



“Growing Community” in Community Gardens: Tips for Getting (and Keeping) Neighbors Involved

*** Visit: <http://tinyurl.com/FCGGardenStartUp> for garden organizing resources, including sample interest surveys, mission statement worksheet, garden guidelines and plot-holder’s agreements. ***

Engage members with personal invitations & meaningful opportunities.

- **Provide personal invitations.** Talk with neighbors and visit association meetings (neighborhood associations, PTAs, library programs, Scouts, faith communities, classes at recreation centers, etc.).
- **Understand and tap people’s gifts, talents, and interests:**
 - **Conduct interest surveys** to identify members’ skills & goals.
 - **Meet one-on-one** with members to learn what they are good at *and* passionate about!
- **Create opportunities for members to shape garden design, plantings, and activities:**
 - **Hold planning meetings** to define (or refine) the garden’s mission, and invite input on garden design, plantings, and activities.
 - **Use consensus-based decision-making** (discuss and refine proposals until the group comes up with a plan everyone can support).



Create organizational structures that promote support, accountability, & shared leadership:

- **Have a regular schedule of meetings and collaborative workdays.**
 - Regular scheduling helps people to plan to attend (e.g., “workdays on the fourth Saturday of every month from 10 am – 12 pm”).
 - Ensure that meetings and workdays are well-planned so participants experience the satisfaction of completing meaningful work. For ideas, check out “Steps to a Successful Garden Workday”: <http://www.lifelab.org/2014/09/garden-workdays/>.
- **Invite members to take leadership by serving on committees.**
 - Establish committees based on the garden’s goals and needs, and invite members to sign up according to their skills. **EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE A JOB!** For example: Plot Coordinator, Grounds/ Workday Coordinator, Education Committee, Communications Committee, etc.



- **Have written guidelines for garden participation.** These should include required work hours to help maintain common areas, and serving on a committee.
- **Provide an orientation for new members.** Share what support is available to them, how the garden is organized, and expectations for contributing to garden maintenance and activities.

Provide educational opportunities for garden members to build their skills.

- **Make workdays educational:**

- Assign experienced gardeners to lead work teams.
- Incorporate short gardening workshops/demonstrations (e.g., cover cropping, choosing soil amendments based on soil tests, trellising, weed management, etc.).



- **Link garden members to resources** to help them carry out their tasks successfully.

- Share information about Extension programs, handouts, websites, etc.
- Encourage garden members to sign up for the Forsyth Community Gardening Bulletin Board (<http://tinyurl.com/FCGBulletinBoard>) and attend horticultural workshops.

- **Set up a Garden mentor/buddy program.** Pair new gardeners with experienced mentors.

Identify and address barriers to participation.

- **Survey members to determine ideal times for meetings and workdays.**
- **If possible, provide fun, supervised children's activities at workdays.**

Show gratitude and celebrate success!

- **Recognize members' contributions.** Thank them publicly at meetings and workdays, in newsletters, and any other opportunities that arise!



- **Tell your garden's story within and beyond the garden!**

- **Track your progress and impact** with photos of workdays and events, harvest and food donation records, stories of what members & guests have learned, etc.
- **Share this story** in garden newsletters, with a display board, during tours open to the public, at an end-of-season harvest party, and other opportunities.