

RESILIENCY: GARDENS, PEOPLE & PROGRAMS

Gardens are great teachers of *resiliency*; they demonstrate the capacity to adapt and respond to change and challenges. As gardeners and garden leaders there are questions we can ask ourselves to address needs and challenges in a way that builds responsive, sustainable, and resilient gardens and programs. Consider the following steps as a way to think through your problem-solving; not every element will be appropriate for your solution. The right combination will come from taking the time to observe, interact and understand the needs and challenges of your gardens, people, and programs.

1st Don't rush into a solution. Spend time working to understand the problem and its context. Pay attention to challenges and opportunities. Take time throughout to do the following:

- ❖ **Observe and listen**
- ❖ **Interact** with the garden and your gardeners
- ❖ **Use existing knowledge**

Examples: Spend time at your garden paying attention to patterns and trends. Ask gardeners how they perceive the challenge. Conduct an asset and needs assessment of your garden community. Bring together a group of people who will be able to contribute to knowledge of the challenge and/or solutions—build solutions together.

2nd Take a look at the resources you have available to you and how these resources can work together.

- ❖ **Onsite resources:** What resources are available and entering the system on their own?
Example: In developing your garden's educational plan, seek topics based on skills and knowledge of your gardens or others involved in your garden community.
- ❖ **Interconnection:** How can the various parts of the system support each other?
Example: Develop a mentoring program in your garden where experienced gardeners provide support to new gardeners.
- ❖ **Least change for greatest effect:** What's already going on that works?
Example: Before starting your own garden program, get to know what else is happening in the community and consider if your resources would be better used supporting other's efforts.
- ❖ **Turning problems into solutions:** How can you turn challenges into opportunities?
Example: A difficult to use, overgrown compost pile provides impetus for holding a workshop where gardeners learn how to build and use an effective compost system.

3^d Meet your needs by seeking diversity and redundancy. Consider how these elements interact.

❖ **Diversity:** What diverse elements could bring strength to your garden and program?

Example: Develop shared leadership that reflects the diverse needs, individuals, and culture of your garden community.

❖ **Multiple Functions:** How can you support as many needs as possible?

Example: Meet several needs at once with a fall harvest party—share a meal with your garden community; invite public officials and potential funders to the event to learn more about your garden; build a new shed; and discuss ideas for the future of the garden.

❖ **Redundancy:** How can each of your needs be met in more than one way?

Example: Along with diversity in your leadership team, promote shared responsibility. Take turns facilitating meetings, communicating with gardeners, and work to train new people to gain leadership skills and knowledge of garden management. This way, if one leader moves away or gets busy, the garden and program doesn't fall apart.

❖ **Overlap:** How can you overlap various elements to make for stronger solutions?

Example: Form a coalition of gardens in your community to work together to share ideas and resources and jointly fundraise.

Resources:

- *Social Permaculture: Principles in Action*, Lisa DePiano, Feb. 8, 2013, The Permaculture Research Institute <http://permaculturenews.org/2013/02/08/social-permaculture-principles-in-action/>
- *Resilient Gardening-Part I & II*, Christine Patton, Published by Peak Oil Hausfrau
Part I: <http://peakoilhausfrau.blogspot.com/2010/05/resilient-gardening-part-i.html>
Part II: <http://www.resilience.org/stories/2010-06-02/resilient-gardening-part-ii>

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