

Portland Community Gardens

A handbook



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland



“In former eras, the plaza, town square and city stairs were far removed from the centers of production, with all their toil and grime, and from growing nature, disdained for its soil, thought to be so base, and its crawling creatures, thought to be so foreign to humanity. But now we are all in this together, and our social meeting ground will be in nature, and it will be the very place where we work together, producing all our needs. The sign we see today of this coming democracy is the growth of community gardens in the centers of our cities.”

- Donald McKinlay

Director Leslie Pohl-Kosbau

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Contact Information

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Mission

Portland Parks & Recreation's Community Gardens Program promotes community building and food security through gardening: providing garden opportunities at city-managed sites for the physical and social benefit of the people and neighborhoods of Portland.

History

In 1974, Portland's Neighborhood Associations asked Parks to start the Community Garden program. In response, Portland City Council passed an ordinance in March of 1975 allowing land to be used for public gardening and designating the Parks Bureau to carry out the program.

In 1975 and 1976, the number of garden sites grew from three to eleven. In 1980 there were fourteen gardens, growing to sixteen in 1990 and twenty three in 2000. In 2008, Portland Community Gardens 33rd year, the 31st garden was added to the program.

The Community Gardens program continues to be developed and operated by PP&R staff and community volunteers. Over time, the program has evolved to include many community-oriented activities and features discussed in this handbook.

Community Garden Sites

Thirty Community Gardens are located throughout the City of Portland. Each garden is divided into several plots for citizens to grow their own vegetables,

fruit, herbs and flowers, and to establish relationships with earth and neighbors. Gardeners rent their plots, usually about 200 or 400 square feet in size, by registering and paying an annual fee. Gardens are located on school, city, church and private property, differing in size and setting. The smallest Community Gardens have around a dozen plots, while the larger one has over 100 plots. All but two gardens are fenced, with gardeners holding the combinations to the locks. Every Community Garden has on-site access to water from spring to fall.

Gardens are increasingly designed with community spaces in mind. Popular features include common areas with tables and benches, kiosks and storage sheds. Most gardens have some raised accessible beds and pathways, and many gardens exhibit water-wise structures and public art.

Families, school groups and individuals of all ages, backgrounds and abilities use the gardens throughout the year. The high demand for more Community Gardens is evident in the long waiting lists for plots.

Garden Management

The overall program and the individual garden sites are managed out of the Community Gardens office at the Parks & Recreation Mount Tabor Yard in Southeast Portland.

The office processes all of the paperwork and payments for people involved in the Community Gardens Program. It organizes and schedules projects and events, while maintaining a network of contacts and information.

Volunteer Garden Managers provide the majority of the on-site management and serve as the main contact for gardeners. The Managers make sure plots are maintained, give assistance and advice to gardeners, organize social events, and act as the main liaison between the office and gardens.

Site management includes routine maintenance of the gardens to ensure that they function safely and properly. This is done in concert with the Garden Managers and according to each garden's specific needs. Regular maintenance areas include fences, locks, signage, sheds, tree pruning, path and plot layout, gravel, gathering spaces and safety issues.

PROGRAM AREAS

Demonstration Sites

Portland Community Gardens operates four major demonstration sites: the Community Demonstration Orchard at Gabriel Community Garden, the Small Fruits Demonstration Garden at Brentwood, the Bioswale Demonstration at Beach, and the Compost Demonstration Exhibit at Fulton. There are also demonstration Ecoroof Kiosks at five Community Gardens.

The above sites serve as public demonstrations of home-scaled organic gardening and growing methods. The fruit programs show how people can raise fruit in an urban environment. The compost site lets people see how they can recycle and reuse plant matter in a city setting. Both the bioswale and ecoroofs are examples of water wise-gardening that incorporate native plants.

The demonstration sites are also centers for active learning. Portland Community Gardens offers free workshops and work parties throughout the year. Their purpose is to teach people the skills needed for composting and raising fruit at a community garden or in their own backyard, as well as to raise awareness for ecologically smart plantings. Contact the Portland Community Gardens office for a schedule of upcoming events related to the Demonstration Sites.

