Community Gardens

“Community gardens provide fresh produce and plants as well as satisfying labor, neighborhood improvement, sense of community and connection to the environment. They are publicly functioning in terms of ownership, access, and management, as well as typically owned in trust by local governments or not for profit associations.”

Table of Contents:

1. Definition of community gardens versus communal gardens (various definitions and interpretations)

2. Different types of Partnerships examples

3. Models - What types of models can we use for communal gardens?

4. Failures & Lessons learned - what were some communal gardens that did not work out?
Part 1. Definition(s) of Communal and Community Gardens

The community gardening "movement" is a series of distinct phases each with contrasting ideologies and purposes, even though all resulted in people creating gardens on public or abandoned land.

- The latest phase began with the alternative politics and culture and dawning ecological activism of the late 1960s.


Although these three types might overlap, there are generally 3 Types of Community Gardens that exist:

- One is a collection of individual plots, often in a location central to residences with insufficient garden space.
- The second type is a collectively worked garden solely or largely for the benefit of the group that works it.
- The third type of community garden is a collectively worked plot specifically for the benefit of the broader community.

Reading:


Positive effects of community gardens on neighboring property values - find that the opening of a community garden has a statistically significant positive impact on residential properties within 1000 feet of the garden, and that the impact increases over time. Voicu and Been (2008) also found that higher quality gardens have the greatest positive impact, particularly with gardens having the greatest impact in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods.


Entrepreneurial Opportunities - Community gardens have shown to achieve some measure of tangible economic development in the community in the form of jobs.


Part 2. – Types of Partnerships

Government as partners
In Seattle, the **P-Patch** (link: [http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/p-patch-community-gardening](http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/p-patch-community-gardening)) program for community garden plots began in the early 1970s

- Darlyn Rundberg Del Boca focused on growing for the local Neighbors in Need food bank program, and with the help of a Seattle Council member obtained permission to use part of the Picardo family’s truck garden in northeast Seattle with the City of Seattle renting the land for the cost of its real estate taxes.

- The first garden consisted of a large central garden plot planted by children from the nearby elementary school and their parents. Families who volunteered to help were offered smaller individual plots around the perimeter of the central plot.

- The City subsequently purchased the Picardo farm, and the program of renting individual garden plots arising from the first efforts was named 'P-Patch' in honour of the Picardo family's contribution.

- The **P-Patch** program continued to grow and currently consists of 1900 plots in 68 locations with a total of 23 acres (93,000 m²) of land, with additions planned each year, and the tradition of growing for local food banks resulted in 12.3 tons of food donated in 2008.

- The model is based on a **partnership** with the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, which now oversees 88 P-Patches distributed throughout the city.

Readings:


**Government as partners**

In San Francisco, community gardens are available through both **public** and **private partnerships**. Most community gardens in San Francisco are available through its **Recreation and Park Department**, which manages over 35 community gardens on City property.

- These are allotment gardens whereby individuals or groups volunteer to be assigned garden plots. Garden members within their respective gardens democratically organize themselves to set bylaws that are consistent with City policy.

- These gardeners often self-impose garden dues as a membership requirement to cover common expenses. To standardize the development and management of its community
gardens, the Recreation and Park Commission adopted its Community Garden Policy in 2006

- **City’s Department of Public Works** supports communal-style gardening on City property whereby community groups participate in the development and maintenance of public gardens.

- No one person is responsible for any portion of the site. One group, a community-based and resident-led volunteer group in an underserved neighborhood called **Bayview Hunters Point**, has created an enclosed food-producing garden on City-owned land, as well as developed many residential urban farms around privately owned homes. This is in partnership with the **Hunters Point Family** [www.hunterspointfamily.org](http://www.hunterspointfamily.org), an organization that runs violence prevention and food justice programs for at-risk youth.²

**Reading**


**Non Profit partners**

In Salt Lake City, community gardens are available through the non-profit organization **Wasatch Community Gardens**.

- In 2009, Wasatch Community Gardens collaborated with **The Redevelopment Agency of Salt Lake City (RAD)** to launch the first People’s Portable Garden in Salt Lake City. The garden is designed to stimulate growth and revitalize different areas of the city. Salt Lake City put $48,000 into the People’s Portable Garden on 900 South. The People’s Portable Garden is located at 900 S 200 W, Salt Lake City

**Non-Profit partners**

In Denver, there is the Denver Urban Gardens.

- **Denver Urban Gardens** (DUG), a non-profit organization that assists community members with the design, planning, and construction of neighborhood community gardens.

- The gardens were the brainchild of Chris Cordts a Colorado State University Extension Agent. The gardens were initially started to give a small group of **Hmong women a place to garden**.
  - From this idea, the original three gardens were formed: the Shoshone Community Garden, the El Oasis Community Garden and the Pecos Community Garden.
  - Many **women from the lineage** of this original garden group still participate today. In 2001, DUG was formally adopted as part of the city of Denver’s comprehensive plan, which now provides a framework for regional gardens throughout the city

² All of the community gardens of San Francisco are listed on the San Francisco Garden Resource Organization web site with detailed directions and garden pictures of some of the gardens. [http://www.sfgro.org/]
Religious non-profit partners

Jasper County in Indiana supports a local community garden run by local churches. One example is the **KV Community Garden**, which has given away over half a million pounds of produce to local food shelves since it was founded in 2008.

