

An aerial photograph of a school building with a playground and parking lot. The school building is a large, rectangular structure with a dark roof and a central entrance. To the right of the building is a large, rectangular playground area with a green surface and several wooden structures. In the foreground, there is a parking lot with several cars parked. The surrounding area is lush with green trees and grass.

# The Community Gardens of Morrisville Borough, PA.

A Proposal by Wayne Kachelries with  
the Morrisville Environmental Advisory Council  
(June 2014)

Google

Imagery ©2014 Google

# The Morrisville Community Garden - Proposal Outline & Introduction

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# The Morrisville Community Garden - Proposal Outline & Introduction

## Executive Summary

In an effort to **Build Good Will and Further Cooperation in Our Morrisville, PA Community**, to **Expand Recreational Opportunities for Our Citizens**, to **Provide Open Educational Opportunities for Our Children**, to **Promote Good Health by Growing and Harvesting Wholesome Fresh Fruits and Vegetables**, and to **Beautify Our Park and Shared Community Spaces**, this document proposes the **Creation of a Community Garden** by making use of the space currently occupied by the defunct community pool while providing elucidation, in the briefest of terms, of common discussion points and overview of goals useful in the introduction of **Community Garden** concepts to those who are unfamiliar with them.

This proposal presents the benefits that the creation of a community garden will provide to ***all of the residents*** of Morrisville Borough and advances the recommendation that the location currently occupied by the defunct community pool as the best place to create a community garden. Specific design goals and resource requirements are presented along with proven start-up and management methodologies as well as agreements and structure of proposed community garden memberships. Local and regional sources of support and funding are identified as well as methods to publicize the community garden furthering the overall promotion of our Borough. Goals and strategies for engaging our community to participate both actively and passively in the community garden are introduced and specific examples are provided that focus on educational opportunities to benefit all members of our community in an inclusive manner.

The creation of the Community Gardens of Morrisville will doubtlessly prove to be another community supported - community created - community operated source of pride, beauty and recreation for all of our families, friends and neighbors in Morrisville Borough and beyond.

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*"Kids who grow kale, eat kale." - Ron Finley*

## **The Benefits of a Community Garden**

The Benefits of establishing a Community Garden include:

- The improvement of people's quality of life by providing a catalyst for neighborhood and community development.
- Stimulating social interaction.
- Encouraging and renewing self-reliance.
- Beautifying neighborhoods.
- Producing nutritious foods locally.
- Opportunities to provide fresh food assistance to our neighbors in need.
- Reducing family food budgets.
- Conserving resources.
- Creating opportunities for active and passive recreation, exercise, therapy and education affecting families, individuals, seniors and youth in a purposeful and positive way.

## **The Benefits of a Community Garden at the Williamson Park pool**

The Benefits of establishing a Community Garden located at the site of the defunct swimming pool in Williamson Park, Morrisville, PA include:

- High Visibility - promotes public awareness, public involvement, business support.
- Central location - easily accessible by public with adequate adjacent parking.
- Sales of donated crops and other fundraising opportunities will be higher in this location due to daily pedestrian traffic and ongoing recreational uses.
- Utility services currently exist.
- Area is fenced.
- Storage facilities already exist for tools, equipment and supplies.
- Area is easily patrolled - discouraging vandalism and theft.
- A garden can be put in place quickly (even mid season), and scaled up upon demand maximizing land usage, returning benefits to the community quickly.
- Beautification - this pool has been non-operational and a very visible eyesore for several

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years - a Community Garden can fix that quickly by offering both passive and active recreational opportunities, restoring usefulness to this space and making it a living testament of Morrisville's Community Pride!

### Specific Design Goals

- Permaculture garden design and methodologies.
- Attractive, simple to manage landscaping using native flowering plants.
- Raised garden bed designs.
- Wide paths and other ADA compliant design features.
- All plants labeled for identification.
- Organic gardening methods used.
- Notice Board providing information to gardeners and visiting public.
- Accessible to the public for both active and passive recreational opportunities.
- Gardeners encouraged to grow through extended season to frost.
- Rainwater collection and irrigation (primary or secondary source as needed).
- Solar power for lighting (and irrigation if needed).
- Experimental "container garden" area.

### Land Requirements

#### Must Have:

- Full Sun (6 to 8 hours, the more the better). *Requirement met.*
- Flat (relatively speaking). *Requirement met.*
- Accessible, clean, Water (utility supplied or collected rain, though not from asphalt roof surfaces). *Requirement met.*
- Safe Soil (may require amendment, additionally some problems may be mitigated using raised beds with barrier). In most cases the growing medium will either be created on-site or received from a trusted supplier. *Testing needed.*
- Workable by hand or small tiller. *Requirement will be met.*
- Fenced (tall enough to discourage deer and vandals). *Requirement met.*



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- Accessible Location (parking, safe walkable path, ADA compliant). *Requirement will be met by design.*

### **Nice to have:**

- Storage for securing tools. *Facilities are present that can meet this requirement.*
- Rain collection and irrigation method. *Requirement can be met by design.*
- Shady area for rest, "bench work", etc. *Requirement can be met by design.*
- Picnic Tables and other seating. *Requirement can be met by design.*

### **Start-up Guidelines**

The Community Garden Organizers shall make use of the "Community Garden Start-Up Guide" by Rachel Surls of the University of California Cooperative Extension, Los Angeles County (see Appendix 1) which provides a detailed, step by step, methodology that has been proven to work and has been adopted by the American Community Garden Association. Modifications shall be introduced in order to satisfy specific processes or other requirements unique to the community of Morrisville Borough's needs.

