

*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](mailto:ptcommunitygardens@yahoo.com) site.*

**Garden: Oak Street Community Garden**

**Submitted by: Cathie Wier**

**Date: 1/5/2009**

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| <p>Q1: How is your garden group organized?<br/>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>Number of members: 10 units (individual, couple, family, all the same)</p> <p>No professionals here, we have a range of gardening experience represented. Some jumped in to setup the fence, others to dig blackberries. When it came time to creating beds, some jumped in with ideas. Planting is now managed by individuals – who choose which areas they want to manage.</p> <p>No formal committees, but a couple of people manage our composting, a couple people plan the beds in terms of crop rotations.</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 nothing formal. Our Hosts, Roger and Cameron McPherson, stated when we started that the garden will be available as a community garden for 10 years. It certainly is helpful to know the length of the commitment of the host.</p>  |
| <p>Q3: How do you handle damage/injury/liability insurance for members and host?</p>   | <p>Assume self responsibility</p>  |
| <p>Q4: What are the conditions to becoming a member? belonging to the neighborhood? other?</p>   | <p>Cameron has managed the list of people interested in joining. We are primarily neighbors, and now have a few more neighbors on our waiting list.</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've added members when we had openings. We've now decided as a group to go another year without adding anyone.</p>  |

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| Q6: Do you have a philosophy, guidelines, rules, and/or by-laws? What are they?  | Our garden is organic. Our basic rule is that we want all amendments and seeds to be organic. This means we ask about free manure, free wood chips etc. We want to know what we are bringing to the garden.  |
| Q7: What is the one-time new member financial commitment? What are the continuing dues, and how often are they collected?  | Pulling out blackberries (and hauling), fencing, adding manure and lime, purchasing starts (asparagus, berries) and seeds, all added up to more than \$200 per share. Members who joined after that paid \$160. As needed we have additional assessments for seeds, amendments, row covers, etc. |
| Q8: How much, how often, and for what one-time expenses have you collected special dues?   | See above.   |
| Q9: Do you pay a gardener to organize and oversee member work? Why?  | No paid gardener. There is a lot of information available from garden members as well as in the larger gardening community. We treat it all as an experiment. If something doesn't work, we learn for next time.   |
| 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?                  | We targeted 10 members when we started, and have decided to stick with that for another year. We did have some people decide not to participate and others join during the first winter as we worked on pulling blackberries.  |
| 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? | No.  |
| 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?                           | We did offer this initially, but everyone wanted to work together.   |
| Q13: How are organizational  | Our host manages the bookkeeping. Individuals purchase as  |

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| functions such as bookkeeping and purchasing handled? Other non-gardening activities?   | necessary and hand in receipts. We try to agree on purchases before they are made (seeds, tools, etc.)   |
| Q14: What forms of community service does your membership perform -- food bank donations? community education? assisting new/startup community gardens? other?                                | We have a food bank bed and donate our excess as well. Garden members have helped put together a poster for the garden and promote community gardening at the L2020 booth at the Farmers Market and other venues. Cameron and Roger (our hosts) have promoted community gardening and our garden will be on the Master Gardeners garden tour in June 2009. One member (Cathie) represents our garden on the L2020 Food Resiliency Action Group. Members hosted a tour of our garden for a group that was planning to start a garden. |
| <b>GARDEN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>   |  |
| 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? | Our garden is 80'x80' with great sun exposure. It is a sloped lot, so our beds are a bit terraced. We found beautiful soil under the blackberries.   |
| Q16: Describe your overall garden design/layout and what factors influenced it? Has it changed over time and why?   | The 10 ft wide gate comes into the center of the width of the garden. An 8 foot wide road cuts through the center of the garden from the gate to permit trucks to drive in if necessary. The upper half of the garden is primarily in 4 rows of 10 ft by 3 or 4 ft beds. The lower half of the garden has some rows and some larger areas.   |
| Q17: Does your garden include art? Describe.  | One well dressed scarecrow (taken in for winter)   |
| Q18: Describe what "organic" means in your garden. Does it apply to non-chemical insecticides, pesticides, herbicides? and non-chemical fertilizer? other?                                    | We look at all inputs into the garden, and want them all to be organic. This includes manure and compost as well as seeds and fertilizers. We are learning about green manure and trying to do as much as we can with generating our own compost.  |

