

Milwaukee Urban Gardens Community Garden Handbook



A Booklet of Best Practices
and Strategies for Starting and
Sustaining Your Community
Garden

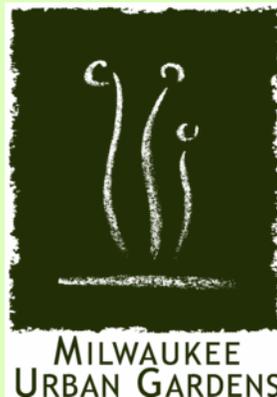
About Milwaukee Urban Gardens, A program of Groundwork Milwaukee

Groundwork Milwaukee is an independent, not-for-profit, environmental business linked together with other Groundwork trusts by the Groundwork USA national office. Locally organized and controlled, Groundwork Trusts provide cost effective project development services focused on improving their communities' environment, economy, and quality of life.

Our mission is to bring about sustained regeneration, improvements and management of the physical environment by developing community based partnerships that empower people, businesses, and organizations to promote environmental, economic, and social well-being.

Community Gardens have been a historical presence in Milwaukee since World War I. However today they are an endangered species. Over the decades, Milwaukee County has lost over 60% of its garden plots to pressures of development- jeopardizing the quality of life for future generations of Milwaukeeans. In many neighborhoods, new developments are quickly swallowing many vacant parcels, resulting in very little green space left in urban neighborhoods.

Milwaukee Urban Gardens (MUG), a program of Groundwork Milwaukee (as of March 2013) is a trust dedicated to acquiring and preserving land and partnering with neighborhood residents to develop and maintain community gardens that improve the quality of life. Founded in 2000 by a group of individuals who were advocating for the long term protection of community gardens in urban Milwaukee, MUG supports efforts to community groups wishing to start or sustain neighborhood gardens by negotiating long term lease agreements with the City of Milwaukee, buying properties to preserve them from development and assisting with permits for water from city hydrants. We also offer technical advice, tools, and help with organizing projects.



About Home GR/OWN Milwaukee

HOME GR/OWN is an initiative of the City of Milwaukee to find creative, productive new uses of City-owned vacant lots, many with a focus on increasing access to healthy food in Milwaukee. HOME GR/OWN partners with neighborhood groups, community agencies and entrepreneurs to develop parks, community gardens, urban farms – many with rain gardens and rainwater harvesting. HOME GR/OWN also works to expand the growing, processing and distribution of local, healthy food, expanding and enriching Milwaukee's community food system. In 2014, HOME GR/OWN has worked with Milwaukee Urban Gardens to create and expand 4 community gardens, revise urban agriculture ordinances and streamline City garden processes and permits.



Purpose of this handbook:

The intention of this handbook is to provide a tangible road map, with technical assistance directions, to guide you toward your goal of a sustainable community garden. To that end, The Community Garden Handbook is a compilation that shares the practices and core beliefs of our organization's experience over 10 years. During that time, we have worked with countless partners and communities with the primary goal of building and strengthening community.

To make this Handbook even more helpful, we include some of our most useful documents as appendices; these are meant to be templates, easily adaptable for organizations and communities with different needs. We hope these resources will help communities lay a solid foundation from which to begin planning a thriving and sustainable community garden network.

Milwaukee Urban Gardens' website (www.milwaukeeurbangardens.org) is also a great way to find many of the resources mentioned in this Handbook. Finally, sometimes the best way to get the information you need is a person-to-person conversation. If after reviewing this Handbook, you have additional questions; please feel free to contact the MUG staff directly at Info.mug@gmail.com or 414.431.0919.

Milwaukee Urban Gardens' core values are embodied in our vision of a thriving and connected network of deeply rooted community gardens-conceived of, cultivated by and supported by local residents and institutions throughout Metro Milwaukee.

We know that community gardens enrich and provide lasting benefits to neighborhoods when they are:

- **initiated collectively by community members who participate in organization, design, construction, and ongoing care;**
- **planned for and protected as a highly valued neighborhood asset;**
- **well-maintained, inviting and accessible to all people;**
- **aligned with the broader purpose of the site, as in the case with a garden in a park, on the grounds of a school, or as part of an affordable housing development;**
- **encouraging individual self-sufficiency and integrity, while collectively developing strong social networks in which participants look after, learn from, and share with each other;**
- **donating a generous portion of their bounty to others in need;**
- **providing healthy food and promoting healthy lifestyles in which members celebrate growing, cooking and eating together;**
- **Models of environmental stewardship through organic and sustainable practices including composting and water conservation;**
- **sites for fostering a sense of belonging and attachment, in both the lives of the gardeners and in the**
- **life of the neighborhood;**
- **Honoring diverse viewpoints, valuing the strengths of each gardener, bridging differences, promoting understanding and developing respect through the unifying act of gardening together.**

When working with communities to actualize their vision of an urban garden in their neighborhood, we look to our core values as well as to the bedrock principles of sustainability and social equity. The concepts of sustainability and social equality have been threaded throughout this Handbook. Before moving forward, we want to make sure that readers know how MUG defines these two overarching concepts in relation to community gardening.

Sustainability

Milwaukee Urban Gardens is committed to providing spaces for long-term community building. Our gardens must be developed by the local community, must be set up for the long-term, and must be organically grown and cared for.

The American Community Gardening Association states that “community gardening is most successful and long lasting when the people affected by the garden have a role in leading the development of the garden” (Abi-Nader et al. p. 13). This is demonstrated by MUG’s commitment to the idea that community gardens are more likely to be sustained if they grow from the local community’s desire, needs, and strengths. This approach helps to ensure there is enough demand and desire to care for and use the garden for years to come. This also allows the garden to reflect the individual community’s needs and uniqueness.

To ensure the longevity of a community garden, we recommend that gardens not be built on privately owned land. Regardless of the landowner’s commitment, in our experience, privately owned land is eventually sold or developed. Sustainability can be difficult to achieve when there is uncertainty around the long-term use of the land.

Recognizing the need for environmental sustainability, we ask all of our gardeners to incorporate organic growing practices and refrain from adding any non-organic amendments or using pesticides and/or herbicides. Along with this, we encourage gardeners to amend their soil each year with plant based compost. Not only does composting increase soil health, it also has been shown to reduce water needs in community gardens, while reducing the amount of waste in our landfills. The majority of our gardens have on-site compost bins and gardeners are encouraged to develop a compost system.

Social Equity

Milwaukee Urban Gardens works with communities of all income levels to create and build sustainable community gardens, while prioritizing the needs of underserved communities. Over 80 percent of MUG's community gardens are located in low- to moderately low- income neighborhoods. We work closely with organizations already serving low-income populations to round out services to those in need. Often, our gardens are located on public sites in low-income neighborhoods, such as at Clinton and Bernice Rose Park, a senior center located in a Milwaukee County Park in the Harambee area; I Have a Dream Foundation, a nonprofit that serves primarily young, low-income, families in the Metcalfe Park neighborhood in central Milwaukee through afterschool programming; and multiple Milwaukee vacant lots.

Community gardens are proven to reinforce ties to one's environment (Comstock et al., 2010) and increase food access and food security.

Community gardens provide an opportunity for people to grow their own food with greater control over the environment and inputs used in the growing process. This empowers individuals to Change their own lives and physical environments while increasing their access to fresh produce and open space.

Along with increased food security and access to healthy environments, community gardens are catalysts for organizing community. The process of creating a community garden that meets the needs of diverse individuals encourages neighborhood residents to work together toward" a common goal. This process and the garden that it produces helps to bridge gaps and create networks that cross socioeconomic and cultural strata. Breaking down these barriers creates a stronger and healthier neighborhood.

Milwaukee Urban Gardens also partners with organizations such as Home GR/OWN Milwaukee and The Milwaukee County Parks to ensure access and availability to people who may lack the financial resources to cover the costs of a community garden plot fee. Additionally, Milwaukee Urban Gardens offers MUG Bucks, a Free Seed Transplants program that allows in-need populations to order a variety of free vegetable seeds and transplants to plant at home or in a community garden.



What is a Community Garden?

Milwaukee Urban Gardens defines a community garden as a unique space where neighbors and residents can come together to build community and grow food. The collective will of the gardener's results in a sum, the garden that is greater than each of the individual parts. People will sometimes ask about the differences between an urban garden and a farm. Participants may initially come to a garden to grow healthy food, however, MUG believes that ultimately, deeply rooted community connections are the primary fruit of the gardener's labor. With a farm, food production is most often the primary goal.

Additionally, there is often a misperception that community gardens are only for skilled gardeners. This is antithetical to the true nature of a community garden. Community gardens welcome skilled and unskilled gardeners in a spirit of common unity. Through the process of working and sharing together, people learn from the knowledge, skills and abilities each person brings to the garden. Community gardens benefit gardeners of all skill levels.

A community garden is a unique and inclusive community space; it reflects the personality and tells the story of the gardeners and the neighborhood that surrounds it. It is a neutral space, a place where people from all backgrounds gather, meet and share. A community garden has the very real potential to be important to its neighborhood and creates strong ties between neighbors.



Why Community Gardening?

Benefits of a Community Garden

The Healthy People 2010 initiative, a national framework for public health prevention, suggests that individual health is almost inseparable from the health of the larger community. Understanding and improving this larger community—the places people live, work and recreate—will go a long way to promoting health and strengthening neighborhoods.

Realizing the health benefits are numerous is key. As well as eating better and being more active, gardeners are more involved in social activities, view their neighborhoods as more beautiful, and have stronger ties to their neighborhoods (Litt et al., 2011). More than 50 percent of community gardeners meet national guidelines for fruit and vegetable intake, compared to 25 percent of non-gardeners (Litt et al., 2011). In fact, community gardeners consume 5.7 servings of fruits and vegetables per day on average, compared to 3.9 servings for non-gardeners (Litt et al., 2011). And, when it comes down to body mass index, community gardeners averaged 24.2 compared to 27.2 for non-gardeners (Litt et al., 2011).

When looking at the social and ecological benefits, the research is just as affirming. All community gardeners (100 percent) stated that their main reasons for gardening were to be outside in nature and to get their hands dirty. Almost 80 percent of them gardened as children (Litt et al., in preparation). Most (95 percent) community gardeners give away some of the produce they grow to friends, family and people in need; 60 percent specifically donate to food assistance programs (Litt et al., in preparation).

Research found that at a neighborhood level, community gardens promote stronger neighborhood leadership, outreach, and volunteerism (Teig et al., 2009). They strengthen emotional bonds to the neighborhood (Comstock et al., 2010) and aesthetic appreciation (Hale et al., 2011). With such strong evidence of the many benefits of



community gardening, it is no wonder that 88 percent of people who do not garden want to see gardens in their neighborhood (Litt et al., in preparation, 2012).