Children's Gardening

The Children's Gardening Program is sponsored by partnerships between Community organizations, such as Slow Food Portland, and corporate partners like the Blazers and Fred Meyer with PP & R Community Gardens. The program started in 1992 at the Fulton Community Garden.

Children's Gardening at
Woodlawn Community Garden



The Children's Gardening Program provides a high quality gardening experience to youth ages 6 -12 years old at three community garden sites: Woodlawn in Northeast Portland, Lents in Southeast Portland, and Fulton in Southwest Portland. The children learn through active participation in the gardens, have access to healthy outdoor activities, and develop environmental and community awareness.

From May to October, different seasonal gardening

themes and topics are covered during class, incorporating a variety of hands-on activities. Special attention is placed on nutritional education and environmental awareness. The range of topics covered includes plant life cycles, soil components and compost, and food geography. Methods used to teach these topics involve a combination of art, games, hands-on experiments and physical movement. The program also includes a farm field trip, and culminates with a garden harvest party and cooking demonstration.

Children's Garden Program Goals

- Provide children with a quality gardening experience that teaches nutrition, garden ecology, and environmental awareness.
- Encourage the development of healthy lifestyle habits including diet, exercise, personal skills and interpersonal relationships.
- Elevate the children's appreciation of food and nutrition.
- Increase the number of children served by the program, especially those with limited financial resources.
- Participate in the Produce for People program by donating produce the children grow in the gardens.
- Give students access to wholesome food, thereby increasing their food security and promoting good nutritional habits.
- Secure adequate funding for the program to ensure its sustainability for successive years.

For more information on the Children's Gardening program e-mail childgard@ci.portland.or.us or call (503) 823-1617 from May to October; e-mail comgardens@ci.portland.or.us or call (503) 823-1612 from November to April.

Produce for People

Produce for People is a program that links Portland Community Gardens with local emergency food agencies to provide individuals and families in need with fresh, healthy produce. The program began in 1995, when Portland Community Gardens established a formal system of giving some of the fresh produce from the garden plots to service agencies.

Every year, thousands of pounds of food are donated directly from the gardens. Fresh produce is difficult to channel through the established emergency food system because it is highly perishable, difficult to store, costly to procure and not always available. The people who receive emergency food are often those in greatest need of the nutritional components found in fresh fruits and vegetables. Community gardeners aim to provide a steady weekly supply of produce to emergency food providers.

Volunteer gardeners set aside a particular plot, designate a row from their own plot, or donate their excess produce for Produce for People. The cooperative atmosphere of Community Gardens, coupled with a frequently unexpected abundance of produce, motivates gardeners to contribute their bounty to those in need. Over two thirds of the 31 gardens participate in Produce for

People. Partnerships have formed with emergency food agencies such as FISH Emergency Services, Ecumenical Ministries, NE Emergency Food Service, Neighborhood House and St. Francis Dining Hall. Produce for People enables gardeners to contribute to their community in a healthy, sustainable way.

Volunteering

Portland Community Gardens has a strong volunteer program that supports every area of its operation. Approximately 7,000 hours of volunteer time are consistently logged on a yearly basis.



Portland Trailblazers Staff Workparty at Woodlawn Community Garden

Hundreds of volunteers from the general public participate in garden work parties to address regular maintenance issues. Partnerships with organizations like Hands on Portland, Adjudicated Community Service, and the University of Portland increase volunteer opportunities for all parties involved.

Community Gardeners volunteer their time in a variety of ways. They maintain and beautify the common areas in their garden, serve as Garden

Managers, participate in Produce for People, staff information tables at outreach events, serve on the Friends of Portland Community Gardens board, and with special projects.

Education & Outreach

Portland Community Gardens promotes organic gardening, soil stewardship, plant diversity, native habitats, water-wise gardening and community building. It seeks to educate the public about these topics through hands-on workshops and events.

The following table of educational events is a general guideline for reference purposes only, and is not a set schedule. Check with the office for current information.

