



Hale County Community Garden Coalition Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1

What is a community garden?

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. Some use community gardens because they lack adequate space at their house or apartment to have a garden. Others take part in community gardening to build or revitalize a sense of community among neighbors.

Community gardens also take many shapes and forms. From a 50-by-50-foot church garden that supplies a local food pantry with fresh produce to a vacant city lot divided into plots and gardened by neighbors, community gardens reflect the needs and the desires of people directly involved in their management and upkeep. As such, there are many, many ways to organize and manage a community garden.

Regardless of why people choose to take part in a community garden or how a garden is organized, the activity of gardening with others can be both rewarding and challenging.

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Five core beliefs of working in groups

- **Core belief 1:** There are many ways to start and manage a community garden." Although this may be a given, it helps to remember that community gardens can serve many purposes and take many forms.
- **Core belief 2:** In order for a garden to be sustainable as a true community resource, it must grow from local conditions and reflect the strengths, needs and desires of the local community." Assistance from people or organizations outside of the community can be helpful. However, those who will be using the garden should make most of the decisions about how the garden is developed and managed.
- **Core belief 3:** Diverse participation and leadership, at all phases of garden operation, enrich and strengthen a community garden." Gardens can be stronger when they are developed and led by people from different backgrounds.
- **Core belief 4:** Each community member has something to contribute." Useful skills and good suggestions are often overlooked because of how people communicate. People should be given a chance to make their own unique contributions to the garden.
- **Core belief 5:** Gardens are communities in themselves, as well as part of a larger community." This is a reminder to involve and be aware of the larger community when making decisions.

Other types of community gardens

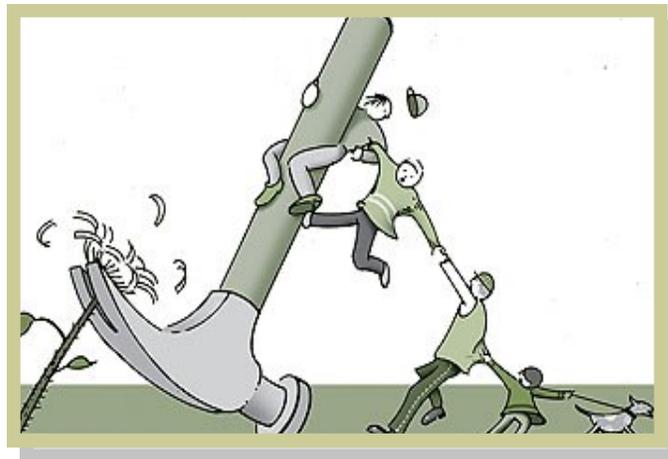
In addition to the typical neighborhood community garden where plots are subdivided and cared for by individuals or families, community gardens exist in a variety of other forms to serve a number of functions. The examples below represent different types of community gardens that are distinguished in part by their purpose and participants.

- **Youth/school gardens** expose young people to gardening and nature, give them the opportunity to do some of their own gardening and/or educate them in a variety of subject areas. These gardens are typically associated with a formal or semi-formal program that incorporates classroom lessons with hands-on gardening activities. Gardens may be located on school grounds, at a community center, in neighborhoods or on other parcels of land.
- **Entrepreneurial/job training market gardens** are typically established by nonprofit organizations or other agencies to teach business or job skills to youth or other groups. They grow and sell the produce they raise. Proceeds from the sale of garden products are used to pay the participants for their work. Programs typically rely on outside sources of funding to offset costs.
- **Communal gardens** are typically organized and gardened by a group of people who share in the work and rewards. Plots are not subdivided for individual or family use. Produce is distributed among group members. Sometimes produce is donated to a local food pantry.
- **Food pantry gardens** may be established at a food pantry, food bank or other location. Produce is grown by volunteers, food pantry clients, or both and donated to the food pantry.
- **Therapy gardens** provide horticultural therapy to hospital patients and others. A trained horticulture therapist often leads programs and classes. Gardens may be located at hospitals, senior centers, prisons or other places. Demonstration gardens show different types of gardening methods, plant varieties, composting techniques and more.
- **Demonstration gardens** located at working community gardens are often open to the general public for display and classes. They may be managed and maintained by garden members or a participating gardening group such as extension Master Gardeners, community members who receive training in home horticulture and then serve as volunteers to educate the public about gardening.

