

Introduction to the Gardeners' Welcome Packet

Dear Community Garden Organizers,

As a companion to the University of Missouri Extension publication MP906, *Community Gardening Toolkit* (<http://extension.missouri.edu/mp906>), specialists at MU Extension have created this Gardeners' Welcome Packet — a template for creating written materials that explain how your community garden operates and how gardeners can be involved.

The information contained in the packet was gleaned from the experiences of various community gardening organizations and community gardeners from around the country. It is intended to be a tool for organizing your garden; introducing new gardeners to the policies, procedures and people that keep the garden running smoothly; and keeping returning gardeners updated and involved. It is also intended to help gardeners find a clear and easy way to play an active role in the garden's management and upkeep.

The packet is not intended to be used as is. Instead, the materials are meant to serve as a template. To make the most of them, you will need to edit, add or delete information or pages to suit the unique circumstances of your garden.

We recommend that you revise these materials with your garden's leadership team or other people at your garden. If you don't have some type of leadership team, such as an executive committee or organizing committee, we recommend that you form one. By involving others, the responsibility of creating, reviewing, editing and enforcing the garden's policies can be shared by the group.

We hope you find this information useful. For additional resources, visit your local University of Missouri Extension center or MU Extension online at <http://extension.missouri.edu>.

Have a bountiful gardening season!

Bill McKelvey
University of Missouri
Columbia, Missouri
McKelveyWA@missouri.edu
Phone: 573-882-4973

This Gardeners' Welcome Packet was adapted in part from the Welcome Packet Documents in the Community Garden Organizer's Handbook published by the Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin (now found in the links under "Spring Registration and Welcome Packet" on The Gardens Network website at <http://danecountycommunitygardens.org/resources/for-garden-leaders>). Other materials were adapted from Gardening Matters (<http://gardeningmatters.org>) and the Community Garden Coalition (<http://comogardens.org>).

Note: For a more comprehensive set of rules than those on page 10, go to the Gardening Matters website at <http://www.gardeningmatters.org/sites/default/files/garden-rules.pdf>.

Gardeners' Welcome Packet
(Name of Garden)
(Year)

Welcome to (Name of Garden). This Welcome Packet contains important information about how our garden operates and who to contact with general and specific questions. It also contains information about how you can pitch in to make the garden run smoothly and efficiently. Because community gardening requires a fair amount of work beyond tending your own plot, every gardener is asked to participate to the best of his or her ability in the management and upkeep of the entire garden.

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Welcome to Community Gardening

A community garden means many things to many people. For some, a community garden is a place to grow food, flowers and herbs in the company of friends and neighbors. For others, it's a place to reconnect with nature or get physical exercise. Yet others use community gardens simply because they lack adequate space to have a garden at their house or apartment.

Regardless of why you are choosing to take part in a community garden, the activity comes with both responsibilities and rewards.

Responsibilities: Successful and vibrant community gardens rely on the dedication of each and every gardener to 1) maintain his or her own plot and 2) contribute to the upkeep and management of the entire garden. There are many jobs that need to be done in order to help the garden run smoothly, including keeping paths mowed or mulched, maintaining tools and equipment, planning events and workshops, stocking and hauling supplies and building raised beds, among other things (see pg. 3, Community Garden Job Descriptions, for a complete list). The adage many hands make light work is appropriate. If everyone pitches in according to their ability and desire, then the garden will prosper and grow.

Rewards: Community gardening has the potential to offer a range of benefits to individuals, families, communities and the environment. Benefits include, but are not limited to, the following:

Food production — Community gardens enable people to grow high quality fruits and vegetables for themselves, their families and their communities.

Nutrition — Some research indicates that community gardeners eat more fruits and vegetables than non-gardening families.

Exercise — Gardening requires physical activity and helps improve the overall physical health of gardeners.

Mental health — Interacting with plants and nature helps reduce stress and increase gardeners' sense of wellness and belonging.

Community — Community gardens foster a sense of community identity and stewardship among gardeners. They provide a place for people of diverse backgrounds to interact and share cultural traditions.

Environment — Gardens help reduce the heat island effect in cities, increase biodiversity, reduce runoff from rain, recycle local organic materials and reduce fossil fuel use from long-distance food transport.

Learning — People of all ages can acquire and share skills and knowledge related to gardening, cooking, nutrition, health, culture, etc.

Youth — Community gardens provide a place for youth to explore gardening, nature and community.

Income — Produce grown at community gardens may be sold or used to offset food purchases from the grocery store.

Crime prevention — Community gardens can help reduce crime.

