

The more diverse the uses of a community garden, the more used and supported it will be. Be creative! A butterfly garden, an herb garden, or a fruit orchard are all landscape options for common space.

to come to the garden as often as possible. Having automatic watering systems in place can cause problems with weeds as the season progresses.

Ideally a community garden will have approximately one hose bib for every four plots, whether you use drip irrigation in the system or not. Hand watering with a hose is the most practical and affordable for individual plots (and it's almost a necessity when you start plants from seed). Hand watering uses far less water than sprinkler systems, and is therefore a much preferred option.

You might need to seek some assistance in designing your irrigation system. Find a landscape contractor, designer, or nursery professional to help you develop a basic layout and materials list.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

The more diverse the uses of a community garden, the more used and supported it will be. Be sure to build in shared community spaces of the garden as well as individual plots. Be creative! A butterfly garden, an herb garden, or a fruit orchard are all landscape options for common space. Do, however, consider who will care for them as you design these spaces and coordinate accordingly when you create your garden guidelines.

Other community spaces could include a roofed bulletin board for posting notices and announcements, a visible sign to promote the garden from the outside, a tool shed, a cob oven, compost bins, shade structures, picnic tables, a greenhouse, an amputheater for classes and performances, and walking paths for people passing through. Murals painted by school children or sculptures made by adult artists are also engaging additions to community gardens.

These are just a few tips to consider when beginning to design and build your garden. Looking through the many books out there on the topic, and seeking the help of a landscape architect from the beginning will help fill in the gaps in transitioning the garden from your community's vision into a well thought through garden design.



MAUREEN SHAUGHNESSY, NATIVE DESIGN, HELENA, MT.



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Gardeners at the Waukesha Community garden in Helena have individual compost bins on their plots.

INCORPORATING FOOD ASSISTANCE (FOOD-SHARE, SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS, VOLUNTEER FOR VEGGIES)

Many community gardens incorporate food assistance programs to provide fresh, local food to garden volunteers, food banks, and schools for lunch programs. These programs all provide a way for community members to be involved in the garden without having to commit to maintaining a bed of their own.

Food assistance programs can be set up in a variety of ways. Some gardens ask members with individual plots to grow a row for the hungry and then donate food from that row to the local food bank.

Some gardens put a basket in a common area for gardeners to place surplus veggies for donation, while others have communal beds and ask gardeners to share in the task of growing the food there to be donated.

Volunteer for Veggie programs can be set up for volunteers to tend a garden plot in exchange for food. The amount they take home corresponds to the number of hours worked. A program like this can keep a garden well-maintained and allow more folks in your community to benefit from the garden. You may want to have a garden manager coordinate the Volunteer for Veggies program to make it run smoothly.

CHAPTER 4: BUILD YOUR GARDEN

Asking around will often reveal an abundance of resources available to help start a community garden.

GATHER SUPPLIES

Working with an experienced and community-minded landscape architect can add a creative and inspiring spin on your garden design. In addition, architects often have insight on appropriate materials, as well as ways to find deals on them. Visit your library to find design and building tips from the many books on the topic. See Appendix J for a book list and estimated costs of supplies.

Asking around and inquiry will often reveal an abundance of resources available to help start a community garden. Remember that both local businesses and national chains are often willing support community groups looking to make improvements in their neighborhoods or towns. Inquiring with these businesses is often a good place to start. Your city also may have supplies, equipment, and labor it could offer, such as a backhoe, a water meter, or other materials which are expensive at market value but easy enough to lend.

There are often inexpensive or free

resources to tap when gathering supplies to build your garden. A volunteer may know a source for some large landscaping rocks or cedar posts. A friendly horse farmer may be willing to donate a load or two of compost, maybe even each year. Another farmer may donate the use of a rototiller in the spring.

Other similarly minded organizations, companies and individuals in your community are also often good places to find resources, such as Friends of Trees groups, landscaping businesses, and fellow gardeners who may have old or extra tools and equipment, unused greenhouses, seeds, gloves, planting trays, or other supplies.

Salvaging materials is a good option, but there are some materials to avoid. Building raised beds with railroad ties and pressure treated wood are tempting options for rot resistance, but they both contain dangerous chemicals that you don't want near food you intend to eat. It's best to stay away from these materials in a community garden.



Gathering supplies for a brand new garden.

PHOTOS COURTESY BIG TIMBER COMMUNITY GARDEN, 2008.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Once you have secured your garden site, you can begin to build the garden. If well planned, this effort can really galvanize community support for your project. A few well-attended volunteer work days can accomplish a great deal of work, and get the garden ready to plant in short order.

