

These Frequently Asked Questions and Answers (FAQs) are intended to help get your new community garden off to a good start by providing information from in-place community gardens on their organization, their garden design and infrastructure, and operation. The Answers reflect the diversity of gardens -- their objectives, structure, and methods. The FAQs are not intended to encompass the many ongoing specific and timely questions that are addressed on the ptcommunitygardens@yahoo.com site.

Garden: Castle Hill Community Garden
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<p>Q1: How is your garden group organized? How many members? What is the leadership -- core group of volunteers with lots of energy or natural leadership/organizing skills? and/or professional gardener who runs the day to day operations? other? What if any committees are there?</p>	<p>We have a small membership, about 5 in 2012, so are actively searching for new members for the 2013 season.</p> <p>Our organization is very simple: we have an appointed 'Garden Coordinator,' who takes on the responsibility of planning the 'what, where and when' of seed planting, and another member serves as treasurer to manage garden funds. Some members are more active and dedicated than others, but generally we manage to have an afternoon work party each week with most members in attendance. During the summer, two to three volunteers share watering responsibilities on appointed days, and other member may perform additional tasks for the garden as fits their schedule.</p>
<p>Q2: Describe your Member - Host agreement. Are there Member - Host agreements you think are critical to success over time?</p>	<p>We have no formal agreements.</p>
<p>Q3: How do you handle damage/injury/liability insurance for members and host?</p>	<p>We have no liability insurance.</p>
<p>Q4: What are the conditions to becoming a member? belonging to the neighborhood? other?</p>	<p>Generally, anyone who has an interest in our garden and our system of managing it is welcome to join us. We do ask for a dues contribution at the beginning of the season, and/or in-kind donations throughout the season. Our first memberships were all from Castle Hill neighborhood, but now only about 50% of us live on Castle Hill.</p>
<p>Q5: Do you have guidelines or rules about when new members can join the group, i.e., limited windows of opportunity during the year? ..</p>	<p>We have no formal guidelines. Preferably, we'd like members to join at the beginning of the gardening season, in order to enjoy a full share of the harvest later on. But we will accept members at any time during the year.</p>

<p>Q6: Do you have a philosophy, guidelines, rules, and/or by-laws? What are they?</p>	
<p>Q7: What is the one-time new member financial commitment? What are the continuing dues, and how often are they collected?</p>	<p>Most members contribute \$100 annually. Some have contributed more, and some less as an up-front cost, depending upon their circumstances, but those who have contributed less generally make up for it by making special purchases for the garden from time to time as special needs arise.</p>
<p>Q8: How much, how often, and for what one-time expenses have you collected special dues?</p>	<p>We've been fortunate to receive grant money for our biggest project, that of erecting a deer and rabbit-proof fence. So far we haven't needed special dues for any big projects, and hope that our annual dues will cover most all our expenses.</p>
<p>Q9: Do you pay a gardener to organize and oversee member work? Why?</p>	<p>No, all work is volunteer and unpaid.</p>
<p>Q10: To what extent has your membership grown after the initial garden was established, eg. after clearing, rototilling, major soil amendments, fencing, irrigation were completed?</p>	<p>Our membership has always been small, between three and six members at any given time.</p>
<p>Q11: Do you have 'categories' of membership where quantity of produce and work are 'graduated' -- similar to some CSAs where one can purchase, or work for, small (couple) or large (family) shares?</p>	<p>No, we are not too formal about these things. Generally, we harvest during the last part of each work party during the growing season, thus rewarding the day's work with an equal share of that week's harvest. We rely on a sort of honor system that if someone is not contributing work to the garden, they don't take harvest either. On the other hand, if a dedicated member cannot make a certain work party, they will generally put in an individual work afternoon, and will harvest a few things for themselves at that time. We do ask that they check in with the garden coordinator beforehand, and discuss what jobs they might do and what items are available for harvest.</p>
<p>Q12: Do you offer the option of garden members having a p-patch (an individual plot)? If so, are there common garden resources that are shared with the p-patch gardeners?</p>	<p>No, we do not want to divide our garden into individual p-patches. We prefer the preserve the community spirit of working together and harvesting together.</p>
<p>Q13: How are organizational functions such as bookkeeping and purchasing handled? Other non-gardening activities?</p>	<p>The treasurer keeps a computer log of income and expenses, and either makes purchases or reimburses other members who make purchases for the garden, unless they offer their purchase as a donation. Any remaining balance at the end of a garden season is kept in reserve for the following season.</p>

