



Building Your Garden Leadership Team

Structure will help an organization to last; it will promote trust; it will help your group grow and create new opportunities for leaders to develop.

-American Community Gardening Organization

Dedicated, Motivated Individuals

Communal garden projects take passion for the cause, dedication to the project, and energy to get things done. It's more important to have a handful of dedicated team members than a fleet of individuals who are unmotivated about the project.

A Healthy Mix

A diversity of ages, backgrounds, knowledge, and skill levels strengthens your team. Start by identifying people in your organization, institution, or community who can play a potential role. Some questions you'll want to ask:

- ❖ Who's involved with the garden?
- ❖ Who does the garden affect? (Maintenance crews, neighbors, program staff, administrative staff, participants, participant families, etc.)
- ❖ What's missing? What added skills would strengthen your team and your garden?

For potential Garden Leadership Team members you might seek out:

- Long-time gardeners and enthusiastic new gardeners
- UVM Extension Master Gardeners
- Landscape architects, garden designers, landscapers
- Carpenters, builders
- Fundraisers, grant writers
- Planners, project coordinators, volunteer coordinators
- School or community leaders
- Social services and food security advocates
- Youth, elders



Value Youth & Elders,
whose perspectives are often left out of decision-making. Their opinions, ideas, and experiences can bring a unique perspective into your Garden Leadership Team.

Getting Organized

Start by asking what level of organization is appropriate for your garden group. Some groups will want to start by looking for an existing organization to operate under; for other groups an informal group or club is most appropriate; and still other groups may want to incorporate as a non-profit. Discuss as a group: (list from ACGA, *Starting a Community Garden*—see Resources Used)

- ❖ What is your purpose? What are your short and long-term objectives?
- ❖ How are decisions to be made? Who chooses leaders and how?
- ❖ How will work be shared? Who does what?
- ❖ How will you raise money? Membership dues, fund raising, grants, sponsors?
- ❖ Are you open to change? Flexibility is important when goals and members change.
- ❖ Do you want to be incorporated or act as a club?

Vermont Community Garden Network

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Clear Lines of Communication

Open, honest, and regular communication keeps your Garden Leadership Team alive and well. Some ways to maintain healthy communication:

- ❖ Set regular meetings to bring all those involved up-to-speed and provide opportunities for discussion and feedback. Efficient meetings will keep your group engaged—set an agenda and goals.
- ❖ Choose a form of communication that works well for your team members to regularly stay up-to-date on developments so that no one gets left out.
- ❖ Build relationships and trust, and share successes through frequent small celebrations and occasional big events. (i.e. potlucks, BBQs, garden open houses, work parties, fundraisers)

Defined Roles and Responsibilities

Clarifying roles will keep your group moving, growing, and organized. In addition to considering traditional roles, tasks will also arise with roles based on skills, knowledge, and desire to be involved. Some possible responsibilities and roles include:

Responsibilities:

- ❖ Participant recruitment
- ❖ Registration coordination
- ❖ Community outreach & partnerships
- ❖ Program implementation
- ❖ Event organization
- ❖ Group communication
- ❖ Garden site maintenance
- ❖ Volunteer coordination
- ❖ Garden education

Roles:

- ❖ Chair/Point-person
- ❖ Membership
- ❖ Fundraiser
- ❖ Publicity/Outreach
- ❖ Treasurer
- ❖ Secretary
- ❖ Education

An Open Invitation

Identify ideal times to consider bringing new people on, including when you're:

- Designing the garden
- Planning for the garden season
- Managing the garden and gardeners
- Developing community support for the garden
- Maintaining common areas
- Organizing events
- Reaching out to new gardeners
- Fundraising
- Expanding the garden
- Facilitating and attending gardening workshop

Resources Used (and worth checking out)

- American Community Gardening Association, *Starting a Community Garden*
<http://communitygarden.org/resources/community-garden-start-up-resources/>
- University of Wisconsin Extension, *Starting a Community Garden: How to Put Your Plot on the Path to Success*
<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/A3905-02.pdf>

*For setting up a group checking account see the IRS website for setting up an Employer ID Number (EIN):
<http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Employer-ID-Numbers-EINs>

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