

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: Tibbals Lake Community Orchard
Submitted by: Adriane Oliver
Date: 1/132008

Q1: How is your garden group organized?
Through our home-owner's association

How many members?
14 people

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?
There is no leadership. Decisions are made as a group

What if any committees are there?

No committees

Q2: Describe your Member - Host agreement. Are there Member - Host agreements you think are critical to success over time?

No

Q3: How do you handle damage/injury/liability insurance for members and host?

Our association carries a blanket liability policy.

Q4: What are the conditions to becoming a member? belonging to the neighborhood? other?

Being a member of the association

Q5: Do you have guidelines or rules about when new members can join the group, i.e., limited windows of opportunity during the year? ..

Yes - see above

Q6: Do you have a philosophy, guidelines, rules, and/or by-laws? What are they?

Our philosophy comes from the CC&R's of the association, which is strongly slanted towards preserving wildlife, wetland protection and using organic methods.

Q7: What is the one-time new member financial commitment? What are the continuing dues, and how often are they collected?

We collected contributions according to our estimated budget.

Q8: How much, how often, and for what one-time expenses have you collected special dues?

We're still in our first year.

Q9: Do you pay a gardener to organize and oversee member work? Why?

No. We do group work parties (usually followed by a meal).

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?

It can't grow.

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?

If some wanted it, we'd be open to it. (we've expanded from fruit trees, to berries and perhaps some veggies this spring)

Q13: How are organizational functions such as bookkeeping and purchasing handled? Other non-gardening activities?

We have a volunteer treasurer.

Q14: What forms of community service does your membership perform -- food bank donations? community education? assisting new/startup community gardens? other?

We have no product yet ---

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?

We cleared a piece of the "commons" that was covered with bramble, with good sun exposure.

We added compost and horse manure, after major weeding.

Q16: Describe your overall garden design/layout and what factors influenced it? Has it changed over time and why?

Since we began with an orchard, we planted the larger trees towards the south. We're already thinking about expanding!

Q17: Does your garden include art? Describe.

Not yet, but everyone wants to design a gate and sign.

Q18: Describe what "organic" means in your garden. Does it apply to non-chemical insecticides, pesticides, herbicides? and non-chemical fertilizer? other?

We added natural organic supplements to meet the individual needs of bare root fruit and nut trees. We work with guilds around the trees (including planting bulbs).

Q19: What if any invasive and vining crops do you prohibit (ex. Mint)?

We're working at keeping out quack grass, wild rose and blackberry bramble.

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?

We've planted a fruit and nut orchard. Have added strawberries and blueberries, and plan to add raspberries and maybe expanding enough to add a hoop house.....

Q21: What materials and methods of irrigation/watering and why? What suggestions regarding rain barrels?

Everything is on a drip system, ordered from Dripworks, and installed by some of the members. The water comes from one of the owner's property, with a meter on it. We drain the system in the winter, and take the meter inside.

Q22: Any advice or considerations in selecting a water meter (assuming there is a host-provided water source)?

We found the one online -- it connects using hose bibs.

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?

We installed deer fencing around the orchard (from Fickle Hill Fencing), installed by most of the members in a work party. It cost around \$750.

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?

One of the members has horses, and contributes horse manure and bedding. In addition we added straw for mulching (from Cennex).

Q25: What is a good lab for soil testing? What kinds of soil test do you recommend?

We used a home kit to test the soil.

Q26: What suggestions do you have for getting low-cost, free, donated, or loaned equipment and materials for garden startup activities?

We shared our own tools.

Q27: What grant sources are available?

don't know

Q28: For what projects/materials has your garden received grants?

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?

Since our initial object was to share an orchard -- and have found, as we work together, that there is interest in other crops.

OPERATIONS

Q30: How does membership communicate (other than gardening together) -- phone trees, email list, at-garden message board, regular meetings?

e-mail, and our membership annual meeting.

Q31: Do members meet regularly? For what purpose? How frequently? What location? What is your meeting format (committee reports? problem solving? social/food? other?)

Only for specific work purposes

Q32: How are decisions made -- by leader(s), by member consensus? both? other?

by member consensus -- for instance, in selecting the trees for our original planting, we solicited suggestions from all the members (from either the Raintree or Burnt Ridge catalogue), then compiled a list -- and from that list, we chose the final trees to be planted

Q33: How are work parties organized -- around a special task (ex. fence building)? or regular, weekly sessions for ongoing gardening (planting, weeding, watering, etc.)?

Around special tasks - although, people arbitrarily weed, or water according to need

Q34; How is work shared and/or assigned?

people select what they are interested in or capable of doing.

Q35: How do you harvest so that produce is shared equitably and that produce use is maximized?

Yet to be explored -- except: we had five blueberries and one pear, which we divided amongst the group!!