### **Gardener's Agreements (Rules and Guidelines)**

Each Community Garden participant, whether they are a paying lessee or volunteer, shall sign an agreement that specifies expectations regarding the use of land, shared tools, supplies and resources and other behavior and safety expectations, and specifies the consequences resulting from the failure, by their own action or any member of the party they represent, to uphold those expectations, which may include forfeiture of their garden bed(s) and/or denial of any future opportunities to participate in active gardening in the community garden. Sample agreements, that have been tested and used successfully for several years, have been collected (see Appendix 2 and 3) and shall be used as models for our own Community Garden. These agreements shall be open to modification as necessary to suit any particular circumstances unique to the needs of the community of Morrisville Borough.

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## Membership (principles in summary)

### Leadership

- The membership shall consist of participating gardeners as well as a subset of participants who will serve as a Community Garden Management Team.
- The Community Garden Management Team should be comprised of a combination of leaders selected by Borough Council and elected by Community Garden members.
- The first Community Garden Management Team (Management Team) members shall be selected based on their ability to contribute to these efforts, the value they add through skill, experience and knowledge, their determination to build a successful and inclusive Community Garden and their ability to work well with others to these ends. The first Management Team members shall serve for a period of one and two years beginning with the start of the project, after which, an election shall be held for new Elected Management Team members before the end of the first growing season. All active, lease holding members in good standing, shall be eligible to be elected and to vote. The length of terms shall be staggered one and two year terms, so that there remains some continuity of experience among active Management Team members.
- Management Team Members shall be responsible for providing guidance and oversight of the Community Garden.
- The Management Team shall consider any questions, conflicts, recommendations and requests and respond with a thoughtful, timely and democratically derived response that serves the best interest of the Community Garden overall.
- Management Team members shall be responsible for performing administrative duties and to liaise with others in our community including elected officials and other agents acting on behalf of our government.
- The Management Team shall be authorized to make timely purchases of materials deemed necessary to the operation of the Community Garden. Thresholds shall be determined to guide such expenditures, below which the Management Team can

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make purchases agreed to by the Management Team, above which would require submission to an as yet to be determined authority of Morrisville Borough. Such a provision shall enable the Management Team to respond quickly to urgent garden needs (an example may include materials necessary to control pests or diseases affecting the gardens, short-run printing of important notices and forms, etc.).

- The first Community Garden Club Management Team shall take action to register the club as a 501 (c) (3) in Pennsylvania/Federal registry in order to apply for broader and long-range grants. Such a registration also offers the benefit to businesses and individuals to receive a tax credit for donations made to the Community Garden Club.

### **All Participating Members**

- All members shall sign and adhere to an agreement of conduct, responsibilities and expectations (see Appendix 2 and 3 for examples of such agreements).
- All members shall "lease" garden beds on a per season basis and shall have access to shared tools, selected pooled starter plants, and other common resources. All members shall have opportunity to submit requests to the Management Team members for acquisitions and to provide suggestions to "steer" the future direction of the club.
- Paid Membership: Paid memberships shall have priority over Volunteer memberships. This is necessary in order to ensure adequate operational funds. This guideline shall be reconsidered on a yearly basis.
- Garden plots shall be leased on a per garden bed basis so that multiple parties may cooperate, within a single or among multiple garden beds, with the condition that garden bed leases shall be signed by one adult individual responsible for representing their cooperative. In principle, all efforts shall be taken to encourage the maximum number of opportunities for membership, meaning, parties shall only be able to apply for one garden bed at a time so that "hoarding" does not take place. Individual members who lease multiple garden beds shall identify a single bed as their primary garden bed because only a single primary garden bed may be reserved for a member returning the following season.



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- Returning members in good standing shall have the first option to renew their lease on their primary garden bed, or they may request to relocate to a new or unassigned garden bed. Additional garden beds shall be available for multiple bed leases if or when they become available.
- Volunteer Membership: In keeping with the guiding principle of inclusivity, no one shall be denied a garden bed that is not otherwise under lease in the garden, or already dedicated to providing food bank assistance, because of an inability to pay membership fees in cash. Some alternative means shall be considered so that "payment" may take the form of "voluntary work." As with most any garden, there are many tasks providing opportunities to contribute a "fair and reasonable voluntary work effort" to support the Community Garden in lieu of cash payment. Such cases shall be considered and negotiated on an individual basis.
- Community: If any garden beds remain available at the start of the growing season, i.e., they remain without a lessor, or if any garden bed is abandoned or otherwise forfeited during the season, it should not remain fallow, but rather be cultivated so that those harvests may be entirely donated to local food banks.

### Local Support Sources

- Residents of Morrisville Borough.
- Local Businesses (a key source for start up funds and materials, who should receive recognition and gratitude in press releases, website, etc. along with patronage whenever possible).
- Community Leaders (not necessarily elected officials, but others within the community who are recognized as experts or have a desire to get things done).
- Elected Officials - Borough Council, guided by the *Borough of Morrisville Open Space Plan 2009* and the *Borough of Morrisville Comprehensive Plan* of 2008, must be encouraged to include "Community Gardening" in Borough parks and open space policies for current and future land use. Such a policy will help to ensure that funding sources dedicated to the Community Garden shall be applied to the operation of the Community Garden.

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- County, State Government Agencies/Departments (parks, library, works, schools, etc.).
- Other Community Gardens, Horticultural and/or Conservation societies, clubs, etc.

### **Publicity**

- Local Printed/Online News (daily, weekly, monthly): Press releases for milestones.
- Website (wordpress, twitter, facebook): Weekly updates for milestones. Shall also serve as a communications hub.
- Events: Specific milestones such as ribbon cutting, co-op work days, harvest days, fundraising, delivery to food banks, etc., shall be publicized and accompanied by a photograph. These events should be relatively frequent and include local elected officials, business leaders and celebrities, Community Garden members and other contributors.

