Organizing for Garden Success
Part 2: Bylaws

NYC Parks 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
• Bike Rack

Adapted from Cooperative Economics Alliance for NYC
Poll: How does your garden deal with internal conflict?
What are Bylaws?

Bylaws are mutually agreed upon rules and procedures that a garden group creates to regulate its current and future practices for the day-to-day operations and governance of the garden. A garden’s bylaws are where the group establishes, in writing, various garden responsibilities among group members, protocol for bringing in new members, changing garden leadership, handling finances and disputes, planning events, and any other activities the group takes on.
Why Bylaws?

This is a great opportunity to bolster the strength of your group through a shared understanding of membership rights and responsibilities, rules and procedures, governance structure, and how the group makes decisions.

Also, GreenThumb requires them for all community gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction!
What goes in garden bylaws?

1. Mission statement
2. Membership requirements and procedures
3. Decision-making process
4. Leadership structure
5. Process for changing the bylaws
6. How the garden handles conflicts and disputes
7. Finances
What bylaws can’t do

- Exclude people: geographic location, race, sexual orientation, age, gender, financial situation, ability, etc
- Break any NYS or NYC laws, NYC Parks Rules and Regulations, or the GreenThumb License Agreement
- Cannot enforce monetary donations
Bylaws Requirements Checklist

This checklist covers what GreenThumb specifically requires in the bylaws of garden groups through a series of prompts and questions. In other words, we expect garden bylaws to include all of the prompts below. Once complete, this will form a foundation for the group’s bylaws that will satisfy GreenThumb’s minimum requirements; you can always add more to the bylaws than what is included in this outline. Please complete the checklist with your garden group. If your group needs resources on how to facilitate this conversation, please attend a GreenThumb bylaws workshop and/or ask your Outreach Coordinator for materials.

1.Mission Statement
   Required:
   - A statement describing the garden’s mission, vision, and/or purpose. A mission statement can be as broad or focused as the group would like.

   Above and Beyond:
   - Why is the garden important?
   - What value does it bring to the community?
   - What does the group hope to achieve?
   - What is the history of the garden?

   Watch out for:
   - While we welcome a focus on assisting the local neighborhood and encouraging local partnership, a garden group cannot legally restrict membership to only a geographic area. Specific community-based organizations, non-profits, faith, or commercial partners also should not be included in the mission statement as gardens are stewarded independently by community groups.

2. Membership Procedures
   Required:
   - How to join the garden. How does one become a member of the garden? What are the steps? Who should be contacted?
   - Rights of members (e.g. garden access, keys, shared tools)
   - Responsibilities of members (e.g. open hours, meeting attendance, plot maintenance, common areas, snow removal, sidewalk clean-up)
   - If one becomes a member, what are the requirements for maintaining membership?
   - Is there a fee to become a member, and what is the alternative to monetary payment if a fee is required?
Bylaws Meeting Simulation
Welcome to the Happy Garden!

Creating Bylaws for your Garden

Meeting Plan
Adapted from Farming Concrete’s Setting Goals in your Garden workshop

Before the meeting
Invite all of the members of your community garden to a special 2-hr meeting. Tell them to bring an open mind and an open heart to thinking about the purpose of the garden. The process of writing bylaws can be hard work, especially when many different people and perspectives are involved. Yet like any good gardening practice, a little bit of extra effort can help your garden grow stronger over time.

Workshop materials:
- Pens and/or fine-point markers for all participants
- Post-its (one pad for each participant - split pads in two if there aren’t enough to go around)
- One of the following:
  - Large easel paper
  - Whiteboard or chalkboard
  - Scrap paper
- Snacks can help! Invite participants to bring something to share.
How to join our garden
How to join our garden

- Attend 1 orientation with membership coordinator
- Pay dues
- Fill out a form
- Attend a full general meeting
- Volunteer at garden - two workdays, 1-3 hours each time
- Volunteer at garden - half of what's required for full membership (10 hours/month, 4 of which have to be garden maintenance)
- New members: 5 hours/month for 3 months (15 hours)
- Volunteer three times within a month
- Come to a general meeting
- Begin volunteering, in person or remote
- Membership fees* (still needs $0 option)

Join the waiting list for a plot

Email the primary contacts

Membership form

Fill out a form

Attend 1 orientation with membership coordinator

Attend a full general meeting

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How to join our garden

1. Contact the Garden
   - Email the primary contacts

2. Attend a garden meeting
   - Attend a full general meeting
   - Come to a general meeting

3. Attend a membership orientation
   - Attend 1 orientation with membership coordinator

4. Fill out a membership form
   - Membership form
   - Fill out a form

5. Volunteer at the garden
   - Volunteer three times within a month
   - Begin volunteering, in person or remote

6. Pay garden dues / discuss $0 alternative
   - Pay dues
   - Membership fees* (still needs $0 option)

7. Join the plot waitlist
   - Join the waiting list for a plot

Volunteer at garden - two workdays, 1-3 hours each time
Volunteer at garden - half of what’s required for full membership (10 hours/month, 4 of which have to be garden maintenance)
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How to join our garden