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| <p>Q19: What if any invasive and vining crops do you prohibit (ex. Mint)?</p>  |  |
| <p>Q20: What produce have you chosen to grow -- perennial/annual vegetables? fruits? flowers?<br/>                 What season(s) have you chosen to grow -- spring-summer-fall, or winter garden also?<br/>                 What types of food use have you chosen -- immediate consumption? food preservation?<br/>                 Do you grow for seed production?</p> | <p>Most of our crops are for immediate consumption, although in our second year, more participants will consider preservation.<br/>                 Crops include: strawberries, raspberries, peas, beans, broccoli, kale, collards, beets, turnips, arugula, salad greens, spinach, carrots, rhubarb, artichokes, zucchini, winter squash, cucumbers, Brussels sprouts, broccoli raab, bok choy...<br/>                 We have not yet started harvesting our own seeds – next year!</p>                                     |
| <p>Q21: What materials and methods of irrigation/watering and why? What suggestions regarding rain barrels?</p>  | <p>In our first year we hand watered most beds. A couple beds had soaker hoses. In our second year, we intend to put down more soaker hoses, maybe on timers. We want some beds to be hand watered so that people are in the garden every day.</p>   |
| <p>Q22: Any advice or considerations in selecting a water meter (assuming there is a host-provided water source)?</p>  | <p>We installed a meter, but it was not reading correctly. Be aware that some calibration may be necessary.</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>Initially our major infrastructure was fencing. First for the goats (who helped us with the blackberries), then extended its height to keep out the deer. We did not have a tool shed initially, and hope it is completed this winter by one of our members.</p>  |
| <p>Q24: What methods do you use for managing compost -- bins, heaps, sheet-composting, other?<br/>                 How many households contribute compost material? Does the garden accept neighborhood waste?<br/>                 What kinds of problems have you experienced and how were they solved?</p>  | <p>Very much in a learning process. Currently using heaps. Planning on building 3 sided bins. Compost greens come from garden. Some (very little) material came from household contributions. Many garden members have composts at home for their personal gardens.<br/>                 Used goat manure and a commercial compost that included cow manure. Learned we needed to ask about whether the composted materials were organic and if the animals that supplied the manure took medications. Also needed to know</p> |

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|   | when the manure was added to the compost – recommendations from Extension Agents for the length of time manure should age in compost before being used on field/plants has been lengthened due to ecoli concerns.  |
| Q25: What is a good lab for soil testing? What kinds of soil test do you recommend?   |  |
| Q26: What suggestions do you have for getting low-cost, free, donated, or loaned equipment and materials for garden startup activities?   | Post at CENEX – have not tried this yet, but another garden told us about this. Post on Freecycle – open to all -- and North Olympic Exchange – a membership group.  |
| Q27: What grant sources are available?  | Master Gardener grants are available for education and tools. Applications due twice a year.   |
| Q28: For what projects/materials has your garden received grants?   | We received a grant from Master Gardeners for raising bees.  |
| 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? | We initially planted half the garden. Then cleared out more blackberries in time to plant squash and tomatoes. The rest was cleared out and a cover crop was planted, leaving the bed to be planted in the late summer for fall crops.   |
| <b>OPERATIONS</b>   |  |
| Q30: How does membership communicate (other than gardening together) -- phone trees, email list, at-garden message board, regular meetings?   | We rely on a combination of email and a yahoo group website that supports posting documents, onsite postings (log/white board) in the garden, and face to face communication in regular weekly garden work parties and in formally set meetings.   |
| Q31: Do members meet regularly? For what purpose? How frequently? What location? What is your meeting format (committee reports? problem solving? social/food? other?)                          | 1. We meet regularly through the first winter and spring to plan and take on tasks. We met at the host’s home. Format was primarily planning and problem solving and reporting back on tasks that an individual may have taken on. Once we were in the garden at a weekly work time, much of the conversation was carried on then. This led to the need to |

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|  | <p>email or post information for those who missed the work party.</p> <p>2. Currently most of the garden members are reading the NWEI food course together. This includes 6 meetings.</p> <p>3. We had a garden celebratory dinner where everyone made something from the garden. Purely social and fun and great food.</p>  |
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| <p>Q32: How are decisions made -- by leader(s), by member consensus? both? other?</p>  | <p>In formal meetings by member consensus. Trying to minimize the number of subjects to meet and agree on by having members take responsibility for specific crops. The members responsible for a specific crop will make the decisions for that crop. The crops for the second year were decided on in a meeting and through a voting process on what we liked and did not like in our first year.</p>  |
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| <p>Q33: How are work parties organized -- around a special task (ex. fence building)? or regular, weekly sessions for ongoing gardening (planting, weeding, watering, etc.)?</p> | <p>Have a weekly work party for 2 – 4 hours on a set day and time. Call special work parties as needed.</p> <p>Watering was assigned by the day of week to specific members.</p>   |
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| <p>Q34: How is work shared and/or assigned?</p>  | <p>Individuals state what they will do by themselves or what they will be responsible for that needs a work team called together to complete.</p>  |
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| <p>Q35: How do you harvest so that produce is shared equitably and that produce use is maximized?</p>  | <p>The majority of members prefer to harvest for themselves when they plan to use the produce. This requires individuals balancing how much produce there is and what they have taken in the past. Members were very conscious of each other getting produce and would share in the work parties what they did not want and what they felt they had taken their share of in the last week.</p> <p>Bottom line is we have a philosophy that work and produce will not be totally equitable.</p> |
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