Note: This is also an excellent promotional opportunity for the Borough overall. A Community Garden such as the one defined within this proposal should be continuously and actively publicized for the benefit of the Garden as well as the community of Morrisville Borough.

### **Giving Back to our Community**

Members shall agree to donate, through the Community Garden, an amount approximately equal to 10% of the foods cultivated and harvested from their garden bed(s). Methods may include uniquely grown foods or foods produced in "dedicated" garden beds maintained by the members for the purpose of donation.

### **Community Outreach**

- In principle, efforts should always be taken to make the Community Garden space available/accessible to interested passersby during normal hours of park operation. Garden members should take the time to greet impromptu visitors and inform them of opportunities to join and contribute. Additionally, organized efforts should be taken to extend invitations to specific groups of people in the Borough to visit the garden where a "mini-program" explaining and showcasing the Community Garden along with a brief guided tour can be offered. Examples of such groups may include school

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aged children, seniors groups, youth groups (boy/girl scouts, 4-H, etc.) or any other interested parties.

- Community Garden space will also provide opportunities for visitors to enter the garden and sit peacefully on benches and picnic tables to enjoy viewing the beauty of our Community Garden growing both vegetables and ornamental flowering plants.
- The Community Garden also offers an excellent opportunity to introduce school aged children to the concepts of local food sources, plant biology and earth and environmental sciences. A simple, yet excellent, example is one where a classroom is provided sugar-snap peas to soak overnight in-class, then the students can come to the garden, plant them in a dedicated space and visit them with their class as they grow (or after school hours with their families), culminating in a sugar-snap harvest. An in-class educational program can accompany such an exercise and materials are available through the County Agriculture Extension to assist teachers. NOTE: Sugar-snap peas are a good choice since they are easy to handle because of their large size, grow quickly and are harvested in the early spring season so that they can be enjoyed while completing their lessons before the summer break. Sugar-snap peas also require very little care while growing (no pruning, etc.), they are vertical growing, and require only about a 1-foot wide row of garden space with a simple and inexpensive net trellis. After the harvest, this space can be re-allotted to growing a late-harvest plant or dedicated as a "set aside" plot.

### **Resources (Information for effective and efficient Community Gardening)**

- Penn State Agriculture Extension.
- Morrisville's own Master Gardeners certified by Penn State.
- The American Community Garden Association.
- The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (a grant source).
- County Heritage and Open Space Conservation organizations (a grant source).
- The "Square Foot Garden", Mel Bartholomew (methods to maximize yield per space).
- "You Bet Your Garden", Mike McGrath (Delaware Valley based organic gardening).
- The Bucks County Technical High School.

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- The Delaware Valley College.
- Other nearby Community Gardens and Gardeners.

### Videos (Ideas and Inspiration online)

- TEDxPhilly - Nic Esposito - Urban green thumb ([http://youtu.be/\\_Jibmiiu2uw](http://youtu.be/_Jibmiiu2uw))
- Ron Finley: A guerilla gardener in South Central LA ([http://youtu.be/EzZzZ\\_qpZ4w](http://youtu.be/EzZzZ_qpZ4w))
- Pam Warhurst: How we can eat our landscapes (<http://youtu.be/4KmKoj4RSZw>)
- Community Gardens Grow Community (<http://youtu.be/ydrALNfsm6o>)
- University of MA Permaculture series  
(<https://www.youtube.com/user/UMassPermaculture>).

### Expenses

Expenses are dependent upon many factors and not all needs can be known ahead of time, particularly prior to site access, soil and water testing, etc. An estimate to build all of the items and structural features and based on a "clean" site with pre-existing access to water and requiring minimal mitigation and remediation may cost between \$3,000 and \$6,000 for materials, supplies and equipment. The number of actual beds will be determined by the number of paid memberships. In principle, costs shall be kept to a minimum whenever possible (i.e., if a site contains toxins, heavy metals, or the presence of other extremely undesirable and difficult to mitigate circumstances, then it would prudent to find another location more amenable to the creation of a community garden).

### Start-up Needs

- Water (utility source and/or rain collection). *Estimated utility cost \$125.00 per season.*<sup>1</sup>
- Preparation of site (clean up, demolition, waste removal). *Unknown.*
- Storage space (existing building space). *None extra.*
- Tools and equipment (donations by members or community). *None extra.*
- Fencing (exists, but some repairs are needed such as staking bottom to ground and

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<sup>1</sup> Water estimate based on 50% supply from rainfall and 50% supplemental: 1,000 square feet at one inch per week = about 300 gallons per week.

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repair of north gate). *Unknown*.

- Seeds and Starter Plants (minimal cost if partner with BCTHS). *Estimated \$50.00 per season*.
- Liability insurance. *Waiting for estimate from [www.Brunswickcompanies.com](http://www.Brunswickcompanies.com)*.
- Legal review (borough solicitor?). *Unknown*.
- Construction Materials for Garden Beds. *Estimated Total materials for 50 beds (4'x8'x8", WxLxH) = \$2250.00.*<sup>2</sup>
- Soil testing. Performed by Penn State College of Agriculture Sciences. *Depending on analysis needs, costs run between \$20.00 and \$75.00*.
- Growing Mediums<sup>3</sup>. *Estimated Total Fill for 50 beds = \$1200.00 to \$1800.00.*<sup>4</sup>
- Membership registration in American Community Garden Association. *\$100.00*<sup>5</sup>

*Total of known start-up expenses needed: \$4,400.*

### Operational

- Water.
- Seeds and starter plants.
- Maintenance.
- Expansion.
- Liability insurance.
- Membership registration in American Community Garden Association (renewal).

### Funding

- Member Fees (should be kept as low as possible, may include an initiation fee plus lease fees). Example: \$10.00 Initiation Fee + \$40.00 Garden Bed Fee = \$50.00 per garden bed.