Property values — Some research indicates that property values around community gardens increase faster than property values in similar areas without gardens.

Above all, community gardening can provide a real sense of satisfaction and accomplishment for all involved.

Success and Security at the Garden

Adapted from the Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin Community Garden Organizer's Handbook.

The following tips are intended to help ensure your success at the garden, minimize theft and vandalism, and keep you safe while gardening.

Successful Community Gardening

- **Plan to visit your garden two to three times a week during the growing season.** Make a schedule with yourself or other gardeners. Write it in your calendar. Post a colorful reminder on the fridge. Because your garden is not located outside your front or back door, it's sometimes easy to forget that there is weeding, watering, staking or harvesting to do.
- **Attend scheduled meetings and workdays.** This will help you meet other gardeners and become part of your gardening community. You'll also learn about the various jobs and projects that need to be done to keep your garden in shape.
- **Make friends with other gardeners.** Experienced gardeners are an invaluable resource at your garden. Pick their brains for gardening tips. Visit their plots to see how they stake their tomatoes or trellis their beans.
- **Volunteer for a garden job or committee.** Community gardens don't manage themselves. They require a fair amount of work. By pitching in on a certain job or project, you'll be supporting the garden as a whole and ensuring that the work is spread among many people.
- **Educate yourself.** Check out books from the library. Attend classes. Become a Master Gardener (<http://mg.missouri.edu>). There's always something to learn about gardening. The more you learn, the more success you'll have.

Security and Personal Safety at the Community Garden

- **Know your neighbors.** Learn the names and a little about your non-gardening neighbors. Share some extra produce. Take the time to visit with them about how the garden works if they're not familiar with it. You may be surprised to find that people just assume that they can take food from the garden. "Hey, it's for the community, right?"
- **Harvest produce on a regular basis.** Some people use the excuse that "a lot of food is going to waste" to justify taking food from a garden without permission. During harvest season, let garden leaders know if you plan to be out of town for more than a few days. Gardeners can harvest for you and donate the food to a local pantry.
- **Consider growing unpopular, unusual, or hard-to-harvest varieties.** People generally go for easy to snatch things like tomatoes, peppers and corn.
- **Grow more than you need.**
- **Put a border or fence around your plot** if your garden rules allow it. Even a simple barrier can be a deterrent.
- **Use common sense.** Even though your garden may be well-lit from street lights, only garden during daylight hours. Garden in pairs or keep a cellphone nearby if it makes you feel more comfortable.
- **Report theft, vandalism and unusual activities to garden leaders and the police.** The more people who are looking out for the garden and talking about what's going on, the more success you'll have at being safe and curbing unwanted activities.

Community Garden Job Descriptions

The *who* and *what* that make your garden tick

Adapted from Gardening Matters and the Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin Community Garden Organizer's Handbook.

Community gardens depend on gardeners' willingness and ability to take responsibility for a number of important tasks. Please review the following job descriptions and contact the garden co-leaders to let them know how you'd like to help.

Garden co-leaders: Primary contacts for the garden. Coordinate and facilitate all garden activities and meetings. Recruit gardeners for various jobs. Provide leadership and guidance for gardeners and volunteer positions below. Identify and recruit new garden co-leaders. Chair the garden's leadership team.

Plot coordinator: Organizes spring registration, makes plot assignments and garden map, collects gardener applications and manages the waiting list. Creates spreadsheet or other files for gardener contact information.

Grounds crew: Maintains the garden's common areas. Mows grass, clears pathways and removes trash.

Maintenance crew: Maintains tools, equipment, hoses and raised beds.

Supply crew: Maintains supplies of common garden materials such as compost, mulch, tools and hoses.

Composting crew: Maintains and oversees the composting and compost bins. Provides gardeners with clear composting instructions via signs, verbal communication, workshops, emails or memos.

Events crew: Coordinates regular and special garden events including work parties, neighborhood parties and educational workshops.

Treasurer: Collects plot fees, maintains garden accounts, writes checks.

Communications crew: Revises and assembles the Gardener's Welcome Packet with leadership team. Writes and distributes garden newsletter or blog. Communicates with gardeners through email, phone calls or mailings about garden news, meetings and events. Maintains garden bulletin board.

Outreach and community relations: Maintains positive relations with neighbors. Ensures that neighbors are involved in and supportive of the garden. Coordinates social events for neighbors and gardeners with events crew.

Horticulture advisers: Possess gardening experience and a willingness to share it with gardeners. Mentor new gardeners, circulate new gardening resources, and coordinate gardening workshops with events crew.