Additionally, youth greatly benefit when a garden is located on school grounds and they participate in nutrition and garden-based educational activities. Various studies have found that school garden programs increase academic achievement, physical, social and emotional health, and have positive impacts on the school and nearby community.

Choosing to Start a Community Garden

Assessing Community Readiness

When a group of dedicated community members comes to consensus that a community garden complements their vision for their neighborhood, the community must assess its own readiness to support and sustain a community garden. This requires a community to affirm that there is 1) a critical mass of committed participants, 2) broad-based support, 3) agreement from the participants on the need for the garden and the multiple purposes it may serve, and 4) an available, sustainable, long-term site. Here are key questions Milwaukee Urban Gardens encourages anyone wishing to establish a community garden to consider:

- Is there a solid need for the garden? Does the community garden have a broad base of support that reflects the demographic makeup of the surrounding neighborhood? As a guideline, we recommend having a core group of at least 4-6 interested individuals to begin the planning process.
- What partnerships have been formed to strengthen the connection between the community garden and the surrounding community program, service learning programs and youth education organizations?
- Is there a local group or organization that can benefit from a partnership with your community garden? If so, what type of group? Examples may include schools, food banks, hunger relief

organizations and nonprofits and churches that prepare meals for people in need.

- Have individuals/local organizations been contacted to help with day-to-day support with various activities? Activities may include helping with ongoing maintenance of garden amenities, providing cooking demonstrations, and teaching gardening classes.
- Is there any skilled and/or unskilled local labor to support garden construction, financial management, material donations, art installations, etc.? Local support may include connecting with a local hardware store, service organizations or corporate volunteer program.

The answers to these questions help determine how much need and support already exist for the community garden. A positive community readiness assessment is a sign that the community has a solid foundation for moving forward. The more cohesive the neighborhood effort, the easier the process becomes and the faster the vision can be made a reality.

Models of Community Gardens

Milwaukee Urban Gardens works primarily with the following community garden models. These models are not mutually exclusive and there are often characteristics of several models at one site.

Traditional- Most MUG community gardens are comprised of many separate garden plots that are cared for by individuals and families. Community gardener's care for and harvest from their own plot. Shared spaces like pathways, perennial herb and flower beds, sheds, and gathering spaces are cared for by all members of a community garden. The day-to-day operations of the garden, including new gardener sign-ups and organization of community work days and gatherings, are handled by volunteer garden leaders or steering committees.

Communal- Although the communal model is not very common for MUG community gardens, they do exist. In the communal model, gardeners are not assigned individual plots but, rather, the entire garden is planted, harvested and maintained by the group. These gardens are often connected to a specific program or organization with a defined goal, i.e. a church growing for its meal program. In our experience, this model is difficult

to sustain because it may not lead to feelings of ownership and may limit the amount of time and care people are willing to invest in the garden.

School-Based- Milwaukee Urban Gardens manages also works with school-based community gardens in the Milwaukee metro area. These school-based community gardens are unique because they are located on school property, giving students access to the garden of educational purposes. Schools have opportunities to infuse produce from the garden into the cafeteria and community at large through programs such as Garden to Cafeteria and Youth Farmers' Markets. School-based community gardens also provide neighbors a space for gardening at a site, which by virtue of being a school promotes communities engagement. Additionally, school and community gardeners mutually benefit from the sharing of knowledge, resources and programs. For example, the student gardeners may rely on the community gardeners to bridge the school year and provide care for their plots and plants over the summer.

Specialty- Specialty community gardens are designed and developed for specific populations with distinct characteristics, unique circumstances and needs. Milwaukee Urban Gardens has worked with older populations, community centers for disabled



populations, and youth to develop specialty gardens. Examples of MUG specialty community gardens include the Cream City Community Garden located at a day-center for the veteran community, the Neu life Community Garden located at a afterschool

program, and the 60th and Green Tree Community Garden located at a job training center for youth.

Timeline:

Intentional planning promotes sustainability. A community garden, from start to complete build out, may take two to three years. This estimate may shift dramatically based on the energy, cohesiveness and readiness of the organizing community, as well as the resources made available to the project. Each community garden model has its own considerations, which can be incorporated into the planning and design process.

The following three phases illustrate the process of planning and building a community garden from conception to first planting:

Assessment: Before any planning, designing or construction occurs, MUG goes through a due diligence process with the community. This includes helping with the community readiness assessment. The goal is to make sure all interested parties understand the breadth of what is involved in becoming a community garden and that they are ready and willing to move forward.

Planning: Once everyone is committed, planning begins. This is when MUG obtains or helps to obtain the proper permits, approvals and use agreements, which can vary depending on the municipality in which the garden is located. This phase also includes fundraising, which is typically a joint effort between MUG and the garden or host organization. The garden is also designed during this phase; MUG works closely with community members to design a garden that is suitable for the site. Often this includes community design workshops, where potentially gardeners provide input; this ideally occurs in the fall prior to construction.

Construction: The construction phase can extend over many years; however, to initiate planting, only the basic infrastructure needs to be in place. The basic infrastructure generally includes plots, pathways, water access, perimeter fencing and tool storage which is usually achieved in the first year. After these elements are installed, items such as pergolas, compost bins, orchards and community gathering spaces can be added as funding and time permits. It may also be appropriate for the first season of a garden to be a pilot year, in which a handful of garden plots are established to gauge the level of neighborhood interest and build momentum for the garden.

At the end of this Handbook, we include steps for starting a traditional community garden, the construction timeline, and the steps for starting a school-based community

garden. The timeline and steps required establishing traditional community gardens and school-based community gardens are also included in the New Garden Interest Packet.

Cost and Funding

When putting together a budget, remember that a garden can take up to three years to fully complete and can be planned for accordingly. Essential start-up elements include plots, pathways, irrigation, perimeter fencing and tool storage. Irrigation and fencing are often the two most expensive line items in a community garden construction budget.

Milwaukee Urban Gardens works closely with communities to help identify and secure funding. As part of this process, it is critical that communities embark on independent fundraising efforts as well. When a community comes together and collectively works to raise funds for the garden, a by-product is an increased sense of ownership and commitment to the community garden.

HOME GR/OWN, NIDC CIP grants and SNP Funding

The City of Milwaukee has several funding opportunities:

- HOME GR/OWN has funded community gardens in the past on a project-by-project basis. Contact Tim McCollow at 414-286-3748 or tmccol@milwaukee.gov
- The Mayor's Strong Neighborhoods Plan (SNP) has a Vacant Lot Beautification program. Depending on your location and specific proposal, SNP may offer funding to your project. Contact Mario Higgins at 414-286-3467 or Mario.Higgins@milwaukee.gov.
- The Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation (NIDC) offers Community Improvement Project (CIP) funding on an annual basis. CIP funds are available to engaged residents with a plan to improve their neighborhood. CIP funds are available (till exhausted) for new community gardens and other vacant lot/neighborhood projects. A CIP grant is a reimbursable grant that requires 1:1 matching. The matching funds cannot be sourced from the City. Contact 414-286-5610 or nidc@milwaukee.gov.

Developing Partnerships and Collaborations

MUG's Collaborative model-

The success of a community garden relies heavily on the partnerships and collaboration created throughout the planning, implementing and maturing phases of the garden. MUG's community gardens are collaborative by nature. Lasting partnerships between groups, schools, neighbors, businesses and generations are crucial to the long-term success of a community garden. We approach each garden in partnership with the neighborhood and with inclusivity in mind, engaging as diverse a profile of participants as possible. We work very closely with other organizations providing related education programs and human services. We work to recruit construction labor from local volunteer groups, but we generally use the services of the youth from our First Green Jobs Program. In building new gardens, we maximize our efficiency through collaborations with partner agencies such as low-income housing authorities, local governments, school districts, community centers, and like-minded non-profits that focus on youth education, food security, healthy living and nutrition.

Asset based community development-

Asset-based community development (ABCD) is the process of determining and uncovering the community's existing strengths and assets as a means for sustainable development (Kretzmann, 1995). Asset-based community development works from the principle that every single person has capacities, abilities and gifts that can be utilized to build a web of strong community connections. It focuses upon the assets of individuals and communities, rather than the needs, deficits or problems. Such an emphasis allows positive change to occur from within the community. Assets encompass resources, which may include individual gifts, associations, institutions, land and buildings, but the term has a much broader definition. For example, people in low-income communities may be wealthy in assets, but poor in resources. In the Franklin Heights neighborhood in Milwaukee, for example, many residents come with assets such as the ability to support family members and/or agricultural skills, but they need resources such as nutrition classes and an introduction to the financial literacy in order to more fully immerse themselves in their communities.

Talking to your local alderman is also crucial to this process. Since the alderman have a 10-day period to provide input on your community garden permit, it is crucial to communicate with your alderman before you apply for a garden. Having the support of your local representatives will give you an inside track and allow your permit to be approved without a hitch.

Milwaukee Urban Gardens intrinsically utilizes the ABCD principles in its basic philosophy and process of garden design and implementation. Healthy communities need time to grow, and essential to this growth is the participation of diverse individuals with varied community-based assets. Below are three main phases in which MUG encourages and helps communities identify their assets.

Organizing

The collaborative process begins with a visioning phase, which assesses the web of potential assets in the garden community. During this phase, MUG helps to identify community members who might serve as volunteer garden leaders assist in various steering committee roles to help assure smooth functioning of the garden. Not only do we identify the skills already present within the community, we also assist with skill development by offering the help of UW-Extension's Master Gardener and/or Master Composter volunteers. By providing facilitators and teachers when requested, MUG equips participants with the skills necessary to establish a successful garden. Milwaukee Urban Gardens seeks to empower others in their own process to develop a sustainable garden.

Actualizing

During this phase, MUG works with volunteer groups, gardeners, community-based nonprofits, businesses and institutions to mobilize and build assets beneficial to the garden. Central to this phase is the concept of allowing the garden to develop slowly, as community capacity increases. Involving a wide array of participants and stakeholders allows gardens to be truly built from the ground up. Gardens depend upon the unique skills and abilities of residents and their willingness to reach out and engage others in a spirit of common unity.

Reflecting

Over time, garden leadership intentionally reflects on the evolution of the garden. From soil preparation, to emerging seed, flower, fruit and eventual winter period of rest, MUG

gardens are deeply rooted in the specific goals and objectives of each unique community. Each garden's goals, purpose and day-to-day operation are evaluated, fine-tuned, and driven by community capacity, with a deep respect for cultural perspectives and preferences. This is done by listening to the stories of garden participants, gathering information about how gardens affect members and the surrounding community, and formulating ideas for addressing ongoing and future needs. This allows for opportunities to understand and adapt what works best for each specific garden.

