wasn’t breaking down.

‘I found something that said using carbonated liquids will help things deteriorate,’ Librizzi explains. ‘So now the kids pour out their sodas on the compost.’

Ideas for inclusion: Creating gardens for all

By welcoming all, community gardens help build peaceful and respectful relationships among different cultures and people. Active inclusion also enables community gardens to benefit from the wisdom, skills, and goodwill of every gardener and community member.

Welcoming families, children, and seniors is one key aspect of inclusion. So, too, is creating a place where all kinds of people feel welcome – teens, members of different cultural and economic groups, single people, and people with disabilities.

To be truly inclusive, a garden must have an organizational structure that keeps leadership and decision making open to everyone.

Creating and maintaining such an open organization, one that empowers and truly listens to all members, is neither easy nor always the most 'efficient' process for short-term decision making. Over the long run, however, the garden and the community benefit.

Each person, young or old, represents a unique resource. There's no telling who'll have the right stuff to deal with a recalcitrant city bureaucrat, cope with an outbreak of cucumber beetles, or bring a smile to the face of an elderly gardener after a hot afternoon of weeding.

Design for inclusion

The physical design of a community garden makes an enormous difference in how inclusive and welcoming the garden feels to gardeners and visitors.

Older gardeners and people with disabilities need special consideration in garden design. Books like *The Enabling Garden* by Gene Rothert, president of the American Horticultural Therapy Association, provide helpful ideas for creating barrier-free gardens.

Groups active in the garden may have cultural traditions that help them feel more at home, traditions that also enrich the entire garden. In many community gardens, for example, Hispanic immigrants have created garden 'casitas' (literally 'little houses') that serve as a social focus as well as a place for garden storage.

Explore different forms of inclusion

Encouraging inclusion means thinking beyond the tradition of individual community vegetable gardens. Inclusion calls for flexibility, creativity and being mindful of the entire community. Some successful programs intentionally set up garden projects designed to meet the needs of a specific group. There are sometimes good reasons to set aside an area, or even a separate garden, for wheelchair access, purely organic gardening, or children's activities.

Specialized garden areas offer opportunities to bring communities together. For instance, a garden for seniors can recruit youth to help with 'heavy work' and seniors can serve as volunteer mentors in youth gardens. Garden organizations can also provide opportunities for gardeners from different garden sites to gather for social events and to swap information and ideas.

Notice who is missing

Successful community gardens around the country boast a bumper crop of stories about the wonderful contributions made by families, children, youth and elders from a rainbow of cultures and backgrounds.

In spite of this, community gardeners frequently tend to seek out people 'like themselves'. Working with friends or family members, and not having to cope with language and cultural differences, takes less effort than reaching out to newcomers and strangers.

Organizers and gardeners must recognize this pattern and work intentionally to encourage inclusion and give everyone a voice. In a practical sense, in the modern multilingual world, this may involve finding people who can serve as translators.

The American motto is 'e pluribus unum', to create one from many, to create strength from diversity. For community garden programs, located in some of America's most diverse neighborhoods, the challenge is to make this not simply a motto but an inspiring reality.

IV. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

'As an urban economic activity, agriculture has attractive attributes. It creates jobs at low capital investment. It is a basic industry that stimulates growth in forward and backward links. ...It altogether increases the size of the urban economic pie.'

Jac Smit, *The Prospect for Urban Agriculture*

'Agriculture may be an essential component of any plan to create sustainable urban communities. It may be the most powerful and readily accessible tool we have to close the nutrient, carbon, and pollution loops that are currently wide open and potentially devastating to our urban communities.'

Greg Watson, Boston, Massachusetts

Informal enterprises pop up like dandelions in community gardens. Most of the time, this is entrepreneurship on a very modest scale - a couple of grandmothers swapping herbs or a teenager selling a few surplus tomatoes to the neighbors - but economics and gardening do go back together a long way in human history. Given this ancient link, do community gardens have the potential to become powerful catalysts for economic development in low-income neighborhoods?

The short answer is 'Sometimes', based on the successes and failures of community garden organizations which have sponsored economic development programs. In fact, some communities are now creating garden programs with economic development as their specific focus. But, as veteran community garden organizer Jack Hale puts it, economic development projects require patience and maddeningly hard work, with no guarantee of success.

Setting up effective economic development programs in community gardens involves a lot more than seeking a fair price for a basket of cucumbers. Community gardens can indeed help transform the economics of impoverished communities, but only if garden groups recognize that the true bottom line for community economic development is improving the skills, prospects, and economic security of individuals and communities, not simply making a profit.

This does not mean that businesses and business people have no business in community gardens. On the contrary, the business world has excellent tools for improving garden-based community economic development projects. People with business expertise can provide invaluable guidance to help garden organizations keep a balanced budget and set a good financial example for the neighborhood.



COMMUNITY BUILDING PRINCIPLES

Build social capital

Economic development programs must build 'social capital' as well as amass financial capital. Social capital refers to the value of relationships among neighborhood gardeners, businesses, educational institutions, government, and non-profit organizations. Garden-based pro-



grams act as catalysts to increase social capital by encouraging healthy community dialogues and partnerships. By increasing the number and quality of relationships among different parts of the community, gardens improve communication and generate new resources, mutually beneficial cooperation, and strong community networks.

Successful employment and economic development projects often take one to three years to develop. Typically, gardeners and organizers first establish one or more gardens. Then, over time, they add marketing and employment components to their project. Garden programs that include economic components must pay especially careful attention to community relations as well as to horticultural considerations and financial needs.

☛ *Seek expert advice*

The amount of advice a community garden needs is roughly proportional to the complexity of the project it decides to undertake. Outside expertise on business plan development can be critical to a community garden's financial success and security.

Corporations, government, foundations, universities, and community agencies are potential partners for community garden employment training programs. Working together, these organizations can help community garden groups package and promote technical assistance programs for new enterprises.