<p>Q14: What forms of community service does your membership perform -- food bank donations? community education? assisting new/startup community gardens? other?</p>	<p>We have given some of our produce to the local food bank. We also share part of our harvest with friends and neighbors in need, as well as the neighbor who owns the land.</p>
<p>GARDEN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION</p>	
<p>Q15: What is the typical? the ideal? garden size? How have you taken advantage of exceptionally small/large garden plots, less than ideal amount/ duration of sun, and ‘difficult’ soil types?</p>	<p>Our garden is adequately sized to meet our needs. This last season we enlarged it so as to allow for better spacing and more crop rotation possibilities, as well as space for some perennials. However, it seems a bit too large for our small membership to manage now, so we are really hoping for new members. Our soils were poor when we first developed the garden four years ago, but we have been amending them annually with manure, organic fertilizers and compost. Most of our garden is in full sun, the rest has partial sun, which has been very good for growing lettuces.</p>
<p>Q16: Describe your overall garden design/layout and what factors influenced it? Has it changed over time and why?</p>	<p>We have five long rows of raised beds, divided by a path through the middle, so ten distinct row areas, plus a large partial-shade bed at NW corner used for leafy greens, also some open, flat areas which we develop for crops of squashes, potatoes, corn, raspberries, onions, garlic and beans. We enlarged the garden to accommodate better crop rotation.</p>
<p>Q17: Does your garden include art? Describe.</p>	<p>No, not yet.</p>
<p>Q18: Describe what “organic” means in your garden. Does it apply to non-chemical insecticides, pesticides, herbicides? and non-chemical fertilizer? other?</p>	<p>We definitely stay away from chemical use of any kind. Everything we purchase and use in our garden, including our seeds and all of our fertilizers, are certified organic.</p>
<p>Q19: What if any invasive and vining crops do you prohibit (ex. Mint)?</p>	<p>We haven’t established rules about such things yet, but have been careful in what we introduce into the garden.</p>

<p>Q20: What produce have you chosen to grow -- perennial/annual vegetables? fruits? flowers? What season(s) have you chosen to grow -- spring-summer-fall, or winter garden also? What types of food use have you chosen -- immediate consumption? food preservation? Do you grow for seed production?</p>	<p>We work spring through fall, and usually have a few overwintering vegetables as well. Our standard crops include: peas, beans, varieties of greens, spinaches, chards & kales, broccoli, brussel sprouts, beets, carrots, tomatoes, corn, squash, onions, garlic, potatoes, cucumbers, strawberries, raspberries, nasturtiums, borage, calendula, French sorrel, thyme, parsley, tomatillos, sage, oregano, chives</p>
<p>Q21: What materials and methods of irrigation/watering and why? What suggestions regarding rain barrels?</p>	<p>Soaker hoses and hand watering</p>
<p>Q22: Any advice or considerations in selecting a water meter (assuming there is a host-provided water source)?</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Q23: What infrastructure (fencing, hoop house, watering/irrigation, compost bins, tool shed, and other) did you put into place initially? How has it grown? What approximate costs?</p>	<p>Our first fence was plastic netting supported by rebar and wire, costing about \$250. However, after three years it needed to be replaced. This last Spring we installed a much more solid deer & rabbit-proof wire fence, with metal gates, costing over \$600, built with grant money from both Master Gardeners and Tri-Area Gardeners. We also have a large three-compartment compost bin built and provided to us by the Jefferson County Public Works department. We also have free access to a tool shed owned by the same person who donates the property.</p>
<p>Q24: What methods do you use for managing compost -- bins, heaps, sheet-composting, other? How many households contribute compost material? Does the garden accept neighborhood waste? What kinds of problems have you experienced and how were they solved?</p>	<p>Bins, as described above. Neighbors have been invited to add their vegetative compost to our half-buried metal trash can repository. It's unknown how many people are contributing at this time, apart from us and one or two former members. The main problem composting is that seed-bearing weeds are often inadvertently added to the compost, and we have been unable to tend the piles enough to hot compost them to the point of killing these undesirable additions.</p>
<p>Q25: What is a good lab for soil testing? What kinds of soil test do you recommend?</p>	<p>We haven't done this yet.</p>
<p>Q26: What suggestions do you have for getting low-cost, free, donated, or loaned equipment and materials for garden startup activities?</p>	<p>Word of mouth, community awareness, direct appeal, applying for grants. In addition to items listed above, we have obtained free wood chips and manure merely for the asking. Also, our tools and work carts were all donated, either by members or neighbors. We also collect cardboard and lumber wraps from store dumpsters for use in mulching.</p>