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2 Garden Bed estimated costs approximately \$35.00 - \$45.00 for materials (based on list price for # 2 prime, pressure treated "weathershield" wood (MCA - micronized copper azole treatment classified as safe for use in constructing raised bed vegetable gardens), miscellaneous fasteners (cable, eye bolts, washers, nuts, screws, nails), plastic film and cardboard barriers.

3 Growing Medium: Each bed requires about 1 Cubic Yard of medium, composed of 50% sifted clean soil, 25% leaf compost, 25% mushroom compost (SMS).

4 Lower cost possible if we can reclaim adequate supply of leaf compost from Borough collection site.

5 Membership provides additional support including grant applications, discounted insurance, technical support, online training, inclusion to online list of community gardens, and other materials.

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- Donations (from local businesses and caring individuals, in the form of cash or material support, discounts on material purchases).
- Fundraising Sales (members will be asked to donate to the Community Garden some share of their excess harvested vegetables for sale by the garden to the public).
- Starter Plant Sales (starter plants should be started in-bulk and extra plants would be available for sale to the public).
- Container Garden Sales (grow box/earth box type containers fabricated by members would be available for sale with/without pre-planted starter plants).
- Grants (available from multiple sources).
- Fundraising Social Events (garden themed art show & auction, dinner and dance, wine & cheese, etc.).
- Fundraising Educational Sessions (held at the garden, may include instructions on rain water collection, organic gardening techniques, high-density gardening techniques, permaculture gardening techniques, gardening with native plants, pest and disease identification and control, photography in the garden, etc.).



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### COMMUNITY GARDEN START-UP GUIDE

By

Rachel Surls, UCCE County Director

With Help of Chris Braswell and Laura Harris, Los Angeles Conservation Corps

Updated March 2001 by

Yvonne Savio, Common Ground Garden Program Manager, UCCE

This "Community Garden Start-Up Guide" is intended to help neighborhood groups and organizations along the path to starting and sustaining a community garden.

#### ***Why Start a Community Garden?***

Many families living in the city would like to grow some of their own fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Some want to save money on their food bills. Others like the freshness, flavor and wholesomeness of home-grown produce. And for many, gardening is a relaxing way to exercise and enjoy being out-of-doors. There are also families from other cultures who would like to grow traditional foods not available in the supermarket.

Community gardens beautify neighborhoods and help bring neighbors closer together. They have been proven as tools to reduce neighborhood crime--particularly when vacant, blighted lots are targeted for garden development.

Community gardens provide safe, recreational green space in urban areas with little or no park land, and can contribute greatly to keeping urban air clean.

Those who are lucky enough to have sunny backyards or balconies can plant a garden whenever they have the time and energy. But what about those who do not have a place to garden? For these people, community gardens may be the answer.

#### ***Step by Step To Your Own Community Garden***

##### **1. Get Your Neighbors Involved**

There is a lot of work involved in starting a new garden. Make sure you have several people who will help you. Over the years, our experience indicates that there should be at least ten interested families to create and sustain a garden project. Survey the residents of your neighborhood to see if they are interested and would participate. Hold monthly meetings of the interested group to develop and initiate plans, keep people posted on the garden's progress, and keep them involved in the process from day one.

##### **2. Form a Garden Club**

A garden club is a way of formally organizing your new group. It helps you make decisions and divide-up the work effectively. It also ensures that every one has a vested interest in the garden and can contribute to its design, development, and maintenance. It can be formed at any time during the process of starting a community garden; however, it's wise to do so early on. This way, club members can share in the many tasks of establishing the new garden. The typical garden club will have many functions, including:

- Establishing garden rules (see sample)
- Accepting and reviewing garden applications
- Making plot assignments
- Collecting garden dues (if any)
- Paying water bills
- Resolving conflicts

The typical garden club has at least two officers: a president and a treasurer; although your garden club may have more if necessary. Elections for garden officers usually are held annually.

##### **Find Land for the Garden**

Look around your neighborhood for a vacant lot that gets plenty of sun--at least six to eight hours each day. A garden site should be relatively flat (although slight slopes can be terraced). It should be relatively free of large pieces of concrete left behind from demolition of structures. Any rubble or debris should be manageable--that is, it can be removed by volunteers clearing the lot with trash bags, wheelbarrows, and pick up trucks. Ideally, it should have a fence around it with a gate wide enough for a vehicle to enter. It is possible to work with a site that is paved with concrete or asphalt by building raised beds that sit on the surface or using containers. You can also remove the asphalt or concrete to create areas for gardens, but such a garden will be much more difficult, expensive, and time-

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consuming to start. A site without paving, and soil relatively free of trash and debris is best.

The potential garden site should be within walking, or no more than a short drive from you and the neighbors who have expressed interest in participating. If the lot is not already being used, make sure the community supports establishing a garden there.

It's best to select three potential sites in your neighborhood and write down their address and nearest cross streets. If you don't know the address of a vacant lot, get the addresses of the properties on both sides of the lot--this will give you the ability to make an educated guess on the address of the site. We suggest you identify at least three potential sites because one or more might not be available for you to use for various reasons, and you want to end up with at least one that works out.

### **3. Find out Who Owns the Land**

It is illegal to use land without obtaining the owners permission. In order to obtain permission, you must first find out who owns the land.

Take the information you have written down about the location of the sites in step 3 to your county's tax assessor's office. The Los Angeles County Tax Assessor's office is located at 225 North Hill Street, Room 205. Or go to a branch office listed in the white pages of the telephone directory. At this office, you will look through the map books to get the names and addresses of the owner of the sites you are interested in.