☛ *Diversify economic activities*

Many garden organizations are wondering if they can generate income from high value items like edible flowers or fresh herbs. High-value crops such as baby vegetables, gourmet salad mixes, fresh herbs, and edible flowers have been very profitable in a few situations, especially when contracted to gourmet restaurants. Producing and marketing value-added products fits in well with enterprise and job training. Value-added products such as herbal vinegars, salsa, jam and dried flower wreaths have also been successful money makers under certain circumstances.

These and other entrepreneurial options can become sources of supplemental funds, as long as garden groups remain focused on the goal of assisting the community and keep expectations realistic. Most programs will probably not be able to replicate the rare situations where urban community gardens reap high profits. Rather than specialize in one of these projects, community gardeners may be wise to diversify and emphasize their community's unique strengths and interests.

Community gardening groups around the country are exploring innovative ways to build business skills and generate income. For example, gardeners can offer landscaping and gardening services to homeowners, commercial properties, or the public sector, including parks, schools, and libraries. Community garden nurseries and greenhouses can propagate and sell hard-to-find landscape plants, especially native plants for increasingly popular naturescaping and environmental restoration projects. Gardeners can also offer (or host) educational programs, such as landscaping or gardening specialty classes (such as 'How to grow a salsa garden', 'Growing and cooking with Asian vegetables', or 'Soul food from the garden').

Traditional farmers' markets hosted at community gardens are yet another appealing option, with additional benefits for community relations. The same holds true for community supported agriculture programs (CSA's) sponsored by community garden organizations.

Due to the training aspects of most garden programs, as well as start-up costs that affect any new business, the money generated from sales or services is rarely 'profit' in the true sense. Generally, gardens can distribute earnings to gardeners or trainees only when grants or donations cover overhead costs.

☛ *Develop multiple sites*

Community garden programs are wise to develop more than one garden site whenever possible. Multiple locations increase community exposure, broaden participation and diversify economic activities. Having more than one location makes garden programs less vulnerable to problems stemming from land tenure. Multiple sites also allow gardens to take advantage of micro-climates and preserve threatened pockets of good soil in an urban area. Having several locations also helps decrease the risk of ruinous pest and disease damage to vegetable and flower production.

☛ *Model responsible business practices*

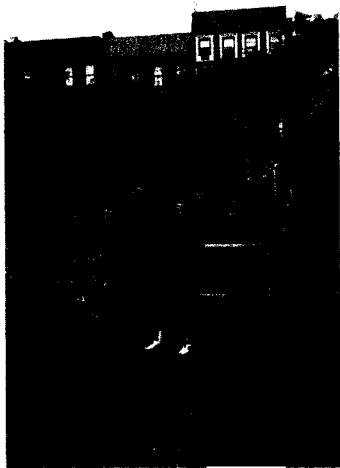
Although environmental stewardship and social responsibility do not always maximize short-term profits or accommodate the cheapest and easiest solutions, ecologically informed decisions are key to maintaining a strong and sustainable foundation for economic health and social justice. For this reason, it is essential to incorporate responsible environmental and social policies into the garden's business plan and day-to-day operations. In addition to obvious practices such as energy efficiency and recycling, is important to consider the origin of the materials being used in the project.

For example, community gardens may want to consider using only non-toxic and sustainably grown lumber for raised beds or garden furniture ('treated wood' is an environmental hazard since it is treated with arsenic and heavy metals, while redwood and teak are usually not harvested sustainably). Garden groups may also use recycled paper; reduce toxicity by using lead free paint and integrated pest management (IPM) techniques; use soil tests, composting, and 'slow release' organic fertilizers to cut pollution; conserve water; and avoid materials that come from companies that use sweatshop labor or prison labor. Garden-based education programs that teach about composting, water conservation and ecological landscaping plant seeds of awareness that will yield benefits for generations (and may increase garden yields). Garden organizations can also support local strategies for creating environmentally sustainable neighborhoods, such as recycling, mass transit, and toxic waste clean-up.

☛ *Cultivate a strong ethic of community investment*

All community gardens offer many opportunities for community investment. Community garden organizations may not be rich in finan-





cial resources, but they have a wealth of creative and dedicated people who are already 'investing' themselves in their communities by volunteering in the garden. A community garden shows how, by joining together, people in a neighborhood can generate assets that improve their lives. Ideally, this spirit can spread beyond the garden gate to touch the entire community.

Different gardening programs may have very different approaches to community investment. Some community gardeners may want to donate some of their harvest to food banks, or to participate in the 'Plant a row for the hungry' program. Other garden groups may encourage volunteers to work with nearby schools or senior programs.

Garden programs can also look for ways to support and patronize local business and services. They can form partnerships with other community organizations to cooperate on projects that strengthen the neighborhood - including those not related to gardening.

☛ Include grassroots fundraising in funding strategy

When a community garden group develops a funding strategy, it is important to include the financial contribution of local individuals, as well as income from any profitable garden-based programs. Such local and self-generated support deserves mention alongside funding from grants and other outside sources. Local financial support is a persuasive and tangible demonstration that the community values and supports the garden.

☛ Measure and publicize positive social impacts

A garden's social benefits to a community are an important aspect of the project's economic success. Community gardens, for example, have increased neighborhood cohesion and trust, and have helped improve race relations. Such social benefits have economic value, if only because they improve public perception of a neighborhood, potentially attracting investment. A successful garden project can also spark positive media attention, which increases respect for gardeners from neighbors, city officials, and media, which in turn increases self-esteem for members of the neighborhood.

Economic benefits also flow from social impacts within a neighborhood. Community gardens can increase the number and quality of neighborhood associations and coalitions and improve civic capacity among diverse community members. On a more personal level, seniors can take pleasure in seeing and supporting youth working in the garden. Through shared work on a garden project, residents can change perceptions of youth and of different racial groups. Residents may discover that people they saw as marginal are valuable members of the community. By reducing social friction and encouraging cooperation, a community garden can make a valuable contribution to a neighborhood's economic development.

Building people and saving lives in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA - In spite of the city's legendary hills and fog, San Francisco is a wonderful place to garden. The city's community gardening organization, San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners, best known by the acronym 'SLUG', supports gardens and environmental education projects from the Golden Gate to San Francisco Bay, including a community garden just a stone's throw from Fisherman's Wharf.

