

**South  
Education  
and  
Demonstration  
Garden  
at  
extension**

**Garden Project  
Portfolio**

**Erika West  
CCEPC MGV**



**POTAGER GARDEN**

# ***Introductory Statement***

## **South Education and Demonstration Garden at extension (SEDGe)**

SEDGe is the South Education and Demonstration Garden located near the CCE office at 1 Geneva Rd, Brewster, NY. In accordance with CCE's Program Area Priorities, SEDGe demonstrates evidence-based landscape management resources to residential audiences that:

- 1) support biodiversity
- 2) respond to climate change
- 3) protect water quality

In recent years, CCE has struggled to draw Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) interest both in maintaining the garden and holding educational workshops. In response to limited human resources, we are leaning into our mission and striving for a garden that is resilient, sustainable, and less requiring of volunteer time and effort. As education remains our core purpose, we're focusing on quality over quantity of workshops and examining the potential for collaboration with 4-H. Partnering with 4-H would enrich both the 4-H and MGV programs and inspire a next generation of gardeners and environmental enthusiasts.

# ***Program Goals***

## **Environmental Horticulture & Natural Resources Priorities**

### **1. *Support Biodiversity***

- Native Plants
- Invasive Species
- Habitat Creation

### **2. *Respond to Climate Change***

- Composting
- Climate-Smart Landscaping

### **3. *Protect Water Quality***

- Responsible fertilizer use
- Responsible pesticide use
- Responsible water usage

## **4-H Youth and Families**

### ***Inspire Youth to:***

- Garden
- Grow food for others
- Appreciate Nature

# Logic Model

## Template Garden-Based Learning Logic Model

**Program title** South Education and Demonstration Garden @ Extension  
**Situation** The CCE SE use demonstrates evidence-based landscape management resources to residential audiences that 1) support biodiversity 2) respond to climate change 3) protect water quality.



## ***Garden Project (Elevator Speeches)***

My name is Erika West. I am the team leader of South Education and Demonstration Garden at Cornell Cooperative Extension. We call it SEDGe for short. Our mission is to support the community by sharing evidence-based research related to food security and environmental stewardship. Located next to the DMV, the garden passively receives hundreds of visitors each year, and hosts hands-on, experiential workshops on topics such as square foot gardening, composting, and planting for pollinators.

*For non-specific volunteer recruitment:*

As a garden volunteer, you have the flexibility to work independently or as part of our group. You can help us with yearly planning, share your craft, trade or design skills, lead one of our workshops, grow food, or join us in garden maintenance. There are many ways to leave your mark! And if you're looking to learn, SEDGe is a learning garden for volunteers, too. Volunteers not only form friendships, but educate and inspire one another. Would you like to meet me in the garden for a tour?