### **4. Find out if Your Proposed Site has Water**

While you are researching site ownership, contact the water service provider in your area to find out if your potential site(s) has/have an existing water meter to hook-in to. Call your water provider's customer service department, and ask them to conduct a "site investigation". They will need the same location information that you took with you to the Tax Assessor's office.

Existing access to water will make a critical difference in the expense of getting your project started. Depending on the size of your garden site, you will need a 1/2-inch to 1-inch water meter. If there has been water service to the site in the past, it is relatively inexpensive to get a new water meter installed (if one doesn't already exist). If there has never been water service to that site, it might cost much more for your water provider to install a lateral line from the street main to the site and install your new meter.

### **5 Contact the Land Owner**

Once you have determined that your potential site is feasible, write a letter to the landowner asking for permission to use the property for a community garden. Be sure to mention to the landowner the value of the garden to the community and the fact the gardeners will be responsible for keeping the site clean and weed-free (this saves landowners from maintaining the site or paying city weed abatement fees).

Establish a term for use of the site, and prepare and negotiate a lease. Typically, groups lease garden sites from land owners for \$1 per year. You should attempt to negotiate a lease for a least three years (or longer if the property owner is agreeable). Many landowners are worried about their liability for injuries that might occur at the garden. Therefore, you should include a simple "hold harmless" waiver in the lease and in gardener agreement forms. For more information on the lease, and the hold harmless waiver, see 8, "Signing a Lease".

Be prepared to purchase liability insurance to protect further the property owner (and yourself) should an accident occur at the garden. For more information on the hold harmless waiver, and liability insurance, see 8, "Signing a Lease", and 9, "Obtaining Liability Insurance".

### **6. Get Your Soil Tested**

It might be advisable to have the soil at the site tested for fertility pH and presence of heavy metals. Contact a private lab.

### **7. Signing a Lease**

Landowners of potential garden sites might be concerned about their liability should someone be injured while working in the garden. Your group should be prepared to offer the landowner a lease with a "hold harmless" waiver. This "hold harmless" waiver can simply state that should one of the gardeners be injured as a result of negligence on the part of another gardener, the landowner is "held harmless" and will not be sued. Each gardener should be made aware of this waiver and should be required to sign an

2

3 agreement in order to obtain a plot in the community garden. A sample gardener agreement form is attached which your group can use as a model.

### **8. Obtaining Liability Insurance**

Landowners may also require that your group purchase liability insurance. Community gardeners in the Los Angeles area can obtain inexpensive policies from Metro Farm Gardens. Contact Toby Leaman at (323) 663-7441 or fax (323)

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663-5715, for more information on obtaining an insurance policy.

Once you have a lease signed by the landowner and liability insurance, you're free to plan and plant your garden!

## 9. Planning the Garden

Community members should be involved in the planning, design, and set-up of the garden. Before the design process begins, you should measure your site and make a simple, to-scale site map. Hold two or three garden design meetings at times when interested participants can attend. Make sure that group decisions are recorded in official minutes, or that someone takes accurate notes. This ensures that decisions made can be communicated to others, and progress will not be slowed. A great way to generate ideas and visualize the design is to use simple drawings or photos cut from garden magazines representing the different garden components-- flower beds, compost bins, pathways, arbors, etc.--that can be moved around on the map as the group discusses layout.

### a. Basic Elements of a Community Garden

Although there are exceptions to every rule, community gardens should almost always include:

- At least 15 plots assigned to community members. These should be placed in the sunniest part of the garden. Without plots for individual participation, it is very difficult to achieve long-term community involvement. Raised bed plots, which are more expensive, should be no more than 4 feet wide (to facilitate access to plants from the sides without stepping into the bed), and between 8 and 12 feet long (it is advisable to construct your raised beds in sizes that are found in readily-available lumber, or that can be cut without too much waste). In-ground plots can be from 10 x 10 up to 20 x 20 feet. Pathways between beds and plots should be least 3 to 4 feet wide to allow space for wheelbarrows. The soil in both raised bed and in-ground plots should be amended with aged compost or manure to improve its fertility and increase its organic matter content.
- A simple irrigation system with one hose bib or faucet for every four plots. Hand watering with a hose is the most practical and affordable for individual plots (and it's almost a necessity when you start plants from seed). Drip and soaker-hose irrigation can be used in all areas of the garden for transplanted and established plants, but especially for deep-rooted fruit trees and ornamentals. If no one in your group is knowledgeable about irrigation, you might need some assistance in designing your irrigation system. Seek out a landscape contractor or nursery or garden center professional to help you develop a basic layout and materials list.
- An 8-foot fence around the perimeter with a drive-through gate. In our experience, this is a key element of success. Don't count on eliminating all acts of vandalism or theft, but fencing will help to keep these to tolerably low levels.
- A tool shed or other structure for storing tools, supplies, and materials. Recycled metal shipping containers make excellent storage sheds, and are almost vandal-proof. Contact the Port Authority for leads on where to find them.
- A bench or picnic table where gardeners can sit, relax, and take a break--preferably in shade. If there are no shade trees on the site, a simple arbor can be constructed from wood or pipe, and planted with chayote squash, bougainvillea, grapes, kiwis, or some other vine.
- A sign with the garden's name, sponsors, and a contact person's phone number for more information. If your community is bilingual, include information in this language.
- A shared composting area for the community gardeners. Wood pallets are easy to come-by and (when stood on-end, attached in a U-shape, and the inside covered with galvanized rabbit-wire) make excellent compost bins.