SLUG offers programs that range from supporting and coordinating over 100 community gardens throughout San Francisco to providing a soil testing service for area residents. SLUG also supports community economic development by combining education and concern for youth with successful economic development initiatives, through such innovative programs as SLUG's Youth Garden Internship and the 'Urban Herbs' program.

'We're not farmers, but we're concerned about what we eat and we're concerned about the environment,' explains SLUG's executive director Mohammed Nuru. 'We don't train gardeners or farmers. We build people and we save lives.'

Youth Garden Internship

The Youth Garden Internship (YGI) employs 20-25 young people, ages 14 to 17, during the school year. Some 60 young people take part during the summer. Consistent with SLUG's philosophy, the educational program is rich and varied. The interns learn about ecology, computers, history, local politics and community organizing, as they develop practical skills in landscaping, pruning, irrigation, and market gardening. As the education program expands, SLUG plans to add more extensive nutrition education, job and college placement, and career development. The program employs 1-3 full time staff. A combination of city funds, foundation grants and donations covers salaries. The program pays young workers an hourly wage.

Youth in YGI and other SLUG programs grow herbs for Urban Herbal products, flowers, vegetables and other crops.

The St. Mary's Urban Farm, one of SLUG's youth training sites, includes an orchard, beehives, a greenhouse, a flower production area and a wetland restoration project, complete with a windmill.

The project provides environmental services to the community, including a green waste chipping program, recycling, and compost education. SLUG also assists the neighborhood, including an adjacent public housing complex, with non-garden issues, helping residents paint houses, control rats, and negotiate with the housing authority for new fencing.

The urban farm is a popular destination for school field trips. It is also the site for public



events including a weekend farm festival and the launch of the Bike Aid fundraising trip.

Urban Herbals

Urban Herbals empowers young adults with employment and with the skills needed to participate in the economic development of their community. Urban Herbal products are made from local ingredients, with 25% grown by youth in SLUG programs and the remainder by local family farmers. Urban Herbal workers learn how to produce, package and distribute the various products and master business and marketing skills. Many Urban Herbal workers are graduates of SLUG's youth programs.

Urban Herbals rents a commercial kitchen and sells products wholesale to retail outlets. Other marketing strategies include wine festivals, gift shows, web site orders, and sales to city offices via direct fax orders.

A grant from the San Francisco Mayor's Office on Community Development, plus donations by supporters of SLUG, covers salaries for employees and SLUG supervisory staff.

Urban Herbals has been a learning experience for SLUG, but they have managed to turn challenges into opportunities.

In the process, they have learned the value of cooperation with other groups and individuals--notably local family farmers--and of heeding to business savvy advice.

'We've learned the hard way,' Nuru says. 'Marketing is a huge challenge. You can't beat corporate prices, so you have to find other ways of marketing. We were trying to do everything in-house, but we are now being advised to contract out certain parts of the business.'

'We tried to grow 100% of the food for our value-added product so that we could be self-sufficient. That didn't work; there was never enough supply. We have had to find suppliers, which became a way of supporting family farms.'

Economic development and youth

SLUG does an especially good job of integrating education and concern for youth with community economic development. Nuru describes SLUG's approach:



'The garden's natural setting is very important, but an education program for young people must teach things other than gardening. The garden can be a 'new school' -- a new institution for learning about issues.

'We build on the real things in people's lives and on the things that are happening right in the garden.

'We have an urban 'ag' person who works with kids to teach the details of urban farming. And they learn about other ecological issues as well -- preservation of wetlands, the importance of medicinal plants and native plants, how to protect the waterfront. They are learning to use computers and the computer lab to work on issues.

'It's important that they learn the history of different cultures. We bring people in to talk about history, to give a historical perspective on why there are people standing on the corner selling drugs. By seeing things in a historical context, not just as their own neighborhood's problem, it gives people more reason to hope. In addition, they learn conflict resolution skills, resume writing, the importance of community service, math, and how to read blue prints.'

Understanding patterns

'We bring community leaders to the garden: for example, the mayor, city council members and the school superintendent. The kids invite them and say in the invitation, 'We need you for about an hour because we have some things we want to talk to you about.' The kids make a presentation and then ask specific questions of the visitor. The visitor also asks questions which the kids answer. The

kids learn how to connect issues and understand patterns between issues.

'We also go beyond the garden out into the community. The kids go door-to-door in the community to tell people about the garden. That way we get parents involved and other elders involved. It's very important to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

'We give the youth a lot of social support, for example by helping them deal with racism. We

also track their school grades and attendance. You have to be succeeding in school to stay in this program, so we help them succeed. If they don't like the expectations we have, they may run away for six months, but they almost always come back for help. There are no restrictions to coming back. We just take them back. They have to agree to meet certain conditions, but they can come back if they do that. I get criticism for not having more structure, but I find it makes sense just to have faith in the kids.'



A gardener's guide to economic development

With careful planning and commitment, community gardens can be effective tools for community economic development. When a community garden organization decides to create or host an economic development program, the group must carefully consider the goals, characteristics and financial impact of different economic development strategies. Here is a thumbnail sketch of approaches generally offered by community gardens:

Job training

The goal of job training programs is to help participants develop job readiness and self-confidence, as well as to learn specific job skills. Job training programs are usually 'long term', lasting anywhere from 6 to 36 months. The curriculum typically includes basic job readiness and workplace behavior, interviewing and resume writing, phone skills, computer literacy, and entrepreneurial skills. Some programs enable participants to complete basic education requirements, such as earning a GED. In gardens, job skill training may emphasize horticulture, or making and marketing 'value added' products from garden products such as herbs, but garden-based programs are by no means limited to these 'green' options. Job training programs often provide counseling and mentoring to participants.

Job training participants earn a modest income. Government or private grants may fund an hourly wage. Participants may receive a share of income from the sale of garden products. Projects typically provide part-time or temporary employment (summer jobs) as supplemental income. Programs often provide childcare and other support services.