There are many ways to find volunteers. Everyone who has been involved in planning the garden should be invited to help build it. Churches, schools, friendly organizations, neighbors, friends, and local businesses often have a few helping hands to offer. The Montana Conservation Corps is a public works organization that may have volunteers available. The County Extension Service's Master Gardener students have a number of volunteer work hours they must fulfill and may be eager to help. Put the word out as widely as possible and you will likely find the help you need.

The key to productive work days is to be well prepared. Here are a few things to have ready before the big day:

- A step by step plan of what is to be built and in what order. You will want to do a thorough clean-up of trash and debris first, then proceed to divide the volunteers into work crews depending on skill and ability.
- Have a work day event coordinator ready to act as a contact person, liaison for volunteers, and follow the garden design to be sure the garden is being built according to plan throughout the day. Consider a back-up coordinator as well.
- Be prepared with all the necessary materials: tools, wood cut to the proper dimensions, soil, fencing, fruit trees and shrubs, the right size screws, picks, forks, spade shovels, buckets, wheelbarrows, mulch or other pathway material, and any other materials included in your design. Have a few willing volunteers ready to make runs to the hardware store to retrieve forgotten items as the need arises. Remember to build signs into the garden design, from marking individual beds to a large sign identifying the garden to the outside.
- Provide food and refreshments to volunteers throughout the day. You may look for lunch donations from grocery stores or restaurants to help with this. The more of a celebration you make of the event, the more support you will have.



The Big Timber Community Garden project, before and after.



PHOTOS COURTESY BIG TIMBER COMMUNITY GARDEN, 2008.

CHAPTER 5: GARDEN ORGANIZATION

Any reason to gather those who use the garden and those who would like to is a good way to build community and garner support.

After a few months of organizing a garden together, your group may be in a better position to come up with a more explicit organizational structure. You do not need a formal organization to build a garden and make it work, but it can help with the longevity of your project to have a more formal structure.

A few basic agreements are necessary in order to make your project a success. Most of all, you want to be sure to clearly outline what is expected of each gardener. You will also likely choose to adopt use agreements with each gardener and possibly membership fees. These will vary depending on your project's budget and costs. Determine among your group what will work best.

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR GARDEN

The agreements that gardeners in a community garden make with each other need to cover a number of topics. From deciding to share tools, compost bins, and hoses to sharing community tasks such as weeding pathways and other common areas, there are a lot of choices to make regarding the maintenance and everyday workings of a successful project. How will you make sure the necessary tasks get done? Will your garden be organic? Will you establish one or several work days in the spring, summer or fall to turn soil, weed pathways and plant cover crops? Will you make a mandatory number of hours that each gardener must contribute to these community tasks on their own? Will gardeners hold meetings? How often? To answer these questions, be sure you have the input of the gardeners who will use the garden.

MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

One task your garden coordinating group will need to undertake is to consider how the garden will determine membership. By what criteria will the gardeners be chosen? By whom? Possible criteria could include the proximity of residence to the garden, by financial need, or a specific target group. Whatever your process may be, make sure it is clear and fair to all.

Most gardens do have a user's fee for individual plots. This can help cover costs for things such as water bills, soil amendments, compost, tools, etc. It can also help ensure the necessary commitment to properly maintain garden plots from each gardener. You could establish a scholarship fund or a payment plan (if the fee is \$25 dollars, an option would be to pay \$5 a month for 5 months) to help ease the burden of a one-time payment.

GARDEN GUIDELINES

Once a management plan has been devised, formalize the agreements by writing a garden guidelines contract. This will serve as a use agreement between the garden group as a whole and each individual gardener. In addition to outlining the rules of use, your agreement should state the consequences of non-compliance (likely a given amount of time or number of warnings will result in the loss of a plot.) Each gardener renting a plot will need to sign the garden guidelines and return this form to the garden manager. These guidelines should include a hold-harmless statement, similar to the one in the gardens use agreement with the land-owner. Several examples of garden guidelines can be found in Appendix F.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS

• Surveys

Surveying users of the community garden at the end of each season is a good way to get feedback on your management plan as well as many other aspects of your project. A simple survey can be very beneficial to a developing project. See Appendix H for examples of surveys.

• Education

One of the many benefits of community gardens is that they are a shared space for people to use for gatherings, meetings, and classes. Holding classes in the garden can serve to create a network of gardeners within your community more broadly and therefore involve more people in your garden. Classes can connect experienced gardeners with those anxious to learn and can be encouraging for beginning gardeners with plots in your garden to have a good experience their first year. See Appendix E for sample outreach material.

• Celebrate!

