



Tips on Running your Community Garden

Safety, Accesability, and
Community Skills



(253) 845-9770



[https://pierced.org/194/
Community-Gardens](https://pierced.org/194/Community-Gardens)

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Safety in the garden

AS WE INVITE PEOPLE TO SHARE AND ENJOY COMMUNITY GARDEN SPACE, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT COMMUNITY GARDENS MAY RECEIVE UNWANTED BEHAVIOR. THERE ARE WAYS OF PROTECTING YOURSELF AND COMMUNITY GARDENS FROM UNWANTED BEHAVIOR.

Personal Safety

- Know the address of your garden
- Find a garden buddy to be in the garden with you if your comfort level is challenged.
- Carry your cell phone with you IN the garden
- Walk through the garden when you arrive to make your presence known
- Keep your car locked at all times
- Follow your personal instincts in interacting with people if you do not feel safe.
- If you encounter homelessness in your garden, please call Positive Interactions (253)382-2677

General Crime Prevention

- Encourage the neighbors to keep an eye on the garden
- Use signage to let people know what you can and can't do at the site
- Create a presence in the garden throughout the day
- Meet with Neighborhood Block Watch or other safety groups
- Meet often as a group to discourage unwanted behavior
- For non-emergencies, call (253)798-4722 and visit tacomasafe.org to file a police report

Theft

- Signage is especially effective
- Community beds, consider an area for community picking
- Involve your neighbors in the garden with an event and make a point of involving youth
- Keep things tidy and promptly harvest produce
- Make it hard to pick produce: wrap chicken wire around valuable plants, Tie Reemay fabric around and over plants to hide them, Cover pumpkins w/ burlap as they ripen orange
- Report theft to police at TacomaSafe.org and to Harvest Pierce County

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Unwanted Items

- **GRAFFITI:** To report graffiti, call (253) 798-4721
- **SYRINGE/NEEDLE DISPOSAL:** Put used needle in a plastic bottle Seal the lid with tape Label the container "BIOHAZARD" Dispose of at a transfer station
- **Feces Removal 1:** Pour water/bleach (10:1) on feces to kill germs. Leave on for few minutes 2: Shovel feces and double bag and place in trash 3: Clean shovel with bleach and water formula

Making an Accessible Community Garden

Accessible gardens are designed to allow direct participation of people of all ages and abilities.



Garden Bed Construction

General Raised Bed Considerations:

Side walls of beds should be constructed as thin as possible due to the limited reach of the seated gardener.

Walker Modified Beds: Should have a max height of 35", a max width of 36", and be designed with a 24" soil depth in mind (with any remaining depth filled with crushed gravel to facilitate drainage).

Wheelchair Modified Beds: Should have a max height of 24" and a max width of 12" (though if accessible from two sides the width can be 24"). Ideally, wheelchair modified beds will taper out from the bottom in order to accommodate room for legs/feet while seated and allowing head-on access rather than to-the-side access.

Site Considerations

Location of Beds: Garden beds should be located close to garden entrances, near parking drop off areas, tool storage, and adjacent to a water station.

Pathways & Surfaces: Must be firm, stable, slip resistant, and no less than 48"

Rest and Gathering Areas:

Tables should permit wheelchairs to roll under and consider adding benches in walkways for resting.

Water: Should be placed close to garden beds, with a light weight hose, drainage should be considered as not to drain onto the person

Tool Shed: should be located as close as possible to the accessible beds and have level, solid surface pathways. For wheelchair access within a general shed, the doors must be at least 48"

Accessible Tools

Most tools can be modified with D-grips or T-grips, telescopic handles, and/or various other modifications to facilitate ease of use for seated gardeners and for gardeners with limited gripping strength. Modified tools might be stored in accessible containers adjacent to modified plots if situation of the tool shed cannot accommodate ease of wheelchair or walker access.

Visit [P-Patch Community Garden Accessibility](#) for more information about accessible garden construction.

Tips for Facilitating Community Meetings

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY MEETINGS HAVE THE FOLLOWING VALUES

- THEY ARE INCLUSIVE AND EVERYONE HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE
- DECISIONS ARE TRANSPARENT & SHARED
- ARE ENJOYABLE & CELEBRATORY

Introductions

Make sure that everyone has a chance to say at least their name and something personal. When folks come late, also take a moment to have them introduce themselves to the group so their presence is acknowledged and appreciated.