Reciprocal Mapping

Reciprocal mapping is an exercise designed to help communities identify complementary partnerships (Abi-Nader et al., 2005), and, is a natural extension of the ABCD methodology. This exercise asks community gardeners to think outside the garden and identify possible, mutually beneficial partnerships. In the Appendix, there are two worksheets, one completed and one blank, from the American Community Gardening Association. On the completed worksheet, please note the many ways in which a community garden and the surrounding community can intersect and strengthen each other. Now, look at the blank worksheet. Take time to closely examine the community in which your garden may be located. Think about your community: its informal social groups, churches, schools, libraries, etc. Fill in the blank worksheet with the potential partnerships that may result from increased outreach and organization in your community. Reciprocal mapping is a tool that will be useful throughout the life of the community garden. It encourages gardeners to ensure the garden reflects and is integrated into the surrounding community.



Selecting a Site

Site Selection

It takes time for a garden to set its roots in a community and to begin to affect the health and wellness of a neighborhood. Finding land that will remain designated for that garden is paramount. To ensure a garden's longevity, MUG carefully looks at the prospective garden sites before we commit to assisting a community in the creation of its garden. Below are the criteria MUG considers before committing to supporting a new project:

Need & Critical Mass

Before active planning begins, we will always assess community readiness: ensuring there is a critical mass of committed participants, broad-based support, agreement from participants on the need for the garden and the multiple purposes it may serve, and the availability of a sustainable, long-term site. Sustainability is at the heart of our community organization process, and community readiness is essential to a solid start.

Identifying Primary Purposes for the Garden

The gardeners must have a clear sense of purpose. Whether the purpose is singular or multi-faceted, it must be easily identifiable and strong enough to drive the viability of the garden into the future. The most enduring core purposes are 1) the need for space to grow food, 2) the desire to educate children in the wonders of nature and healthy food, 3) the desire to build community, and 4) the wish to create an natural oasis in the city.



Need for a Core group of committed Gardeners

We take care to ensure that each garden has broad-based interest and support and is not the pet project of one or two people. It is essential to the success of a project that a core group of participants commits to being actively involved in the garden. What constitutes the minimum number of people is subjective, but our experience indicates that 4-6 committed participants is a promising starting point. If a garden is successful in its inaugural season, the number of participants will likely grow to maximize the capacity of the garden. Conversely, if the garden does not have a critical mass of committed gardeners, it is almost sure to struggle.

Developing Long-Term Project Partners

In an effort to strengthen the garden at its inception, it is important that this core group of participants seeks out partners that might have an interest in being involved. As noted previously, this could include nearby churches, youth groups, schools, food banks, as well as organizations serving populations in need. And it never hurts to have the support of local businesses, restaurants and chefs, and even local artists. The more diverse the outside interests in the garden, the more sustainable a garden tends to be.



As the diversity of a garden's participation expands, so does the potential for long-term partnerships to develop. This in turn strengthens the viability of the garden. For example, a faith-based group may wish to garden a collection of plots to support the local food bank, or a teen youth group might partner with the elementary school to develop an after-school mentoring program in the garden. A garden is especially strengthened when the agency that owns the property is actively involved in the use of the garden.

Characteristics of a viable & Sustainable Garden Site

There are several key characteristics of a candidate site that can lead to a thriving, sustainable community garden. MUG evaluates and eventually helps communities select sites based on these key attributes. The first three outline considerations that help determine if land is suitable for a community garden, with the last six specific to the site itself. Please see our website or contact Milwaukee Urban Gardens if you would like further detail on site selection process for community gardens.

Public/Institutional versus Private Sites

MUG typically builds community gardens on institutionalized public land. This allows long-term relationships to flourish without the fear of the land being sold or repurposed.

Based on our experience in maintaining garden sites, MUG gives privately owned land a wide berth. Even if the property owner has a heart for community gardening, in the end they are speculating on their land with garden ending up as the feel-good temporary use. When the private site is sold for development (we find that this eventually of all gardens on privately-owned land), the garden and its partners lose everything that was collectively invested.

Selecting the right property for a new project, one in which a garden has a greater likelihood to be permanent, such as in a park, along a greenway, a vacant lot next to a community center or on the grounds of a school library, has become a high stakes process for MUG. Community gardens on publicly-owned land foster greater community partnerships and increase sustainability.



Zoning and Adjacent Uses

When community gardens are pitted against other important land uses, such as an affordable housing project, a health clinic or a soccer field, they often do not fare well, especially since most everyone but the garden participants think that gardens are easily moved at very minimal expense. MUG is constantly faced with dispelling this stereotype when working to preserve urban space for gardens. The key to this work is changing the perception of community gardens in the eyes of city officials and the public from temporary, easily moved placeholders for higher and better uses to active, healthy and productive open spaces valued by their urban neighborhoods.

Central Location

From our experience, it is extremely important that a garden is situated in a highly visible location within a neighborhood. Gardens in the backs or corners of properties, out of the sight of the general public, are typically not as well tended or as well utilized as their centrally located counterparts. It is far better when the garden's permanent home is in a prominent location and part of the everyday landscape of the community it will serve.

Size

A typical MUG community garden has 10 plots and each plot is approximately 4 by 8 feet in size or 150 square feet. While this is the average, community gardens can be designed to fit many different site configurations and sizes. To maintain a critical mass of gardeners, the total garden size should be the size of your group.

Access to Water

A garden needs a reliable source of water to thrive. A hose connected to an adjacent building is inadequate to effectively serve a community garden. Multiple gardeners need to be able to water at the same time. Without dragging the hose across their neighbors' plots and damaging their plants. When a new garden is going to be located within the landscaped area of an existing facility (i.e. within a park, on the grounds of a school or library, or as a part of the open space of a housing complex), connecting a rain barrel to a neighbor's downspout is ideal if the rainwater harvesting system is under 150 sq. ft.

Accessibility and Slope

And inclusive garden needs to be easily accessible to all participants regardless of their physical capabilities. Accessibility is increased when the garden site is bordered on at least one side by a 4- to 5- foot sidewalk. It is also useful if a garden is bordered by a parking lot, public street or alley for ease of seasonal garden deliveries such as compost and mulch.

Additionally, it is ideal if a prospective garden site is relatively flat. A sloped site requires terraced walls to establish level garden space, along with the construction of stairs and ramps. These elements can significantly increase the cost of a garden, often by several times the cost of a flat site.

Sun Exposure and Drainage

A productive garden site tends to need direct sunlight for at least six hours per day. It is important to assess the impact the shadows from adjacent buildings and trees will have on the garden. Even in a semiarid climate, drainage must also be considered to prevent flooding in the event of a heavy summer storm. Drainage features such as swales and French drains should be considered to direct storm runoff toward the garden sites' property lines.



Other Characteristics Unique to the Site

Each new garden site tends to have one or more unique features that inform the design. The shade of a large tree, for instance, is a wonderful place to locate the gardens' gathering space. An informal community path across the vacant site may be worth retaining for the main garden pathway. If a garden site is hosted by an organization offering complementary programming, it would be beneficial for the garden to be easily accessible from the building. Also consider orienting the garden to take advantage of a special off-site view or feature.

Designing and Constructing

Design Process

Once a site has been selected, there are several very important underlying considerations when initiating the design process for a garden. First and foremost, the site plan should reflect the collective ideas, needs and wishes of the garden participants. Input should be gained in a series of meetings, ideally in the fall before construction begins, in which garden participants, property owners, project partners, site neighbors, community leaders and city officials discuss the desired site uses along with its character.

It is also very useful to have the support of design professionals from the community, or through a sponsoring organization such as MUG. This will help to ensure a garden is 1) well designed, built and organized; 2) affordable, durable and easily maintained; and 3) capable of becoming a unique and cherished place.



Design Elements

In addition to the key Characteristics of a viable & Sustainable Garden Site previously described, a summary of important design considerations includes the following:

- Identifying the variety of uses and garden amenities desired, including the potential to accommodate alternative uses in the garden such as hosting community events (is. memorials, weddings and dedications)
- Locating and allocating adequate space for the desired uses, and integrating those uses effectively
- Identifying key access points and predicted circulation through and around the garden, informing the layout of a garden pathway system)
- Integrating the neighborhood's unique history and character into the theme of the garden
- Infusing art in the garden in the form of murals, sculpture, special paving, bird houses, etc.



- Identifying the type and location for the garden's perimeter fence, entry and service gates (typical MUG fencing: 4 feet tall hog wire fence, with t-posts NOT cement filled poles)
- Agreeing collectively to a set of material choices for elements such as garden plot edging, pathway surfaces and vertical growing structures
- Sizing garden plots to meet the community's needs, while making them dividable to increase the garden's capacity to engage more participants (plot size range: 100 to 800 square feet; typical: 150 square feet)
- Sizing pathways to promote efficient circulation (main paths: 4 to 5 feet wide; secondary paths: 2.5 to 3 feet wide), while choosing ADA accessible surface materials such as a crusher fines (when combined with a bonding/hardening agent) and/or concrete where necessary
- Considering the need for drip irrigation zones for common beds (i.e. fruit trees, perennial beds, etc.)
- Locating the best place for the garden sign and message board (typically at the gardens main entry)
- Finding a convenient location for the garden's storage shed or tool box (consider a structure that is weatherproof, secure and size appropriate for garden tools. MUG uses either 10 by 15 feet prefabricated tool sheds or knock model 60 tool boxes)
- Locating the community compost bin area in an accessible and functional location
- Considering the type, size and location for community gathering spaces (i.e. areas for picnic tables, benches, a youth farmers' market, a children's discovery garden, an art display space, etc.)
- Identifying a location for shade elements in the garden (i.e. pergola, shade trees, etc.)
- Selecting a location for community planting beds if desired (i.e. perennials, herbs, border hedge, cut flowers, etc.)



- Finding a location for a grove or line of dwarf fruit trees (typically on the north side of the garden and spaced 12 to 15 feet apart)
- Determining the need for security lighting (either provided by the landowner or by utilizing individual solar powered lights)
- Considering complimentary projects, as capacity and time permits, that would add value to the garden (i.e. bee hives, chicken coops, etc.)

Construction Process

Once the master plan for the community garden has been agreed upon, the next step is to begin the construction process. This process offers a variety of roles for participants and has its own timeline (see Timeline section). Below we outline some of the key roles for skilled and unskilled labor, as well as requirements to begin the construction process.