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Winter</i> | Fruit tree pruning | Getting started gardening | How to Compost |
| <i>Spring</i> | Compost | Seed and plant exchange | Least toxic pest control (fruit trees) |
| <i>Summer</i> | Small fruits Seed Saving | Fall and winter gardening | Water-wise gardening |
| <i>Fall</i> | Cider pressing | Compost | Preparing for winter |

Community Gardens participates in public outreach events in an effort to educate people about the opportunities and benefits of community gardening. Staff and volunteers exhibit at Fix-It Fairs sponsored

by the Office of Sustainable Development, Farmers Markets throughout the City of Portland, Health Fairs, activities sponsored by the City and Neighborhood Associations, and other garden-themed shows and events.

All Portland Community Gardens classes and events are open to everyone. Most take place rain or shine, and every effort is made to host them at convenient, accessible and appropriate venues.

Native Habitats

A third of all Portland Community Gardens have a designated Habitat Site with native plants and wildlife space. They are usually built around existing or native trees and plants that are familiar homes to native wildlife, or in areas that are too shady for vegetable gardening.

The four basic elements of the urban Habitat Sites are *food* in the form of native plants (berries, leaves), *water* (birdbaths, water dishes), *cover* (rock piles, fallen logs, dense foliage), and *nesting places* (nest boxes, trees.) Habitat Sites reduce soil erosion and contribute to the formation of a habitat corridor through Portland.

In addition to providing physical benefits, the Habitat Sites positively impact the community in many ways. These educational sites familiarize people with what is natural to this area of the world, instilling in them a better “sense of place.” They serve as living examples of how people can improve their watershed and support native wildlife, while educating the public about restoration efforts and techniques. They also help teach native plant identification skills with

informational signage.

Annual Events

Throughout the year, Portland Community Gardens hosts several annual events, open to the public. The events are intended to celebrate the season's bounty, to expose more people to Community Gardens, and to foster a sense of community among people involved in the programs.



Tomato Tasting at
Kennedy Community Garden

The following annual events are sponsored or co-sponsored by Portland Community Gardens: Seed and Plant Exchanges in April, Earth Day in April, a Garden Tour in July, Children's Garden Harvest Parties in August, the City Garden Fair in September, a Cider Pressing during apple harvest time, garden openings and renovations, and garden celebrations.

GARDEN PROGRAM DETAILS

Registration - How to Get a Plot

Community Gardens are divided into individual plots. Ground plots are approximately 400 square feet and cost \$75 per season; half-plots are approximately 200

square feet and cost \$38per season; accessible raised beds are approximately 32 square feet and cost \$20per season. Non-Portland residents pay an additional \$10 per year. All gardeners must pay a one-time \$10 deposit to join the program. Water is included at every garden and is available from spring through fall.

Citizens who wish to have a community garden plot must contact the Community Gardens office to register. If the garden in which you would like a plot is full, you will be placed on the waiting list for that garden, and contacted when a plot becomes available. In both cases, the office requires your full name, mailing address and phone number or e-mail.

Gardeners who are registering for a plot will receive a registration packet in the mail. It contains (1) a map of the garden with your name on your plot, the garden manager's contact information, and the garden's combination if there is a lock; (2) a copy of the Rules & Guidelines (see below); (3) a green Registration Card to be completed and returned along with payment to the City of Portland; and (4) a yellow Volunteer Card to be completed and returned.

Rules & Guidelines

Portland Community Gardens asks gardeners to adhere to the following **General Garden Guidelines**:

1. The garden plot and pathways must be maintained, planted or mulched. Paths must be flat and at least 2 ½ to 3 feet wide. Harvest and weed your plot in a timely manner. Gardeners who have consistently weedy, untended or debris-filled plots will be notified and asked to clean up their plot or pathway within 5

days. Contact your garden manager with questions. Subsequent inactivity will classify the plot as abandoned, and it will be forfeited.