An annual harvest party, potlucks, or other planned events are a lovely addition to community gardens. Any reason to gather those who use the garden and those who would like to is a good way to build community and garner support. Live music, food, and activities increase the draw to your event.

• Fundraising options

Fundraising is often an important aspect of the success of your project. Fundraising may include soliciting donations from local businesses or holding events at local restaurants, grocery stores or churches, or grantseeking. See the appendix for examples of local fundraising events as well as grant opportunities.

A community garden can generally manage with very little money. However, local fundraising goes hand in hand with



PHOTO COURTESY WHEEL

A women's raised bed building class at the ExplorationWorks! garden, taught by Anna Baker.

creating positive publicity for your garden and can serve to rally support as well as operational funds.

• Incorporating as a Non-Profit

Obtaining grants, leases, and insurance can all be made easier with the backing of an organization with either non-profit status or a limited liability corporation. Often an organizational sponsor is willing to provide this type of support. Over time, however, with consideration given to the size and scope of your project, you may decide that incorporating the garden group itself is a good option. In order to do this, you will need to follow a specific procedure listed in, Appendix K.

• Vandalism

Generally vandalism is more of a concern than an actualized event. Most often, vandalism is infrequent and minor. However, having a garden that is open to all, has multiple uses and ways to be involved, and is well used is less likely to be vandalized. Other elements in a garden's design can also put off vandals, including a streetlight or a combination lock on the garden gate.

GOING ORGANIC

Many community gardens use organic practices, as pesticides, herbicides and other garden additives can be unsafe for people, animals, the water supply, and the environment. It is especially important to use organic practices in a community garden because of the risks involved when many people using the same space to grow food. Adopting organic guidelines for your project will ensure confidence for all gardeners that the garden is a safe place for them and their children and a sustainable stewardship of the land and its ecology.

CHAPTER 6: SUCCESS!

*Communities
across
Montana
are building
community
gardens.*

MONTANA'S COMMUNITY GARDENS

Community gardens in Montana have followed a nation trend of rising popularity. People are becoming more aware of the ecological and social impact of where their food comes from, and in response are choosing to grow their own food, shopping at farmer's markets, and looking for local, Montana-grown produce in stores. Communities across Montana are building community gardens. Missoula's Garden City Harvest has been building community gardens for years in low-income neighborhoods, where people are often without access to their own yard space. Helena's Growing Community Project, founded by the Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) and Working for Equality and Economic Liberation (WEEL), has also created a network of community gardens and is currently working to bring community gardens every neighborhood in Helena. The following pages will highlight these two Montana success stories, sharing inspiration and logistical advice for community gardens as they get underway across the state.

GARDEN CITY HARVEST COMMUNITY GARDENS

Garden City Harvest organizes and manages the operation of seven community gardens in the greater Missoula Valley: River Road Garden, Orchard Gardens, HomeWORD Garden, Northside Garden, Associated Students of the University of

Montana (ASUM) Garden, Meadow Hill School, Second Street Garden, and the Garden of Eaton.

Community gardens are working green spaces shared by neighborhood residents and the public. Neighborhood-based community gardens provide many benefits to Missoula residents. For a small fee gardeners have access to: household garden plots, tools, water, compost, seeds, advice, and beautiful places where families and neighbors gather to enjoy growing healthy, delicious food. Garden City Harvest (GCH) strives to locate gardens in low-income neighborhoods, which tend to be urbanized, and they specifically serve people without access to their own land. According to one family, the best part of their community gardening experience was "the chance to have a quiet place to come as a family to work in the dirt and grow our own food."

Land at most GCH community gardens is also dedicated to growing produce for the Missoula Food Bank and other organizations assisting hungry Missoulians. In addition, they also operate the "Volunteer for Veggies" program where people can volunteer in exchange for organic vegetables grown at the gardens throughout the season.

Partners at the gardens include the Youth Homes of Missoula, United Way of Missoula County, Watson Family Children Shelter, Montana Conservation Corps, Flagship, homeWORD, Blessed Trinity Church, Associated Students of the University of Montana, the City of Missoula, and numerous volunteers.



MAUREEN SHAUGHNESSY,
NATIVE DESIGN, HELENA, MT.

2nd Street Garden Development Process – Case Study

2004 Neighbors in re-developing (Missoula Champion Mill site) neighborhood see underutilized piece of land in neighborhood getting abused by off-roading cars and trucks and weeds. They want to make it safe for children and functional as open space or park to serve the neighborhood or subdivision.

2005 Neighbors determine the plot is City of Missoula Property (Public Works) Neighbors obtain permission to develop site into garden from City of Missoula. Neighbors discuss options for the site and want a community garden.