*For general administrative support:*

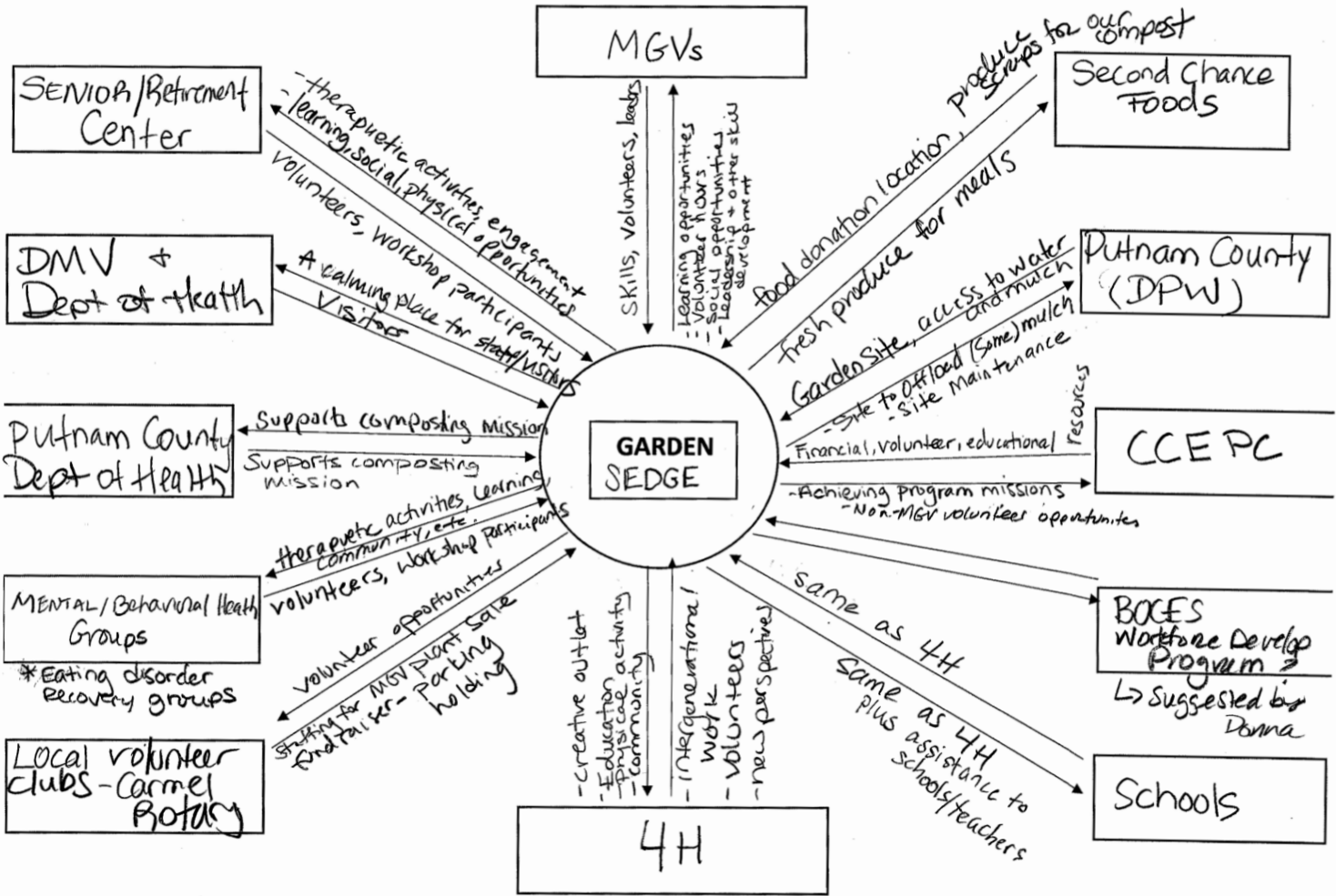
Our overarching goal for SEDGe is sustainability - both in education and practice. We've steadily removed invasive species, made more thoughtful plant selections, and reduced inputs. With less maintenance in the future, volunteer time will be free to enhance garden education - or to work on other valuable CCE projects. With staff support, SEDGe can transition to an easy, ongoing win - and one that we can proudly hand over to a successor group. Can we meet to discuss the project's future?

*For administrative support of SPARK:*

Despite our efforts, we've struggled to engage both volunteers and the public. We could be pooling resources with 4-H to inspire the next generation of gardeners while achieving both 4-H and MGV program goals. A six-week SPARK program shows promise for uniting both these programs and providing quality, experiential education for kids. Can we meet to discuss how SPARK could be a good fit for CCE?

# Potential Partnerships

## MAPPING RECIPROCAL PARTNERSHIPS ACTIVITY



# Checklist For a Sustainable Garden Site

Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Cornell Garden-Based Learning



*SEDFE*

## Checklist For a Sustainable Garden Site

### Does your garden have:

- Well-drained soil, free of heavy metals such as lead
- Full sun and protection from wind *It is windy, but we make do*
- Proximity to a water source
- Nearness to classrooms or meeting place with seating and shade \*
- Storage space for tools and equipment \*
- Availability of additional space for composting, pathways, improvements, expansion
- Security from theft and vandalism (do people who could watch over the site live nearby?) *It has protection provided by offices during the day, but not nights + weekends.*
- Anything else? *\* Access to Bathrooms*