Job training does not, however, offer permanent employment at a living wage. At the program's end, graduates must find jobs or other sources of income. Most job training programs are not, and will never be, self-sufficient or economically sustainable. Grants, donations and government assistance are necessary to pay for staff costs, training and human development,

technical assistance, land and capital investments, and horticultural supplies.

Entrepreneurial programs

Entrepreneurial and micro-enterprise training programs overlap with job training in many ways but have a somewhat different goal. They are designed to enable participants to succeed in small enterprises they start themselves, rather than work for an employer. The structure and duration of these programs is similar to job training. The curriculum covers many of the same topics, but adds more specific business skills, such as business plan development, bookkeeping, marketing, and publicity.

Like job training, entrepreneurial programs offer participants a modest to moderate income. In the vast majority of cases, garden-based projects earn at best a modest profit from selling garden crops to the local community. Most projects are not economically self-sufficient. As with job training, 'outside' funding is needed to pay for staff, materials and other costs.

In a few extraordinary situations, entrepreneurial community garden projects yield a substantial income for a handful of people. These exceptions occur when community gardens are able to contract with expensive restaurants willing to pay high prices for fresh herbs, baby produce, and edible flowers. Even in these situations, however, few enterprising gardeners can count on long-term self-sufficiency, since their success depends on access to land, materials, and capital they cannot obtain easily as individuals.

Community economic power

The goal of community economic power is to generate real wealth (assets as well as income) within a community rather than to provide a specific number of jobs. This hopeful and inspiring approach is still in a very early stage of development. The program at the forefront of this approach is Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) in the Boston, Massachusetts metropolitan area. To find out more, visit the DSNI website. (www.dsni.org)

'The training workshop gave me the tools to let the community organize itself. Before I had wanted to do this, but the actual process or approach I took was really attempting to control the outcome rather than letting the community decide. In practical terms, this has changed the way in which we are organizing gardeners - putting decisions and responsibility more in their hands, trying to hold back giving what I see as the answer in order to allow the community members to arrive at the answers themselves.'

Crystal Henle, Salinas, California

'We never just hand out our application to people. We know it can be overwhelming, even daunting, for people who may not be great at reading or when English is not their first language. When a group comes to us with an idea about a garden, we visit, talk, ask questions for hours, walk around their neighborhood. The development of a relationship with that group is key.'

Kathy Bosin, St. Louis, Missouri

How can community gardens increase effectiveness? In other words, how do successful community garden programs translate good ideas and sound principles into effective action to build community? How do community gardens stay healthy and sustainable? How do they keep people actively engaged?

To answer these questions, community gardens around the country can draw on decades of experience. There are no cookbook answers - each community garden is different - but many sources of information describe successful programs and best practices.

Empowering people and training them are key strategies for increasing the effectiveness. By encouraging everyone to participate in a wide range of activities and to take on new roles, community gardens can integrate the opportunity to learn and grow into every aspect of garden organization and management. Even before the garden begins, during the application process and during planning, there are numerous opportunities to build knowledge and skills. Training can help build skills and enlarge perspectives. Many garden programs hold workshops and classes for members and for the community, covering topics from composting to public speaking.

Reducing isolation is another way to increase effectiveness. This means increasing a sense of solidarity among the gardeners within the group, as well as getting out the word to the larger community through effective publicity. Community gardens can offer everyone, not just official or unofficial leaders, an opportunity to represent the garden to other community groups and to speak in public. In addition, garden groups can actively promote community gardening as a tool for community development, reaching out to organizations and public agencies that may be unaware of the many benefits of gardening.



☛ *Communicate with other community groups*

The community garden movement must communicate effectively with other community development organizations, as well as with government agencies and the general public. Connection between groups fosters mutual discovery of common ground, common purpose, and common practice, and creates the possibility for shared practices, information, and projects.

☛ *Develop an effective application process*

When neighborhood groups or individuals approach community garden organizations seeking support and assistance, a formal application process can give applicants an opportunity to organize their ideas and goals. As applicants work through a well-designed application, with guidance from the community garden organization, the new gardeners build skills they need to successfully create and maintain their garden. The application itself is not as beneficial as the process of working through the application requirements. Some programs, such as the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Philadelphia Green, require attendance at workshops for applicants as part of the process. It is essential that sponsoring organizations provide counseling and support. Access to support must be readily available and, like the application itself, clear and easy to understand. People who apply to start a neighborhood garden, or to work on any community building project sponsored by a garden organization, benefit most from the kind of assistance they need to succeed on their own. Their success will increase the effectiveness of the entire community garden program. Sample applications are available from Gateway Greening (St. Louis), Grow With Your Neighbors (Dayton), Des Moines Community Gardening Coalition, and Philadelphia Green. [See *Resources* for contact information.]



☛ *Offer training and technical assistance*

When gardeners and organizers come together to learn, share, and socialize, they connect with people who share in a common vision. Gatherings for training, information sharing and mutual support are crucially important for community gardeners. These experiences benefit experienced leaders, organizers and staff as well as those new to community gardening. To ensure high visibility and attendance, garden organizations should actively publicize opportunities for training and technical assistance. In addition to familiar media such as newspapers, neighborhood association newsletters, and radio, remember to contact churches and religious organizations, schools, and other community groups.

Some gardens combine hands-on training in gardening with sessions on community organizing and garden management. This attracts a wider audience, allows participants to explore important connec-

tions among these diverse topics, and provides common ground for people with differing interests.

Community organizations benefit as much from training as individuals do. Of special value to groups are training activities that address community organizing and community building. The American Community Gardening Association also offers mentoring programs, conferences and educational materials focused on these objectives. in the project. Giving credit within the group, even in a subtle way like a heartfelt but quiet word of praise, is universal in its positive impact. And be sure to keep an album of flyers and photos that document the progress of garden projects, as well as all press cuttings.