They contact Garden City Harvest, a non-profit that coordinates the community garden network in Missoula, about assistance and advice concerning a potential community garden.

Neighbors and GCH community garden director inspect the site and discuss options for garden layout.

2006 Garden City Harvest agrees to serve as technical advisor regarding site development and be a supporting partner with the neighborhood group developing 2nd Street garden. Development costs determined: Water to site-\$3,000 required excavation and installation of metered frost free hydrant for

garden water, \$1,000-fencing site perimeter, \$800-soil amendments, and \$500-supplies and tools. Partners agree to seek grant funding from City of Missoula and Missoula Redevelopment Agency to aid with site development. Two grants are written and secured by the neighborhood group, one for water installation and one for fencing and soil amendments. Neighborhood group coordinates installation of water to the site. Tools and supplies are purchased and stored in a neighbor's garage.

Neighbors ask if Garden City Harvest will be garden manager and add the garden to the GCH network of gardens. Garden City Harvest Board of Directors vote to assume management responsibility for the site after one year of operation on its own.

2007 Garden City Harvest coordinates the inaugural community gardening season at the site. 15 plots are developed with areas left to expand and grow communal crops, compost storage and a storage, shed. Neighbors request shed donation from neighborhood housing developer. Used shed is donated and delivered to the site.

The garden plots quickly sell out on opening day in early April. End of season reports indicate success on many levels.

HELENA COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT: BUILDING A MODEL PROGRAM

The Growing Community Project is a diverse group of individuals and organizations that are working together to develop community gardens within walking distance of every neighborhood in Helena, Montana.

The Growing Community Project aims to build community gardens, based on community support, which bring together diverse neighborhoods so that we may create community while addressing food security issues. We believe that everyone should have access to healthy, affordable food.

There are three gardens in our network to date. Gardens can start small and grow over the years to fit your vision. The following is an overview of how each garden came to be and how they are managed.

ExplorationWorks!

Community Works developed Exploration Garden in the summer of 2005 in cooperation with the Helena Rotary Club

and the YMCA. It is an outdoor classroom and exhibit of ExplorationWorks, an interactive children's museum. The garden provides hands-on learning opportunities in the study of plants and botany, health and nutrition, cooking, and environmental sciences.

In 2007 the Growing Community Project began working with ExplorationWorks! to expand Exploration Garden to include plots that could be rented to the community. We added 12 raised beds and began renting plots to people in the neighborhood in the spring of 2008. WEEL, ExplorationWorks, and AERO held a fundraiser to build a fence in order to curb a deer problem. With the help of generous donations, many volunteers, and countless volunteer hours, we built the fence over 5 weeks.

Exploration Garden is located right next to the YMCA off Last Chance Gulch.

Florence Crittenden Home

In the spring of 2007, the Florence Crittendon Home contacted the Growing Community Project for help in building a communal garden for the women who live and work at the Home. The young women designed, built, planted, and tended their garden. It was built with help from the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC). The girls harvested vegetables in the fall and made their own organic baby food. They also gave away packets of herbs at the annual Sixth Ward and Midtowne Flea Market, an event held in their neighborhood.

In 2008 the garden was expanded to include room for corn, squash, beans, and an apple tree. Many thanks to Montana Conservation Corp and the Boy Scouts.



PHOTO COURTESY WEEL

Florence Crittendon Home resident, Jess, loves to garden with her 2 year-old son, James.

Florence Crittenton Home resident, Jess, loves to garden with her 2 year-old son, James. Jess is very interested in gardening, and interned with the Growing Community Project in the summer of 2008. She was integral in organizing the Food Share Garden, and doing outreach to the neighborhood around the garden. She also spent many hours working in the Florence Crittenton Home Garden.

Jess began gardening when she was eight, and has a green thumb. “You get to watch seedlings grow and mature and produce seeds of their own. In all reality, it’s like watching kids grow. It just takes less time.”

Helena Food Share Community Garden

The Food Share Community Garden is just steps away from Food Share. Food Share recently bought land next door to expand their warehouse, but until the capital is raised, the land won’t be used for much. Joyce Brown decided not to let the empty space go to waste, even if only for a couple years, and began organizing and working with the Growing Community Project and Food Share to build a community garden. She asked local businesses for donations, and nearly all of the materials for the garden were generously donated. The garden was built over three weeks, with an amazing number of volunteers turning out to help.