2. Plots must be started by May 1st. Gardeners are encouraged to weed and plant earlier. Cancellations must be phoned into the office. The plot fee will be returned if the phone call comes within two weeks of the garden registration. The deposit in this case is not refundable. Neither plot fees nor deposits are refundable if there is a cancellation after two weeks or there is non-compliance with the garden guidelines.

3. Gardens must be maintained on a consistent basis. Persistently weedy or abandoned-looking plots will be considered for cancellation. Excessive trash or unsightly structures may not accumulate in garden plots. No structure may encroach upon the paths or community spaces, or shade adjoining plots.

4. Plots are non-transferable. Registered gardeners are responsible for keeping contact information current with the Community Gardens Program.

5. Dogs must be leashed and not allowed to run through the garden or go into other garden plots. People must use the pathways without going through the plots of other gardeners. Harvest only from your assigned garden plot.

6. Water only within your plot and do not let it drip or flood another garden or path. Conserve water by using mulch and by hand watering plants, for less than one hour. Be courteous to other gardeners.

7. Organic gardening is expected. There are many earth friendly products. **NO HERBICIDES (weed killers) ARE ALLOWED IN OR AROUND THE**

GARDEN.

8. Gardeners must keep locks tumbled and keep the combination a secret. Notify the garden manager if there is a problem with the locks. Notify the garden manager and the Community Gardens Program if there are on-going security problems at your garden site.

9. Crops are for home use, not commercial purposes, and must be legal. Do not allow plants to shade other gardens. Trees are not allowed in the garden plots. No kitchen compost.

10. Gardens must be cleaned, cover-cropped or mulched around perennial plants by October 31st. Deposits or registration may be forfeited if gardens are not cleaned up and ready for winter.

11. Gardeners must abide by the guidelines to qualify for a plot in the Community Gardens Program. Check with your garden manager for rules specific to your garden site.

Gardener Expectations

Each garden site depends on its volunteer gardeners to keep plots, paths and common areas productive and looking attractive to the public and the neighborhood.

Especially important is each gardener's commitment to:

- Tending the garden plot weekly, if not daily. (Plan to spend a minimum of 2 or 3 hours per week working your plot.)
- Keeping paths clear, and keeping all plants and compost inside the plot.

- Being courteous to other gardeners, and cooperative in spirit. Following the Community Gardens Code of Ethics.
- Removing debris from paths or borders of the garden.
- Leaving plot marker stakes in place, cooperating with water use, recoiling hoses, keeping any gates locked and combination numbers tumbled.



Community Garden plots in full growth

Helping with work parties, garden projects and related events **AT LEAST 6 HOURS PER YEAR.**

**“It takes a village to raise each other,
lend a helping hand”**

Garden Managers

Garden Managers are usually volunteers elected from the members of the local site. The Program Director may appoint a Garden Manager if the position becomes vacant, until elections in the fall.

The Garden Manager, or Managers for larger sites, are listed on the participant's map, and are often the first contact after a new gardener is assigned to a garden plot. Garden managers may help to orient a new gardener, in a positive and reinforcing way.

Garden Managers' Responsibilities

- Keep track of plots that are unused, neglected, or abandoned; contact the participants and report these conditions to the Community Gardens office.

- Write letters to the gardeners. The Community Gardens office will copy and mail the letters. Garden Managers or gardeners can write articles and submit them to the "Garden Notebook" newsletter.

- Help resolve conflicts regarding on-site garden issues such as pathway lines, water time and use. A measure of logic and cooperation is always the best approach.

- Organize and lead on-site garden meetings or events. Community Gardens can assist, if necessary.

- Form work parties to enhance the maintenance or renovation of the common areas on site. This may include plot layout, compost work, planting or mulching.

- Attend quarterly all-city Garden Manager meetings.

- Cooperate with other Garden Managers and Site Assistants. Help other volunteers with on-site projects and programs.
- Coordinate maintenance of common and habitat areas.

New Garden Development

People frequently ask Portland Community Gardens how to start a community garden. Community gardens address pertinent needs and provide numerous benefits to neighborhoods. However, developing a new garden is a complex process that requires time, fund-raising, planning, and community support and input. On average, a new garden requires \$50,000 for successful development. Partnerships also play a vital role in the creation and sustainability of community gardens.