### Other things to consider:

- NO* Are there on-site materials that need to be removed, such as blacktop or debris?
- YES* Should you perform a soil test before planning? If so, contact your local Cooperative Extension Office. *We should retest pH*
- BOTH* Will you build raised garden beds or plant directly into the ground?
- YES* Is the site location safe for participants? (Will motion-sensor lights be needed, and can they be installed?) *→ Keeping an eye on garden wall; may be destabilizing*
- NO* Will you need a fence to prevent unwanted wildlife from entering?
- YES/NO* Is there a "garden guardian" who lives nearby who can watch over the site to help prevent theft or vandalism? *CCE office nearby, volunteers in and out*
- YES* Will you have a garden sign (or numerous signs) to educate visitors when no one is available to answer questions?
- YES* How can you ensure the site is accessible to all? *Maintaining walkway; broad advertising varied activities*
- YES* Are there public restrooms nearby?
- YES* Is the site easy to get to? Accessible by public transportation? Is parking available?
- NO* Does it have a bike rack? *NO → NO → YES*
- YES* Have you communicated with the groundskeeper of the site?
- MIA* For school gardens, are there any requirements and/or restrictions by the principal, school district, etc.?
- NO* For community gardens, any ordinances or local restrictions/requirements by local municipality?

Notes: *\* SEDGE may look extension support in the future and I'd like an exit strategy.*

Revised December 2024  
Donna Aleso Cooke *Our CCE office will be relocating (Date/year TBD) and if CCE does continue to maintain the garden we will likely lose access to class space, bathrooms, and a shed.*



*these could also be considerations for any transference of garden*

## *Evaluation Plan*

**Outcome to Evaluate:** Raising awareness on topics related to environmental stewardship and sustainability.

### **Evaluation Method:**

- **Create Pre- and Post-Participation Knowledge Tests** as illustrated in “*Getting Started with Garden-Based Learning*” Guide, pg. 20. Example knowledge test for a composting workshop:
  - What is composting?
  - Name three (3) benefits of composting.
  - Name two (2) reasons compost can become smelly.◆ *Conducted by MGV educators or Coordinator*
  
- **Create a Garden Drawing Evaluation and Quality Circles** for SPARK participants as illustrated in Cornell CALs PDF from Youth Lessons, Educator Planning Tools, Sowing the Seeds of Success - Evaluation Toolkit.
  - ◆ Suggest *Drawing Evaluation* be conducted by 4-H educator (or program leader). Need project clarification (ie. length of sessions) to determine if this is best done before/after individual sessions or before/after the program.
  - ◆ Suggest *Quality Circle* be conducted by 4-H educator (or program leader) after each session.
  
- **Obtain year-end quantitative data:**
  - How many visitors per week at the co-located DMV? From this number estimate number of visitors to our garden for the project year.
    - ◆ *Obtained by Senior Resource Educator*
  - How many MGV interactions with members of the public?
    - ◆ *Compiled by Garden Team Leader*
  - How many pounds of vegetables and herbs did we successfully grow?
    - ◆ *Weighted by harvester; data compiled by Garden Team Leader*
  - How many plants are without labels or other signage?
    - ◆ *Evaluated by Garden Team Leader*

**Outcome to Evaluate:** Workshop participants show *intent* to start their own pollinator garden, vegetable garden or composting system.

**Evaluation Method:**

- **Create Feedback Form** (*Is there another name for this?*)
  - How familiar were you with X prior to our workshop?
  - Did you learn something new? If so, what?
  - After our workshop today, do you intend to start an X? If not, what obstacles or perceptions are keeping you from starting one?
- ◆ To be distributed by MGV educator or Coordinator at the end of Workshop.

