

# INTRODUCTION

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed individuals can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."* —Margaret Mead

## Benefits of a community garden:

### Community Organizing

- Increase community ownership and stewardship.
- Foster the development of community identity and spirit.
- Bring people together from a wide variety of backgrounds.
- Build leadership.
- Offer a focal point for community organizing, which can potentially lead to community-based efforts to deal with other social concerns.

### Crime Prevention

- Provide opportunities to meet neighbours, build links and trust.
- Increase eyes on the street.

### Cultural Opportunities

- Provide opportunities for new immigrants (who tend to be concentrated in low-income urban communities) to produce traditional crops otherwise unavailable locally and offer cultural exchange with other gardeners.
- Offer organizations an access point to non-English speaking communities.
- Allow people to work on common goals without speaking the same language.

### Youth

- Teach where food comes from.
- Teach practical math skills.
- Teach basic business principles.
- Impart the importance of community and stewardship.
- Teach issues of environmental sustainability.

- Offer job and life skills.
- Bring youth closer to nature, and allow them to interact with each other in a socially meaningful and productive way.

### Food Production

- Provide a significant source of food and/or income.
- Allow families and individuals without land of their own the opportunity to produce food.
- Provide nutritionally rich foods otherwise unavailable or unaffordable.
- Urban agriculture is three to five times more productive per acre than traditional large-scale farming!
- Donation opportunities to food pantries that provide food security and alleviate hunger.

### Health

- Community gardeners and their children eat healthier diets than do non-gardening families.
- Reduction in asthma rates, because children are able to consume manageable amounts of local pollen and develop immunities.
- Reduce stress and increases a sense of wellness and belonging.
- The benefits of Horticulture Therapy.

### Green Space

- Add beauty to the community and heighten people's awareness and appreciation for living things.
- Filter rainwater, helping to keep lakes, rivers, and groundwater clean.
- Restore oxygen to the air and help to reduce air pollution.
- Recycle tree trimmings, leaves, grass clippings, and other organic wastes back into the soil.

- Provide a place to retreat from the noise and commotion of urban environments.
- Provide much needed green space in lower-income neighbourhoods that typically have access to less green space than other neighbourhoods.
- Development and maintenance of garden space is less expensive than that of parkland.
- Increase property values in the immediate vicinity where they are located.

## What Is Community Organizing?

Community organizing is a process where people who live in proximity to each other come together into an organization that acts in their shared self-interest.

Most definitions include proximity, nearness and place as a key element, despite our society moving toward more and more “virtual” communities. In the case of community organizing for GARDENS, “virtual” is not an option. We are creating something physical. Close proximity is also important for environmental sustainability.

## Are You Ready To Be a Community Organizer?

This takes time! It also requires a commitment to involving all people interested, in a democratic way, no matter how inefficient.

Planting a PRIVATE garden is hard work. There are risks and failures and unpredictable conditions. If you are simply planting a private garden it is easy enough to find resources, good books and knowledgeable friends to help get you through the process of growing vegetables. But planting a COMMUNITY garden involves organizing a group of people and has a whole other set of risks and potential for failure. If you are planning for a community garden, building community is actually the first goal and the growth of plants is secondary.

This workshop explores some areas of community organizing, and this binder provides you with information and documents you might wish to use. There is a lot of helpful information out there on how to organize for community gardening – some resources are listed in the resource list in the binder.

## The Garden IS a Community

Gardens themselves represent a biological community. They are created to operate in ecological symbiosis, and they include many components, just as a community gardening group has many components. This workshop on community organizing will look to basic garden ecology as a metaphor for community organizing, drawing on 10 principles of a healthy vegetable plot.

# THE PLOT THICKENS

*Ten Principles of Community Organizing for the Aspiring Community Gardener*

## 1. SEEDS!

What are the ideas, opportunities, assets, and strengths of your organization?

## 2. CONDITIONS FOR GROWTH!

Generating interest in your organization

## 3. PREPARING THE SOIL!

Assembling a team and meeting together

## 4. PLOTTING IT ALL OUT!

Assessing the needs, establishing the purpose

## 5. FERTILIZER, COMPOST and MANURE!

Developing a budget and acquiring funds

## 6. PLANTING!

Presenting the vision and communicating with public

## 7. FARMERS!

Leadership and roles in the community garden

## 8. PRUNING!

Decision-making and direction in the gardening group

## 9. PESTS, WEEDS, WEATHER and other CHALLENGES!

Conflict in the garden

## 10. A HEALTHY CROP!

Volunteer management, engaging all people

## 1. SEEDS!

*Grow Out of the Ideas, Opportunities, Assets, and Strengths of Your Organization*

### Identify All Your Resources

Start with yourself: what amount of time do you have for this? Consider the long-term sustainability of the project and think about multiple-year involvement.

### Do a Community Assessment

Use asset-based community development, not problem-based community development. The ideas, opportunities, assets and strengths could be identified by you only, by a group that sparks the discussion, or by a church or organization staff who are thinking strategically. Note that sometimes opportunities initially arise out of a problem. For example: declining relevance of the organization in the community, a fire destroying a local building and leaving a vacant space, poverty and hunger in the area. Take the problems you see and look for the opportunities that are presenting themselves through these problems.

There are consequences of problem or deficit-based community development: participants internalize a sense of deficiency, outside funds go to service agencies and professionals rather than residents or participants, neighbourhood leaders learn to magnify and reinforce problems in order to get assistance, narrow categorical funding labels are reinforced, hopelessness rises in participants and stereotypes become imbedded.