☛ *Encourage research*

To better demonstrate how gardens can build community, community gardeners need reliable information on the impacts of garden projects. Program evaluation, the focus of the next section of this paper, is only one aspect of community gardening that relies on accurate data. Community gardens offer countless possibilities for research, from sociology to soil science. A partnership with a nearby college or university, especially one with a Science/Technology/Society (STS) program, is one way to encourage research in your community garden.

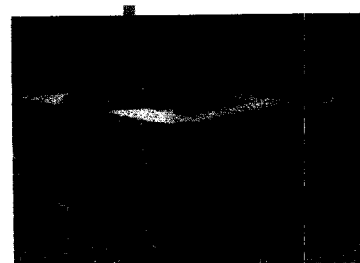
A perennially important topic of research is assessing the benefits of community gardening to individuals and families. Research might examine the benefits of community garden programs to the wider community, focusing on a garden's overall impact on the environment, democratic practice, nutrition, or economics. Within gardens, researchers might explore topics such as practices in the garden that support sustainability, cultural diversity, and effective communication in the garden, or the uses of gardens in education.

☛ *Facilitate visioning and design exercises*

Gardens begin with a vision. Group design exercises spark imaginations, helping a community garden group to visually define a space and plan its uses. For individuals who have never participated in a garden project, visualizing exercises that inspire with possibilities provide more than just a plan for where to plant the tomatoes. As they suggest ways to address community needs in a concrete way through the garden, planning and design exercises become a blueprint for hope.

☛ *Create educational materials*

Community gardeners, organizers, and coalitions need educational materials describing the nuts and bolts of building community through community gardens. Excellent materials already exist (see Resource Directory). Groups can find very good materials on the horticultural and design elements of community gardening, or adapt them from cooperative extension materials.



It is useful to gather and disseminate information on community organizing as well as on community garden planning and management issues. Include articles on innovative ideas and best practices in the garden newsletter. Begin to gather monographs and papers discussing research on community gardening. Be always on the lookout for ways to tailor the research to fit local conditions. Work cooperatively with other groups to create a community organizing and leadership development manual or curriculum.

☛ *Do a good job on publicity and public relations*

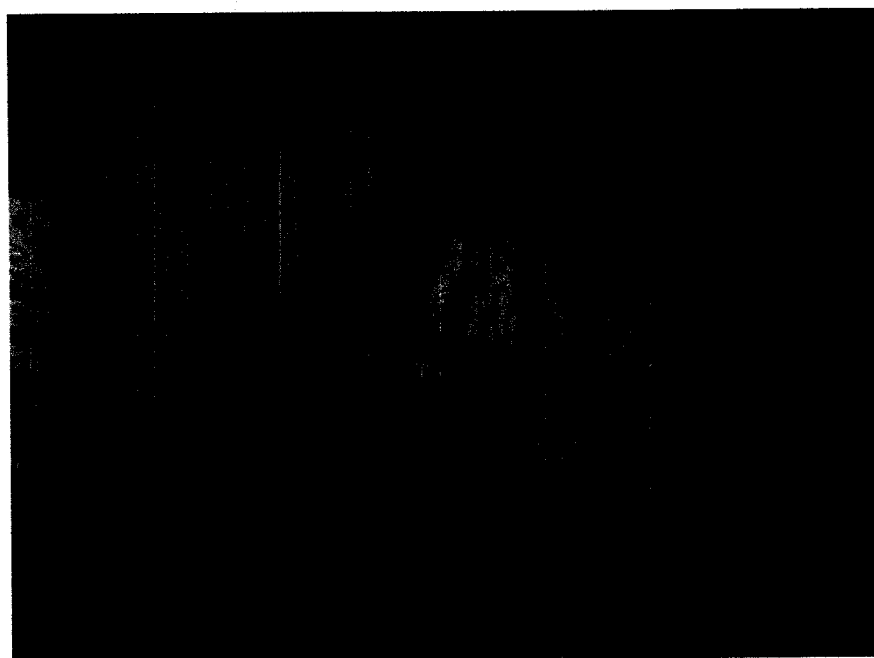
Don't take publicity for granted. If a garden is doing a wonderful job, let people know! It is especially important to publicize the ways a community garden is building and strengthening community.

Always cover the basics, like press releases and public service announcements, but don't stop there. Make contacts with local media and encourage members of your garden to make contact with key people, such as reporters on the community affairs or environmental beat. Invite them to garden events.

Even simple brochures and newsletters are useful publicity tools. So too is a website, if it looks good and functions efficiently. These days, it helps to have an e-mail contact who can send brief electronic notes to key media contacts, keeping them informed about community garden news and events.

Community gardeners can also develop quality publications and brochures. This takes an investment of money, time, and talent, but it pays off by providing something tangible to give public officials and potential supporters. Some projects have also developed slide shows, multimedia presentations and videos. These are valuable, although they must be distributed to the target audience. A speaker's bureau can help accomplish this objective.

Another kind of publicity is invaluable to any group. Make sure individuals in the garden, and garden supporters, receive public recognition. A newspaper photograph of a community member shaking the mayor's hand can raise individual self-esteem and engender pride.



Cultivating community 'From The Roots Up'



ACGA - In 1995, the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) launched From the Roots Up (FTRU), a training and mentoring program designed to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of emerging community gardening programs. FTRU's two central goals are to enhance the leadership and community-building skills of people who are involved in community gardening and to develop the capacity of community gardening programs to address social, environmental, and economic issues. The FTRU Program currently has three components: workshops and training events, mentorships, and a community building manual.

Workshops and training events

FTRU offers national and regional workshops and trainings on issues relevant to community development through community gardening. Workshop topics include community organizing, leadership development, and organizational development.

Workshops draw on the assets and experience of participants as a basis for learning and teaching. Activities are highly participatory, using scenarios, group problem solving, brainstorming, paired listening, and a variety of other tools to enable teaching to come from the entire group, not from a single person standing in the front of the room.

This style of workshop encourages participants to view themselves as a community of people who know how to learn from each other and who see each other as colleagues with assets and wisdom, rather than as a group of struggling beginners. This is also the spirit and the method necessary to build gardens and coalitions capable of eliciting new community leadership and transforming neighborhoods.