**Outcome to Evaluate:** Building a sense of MGV Community.

**Evaluation Method:**

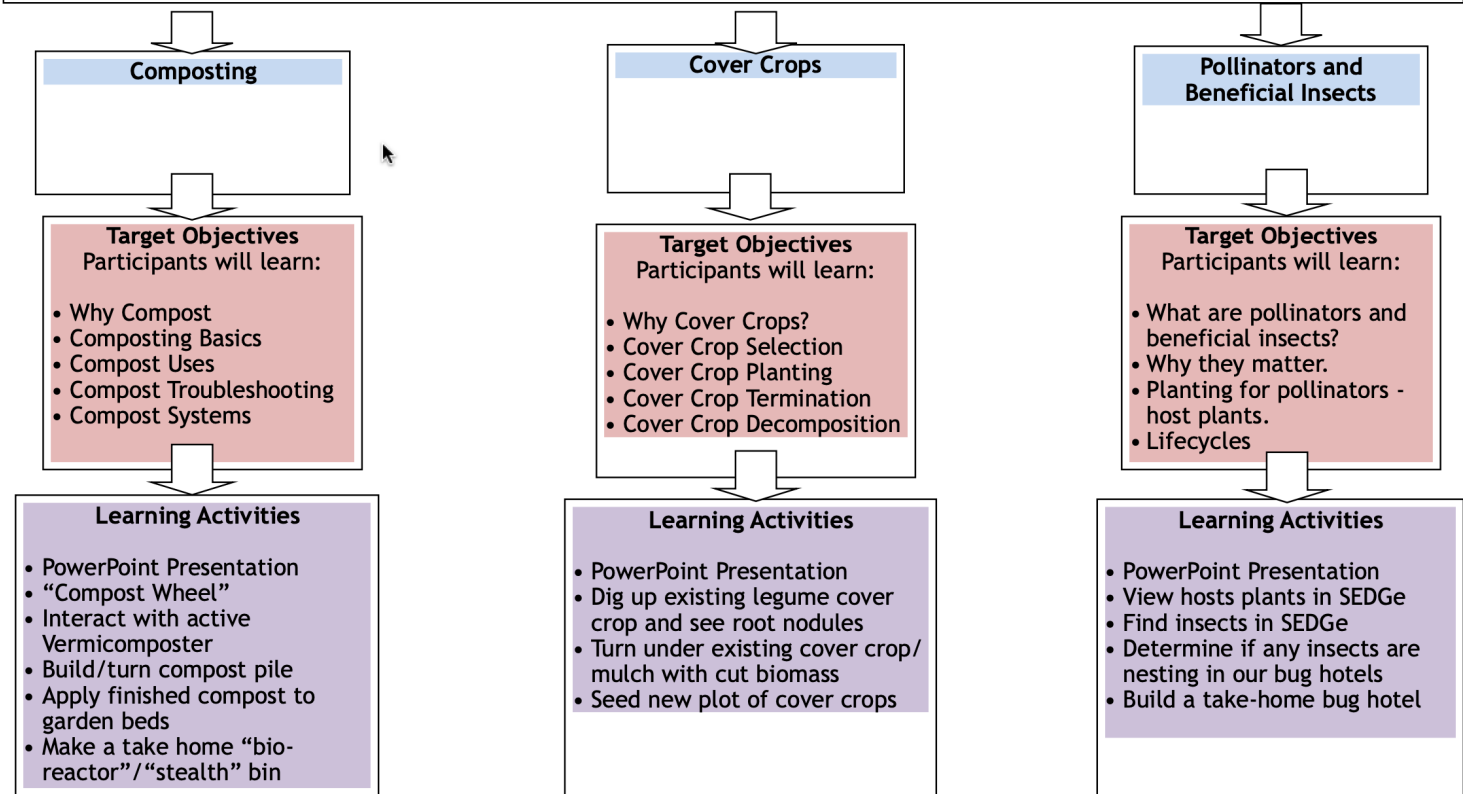
- **Self-Assessment/Survey** as illustrated in Cornell CALs PDF from Youth Lessons, Educator Planning Tools, Sowing the Seeds of Success - Evaluation Toolkit.
  - ◆ *Conducted by Garden Team Leader at end-of-year or post-workshop.*
- **Straight-Talk: A Peer Evaluation Model** as illustrated in Cornell CALs PDF from Youth Lessons, Educator Planning Tools, Sowing the Seeds of Success - Evaluation Toolkit.
  - ◆ *ANYTIME by anyone. More formally: Conducted by MGV Coordinator after Workshops and at end-of-year with Garden Team Leader. Conducted by Garden Team Leader at yearly program kick-off.*
- **Visionary Exercise** (*Mission, Vision, Values: What is the Difference?*)
  - Attendance and engagement in this exercise could provide quantitative and qualitative data about our program.
  - ◆ *Conducted by Garden Team Leader; evaluation collected at the end-of-year and reviewed with team at yearly program kick-off.*
- **Obtain year-end quantitative data:**
  - Evaluate individual and collective volunteer hours
  - Monitor Tasks Needed vs Tasks Completed
  - ◆ *Collected and analyzed by MGV Coordinator and Garden Team Leader*