### The following two exercises are helpful in identifying your assets:

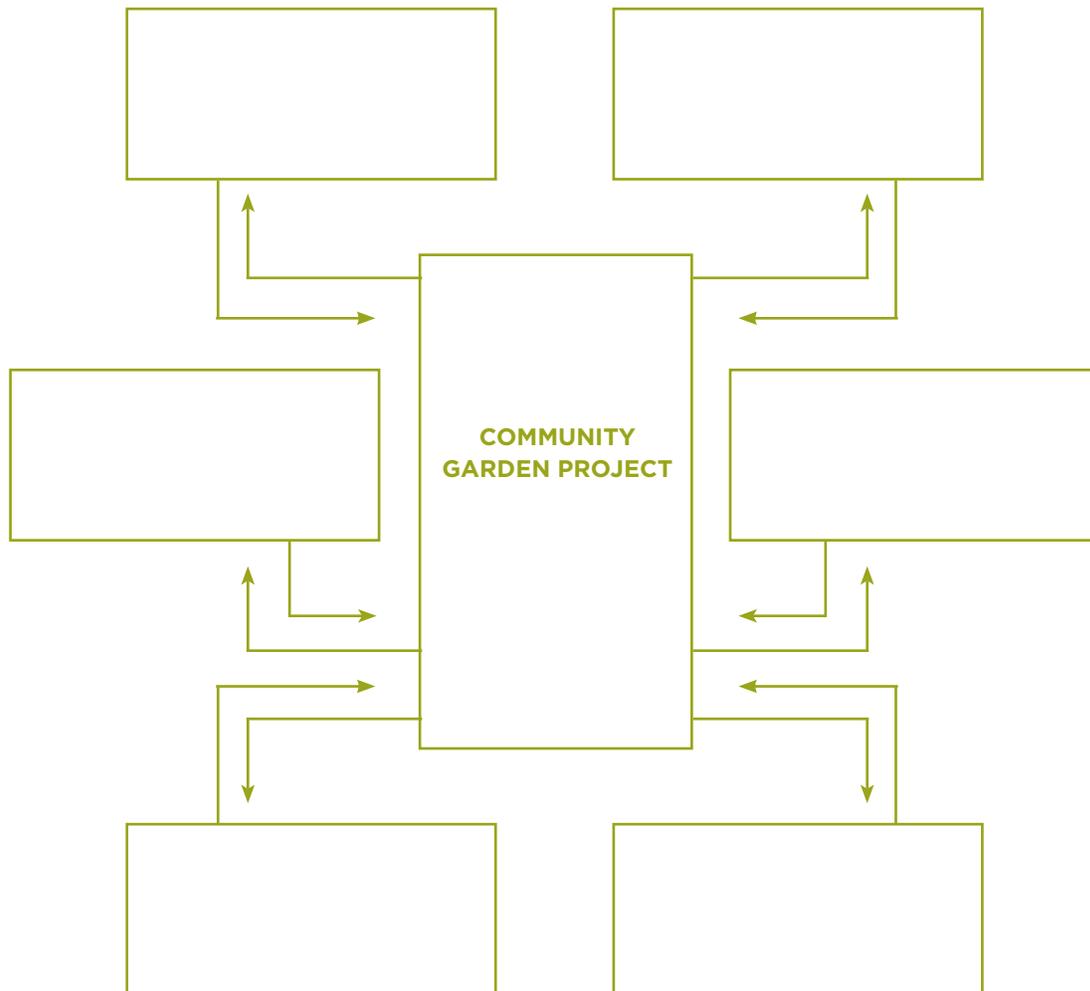
#### Brainstorming and Blue Sky Thinking Examples:

- Land, rooftop, boulevards, balconies, containers
- Eager and knowledgeable gardeners
- People who could use and would enjoy land/food
- Desire to interact positively in/contribute to the neighbourhood
- Programs and soup kitchens appreciate resources
- Seniors/youth/unemployed people have time and energy
- Newcomers have diverse agricultural experiences
- A kitchen is available for prepping foods
- A desire for sustainability, environmental stewardship among participants
- Supportive organizational staff and members
- Local businesses that would help with funds, materials, loans
- Public space artists that could be engaged
- Densely populated neighbourhood – people are close to the site
- Availability of public transportation
- Good visibility
- Grant money or missions budgets accessible
- Vacant city land
- Complementary programs of the organization or near it: daycare, day camp, soup kitchen, community housing, ESL classes, Sunday school or kid's club, singles group, Bible study groups, Alcoholics (etc.) Anonymous, 4H club, book clubs, guides or scouts, Awana, local homeschoolers groups
- Significant wildlife nearby
- Carpenters and handy people
- Scrap materials for building
- Home owners with land to share for site development
- Municipal support
- Local community garden networks and societies
- Water sources
- Fruit trees
- Good neighbours (or good fences?)
- Partnership with other established community garden(s) for mentorship
- Students (landscape design, horticultural therapy, education, etc.) with practicum time

# THE PLOT THICKENS

## Mapping Reciprocal Relationships:

Another way to look at assets in the community is by mapping the partnerships and the various ways that relationships can be reciprocal. By communicating reciprocity to your partners and funders, you will garner wider support for the project.



**Some examples of reciprocal partners:** local police force (patrols garden, garden presents an alternative to youth violence), neighbours (can allow for an eavestrough to drain into adjacent rain barrel, will see property value increase), municipality (can supply land or funding, will see tax base increase and crime decrease).

## 2. GROWTH

*Create the Conditions for Growth by Generating Interest in Your Organization*

*"Successful, long-term community development depends on the inclusion of those who will be affected by change as key decision makers and implementers of that change." —Growing Communities Curriculum*

### Communicating With Your Organization

An important part of communicating about your plans is dialogue within your own organization. This is where your enthusiasm and commitment will be shared in a way that ignites everyone's support, even if they are not gardeners and never become involved.