Assign a note taker

We suggest making a template that can be used by almost anyone in the garden team and also makes sure nothing gets missed. Share these notes with all garden members, not just those in attendance.

- Record decisions made
- Assign Actionable Items
- “Parking Lot” Items—things that need to be discussed but didn’t have a chance to

Be Respectful of Time

Consider delegating a time-taker. Respect that folks are taking personal time to be a part of these meetings: Starting on time and staying true to when you announce the meeting will go far to build a culture of reciprocity.

Tips for Facilitating Community Meetings

Closing

Similar to the introductions, it's nice to finish a meeting on a personal and celebratory note. Some sample closing questions include:

- What are you excited about in the garden?
- What surprised you about this meeting?

Transparent Decision Making

It is very important that everyone have an opportunity to share their thoughts. Silence doesn't always mean people are in favor. There are many options, but we encourage your group to decide what option works best for you.

Tips for navigating disagreements

Listen – Make sure all parties have an opportunity to discuss their point of view and are truly heard

- Learn – An open mind and open heart are critical—so try and truly put yourself in other persons shoes
- Talk—Mirror back what each other's points of view are.
- Act—Make a plan of action

Please remember that Harvest Pierce County is here to act a neutral facilitator at your request. We encourage you to use this resource.

6 Essential Strategies For Inclusive Engagement

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TAKES CAREFUL PLANNING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT EACH POPULATION THAT WE WORK WITH IS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO BROADEN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY.

TO HELP YOU THINK ABOUT WAYS TO USE EACH STRATEGY, WE HAVE PROVIDED CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER, AS WELL AS SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE CREATIVE WAYS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR TARGET GROUP.

1. Build personal relationships with target population

Q1 Are there key individuals or constituents you already have or should be building a relationship with?

Q2 Are there venues for you to attend or explore to find out who are natural community leaders?

- Informal/Community driven gatherings that are appropriate to attend
- Connect with the individuals in this community/population

2. Create a welcoming atmosphere

Q1 Does your process reflect, honor, and welcome the community?

Q2 Do the venues you choose invite participation and engagement?

- Hire staff or consultants from the community or that reflect the target population
- Choose gathering places that are comfortable and that are conducive to the interactions that you want to have

3. Increase accessibility

Q1 Are there issues/barriers (language, location, time, transportation, childcare, food, incentives, appeal, power dynamics, etc.) that should be considered throughout the whole process?

Q2 Are there ways to increase the level of input a community has in a process?

- Selecting the most appropriate and effective communication method to promote engagement opportunities
- Decrease barriers to attendance or effective communication at events

6 Essential Strategies For Inclusive Engagement

4. Develop alternative methods for engagement

Q1 Do you have non-traditional methods of outreach to get people involved?

Q2 Do you offer multiple ways for contributing input and feedback?

- Provide opportunities for social interaction and relationship building
- Provide opportunities for community members to give feedback in photographic, voice recorded, or video formats

5. Maintain a presence within the community

Q1 Are there community driven events that you can participate in and that people will already be gathering for?

Q2 Do community members see you out, regularly, in the community?

- Attend community driven events and activities (think non-traditional)
- Establish places in the community that people can have sustained, informal interactions with you

6. Partner with diverse organizations and agencies

Q1 Are there organizations that currently have relationships with your target populations that you can connect with (remember to consider power dynamics)?

Q2 Have any agencies or organizations successfully implemented similar programs or initiatives (perhaps on a smaller scale or in another community) that you can solicit advice from?

- Connect with organizations who are already culturally tied to the target community or are currently providing services to your target population
- Create a network of services that eliminate gaps or reduce redundancies for the target population

Transparent Decision Making Tips

Transparent Processes -

When participants feel like decisions are being made in secret, or inaccessible to them, they can feel frustrated and withdraw from the project. This can be avoided through making sure all decisions are transparent. There are many ways of doing this, but whatever you decide must be agreed upon by the group in the initial phase. If your group is tech savvy, consider using online tools such as Google Documents, Facebook Groups, Drop Box which are designed to help multiple people work on a project at the same time to help. We also recommend using a tool called the **5 Finger Consensus Model** to promote full participation from all gardeners.



Yes! Agree full heartedly



Fine. Minor hesitations.



I have concerns, but don't want to hold up group.



Serious questions. Stop to hear their concerns.



Absolutely not. Stop to hear their concerns