# Concept Map



**SEDGE Adult Workshops**  
 Participants will learn about environmental stewardship, more specifically, how to 1) support biodiversity, 2) respond to climate change, and 3) protect water quality.

**Pre-requisite skills (in any):**  
 Participants need no pre-requisite skills. Workshops will be introductory.

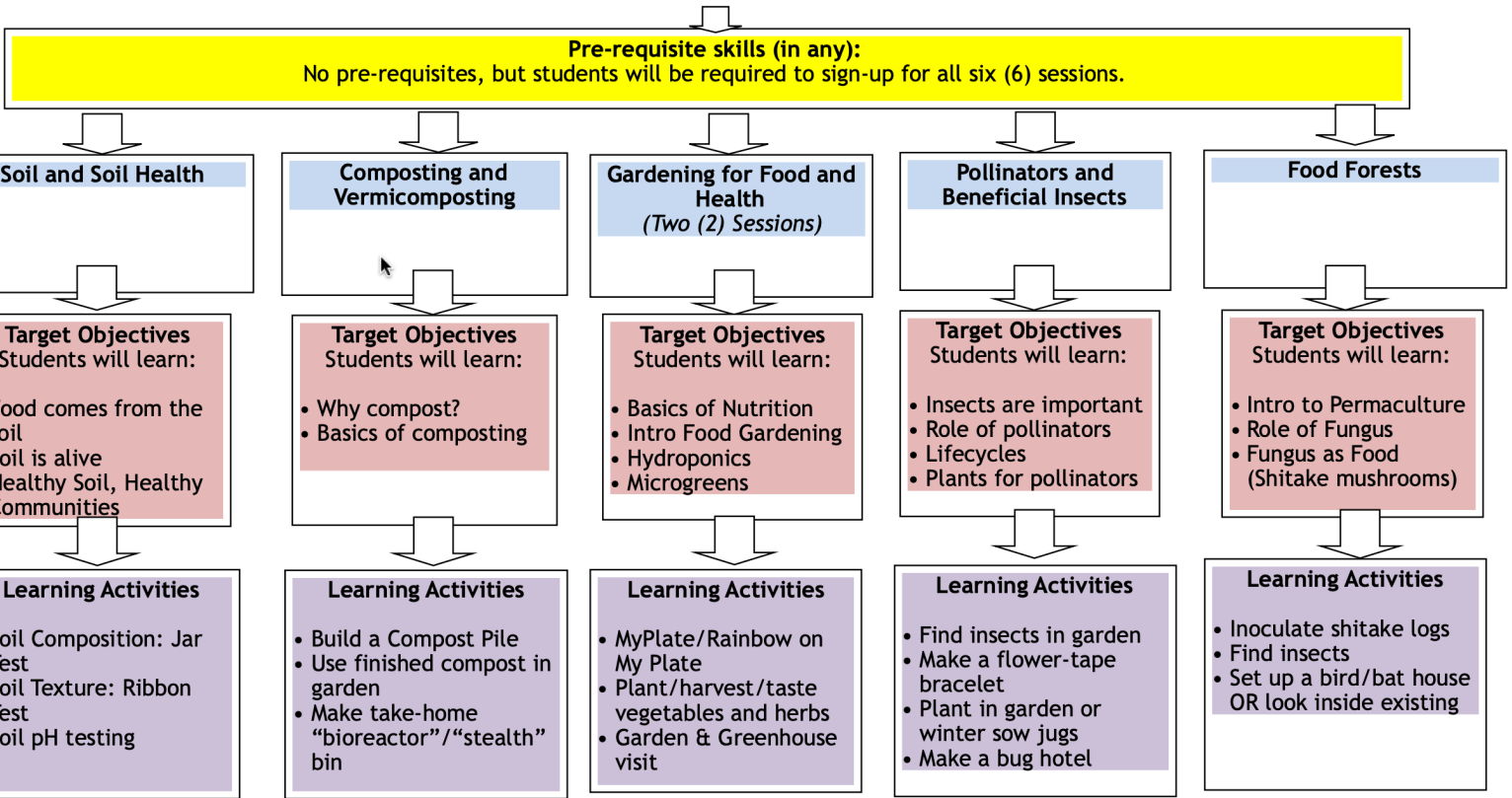


Author: Donna Alese Cooke, 2024

# Concept Map



**SPARK Program: Food Security and Environmental Stewardship through Gardening**  
 4-H in collaboration with MGVs will introduce students to a variety of subjects related to gardening. If it “sparks an interest” students can join the 4-H Gardening Club.



Author: Donna Alese Cooke, 2024

# ***Sustainability & Support Plan***

## **Getting Organized**

1. Who is taking the lead/overseeing the garden: volunteers, teachers, parents, staff, and maintenance?  
MGV Team leader & MGV Coordinator
2. Garden Committee Chairperson or co-chairs  
None
3. Sub committees  
a) Fundraising  
Fundraising through CCE Plant Sale.  
b) Volunteer coordinator  
MGV Team leader & MGV Coordinator  
c) Documentation/ handbook (to update to hand down to future volunteers/ staff)  
MGV Team Leader with sign-off by MGV Coordinator and Senior Resource Educator  
d) In-service & Education  
Volunteers, Team Leader, MGV Coordinator, and Senior Resource Education, jointly.
4. Do you have funding? If yes, where is the funding from?

- National Grant
- Local Grant
- School Budget
- PTA
- Local Civic Organization

X] other MGV Plant Sale

## **Keeping the Garden Growing Year after Year Volunteer Retention**

1. Volunteer Plan- who will coordinate this?  
