

activities on public land, including many of the areas listed above. Be respectful and courteous in your negotiations with the city, but don't allow your community garden to get excluded from potential funding because of the simple fact that it is unprecedented in your town.

WATER SOURCES

Montana's arid climate, even west of the Continental Divide, requires a reliable source of water when building your garden. There are several options for water sources, depending on the size of your garden, land ownership, and the surrounding infrastructure available. It is important to evaluate your ability to get water to your site before you settle on a piece of land, as a costly water setup has the potential to stall or even halt progress on your project.

Often the easiest option available is to use water from an existing spigot with an adaptor to join several long extension hoses. Often a neighboring building, company, or house will either allow a garden to use their water for a nominal fee or as a donation. It is also possible to install a water meter to read the amount that is running to the garden and pay the water bill accordingly. However, running

a connecting hose off of a spigot can only provide for a small garden, and can pose problems if gardeners have too few hoses to share during busy times of the day.

In addition to local businesses and non-profits, you may find the city to be an ally in providing water for your garden. Contact the city parks department to talk about possible ways to access city water, the department will likely know the typical process for extending or diverting a water line as this is commonly required for many land developments projects. Finding a water source is just one of the reasons why it can be so important to maintain a good working relationship with the city and the park's department, as they can really aid in your search.

If you already have water lines in the area, you have a few options. One option the Parks Department may suggest is to install a short water line and above ground spigot on a fire hydrant and read your meter each season. It may also be necessary to connect to the water main below ground, install a new line, a meter, and a tab that prevents backflow. This second option is a fairly involved process and requires a backhoe. If hired out, the equipment and labor for this job would cost several thousand dollars. While you may have the fundraising capabilities for this, many gardens do not. Try negotiating with the city on public land, or neighboring buildings on private land to use their water for the first few years until your garden become more established.

When working with the city, remember that water is necessary for many endeavors involving parks, and that a community garden often actually uses less water than growing grass in parks, sporting fields, or any maintained public space. An additional benefit to the city is that a community of gardeners is responsible for maintaining a garden, so a community



MAUREEN SHAUGHNESSY, NATIVE DESIGN, HELENA, MT.

garden on public land does not represent additional work for the city. Community gardens are a re-emerging use of land, and city officials and parks directors may be hesitant at first to treat them like other parkland. Working with the city from the beginning will really help in the long run in this regard. Don't give up if your first answer regarding water isn't what you had hoped; over time, with good relations, this can change.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

Increasingly, landowners require the inclusion of public liability insurance in lease or use agreements. The city or county on public land, the property owner on private land or the garden planning committee itself will likely request liability insurance for the garden site. There are two relevant types of liability insurance: insurance for the property, and general public insurance for people while they are on the property. General public liability insurance protects the landowner and the garden planning committee or organization from lawsuits arising from injury incurred on the garden property. Gardening is a relatively low risk activity, but it is commonly required to have this insurance nonetheless. Insurance for the property covers damage to tools such as wheelbarrows, or equipment such as water systems or a tool shed. Usually only the general liability is necessary.

Finding affordable public liability insurance may be tricky, though certainly not impossible. Some insurance companies are hesitant to insure gardens simply because the prospect is a new one and they may as yet not have company policy for it. Premiums will vary depending on your location, the size of your garden, the number of garden users you plan to host, and whether you plan to have large public



MAUREEN SHAUGHNESSY, NATIVE DESIGN, HELENA, MT.

events at the garden.

Community gardens will sometimes have the option to enter into an umbrella insurance plan with other gardens or a sponsoring organization which can significantly reduce insurance costs. These kinds of alternatives to your own insurance plan may be preferable to some community garden groups. A non-profit can often acquire liability insurance at a reduced rate or may already have it if they have a social service component to the work that they do. In many cases, this insurance can simply be extended to gardeners with no significant changes to the policy. Churches often already have liability insurance as well.

Similarly, the city and county likely have liability insurance covering activities on public land, and it is possible that they will allow this insurance to cover a community garden on public land. This is another area where your community garden will set a precedent for future gardens.