Best Management Practices for Community Gardens

Luke Drake
Rutgers University
Dept. of Landscape Architecture & Dept. of Geography
Cook Organic Garden Club
New Brunswick Community Garden Coalition
Overview

• Community Garden Diversity
• Management in Practice
• Urban, Suburban, Rural Community Gardens
• Management Vignettes

Photo: Luke Drake
Main Takeaways

• Reflect on your own and others’ motivation, assumptions, goals
• Attention to context
• Networking

Photo: Luke Drake
Diversity

- Reasons people join, stay, leave
- Character of members and neighborhoods
- Ethnicity, class, gender
- Built and natural environment
- Climate

*Look across cities, you see different practices*

Photo: Luke Drake
New Jersey: The (Community) Garden State

Photo: Luke Drake
Management in Practice

- Horticultural
- Administration
- Gardener Management

Photo: Luke Drake
Urban

- Soil
- Water
- Waiting lists
- Accessibility and Parking??

Photo: Laura Lawson
Suburban/rural

• Fastest growing CG segment
• Why are people going there?
• Access and parking
• Garden maintenance
• Touring the garden before joining to see the size of plots
Suburban/rural

Photo: Luke Drake
MANAGING GARDENERS

Photo: Jeana Drake
Gardener Orientation
Group Activities

- Work Days
- Seed Swaps
- Winter Sowing

Photo: Luke Drake
• Potlucks and Picnics
• Movie nights
• Pizza Oven

Photo: Daphne Speck Bartynski
It takes a community to make it work...

- Weekly, Monthly, Seasonally?
- Logging Volunteer Hours?
- Required or voluntary?
- Rotating schedule?
- Vacation flags
- Opt-out fee?

Example: Compost
- Make it a group activity
- High School students need service hours
- Give clear instructions
- Involve cooperative extension
- Donate compost to other community gardens

Photo: Luke Drake
Options in Charging for Plots

- Deposit
- Penalty
- Income
- Cooperative shareholders

- Beginning of year
- End of year
- Year-round higher fee
- Annual billing tends to work better

Photo: Luke Drake
Organic?
What does that even mean?

- Different definitions, different interpretations
- Consequences for gardener and garden mgmt
- Education at gardener orientation and meetings
Conflict Resolution

Squatter within the garden

Cut down the tree!

Border disputes

Land tenure...

Photo: Luke Drake
“Letting Go”

• “Once I learned to 'let go,' it became so much easier”

• Food is more than ______ (nutrition, culture, socializing, environment)

• *Try to see things from other points of view*
WATER AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

Photo: Luke Drake
• Getting water to the community gardens
  – Public supply - Rain barrels - Neighbors’ gutters
  – Fire Hydrants

• Movement of water within the garden
THE COMMUNITY BEYOND THE GARDEN

Photo: Luke Drake
The community beyond the garden

• To fence or not to fence
• Community plots for members and non-members
• Theft
• Community outreach

Photo: Luke Drake
Food Distribution

– Entire garden
– Dedicated beds
– Food boxes through church
– Table outside for passersby
– Group harvest
– Sales

Photo: Luke Drake
Food Distribution

Photos: Luke Drake
NETWORKING

Photo: Krissy Kopia
This Garden Grows with EcoSoil

100% natural, screened compost

Donated by ACUA
Local Government, Universities, Clubs, Small Business

Photo: Daphne Speck Bartynski
Sponsors and Fundraising

Photo: Luke Drake
Sponsors and Fundraising

Photo: Luke Drake
Connecting Beyond Local to Distant Others

Photo: East Brunswick Community Garden
MOST IMPORTANTLY: HAVE FUN!
&
“THERE ARE NO GARDEN MISTAKES, ONLY EXPERIMENTS”

http://communitygarden.rutgers.edu/resources.html

Photo: Chantae Moore