Skill Labor Needs

It is ideal for garden participants to build as much of their garden as possible; this contributes to their sense of ownership and stewardship for the space. With that said, MUG finds that most communities need guidance with each step in the construction process, as well as skilled labor to install the garden's basic infrastructure. This work can be completed for a significantly reduced cost if a garden's community has skilled and willing volunteers with landscape construction experience. In the spring and summer months MUG leads a Green Team that can assist with the building of the garden, along with outreach.

Volunteers

MUG utilizes volunteers, with our staff's skilled supervision, to complete the other elements of the garden including plot edging, soil amendment, crusher fines pathways, paved courtyards, raised beds, perimeter fencing, common beds and tree planting, bench and picnic table installation and pergola construction. These activities are often completed during scheduled volunteer work days. Volunteer work days are typically in the morning and last three to four hours. Volunteers include new garden participants as well as those wanting to volunteer from a community building motivation.

In our experience, gardeners gain confidence in their ability and capacity as they become very capable of completing new improvement projects on their own with limited MUG guidance and supervision.

Required Permits and Utility Locates

Many jurisdictions require permits for a garden's grading and drainage, perimeter fencing, irrigation connection and structures such as shade pergolas. Most jurisdictions do not require a permit for structures under 150 square feet in size, such as prefabricated tool sheds.

For safety reasons, locating underground utilities is required prior to initiating construction. In Wisconsin, as well as the rest of the United States, calling 811 will direct you to your local operator who will schedule a utility locate with the appropriate agencies. To learn more about this process, please visit the 811 website.

The City of Milwaukee instituted an ordinance change that requires a no-cost community garden permit be filed with the City prior to operation. MUG can help you complete this form. Under the City's



rules, the alderperson whose district contains your proposed community garden has 10 days from day of application to the City to approve or deny the filed community garden permit. More information is available at MUG or at the FAQ posted at www.homegrownmilwaukee.com.

The City does not require a permit for a shed at your garden if it is less than 150 square feet. Any structure larger than 150 square feet will require a City permit, at cost. The City's HOME GR/OWN program has open-source plans, material lists and instructions for a water-harvesting tool shed that can be built at your site.

It is legal to sell on-site uncut, bagged fruit and vegetables grown at your garden. Compost produced on-site can also be sold. More information at http://city.milwaukee.gov/homegrownmilwaukee/faqs.htm#FAQ2_Q51.

Establishing Community Garden Leadership

A garden leader or steering committee locally manages each community garden site. MUG encourages management by a steering committee, which allows the responsibilities to be shared so that one person does not become either overburdened or in control of too many decisions on his or her own.

At the Very heart of Milwaukee Urban Gardens' mission is the volunteer work of garden steering committee members. These committed and deeply involved volunteers set the tone for each unique community garden. Steering committee members model a spirit of inclusivity that encourages cooperation, shared responsibilities, and sustainability. They encourage mutually beneficial relationships between gardeners, neighbors and visitors alike. Their work helps to expand local food security in the community and makes the neighborhood safer, healthier and more beautiful.

We encourage all of our steering committee members to promote the following core values as they lead efforts to carry out the majority will of the community garden. From our experience, steering committee members are:

.Engaging All Community Members

Engaging Gardeners & Non-Gardeners

Although community gardens may be able to provide growing space for a certain number of gardeners, they have the potential to engage and benefit all community members in some way. Community gardens provide a great space for gatherings, community events, picnics and finding peace in a sometimes overwhelming urban environment. The key is making the community feel comfortable to enjoy the garden

along with the gardeners. When the surrounding neighbors gain a sense of understanding and pride for the space, the garden is much more likely to be protected and thrive.

Cross- Cultural Communications

A community garden brings together a cross-section of the neighborhood in which it is located. While this provides opportunities to unite over similarities and differences, it can also, with a few missteps, cause and perpetuate miscommunication. Effective cross-cultural communication requires openness, a focus on the inherent strengths, rather than challenges of individuals, and a willingness to promote a culture of inclusivity within the community garden.

When there are multiple languages being spoken, volunteers, both adults and children, help translate and communicate the details of events such as work days and potlucks, into the languages spoken and understood by the gardeners. To facilitate this, gardeners can choose commonly understood words and phrases and avoid the use of slang and acronyms.

Learning to be a competent cross-cultural communicator also requires that one acknowledge all of the voices present and those that are silent (this even means tapping into nonverbal cues). To foster a culture of trust, where all voices are heard, one must step back and ensure that everyone's voice is present. If a gardener is not providing input, it is important to understand why and figure out the type of dialogue that is comfortable for him or her. The remedy for this situation may greatly depend on a variety of cultural characteristics: age, ethnicity, gender, and the gardener's skill level.

It is also important to consider the timing of gatherings. Pre-scheduling events and meetings



If

for a variety of days and times helps to accommodate community members with varying schedules.

Ultimately, when working with any group, particularly a diverse group, it is important to cultivate the principles of Asset Based Community Development: working with the existing strengths and resources of a group. As described earlier (see Asset-Based Community Development), this provides a solid foundation in which the principles of sustainability and social equity are joined for the benefit of the garden.

Events

Community gardens are encouraged to hold events that are open to the public in an effort to engage neighbors that are not directly involved in the garden. This allows non-gardeners the opportunity to appreciate the garden as a space for community engagement and gives gardeners a chance to share the beauty they have created. Often these events are also a chance for the garden to do a bit of fundraising.

Some examples of events include holding a yard sale, celebrating season's end with a harvest festival, hosting a musician, or creating a space for an art exhibit. We encourage gardens to independently organize and facilitate these events, which allows them to tailor the event to their specific community. Events can be advertised through listservs, discussion boards, social media groups and posting flyers throughout the community, word of mouth and/or local newspapers.

Common Concerns

People who are new to community gardening may have questions about whether the garden will affect neighborhood in adverse ways. Below is a list of common concerns and the ways in which these issues are addressed. Please contact the MUG office if you have further questions; we are happy to connect you



with community gardeners who have worked with their community to overcome these misconceptions.

Theft and Vandalism: We recognize that theft and vandalism are different and may have different motivations. Community-wide engagement is the top priority in preventing both of these detrimental activities. See Appendix J for a full list of recommendations on how to deal with theft and vandalism.

Odor and Rodents: There are often worries about the potential of unpleasant smells and unwanted rodents associated with garden compost bins. With a well-managed, healthy compost pile these concerns are unwarranted. To avoid these nuisances, it is important to educate gardeners about what is allowed in a compost pile (we suggest garden material only be allowed with, no food scraps from outside sources) and to make sure that the compost pile is covered. In a well-maintained and regularly turned pile, matter decomposes quickly and does not emit an unpleasant odor.

Parking: There are often concerns that garden participants will monopolize a valued segment of street parking in proximity to the garden. While some people may regularly drive to the community garden, many will walk and bike. Community gardens, by their nature, inherently appeal to the immediate neighborhood and typically draw from a base of support within walking distance. Additionally, gardeners have varying schedules and visit the garden as their time permits, limiting the number of parking spaces needed at any one time.

Excessive Noise and Lighting: With a new amenity in the neighborhood, people may have concerns regarding excessive noise and night lighting. Community gardens occasionally conduct group work days, evening potlucks and may host a neighborhood event such as an art opening, an education workshop, a public cooking demonstration, or even a wedding, dedication, or memorial service. While noise and lighting may have been an initial concern for neighbors, we have found that this apprehension dissipates once the garden is in place and events occur. Community gardeners are sensitive to their neighbors and want to enhance the neighborhood; they garden, celebrate and learn in such a way that is not intrusive or unpleasant. Additionally, community gardens will often observe quiet hours: times by which gardeners are expected to keep their voices down or conclude events and gatherings (e.g. quiet hours may be from 9pm to 7am).

Invasion of Privacy: Concerns may arise about residential privacy, just by the adjacency of some gardens to private yards and outdoor spaces and by the presence of gardeners, especially in the early morning and evening hours. As noted earlier, many gardens observe quiet hours. Neighbors tend to find their initial concerns to be unfounded, as community gardener's end up being a built-in neighborhood watch group. By license, gardens are open from Sun-up to Sun-down.

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GROUNDWORK
CHANGING PLACES
CHANGING LIVES

Groundwork Milwaukee's:

GROUNDHOG DAY celebration



- Learn about HOME GR/OWN's options for homesteading and securing land for farming
- Workshops presented by GROUNDWORK MILWAUKEE, BEEPODS & MORE!
- Complete your Seasonal Garden/hydrant Permits & Garden Agreements
- Beginner/Advance Gardening Break out sessions
- Get the Groundwork Milwaukee workshop schedule for 2014!

Saturday, February 7 from 10AM to 12:30PM
Body & Soul Healing Arts Center

SPONSORED BY: Come Learn, Dream, & Plan your garden!!!

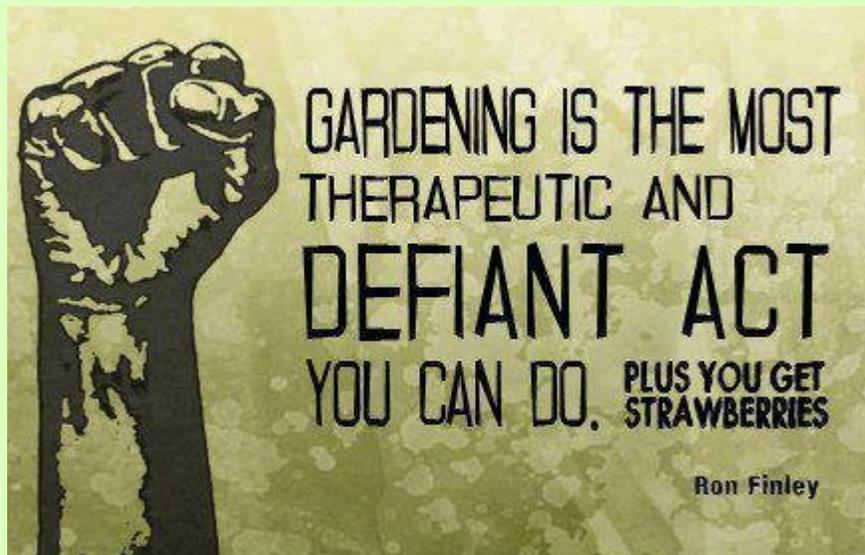


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Aesthetics: There may be a concern that the community garden will become untidy and unsightly. Community gardens, by their nature, can appear eclectic and at times untidy to passers-by (especially in the off-season, November through March). It is our experience that even an eclectic garden will be accepted by the community, if it is constantly tidy. In MUG gardens, all participants are expected to follow our Community Maintenance Guidelines. Gardens are required to be cleaned up by October 31st of each year. Community gardeners who do not adhere to the guidelines in the Agreement may not be asked to return to the garden the following year.