PHOTO COURTESY WHEEL

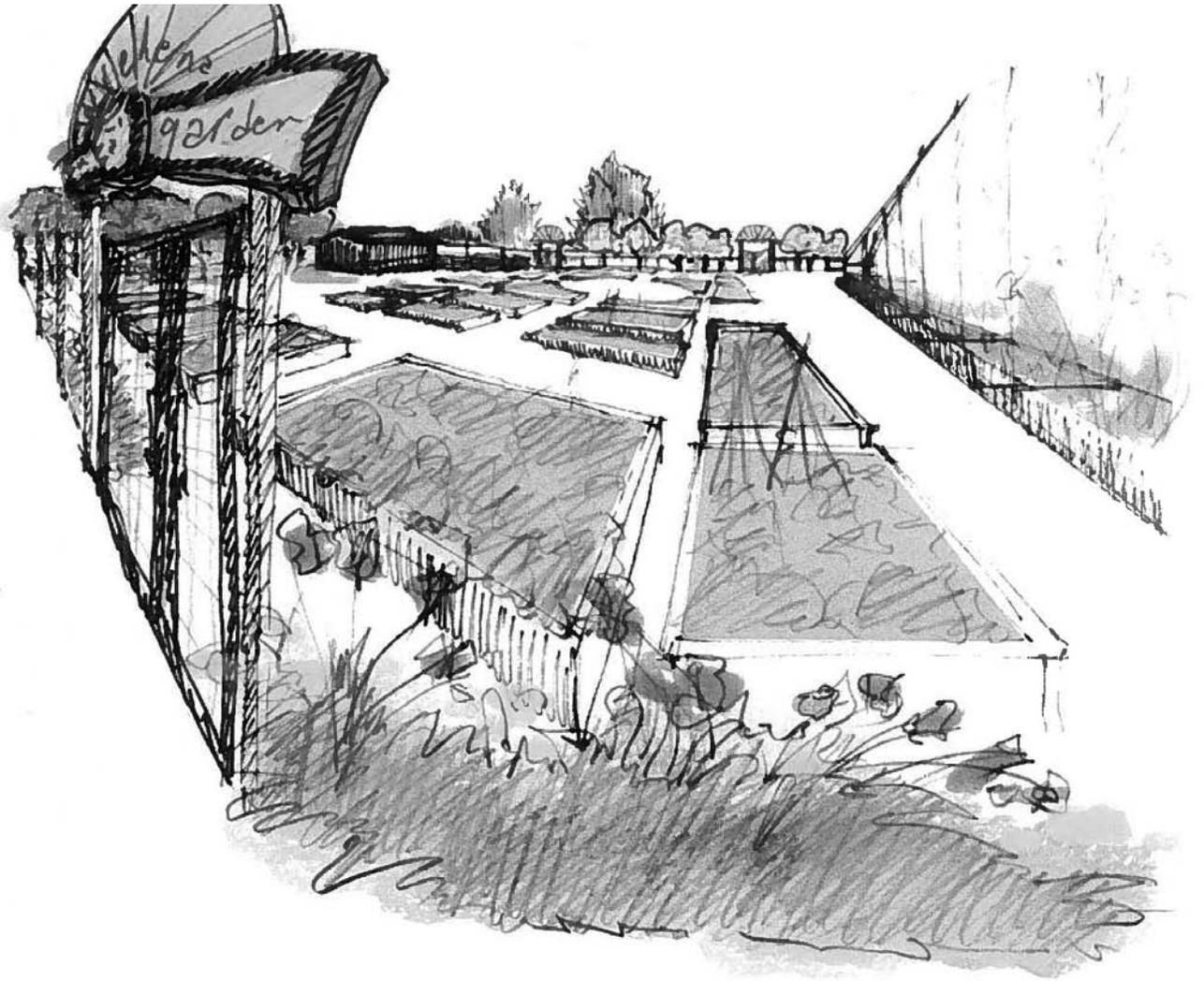
Volunteers raise fence at Helena Food Share community garden.

Half of the Food Share Garden are community plots, where individuals can rent a plot for the growing season. The other half are Volunteer for Veggies beds. All of the starts and seeds were donated. These beds are open for community members to come and volunteer a little of their time weeding, watering, and harvesting veggies, and in exchange can take home as many veggies as they need. The rest of the vegetables were donated directly to Food Share. Over the course of 2008 the gardeners donated over 400 pounds of veggies to Food Share!

