

GARDEN MANAGER MANUAL HELENA COMMUNITY GARDENS

Organizational Background and Structure

1. Board of Directors of Helena Community Gardens (HCG)
 - a. Comprised of interested members of the community
 - b. Guidance, financial oversight, and policy decisions
 - c. Monthly meetings (2nd Tuesdays)

2. Garden Managers (GMs)
 - a. Usually a plot holder who volunteers to be GM
 - b. Gardens can have more than one GM
 - c. GMs may be Board Members but this is not required or expected of them.
 - i. Regardless, GMs are always encouraged to attend the monthly Board meetings.
 - d. Monthly meetings from approximately March - November

3. Head Garden Manager (HGM)
 - a. Board member
 - b. Serves as liaison between GMs and Board
 - c. Position may be shared

4. Committees
 - a. Board members and non-board members (including GMs) are welcome and encouraged to participate on any appropriate committee.
 - i. Executive
 - ii. Financial
 - iii. Governance
 - iv. Fundraising
 - v. Outreach and Education
 - vi. Garden Managers

5. Coordinator
 - a. Part-time paid staff person
 - b. Assists the Board and organization with marketing, fundraising, day-to-day communications, and community outreach

Garden Managers

1. Expectations (see Section 7 for more details)
 - a. Attend monthly GM meetings
 - b. Assist with plot sign-up and conduct a pre-season garden meeting with prospective gardeners.
 - i. HGM and/or Coordinator can assist if necessary.
 - ii. Review HCG policies, gardeners can sign agreements, etc.
 - c. During the season, get to know your gardeners and make yourself available to them.

- d. Provide general maintenance at garden throughout season such that gardeners can operate with minimal interruption.
- e. Administer and coordinate a gardener volunteer program within their garden, with the help of the HGM and/or Volunteer Coordinator
- f. In the fall, provide a budget and itemized list of wants and needs for the upcoming gardening season.

2. Resources

- a. HGM – liaison to the Board. Contact as needed with questions, problems, and needs for assistance.
- b. HGC Coordinator – May assist GMs with plot signups if necessary, and assists with database upkeep.
- c. HCG Board – Concerns, problems and needs should be brought to the attention of the HGM to be presented to the Board. This does not preclude other formal or informal discussions with other Board members.

3. Benefits

- a. Free plot in the garden managed
- b. Be in charge of any garden improvements you would like to see
 - i. HGM and the Board will make every effort to assist and support these improvements

4. Interpersonal Responsibilities

- a. Internal
 - i. Problems and conflicts
 - 1. Responsible for making a first attempt to address and resolve problems and conflicts.
 - 2. Notify offending plot holder and HGM of all infractions; HGM will apprise the Board of the situation.
 - 3. Document (written notes or email) the problem, actions taken to resolve the situation, outcome and/or further developments if problem is not resolved.
 - 4. Seek assistance from HGM and/or Board if problem is not easily resolved
 - 5. In the cases of water use violations, if a second violation occurs, in consultation with the HGM, GM may confiscate offending hardware until end of season.
 - 6. GM can recommend to the Board that habitual violators surrender their plot.
 - 7. Violators have the right to appeal any decisions of the GM to the Board.
 - ii. Serious infractions and/or injuries
 - 1. Responsible for contacting emergency services or law enforcement
 - 2. Responsible for completion of formal incident reports
- b. External
 - i. Serve as an ambassador to the neighborhood and property owners surrounding the community garden
 - 1. Work together address problems and concerns, scheduling events, etc.
 - 2. Make every effort to include the neighbors at garden events
 - ii. As time allows, GM may recruit, administer and coordinate outside volunteer groups.
 - 1. These efforts should be coordinated through the Coordinator and HGM.

5. Safety, Security, and Access

- a. Contact information of gardeners with plots in HCG gardens is not for general distribution
 - i. Always use "bcc" (blind copy) option when emailing your gardeners
 - ii. Do not distribute any email addresses, phone numbers, etc. without permission of the gardener
- b. Overall security of gardens
 - i. Gate locks
 - 1. Discretion of GM and gardeners whether to lock gates
 - 2. Notify HGM if locks are needed
- c. Physical safety and access
 - i. Safety
 - 1. Identify and report to HGM any human, environmental, and physical hazards
 - 2. All hazards should be mitigated as soon as possible
 - 3. Ensure that anyone using motorized equipment (mowers, tillers, shredders, weed eaters, etc.) wears proper safety gear
 - ii. Access
 - 1. Work to improve physical and financial access to garden plots for all potential gardeners
 - a. **Free and reduced-cost plots and supplies are readily available for those who need them.**
 - 2. Make recommendations for improvements to the HGM and Board

6. Infrastructure and Resources

- a. Physical
 - i. Monitor physical condition of shared fencing, sheds, water systems, pathways etc.
 - ii. Maintain and repair as needed
 - iii. Notify HGM of any significant damages or other problems that you cannot repair
 - iv. Property owners should be notified if problem affects their adjacent properties
 - v. Shared tools and equipment
 - 1. Maintain inventory of all shared tools and equipment
 - 2. Make sure they are in good repair and available for all gardeners to use
 - 3. Attempt to limit misuse and pilferage
 - 4. Motorized equipment
 - a. Shredder, rototiller, etc.
 - b. Located at some but not all gardens
 - c. If not available at your garden, contact HGM.
 - d. Shredder should not be used without proper instruction and safety equipment
- b. Natural
 - i. Water Conservation – **Water is one of HCG’s largest expenses; wasting water is a serious problem and should be dealt with immediately.**
 - 1. Educate gardeners about appropriate conservation methods and monitor water use;
 - a. Drip irrigation
 - b. Soaker hoses
 - c. Mulching
 - d. Hand watering