Mentorships

Mentors, who bring hands-on experience and the ability to work effectively with groups, provide follow-up support for groups that participate in FTRU trainings. A mentor, matched to a specific community garden organization, serves as a resource and sounding board for the group as it

implements decisions and strategies and uses skills that emerge from the FTRU workshops.

The mentor's challenging role is to draw out the abilities and potential of individuals and the group - to encourage leadership, not to act as leader. Mentors help gardeners and organizers fully recognize and seize opportunities. Mentors stand outside as well as inside the process, which enables them to pose hard questions to the group. At the same time, mentors are able to step back at key points, and to encourage local people to make and implement their own decisions.

Growing Communities Curriculum

The *Growing Communities* Curriculum will package the expertise of people experienced in community gardening and organizing. This tool for community gardening organizations, now in the planning and writing stages, will cover a wide range of issues faced by people using community gardens as a tool for community building. Each chapter will provide analysis, examples of best practices, and workshop outlines and materials. (Projected publication date: September 2001.)

No 'dumbing down' in St. Louis

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI - Kathy Bosin says a key to community garden success for St. Louis's Gateway Greening project is providing help during all phases of the community development process, not simply when a group is ready to start gardens.

Bosin developed a rigorous garden application process for St. Louis community groups that want help starting a garden. Groups are asked to find a suitable site, submit two site plans, identify community impacts, create a maintenance plan, and more. If the plan is accepted, they receive tools, technical help and support from Gateway Greening. But the assistance really begins just as soon as a group begins applying.

'No one is given this packet without lots of opportunity for help,' Bosin emphasizes. 'We've even sat with groups and helped them fill it all out when necessary. It's our belief that 'dumbing down' this process would be less useful than helping groups work through the application.'

Tools to increase effectiveness

Ideas for programs, materials, and activities

- Workshops and conferences
- Mentorships and mentor training
- Support successful programs and disseminate best practices
- Training and technical assistance opportunities to build skills and knowledge
- Draw on local expertise, such as government agencies, or university resources
- Promote community gardening in communities, organizations, and networks that are unaware of gardening's value as a tool for community development

Ideas for educational materials

- Summaries of outstanding articles or research
- Community organizing and leadership development curricula
- Newsletter featuring new articles as well as innovative ideas and best practices
- Community gardening manual highlighting models and best practices, as well as basic step-by-step suggestions tailored to local circumstances

Ideas for research

- Program evaluation strategies and methods
- Benefits of community gardening to individuals
- Best practices (for sustainability, diversity, land tenure, coalitions, leadership on non-gardening issues)
- Benefits of community gardens to wider communities or issues (neighborhood, city, nation, environment, democratic practice, nutrition, economics)

Ways to encourage diversity and intercultural understanding

- Diversity training for local gardeners
- Conferences and workshops on building diverse leadership
- Diversity training for local, regional, and national organizations and coalitions

'One of greatest gifts of this work lies in the hearts of people, the confidence they gain, and their friendships. It's not the weight of produce they grow.'

Rich Bell, Durham, North Carolina

It's easy to tally up the flats of tomato seedlings gardeners set out or the number of civic-minded volunteers who show up for a community garden's annual 'workday'. Do indicators like these convincingly demonstrate the value of community gardens in building community?

Many of the most important benefits of a community garden to individual, family, and neighborhood life do not translate so readily into numbers, graphs, and statistics. In response, community gardeners have devised methods and identified resources to help them paint the big picture. Using these approaches, garden groups can clearly show positive change in a community and help build a strong case for community gardens.

Accurately measure outcomes and document success

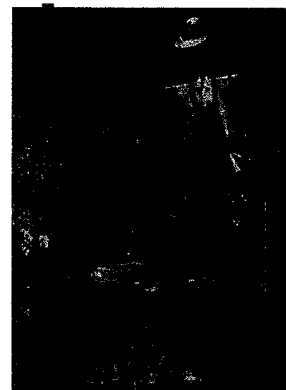
When a community garden receives a grant, the agency providing the grant understandably requires evaluation. However, granting agencies usually let grant recipients choose the method for evaluating outcomes. Community gardeners must gather, analyze and present reliable information about their garden project's achievements.

It might be tempting to dismiss such evaluation requirements as 'busy work', a necessary evil that comes with landing a grant. That is understandable, given all the other things garden groups must worry about, but there is a more positive way to think about evaluation. A meaningful assessment of a community garden program's strengths and weaknesses provides an invaluable tool for improving the garden and demonstrating its effectiveness to the public. Community gardeners nationwide will benefit if they cooperate to develop, share, and disseminate successful evaluation models and methodologies.

Ask the right questions

It is an art to devise questions that focus on critical areas of interest and provide data in a form that 'translates' to meaningful statistical and numerical analysis. Seek help from college faculty members, ideally those experienced in qualitative and quantitative approaches to cultural, social and economic research.

In the end, however, in participatory evaluation, the gardeners, organizers, neighbors, funders and every stakeholder determine the questions. The point of a community garden evaluation is not to test academic theories, but to gather useful information that can help make a community garden program work better and demonstrate the program's effectiveness.



☛ *Include social impacts as well as economic impacts*

When evaluating a program, remember to consider and measure social impacts as well as economic impacts. Social impacts include things like increased neighborhood trust and cohesion and improved race relations.

☛ *Utilize resources available through local colleges*

Academic institutions offer a vast pool of assets for community garden organizations. Professors and graduate students can provide expert help with methodology and analysis. Faculty members and students in the social sciences, geography, horticulture, landscape architecture, planning, and civil and environmental engineering, especially at campuses near community gardens, are potential allies in gathering and interpreting data. Pioneering researchers in the emerging discipline of Science/Technology/Society (STS) may be particularly interested in working with the community garden movement.

Different disciplines have distinct ways of gathering and interpreting data. In addition to familiar 'quantitative' approaches - everything from adding up receipts for vegetables sold to surveys with coded questionnaires - you will find 'qualitative' and even 'spatial' research. Qualitative techniques, such as individual interviews and observations based on anthropological techniques, can contribute extremely helpful information. Spatial techniques, from geography, architecture, and planning are also very valuable.