- If you are part of a church, discuss your ideas first with a ministry leader or pastor and ask to share the vision with the board, vestry, grounds committee, etc. Also include conversations with special interest groups that you plan to involve within the church/organization.
- Be clear about what the reciprocal relationships are. What are the costs and benefits to the organization? Is land required? What are the plans for funding? Will this use organization staff time?
- If there is approval and support at these levels, find ways to share with the entire congregation. You might do this at a membership meeting, or following (or during?) a worship service. Be creative in doing this so you inspire others and attract attention. For example, plan a skit or slide show; include a Bible lesson or a story. Some Christian groups will need convincing that this is a ministry, not an unrelated secular activity that is going to suck funds from the church's mission budget.
- If you are in a church congregation you may want to focus some energy on communicating through a sermon series or a weekly handout with interesting thoughts on creation care, neighbourhood outreach, and the significance of gardening in the context of Christian faith. There could also be small groups (Sunday School or Bible studies) that choose to take on a creation care or gardening theme for a period of time. You can find many interesting resources to help with this or to pass on to others by searching online and by checking out the resource page in your binders.

### Consider these things when you are firing up interest among Christian groups:

- In creating the earth, God PLANTED a garden.
- The first place God communed with humans was walking with them in the garden.
- Agricultural themes are used repeatedly by Jesus to teach and share about the kingdom.
- Stewardship of land is very important to God – Old Testament Laws.
- The Bible teaches that the right use of land creates justice for people.
- Creation needs to praise God, even in the city.
- Gardens give people a place to worship God.
- Crops are part of our acceptable tithes and offerings.
- It is important to share food with the hungry.
- Harvest celebrations are significant in the Bible, correlating with major Jewish holidays.
- Wisdom and Knowledge are given through agriculture (Isa 28:26,29, 1 Cor. 2:17).
- The Bible is full of God's provision of food that knits God to people: the Manna from Heaven, the Lord's Supper (Passover), the marriage feast of the Lamb, and many more!

See section 6 for more on communication in the community.

## 3. PREP THE SOIL

*Assemble a Team and Meet Together*

### Strategies for Successful Meetings

Successful meetings are critical for the long-term success of a gardening project. It is very important that meetings are effective and that they make efficient use of everyone's time. If your meetings are productive, you will have more time for the stuff that matters – like gardening!

The following was developed by American Community Garden Association and is available in the publication Growing Communities Curriculum:

### Elements of a Well-Planned Meeting

- Set clear goals for the meeting.
- Be selective about choosing a meeting site.
- Don't forget about childcare or other supports.
- Choose a convenient time.
- Schedule meetings regularly.
- Set up the room beforehand.
- Actively recruit members.

### Meeting Roles

**Meeting Facilitator:** Keeps the meeting on track, sets the tone of the meeting, makes sure everyone feels safe, understands what is going on, is heard, and stays involved.

**Scribe:** Keeps track of the essence of what is said, writing on a black board or flip chart so that everyone can follow what has been said.

**Note Taker:** Records the details of the meeting, and types up meeting minutes for distribution to all group members (overlaps with role of Scribe).

**Timekeeper:** Paces the discussion by letting people know when it is time to move on to another topic.

**Greeter:** Welcomes people as they enter the meeting, recording their names and contact information. This is particularly important when new people are present.

### Solutions for Facilitators to Common Challenges

#### A point is being discussed for too long.

- Summarize.
- Suggest tabling the question for a later time.

#### Two or more members are in a heated discussion.

- Summarize the points made by each member and then turn the discussion back to the group.
- Invite the two to stay after the meeting so everyone can talk it over.

#### Dealing with a “one-person” show.

- Interrupt with a statement giving the speaker credit for their contribution, but politely ask them to hold any other points until later.
- Interrupt with “You have brought up many points that will keep us busy for a long time. Would anyone like to take up one of these points?”

#### A speaker has drifted from the subject.

- Interrupt, give credit for the idea, but explain that it is a departure from the main point.
- Present to the group the question of whether they want to stray from the outline or follow it.
- Bring the discussion back to the topic by using the related idea as a transition.

#### A member is having difficulty expressing him/herself.

- Build up his or her confidence by stating appreciation for what has been said and then re-phrase the material with a preface such as “Is this what you mean, Mr. Jones?”

When meeting, promote community by keeping it fun and including food and time for people to mingle and interact. Find some interesting ice-breaker games. Insert jokes. Laugh and enjoy yourself!

For more on challenging dynamics in a group, see section 9.

## 4. PLOTTING

*Establish the Purpose*

Now that you are thinking about starting a garden, some of the first things you should consider are the purpose, goals and objectives of the garden. You should consider three types of organizational priorities:

### **Purpose or Mission**

This is a very broad concept of why your garden organization exists, and can help keep everyone on track. An example could be: "The empowerment of our community."

### **Goals**

These are statements describing what your group hopes to accomplish in order to bring it closer to its overall mission. Goals could include: "Increased access to fresh produce, increased environmental awareness, and stronger community networks." Dream big!

### **Objectives**

These are clear tasks that are meant to bring you closer to your goals. These should be short, have deadlines, and be specific to your goals. An example is: "Establish 30 garden plots in 2011 on the vacant lot at \_\_\_\_\_ St. for the use of people in the adjacent high-rise."

### **Questions to Consider:**

- Is there a strong desire and need for a garden?
- What is the purpose of the garden?
- What type of role will the garden play - food production, community building, environmental restoration, beautification, recreation?
- Who will the garden serve – youth, seniors, a special population or the surrounding neighbourhood?
- What type of garden would you like to create – vegetable, flower, tree, fruit, herb, or a combination?
- Who are the potential supporters of the garden – businesses, neighbours, schools?