Portland Community Gardens uses the following criteria for establishing a new community garden:

1. Demonstrated Need

There must be a bona fide need for a garden. Is the neighborhood without gardening opportunities? Do existing gardens have an unusually long waiting list?

2. Neighborhood support

The neighborhood must be in favor of actively supporting a garden in the proposed location. Usually this is indicated by members of the neighborhood who are interested in gardening that petition for and work towards garden implementation. These gardeners should have the backing of community and business organizations and work with



Portland Community Gardens as members of a steering committee.

3. Parking

An assessment of participant parking needs should be part of the planning process. Participant parking should not have an adverse impact on the neighborhood. Other means of transportation should be available, such as light rail, buses, bicycle routes, etc.

4. Property

Ownership or an agreement should be in place that allows use by the program for 10 years if considerable capital is expended.

Size: The property should support at least 15 or more garden plots. The number of plots is important for management efficiency and also as a necessary ingredient for participant interaction.

Topography: The property should be graded to assure drainage, yet be gentle enough to be accessible and should encourage participation from a diverse group of citizens, including seniors, children, and persons who are physically challenged.

5. Security

The site should be located in a safe place.

Location: The site should be located so that it enjoys a large amount of visibility from several vantage points. Sites in neighborhoods are more satisfactory than in industrial or remote areas. Neighbors watch over gardens, which reduces vandalism and theft. Gardeners feel an added degree of comfort and security when in a neighborhood.

Fencing: protects the gardens from most theft, illegal dumping, roaming animals, vehicles, and other intrusions. One of the gates should be large enough to allow access to tractors or large trucks for maintenance purposes.

6. Water

Gardens need water from the City water system (with a backflow prevention device between the service and the

garden) so that there is an adequate amount for the size of the garden. Hose bibs should be provided within the garden so that 50 feet of hose will reach every plot from an outlet.

7. Soil

The soil must be free of contaminants and hazardous materials. It should be a sandy loam, relatively free of stones and debris, and capable of growing plants. The site will need to be graded, plowed and rototilled or heavily mulched to be acceptable for initial gardeners. Gardeners are encouraged to be good stewards of the soil by using organic methods and employing cover crops during the winter months.

8. Light

The site should have unobstructed natural light. Trees, buildings, obstructions, adjoining buildings, or other obstructions on the site or on the adjoining property reduce the productive value for gardening.

9. Resources

New projects need funding for capital development and ongoing operation and maintenance.

10. Other considerations

In addition to gardening opportunities, other positive factors encourage neighborhoods to request a garden. Gardens add value as a healthy activity, provide fresh food, reduce crime, cultivate neighborly interactions and improve the quality of life. They can transform or enhance an area into a wholesome green space that adds social cohesion to the community.

More information on community garden development is on the American Community Gardening web site (see Related Contacts section.)

Starting a garden with Portland Parks & Recreation

Contact Community Gardens at (503) 823-1612.
Then visit <http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/>
and fill out an on-line application at Citizen Initiated
Projects.

Portland Parks and Recreation

www.portlandparks.org
Zari Santner, Director
Phone: (503) 823- PLAY (7529) Fax: (503) 823-6007
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City of Portland

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Friends of Portland Community Gardens

www.getdirtypdx.org
info@fgetdirtypdx.org

6437 SE Division St.
Portland, OR 97206

Friends of Portland Community Gardens is a not-for-profit group advocating edible gardens in the neighborhoods of Portland. They are committed to garden advocacy and education, partnership with environmental organizations, and a close relationship with Portland's Department of Parks & Recreation.

American Community Gardening Association

www.communitygarden.org
(877) ASK-ACGA or (877) 275-2242

c/o Franklin Park Conservatory
1777 East Broad St
Columbus, Ohio 43203

Annual conference, resources for community and urban gardening, publications, trainings, monthly teleconferences.

City of Portland/Multnomah County Food Policy Council

www.sustainableportland.org
Steve Cohen, Food Policy and Programs
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