Although the disciplines mentioned above are the most obvious partners, do your homework and look around for interested university faculty in other disciplines as well. The English department may harbor writers who can do a wonderful job describing the garden and its place in the community, and the same goes for the Journalism school. Education, Early Childhood Development, Psychology, and even Recreation Departments may have interested faculty or graduate students.

Fine arts faculty and creative artists can also be very valuable partners. A vibrant mural on a cracked tenement wall behind the garden can provide more historical perspective (and encourage more community involvement) than a wheelbarrow load of statistics.

☛ *Don't neglect presentation*

No matter how carefully and fairly a community garden group does its research and evaluation, skeptics will demand to see 'the bottom line'. After gathering and interpreting the data, a garden organization still has an important job to do - to use the information to make a convincing case for community gardening and community-building projects.

At this crucial stage, writers, journalists, creative artists, and people experienced in publicity and advertising are especially important allies. Someone comfortable with computer publishing and graphics is also useful. It is not necessary to spend a great deal of money to make a case powerfully and effectively.

An evaluation gains power if it is focused. A short executive summary can highlight key points. There may be just three minutes before



the city council or planning commission to make the case for a community garden. Be ready! Garden groups may also want to develop short, informal (but informative) descriptions of their programs to share in one-on-one meetings with city council members, planning commission members, and other key decision makers.

☛ *Document the perspectives of individual gardeners*

Garden members themselves provide eloquent and persuasive testimony about a community garden's positive influence on individual and family lives. Answers to questions such as 'How has your life changed since you became involved in the garden?' and 'What changes have you seen occur in the neighborhood as a direct result of the garden project?' are significant evidence of a community garden's value.

☛ *Value every contribution*

It is possible to determine a reasonable financial value for people's volunteer time and labor. A garden group can set an hourly rate in dollars per hour to put a cash value on volunteer labor and the sweat equity of project gardeners. In-kind donations such as tools, plants, building materials, and raffle items are easily assigned a dollar equivalent.

☛ *Examine 'outside' indicators to measure impacts*

Local crime reports, census data, and home appraisals are useful tools in measuring long-term change in a community. City community development agencies and nonprofit groups, especially those focused on improved housing options, sometimes have this type of data in well-organized formats. Sharing this information with neighborhood associations and other residents groups is also an ideal way to build bridges between the garden and the surrounding community.

School teachers and principals also face a need to document effectiveness. Working together, garden organizers and educators can attempt to accurately measure academic impacts of gardens at the classroom or school level.



Desirable outcomes for community gardens

Community development and capacity-building outcomes

Emergence of a core of dedicated volunteers
Increased leadership opportunities for residents
Greater diversity of community and community garden leadership at local, state, and national levels
Increased mentoring relationships between adults and at-risk youth
Improved conflict-resolution skills in communities
Improved community building and organizing skills to enable effective activism to address needs in education, transportation, housing, food security, and the environment
Increased number and quality of neighborhood associations and coalitions
Programmatic and financial support for community gardening from local government, churches, schools, businesses, law-enforcement, and activist and service organizations in environmental and social justice, mental health, and housing and human services
Increased number of residents on community boards and serving as officers

Organizational development outcomes

Positive media attention, including awards and stories about members
Increased awareness that community gardens must encourage community participation
Improved skills that enable people to implement bottom-up development
Growing level of community involvement in the gardens
Greater ability to fundraise
Improved ability to face challenges like changes in staff or loss of gardens
Decreased dependence on outside help, increased reliance on local/regional resources
More effective outreach and publicity strategies
Greater respect for gardeners from neighbors, officials, media
Higher self-esteem for gardeners
Increased involvement of boards of directors

Health, educational, and social outcomes

Increased consumption of fresh food and increased food production
Family nutrition education
Increased recreational opportunities through gardening
Accessible gardens for people with mental and physical disabilities
Increased garden-based community education in public housing
Development of garden-based school curriculum and increased links to schools
Reduced crime rate
Availability of preventative health care (for example, blood pressure screening)
Increased number and density of social connectors (friendships and relationships)
Increased neighborhood cohesion and trust
Improved race relations
Neighborhood pride in the garden project
People seen as marginal are recognized as valuable community members
Senior's pleasure in seeing and supporting youth working in the garden
Changes in perceptions of youth and of different cultural and racial groups
Increased in-kind donations

Principles and success stories are one thing. Actually doing community organizing every day is another. For example, we can talk about honoring diversity, but it takes a lifetime of learning and mistakes and discussion to understand how to treat everyone with the respect they deserve. Even concepts that sound simple, such as 'listening' or 'reaching out', can be very challenging in practice; most people benefit from training in these skills and get better with practice.¹

There are probably a few 'born community-builders': people who creatively and consistently act to maximize opportunities for everyone to be empowered, and who understand that being too knowing or overly 'helpful' creates dependency or resentment rather than strength and skills. The rest of us have to learn these things, again and again.

We hope that *Cultivating Community* will generate discussion about what it means for community gardeners to focus on building stronger communities, and not just creating wonderful gardens. What do we need to learn and what do we need to remember? It is hard enough to build a garden. But the earth is so generous that most gardens will provide nutrition and beauty.

Community is harder. It takes great commitment to our principles to have the discipline and love to create community gardens that have the goal of empowerment for everyone.

Much is at stake. As families, neighbors and community groups learn how to successfully build and maintain a garden, we can all gain new skills and courage to take on other local issues and help build communities that are grounded in sustainability, hope and justice.

¹ACGA's *Growing Communities* Curriculum will contain outlines and handouts for training workshops that focus on learning how to apply the principles described in this paper (to be published in September 2001).