Monitors: Ensure that all plots are being used and maintained at acceptable levels according to the Gardener Guidelines. Contact gardeners who either appear to have dropped out or are not keeping their plots maintained. Communicate with the registrar about available plots.

Security: Works to minimize theft, vandalism and other unwanted activities.

Translation: Provides translation for gardeners, garden literature and signs. May also make arrangements for others to provide translation.

Leadership team: Comprised of the garden co-leaders and at least three other gardeners. Responsible for reviewing, editing and enforcing all gardener guidelines.

Contact List for Garden Jobs

Adapted from the Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin Community Garden Organizer's Handbook.

The following people have volunteered for the following jobs at the garden this year.

Job	Name(s)	Phone	Email
Garden co-leaders			
Plot coordinator			
Grounds crew			
Maintenance crew			
Supply crew			
Composting crew			
Events crew			
Treasurer			
Communications crew			
Outreach and community relations			
Horticulture advisers			
Monitors			
Security			
Translation			
Leadership team			

Garden Map

(To be shared once everyone has confirmed his or her plot assignment)

	A	B	C	D	E
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

Calendar

Adapted from the Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin Community Garden Organizer's Handbook.

Throughout the year the garden hosts a number of meetings and events. To date, the following meetings and events have been proposed or scheduled. Questions concerning events should be directed to the events crew or garden co-leaders (page 5).

Event	Date/Time	Location	Purpose
Annual meeting			Review last gardening season. Plan for upcoming gardening season. Update and revise Gardener Guidelines. Select garden co-leaders. Select crew leaders and leadership team. Prepare for spring registration.
Spring registration			Pick up Welcome Packet. Complete application. Confirm plot assignment. Sign up for a job/crew. Pay plot fees. Pick up seeds. Meet gardeners and crew leaders.
Opening day			Ensure water is turned on. Meet gardeners and crew leaders. Clean the garden. Hold potluck picnic.
Garden work parties			Clean the garden or help with various projects. Hold potluck picnic
Closing day			Put your garden to bed. Confirm plot assignment for next year. <u>All plots should be cleaned by this date to guarantee your space for next year.</u> Hold potluck picnic.
Workshops			
Social events			
Garden tour			

FAQs

Adapted from the Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin Community Garden Organizer's Handbook.

Questions about how the garden operates will arise throughout the year. The following answers to some frequently asked questions may help shed some light on a few questions. Other questions can be directed to the garden co-leaders or other crew leaders.

- How much does it cost to garden here?
- What kinds of tools, equipment and supplies are available at the garden?
- Can I leave a sprinkler or soaker hose "on" if I am not at the garden?
- What do I have to do to stay in good standing with the garden?
- Can I bring fruit and vegetable scraps from home to compost in the bins at the garden?
- How are plot sizes determined?
- How many plots can I get?
- Is this an organic garden?
- Who do I contact for gardening advice?
- How much time should I expect to spend at the garden?
- What should I do if I experience or see theft or vandalism?
- What should I do if I am threatened or harassed at the garden?

Gardener Guidelines

Adapted from the Community Garden Coalition's Gardener Guidelines.

Gardener guidelines (or rules, regulations, policies, etc.) can take many shapes and forms. The following guidelines have been established by the members of this garden. Please read the guidelines and direct any questions or comments to the garden co-leaders.

1. All gardeners are required to complete an application form. A plot fee of \$_____ is due by _____.
2. All gardeners are required to sign up for one of the garden jobs/crews list on page 4. Please contact the garden co-leaders for more information.
3. Garden meetings and work parties are scheduled throughout the season (see calendar on page 8). Please plan to attend to get to know your fellow gardeners and help with garden upkeep and special projects.
4. Keep your plot and the adjoining pathways tended. If your plot appears to be untended for a period of time, and you haven't contacted the garden monitor, you will be contacted and your plot may be assigned to another gardener. Call the garden monitor if you need help or if you will be out of town for an extended period of time. If you plan to discontinue use of your space, please let the monitor or registrar know as soon as possible so that your plot can be assigned to another gardener.
5. Plant tall plants and vines in places where they will not interfere with your neighbor's plot. Planting illegal plants is prohibited.
6. At the end of the gardening season, all dead plants and non-plant materials (string, wire, wood, metal, plastic, etc.) must be removed and disposed of properly and all gardens left neat and tidy. If your garden is not cleaned-up by _____, you could lose your gardening privileges for the next season or be reassigned to a new, smaller plot.
7. Pick up litter when you see it.
8. Please put weeds and dead plants into the compost bin provided. Do not leave them in the pathway. Any diseased plants or seedy or invasive weeds are to be bagged and put in the trash so as not to contaminate the gardens. Old woody plants are to be placed in the brush pile to be carted to the recycling center.
9. Do not apply anything to or pick anything from another person's plot without their express approval.
10. Please do not leave the water on unattended. When finished gardening for the day, please roll up the hose at the faucet area, return tools to the shed and lock the shed before leaving the garden.
11. Smoking and chewing tobacco is not allowed. Tobacco can transmit a lethal virus to tomatoes and cigarette butts are loaded with toxins.
12. Pets, drugs, alcohol, radios, boom boxes and fires are not allowed.
13. Please supervise children in the garden.
14. For your safety, only garden during daylight hours. Consider gardening in pairs or keeping a cellphone nearby if it makes you feel more comfortable.
15. Report theft, vandalism and unusual activities to the garden co-leaders and police.
16. Use common courtesy, be considerate of your gardening neighbors and **enjoy**.
17. Violation of Gardener Guidelines: If any of the guidelines are violated you will be contacted by phone or email and have one week to address the violation. After one week, if the violation has not been remedied, you may lose your gardening privileges.