### **Some Types of Community Gardens:**

- **Allotment Garden** – Private plots that are established by the organization, and gardeners agree to the terms of use. They may pay fees and may also volunteer time.
- **Mentorship Program** – For building social capital and developing capacity.
- **School Garden** – For outdoor education – classes integrate curriculum with gardening.
- **Entrepreneurial** – To generate revenue (through a Community Shared Agriculture model or a market garden) to support a program.
- **Charitable Donation** – A group of volunteers tend the garden and all produce is given away or used within the organization to feed others.
- **Therapy Garden** – For seniors, people with mental disabilities and illnesses or people with physical exceptionalities.
- **Guerrilla Garden** – Subversive. To establish gardens in abandoned spaces without obtaining permission. This is dangerous for a church/organization.
- **Ornamental Garden** – To beautify. May be a theme, like Japanese.
- **Natural Landscape Renewal** – To promote native plants and return an urban or industrial space to natural land, for a wildlife corridor.
- **Worship/Meditation Garden (like a labyrinth)** – To create public spiritual spaces outside of buildings.
- **Creative Play Space** – To welcome children into interactive, non-built play space.

Spend time in your first meeting(s) establishing your purpose, goals and objectives. If you meet regularly, refer often to these so that everyone is clear and is moving together.

Your purpose, goals and objectives will come in very handy when you are communicating with others in your own organization, with the public, applying for funds and evaluating your project. Make sure these are agreed upon by the whole group and written up formally for reference.

## 5. FERTILIZER, COMPOST AND MANURE!

*Develop a Budget and Acquire Funds*

Every garden requires a large investment of time, as well as materials and money.

One of the most important things to know when getting started on your garden project is how much it is going to cost. Having a projection of the cost will give you a good idea of the level of contributions you will need to obtain in order to begin. If you are applying for any grants to help you build your garden, a detailed explanation of what you need will most likely be required by the donor, so it pays to be comprehensive when calculating costs.

### What Will We Need?

#### Brainstorm

To get started, it is important to sit down with your gardening group and brainstorm about everyone's vision for the site. You may find that people have different ideas about the types of features that they would like to see installed in the garden, and that there may be some points that everyone agrees upon. If everyone would like to see picnic tables built within the first year of the project, for example, it will be important to work this into your budget.

Brainstorming will also help you find out what types of resources are available from the gardeners in your group, and what materials may be donated or loaned to you. This will help you have a more realistic picture of overall costs.

#### Determine the Size of Your Garden

An important first step in the process of estimating costs is knowing the size of your space. Map out your garden with ropes and take measurements. Know how much of it will be tilled, how much will be left grass and how much of it will be pathways.

#### Create a List

It is important to have a comprehensive list of everything that you may want to include in your garden, beyond the basics of plants, soil, etc. The following are things to consider:

- **Plants and Flowers:** Flowers, seeds, shrubs, trees, hanging baskets, plant pots, tubs and containers.
- **Materials:** Hand tools, larger tools, soil, compost, fertilizer, compost bin, fencing, slabs and paving stones, materials to build raised beds, patio paving materials, concrete and sand, bricks and path edging materials, chipping, pebbles and stones, wood chips, sod, cover crop seed, grass seed.
- **Fittings and Furniture:** Lights, electricity supply and cabling, water supply, irrigation supplies, chairs and benches, tables, barbeque.

- **Outdoor Structures:** Shed, greenhouse, gazebo, trellises, shade house/arbour, children's play equipment, animal pens.

- **Ponds and Pools:** Pond lining, water supply fittings and pipes, fountain pump and system, underwater lighting and bulbs, fish.

- **Contractors' Services:** Professional labour costs, general labour.

- **Other Costs:** Machinery rental.

Also, get an estimate of the expected revenue of renting or loaning plots in the garden. You may want to make the garden free to participants so that there are no barriers to use, but there can be advantages to having people invest themselves by paying even a nominal fee. This can be paid in instalments (though this is cumbersome to administrate and collect), or with a commitment to sweat equity (time put into a public plot, etc.).

### How Can We Cut Costs?

#### Rent, Loan and Trade

Rather than purchase expensive tools or equipment, see if there is anywhere you can access these resources for free or at a minimal rental cost. Look into tool libraries, garden networks or societies, neighbours, businesses, and even schools or universities. Offer an exchange, like some fresh produce from your garden. As a trade, let others use the garden for parties or classes. Offer gardening lessons, clean a neighbour's yard – these are all ways to save your money for other needs.

#### DIY is the Way To Go

Using the skills of your project team is one way to minimize costs. Rather than hiring professional help to do work like building permanent structures or tilling the soil, find out what type of experience people in your gardening group have. You may be surprised!

#### Trash to Treasure

From using old barrels as planters and milk bottles as mini-greenhouses, there is almost no end to the creative ways you can give old materials a new life in your garden. Once you have an idea, you can collect supplies from thrift stores, garage sales, flea markets, junk yards, etc. Think of where there is waste in the system and make an inquiry. The municipality may have many leftover ornamental plants and by talking to the right person you might get access to surpluses.

## Plant for Less

There are a few ways to reduce the amount of money you will have to spend on plants for your garden:

- Start your own plants from seed.
- Collect seeds from your garden for replanting the next year.
- Get cuttings or divisions from someone you know.
- Attend a plant swap.
- Check with nurseries to see when plants go on sale or if they will donate plants.
- Contact a local community gardening association to see if they offer plants or seeds free of charge.
- Check with local horticulture schools or programs – they sometimes sell plants, usually much cheaper than commercial growers, or may donate them.

