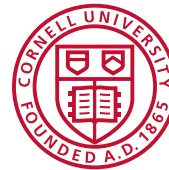


Cornell Cooperative Extension

Cornell Garden-Based Learning



The Top Five Things to Know While Working with a Community Garden

1. It's not just about gardening.

- Community gardens have a much richer story to tell and they represent much more than food production (although food is an important part of it).
- Cultural celebration
- Neighborhood Beautification which leads to hope and reduced crime
- Community Bonding
- Youth engagement and intergenerational learning
- Food security
- Healing

2. The idea of a community garden *must* come from that community.

- For a sustained, long-term community garden project, the founding idea must come from those community members, not an outside person or organization.
- "They live in a food desert, why don't we start a community garden for them there?" With no community buy-in this will not be a sustained project.

3. Effective communication is essential.

- Listen first, hear and understand the local knowledge, goals, vision, mission and values. Then, work together to establish what a partnership might look like.
- Establish a clear vision of your partnership along with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Toss out the expert-driven approach we are all so familiar with. Don't form assumptions of what the community garden needs. Those community members will be the ones that ultimately know, they are the experts of their community.
- Communication is ongoing, it never stops. Look at the partnership as you might look at a friendship, it is a constant give and take; you are building a relationship.

4. Practice self-awareness.

- Reflect on unconscious bias and hidden assumptions. Become aware of how those might impact your partnership with the community and how you might work through them.
- Be aware of the language you choose to use. Training vs. facilitation; help vs. engage; make vs. encourage.
 - Take a moment to think about the terms food bank, food pantry, clients and consumers. How might we make these terms more dignified to those who participate?
- You might be viewed as an outsider or stranger. How might you overcome that?

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.

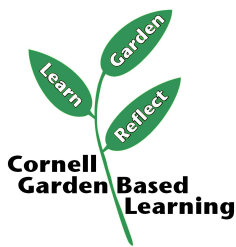
5. Consider community inclusion.

- What ways can you invite a broader audience to the community project?
 - Relationship building, patience, going to them instead of expecting them to come to you.
 - Transportation- near a bus stop?
 - Childcare during events or classes
 - Accessibility~ consider aging populations

6. Community projects can be messy.

- Just like you'll get dirt under your fingernails, community projects can be a lot messier than you expect. You can plan all you want but sometimes plans change at the last minute or you discover a previously unknown obstacle. Although it may be frustrating at first, it is the nature this work~ it keeps us on our toes and in a problem-solving mindset.

What is one takeaway you can apply to your work with a Community Garden? Other Questions, comments, wonderings?



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