Part Eight
Growing Goodwill

Community gardens are as much about relationships as they are gardening. How decisions are made among members is important and can be critical to the longevity of a garden. Learn how to build consensus among members, identify individual's talents, delegate responsibilities, and be a good neighbor. By building a strong foundation, you'll be ready to face any challenges that may arise.

Community Gardeners & Urban Farmers of Cuyahoga County, © Don Snyder

Inspiring Leadership

Community Leaders often display these characteristics:
- ☐ Vision
- ☐ Respect
- ☐ Creative problem-solving
- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Trustworthy & trusting
- ☐ Confident
- ☐ Motivated and reliable

When establishing leadership in the garden, these are qualities you will want to look for. Just because a person may not be the strongest gardener does not mean they will not be a strong leader. Providing opportunities for leaders to come forward will allow individuals to share their own special talents.

Top 10 Tips for Modeling Leadership

1. Set realistic expectations.
2. Divide-up and delegate work.
3. Show appreciation for work well done.
4. Be organized!
5. Welcome criticism.
6. Help people believe in themselves.
7. Inspire trust.
8. Herald a greater purpose.
9. Convince others they can lead.
10. Create structures that increase skills and support accountability.

Suggested Guidelines for Meeting Discussion

- ☐ Listen to Others.
- ☐ Don't Interrupt.
- ☐ Ask clarifying questions.
- ☐ Welcome new ideas.
- ☐ Start on time.
- ☐ Disagree with ideas, not people.
- ☐ Treat every contribution as valuable.

Adapted from American Community Gardening Association, Growing Communities Curriculum

The Consensus Process

A consensus process aims at bringing the group to mutual agreement by addressing all concerns. It does not require unanimity. In some cases, consensus can take longer than other processes, but it fosters creativity, cooperation, and commitment to final decisions.

Consensus asks us to step out of our narrow personal agendas and to make decisions that are in the interest of the whole group. This is not to say that personal concerns are left out of the processes. Agendas of individuals impact the whole group and are taken into consideration during the discussion portion of the process. Someone who has a personal concern with a proposal but who has had their issues deliberated on by the group and feels they can live with the decision can allow a decision to be made by "standing aside." A "block" is a persons way of disallowing a decision. A block is only used when a person has a strong moral disagreement or thinks that the decision will fundamentally damage the group. This is not a step to be taken lightly.

The steps on consensus are:
1. **State the issue.** What are we talking about? The Facilitator asks the person who brought the issue to the group to frame the issue.
2. **Clarify the question.** What needs to be decided? The facilitator or the framer states what needs decided.
3. **Discussion.** What are all the viewpoints? The facilitator asks each person to speak on the issue.
4. **Make a proposal.** The facilitator asks for proposals describing action that the group can take that incorporates all viewpoints.
5. **Discussion.** The facilitator asks people to speak to proposals by asking clarifying questions or by expressing support or concerns.
6. **Modify the proposal** by friendly amendments or withdraw the proposal and solicit a new one.
7. **Test for consensus.**
   a. **Call for concerns** – The facilitator restates the proposal and asks if anyone still has concerns. If so, the person with concerns is asked to restate them and others speak to those concerns.
   b. **Call for objections within consensus** – If people still have concerns even after they have been thoroughly discussed, the facilitator asks if those persons with remaining concerns are willing to stand aside. ("I think I don't agree, but I can live with it.")
   c. **Call for blocks** – If persons with concerns cannot stand aside then the facilitator asks if they are blocking. If blocked, the proposal is dropped or discussed further or sent to committee.
8. **Consensus is reached**. If there are no blocks, ask everyone to show visual (hand waving) or oral agreement.
9. **Decision Implemented**. Who does what when?

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Gaining Community Support

Reasons for supporting a community garden project:

☐ A garden is a non-threatening place for interaction among people of ages, cultures, income levels and physical and mental abilities.

☐ It is an on-going project that, after the initial start-up phase, can be sustained primarily by the will of the community rather than by outside agencies or experts. It requires relatively few funds compared to other outdoor activities.

☐ The process can involve a wide range of skills, allowing even non- gardeners to be involved.

☐ A garden can continue to grow and change in form, offering challenges and opportunities for its participants along the way.

☐ The space in which a garden is created is safe and controlled by the residents themselves.

☐ Visual changes can happen in the short term, unlike housing or economic development projects, which can take years to realize.

☐ Through the process of creating a natural environment and caring for living things, people learn to step outside of themselves and feel the pride of giving something beautiful to their community.

Ideas for Getting People Involved in Garden:

☐ **Let people know the benefits** – Let people know that developing a garden empowers people of all ages and abilities to participate and contribute something positive to the community and that they can make a difference.

☐ **Word of mouth** – Talk to neighborhood friends and anyone passing by the garden project about how they can become involved.

☐ **Use established institutions** – Talk to groups already invested in the community, such as church groups, community centers, boys' and girls' clubs, local council representatives, schools, garden clubs and businesses, to let them know about new developments with your community garden and how they can get involved in garden activities.

☐ **Post contact information** – Create garden signs (in all languages in your neighborhood) and pass out flyers listing the location of the garden, the contact person, meeting times and recent garden developments.

☐ **Connect with community** – Post your community garden flyers at local churches, community centers, libraries, schools, corner stores and other public locations.

☐ **Neighborhood libraries** – Maybe your local library has a display box. Use that space to tell the story of your community garden and how folks can get involved.

Security:

There is always concern about theft and vandalism in community gardens. You can ask neighbors to keep an eye on the garden. Sharing what you grow with them will give them a reason to care about the garden. Report major vandalism and theft to the police. Ask police to drive by when they can. Pick often at the peak of the season, 2-3 times a week. Grow more than you need so some loss won't hurt too much. If the garden has a fence with a gate, consider keeping it locked at all times, even when working in the garden.

Adapted from: Sustainable Resource Center, Urban Lands Program's Training Manual, p.2-9, 1999.