1. Contact the Garden
   Email the primary contacts

2. Attend a garden meeting
   Attend a full general meeting
   Come to a general meeting

3. Attend a membership orientation
   Attend 1 orientation with membership coordinator

4. Fill out a membership form
   Membership form
   Fill out a form

5. Volunteer at the garden
   Volunteer at garden - two workdays, 1-3 hours each time

6. Pay garden dues / discuss $0 alternative
   Pay dues
   Membership fees* (still needs $0 option)

7. Join the plot waitlist
   Join the waiting list for a plot

Volunteer three times within a month
Begin volunteering, in person or remote

Longer/Bigger:
Pro - person is likely to stick around, they’ve met fellow gardeners
Con - people might not have time to do this.

Volunteer at garden - half of what’s required for full membership (10 hours/month, 4 of which have to be garden maintenance)
New members: 5 hours/ month for 3 months (15 hours)
What our bylaws will say:

MEMBERSHIP
- How to join our garden
What our bylaws will say:

MEMBERSHIP

● How to join our garden
  a. Call or email the Primary Contacts to let them know you’re interested in joining
  b. Attend one of our monthly general meetings
  c. Attend a new member orientation with our Membership Coordinator
  d. Fill out a membership form and return to the Membership Coordinator
  e. Volunteer at the garden to make sure it’s a good fit for you
     ■ New members must complete half of what’s required for full membership. Full members
       must volunteer at the garden 10 hours/month during the growing season, 4 of which
       have to be garden maintenance.
     ■ New members must complete 5 hours/month for 3 months (15 hours) in order to be
       considered eligible for full membership
  f. Once the new member completes the above requirements and would still like to join,
     they are asked to pay garden dues on a sliding scale from $5-$50/year. No one will be
     turned away for lack of funds.
  g. If the new member is interested in one of our individual garden plots, the Plot
     Coordinator will add them to the waitlist.
Membership Responsibilities

- Keep plot clean
- If a member is at the garden watering they should water all beds.
- Don’t shade out your neighbor’s plot
- Keep pathways clear
- Maintain ongoing presence in garden and garden community
  - If plot is unattended, steering committee alerts plot holder they have two weeks to resolve.
- Serve on a committee
- Communicate safety hazards to NYC Parks or necessary garden official
- Inspect for rat burroughs when you’re in the garden
- Only touch your garden plot
- Socially distance if other garden members are present during pandemics
- Hose limit: 30 min. Then pass to someone who is waiting.
- REQUIRED to attend Rat Academy Workshop
- Help one another

Membership Rights

- Get a key
- Can enter garden any time
- Have a say in suggesting what projects/events we will plan
- Use of compost processed at the garden
- Can keep what they grow
- Has a share of what is grown
- Can be a part of planning committee and garden design.
- Can work in the garden w/o supervision (just let officers know)
- Vote in general meetings
- Attendance at internal workshops
- Inspect for rat burroughs when you’re in the garden
- Serve on a committee
- Can be a part of planning committee and garden design.
- Hose limit: 30 min. Then pass to someone who is waiting.
- Don’t shade out your neighbor’s plot
- Keep pathways clear
- Maintain ongoing presence in garden and garden community
  - If plot is unattended, steering committee alerts plot holder they have two weeks to resolve.
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- Hose limit: 30 min. Then pass to someone who is waiting.
What if someone violates the bylaws?

- Gardener receives an email from coordinator as a warning. Reoccurrence of issue can result in suspension from garden.
- If not covered in bylaws, come up with solution (internal/external) and propose to amend bylaws.

Determine the exact nature of the violation(s), harassment, discrimination, etc. What is major or minor and resolution. A talk or exclusion, and for how long?

- Violations that involvement, harassment, discrimination, racism, can result in immediate expulsion from garden.

- Two written warnings, before asked to leave (per calendar year).

- Notify person by email that they are in danger of being expelled.

- Written notification, clearly written by email and CC executive committee.

- Notify person by email AND phone.

- Violate 3 times and they’re out.

- Follow up with a meeting with executive committee to clear up “confusion.”

- Members can file grievance against other members, which are held by the steering committee.

NYC Parks GreenThumb
What is our process for handling conflict?

- One person on steering committee volunteers to mediate a conversation between disputing parties.
- Generate pros and cons list at meeting - put ideas to a vote.
- Process of getting the facts first from both or all involved, then goes to garden committee on conflict resolution, where decision is made.
- Conflicts should be mentioned and recorded in general meetings.
- Conflicting parties required to do “Turning Towards Each Other” Workbook.
- Individuals in conflict need to seek mediation with NY Peace Institute.
- Designated garden mediator (garden member, or maybe member of nearby garden).
- Accuser must write details; accused must be given opportunity to defend.
- Suggest that they are to meet with the person who they have a conflict with. Mediation meeting is required.

Steering committee hears both sides.
Thank you!