BOOKS, GUIDES, MANUALS, AND PERIODICALS

Community Gardening

Philadelphia Green Gardeners Guide

Philadelphia Green
100 N. 20th Street, 5th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19103-1495
(215) 988-8800

Community Gardens in the Garden State

Martin Johnson
Isles, Inc.
10 Wood Street
Trenton, NJ 08608
(609) 393-5656

Creating Community Gardens

Minnesota Green
1755 Prior Avenue North
Falcon Heights, MN 55113

Garden Leader's Manual

Atlanta Urban Gardening
1757 Washington Road
East Point, GA 30344

Growing Together: A Step-by-Step Guide

Sustainable Food Center
434 Highway 183 South
Austin, TX 78741

How to Start a Community Garden

San Francisco Garden Coordinators' Manual and
Resource Guide
San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners
(SLUG)
2088 Oakdale Street
San Francisco, CA 94124
(415) 285-7584

How Does Our Garden Grow?

Laura Berman
FoodShare Metro Toronto
238 Queen Street W
Toronto, Ontario M5V 1Z7
Canada
(416) 392-1668

"Starting a Community Garden"

American Community Gardening Association
100 N. 20th Street 5th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19103-1495
(215) 988-8785

"What Good Is Community Greening?"

David Malakoff
American Community Gardening Association
100 N. 20th Street, 5th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19103-1495
215-988-8785

Texas Community Garden Resource Guide

Bexar County Master Gardeners
3427 Northeast Parkway
San Antonio, TX 78218
(210) 930-3086

The Community Garden Book (out of print)

Larry Sommers
National Gardening Association
180 Flynn Avenue
Burlington, VT 05401



Children's Gardening

Digging Deeper: Integrating Youth Gardens Into Schools & Communities

Joseph Kiefer & Martin Kemple
Common Roots Press
Food Works
64 Main Street
Montpelier, VT 05602
(800) 310-1515

Life Lab Science Program

1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064
(408) 459-2001

Success with School Gardens:

How to Create a Learning Oasis in the Desert
L. Guy, C. Cromell, and Lucy Bradley
Master Gardeners, Inc.
Phoenix, AZ

MISCELLANEOUS RESOURCES

Assets and the Poor:

A New American Welfare Policy
Michael Sherraden, Neil Gilbert
Armonk, N.Y. : M.E. Sharpe, 1991

Black Wealth, White Wealth:

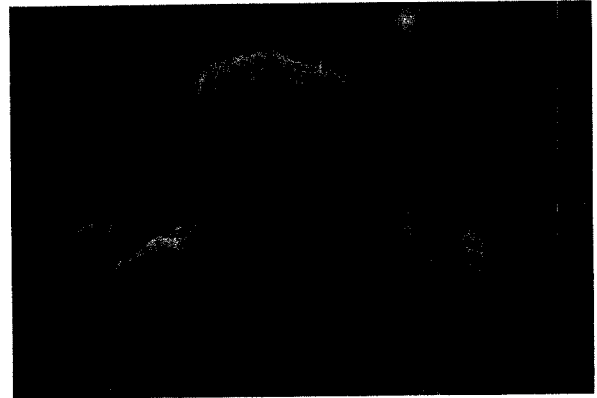
A New Perspective on Racial Inequality
Melvin L. Oliver, Thomas M. Shapiro
New York: Routledge, 1995

Building Communities from the Inside Out:

A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a
Community's Assets
John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight
ACTA Publications, 1993
4848 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60640
(800) 397-2282

Entrepreneurial Community Gardens:

Growing Food, Jobs, Skills and Communities
Gail Feenstra, Sharyl McGrew & David Campbell
University of California Agriculture and Natural
Resources Publication #21587, 1998
Davis, CA (800) 994-8849



Getting It Done:

How to Lead When You're Not in Charge
Roger Fisher & Alan Sharp with John Richardson
New York : HarperBusiness, 1998

Community (magazine)

United Way of America
701 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-2045
(703) 836-7100

Urban Agriculture: An Abbreviated List of
References and Resource Guides
United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Library
Beltsville, MD 20705-2351

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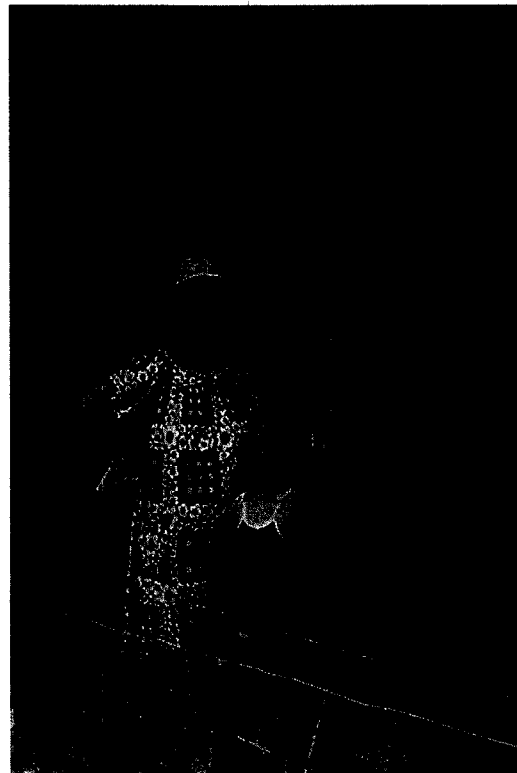
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ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION:

The **Annie E. Casey Foundation** is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. The Annie E. Casey Foundation was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY GARDENING ASSOCIATION:

Established in 1979, the **American Community Gardening Association (ACGA)** promotes the growth of community gardening and greening in urban, suburban, and rural America and Canada. ACGA is the leader in promoting community gardening as a tool for community development, food production and environmental activism. As a national, nonprofit membership organization of horticultural professionals, community organizers and supporters of community gardening and greening, ACGA is the main vehicle for networking and information sharing among groups and individuals in this movement.

Through conferences, trainings, mentorships, newsletters, journals, listserves, a video, and other educational materials, ACGA keeps community gardening organizations across the nation abreast of inspiring gardening programs throughout the country, local and national political developments, funding opportunities, and the availability of technical and educational resources.

For more information about ACGA:

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