APPENDIX A: GARDEN DESIGN

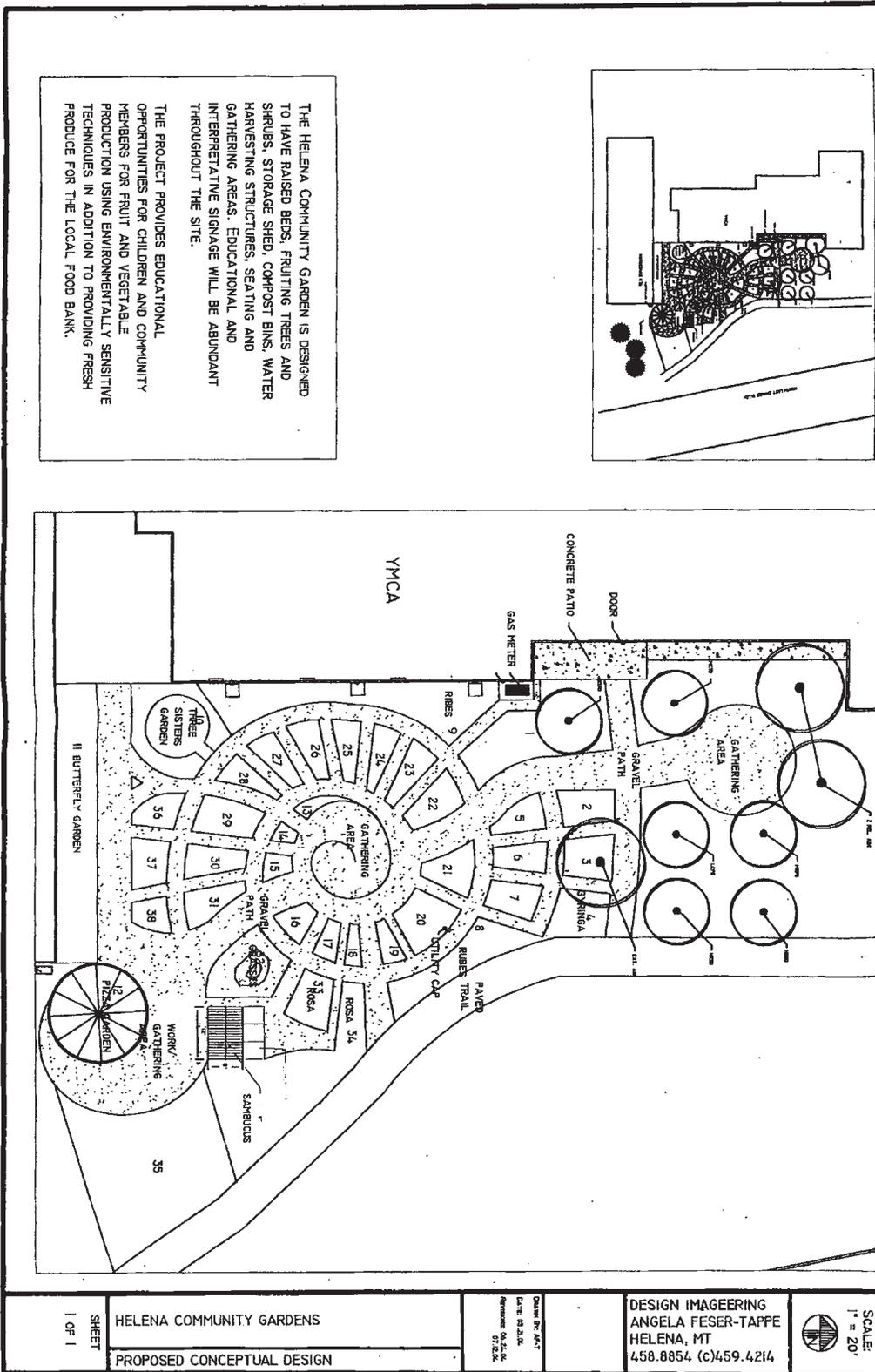
ARTISTIC RENDITION OF A NEIGHBORHOOD GARDEN
USED AT A COMMUNITY MEETING.

COURTESY MAUREEN SHAUGHNESSEY, NATIVE DESIGN



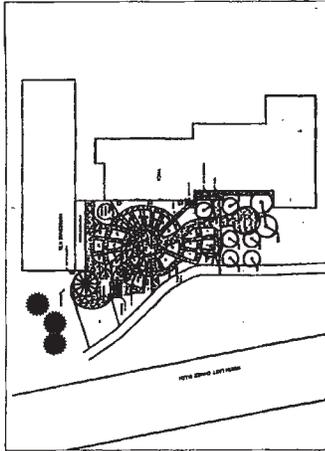
APPENDIX A: GARDEN DESIGN

EXPLORATIONWORKS! COMMUNITY GARDEN DESIGN, HELENA



THE HELENA COMMUNITY GARDEN IS DESIGNED TO HAVE RAISED BEDS, FRUITING TREES AND SHRUBS, STORAGE SHED, COMPOST BINS, WATER HARVESTING STRUCTURES, SEATING AND GATHERING AREAS. EDUCATIONAL AND INTERPRETATIVE SIGNAGE WILL BE ABUNDANT THROUGHOUT THE SITE.