## How Can We Access Local Resources?

### *Gifts In Kind*

#### **Local Hardware Stores**

Get to know the local hardware store owner or the manager of the local garden center at Home Depot or similar building supply stores. They often have bags of potting soil, mulch, stone, or vermiculite that are broken and not in condition to sell. They may sell to you at half price! At the end of the season, such stores typically give away seeds and other seasonal materials that they don't want to store or that have a short shelf life.

#### **Local Florists/Greenhouses/Interiorscape/Plant Rental Companies**

A local florist can often supply plant material. They don't have time or space to nurse plants back to health and may gladly contribute them to your "garden hospital."

#### **High Schools**

Borrow from your local high school. Some high school science teachers will gladly let you borrow materials from them that they aren't using. Make sure to return things in a timely fashion and in good condition.

#### **Neighbourhood Residents**

Don't discount the goodwill of the neighbours around your garden. They have a vested interest in keeping the garden in good condition because it affects the value of their property and gives them pride in their neighbourhood.

#### **Librarians**

Work with a school or public librarian to identify books for the

library that will be useful in the development and maintenance of your garden. This might include curriculum guides and general gardening books. Because libraries are continually updating their collections, they often donate used books to non-profit organizations.

#### **City Service Departments**

Some cities have programs in place to help community gardeners and provide resources such as land, tool rental, and utilities such as water and electricity for little or no cost. Contact a city council member to see what types of services may be available to you.

## Money

#### **Begin With Your Own Organization:**

Most churches have a mission budget or community outreach money that could be applied to a community garden. There may be funds in a buildings and grounds budget for property improvement. Find out when the church puts together the annual budget and what the process is for requesting funds. This may require a formal proposal and approval from the membership.

#### **Writing for Grants**

Grant writing can be an intimidating and time-consuming process, but here are a few basic things to keep in mind:

#### **Know What You Need**

Have a good idea of your general resource and material needs.

#### **Plan Ahead**

Most grant applications are due many months before funding will be distributed. Plan ahead to make sure you will have funds when you most need them. Grant writing is also a time consuming process, so start working on it well before deadline dates.

#### **Know Yourself**

Your gardening group should have a clear focus and mission when applying for a grant, as well as a series of measurable goals. See section 4.

#### **Research Funding Options Thoroughly**

Conduct research by asking for advice from other people who have gone through the grant writing process.

#### **Research the Grant Writing Process**

Check online for examples of successful grants, grant writing tips, and courses.

#### **Get Local**

Many communities have local community foundations that work with groups to match them up with local donors or foundations. To find a local community foundation, do an internet search for the name of your city or region and "community foundation."

## **Pay Attention to the Details**

Many grants include a confusing list of requirements, and it is easy to overlook the details. Have members of your gardening group review the entire application packet well before the deadline to make sure you have everything.

## **Solicit Letters of Support**

Perhaps a neighbour, nearby organization or local business has expressed great interest in your project; ask your fans to write thoughtful, detailed letters of support. While some foundations do not require letters of support, they will always make your application stronger.

## **Improve Your Chances**

Don't just apply for one grant – it is beneficial to apply to several at once.

## **Proofread, Reread and Edit**

Have others review your application before you send it off. If you can find someone experienced with grant writing, even better.

## **Try Again**

Don't get discouraged. Even if your proposal is not accepted by one foundation, another might happily accept it, or the same foundation might accept it in another funding round. If your proposal is rejected, ask the foundation why; their comments will help you make your next proposal stronger.

## **Other sources of revenue:**

### **Fundraisers**

Think outside the box: there are many fundraisers that can raise money while at the same time promoting your group's aims of community building and sustainability. Some successful fundraisers for garden-minded folk are things like, selling rain barrels, compost bins or finished compost. You can also sell off surplus seedlings grown for your own project.

### **Sponsorships**

"Sell" square inches/feet of the garden to individuals or get sponsors for whole plots. Think creatively: get a mattress company to sponsor "garden beds". Show them how it will enhance public perception of them in the community and let them know how they will be recognized.

Fundraising can be complicated for organizations with Canada Revenue Agency charitable status. Meet with a person involved in the organization's finances to learn about receipting, charitable status laws around fundraisers and sponsorships, receipts for gifts-in-kind and applying for grants. There may be some restrictions on these activities.

## **Ongoing Fundraising**

How will you sustain the garden in the long run? You may need continual assistance in the form of materials and funds to keep your project healthy and growing. The following are some suggestions that will help you with ongoing support:

### **Start Your Garden with the Assistance of Others**

If people, organizations, or businesses are involved in your project from the start, they will have an interest in continuing to see it thrive.

### **Share News About the Project on a Regular Basis**

People who helped you get funds to build a gazebo would be happy to receive a photo of the completed project in the mail, or to be invited to attend a party celebrating the completion of the project. Keep your supporters in the loop through newsletters, a website, or a list-serve. Make sure they know how their contributions are helping build a successful gardening program. Get the word out in press releases. See section 6.

### **Give Your Contributors Credit for Their Help**

Make sure you acknowledge who has helped get you where you are. Do this with a sign, something on the website, a reference in a press release or news interview. Seeing that you give your contributors credit may also help you attract new investors.

### **Be Open to New Ideas and Change**

Do not let yourself get stuck in the "way we have always done it". Make sure you let your supporters know that your project is flexible and evolving, and that you are willing to take suggestions and advice.

### **Keep Track**

Record numbers! They can be useful in demonstrating participation levels. If you start tracking your progress from the beginning, you can note change over time. Depending on the type of garden project you are involved in you may want to record numbers like: pounds of produce grown/sold/donated; number of youth/adults/seniors/children involved; increase in value of neighbouring properties; health impacts on gardeners; job skills learned and job-placement rates.

