



Recruitment Guide by Affinity Groups

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Background and How to Use this Guide

NYC Parks GreenThumb is proud to be the nation's largest urban gardening program, assisting over 550 gardens and over 20,000 volunteer gardeners throughout New York City on 100 combined acres of open space. GreenThumb gardens create hubs of neighborhood pride while providing a myriad of environmental, health, economic, and social benefits to the neighborhoods in which they thrive.

GreenThumb gardens are open and accessible to the public. They are inclusive spaces regardless of age, race, citizenship status, skin color, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, national origin, pregnancy, religion, sexual orientation, and military or veteran status. Your garden should be a welcoming space and have a clear process in place for accepting new members.

Community Engagement

GreenThumb's Community Engagement team is the first point of contact for our network of community gardens. Outreach Coordinators assist gardeners with community organizing and development, and they also help garden groups with special projects and connecting gardeners with a variety of available resources. In addition, the Community Engagement Team administers the Youth Leadership Council, GreenThumb's annual volunteer program that engages youth in civic engagement and beautification projects at community gardens throughout the city.

The NYC Parks GreenThumb Recruitment Guide by Affinity Groups was created by the Community Engagement team who support community gardens across the five boroughs. As part of a long-term vision to support community garden groups, the team has developed multiple strategies to help assist garden groups in reaching new audiences and making themselves even more welcoming to their communities, especially as New York City and its neighborhoods always continues to grow and change. This recruitment guide is tailored toward any garden group or interested partner that seeks to engage, increase or diversify membership in a group by first identifying and defining the considerations of affinity groups, such as school-age gardeners, families and new immigrant communities. Under each affinity group, GreenThumb lists some possible places to recruit these community members coupled with some concrete recruitment strategies. To conclude, the guide also offers some strategies to recruiting members online. This guide is a living document and will be updated as the team continues to develop and implement strategies.

Affinity Group: Families

Group Considerations:

- Garden safety is often a high priority for families
- Often have limited time due to other family commitments
- Seeking child-friendly activities, events, and community relations or to fulfill community service hours as school requirements

Where to Recruit?

- Local schools and daycare centers (parent coordinators, principals, teachers, etc.)
- Public libraries
- Public playgrounds and parks
- Child friendly businesses
- Family-oriented Facebook groups
- GreenThumb public events

Recruitment Strategies

- Host family-oriented events at the garden
- Create family-friendly spaces such as play areas, family beds for nature exploration and soil play
- Expand and create flexible open hours, especially during the weekend
- Create list of “Family Garden Tasks” such as La Plaza’s “17 things to do in garden”
- Host garden activities and workshops such as: toys from twigs, kite-making day, movie nights, children’s garden plot competition, school celebrations in garden
- Host presentations at the local parent-teacher associations (PTAs), libraries, community boards.
- Reach out to parenting groups on social media.
- Post flyers on bulletin boards in local businesses

Affinity Group: Food Appreciators

Group Considerations:

- May be interested in food production, consumption and/or distribution
- Nutrition-focused, healthy living, food advocacy
- Can bring food ideas that can assist with revenue to support the operation of the garden (per the License Agreement, all proceeds must go to supporting the garden)
- Distribution-focused members may want to partner with local charity or food pantry

Where to Recruit?

- Food-related magazines
- Chef networks, especially community chefs
- Wellbeing, nutrition, and health groups
- Food co-ops or CSAs
- Food(ie) blogs
- GreenThumb public events

Recruitment Strategies

- Consider posting (free) ads in magazines
- Host community dinners in gardens with GreenThumb support with local chefs (any fundraisers must follow GT rules and regulations).
- Build relationships and collaborate with local health and nutrition groups
- Flyer and promotion at food co-ops
- Host food-themed garden events
- Organize a regular vegetable stand to sell garden grown produce on site
- Build solidarity economy and raise awareness of the garden by selling garden produce to local food co-ops
- Reach out to food(ie) blogs, post a call for membership
- Connect with community chefs to host food demos in gardens or fundraising events to support the garden
- Host weekly potlucks
- Flyer at farmers market and related activities!
- Garden tours for food enthusiasts ex. for Open Garden Day or GreenThumb workshop

Affinity Group: New Immigrants and Communities of Color

Group Considerations:

- Diverse backgrounds, diverse self-identities
- Many NYC neighborhoods have a multiplicity of identities
- Diverse foods, growing practices, approaches to community and experiences with racism
- Language barriers and technology access considerations
- Time commitment and conflicts with work schedules

Where to Recruit?