THE PROJECT PROVIDES EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTION USING ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE TECHNIQUES IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING FRESH PRODUCE FOR THE LOCAL FOOD BANK.



HELENA COMMUNITY GARDENS
PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

DATE: 07/21/06
DRAWN BY: MGT
DATE: 08/21/06
REVISION: 06/21/06
07/21/06

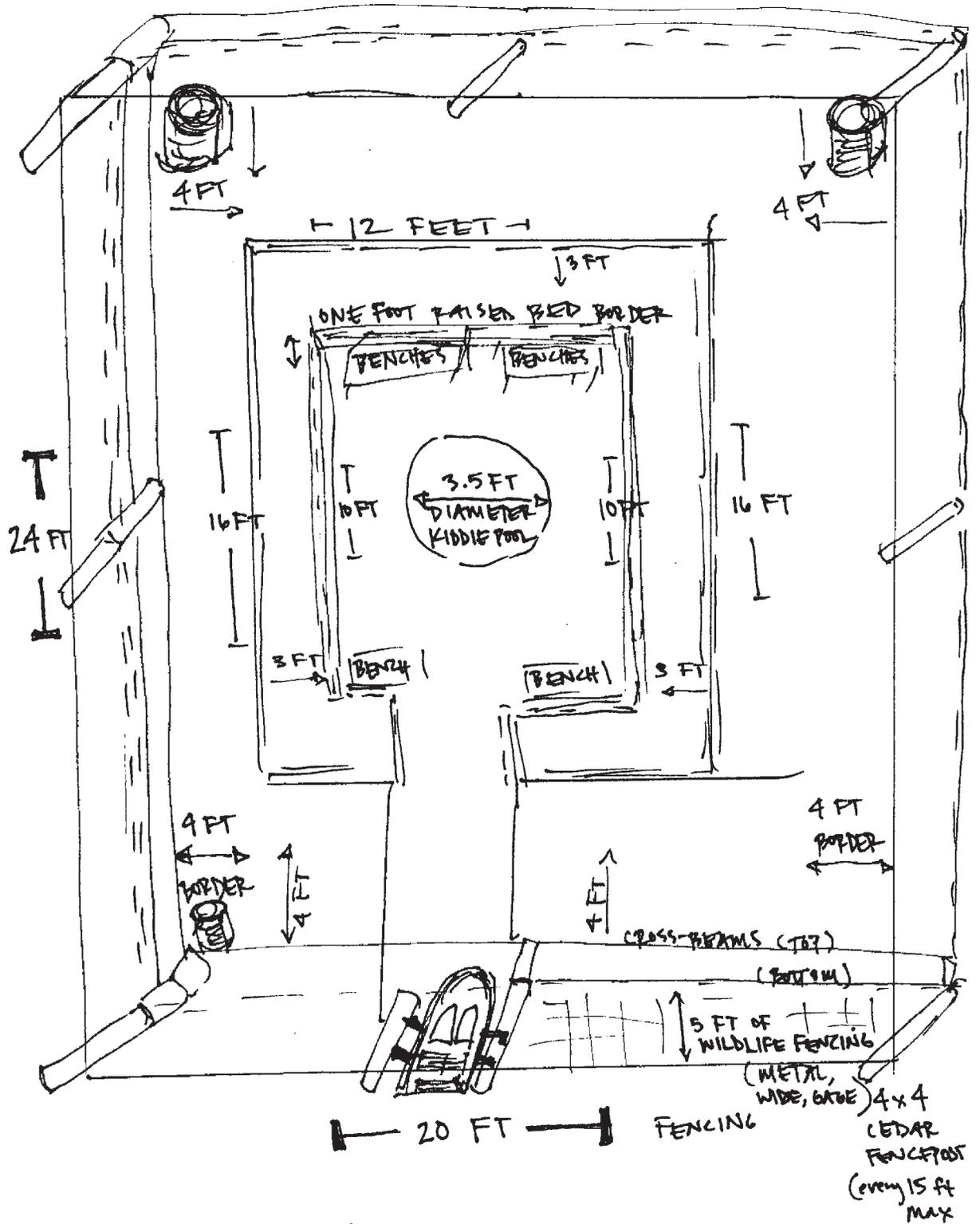
DESIGN IMAGEERING
ANGELA FESER-TAPPE
HELENA, MT
458.8854 (c)459.4214