## 6. PLANTING!

*Communicate with the public*

Blue Sky Thinking and Mapping Reciprocal Relationships give you an idea of who all the players are in the community. Together with your group, assemble a list of people and organizations that need to remain informed in order for there to be broad support. Be sure to discuss the plans for the project with all of these people and organizations.

### Some Ways of Communicating with the Public:

- Door knocking.
- Handbills or flyers in mailboxes.
- Neighbourhood survey to garner interest, support or permission.
- Neighbourhood meeting, advertised with posters.
- Article in a local resident/citizens newspaper.
- Visit to a local politician's office and meeting with local neighbourhood association.
- News and media releases.
- Presentation at your organization's member meeting.
- Email list-serves.

### Some Help with Media and News Releases

Media attention will raise the profile or 'brand' of your project. Media organizations have to slog through a lot of media releases, but it is how they get a lot of their news. About 75% of news starts as a Press Release.

You have two optimum opportunities to involve the media during a gardening season: planting and harvesting. It is at these times when your gardeners will be most active and enthusiastic. Also, the footage and photos are vibrant and tell a great story.

You can send out one press release for 'just news' you want the public to know.

You should send out two press releases if you want the media to come to something. The first notice should go out about two or three weeks prior to an event and then the second should serve as a reminder one week or five days prior to the event. The media never RSVP. In a pinch you can send only one press release but with at least five days of advance notice. If you have a personal contact who works in media, connect directly with them.

### How to Write a Press Release

- The date.
- The event location.
- The attention grabber – give them a concept sentence: "New garden turns heads, changes lives".
- A small detailed paragraph explaining the above.
- A small paragraph introducing a 'hook' or two: A 'hook' is another angle on the story, or another interesting thing the reporter can go off on a tangent about. It can also be a quote you provide from a participant that makes the reporter's job easier. Just ask a few participants for quotes and pick the best.
- The contact person for the event or project.
- A short bio of sending organization.

Do your best to keep the press release to one page. Use plain text or HTML in an email or a PDF, never in any other kind of format.

See the appendix for a sample press release.

## 7. FARMERS!

### *Leadership and Roles in the Project*

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*"Done with an eye to equality and justice, community gardens can offer a uniquely positive and non-threatening environment that can embrace and inspire a wide range of individuals and communities into action". —Kendall Dunnigan*

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A community garden welcomes the participation and gifts of many different people. It can be helpful to outline some of the important roles that need to be filled in your project in order for it to run smoothly.

#### **Potential Roles or Areas of Responsibility in the Garden:**

**Coordinator(s):** While roles in a community garden do not have to be hierarchical and can rotate periodically, it is helpful to have a coordinator or two who have authority, ensure that all the other roles are filled, and that things are moving smoothly.

**Registrar:** This person hosts registration in spring, is prepared with the appropriate documents, a float of money if collecting fees, and an outline of the garden for allocating plots.

**Treasurer:** The treasurer keeps cash inflows and outflows balanced, recorded and safe. They may do this with a "shoebox method" or more legitimately with the organization's bank account and finance person. It is helpful to have a co-signer for all the garden's transactions to protect the treasurer from mistakes and mistrust.

**Events Planner:** The community garden benefits from having a social convener. This person plans special days for work and for celebration.

**Equipment and Maintenance:** Equipment needs to be stored properly and kept in good repair. This person keeps inventory and regularly checks for needed repairs or upgrades.

**Water Systems:** Water supply is critical for the community garden. This person ensures the proper functioning of rain barrels or taps. This may include reading the water meter, cleaning the rain barrels, keeping rain barrels as full as possible, making sure they are safe and easy to use, and emptying them at the end of the season.

**Compost:** A trained or knowledgeable composter keeps an eye on the compost bins, making sure that they are well-balanced, that signage for their use is clear, that gardeners and community members are educated about what they can and can't throw in the compost, and that the compost is turned regularly. When finished compost is ready to be used, it is divided fairly and applied properly to beds.

**Communications (Translation/Interpretation):** This may include coordinating translation and sign interpretation. It may also include contacting those gardeners that don't have e-mail addresses or phones to receive communications. This position is about making sure that there are no communication barriers for people who want to participate. Another communications role could be creating a newsletter or website for the gardeners.

**Community Outreach:** This is the person who communicates with partner organizations, media, politicians, etc.

**Mowing:** If a garden has grassy areas this person coordinates grass up-keep by scheduling a rotation of willing mowers. They understand organic lawn care practices and use grass clippings as mulch or in the compost.

**Mulching:** Mulching is good on garden beds and in paths. Pathways require care so that they aren't weedy or muddy and are safe and accessible. Garden beds benefit from mulching to retain water, prevent soil erosion, and reduce weeds. The person in charge of mulching may order mulch and train gardeners in good mulching practices.

**Art and Signage:** Gardens are beautiful and can be enhanced by local art. Art and signage can be used to educate other gardeners and community members about features in the garden. A community garden should have an attractive sign that includes the name of the project and a way for the public to contact the coordinator or communications person.

**Garden Monitor:** This person keeps a finger on the pulse of the community garden, noticing those individuals that need special attention or help, or who need a friendly reminder to fulfill their commitment to weeding. The monitor may work together with the coordinator to address conflicts of disputes.

**Security:** Every garden benefits from a vigilant neighbour who lives near the site and will keep an eye on activity there in order to curb vandalism.

These are some of the roles that might be included in your community garden plans. Some of these roles can be combined or divided, depending on the size of the group.

