

Gaining Community Support

Reasons for supporting a community garden project

- A garden is a non-threatening place for interaction among people of ages, cultures, income levels and physical and mental abilities.
- It is an on-going 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. It requires relatively few funds compared to other outdoor activities.
- 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.

Ideas for Getting People Involved in Garden

- **Let people know the benefits** – let people know that developing a garden empowers people of all ages and abilities to participate and contribute something positive to the community and that they can make a difference
- Word of mouth – talk to neighborhood friends and anyone passing by the garden project and how they can become involved.
- **Use established institutions** – talk to groups already invested in the community such as church groups, community centers, boys' and girls' clubs, local council representatives, schools, garden clubs and businesses to let them know about new developments with your community garden and how they can get involved in garden activities.
- **Post contact information** – create garden signs (in all languages in your neighborhood) and pass out flyers listing the location of the garden, the contact person (see TIP box), meeting times and recent garden developments
- **Connect with community** – post your community garden flyers at local churches, community centers, libraries, schools, corner stores and other public locations.
- **Neighborhood Libraries** – maybe your local library has a display box. Use that space to tell the story of your community garden and how folks can get involved.

Adapted from:

Payne, Karen and Boekelheide, Don
Cultivating Community, Principles and Practices for Community Gardening as a Community-Building Tool. American Community Gardening Association, 2001. as listed in Sustainable Resource Center, Urban Lands Program, Training manual, p.2-9, 1999.

TIP → Garden Contact Information

Understandably, the garden coordinator may not want their personal contact made public, there are two other options:

- 1) If your garden is in the Garden Directory (www.gardeningmatters.org/directory/index.htm), then list Gardening Matters as the contact organization – we'll handle the rest.
- 2) Create "floating" garden contact information for the community garden group, then garden members can share the responsibilities of monitoring mail, phone and email.
 - Create an email address for the community garden group (many free sources, such as yahoo, hotmail, gmail)
 - Contact a local organization or business to see if mail can be sent there and if you can have a telephone "mailbox" (can voice mail be checked from home?)
 - Rent a mailbox from the local post office