- e. Watering in early morning or late evening
 - f. Checking for leaks in drip lines or soaker hoses
 - 2. Monitor water use
 - a. **Water wastage is not allowed and may be grounds for revoking a plot.**
 - b. Violations
 - i. Unattended overhead sprinklers of any type (including overhead sprinklers on timers)
 - ii. Neglecting to repair excessive leaks in drip lines or soaker hoses within one week of notification
 - iii. Watering a garden plot belonging to someone else, unless given permission by plot holder
 - c. Handling violators
 - i. Shut off water immediately
 - ii. Refer to Section 4.a.i for managing violations.
 - 3. Coordinate water system operations with property owners
- ii. Soil Fertility and Conditions
 - 1. Monitor soil fertility and conditions
 - a. Soil testing – available and inexpensive, but may be of limited use in long-established gardens
 - b. Bean test – bean seeds can be planted in new soil sources and composts to determine if they are appropriate for use in garden.
 - 2. Educate gardeners about improving soil fertility
 - a. Mulching and composting
 - b. Co-cropping and cover cropping
 - c. Proper methods of tillage to avoid breakdown of soil structure and compaction
 - d. **Synthetic fertilizers are not allowed and their use may be grounds for revoking a plot.**
 - 3. Implement a formal composting system for their garden
 - a. HGM can provide guidance as needed
- iii. Weeds, Pests, and Unwanted Crops - **HCG has a strict "organic only" policy. Gardeners observed using non-organic weed and pest control methods may have their plot revoked.**
 - 1. Educate gardeners about organic control methods
 - a. Some "organic" methods, such as rotenone application, are also discouraged. When in doubt, contact the HGM.
 - 2. HCG has a semi-flexible "annuals only" rule
 - a. Planting perennials is generally discouraged, particularly in the case of persistent perennials such as horseradish or Jerusalem artichoke. When in doubt, ask the HGM.
 - 3. Neglected or abused plots
 - a. Give the gardener two weeks' notice to rectify the problem
 - b. Notify the HGM
 - c. If the situation is not resolved within two weeks, the plot will be reallocated and plot fees will not be refunded.

- d. Refer to Section 4.a.i for managing violations.
- 4. Problem plots (weedy, rocky, poor soil, poorly maintained)
 - a. May be issued to interested gardeners for a reduced fee (including free).
 - b. Please consult with the HGM.
- 5. Pets
 - a. City regulations regarding dogs and other pets apply to all community gardens within city limits
 - b. Pet owners should be advised of city regulations

7. Procedures for Seasonal Operation

a. Spring

- i. Contact previous year's plot holders to determine if they want to continue
 - 1. Considerations
 - a. Did they volunteer and make a positive contribution to the garden?
 - b. Any violations or unresolved problems?
 - c. Do they want to switch plots to another available plot?
 - d. Other?
- ii. Offer available plots to new gardeners
- iii. Agreements and fees
 - 1. All gardeners, even those in church owned gardens, need to sign Agreements.
 - a. Agreements should be sent to the HCG Office either by GM or by the plot holder.
 - i. Fees must accompany signed Agreement
 - ii. Checks will not be deposited without a signed Agreement
- iv. Compile list of gardeners
 - 1. Contact information (at a minimum: name, phone number, and e-mail address)
 - 2. Could be used to track volunteer hours
- v. Conduct a pre-season garden meeting
 - 1. Individually or group meeting (GM's discretion)
- vi. Water systems
 - 1. Varies between gardens
 - 2. Let gardeners know when water systems are turned on
- vii. Update garden inventory
 - 1. Garden equipment and supplies on hand
 - 2. Inventory lists posted on HCG website
- viii. Put up signs, if necessary

b. Summer

- i. Maintain garden complex, including signs – notify HGM of any major problems with fencing, water supply, etc.
 - 1. General maintenance – equipment, weeds, general clean-up, etc.
- ii. Communication with plot holders
 - 1. Via email, posted notices, etc.
 - 2. Provide information about volunteer needs, opportunities, Food Share, events, work nights, etc.
 - 3. Help organize events for plot holders

- c. Fall
 - i. Putting gardens to bed
 - 1. Notify gardeners of end date to have plots cleaned-up (October 25th in the gardener agreement)
 - a. Dead plants and weeds should be removed from gardens
 - b. Provide instructions as to what should go in compost pile and what should go in disposal bins
 - c. OK to leave late-season plants in beds
 - 2. Notify gardeners when the water will be shut off
 - a. Winterize water system as needed
 - ii. Plan group work day to clean-up garden complex (optional)
 - iii. Check and update tool inventory
 - iv. Take care of any needed repairs to garden complex (fences, beds, etc.)
 - v. Service and winterize motorized equipment (tillers, shredders, etc.)
 - vi. Take down signs
 - vii. Collect volunteer cards and hours
 - viii. Submit list of next year's needs and budget to HGM and Treasurer by December 1st
 - ix. Submit end-of-year garden summary report by December 1st. A template for this report will be provided.