- The KV Community Garden is a grass roots initiative assisting in a solution to helping those in need of basic sustenance. It is a community project where anyone is welcome to join in the food production process. From providing seeds, to planting, weeding harvesting and delivery there is always an opportunity to get involved in a practical hands on approach to meeting needs in the community.³

Community-Local Business partnership

In Kentucky, the [Commonwealth Gardens](http://kvcommunitygarden.com/) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the formation of community gardens and school gardens in the Frankfort and Franklin County area. Commonwealth Gardens also encourages the consumption of locally grown food not only because it tastes better and takes less energy to produce, but also because it is important to support its local farmers and merchants.

- Commonwealth Gardens is a **multi-partnership** among the Frankfort Department for Parks, Recreation, and Historic Sites, Kentucky Employees Credit Union, Franklin County Cooperative Extension, Pioneering Healthy Communities, The Kentucky Coffeetree Cafe, Earth Tools, Inside Out Design, and many other local businesses and organizations in the Frankfort area.

Massachusetts

In the city of Boston, there are a variety of local and non-profit organizations which own, promote and manage approximately 180 community gardens throughout the city. These organizations include the Boston Natural Areas Network (BNAN), Boston Nature Center of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Boston Parks and Recreation Department, Boston Urban Gardeners (BUG), MA Department of Conservation and Recreation, Dorchester Gardenlands Preserve, ReVision House, and the South End Lower Roxbury Open Space Land Trust.

- In 2002, the volunteer-run **Boston Community Garden Council** was formed as a means of facilitating communication and cooperation between these organizations along with individual gardeners in Boston.

**Part 3 – Examples of Successful Models:**

Alex Wilson Community Garden (Toronto, Ontario)

³ [http://kvcommunitygarden.com/](http://kvcommunitygarden.com/)
Similar to other community gardens in Toronto, this Allotment garden provides 40 plots for local residents in an economically and ethnically diverse downtown neighbourhood. The garden is situated beside two social service agencies, Evangel Hall, a drop-in centre providing food and safety for homeless men and women, and Portland Place, a non-profit housing complex. The clients of both of these agencies use the garden to cultivate food. The garden is also a site of contrast, reflecting the neighbourhood in which it is located: a fashionable restaurant on nearby Queen Street is using one garden plot to cultivate herbs. Other gardeners are drawn from the local community, and include many of the people involved in the establishment of the AWCG.

Urban allotment gardens exist in the heart of many large cities, often occupying vacant or abandoned lots and built from salvaged materials and rescued plants. They are cared for by city dwellers who do not own land and live in high-density areas, and who have a connection to gardening either through personal history, cultural background, and/or economic necessity.

Readings:


Tasmanian Community Garden Network” (Australia)

The community gardens belong to a network of one hundred community gardens across Tasmania. Many of these gardens are members of the Tasmanian Community Garden Network. This network is a support network managed by Sustainable Living Tasmania, a non-political and not-for-profit organization.

- The project aimed to:
  - support existing community gardens.
  - provide networking support, information and advice to communities on establishing community gardens.
  - develop a “how to” resource manual and DVD based on the process of establishing a community garden at Glenorchy Primary School and existing gardens in disadvantaged areas.
  - establish a mentoring program.
  - strengthen the Community Garden Network.
  - showcase and celebrate effective models of community gardens with a state gathering.
  - Link: Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network (http://communitygarden.org.au/)
  - Link: Western Australia’s community gardens. (http://communitygardenswa.org.au/)
Spain

- The squatted social center Can Masdeu is home to one of the largest community gardens in Barcelona.
- Most older Spaniards grew up in the countryside and moved to the city to find work. Strong family ties often keep them from retiring to the countryside, and so urban community gardens are in great demand. Potlucks and paellas are common, as well as regular meetings to manage the affairs of the garden.

Reading:

Britain

- A community garden in the United Kingdom tends to be situated in a built-up area and is typically run by people from the local community as an independent, non-profit organisation (though this may be wholly or partly funded by public money).
- It is also likely to perform a dual function as an open space or play area (in which role it may also be known as a 'city park') and—while it may offer plots to individual cultivators—the organisation that administers the garden will normally have a great deal of the responsibility for its planting, landscaping and upkeep. An example inner-city garden of this sort is Islington's Culpeper Community Garden, which is a registered charity, or Camden's Phoenix Garden.

Reading:

Taiwan

- There is an extensive network of community gardens and collective urban farms in Taipei City often occupying areas of the city that are waiting for development.
- Flood-prone river banks and other areas unsuitable for urban construction often become legal or illegal community gardens. The network of the community gardens of Taipei are referred to as Taipei organic acupuncture of the industrial city.

Reading:

Part 4: Failures


- Author believes that gardens and gardeners represent a threat to the hegemonic project of the government to maximize exchange values and to beautify and sanitize the city.


Argues that the development and administration must address concerns related to their long-term sustainability to position them for success as permanent and valuable parts of the urban landscape.