Responsibilities and Work Days

A community garden only works if everyone feels responsible for the care and maintenance of the entire space, including individual plots, pathways, herb and perennial gardens, fruit trees and common spaces. The City of Milwaukee requires MUG to ensure that garden participants keep their garden sites clean, attractive and orderly at all times, including during the off-season. The garden must have a unified and tidy appearance to landowners, city officials and the general non-gardening public. The benefits of a well-maintained garden are at minimum three-fold:

- The Use Agreement for the garden remains in good standing with the City of Milwaukee,
- Neighbors and non-gardeners enjoy and recognize the community garden as a community asset, and
- Your community garden will harbor fewer pests and weeds and will be healthier from year to year.

The community garden is a community responsibility. Ultimately, everyone must help maintain the common areas of the community garden, such as the compost bins, tool shed, waste containment area, fruit trees, flower beds, street front and sidewalks, entries, pathways and courtyards.



Each community garden establishes how many hours gardeners are expected to contribute to the care of common areas. The most common techniques community gardens use to ensure gardeners are given an opportunity to contribute are periodic group work days. These are generally held twice a month for a few hours. The garden steering committee creates a to-do list and asks all gardeners to join in on these projects. Some of the common projects include weeding pathways, herb gardens and perennial beds; repainting benches; pruning grape vines and fruit trees; compost maintenance; organizing tools and the garden shed and general garden clean up.

Another method gardens have found successful is to have each gardener sign up for one or more of the garden maintenance committees. These committees could include being responsible for the compost, fruit trees, perennial gardens, herb gardens, general maintenance and event planning. This gives gardeners a chance to help with the task they feel most comfortable with, as well as allow more flexible schedule for accomplishing their tasks.

Besides the actual work that gets done during these times, work days and committee participation are also a great platform for gardeners to get



to know one another better. Getting a couple gardeners together to build a compost pile or weed an herb garden

creates a perfect opportunity for team building, sharing and accomplishing something together. All of this builds a stronger and more sustainable garden.

It is important to recognize that all gardeners have a significant role and responsibility regarding the physical sustainability of a community garden. Participation in a community garden is a privilege, and all gardeners should be expected to do their fair share of work beyond maintaining their individual plot. While it is the responsibility of the community gardeners to ensure compliance with the Maintenance Guidelines, MUG is committed to assisting a garden with clean-up when it is out of compliance with these guidelines and is in jeopardy of losing its Use Agreement.

Community Garden Maintenance Guidelines

By following the Community Garden Maintenance Guidelines, outlined below, gardeners contribute to ensuring that community gardening continues to thrive. Community gardens can be either positive or negative examples, affecting the ability for others to secure space in other neighborhoods for new community gardens. In MUG gardens, each new gardener receives these Community Garden Maintenance Guidelines. These Guidelines have worked well for MUG, and we encourage other garden networks to consider establishing something similar for their situation.

Garden Plots

Each plot in a garden is expected to be kept clear of weeds, spent plants, debris and trash. We recommend that each fall, gardeners cut plants to soil level, turn compost and organic material into the soil and cover it with a layer of mulch to regulate soil temperature and retain moisture throughout the winter. This makes a garden plot look cared for to passers-by. Any perennials must appear well kept.

Water Usage

Milwaukee Urban Gardens encourages an efficient and wise use of water, which reduces water costs and the proliferation of weeds. This includes using a hand-held watering wand with a shutoff nozzle, rather than a drip system, and watering at the base of the plant with a low volume spray. The EPA estimates that “manual watering with a hand-held hose tends to be the most water-efficient method, as households that manually water with a hose typically use 33 percent less water outdoors”. See Appendix () for more suggested water conservation techniques.

Vertical Structures

Structures to encourage vertical growing, including arbors, trellises, tree branch frames, fence sections and cages are only allowed during the growing season if they are functional, orderly, safe and attractive. Vertical structures used for growing must appear in good condition and contribute to the community garden's overall visual continuity. We forbid growing structures to be built with cement and that all structures be disassembled and removed during the off-season. Permanent vertical structures in the community garden are allowed to remain if they are approved by the steering committee and MUG, are in good condition, and are attractive from the street.

Shelter Structure

Milwaukee Urban Gardens does not permit the construction or existence of permanent shelter structures within individual or shared community garden plots, including personal sheds, storage, or shade units. Individually constructed



shelter structures present safety concerns and are antithetical to Milwaukee Urban Gardens' community-based approach. If there is a need for additional community storage space, MUG assesses the possibility of installing additional shared storage in the garden. Based on our use agreements with the City of Milwaukee, MUG is required to approve all new structures prior to construction.

Off-Season Storage

The following items are not authorized to be left standing during the off-season and must be disassembled and stored in the garden shed or removed from the site when not in use: chairs and individual benches, shoes and clothes, steel T-posts, buckets, plastic containers, wire cages, fencing, plastic plant pots, tools, wheel barrows, wagons, piping, hoses and nozzles, piles of brick and stone, water containers, bags of compost or leaves

Compost Bins:

Milwaukee Urban Gardens encourages using and maintaining community compost bins. Individual compost bins are discouraged as they distract from the visual continuity of the community garden. To help ensure that compost piles in community gardens are in good condition, MUG offers assistance in building community compost bins as well as free composting workshops throughout the growing season. By City law, food scraps are not allowed in compost bins to discourage vermin.

All material used in compost bins should be chopped into one- to two-inch pieces before being added.

Plastic bags of spent plants, grass clippings and leaves, unopened bags of topsoil, compost or manure are not allowed to be stored in community gardens at any time. To passers-by, they may appear to be bags of trash.



Plot Boundaries

Interior boundary fences around individual plots are discouraged; they are difficult to weed around and can quickly make the overall garden unsightly. The preferred boundary is a weed-free edge between plots and the adjacent path or neighbor. Plots should be edged with a low-profile edging material, which is in good condition and well kept. We highly discourage the use of pressure-treated landscape timbers: 2" x 12" planks are considered the primary material for plot edging. Ideally, the garden steering committee, with input from all gardeners, selects a preferred material for all gardeners to use. This

Programmatic Support

Milwaukee Urban Gardens does not seek to do for others, but rather to provide the necessary tools to individuals and communities who want to learn and do for themselves. Below are brief descriptions of some of the specific programs offered by MUG. The first two programs listed below rely on our large network of gardeners and volunteers and the overarching organization of Milwaukee Urban Gardens to be successful. Produce donation, bee hive and chicken coop programs are more often considered on a site-by-site basis and are easily implemented at a single-garden. Our youth education programs fall under both of these categories.

While only briefly discussed in this Handbook: MUG staff and our Green Team also run the Young Farmers Program. Please see our website or contact Milwaukee Urban Gardens if you would like more information on any of these programs.



Community Garden Cluster Support Program

MUG provides ongoing support for our network of volunteer community garden leaders in a number of ways. Annual support includes hosting a symposium for all leaders, conducting mid-season check-in calls, conducting an end-of-season survey, and hosting a garden leader roundtable series. In addition to these events, monthly electronic communication, training upon request, assistance with leadership transition, and gardener mediation are available year round to MUG garden leaders.

MUG's Groundhog Day Garden Leader Symposium provides staff the opportunity to share relevant policy updates and other important information with garden leaders,

including the variety of free resources available to them as members of MUG's network of community gardens. This is the one time every year when all of the garden leaders convene. MUG's updated Community Garden Application (Appendix) that must be collected from every garden leader is distributed during this meeting, along with our MUG Community Garden Agreement.

In July and August, MUG's Garden Leader Coordinator reaches out to all garden leaders for mid-season calls to see how the gardens are doing, get feedback on any improvement or maintenance needs, and to offer additional resources needed.

An end-of-season survey is distributed to all garden leaders near the close of the gardening season (typically October) to gather information and solicit feedback, including number of gardeners, local organizations that accepted produce donations, and comments on various MUG services or trainings provided throughout that season.

In 2014, MUG launched a garden leader cluster series to provide a forum for leaders of gardens close in proximity to share with each other knowledge and expertise on various topics, as well as bring awareness to the gardens they could easily partner with. As we welcome new garden leaders into the cluster, seasoned garden leaders with topical expertise guide the lesser-experienced leaders with the expectation they pay it forward.

MUG Bucks

Each spring MUG provides free vegetable transplants to over 1,000 low-income families. By volunteering either at your garden for the overall health of your garden (cutting grass, weeding everyone's garden bed), or by volunteering at a participating garden center, you can earn in-store credit for seeds and transplants. This program contributes significantly to the local food security of program participants. Participants are able to stretch their food budgets by growing their own healthy food and, in turn, utilize budget savings to address other critical needs in their lives, adding to their overall economic stability.

Youth Education

For the past few years, MUG has worked in partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), Milwaukee Recreation Department to establish gardens at schools. Most school-based community gardens are located at elementary schools, though we are seeing a new community interest in middle and high school gardens.

MUG is committed to providing alternative spaces and resources for hands-on youth education and supporting each community garden in ways appropriate to that garden's particular needs, including developing a partnership between the school community and surrounding neighbors to strengthen garden sustainability. We believe the lessons

offered in a garden are life changing for children of all backgrounds, but in particular, those from disadvantaged neighborhoods. Through the wonders of a garden, students experience hands-on lessons in biology and ecology, horticulture, wellness and nutrition, recycling, composting, and community building. In support of science and health education, we offer an integrated nutrition and gardening curriculum to school communities.

The Curriculum

Our seasonal approach to teaching builds a bridge for students between gardening, nutrition and science. This year-round curriculum provides opportunities for student inquiry and investigation into nutrition and earth and life sciences, with additional relevancy to math, literacy and social studies. Lessons are linked into existing curriculum and are written in a user-friendly format accessible to both teachers and volunteers. The curriculum is designed to be flexible enough to be shortened to a set of core lessons that can be used in the classroom, or in an after-school or summer program. Please visit our website to view the full curriculum.

World Lunchbox: In partnership with the University of Milwaukee's Cultures and Communities Program, UW-Extension, The world lunchbox curriculum seeks to empower youth, provide cultural exchange opportunities and encourage



Donation Program

The community garden, through its inherent community building properties, enriches the lives of those who garden and those who live nearby. Creating and establishing a donation program is an ideal way for community gardeners to share produce with those in their neighborhood with limited access to fresh food. A donation program further integrates the community garden into the surrounding neighborhood and promotes a localized food system. Some gardens may choose to have an informal donation program where they give to neighbors, friends and family. Other gardens choose a formal approach where they collectively designate a food bank or hunger relief organization as the recipient of their surplus produce donation.