Challenges

A discussion of starting and managing a community garden would be incomplete without a discussion of the challenges encountered by gardeners and garden organizers. Common challenges faced by most community garden groups include:

- **Management:** Community gardens are management intensive. They demand patience, time and the capacity to work with and organize people and projects. They also typically require systems to enforce rules and resolve conflicts.
- **Maintenance:** Community gardens are maintenance intensive. Grass will need to be mowed, equipment will need to be repaired, and plant debris will need to be composted, among other things.
- **Participation:** From year to year, gardeners and garden leaders come and go from community gardens for a variety of reasons. Because of this, it can be challenging to maintain a sense of community and consistency at gardens.
- **Theft and vandalism:** Theft and vandalism are commonplace at many community gardens. As a general rule, theft is the result of adult activity and vandalism is carried out by children.
- **Gardening skills:** Many new and some returning gardeners don't know a lot about gardening. Gardeners who lack gardening skills and have poor gardening experiences may be more likely to give up.
- **Leadership skills:** Many gardeners may not have the skills to take a leadership role at their respective garden.
- **Services and supplies:** Plowing, tilling and the delivery of compost and mulch can be challenging services for gardeners to arrange for themselves.
- **Water:** Most gardens need some way to irrigate fruits and vegetables during the summer. Finding a source of water can be challenging. Also, because most community gardens are located on borrowed land, installing a water hydrant may not be feasible or cost effective.
- **Site permanency:** Most community gardens are located on borrowed land. This limits the amount of infrastructure that can be added to a particular site. It may also create an atmosphere of instability among gardeners since the garden could be lost at any moment.



Wayland Community Garden

Lynette Bowen

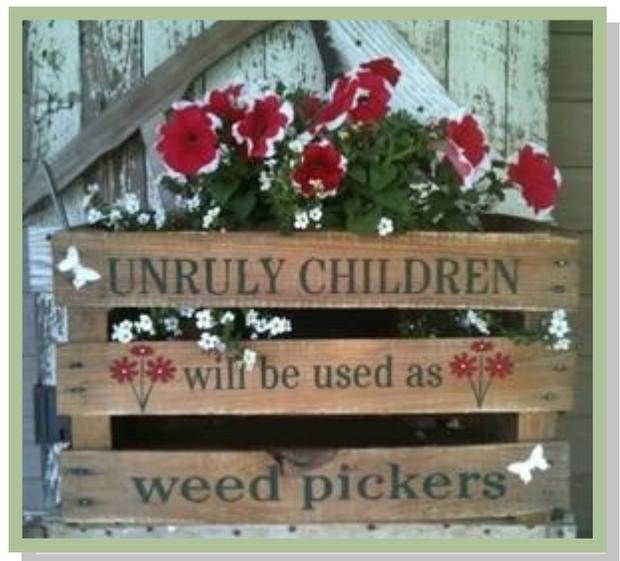
October 2013 - January 2014

Like other gardens around town, the Wayland Community has gone dormant. Not dead, but dormant. Our sugar peas and snow peas grew very well until Plainview's first hard freeze in early November. It was a real delight to see that it is possible to grow up until freezing! We left those plants, as well as our spent green beans, in the beds. Their roots will help to hold moisture in the soil and add some amount of organic matter to the soil, too. Mark Hilliard seeded in winter wheat. It has the same effect as the peas and beans, but it will stay green all winter. Next spring we will mix it into the soil. It adds a lot to soil quality. Anything we can do to retain moisture and enhance soil is a great thing to do. We are already getting ready for spring!

November provided a perfect Saturday for assembling the new shed. Herb Grover, Mark Hilliard, Peter Bowen, Lynette Bowen, Victoria Huffhines, and Jeremy Huffhines spent most of the day on that project and got everything finished. Kudos to everyone! Grant money from the Garrison Institute for Aging provided this shed for us. Thanks to Mike Ramos at Texas Tech for making this partnership possible.

Winter is a pretty good time to work on compost. Wayland maintenance has taken over our large and growing compost pile, which is a very good thing! The pile was started with grass clippings from the athletic fields and quickly grew beyond our little garden crew's ability to keep it turned and watered. Wayland's cafeteria chef, Jay Bendele, is familiar with composting and has provided salad trimmings from the cafe for the compost pile. Right now, we have a good combination of organic materials - and a pile that still continues to grow! Maintenance continues to water and turn the pile with their heavier equipment. Come spring, there should be plenty of brown gold, not only for the community garden but perhaps for ornamental beds around campus as well.

The garden is at the corner of 8th and Utica. You may not see much on the surface right now, but dormancy and soil care now sure do make a difference when it's time to start the spring garden. In the meantime, we and other local garden groups are working on next year's wish-list for the Garrison Institute and making plans for beautiful, productive gardens later in spring.





Meeting to establish a budget for community gardens in Hale County.



Garrison Institute on Aging
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