Organizing for Garden Success
Part 1: Group Structure

GreenThumb
Community Agreements

- Respect differences
- Active listening / Listen to understand, not to respond
- One mic
- Take the wisdom out of the room but leave the names out (confidentiality)
- No one knows everything; together we know a lot
- We can’t be articulate all the time
- Be aware of time
- Embrace curiosity
- Take space, make space
- Self care

Adapted from Cooperative Economics Alliance for NYC
**Best Teams / Worst Teams**

*Take 5 minutes to think about the questions below and make a list.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture the best team you’ve ever been on. What was it like? How did it make you feel?</th>
<th>Picture the worst team you’ve ever been on. What was it like? How did it make you feel?</th>
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### Best Teams / Worst Teams

**Some of the ways other participants have answered:**

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<td><strong>Collaboration</strong>&lt;br&gt;• I learned from other people&lt;br&gt;• Friendliness&lt;br&gt;• Having fun while doing hard work&lt;br&gt;• Open to ideas and opinions of all&lt;br&gt;• Group decision-making - cooperative&lt;br&gt;• We accomplished more because we supported each other&lt;br&gt;• Everyone brings their talents and abilities&lt;br&gt;• Everyone pitched in or mentored&lt;br&gt;• Listened to everyone&lt;br&gt;• Try to reach consensus&lt;br&gt;• Clearly defined roles, moving in one direction&lt;br&gt;• All collaborative, picking up where others left off&lt;br&gt;• Comraderie&lt;br&gt;• Team work development was great&lt;br&gt;• Able to volunteer (not having to be told)&lt;br&gt;• Valued for my contribution</td>
<td><strong>over ridden and walked-on</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Silenced and overlooked&lt;br&gt;• People made fun of me&lt;br&gt;• I got picked last&lt;br&gt;• We weren’t productive - only arguing&lt;br&gt;• Those who need to control. They need to tell everyone what to do. Their way.&lt;br&gt;• Exhausting&lt;br&gt;• A small group makes the decisions for everyone&lt;br&gt;• Passive aggressive&lt;br&gt;• Tension between old and new participants (and old and new ideas)&lt;br&gt;• Points of view were not acknowledged (only valued own opinions)&lt;br&gt;• Conflict, no compromise&lt;br&gt;• Dictatorship! Iron fist ruling&lt;br&gt;• One person doing all the work (or no one is doing the work) between meetings so progress is limited&lt;br&gt;• Everyone feels like an expert&lt;br&gt;• Lack of commitment to project&lt;br&gt;• Lack of direction/information</td>
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*NYC Parks GreenThumb*
Mission & Vision

See the “Mission and Vision” handout for ideas for how to write these statements with your garden group

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<th>MISSION STATEMENT</th>
<th>VISION STATEMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>● Describes what we do and for whom we do it</td>
<td>● Shared values</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Defines the garden’s purpose</td>
<td>● Dream big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Puts the vision statement into practice - how will we get there?</td>
<td>● What do you want for your community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Example: The 462 Halsey Community Garden is a collaborative effort by community residents to create a green space in Bedford Stuyvesant that is dedicated to serving the community in areas that include education, agriculture, healthy living, community pride and community ownership.</td>
<td>● Example from Grow Annapolis: Our vision is of a community where people of all ages and backgrounds come together in the simple shared experience of growing food.</td>
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What is Group Structure?

- Patterns of relationships and decision-making in a group
- Can include a hierarchy (who decides, in what order? Coordinator vs committee?) or process for consensus!
- Can include roles and responsibilities (who does what)
- For example:
  - Garden Coordinator makes most decisions
  - Steering Committee that meets separately to manage garden admin and make decisions
    - Maybe roles like: president, VP, treasurer
  - Committees
    - Maybe roles like: Events Coordinator, Compost Coordinator, Membership Coordinator
What are some of the roles, titles, or committees at your garden?

*Take 5 minutes to think about the questions below and make a list. We’ve gotten you started with some examples.*

- President/Chair
- Garden Coordinator
- Membership Coordinator
- Treasurer
- Events committee
What are some of the roles, titles, or committees at your garden?

