Part 2: Managing A Volunteer-Run Garden

Our Gardening Teams

- Garden 1:
  - Mostly retirees, a few working folks
  - 3-person team each day, an hour or so

- Garden 2:
  - Special-needs young adults & their teachers/aids
  - 2-3 days a week, an hour or so

- Garden 3:
  - Retirees, working folks, special-needs adults
  - 6 days a week, an hour or so

Special Projects Team

- There are tasks besides gardening!
  - Shopping
  - Hauling things
  - Building things - trellises, etc.
  - Fixing things
  - Refurbishing beds

- Good jobs for non-gardeners!

- We established a Special Projects Team

Advance Planning Team

- Someone needs to think ahead:
  - When will the current crops be done?
  - What will be planted next?
  - When do seeds need to be ordered?
  - When do seedlings need to be started?

- We established an “Advanced Planning” Team

Administrative Tasks

- Raise funds; manage finances
- Recruit, process, place volunteers
- Set up / manage web site
- Coordinate with other groups
- Prepare and distribute newsletter
- Set up / coordinate meetings

Who Makes Gardening Decisions?

- Everyone has an opinion!
  - What to grow?
  - When to plant?
  - How fertilize?
  - When to harvest?

- We appointed a Lead Gardener for each garden who listens then decides
**Team Communication**

A big issue in a volunteer garden!

- The daily teams don’t see each other
- They need to know:
  - What’s already been done?
  - What else needs to be done?
  - Who is responsible for what?
- Without communication, it’s chaos

**Setting up Team Communication**

Two way communication:

1. Give directions to the volunteers:
   - What needs to be done?
   - Who is assigned to do it?
   - How is it to be done?

2. Get feedback from the volunteers:
   - What was done on your day?
   - Observations / feedback
   - Questions / concerns / requests

**Communication Methods**

- White board at the garden
- Email messages
- Web site where everyone can make entries
  - Lead Gardeners post instructions
  - Daily teams report in
  - Everyone can read and stay in tune
  - http://volunteer-garden.wikispaces.com

**Training**

- Most daily teams have both experienced & new gardeners
- New volunteers get on-the-job training from teammates
- Farmer Roy advises and mentors us
- Sunshine Care garden seminars are open to all

**Repairs/Maintenance-Reporting/Resolution**

- Daily teams report problems in their on-line daily report
- Special Projects team picks up on the report
- Special Projects reports back when the job is done

**Tools and Resources - Sharing/Storage**

- Most of our tools were donated by volunteers
- Stored in garden-side tool boxes, plastic bins
- Each gardens has its own tools + shared tools
- Soil amendments / fertilizers are acquired in bulk and shared as needed by each garden
Compost Pile / Recycling / Trash

- We compost our garden waste
- The three gardens share:
  - One composting operation
  - One trash can, recycle can for non-compostables

Working with a Food Bank

- What crops do they want?
  - This determines what you grow
  - May differ from gardener wishes

- How will the produce get there?
  - We have to harvest AND deliver
  - What days / times will they accept delivery?
  - Do you need a cooler / refrigerator / storage?

Reporting to Funders / Volunteers

- We use a monthly newsletter to:
  - Report to volunteers, funders, and other supporters
  - Announce upcoming events and developments

Challenges

- Regular gardening challenges
- Ensuring a good experience for the volunteers
- Raising sufficient funds
- Maximizing production

Rewards

- Learning new things
- Feeling of camaraderie
- Sense of accomplishment