MGV Team Leader and MGV Coordinator

2. How will you recruit more people, teachers, volunteers, etc. for each school year?

4-H SPARK, new offerings, collaborating with MGV Coordinator and CCE office on advertising.

3. Who will oversee this?  
MGV Coordinator , 4-H educator

## Participation

4. Garden Clubs / community service (before, during, after school? summer?)

4-H SPARK - TBD

5. Scouts- Gold/Eagle Awards

N/A

6. How could or will the garden be used in the summer or by after-hours staff programming?

SPARK sessions, adult workshops, self-guided tours utilizing signage.

7. Others?

Need to identify/explore organizations who may take on the garden when CCE office relocates. Putnam County, Dept. of Health, DMV, Brewster-Carmel Garden Club, etc? Get them involved before transition.

## Maintenance

8. Yearly Maintenance plan- who will create and implement this?

MGV Team Leader

9. Summer Maintenance Plan- who will care for the garden?

Summer has been our primary season, but, moving forward, the goal will be to shift workloads, as much as possible, to spring and fall when temps are cooler and volunteers are potentially less busy in their own gardens. Exception: SPARK program - details, TBD.

10. What kind of documentation or handbook will be written, who will create it? If it's an ongoing process, who will oversee it?

Handbook with relevant resources in addendum, created by MGVS Team Leader with MGVS coordinator and Senior Resource Educator approval. Updating by current MGVS Team Leader with oversight by MGVS coordinator.