### b. Nice Additions to Your Garden Plan

- A small fruit tree orchard, whose care and harvest can be shared by all the members. The orchard can also create shade for people as well as shade-loving plants.
- A water fountain. This can be a simple drinking fountain attachment to a hose bib (or faucet) you can purchase at a hardware store.
- Perimeter landscaping, which can focus on drought tolerant flowers and shrubs, plants which attract butterflies and hummingbirds, or roses and other flowers suitable for cutting bouquets. Herbs are also well-suited to perimeter landscaping and help to create barriers to unwanted pest insects who do not like the smell of their essential oils.
- A children's area, which can include special small plots for children, a sand box, and play equipment.
- A meeting area, which could range from a semi-circle of hay bales or tree stumps, to a simple amphitheater built of recycled, broken concrete. Building a shade structure above would be beneficial as well.
- A community bulletin board where rules, meeting notices, and other important information can be posted.

## 10. Creating a Garden Budget

Use your design to develop a materials list and cost-out the project. You will need to call-around to get prices on fencing and other items. You might be surprised at the cost. A community garden with just the Basic Elements (listed above) typically costs between \$2,500 to \$5,000. At this point, your group might decide to scale back your initial plans and save some design ideas for a "Phase Two" of the garden.

## 11. Where to Get Materials and Money

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While some start-up funds will be needed through determination and hard work, you can obtain donations of materials for your project. Community businesses might assist, and provide anything from fencing to lumber to plants. The important thing is to ask. Develop a letter that tells merchants about your project and why it's important to the community. Attach your "wish list", but be reasonable. Try to personalize this letter for each business you approach. Drop it off personally with the store manager, preferably with a couple of cute kids who will be gardening in tow! Then, follow-up by phone. Be patient, persistent, and polite. Your efforts will pay-off with at least some of the businesses you approach. Be sure to thank these key supporters and recognize them on your garden sign, at a garden grand opening, or other special event.

Money, which will be needed to purchase items not donated, can be obtained through community fund-raisers such as car washes, craft and rummage sales, pancake breakfasts, and bake sales. They can also be obtained by writing grants, but be aware grant writing efforts can take six months or longer to yield results, and you must have a fiscal sponsor or agent with tax-exempt 501(c)3 status (such as a church or non-profit corporation) that agrees to administer the funds.

## **12. Make Sure Your Garden Infrastructure is in Place**

If you have not yet formed a garden club, now is the time to do so. It's also time to establish garden rules, develop a garden application form for those who wish to participate, set up a bank account, and determine what garden dues will be if these things have not already been done. This is also the time to begin having monthly meetings if you have not already done so. Also, if you haven't already contacted your city councilperson, he or she can be helpful in many ways including helping your group obtain city services such as trash pick-up. Their staff can also help you with community organizing and soliciting for material donations.

## **13. Get Growing!**

Many new garden groups make the mistake of remaining in the planning, design and fundraising stage for an extended period of time. There is a fine line between planning well and over planning. After several months of the initial research, designing, planning, and outreach efforts, group members will very likely be feeling frustrated and will begin to wonder if all their efforts will ever result in a garden. That's why it's important to plant something on your site as soon as possible. People need to see visible results or they will begin to lose interest in the project. To keep the momentum going, initiate the following steps even if you are still seeking donations and funds or your project (but not until you have signed a lease and obtained insurance).

### **a. Clean up the Site**

Schedule community workdays to clean up the site. How many work days you need will depend on the size of the site, and how much and what kind of debris are on site.

### **b. Install the Irrigation System**

Without water, you can't grow anything. So get this key element into place as soon as possible. There are plenty of opportunities for community involvement--from digging trenches to laying out PVC pipes.

### **c. Plant Something**

Once you have water, there are many options for in-garden action. Stake out beds and pathways by marking them with stakes and twine. Mulch pathways. If your fence isn't in yet, some people might still want to accept the risk of vandalism and get their plots started. You can also plant shade and fruit trees and begin to landscape the site. If you do not yet have a source of donated plants, or don't wish to risk having them vandalized, plant annual flower seeds which will grow quickly and can be replaced later. Seeds for Los Angeles County community and school gardens can be obtained through the Common Ground Garden Program (323) 260- 3348.

### **d. Continue to construct the garden as materials and funds become available. 14. Celebrate!**

At this point, your ideas and hard work have finally become a community garden! Be sure to take time to celebrate. Have a grand opening, barbecue, or some other fun event to give everyone who helped to make this happen, a special thank-you. This is the time to give all those who gave donated materials or time a special certificate, bouquet, or other form of recognition.

## **15. Troubleshooting as the Garden Develops**

4

5 All community gardens will experience problems somewhere along the way. Don't get discouraged--get organized. The key

to success for community gardens is not only preventing problems from ever occurring, but also working together to solve them when they do inevitably occur. In our experience, these are some of the most common problems that "crop-up" in community gardens, and our suggestions for solving them

### **a. Vandalism**

Most gardens experience occasional vandalism. The best action you can take is to replant immediately. Generally the

## The Morrisville Community Garden - Proposal Outline & Introduction

vandals become bored after a while and stop. Good community outreach, especially to youth and the garden's immediately neighbors is also important. Most important--don't get to discouraged. It happens. Get over it and keep going. What about barbed wired or razor wire to make the garden more secure? Our advice--don't. It's bad for community relations, looks awful, and is sometimes illegal to install without a permit. If you need more physical deterrents to keep vandals out, plant bougainvillea or pyracantha along your fence, their thorns will do the trick!

### **b. Security**

Invite the community officer from your local precinct to a garden meeting to get their suggestions on making the garden more secure. Community officers can also be a great help in solving problems with garden vandalism, and dealing with drug dealers, and gang members in the area.

### **c. Communication**

Clear and well-enforced garden rules and a strong garden president can go a long way towards minimizing misunderstandings in the garden. But communication problems do arise. It's the job of the garden club to resolve those issues. If it's something not clearly spelled out in the rules, the membership can take a vote to add new rules and make modifications to existing rules.

Language barriers are a very common source of misunderstandings. Garden club leadership should make every effort to have a translator at garden meetings where participants are bilingual--perhaps a family member of one of the garden members who speaks the language will offer to help.

