

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: New Song Community Garden
Submitted by: Sarah Young
Date: 9/20/09

ORGANIZATION	
<p>Q1: How is your garden group organized? How many members?</p> <p>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?</p> <p>What if any committees are there?</p>	<p>The garden group consists of New Song Church members and local community. There are currently 15 participating households. The garden is a hybrid of P-patch's and shared common plots.</p> <p>The Garden Coordinator communicates garden-wide news, needs, and information via email. Besides tending their P-patch, members volunteer for infrastructure tasks like building compost bins, as well as weeding and watering the common plots. Organized work parties are infrequent due to members' diverse schedules. No committees.</p>
<p>Q2: Describe your Member - Host agreement. Are there Member - Host agreements you think are critical to success over time?</p>	<p>Our agreements are informal and evolving. Members are expected to contribute to garden-wide tasks as well as tend their P-patch.</p>
<p>Q3: How do you handle damage/injury/liability insurance for members and host?</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Q4: What are the conditions to becoming a member? belonging to the neighborhood? other?</p>	<p>The garden is open to New Song Church members and the local neighborhood.</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>No restrictions re when one can join.</p>
<p>Q6: Do you have a philosophy, guidelines, rules, and/or by-laws? What are they?</p>	<p>The guiding principle is working together to build community in innovative and meaningful ways.</p> <p>New members contribute to a sweat equity project.</p>

	Each member is expected to amend their new P-patch with at least a yard of good quality compost, and keep their patch tended, weeded, and disease-free.
Q7: What is the one-time new member financial commitment? What are the continuing dues, and how often are they collected?	This is our first year, so ... Original members contributed \$35 towards fencing hardware, and \$15 towards irrigation materials. New members contribute \$50 towards future infrastructure improvements. We will install a water meter soon so members can pay their share of water use. Yearly dues TBD.
Q8: How much, how often, and for what one-time expenses have you collected special dues?	None other than startup costs of fence and irrigation (Q7). Fencing, trees/plants, lumber, manure, a (future) hand-wrought gate and other materials have been donated. As a result, our infrastructure costs are low.
Q9: Do you pay a gardener to organize and oversee member work? Why?	No, the P-patch's are individually managed, and there are experienced gardeners in the group willing to share their expertise and advice.
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?	Initial membership was 7 households. Other members joined soon after fencing and rototilling, but before the garden setup was finished. Other members have joined since.
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?	We are considering two levels of membership or participation -- P-patch only, or P-patch and common plots.
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?	In addition to each member's P-patch, there are common plots for corn and potatoes due to their large space requirement, and greens, herbs, and onions.
Q13: How are organizational functions such as bookkeeping and purchasing handled? Other non-gardening activities?	Pastor Jake manages the garden finances. Several of us carry the L2020 discount card.
Q14: What forms of community service does your membership perform -- food bank	Individuals contribute to the Food Bank along with extra produce from the common plots.

donations? community education? assisting new/startup community gardens? other?	Sarah participates in the Local2020 Food Resiliency Group. We are hoping to partner with the nearby middle school for an educational program.
GARDEN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION	
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?	The 6000 sf space works well, large enough to have room to expand, not too large for basic infrastructure like fence and irrigation. Our plot is ideal -- rich soil, full sun. Our biggest challenge is the wind, as we’re in an open valley floor.
Q16: Describe your overall garden design/layout and what factors influenced it? Has it changed over time and why?	A geometry of 12x12 plots and several triangles along the diagonal entrance path into the center of the garden. We added a 3’ border along the garden fence for climbing vegetables, flowers. The center plot, where the main path ends, will be for art, or flowers, or something special. Compost pile is tucked in the corner, although we may move it out of the fenced area next year.
Q17: Does your garden include art? Describe.	We are planning a hand-forged, artistic gate. Other art will come.
Q18: Describe what “organic” means in your garden. Does it apply to non-chemical insecticides, pesticides, herbicides? and non-chemical fertilizer? other?	No chemical fertilizers or pesticides.
Q19: What if any invasive and vining crops do you prohibit (ex. Mint)?	Mint.
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?	Annuals. Perennials -- artichoke, berries, herbs. Poppies (we remove the seed pods after bloom!), sunflowers, nasturtium, marigold. A few fruit trees. Some of us will winter-garden.
Q21: What materials and methods of	We’ve installed a simple irrigation system that

<p>irrigation/watering and why? What suggestions regarding rain barrels?</p>	<p>we may extend and enhance over time. PVC pipe from the main, to a distribution grid that includes bib/hookup at each plot. A rain barrel is on loan.</p>
<p>Q22: Any advice or considerations in selecting a water meter (assuming there is a host-provided water source)?</p>	<p>We have not installed a water meter yet.</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>Recycled fencing was used to build the raised beds; chain link fence (donated) and irrigation system went in next. Fence posts/hardware cost ~\$300, irrigation ~\$280. Next are bin composter, a permanent entry/gate, water meter, and hoop house.</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>We have an evolving compost pile in a garden. We plan to build a 3-bin composter. We don't accept neighborhood compost material. The only problem has been deciding, communicating, and sticking with the type of composting to do – hot compost or not? Each member carries out their non-compostables, as the City does not provide yard waste service at the Church.</p>
<p>Q25: What is a good lab for soil testing? What kinds of soil test do you recommend?</p>	<p>UMass (on Master Gardeners website link)</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>n/a</p>
<p>Q27: What grant sources are available?</p>	<p>Master Gardeners</p>
<p>Q28: For what projects/materials has your garden received grants?</p>	<p>We have submitted our first Master Gardeners grant request for materials to build an entry pergola to shelter tools, message board, etc. and materials to provide wind protection along the north fence.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>We have several 12x12 plots un-planted, for future use, either for additional members or common use. We also have permission to plant potatoes outside the garden at the edge of the neighbor's hayfield.</p>

OPERATIONS	
Q30: How does membership communicate (other than gardening together) -- phone trees, email list, at-garden message board, regular meetings?	Email for informational updates and requests for special projects. Mostly informal spontaneous discussions in the garden. We plan to put up a message board after we build a covered garden entry.
Q31: Do members meet regularly? For what purpose? How frequently? What location? What is your meeting format (committee reports? problem solving? social/food? other?)	No regular meetings. We meet for special purposes, such as planning the compost system.
Q32: How are decisions made -- by leader(s), by member consensus? both? other?	Garden-wide decisions are made by Pastor Jake in dialog and collaboration with others.
Q33: How are work parties organized -- around a special task (ex. fence building)? or regular, weekly sessions for ongoing gardening (planting, weeding, watering, etc.)?	Our only work parties have been for major projects, like clearing/rototilling and raising the fence.
Q34: How is work shared and/or assigned?	Shared garden plots are currently maintained by those that have the time and motivation. Members are expected to keep the paths bordering their P-patch clear of weeds. Last-one-out turns the main water off and secures the gate.
Q35: How do you harvest so that produce is shared equitably and that produce use is maximized?	Members pick continuous-yield produce from the common plots. We are still figuring out whether shared corn and winter squash will be harvested and distributed, or will be "pick-as-you-go."