SCALE:
1" = 20'

APPENDIX A: GARDEN DESIGN

FLORENCE CRITTENDEN HOME, HELENA

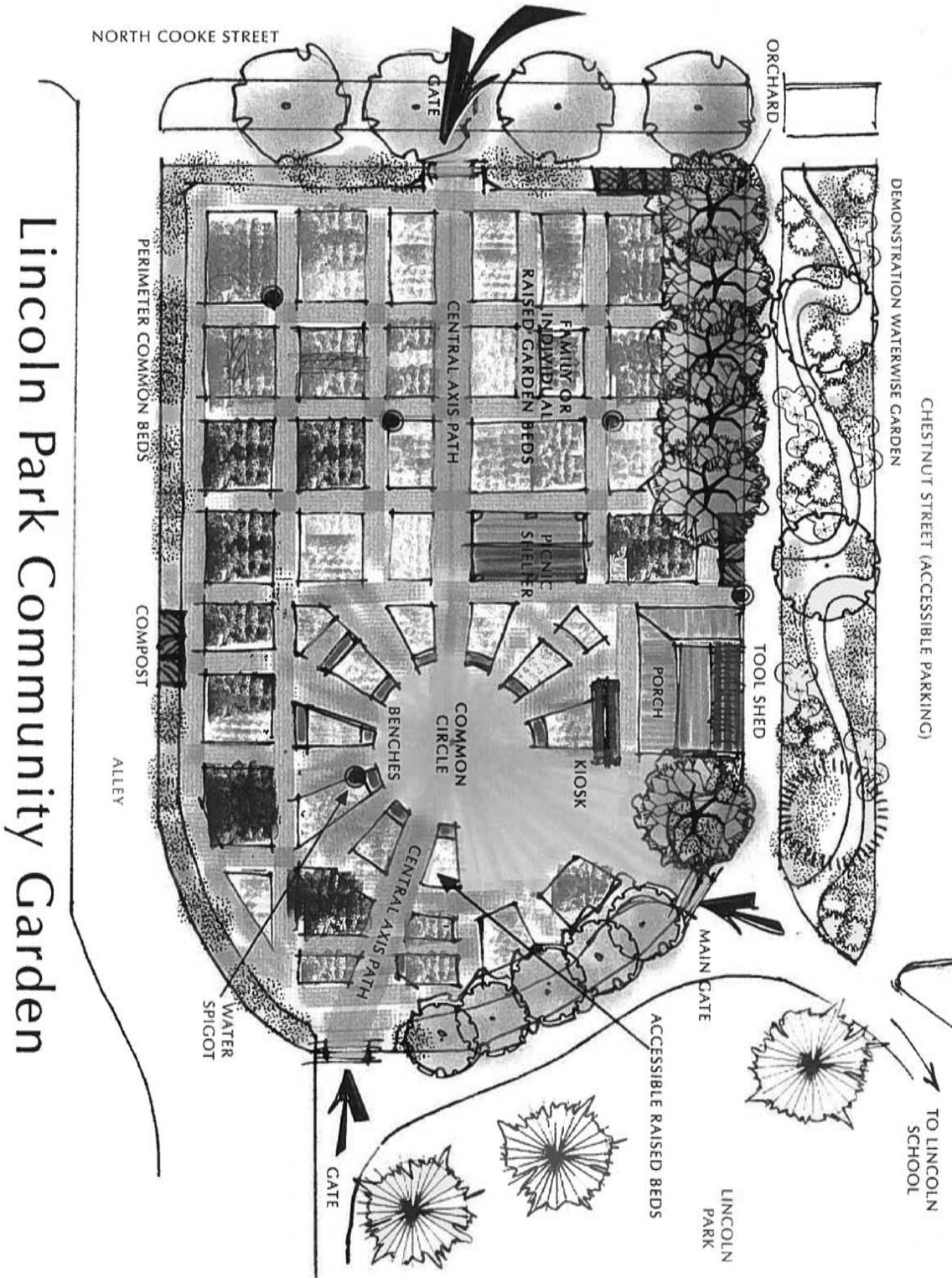
ROUGH DRAFT OF GARDEN LAYOUT INCORPORATING VARIOUS IDEAS



APPENDIX A: GARDEN DESIGN

HELENA GARDEN DESIGN INCORPORATING FEATURES SUCH AS FRUIT TREES, WATER-WISE DEMONSTRATIONS, WATERING SYSTEM, COMMON AREA AND TOOL SHED.

COURTESY MAUREEN SHAUGHNESSEY, NATIVE DESIGN



Lincoln Park Community Garden