### **d. Trash**

It's important to get your compost system going right away and get some training for gardeners on how to use it. If gardeners don't compost, large quantities of waste will begin to build up, create an eyesore, and could hurt your relationships with neighbors and the property owner. Waste can also become a fire hazard. Make sure gardeners know how to sort trash properly, what to compost, and what to recycle. Trash cans placed in accessible areas are helpful to keep a neat and tidy garden.

### **e. Gardener Drop-Out**

There has been, and probably always will be, a high rate of turnover in community gardens. Often, people sign up for plots and then don't follow through. Remember, gardening is hard work for some people, especially in the heat of summer. Be sure to have a clause in your gardener agreement which states gardeners forfeit their right to their plot if they don't plant it within one month, or if they don't maintain it. While gardeners should be given every opportunity to follow through, if after several reminders either by letter or phone nothing changes, it is time for the club to reassign the plot. It is also advisable that every year, the leadership conduct a renewed community outreach campaign by contacting churches and other groups in the neighborhood to let them know about the garden and that plots are available.

### **f. Weeds**

Gardeners tend to visit their plots less during the winter time, and lower participation, combined with rain, tends to create a huge weed problem in January, February, and March. Remember, part of your agreement with the landowner is that you will maintain the lot and keep weeds from taking over. In the late summer/early fall, provide gardeners with a workshop or printed material about what can be grown in a fall and winter garden. Also, schedule garden workdays for the spring in advance since you know you'll need them at the end of winter to clear weeds. If you anticipate that plots will be untended during the winter, apply a thick layer of mulch or hay to the beds and paths to reduce weed proliferation.

### **Good luck with your community garden project!**

Yvonne Savio, Common Ground Garden Program Manager, University of California Cooperative Extension, Los Angeles County 4800 E. Cesar E. Chavez Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90022, Phone 323-260-3407, Fax 323-881-0067, Email [ydsavio@ucdavis.edu](mailto:ydsavio@ucdavis.edu) Website: [http://celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/Common\\_Ground\\_Garden\\_Program/](http://celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/Common_Ground_Garden_Program/) Master Gardener Gardening helpline: [mglosangeleshelpline@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mglosangeleshelpline@ucdavis.edu), 323-260-3238

2007 Lifetime Achievement Award, Los Angeles Community Garden Council 2007 Certificate of Commendation, Los Angeles Unified School District

2006 Certificate of Appreciation, City of Los Angeles

2004 "Feeding the Hungry" Garden Crusader Award, Gardener's Supply Company

Since 1978, the Common Ground Garden program has helped Los Angeles County residents to garden, grow their own food, and healthfully prepare it. Our targeted audience and priority are to serve limited-resource residents and those traditionally underrepresented. By training community volunteers, we empower neighborhoods to create their own solutions. Our Master Gardener volunteers work primarily with community gardens, school gardens, seniors, and homeless and battered women's shelters.



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## Appendix 2

### Sample Community Garden CONTRACT

*(Information in parentheses is to be determined by individual garden)*

Common Ground Garden Program, University of California Cooperative Extension, Los Angeles County P.O. Box 22255, 4800 E. Cesar E. Chavez Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90022

Phone (323) 260-3407, Fax (323) 881-0067, Email <ydsavio@ucdavis.edu>

#### Rules, Terms, and Conditions for Participation

##### Introduction

A. The (organization/garden manager) is the highest governing authority at the (Name) Community Garden.

B. Breaking any rules, terms, and conditions is cause for exclusion from the garden and loss of your plot.

1. You will receive one verbal warning from the garden manager.

2. If no response or correction has been made, you will receive written notice two weeks later.

3. In another two weeks, if no response or correction has been made, you will receive written final notification that you have

forfeited your gardening privileges and plot.

4. You will be allowed to reapply for another garden plot only after one year, and only at the discretion of the garden manager.

##### Rules, Terms, and Condition for Participation

If accepted as a gardener, I will abide by the following rules, terms, and conditions.

1. I use this garden at the sole discretion of (Watts Family) Community Garden. I agree to abide by its policies and practices.

2. The fee for the use of the garden is (\$32.00) per plot, per year (January 1 – December 31), due on or before January 1). Fee for half a

year after (beginning July 1 or later) is (\$16.00). There are no refunds.

3. Once I have been assigned a plot, I will cultivate and plant it within two weeks. I will garden year round. My plot cannot be left

fallow or unused for any period of three weeks or longer, more than one time a year.

4. My plot is (20 x 20) feet. I will not expand my plot beyond this measurement or into paths or other plots. I will keep all my plants

within the limits of my garden plot and will not allow any plants to grow more than six feet high. I must keep my plot free of weeds,

pests and diseases.

5. I will keep my plot, paths, and surrounding areas clean and neat. I will completely separate my trash into three groups: 1) dead plants,

leaves, and other green waste plant parts; 2) rocks, stones, and asphalt; and 3) paper, plastic, cardboard, wood, metal, etc. I will put each type of trash only in the areas designated specifically for each. Anything I bring from my home I will take back home. I will not bring household trash and leave it at the (Watts Family) Community Garden.

6. If I now have more than one plot, I will give up my additional plots by the end of this gardening year (December 31).

7. I will not plant any illegal plant. I will not smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, use illegal drugs, or gamble in the garden. I will not

come to the garden while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. I will not bring weapons or pets or other animals to the garden.

8. Guests and visitors, including children, may enter the garden only if I accompany them. They must follow all rules, terms, and

conditions stated here. I will supervise my children at all times when they are in the garden. I am solely responsible for the behavior of my guests.