When establishing a donation program, it is important to plan from harvest to delivery. After a beneficiary of the produce has been chosen, it is important to work closely with the appointed charitable organization to establish protocols for the produce donation. Given the perishable nature of fresh produce, this will help ensure that the food is used, providing much needed nutrition for those in need.

Key factors and practices to consider for a produce donation program:



important information with garden leaders,

- Choosing between a formal versus an informal donation program.
- Choosing a recipient organization (taking into consideration availability of refrigeration, storage capacity and ability to accept raw, unprocessed food).
- Being aware of the preferred fruits and vegetables of the intended recipients.
- Knowing if there is a minimum donation amount (poundage) required.
- Scheduling regular harvesting days and delivery schedules.
- Designating a collection point in the garden that will keep freshly harvested produce cool.
- Having a plan for transporting food to the recipient organization in a timely fashion.
- Aligning delivery of the harvest produce to a time when it is convenient for staff and volunteers from the recipient organization to accept/process the produce.

Planning ahead and addressing each of these key considerations will help ensure the implementation of a successful donation program. Studies show that most (95 percent) community gardeners give away some of the produce they grow to friends, family and people in need, and 60 percent specifically donate to food assistance programs (Litt et al., in preparation), it is evident that many garden leaders and steering committees have worked through the process of establishing a successful community garden donation program.

To tap into this existing experience and knowledge help by MUG's many dedicated leaders, community gardens new to establishing a donation program are encouraged to contact MUG, regardless of where you are located. We look forward to the opportunity to connect those wishing to establish a donation program and those who have successfully done so.

Donation Program in Practice

Community gardeners donated 338 pounds of produce from seven community plots and individual gardener donations. In addition to working with existing community gardeners, that group publicized their collection days to solicit participation from neighbors. Initially, community gardeners resisted participating in Plant a Row for the Hungry (a program that encourages gardeners across the country to plant extra produce and donate it to food agencies in their communities) for fear there would be too little to share given their heavy clay soil. The garden leaders reminded folks that if each gardener donated one row of produce, it would make the idea of a donation program less daunting.

Garden leaders solicited nominations and held a vote for a food bank recipient. A food pantry was chosen because they were very open to accepting anything fresh, making it easy to donate. Also, The food pantry was close to the garden, making it feasible for many gardeners to help with delivery.

Collection days were held once a week. In the beginning of the project, gardeners collected donations throughout the entire day. Because there was no refrigeration at the garden, gardeners took turns bringing coolers to store the produce. Even with coolers, the heat of the summer provided challenges for keeping the produce cool and fresh. Ultimately, the collection hours were shortened and fragile produce, like lettuces, were discouraged from being donated. During the high yield months, the donations filled more than five coolers. Produce was weighed and recorded. Everyone found the quantitative aspect a fun way to document the efforts and participation was met with enthusiasm.

Reviewing the donation efforts at the winter potluck, it was determined that growing heartier vegetables that will withstand a variety of transportation methods and not need refrigeration would be better choices for the next growing season (ie. mustard greens, spinach, peppers, tomatoes, squashes and cabbages). Gardeners suggested creating a committee to help organize the donation growing efforts and to collaborate with the food pantry to assess the most popular vegetable requests. Helping others eat fresh locally grown food, supplementing canned food donations, promoted a sense of community and pride in the garden.

Bees in Gardens

Just as each community garden makes a small but significant contribution to the health, diversity, and sustainability of the food system, keeping a beehive is a way for a small group of people to make a difference on a larger-scale environmental issue. Urban beekeeping increases the number of beneficial pollinators in community gardens, resulting in the increased production of local, whole foods for residents.

Community gardeners wish to host honeybees, MUG encourages gardeners to either make arrangements with a local beekeeper to place and maintain a hive or two in the garden, or start a hive to be maintained by the gardeners themselves.

For community gardens that are considering beehives, the City of Milwaukee has developed guidelines for complying with existing ordinances, starting a hive, and maintains good

relations within the garden and with the surrounding neighborhood. A city permit is required. This permit may require your neighbors to agree to a beehive installation. To learn more about this process and explore the possibility of a beehive in your community garden, contact MUG for a copy of our beekeeping policy along with the City of Milwaukee's ordinance, which allows for beekeeping in urban gardens in the City of Milwaukee. We are happy to strengthen the connection between community gardens and these beneficial pollinators.



Chickens in Gardens

As interest in urban homesteading grows, many city dwellers, including community gardeners, want to produce more of their own food not only by growing gardens, but also by keeping chickens for egg production. In late 2013, Milwaukee Urban Gardens, in conjunction with the Greenfolks Community Garden, began piloting an educational chicken coop at the Garden. The nearby families, gardeners and surrounding community enthusiastically welcomed the hens.

Maintaining a thriving chicken coop in a community garden requires dedication exceeding that of a traditional community garden. A dedicated volunteer is central to ongoing success of this arrangement. A review of this pilot project, planned for the winter of 2014-2015 will help determine the feasibility and sustainability of caring for chickens in MUG gardens.

Though this program is specific to keeping chickens at MUG's community gardens, we are happy to forward you the City of Milwaukee's zoning ordinances, which requires a city permit, detailing keeping chickens.



Young Farmers Program at Kilbourn Park

The Young Farmers Program at Kilbourn Park is Milwaukee Urban Gardens' community supported agriculture (CSA) community garden in Riverwest, which is easily accessible by bus, bike and major thoroughfares to the residents of Metro Milwaukee. High schoolers working with Groundwork Milwaukee cultivate over 10 garden beds of organic vegetables, and herbs on land generously provided by City of Milwaukee's Water Works Department.

The Young Farmers goals are:

- Provide healthy, locally produced food for people of all economic levels, including helping challenged populations improve their nutrition and access to healthy food.
- Use and model organic growing practices that protect our environment and reconnect people with the land that sustains them.
- Provide nutrition education to all shareholders and involve them in Young Farmer programs as partners in growing, preparing, cooking, tasting, and sharing the produce they grow at the garden.

Community supported agriculture is a relationship of mutual support and commitment between a local farmer and the community, in which participants invest in an annual membership, to cover the gardeners' production costs. In turn, members receive a weekly share of the harvest. This arrangement helps to guarantee the young farmer has a reliable source of support, while vegetables are grown and distributed in an economically viable and ecologically responsible manner. Ultimately, a CSA creates communities, where farmers and members become partners in the production, distribution and consumption of locally grown food.

In this program, our Young Farmers are involved in nearly every aspect of the farm's operations. Every shareholder contributes hours during the growing season, assisting staff with planting, weeding, and harvesting. Young Farmers arrange the weekly harvest in the Milwaukee Public Market for one weekly pickup day.

Supporting a Network

Milwaukee Urban Gardens coordinates over 70 community gardens. This large network supports programs such as the Groundhog Day Symposium and other train-the-trainer programs, creating opportunities to share and build upon existing successful strategies. This, in turn, empowers garden leaders to take the next step and become community liaisons, embodying MUG's vision, mission and principles and sharing them with others.

Our expansive network also gives us a seat at the table to provide feedback and recommendations for policy level decisions. For instance, the City of Milwaukee officially adopted urban gardens as a permitted use in all zone districts as part of the comprehensive update of the Milwaukee Zoning Code. MUG also has been actively providing input to Milwaukee Housing Authority redevelopment sites, serving as a member of the Milwaukee Food Council. Policy level decisions continue to reinforce with residents the importance of community gardens to neighborhoods.

For those wishing to access our network of community gardens, our main office serves as the initial point of contact. This allows the MUG staff to help interested gardeners find a nearby garden with available space. With a garden (or two) identified, MUG directs the interested gardener to the volunteer garden leader in charge of membership. This system has proven beneficial for many reasons, including the following:



For those wishing to access our network of community gardens, our main office serves as the initial point of contact. This allows the MUG staff to help interested gardeners find a nearby garden with available space. With a garden (or two) identified, MUG directs the interested gardener to the volunteer garden leader in charge of membership. This system has proven beneficial for many reasons, including the following:

- MUG is able to easily answer questions regarding the overall structure, mission and reach of our organization.
- Inquiries can be made about multiple gardens.
- When a garden is full, MUG's system limits the amount of phone calls a garden leader is expected to return.
- Garden leaders do not have to publicly post their contact information.
- As garden leadership may change, MUG tracks this information and maintains waiting lists in the interim. This decreases the chance that names of potential gardeners are lost during a change in garden leadership.

With our ever expanding network of gardens, we believe it is increasingly important to maintain an organized system to connect interested gardeners with gardens that have available plots.

Milwaukee Urban Gardens began as just a handful of community gardens sprinkled across Milwaukee that grew organically out of the desires of local residents. Organizers of these gardens saw the potential of joining together to create a formal organization. The goals of creating this organization were to connect the gardens, negotiate leases, solicit funding and provide support and resources, while protecting these garden groups from Development projects. Nearly 12 years later, with over 70 gardens in our network, MUG remains a grassroots organization, taking cues from those in the community who desire to create positive, local change through community gardens. With our network of gardens and gardeners expanding each year, MUG continues to focus on our mission to grow community-one urban garden at a time, with an emphasis on creating sustainable and inclusive neighborhood places.

Suggested Construction Start-Up Schedule

The following tasks briefly describe the itemized work efforts to be undertaken for short- and long-term construction of the community garden. The correlation of tasks to months may be skewed depending on when plans are initiated; moreover, the number and scope projects MUG has in a given year influences the timing of the first planting for a new community garden.

September

- Task 1: Design and Planting
 - Prepare layout plan to dimension and arrange physical site improvements
 - Prepare schematic irrigation plan for installation
 - Prepare planting plan to locate trees, shrubs and seed areas, sizes and quantities
 - Prepare architectural details/elevations, as required, to construct vertical structures

April-May-June

- Task 2: Site Preparation
 - Stake and install fence to enclose the site
 - Purchase or build and install entry gates
 - Stake the layout of pathways, food gardens, flower beds, composting area and vertical structures
- Task 3: Irrigation System
 - Install hose or pipe and hardware including valves and fittings as required

- Task 4: Garden Plot Prep
 - o Rough grade garden beds as per grading plan
 - o Amend soil, as required
 - o Level and edge pathways in preparation for crusher fines (pea gravel) material
- Task 5: Surface Treatments, Paths
 - o Obtain crusher fines and sandstone material
 - o Install crusher fines along primary pathways and secondary pathways

July-August-September (or as funds are available)

- Task 6: Planting
 - o Stake tree and shrub locations
 - o Purchase and haul trees and shrubs and obtain perennial seed
 - o Stake and install trees and shrubs and seed perennial beds
- Task 7: Vertical Structures
 - o Build and/or install tool shed or tool box
 - o Build and install compost bins
- Task 8: Signs



Roles & Responsibilities of the Garden Leader(s)

MUG community gardens are created with and for the surrounding community. Neighbors are encouraged to participate in all levels of development and site maintenance. Individuals of all ages, backgrounds, etc. are encouraged to come together in the spirit of community to enjoy the community gardens, whether that entails gardening, resting on a shaded bench or meeting with friends and neighbors in the garden.

