

The Community Garden Partnership

“growing food, people and communities”



All Community Gardens have basic needs and share common challenges, but they are unique garden communities. They result from the skills, talent and contributions of their members and local community in building both the garden and a community around the garden. Consequently, securing the future of community gardens will require a diverse set of resources and solutions.

For example, those gardens located on public lands need public sector support to secure the garden site, whereas gardens located on privately held lands require the support of organizations and individuals. Other needs, such as supplies and technical assistance, are required to a varying extent by all the gardens. Consequently, community gardeners, through a cohesive network, are best suited to meet the complex and different needs of garden communities, including advocating and promoting community gardens. What happens with one community garden affects all, and therefore it is in the best interest of community gardening that each are organized and work collectively for its future.

The Community Garden Partnership represents a group that advocates, negotiates and collaborates on behalf of community gardening. The partnership gives community gardeners a unified presence and the capacity to educate the general public and each other on the benefits of community gardening, and to further partner with public entities and interest groups to achieve common goals. Given decreasing funds for both the public and nonprofit sectors, community gardens must begin to rely on other methods for sustaining themselves. We, at Community Garden Partnership must create cross-sectional partnerships with these entities to ensure the future of community gardening while achieving mutual goals in our community.

The Community Garden Partnership’s mission of “growing food, people and communities” is in keeping with efforts that support gardeners in creating vibrant supportive communities that serve public, social, ecological, security and educational goals.

Partnerships with other organizations and businesses to advocate for public policy changes in areas that include, but are not limited to: health, anti-hunger, green space, nutrition/anti-obesity, cultural nutrition, homeland preparedness, and more will enable Community Garden Partnership and the gardeners themselves to provide meaningful contributions to their community.

Gardening connects people to the soil and is an important vehicle for understanding how nature operates; it shapes perceptions and values of the natural environment, fostering a respect that will ultimately improve all of our green space. While our community becomes more densely populated,

and more and more green space is covered with concrete it becomes increasingly important for people to have access to space to grow their own produce and plants. Gardens enable the knowledge and skills of growing food (and the preparation and storage) to be passed on to citizens from one generation and culture to the next. Gardens are one of the few spaces where people of different ethnicities and ages can connect and form a bond across these usual boundaries.



Unlike many areas in our community that offer green space, community gardens are a comparative bargain. They use relatively little land, labor and water, compared to seasonal use facilities such as athletic fields and public golf courses. For community gardens, 80% of the cost is in the labor and that is volunteered by gardeners (Schmelzkopf 1996). Community gardens also offer a range of activities beyond gardening. They can become sites for educational and art programs and spaces for the community to meet formally and informally. A healthy urban landscape must include the ability of all residents to participate in a community garden setting that is located where there is need and desire. They can, and should, be community assets, providing a number of benefits to residents:

- ✚ Restoring relationship to the land
- ✚ Restoring ability to develop self-sufficiency
- ✚ Food sustainability
- ✚ Connecting people to the source of our food
- ✚ Exercise and social time in the outdoors
- ✚ A space where people can get to know their neighbors
- ✚ A place where different cultures within a community can come together and learn best practices and develop cross-cultural relationships
- ✚ Green relief from the built environment
- ✚ A space and community where organizations, agencies and institutions can extend their programming

This year the CGP has served 223 individuals and families by supplying affordable garden rental sites and trainings. There are currently 7 Community Garden sites, with 3 of those dedicated to “teaching basic/cultural gardening”.

If you or someone you know would like to become involved in the “greening” of our community, this is a fun and active way to engage and respond to the issues we all face in protecting our environment.

In the words of one Community Garden author, “Gardening is just like me: disorganized, rather unkempt, not always productive, unpredictable, but spontaneous and fun”. (J.Hershey).

Come on, have some fun!