9. The garden manager will assign me general garden maintenance tasks each month, and I must complete them by the end of the month

that I am assigned them

10. I will water my plot according to water-wise guidelines. (If I use more than the recommended amount of water, I will pay a fee each



# The Morrisville Community Garden - Proposal Outline & Introduction

month to cover the cost of this additional water.

11. I will attend the regular (bi-monthly) garden club meetings. If workshops are offered, I will attend at least one of each of the

following topics: soil preparation and maintenance, watering the vegetable garden, and pest and disease control.

12. I will not apply any pesticides in the garden without the approval of the garden manager.

13. I will not make duplicate keys of any locks at the garden or give my key or lock combination to another person.

14. I will not take food or plants from other gardeners' plots. I will not take anything from the garden that is not rightfully mine.

15. I will respect other gardeners, and I will not use abusive or profane language or discriminate against others.

16. I will work to keep the garden a happy, secure, and enjoyable place where all participants can garden and socialize peacefully in a

neighborly manner.

17. I forfeit my right to sue the owner of the property

## **Commitment**

*I have read and understand the application and accept these rules, terms, and conditions stated above for the participation in the (Name) Community Garden*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Gardener

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Morrisville Community Garden - Proposal Outline & Introduction

## Appendix 3

### CENTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY (CFS) COMMUNITY GARDENER AGREEMENT

Clarification: This application is for a gardening membership in the CfS Community Garden Club, of which access to a garden plot is a benefit.

Directions: Please carefully read, sign, and return this document along with your \$25 membership fee to:

CfS Community Garden, c/o Mark Dempsey, 116 ASI Building, University Park, PA, 16802

CfS Community Gardener Agreement Rules, Terms and Conditions for Participation 2014

#### Privileges

All gardeners in good standing with the club and CFS staff will be entitled to:

1. Use of one 10x15 ft. plot for personal gardening purposes
2. Access to a network of support, including experienced gardeners and Penn State faculty
3. Access to gardening implements and water
4. Social events and plenty of new friends

#### Rules, Terms and Conditions for Participation

If accepted as a gardener, I will abide by the following rules, terms and conditions:

1. I will use the garden at the sole discretion of the CFS Community Garden Club. I agree to abide by all its policies and practices.
2. In order to utilize a plot I agree to become a member of the CFS Community Garden Club and pay an annual membership fee of \$25, due one week after receiving notification about a plot assignment. Membership dues are non-refundable.
3. I will participate in at least two of the monthly workdays during the growing season (April-October). Workdays are held at the garden the 2nd Saturday of each month during the growing season, beginning at 10:00 am, unless otherwise announced via the garden Listserv. Attendance is recorded at these workdays, and the attendance requirement must be met in order to be eligible for membership renewal.
4. Members in good standing are eligible to renew their membership for the following year in October. Renewing members will keep their current plot unless specifically requesting a relocation.
5. Maintenance of my garden plot is my sole responsibility. I will not leave my plot fallow or left unused for any period of time exceeding two weeks without making arrangements for its care. I will keep produce from my plot harvested and avoid letting it go to waste.
6. The plot size is 10x15 ft. I will not extend outside of this measurement into other plots or walkways. It is my responsibility to maintain plants within the limits of my plot and to keep vegetation less than six feet in height.
7. I will manage the weeds, pests and diseases in my plot, and I will follow instructions of the garden officers regarding the removal of diseased plant material. Additionally, I will use only organic methods, techniques and substances in my plot.
8. I will take responsibility for the public walkway surrounding my garden plot and keep it free from weeds.
9. I will sort all waste from my plot into compost, recyclables, and trash. Compost can be processed at the site; recyclables and trash must be taken off-site. Household trash or compost will not be brought to or left at the site.

# The Morrisville Community Garden - Proposal Outline & Introduction

10. I will not grow illegal plants in the garden. I realize that gardeners are not allowed to smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, use illegal drugs or gamble at the garden site. Gardeners are not allowed to come into the garden under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. Weapons, pets and other animals are not allowed into the garden.
11. I may bring guests and visitors to the gardens, including children, but guests may enter the garden only when accompanied by myself. Guests are also subject to all rules, terms and conditions stated here. Gardeners are solely responsible for the behavior of their guests.
12. Communal tools and equipment cannot be held overnight or leave the premise of the garden.
13. I will not make duplicate keys of any locks on the premises, or give out the key or lock combinations to any other person.
14. I will not take food or plants without permission from any other gardeners' plots.
15. I will respect other gardeners and will refrain from using profane language around them or discriminating against others.
16. I understand and willingly accept the inherent risks in gardening. I understand that use and misuse of gardening tools may result in injury, and I am aware that soil and foodborne diseases, though rare, may be contracted through gardening or consuming undercooked food.
17. I recognize that garden officers are volunteers and shall not be held liable for accidents or injuries.
18. I realize that I forfeit my right to sue the owners of the property.
19. I will work to keep the garden a happy, secure, and enjoyable place where all participants can garden and socialize peacefully in a neighborly manner.

## Consequences:

The Garden Committee has authority to manage the Community Garden and its membership. Breaking any of the rules, terms and conditions is grounds for action and possible loss of plot.

1. An infraction will result in one email warning from a garden officer.
2. Without a visible response or correction after one week, a 2nd email warning will be sent.
3. If no response or correction has been made two weeks after the first notice, a written notice may be sent notifying you that you have lost your gardening plot and privileges.
4. If the infraction is severe and has the potential to negatively affect neighbors or the use of pathways, then it may be handled directly by a garden officer anytime after the first warning.
5. A relinquished plot will first go to an interested member on the waitlist, and then will be offered to current gardeners.
6. If you lose your plot, you will be able to apply for a plot the following season, but it will be at the discretion of the Garden Officers.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Gardener

Print: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Gardener

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Garden Officer/Committee Member

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## Appendix 4