Q27: What grant sources are available?	We have received grant money from both the Master Gardener Association and Tri-Area Gardeners.
Q28: For what projects/materials has your garden received grants?	Deer fencing, twice! (see Q. 23 above)
Q29: What methods have worked to develop your garden incrementally? Do you have suggestions for starting with a small section and developing the garden as infrastructure and membership grows?	Our initial garden lacked enough space for all our crops, so we grew a few things that we thought were relatively deer proof (potatoes, squash, onions, garlic) outside the fence. With our second fencing project, we now have enough space inside the fence for everything. If anything, we've enlarged beyond our labor-power to maintain. We are seeking new members!
OPERATIONS	
Q30: How does membership communicate (other than gardening together) -- phone trees, email list, at-garden message board, regular meetings?	By phone and/or email. Also by regular attendance to weekly work parties during the growing season.
Q31: Do members meet regularly? For what purpose? How frequently? What location? What is your meeting format (committee reports? problem solving? social/food? other?)	We haven't held formal meetings apart from our initial formation. Our membership has never been large, so informal communication works for us. As friends, we do like to socialize apart from the garden, attending events together, etc., plus hold a potluck harvest dinner party now and then.
Q32: How are decisions made -- by leader(s), by member consensus? both? other?	Through consensus, often deferring to our garden coordinator to make a final decision.
Q33: How are work parties organized -- around a special task (ex. fence building)? or regular, weekly sessions for ongoing gardening (planting, weeding, watering, etc.)?	At our weekly work parties, we choose our tasks from among the various things needing to be done, and also follow the suggestions of our garden coordinator. During the summer, two or three members will take on an individual watering day, in addition to our work parties. Any member may take on additional, individual tasks as fits their schedule or the nature of the task (e.g., seeding in appropriate weather, hauling in manure, etc.)

<p>Q34; How is work shared and/or assigned?</p>	<p>See Q. 33 above. We have not concerned ourselves too much about the distribution of labor. Each member volunteers his/her labor to the level of their own ability and commitment. The down side is that the garden could always use a lot more labor than it actually gets.</p>
<p>Q35: How do you harvest so that produce is shared equitably and that produce use is maximized?</p>	<p>We harvest whatever is ripe at each work party, and divide it equally among ourselves, with extras set aside for members who may be absent for a good reason, but who are generally faithful. (If a member continues to be absent in subsequent weeks, however, they forfeit a distribution.) On those occasions when harvest is plentiful, we also set aside shares for friends, neighbors, and/or former garden members, esp. those who struggle with financial challenges and/or disabilities.</p>