Troubleshooting

Community gardens often face the same challenges and situations they need to work on. Here is a list of some common issues we faced and how we suggest you can deal with them.

**Vegetable thieving**
- More often than not, individuals will pick from your garden because they are not aware of what your garden is about.
- Place signs in your garden stating that each plot belongs to an individual or family working hard to grow their own food. Invite people to contact you to join the garden and get their own plot. See our website for examples of signages you can use.
- Place a food donation box on site, where you offer the walkers and passers-by to help themselves instead of picking from the plots. Make sure you often have a few bags of fresh produce in the bin for people to take home.
- Keep your garden clean and well maintained. It invites respect and consideration.
- Talk to your neighbours, give them vegetables, organize community parties and invites your neighbours to join. They might just start keeping an eye on your space.
- A low fence can also be an option. It works better if you have signage with information about your garden on it, or if you grow a live fence of edible plants where the passers-by can help themselves – blueberries, raspberries and pole beans are good examples!

**Vandalism**
- Vandalism is a common concern, but has not been a challenge in our gardens so far (touch wood!). We believe community gardens inspire respect and appreciation from every individual who get the chance to enjoy it. Keeping the garden clean, well maintained and assuring a regular presence help to keep it that way.

**Gardeners’ participation**
- Everyone has a busy schedule these days. And people want to decide where and how they are ready to invest their time and resources. Offer different opportunities for gardeners to participate in the general coordination and maintenance of the garden. Consider people’s interest and abilities and don’t expect the same commitment from everybody.
- Try different things and be flexible of what is asked or expected from everyone.
- Use a positive language and keep a positive attitude. Do not blame or allocate fault.
- Publicly recognize everyone’s contribution. Take extra care to thank your fellow gardeners for their time and commitment.
- Focus on the process more than the end result. Having many people doing things their way is worth more than having a few doing it your way.
- Keep it fun!
Inclusion

• Getting your neighbours excited about a new community garden is a relatively easy thing to do. But making sure your garden is inclusive and offer opportunities to a wide variety of people requires a bit more work.
• Make special effort to make contact with marginalized individuals who don’t easily have access to this kind of opportunity. You will be amazed by what a diversity of people can bring to your garden!
• Let local organizations know about your garden and invite them to join. Contact organizations supporting individuals with developmental disabilities, newcomers to Canada, seniors, youth at risk…
• Ask your friends and network if they of anybody who could benefit from being involved in your garden.
• Consult the Accessibility Guidelines on our website to learn how to design an accessible garden.

Food growing challenges

• It happens that despite all your efforts and tender loving care, our garden is just not producing the abundance you were expecting.
• Seek advice in your gardeners who successfully grew food despite the hard condition and consult everyone for suggestions and impressions. Ask other community gardens in your area about their ways of increasing food production.
• Look into your soil. It’s all starting with your dirt. Do you need to screen your soil, add compost, deal with drainage issues?
• Sometimes, the weather is just not going along with your plans of grandness! Accept that weather is playing a crucial role and learn how to read the signs and grow food under different conditions.
• Growing food is a learning process. Give yourself time to gain the knowledge and experience you need to grow abundance.

Maintenance

• The bigger your garden space, the more time and energy you will need to maintain it and keep your garden looking great. Coming up with strategies for maintenance is an ever-evolving topic as different people have different preferences and the options can evolve with your membership. Some strategies include:
• Come up regularly with a list of tasks to do (lawn mowing, compost turning, weeding, pruning, garbage picking…) and invite people to do work on their own time and sign in.
• Divide the garden is many small areas and have 2-3 people responsible for the maintenance of each area.
• Organize regular work parties and make it a fun day. Have coffee and food! Better have a clear list of things to do on each work party day so that people feel the day was productive and worth it.
• Have a few people taking the lead of a maintenance committee who will take care of the maintenance for the year. Change the committee every year, or even twice a year.

Let us know of other challenges you are facing and of creative solutions you have been using in your garden!

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