- Locate CBOs, art and cultural groups that work directly with new immigrant groups in proximity of the garden or the neighborhood
- Identify commonly known places where people congregate or community hubs such as places of worship, nail salons, barbershops, bodegas, community centers, etc.
- Churches/places of worship which serve immigrant communities and people of color
- Consulates and embassies

Recruitment Strategies

- Ensure language access: flyers in multiple languages; meetings translated (simultaneous translation)
- Host public events that are open and that celebrate the cultures of new immigrant groups in proximity to the garden or the neighborhood in collaboration with local CBOs, arts and cultural institutions, or the [Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs \(MOIA\)](#).
- Tap into native horticultural / agricultural practices and seed/plant selection--ask them to lead workshops
- Recognize diverse plants / practices by offering a wide array of plants in distribution
- Connect with places of worship and churches which serve immigrant communities
- Consulates and embassies--find the cultural attaches and appeal--maybe plan an event around a cultural holiday, like Diwali, Eid, Persian New Year
- Focus on building leadership of members who are immigrant and people of color and support them in growing garden groups, etc
- Encourage all garden members to attend anti-racism and related trainings, especially in predominantly white garden groups

Affinity Group: Community-Based Organizations (CBOs): nonprofits / faith-based groups

Group Considerations:

- Groups may have a mission statement or particular causes they support
- Likely to have existing community relationships but may be focused on a specific audience
- Can be difficult to ensure garden remains operated by community group (GreenThumb License Agreements must be signed by individuals and cannot be signed by CBOs)

Where to Recruit?

- Tabling events such as resource rooms at conferences, events hosted by local elected officials, green fairs, etc.
- At their office or congregational space
- At community meetings including community boards, block association, organizational meetings that are open to the public, etc.
- Through community level newsletters such as community boards, block associations, BIDs, etc.
- Social media

Recruitment Strategies

- Connect gardens with groups with overlapping causes or missions (e.g. International Rescue Committee and immigrants, local mutual aid groups, food pantries)
- Identify/research CBOs that have deep ties to local community and/or relationships with local electeds - could help promote garden activities
- Invite local CBOs to hyper local meet-and-greets
- In partnerships with CBOs, ensure they understand garden is public space, not only for their members or run by CBO
- Co-host events in garden; host winter garden meetings in indoor nonprofit space (this is a good symbiotic relationship)
- Ask CBOs that we already have relationships with to make an introduction

Affinity Group: Millennials

Group Considerations:

- May have limited time and capacity to commit to the garden (or more flexible schedule if they work remotely)
- May be more transient and may not live in the same place for too long, but may be interested in community-building
- May be drawn to getting involved in the garden with an interest in sustainability and social justice
- May have tech skills to offer the garden group
- May be less familiar with gardening and horticulture, but interested in learning

Where to Recruit?

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Public events
- Signage on gardens, promoting upcoming events, including with QR codes to offer additional information

Recruitment Strategies

Promote gardens as community-building spaces:

- Host public events to get to know your neighbors
- Host consistent public events that are fun and appealing

Promote gardens as hubs of sustainability:

- Host programs with connection to climate justice, sustainability, and social justice issues
- Host programs for new gardeners
- Create signage for horticultural info for members who are new to gardening

Create flexible membership requirements and volunteer opportunities:

- Create different levels of membership with varying levels of commitment
- Host more public volunteer days where people are welcome to help out (beyond those with plots)
- Create ways to be involved beyond caring for an individual plot (ex: volunteer days, event planning, etc.)

Engage Millennials through social media platforms:

- Create active social media pages for the gardens or invite Millennial members to manage these
- Collaborate on media events and social media with media entities with a strong Millennial focus

Affinity Group: Garden Curious

Group Considerations:

- Individuals may be new to gardening or have limited gardening experience
- There are differing levels of interest / desired levels of involvement
- Individuals may be unsure about how to join a garden and what to expect

Where to Recruit?

- Tabling events such as resource rooms at conferences, events hosted by local elected officials, green fairs, etc.
- At community meetings including community boards (CBs), block association, organizational meetings that are open to the public, etc.
- Through community newsletters such as CBs, block associations, BIDs, etc.
- More general community hubs: libraries, universities, Parks Recreation Centers, gyms, and cafes

Recruitment Strategies

- Ensure the garden has clear signage: who to contact to join the garden (including both phone and email), posted open hours, and if applicable any info about volunteering or joining, website, QR code, etc.
- Host community volunteer days as a non-committal way for potential members to try it out
- Garden representative can give presentations in community settings (your Outreach Coordinator can help) and leaves informative/welcoming flyers at community hubs
- Let like-minded CBOs know the garden is looking for new members
- Gardens can consider offering an event specifically for new gardeners, such as seed starting 101, etc
- Tiered membership may help welcome new/inexperienced members who feel reluctant to take on many new responsibilities at once

Recruitment Online

Where to Recruit?	Recruitment Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instagram• Facebook• Twitter• Email blasts• Zoom• QR codes in the garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create social media accounts for community garden group• Post on social media accounts about upcoming events, community programs, and membership opportunities. Ask members to re-post and share these.• Create an email account for the garden's leadership to respond to public inquiries about membership and events• Use a free newsletter service to create email blasts for upcoming events and membership opportunities (such as new member orientations). Ask members to share these emails with their personal networks and neighbors who may be interested.• Research community organizations in the area and ask them to include short blurbs about upcoming events or membership opportunities via email or social media to their members.• Host virtual events and new member orientations over video calls such as Zoom while social distancing remains in effect.