Gardener Application

Adapted from the Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin Community Garden Organizer's Handbook.

1. Gardener: _____
2. Gardening partner: _____
3. Gardener address: _____
4. Gardener phone: _____ Partner phone: _____
5. Gardener email: _____ Partner email: _____
6. Did you have a plot at this garden last year? Yes ____ No ____
7. Number of plots this year: _____ Fee per plot: \$_____ Total plot fee paid: \$_____
8. Please sign up for at least one of the garden jobs/crews listed below. Refer to page 4 for a description of each job.
 - Garden co-leaders
 - Plot coordinator
 - Grounds crew
 - Maintenance crew
 - Supply crew
 - Composting crew
 - Events crew
 - Treasurer
 - Communications crew
 - Outreach and community relations
 - Horticulture advisors
 - Monitors
 - Security
 - Translation
 - Leadership team
9. If you are a new gardener, would you like an experienced gardener to help you? Yes ____ No ____
10. If you are an experienced gardener, would you like to help a new gardener? Yes ____ No ____
11. Photo permission: From time to time, gardeners, garden leaders and the media will take photos of the garden. Please check here () if you do not give your permission for your photo to be published. If you do not give your permission, please let photographers know when you encounter them at the garden.
12. Phone and email: All gardeners are required to share their phone number and email address with garden leaders. In addition, a gardener phone and email list is shared with all gardeners. Please check here () if you do not give your permission to share you phone number and email with all gardeners.

By signing below, I agree that I have read and understand the Gardener Guidelines and plan to abide by all of the garden rules. I understand that neither the garden group nor owners of the land are responsible for my actions. I therefore agree to hold harmless the garden group and owners of the land for any liability, damage, loss or claim that occurs in connection with use of the garden by me or my guests.

Signature

Date

University of Missouri Extension Resources for Planting, Harvesting, Composting, Pests and Disease

Planting and Harvesting

G6201, *Vegetable Planting Calendar* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/g6201>

G6220, *Organic Gardening Techniques* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/g6220>

G6985, *Raised-Bed Gardening* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/g6985>

G6226, *Vegetable Harvest and Storage* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/g6226>

MG5, *Vegetable Gardening* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/mg5>

Composting

G6956, *Making and Using Compost* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/g6956>

Pests and Disease

G6203, *Common Diseases in the Home Garden* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/g6201>

G6202, *Disease Prevention in Home Vegetable Gardens* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/g6202>

MG13, *Preventing and Managing Plant Diseases* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/mg13>

MG12, *Insects* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/mg12>

M163, *Managing Insect Pests in the Home Vegetable Garden* — <http://extension.missouri.edu/m163>

Other University of Missouri Extension Gardening Resources That Might Interest You

CB19, *Missouri Master Gardener Core Manual*

<http://extension.missouri.edu/cb19>

Dig deeper into horticulture with these 14 in-depth chapters on a variety of topics. In-person and online Master Gardener classes are offered throughout the year.

MP928, *From Seed to Harvest and Beyond: Garden Journal and Calendar*

<http://extension.missouri.edu/mp928>

Organize and record your gardening plans and observations. This colorful journal includes graphs for planning, monthly tips and reminders, forms to record information and ideas, and a glossary of gardening terms.

CB2, *Grounds for Gardening Guide Book*

<http://extension.missouri.edu/cb2>

Expand your knowledge of gardening, home landscaping and houseplants. This handy reference contains more than 130 guides and manuals, many providing recommendations and tips specific to Missouri growing conditions.