A neighborhood garden leader or steering committee locally manages each community garden site. MUG encourages management by a steering committee, which allows the management responsibilities to be shared so that one person does not become overburdened.

The garden leader(s) basic responsibilities include the following tasks:

1. Communicate guidelines and expectations for each garden participant, their household, pets and guests.
2. Be the line of communication between gardeners and MUG. Each season, please notify MUG when your plots are full. Also, please participate in the spring Garden Leader Symposium, mid-season garden leader calls, post-season garden leader survey, end-of-year budget reconciliation calls and other community-wide events that MUG facilitates every year.



3. Secure completed plot appliances/waivers from every gardener, every year. Signing the plot application/ waiver is necessary for MUG's insurance carrier and required by most landowners to secure the property. The address on the plot application/waiver provides MUG a mechanism to ensure gardeners receive MUG's newsletter. This provides stories and experiences from other community gardens, gardening techniques, recipes, web connections and best practices for vegetable growing.
4. Determine and collect plot fees. MUG recommends that plot fee prices be set between \$35 and \$60 per plot. These fees cover water cost, compost beyond the six free yards MUG provides annually, and can also be used to purchase small gardening tools such as shovels, mulch and hoses, or invest in garden improvement projects. Though MUG serves as the fiscal agent for gardens, the garden leaders are responsible for tracking all funds related to the garden.
5. Coordinate plot assignment. Plots are available to residents regardless of their affiliation with MUG, the Garden Leader(s) or the Land Owner. Typically one plot is available per family unless there are vacancies. Seniority is not a priority over a "waitlisted" household. Nearby residency is not a priority. Maintain an ongoing waitlist and do not clear people from year to year unless they have identified they are no longer interested.
6. Secure background checks when appropriate. For gardens located on school grounds, secure background check forms from every gardener according to the MPS background check policy instated in 2010.
7. Disseminate yearly water restrictions and use guidelines from MUG to the gardeners.
8. Organize community potlucks and workdays, (weeding common areas, maintaining the compost bins, etc.) as necessary. MUG suggests scheduling these events at least monthly for social and community building value. Each site is responsible to perform maintenance. Gardeners must decide how to maintain the common areas (paths, lawn plazas, etc.). Some schedule regular maintenance workdays, others organize committees for specific tasks, others have a sign-up sheet with a minimum number of hours required per month, and still others assign one task per gardener.



9. Ask for help when you need it. MUG is available to assist community gardens with the fundamental site elements required for successful garden function: water, plots and pathways, perimeter fencing and tool storage. As our project priority list is constantly in flux, we appreciate a garden's patience when we are asked to support and/or complete garden enhancement projects. Please know that your project is important to us.
10. Educate your gardeners about what to do in case of irrigation problems. If your community garden has a break in the irrigation system, gardeners are asked to find the backflow device or the main shut-off valve and turn off the water. Once the water is off, gardeners should contact their garden leader to determine if the capability exists within their garden to properly complete the repair. If the garden leader requires MUG's assistance and the break is underground, gardeners and/or garden leaders will need to dig up the ground around the break to expose the broken pipe. That includes digging a hole large enough to allow for the repair, including the ground below and on either side of the break.
11. Mediate issues within the community garden. Issues may include neglected/weedy plots, vacant plots (can be planted in pumpkins or a cover crop), watering issues, alcohol, smoking, pets, or harvesting another gardener's produce. As per the plot application/waiver that every gardener should sign every year, DUG is the "final say" if the participants and the garden leaders cannot resolve the conflict.
12. Inform gardeners and community members of opportunities MUG provides at the community garden and for the broader community, including workshops relating to composting; basic organic gardening; organic pest and weed control; seasonal, companion and succession planning; soil amendment; and water conservation methods. Post community garden events and general MUG events' fliers in the garden gardeners. and distribute to



Suggested Steering Committee Roles

Steering Committee

As directed by the entire membership of the community garden, this suggested three-person committee is responsible for conducting the business of the community garden and ensuring a positive, rewarding experience for all gardeners. It is suggested that positions are a two-year commitment with the potential for renewal.

- Administrator - Provides communication avenues between gardeners, committees and MUG. Other responsibilities include setting monthly meetings and agendas, bringing suggestions/requests to the steering committee, leading meetings, writing minutes, maintaining guidelines and maintaining records and documents.
- Membership - Assigns and tracks membership. This includes assigning empty plots, fielding phone/email inquiries, maintaining the gardener waiting list and tracking member work hours.
- Treasurer - Manages the garden budget and conducts the financial business of the community garden. This includes maintaining financial records, collecting plot fees, paying bills, preparing monthly finance reports and maintaining records, and facilitating the expense reimbursement process with MUG's garden leader coordinator.

Community Building Committee

This committee provides outreach and community building activities for the community garden. This could include a formal donation program, outreach events including non-gardening neighborhood residents, a garden newsletter, organizing potlucks/social events, etc.

Maintenance Committee

This committee ensures the upkeep of the garden's physical infrastructure. This could include smaller working groups for improvement projects, composting, tools and storage shed, maintaining the perimeter xeriscape beds, the garden irrigation system, etc.

Garden Mentoring Committee

This committee offers training and advice, coordinates workshops with DUG, and educates community gardeners within the community garden. This could include specialty trainings on organic gardening, water wise gardening, composting, mediating garden disputes, youth education, etc.

Suggested Month-By-Month Leadership Activities

January-February:

- Go over site plan (call MUG if you do not have one) and determine which gardeners are staying for next season and which plots are empty.
- Prepare a garden budget, including estimated water and compost expenses and new equipment needs.
- Determine plot fees and gardener guidelines (fill in blanks on gardener waiver, located on back of the gardener application).
- Encourage qualified gardeners to apply for Free seeds and Transplants Program. Deadline is typically February 1. Call MUG for more details about how the program works.
- Review the waiting list for new community gardeners. Lists should be rolling and first come, first serve; for instance, a waiting list should not be started new each year to be fair to all.

March

- Organize a spring clean-up day, usually planned for April.
- Go over site plan and determine if any garden structures need repair, repainting or improving.
- Fill vacancies in garden from garden waitlist or call MUG for ideas on how to advertise to community members for new gardeners.
- Water shrubs and trees during warm spells (over 40 degrees). Continue this from March through summer and fall. Drying winds kill more plants than cold temperatures.
- Prune trees, especially any crossing limbs or broken branches.



April

- Hold a pre-season mandatory meeting with all community gardeners to discuss guidelines, plot assignments, potlucks, training events and community workday schedules. Make a list of special skills gardeners may be willing to share.
- Do spring clean-up tasks: garden preparation, including tilling plots, composting and staking new plots, and repairing winter damage to common areas in the garden.
- Prune roses. Winter-killed canes should be pruned at a 45-degree angle. The pruned ends can be sealed with Elmer's glue.
- Hold special training or education sessions. Call MUG if you would like ideas or information on Master Community Gardeners coming to your garden to do trainings on various topics.
- Assign garden plots and collect plot fees.
- Gather names, addresses, emails, phone numbers and signatures of all gardeners on the gardener applications/waiver so participants may be put in MUG's database and receive copies of our newsletter.

May

- Water is typically turned on the first week of May. With over 120 gardens to attend to, MUG asks for your patience. Spring frosts may occur as late as the second week in May.
- Call MUG when all of your garden plots are full so that it can be noted on our website.
- Call MUG to schedule compost trainings. Have participants chop all compost material in 1- to 2-inch pieces ahead of time. Make sure many of your gardeners can attend,
- Hold special training or education sessions. Call MUG if you would like ideas or information on Master Community Gardeners coming to your garden to do trainings on various topics.
- PLANT!
- Hold garden potlucks.

June - July

- Re-assign unused or neglected plots. Call original gardeners before re-assigning the plot.
- Call MUG when all of your garden plots are full so that it can be noted on our website.
- Keep garden information posted or have gardener newsletter to inform gardeners of current happenings.
- WEED! Especially in common areas. Weeding should occur on a regular basis.
- If your garden has sod, continue to mow and water.
- Hold special training or education sessions. Call MUG if you would like ideas or information on Master Community Gardeners coming to your garden to do trainings on various topics.
- Mulch all perennials and trees with chipped branches to conserve water.
- Hold garden potlucks.



August – September

- HARVEST! Try to harvest all produce (other than pumpkins and winter squash) on a regular basis.
- Arrange to distribute extra produce to needy families or agencies. Many gardens organize weekly distribution days.
- Continue weeding and begin cleaning garden plots for winter.
- Encourage food preservation for winter months.
- Hold garden potlucks.

October

- Have a garden clean-up day for everyone to clean their plots and help with common areas.
- Prepare the garden for winter by planting cover crops such as winter rye or winter hairy vetch. All plots should be put to bed by November 1.
- Make sure compost areas are not overflowing and all plant material has been chopped into small pieces.
- Store tools and supplies for winter. Tools should be cleaned, wooden handles protected with linseed or mineral oil and all rust removed with coarse sand paper. No cages or mobile supports can be left standing in the garden.
- Have an end-of-season potluck to celebrate successes.
- Prepare a final report of activities and evaluate the season for next year's improvements.



Produce Theft & Garden Vandalism:

MUG's Recommendations

Someone is stealing our produce! What can we do?

It's important to remember that most garden theft is not malicious. Often, people that steal produce are hungry and take from the garden if an opportunity presents itself. On rare occasion a community gardener might be tempted to take produce from another gardener's plot. Recognizing the incredible disappointment when a long-awaited vegetable is taken, seasoned gardeners tend to adopt the attitude that if it were needed that badly, hopefully it was enjoyed.

Garden theft, while frustrating, is usually an act that comes from hunger or misunderstanding. Community gardens, by their nature and location, will always be prone to theft, more than home gardens. As a community gardener, you will have a much happier growing season if you anticipate and accept that garden theft may happen, regardless of the steps you take to prevent it.