*Some of the ways other participants have answered:*

- President/Chair
- Garden Coordinator
- Membership Coordinator
- Treasurer
- Events committee
- Horticulture team
- Grants/Fundraiser
- Compost Committee
- GreenThumb Garden Contacts
- Living Maintenance Committee
- Non-living Maintenance Committee
- Garden tool monitor
- Volunteering committee
- Vibes checker
- Conflict mediator
- Vice President/Chair
- Secretary/Note taker
- Waitlist manager
- Primary/secondary contact
- Education and outreach committee
- Conflict mediation team
- Project leads - could be temporary
- Garden administrator
- Plot/Box/Bed Coordinator
- Master Gardeners
- Communication Coord
- Some committees are part of board, some are not
- Consultants
- Service hours coordinator
Writing Break

Group Governance Worksheet
Review: Group Governance Worksheet

Take 5 minutes to think about the questions below and make a list.

Discussion Questions:
● Who makes the decisions around here?
Discussion Question: Who makes the decisions around here?

- Anyone can propose an idea or process and the group votes on it. Group comes to a consensus.
- Issues discussed at full member meeting. Contact person decides with GT liaison. Gardeners vote but few members present.
- Loose leadership structure. Only 1 leadership role: contact person.
- Typically the Steering Committee but decisions are often brought to membership to see if there is consensus. If not consensus - might go to a vote.
- Thoughts about voting - it might consistently be the same people who are outvoted, that’s a reason to move towards more consensus.
- Everyone? No one?
- People just want to tend to plots and not be part of decision-making
- Board - but they have their own agenda
- My garden has been thru many hands of who is in charge. Things have seemed to fall apart. We are now coming together to try to make things better but its baby steps…
- Via WhatsApp (w/ all members) most of the time. Someone poses a question then we all chime in
- We always have a chairperson and a co-chair in every committee so they make the decisions.
Which best visualizes your garden’s group structure? Which do you *want* for your garden group?
Writing Activity

What are the pros and cons of each of the decision-making styles below?

- Hierarchy
- Majority Rules
- Consensus
Hierarchy: Pros and Cons

*Some of the ways other participants have answered:*

- **Pros:**
  - Only one person to communicate with
  - You understand who does what
  - Faster
  - Can be helpful for transparency and maintaining structure in the garden
  - Streamlines the decision-making process
  - Easier

- **Cons:**
  - One person is in charge - might be dictator or responsible/go-to for all problems.
  - Ego situation. Now this is my identity and i don't want to share. It becomes “their” garden and everyone become lesser
  - Needs clear term limits / guidelines
  - No team, no team spirit
  - Can be an unkind environment
  - Lack of communication, limited opportunity for new ideas, opinions
  - Not everyone or everyone’s ideas will be considered
  - Someone might be overlooked
  - Smaller voices not heard
Majority Rules: Pros and Cons

Some of the ways other participants have answered:

● Pros:
  ○ Most people are in favor of the decision being made
  ○ Discussion about decision
  ○ Somethings do get done. Easier than with consensus
  ○ Work as a team, support each other
  ○ Fast decisions
  ○ Everyone feels they have a say
  ○ Likely to have group buy-in

● Cons:
  ○ Not everyone gets what they want
  ○ Outspoken people can dominate
  ○ It can be divisive
  ○ Not enough members present to make decision for entire group
  ○ Sometimes people are intimidated to speak our & vote
  ○ Lack of agreement can be a barrier to progress /or decisions being made
  ○ People band together to stay in control
  ○ Minority will be unsatisfied
  ○ Someone will feel like their voice isn’t heard
  ○ Could affect people’s energy
Consensus: Pros and Cons

Some of the ways other participants have answered:

● Pros:
  ○ A lot of discussion
  ○ Leaders bring everyone along and gets people on board
  ○ More unifying, when the decision gets made everyone knows that their ideas were heard
  ○ Nice to have everyone on board
  ○ Everyone is involved and has their opinion
  ○ Extremely fair
  ○ Absolutely everyone has a say
  ○ Once a decision is made, everyone has bought into it

● Cons:
  ○ Take a long time to decide, if ever.
  ○ Some people will just go along to end the discussion
  ○ Can split the group
  ○ Very inefficient
  ○ One person can slow the process down
  ○ Difficult/impossible to come up with some solutions/decisions
  ○ Sometimes people are unwilling/unable to explain their rationale for being against