## 8. PRUNING!

### *Decisions and Direction in the Group*

There are many methods of democratic decision-making for community groups. Community gardens benefit from involving many people in decisions and setting direction so that people are empowered and committed. The following are a few communication strategies and decision-making methods to try.

#### **Circle Process with a Talking Object**

Give everyone a chance to talk by passing around an object (rock, feather, etc.) and only the one holding the object can speak. This helps to curb interruptions and encourage everyone to take an opportunity to speak. One challenge to be prepared for is when one person talks too long.

#### **Dot-ocracy**

In dot-voting, participants express their preference for one or more ideas among a number of choices. Ideas are drafted and posted (you may use Blue Sky Thinking for this), and every member is given the same number of dots. Generally, the number of dots per person should be fewer than the total number of ideas to vote on, but the precise number can vary considerably. Each person then allocates their dots as they choose among the various ideas. They can award an idea any number of dots from zero to all of their dots. More dots indicate more support, so an idea that someone feels very strongly about might receive all of their dots.

Dot-voting can be used to make a final decision or merely to direct a group's discussion to focus only on ideas that have widespread support. This process helps minority viewpoints be seen and heard, and offers a clear visual way to determine which ideas have the most support within a group. Also, it requires participants to get up, move around, and look at all the ideas, which helps engage kinesthetic learners.

While this exercise is typically done using coloured, adhesive dots, alternative "dots" can be used, including marbles, candy, post-its, etc. Different colours can also be used to signify the preferences of different groups (i.e. one colour for youth and one colour for adults to see whether the two groups value different ideas).

#### **Consensus-Building Line Dance**

After some discussion and presentation about two extreme courses of action, allow participants to situate themselves on a physical line (masking tape on the carpet) from one extreme of a decision to another. One individual from either extreme and one from the middle are invited to express why they chose to stand where they are. Allow some more time for group discussion based on these revelations and then re-do the exercise, allowing people to pick a new place on the line if they have changed their mind. If extreme people remain extreme, they have a visual of where the rest of the group is situated and they are asked if they would be willing to bend their extreme in order to join the group, even though they still feel extreme. Their feelings or opinions ARE valid and have been heard by everyone, but if they choose to join the majority they are also committed to supporting the decision and not being critical, even if they are proved "right" over time. This exercise also gets people off their chairs.

## 9. PESTS!

### *Conflict in the Garden*

If you've ever tried to grow anything before, you have likely been surprised at the number of roadblocks you encountered: inclement weather, destructive bugs and persistent weeds! You may think these are the biggest challenges you'll face, until you add people to the mix. Community gardens can involve a lot of conflict that can take up more of your energy than combating the conventional garden pests like slugs and dandelions.

#### What are some reasons for conflict to arise in the garden?

- People use improper practices - composting quack grass, not weeding their plot, fostering invasive species, planting tall crops that shade neighbour plots, using non-organic methods, bringing disruptive pets to the garden, not supervising children.
- Disrespectful gardeners that speak or behave rudely in the garden.
- Vandalism and theft.
- Non-participation in common maintenance activities.
- Refusal or tardiness in paying fees.
- Littering.
- Not planting their plot in spring or not clearing their plot at the end of the season.
- Treating common equipment poorly.
- Monopolizing rain water.

The key to minimizing conflict is being proactive with a very clear document of understanding that all gardeners sign every year. The actions that will be taken if there is a violation to the agreement need to be clear. The role and authority of the coordinator or garden monitor should also be clear.

In extreme cases, tension between gardeners will rise to a level that cannot be dealt with at the group level. At this point, involve another person from within the organization (church staff or executive director) or find a mediator outside the organization.

See the appendix for sample agreements and rules.

#### Dealing with Difficult Behaviour in a Meeting

*From "The Troublemaker's Teaparty" (Charles Dobson, 2003)*

**Clashes:** When two people start getting in a heated discussion, interrupt them to summarize the points made by each person and turn the discussion back to the group.

**Grandstanders:** If you have a one-person show, interrupt it with a statement that graciously gives credit to the person for their contribution, and ask him or her to reserve other points for later.

**Broken Records:** Paraphrase what a person has been saying over-and-over, letting him or her know that their point has been heard.

**Interrupters:** Step in immediately when someone has been rude: "Hold on, let \_\_\_\_\_ finish what she had to say."

**Overly Critical People:** Legitimize their negative feelings about an issue and then affirm that there are possible solutions or positive and successful models that can be looked at.

**Opposing Views:** When there are differences in opinion (even where there is no heat) you can summarize the differences and identify where there is common ground (e.g. "It seems that we can all agree on \_\_\_\_").

#### Principled Negotiation

*From "Getting to Yes" (Roger Fisher, William Ury 1981)*

In principled negotiations, negotiators are encouraged to take the view that all the participants are problem solvers rather than adversaries. The authors recommend that the goal should be to reach an outcome "efficiently and amicably." They suggest the following steps:

1. Separate the people from the problem.
2. Focus on interests, not positions.
3. Invent options for mutual gain.
4. Insist on using objective criteria.

#### Step 1: Separate the People from the Problem

Getting to YES outlines a number of tools for dealing with the problems of perception, emotion and communication. The authors stress that separating people from problems is the best option. The keys to prevention are "building a working relationship" and "facing the problem, not the people."

All negotiations involve people and people are not perfect. We have emotions, our own interests and goals and we tend to see the world from only our point of view. We also are not always the best communicators; many of us are not good listeners.

Think of the people you negotiate with on a regular basis. Generally, the better we know someone, the easier it is to face a negotiation together. We tend to view people we don't know with more suspicion: just what is "Bob" up to? Take time to get to know the other party before the negotiation begins.

Think of negotiation as a means to solving a problem and the people on the other side as partners helping to find a solution. Ideally both parties will come out of a negotiation feeling they have a fair agreement from which both sides can benefit.