## **Funding & the Future**

11. Future funding sources

Immediately - MGVS Plant Sale

Long Term- Grassroots, TBD

12. Future projects- expansion of the garden

We're at max size, but need to utilize the space better with more thoughtful, goal-oriented plant choices, and new programs (SPARK) or workshops.

## **Some other things to consider...**

13. Does your school garden or community plot have a history? Ask around and look for clues: are there tools or structures (like raised beds) that you could use for your garden? Sometimes gardens exist at schools that all of the staff does not know about. Also consider asking neighbors, older residents, retired teachers, or older students' families.

14. There are many people to cultivate relationships with for a successful garden... who might you recruit beyond those you listed above, that you could consider?  
Neighbors, non-MGVS CCE volunteers.

# ***Fundraising Plan***

## **SEDGE Project Proposal 2026 (For CCE Admin & MGVs)**

In accordance with CCE's Program Area Priorities, SEDGe demonstrates evidence-based landscape management resources to residential audiences that 1) support biodiversity, 2) respond to climate change, and 3) protect water quality.

More specifically, we educate the public on composting, pollinators, sustainable vegetable gardening and more. We do this by creating and maintaining demonstration gardens and holding workshops on site. SEDGe also supplies the MGV plant sale with plant divisions and is a release site for the lily leaf beetle biocontrol wasp. Our vegetables and herbs are donated to Second Chance Foods.

### **Additional details on how we will achieve CCE Program Priorities in 2026:**

1. **Maintaining and improving upon existing pollinator habit** (*support biodiversity, responding to climate change threats, protect water quality*)
  - Replacing key perennials that have died or dwindled off
  - Adding new, valuable species - to hopefully include lesser known natives
  - **New!** Adding matrix plants to act as "living mulch"
2. **Actively composting on site** (*responding to climate change threats and in support of the Dept. of Health's waste management initiatives*)
  - **Note:** SEDGe is on the Compost Facilities Map for NYS: <https://compost.css.cornell.edu/maps.html>
3. **Demonstrating organic and sustainable food gardening** (*responding to climate change threats, protecting water quality*)
  - Using vegetable types and varieties that are disease-resistant, bolt-resistant and/or require less water
  - Using organic seeds
  - Using soaker hoses and row cover
  - Using flowers as vegetable companions
    - To attract pollinators
    - To attract beneficial, pest-eating insects, as step of IPM
4. **Maintaining and increasing educational garden signage**
5. **Holding at least one garden workshop.** Current planned topic:
  - Composting (responding to climate change threats)

## Project Supporters

- MGV volunteers
- Non-MGV volunteers
- CCE staff
- CCE Board
- Cornell
- Putnam County

## Project Needs/Garden Plan

Human Resources - We need support from all parties named above and we need direct time and energy from MGV and non-MGV garden volunteers and CCE staff. At a bare minimum, we need three volunteers maintaining the garden and two hosting workshop(s). If we don't have this support, we'll need to scale back.

### Plants and Seeds - \$TBD

- Perennials for the main pollinator walk, hummingbird garden, and ground cover display garden - \$TBD
- Potager/Kitchen Garden (10' x4' ) - \$TBD
- Vegetable Garden 1 (~ 8 1/2' x 7'5" ) - \$TBD
- Vegetable Garden 2 (5'3" x 2'4" raised bed, w/two radial wings of 28-30") - \$TBD
- Large Containers outside DMV - \$TBD

*\*\*We are sourcing seed and plant donations from MGVs.*

*\*\*For those we purchase, we hope to obtain half from the MGV Plant Sale (thus returning these monies to our MGV funds).*

Bark Mulch - Free from County

Soil Amendments - \$TBD

Potting Mix (DMV Pots)- \$TBD

Seed Starting Supplies - \$TBD

Straw Bales - \$30, for mulching vegetable beds and as a compost 'brown'

Misc. (twine, stakes, shade cloth, etc) - \$TBD

Unexpected Costs - \$50

Printing/Copying - \$TBD

- Handouts for workshops
- New demo signs and reprints of faded signs

*Note: In anticipation of a move to Tilly Foster Farm, all purchases will be repurposed, reused and easily relocated in the future.*



## Garden Development/Activities Timeline

Create a timeline, which can be phased by months, seasons or even years if it is multi-phase project. Add more rows if needed.