MUG recommends the following strategies for deterring theft:

Install a Donation Basket: Affix a donation basket to a fence post near the front gate of the garden, where gardeners can easily donate their extra vegetables on their way out of the garden. Ideally the basket should include an informal sign offering vegetables to neighbors in need and requesting that the basket be left in place. It would also be useful to explain on the sign the way the garden works and to go about getting on a list for a plot. Rather than asking all gardeners to donate surplus to the basket, another strategy is for your garden to designate a community plot, cultivated specifically to provide produce for the basket. Donation baskets make non-gardeners feel welcome and included, and that can go a long way toward creating a sense of community in your garden and neighborhood and in turn preventing theft.

Plant Perimeter Edibles: Plant a row of food along the outside of the garden fence, such as a raspberry hedge, or grape vines, that people walking by can snack from, potentially curbing their temptation to enter the garden and take vegetables from individual plots. It may be helpful to have a sign explaining what is free to pick for the passers-by versus what is grown for individual gardeners.

Educate the Broader Community: Create a flyer mentioning all of the neighboring businesses, institutions and police officers that are partnering with the garden in an informal neighborhood watch program. The purpose of the flyer is to help spread the word that a community garden is a neighborhood asset and that a garden works best when everyone does their part to help prevent theft and vandalism. The flyer should also explain how a community garden works, how to get involved and that community garden doesn't mean produce is free for all community members to take. Recently, MUG has developed signage for gardens to attach to their perimeter fence, which asks passers-by to respect the garden and the hard work of the gardeners and to please not take produce without permission. To obtain one of these signs for your garden, please contact MUG.

Engage Watchful Eyes: If you seem to have a problem with theft (or vandalism), notify gardeners and neighbors and ask them to keep an eye on things. Make friends with neighbors whose windows overlook the community garden, trading flowers and vegetables for a protective eye. Talk to the community officer in your area and ask them to be sure and add the garden to their daily route.

Confronting Someone in the Act: With every strategy, communication is critical, which means talking to the produce thief if you happen to catch them in the act. It's important not to accuse, but to rather approach them in a friendly way, explain how a community garden works and that taking produce without permission is not allowed and then invite the person to get involved as a gardener or volunteer. Gardeners are often generous people and tend to be very willing to share their harvest, but they are especially willing when asked.

Plan Your Plot to Deter Theft: Consider arranging your plot to be less inviting to theft, including planting potatoes, other root crops, and/or less desirable vegetables at the edges of your plot. Be sure to harvest crops like tomatoes and peppers as soon as they ripen. Other creative ideas include planting crops with non-traditional colors (Le. purple beans or white



Someone is vandalizing our garden. What can we do?

Vandalism is a willful act of destruction that is often difficult to police or prevent. It has been MUG's experience that most vandals are neighborhood youth just looking for something mischievous to do. The best solution is to be as inclusive as possible and provide ample education about the garden to the surrounding community. DUG encourages community gardeners to invite neighbors and young people to enjoy common spaces in the garden and even to get involved as a participant. Community gardens tend to be left alone when gardeners are present in the garden, when gardeners and neighbors know each other, and when everyone values and understands the purpose of the garden.

In addition to the strategies suggested to deter theft, MUG recommends the following to deter vandalism:

Visit the Garden Often: Encourage all gardeners to visit their garden regularly, including spending social time in the garden. A garden that is continuously populated by gardeners is the best deterrent for vandalism.

Invite Neighbors to Join a Garden Celebration: Host a potluck or picnic in the garden and invite the whole neighborhood, including neighborhood youth. Offer activities at the potluck to interest youth, such as painting a mural together. People who feel excluded from the garden are potential vandals. Also consider inviting local police and community officials to garden potlucks and celebrations.

Be Diligent about Locking the Gate: It is worth locking gates when leaving your garden. While this may not keep out determined vandals that are just as willing to climb a 6-foot fence as they are a 4-foot one, it does have the potential to keep out those that are wandering by just looking for something to do.

Add Lighting: Consider requesting alley or sidewalk lighting from the City, or install a few solar powered low-voltage lights on the interior of the garden.

Have Children Paint a Mural: Arrange a project with the children in the garden to paint a mural on a garden bench back or to hang on the outside of the fence. The mural can include a request for the community to respect and look after the garden, as well as a message about how much the children care about their garden. Often, youth involved in the garden become the gardens best protectors.

Be Thoughtful when Planting Pumpkins: If your garden plans to grow pumpkins, consider making them less visible in the garden in some way, including their location. Their bright orange color and their size become a major temptation for vandals. Consider

Involve People in Their Own Process of Behavioral Change: If specific individuals are known to be vandalizing the garden, provide a positive channel for them to get involved in repairing the damage. Have them replant, work on digging in compost to soil that has been compacted or be engaged in making improvements to small areas of the garden. Most people would rather be recognized for acts in which they can show a sense of pride than for those in which they have been responsible for damage.



Effective Water Conservation Techniques

Gardening mandates the conscious use of effective water conservation techniques. We believe community gardens should be models of efficient water use, especially in seasons of drought. Additionally, use of water conservation techniques have several other benefits including reduced water costs and weed proliferation. If the following techniques are applied, plants will respond by growing quickly and by producing an abundant harvest. We've also outlined a set of water restrictions required of all community gardeners in response to the on-going drought. Regardless of the duration of the drought, however, MUG advocates gardeners adopt and incorporate these techniques as a way of life.

Water Plants in the Cool of the Day, especially during the Evening:

Watering first this in the morning or an hour or so before sunset, allows plant roots to utilize moisture more efficiently. Late day watering allows the water to percolate into the soil for 12 hours or more before the sun and wind magnify the effects of evaporation and transpiration from soil and foliage. Mid-



day watering is a poor use of gardening time and an extremely inefficient way of watering into thirsty soils. Since plants do a significant amount of their growing at night, it makes sense to provide moisture prior to the critical period.

Water the Roots and Soil, Not the Leaves:

Although some plants, such as the broccoli family, and lettuces, don't mind overhead watering and moist leaves, most vegetables prefer watering at soil level. Tomatoes, peas, and members of the squash and melon families can suffer from disease problems that proliferate on wet foliage.

Cultivate the Soil Before Watering:

Hoe the soil around plants at least once a week. This serves a dual purpose, cutting off germinating weeds that compete for moisture, and also opening up our heavy clay soil so that water can more easily penetrate to deeper levels. Watering should be done after cultivation, while the soil is loose and airy.

Compost Throughout the Season:

Compost should be applied at the beginning of the gardening season, digging two inches of compost into the top 4 to 6 inches of soil, as well as several other times during the summer and fall. Spread a shovel of compost around vegetables, flowers, and herbs, lightly cultivating the soil to incorporate the organic material. Since compost has the ability to hold up to 100% of its weight in water, this allows soils to hold and release moisture and organic nutrients slowly. Having compost-enriched soils is one of the best water conservation techniques available to gardeners.

Space Plants so that their Mature Leaves Shade the Soil Surface:

Soil that is in the shade, even in conditions of drought, is more capable of retaining moisture and reducing evaporation. The mini-climate that is produced by plants that are spaced so that mature leaves almost touch, provides a shading and cooling effect of the soil surface below. You can extend the growing season of “cool season” plants, such as lettuce, by growing in the shade of taller plants such as pole beans. Their leaves provide a “living mulch” to help cool the roots of surrounding plants and to retain moisture.

Mulch any Uncovered Soil Areas:

Mulch conserves water, moderates soil temperature, helps to prevent erosion, and slowly enriches the soil with humus as it decays. Pesticide-free grass clippings that have dried out for a few days, fall leaves or clean straw, are all excellent sources of mulch. Exposed soil areas that are not being used for growing, quickly become weedy and unsightly and are spaces where wasteful evaporation occurs. Mulch warm season crops, such as tomatoes and peppers after the soil warms. Mulch cool season crops, such as lettuce, peas and broccoli several weeks after they have been transplanted or after they have been growing for about a month after germination.

Check the Soil for Needed Moisture:

Most vegetables need about an inch of water per week for adequate growth. Poke a stick or your finger 1 to 2 inches below the soil surface to see if water is needed. Soils that are exposed to the sun (with no mulch), and are deficient in organic matter, will be significantly less efficient at retaining moisture and nutrient supplies than those that are shaded and compost enriched.

Wilting Leaves Don't Always Signal a Call for Water:

Large leaved plants, such as those in the pumpkin/squash family, normally droop during the heat of the day. Plants are just minimizing the water loss (due to transpiration), and watering them at this time will increase water loss rather than lessen it. It also weakens the plants by promoting shallow rooting structure.

Utilize Efficient Watering Tools:

Using a hand-held watering wand with a shutoff nozzle, allows you to water underneath leaves, close to the soil surface. This also breaks the force of the spray and lessens effects of soil compaction and erosion. Water with a low volume spray, as this lets water percolate deeply into the soil. Clay soils absorb water slowly. Watering for a short period of time, allowing the water to infiltrate the top layer, and then remoistening the area is a more efficient watering technique rather than short, intense watering. As an option to hand watering we suggest the use of black soaker hose "snaked" through your garden at the base of your plants.



Harvest Frequently:

Harvest crops while plants are actively producing and healthy. Overgrown, insect and/or disease-laden plants should be removed and the area replanted to another type of plant or seeded with a cover crop. When the plant is taking more out of the soil than it returns,

Letter Template to Alderman

Community projects are most likely to succeed long-term with support at all levels; both at the community level, and when the community's leaders are aware and/or involved. Especially if a garden group is seeking to garden on City of Milwaukee property, Milwaukee Urban Gardens requires each applicant and gardening group to obtain a letter of support from the Alderman/woman representing that district.

Below is a sample letter for you to send to your elected official. Please feel free to modify the text to your project. Send a copy to the correct Alderman, and include a copy of the Alder's letter with the application materials to MUG.

[Date]

[Alderman's name, X District]

City Hall, Room XXX

200 E Wells Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear **[Alderman _____]**:

I am writing this letter to inform you of the community garden project known as **[Garden Name]**, located at **[Garden Address]** in the **[Neighborhood]** community, which is in the **[District #]** district. The property, currently a vacant lot, will be ours to use through a land use permit specifically drafted for community gardening, which is managed by Milwaukee Urban Gardens.

Organized by **[Community Leaders Name]** and **[Name of the COPa]**, the project is supported by the surrounding community and will greatly benefit the area **[Provide details as to how the project will benefit the immediate and larger neighborhood]**.

The **[Garden Name]** will become **[Explain the short term and long term plans and goals for the space, and how all of the individuals and groups involved will work together to make it happen]**. We would greatly appreciate your support in our efforts **[Briefly explain ways you foresee them helping with the project]**.

In conclusion, our community is fully committed to the sustained success of **[Garden Name]** and we would appreciate your full support.

Thank you for your time, and please consider advocating for our own, and for similar community gardening projects within land use legislation and strategic community development planning.

Sincerely,