If the negotiation feels like a situation of "you versus them", the authors suggest a couple of options:

- **Raise the issue with the other side explicitly:** "Let's look together at the problem of how to satisfy our collective interests."
- **Sit on the same side of the table.** Try to structure the negotiation as a side-by-side activity in which the two of you – with your different interests and perceptions, and your emotional involvement – jointly face a common task.

## **Step 2: Focus on Interests, Not Positions**

A simple example explains the difference between interests and positions:

"Two men [are] quarrelling in a library. One wants the window open and the other wants it closed. .... Enter the librarian. She asks one why he wants the window open: 'To get some fresh air [his interest]'. She asks the other why he wants it closed: 'To avoid a draft' [his interest]. After thinking a moment, she opens wide a window in the next room, bringing in fresh air without a draft."

The interests of the two men are the desire for fresh air and the desire to avoid a draft. The men's positions are to have the window opened or closed. The authors say we need to focus not on whether the window in their room is opened or closed, but on how we can meet both the need for fresh air and the need to avoid a draft. More often than not, by focusing on interests, a creative solution can be found.

In this example, each man has one interest. In most negotiations, however, each party will have many interests and these interests will likely be different than yours. It's important to communicate your interests to the other party. Don't assume they have the same

interests as you or that they know what your interests are. Don't assume you know what interests the other party has. Discussion to identify and understand all the interests is a critical step toward mutual resolution.

## **Step 3: Invent Options for Mutual Gain**

A common problem with many negotiations is there are too few options to choose from. Little or no time is spent creating options. Creating more options allows for both parties to brainstorm the possibility of a mutual win-win situation. The new option that both parties collaborate on is oftentimes the best.

There are four steps to generating options:

- Separate inventing from deciding. Like in any brainstorming session, don't judge the ideas people bring forward; just put them on the board, even if they are obviously inadequate. Sometimes, the best option rises out of the combination of lesser ones, or from expanding one idea creatively.
- Broaden the options on the table rather than looking for a single answer. Remember the men at the library? The only option they saw was opening or closing the window in the room they were both sitting in. In fact, there are many options: borrow a sweater, open a window in another room, move to a different spot, etc.
- Work toward mutual gain. Rather than having one party feel as if they won and the other lost, both sides can gain. Although every desire of those involved may not be met, a mutual ground that recognizes and serves the interests of both sides is possible.
- Invent ways of making the other party's decisions easy. Since a successful negotiation requires both parties to agree, make it easy for the other side to choose. This is where putting yourself in the other person's shoes can be very valuable. What might prevent the other from agreeing? Can you do anything to change those things?

## **Step 4: Insist on Using Objective Criteria**

Principled negotiations are not battles of will. There is no winner and you don't need to push your position until the other backs down. The goal is to "produce wise agreements amicably and efficiently".

Use of objective criteria helps remove the emotion from the discussion and allows both parties to use reason and logic. Objective criteria can be created a number of ways: from "traditional practices" to "market value" to "what a court would decide". Objective criteria "need[s] to be independent of each side's will."

Once objective criteria have been developed, they need to be discussed with these guidelines:

- Frame each issue as a joint search for objective criteria.
- Use reason and be open to reason as to which standards are most appropriate and how they should be applied.
- Never yield to pressure, only to principle.

## **Theft and Vandalism**

Vandalism in the garden may be committed by people within or outside of the garden group and can be extremely frustrating. It can raise tensions within each individual gardener and can produce suspicion and conflict between gardeners. Victims of theft and vandalism experience loss, anger and hopelessness.

Possible solutions and action steps:

- Plant low-risk crops and plant for low-visibility of high risk plots.
- Establish a well-signed “public pick” plot.
- Put up signs asking the public to respect the space.
- Use your allies – neighbours and local police.
- Use fencing around plots to inhibit trespassing.
- Deal with wrongs committed by gardeners within your group.
- Educate your gardeners about the nature of community gardens and the likelihood of some loss or damage. If you are working with a faith-based group, emphasize the importance (in most faiths) of caring for the hungry, and allowing for gleaning (Leviticus 19:9-10, Leviticus 23:22, Ruth 2:2,25, Deuteronomy 24:19-22).

## 10. THE CROP!

### *Volunteer Management*

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*"Every single person has capacities, abilities and gifts. Living a good life depends on whether those capacities can be used, abilities expressed and gifts given. If they are, the person will be valued, feel powerful and well connected to the people around them. And the community around the person will be more powerful because of the contribution the person is making." —John McKnight and John Kretzmann*

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Many community organizations engage a throng of volunteers. The organization or church that you are part of likely has specific ways of recruiting, training, insuring, evaluating, and recognizing its volunteers. As you will have many people involved in your project, find out more about how your organization operates with respect to its volunteers.

#### **Some important questions to ask are:**

- What are your organization's procedures for training volunteers?
- What does your organization's insurance cover? Note that you may have an off-site location for the garden activities.
- What are the requirements in the organization for people who will be interacting with children and vulnerable persons? Policies in this regard are for the safety of the volunteer, the organization, and the child or vulnerable person. A Criminal Record Check and Child Abuse Registry Check may be requested by your organization for every volunteer.

Be inclusive! Consider all the people that you might involve: children, youth, elderly, disabled, newcomers, and homeless people. What methods will you use to recruit participation that does not leave anyone out?

Once you have a good crop of volunteers, how they are treated will determine how they feel about their participation, how much time they will offer, and how long they will remain committed.

#### **Consider how to motivate volunteers:**

- Organize them well.
- Support them.
- Inspire them.
- Challenge them.
- Thank them.