A timeline is often required by funders and is a useful road map for long term planning.

Date	Task	Action steps	Contact Person	Date Completed
11/15/25	SPARK Project Proposal	Complete and Submit to MGV Coordinator	Erika West (Team Leader)	
12/01-14/25	Follow-ups on SPARK	Meet with MGV Coordinator and 4-H educator if pursuing	Erika West	
12/15/25	Planning Meeting with garden volunteers	Prepare agenda and coordinate meeting	Erika West	
01/15/25	SEDGe Project Proposal	Complete and Submit to MGV Coordinator	Erika West	
02/xx/25	Introduce project(s) to MGV community	Present at monthly MGV Meeting	Erika West	
02/xx/25	Submit Project Proposal to MGVs for approval	MGV Coordinator sends out to Listserv	MGV Coordinator	
05/xx/25	MGV Plant Sale	Create purchase list, shop, and help staff sale	Erika West	
04/2026	If approved, develop SPARK programming	Create lesson plans and coordinate with MGV educators	4-H Educator & MGV Coordinator	

GOAL: Recruit MGV educators for SPARK and Captains for SEDGe to diversify POCs as the timeline continues into this and next gardening years.

*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.



## Before Going Further Checklist

Consult each step below to make sure your garden project begins and continues successfully.

### Before Going Further, Have You:

#### Getting Started

- Ensured that there is demonstrated interest in the project?
- Secured permission to carry out the garden program?
- Identified a core, committed advisory/planning group?
  - Ensured community-based representation in this group?
- Defined roles: planning, maintenance, funding?
- Identified partners?
- Spoken with administrators?
- Looked into insurance matters?
- Looked for an adequate site?

We could use some improvement here, but it's also a CCE demonstration garden run by MGVs - not a "community garden".

#### Garden Design

- Consulted resources for ideas about the best type of garden design?
  - Addressed accessibility issues for individuals with special needs?
- Considered a fully engaging activity program appropriate for all?
  - Developed an inclusive garden design?

We accommodate volunteers as much as possible, but our garden layout does limit gardening accessibility to participants who can bend over/crouch down to access the soil. It is more widely accessible for viewing. (Note there are also opportunities for participation outside the act of gardening.)

#### Maintenance

- Evaluated the need for and taken steps to organize a volunteer
  - program?

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# ***Starter Goals***

## **Goal 1: SPARK Program**

- Work with MGV Coordinator and 4-H educator to evaluate the feasibility of a SPARK program and solicit interest from MGVs
- Deadline for finalizing topics, dates, and educators = August 2026
- Program Promotion = September and October 2026
- Open Enrollment = October 2026
- Deadline for lesson plans = January 2027
- Program (as proposed) begins Spring 2027

## **Goal 2: Establish a Ground Cover Matrix**

- Identify 1-3 plants that can be purchased in bulk to establish a ground matrix that acts as a “living mulch”
- Mid-Winter = plant(s) and nursery selections
- Late-Winter to Early Spring = purchase plugs, create educational signage
- Early-Mid Spring = Volunteer group work day (or educational workshop) to plant matrix

## **Goal 3: Improve Vegetable Output**

- Recruit a co-captain or backup-captain for the vegetable beds
- Review planting plans in April.
- Ensure seedlings/seeds are planted timely
- Increase fertilization - both at planting and during growth
- Consider shade cloth for the hottest areas
- Increase tomato harvest from ~2.5 pounds in 2025 to 5 pounds in 2026
- Ensure larger tomatoes are caged early
- Increase zucchini harvest from 7.25 pounds in 2024 to 10 pounds in 2026
- Increase eggplant harvest from 0 pounds in 2025 to 3 pounds in 2026
- Plant garlic to take advantage of increased volunteer availability in fall-

**DONE**