Best Management Practices for Community Gardens

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Overview

- Community Gardening in New Jersey
- What do Garden Coordinators have to say?
- Examples from the field
- Group discussion on best practices
New Jersey, A Diverse State

• Socially and Geographically
• Community Gardeners active throughout the state
HOW DO WE LEARN ABOUT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES?
2011-12 ACGA/Rutgers Community Gardening Survey

445 organizations—representing 8,550 community gardens
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Size</th>
<th>Gardens</th>
<th>Percent of Responses</th>
<th>Total Gardens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small-sized organization</td>
<td>1 garden</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>171 gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-sized organization</td>
<td>2-3 gardens</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>209 gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-sized organization</td>
<td>4-30 gardens</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1545 gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Large organization</td>
<td>31 gardens or more</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6623 gardens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Community Gardens are Everywhere!

- 73% -- Urban Areas
- 19% -- Suburbs
- 8% -- Rural

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WHAT DO GARDEN COORDINATORS HAVE TO SAY?
Interest is growing!

- 73% said they knew of other CG efforts in their town/local area
- 89% reported an increase in number of gardens in past 5 years
- Garden sizes are also expanding

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Garden Loss

- Lack of interest by gardeners: 37%
- Loss of land to private organization: 17%
- Loss of land to public agency: 13%
- Loss of funding: 15%
- Other: 17%

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Benefits

“With some of the many frustrations of starting a community garden there is also great joy. Nothing is more thrilling than to see a wide group of people coming together to grow their own food.”

• Food production and access
• Social engagement, community building, neighborhood revitalization
• Education
• Nutrition

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Challenges

Funding

People

Land

Materials

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WHAT ARE PEOPLE DOING ABOUT IT?
Group Work Days

- Clean and maintain common areas
- Site expansion and improvement
Group Work Days

- Weekly, Monthly, Seasonally?
- Required or voluntary?
- Rotating schedule?
- Opt-out fee?
Rules on Plot Maintenance

• Touring the garden before joining to see the size of plots
• Orientation meetings in Spring
• Required dates for plot maintenance
  – Spring, Late Summer?
Social Activities

- Potlucks
- Movie nights
- Pizza Oven (Australia)
Land and Water

• Public land -- Look at your city’s green/sustainability goals
• Search for multiple water sources
  – Fire hydrants
  – Rain barrels
  – Municipal
• Garden design can limit your water source options!
Networking!

• Food donations, swaps
• Sales to support the garden
• Connect with other CGs, organizations, churches
• Within community, city, region...even global!

Moreland Food Gardens Network
“There are no garden mistakes, only experiments”

• Find a balance between strong management and “letting go” that fits your garden, gardeners, and neighbors

• Communicate clearly, be flexible, adapt management practices to your local context

• Facebook: New Jersey Community Gardens

• Communitygarden.rutgers.edu
Group Discussion

• What are your own best practices?
• What have you seen others do?
• How does your local context affect these management practices?
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