**Community Gardens - DRAFT**

**2024**

**Overview**

Community Gardens are spaces managed by the people who live in a particular area, generally with a goal of growing fresh fruits and vegetables. Oftentimes community gardens overlap with urban forestry and food forests because of their potential to produce fruits and vegetables as well as provide canopy and greenery.

**Interesting Information**

**Food Sovereignty**

* “Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations” (U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance).

# Food Apartheid

* The term “food apartheid” is a way of describing the structural injustices and disparities in food access faced by low-income communities and communities of color. The term “food desert” is also sometimes used to describe areas with less access to healthy food. However, desert is often associated with something naturally occurring, as opposed to the reality that differences in access to food are the result of decades of discriminatory planning and policy decisions (Washington, n.d.).

# Benefits of Community Gardens:

* Community Gardens are a great opportunity to empower community members by involving everyone in the process of designing, building, maintaining, and enjoying the space (*Community Gardens*, n.d.).
* People who strongly identify with nature, who enjoy being in nature, and who had more frequent garden visits were more likely to have a stronger sense of social cohesion (Oh et al., 2022).
* Community gardens have been found to have many benefits including bridging social and generational divides, helping individuals save money on groceries, increasing access to fresh produce, and improving the mental health of community garden participants (Delshad 2022).
* People who joined a community garden have been found to be more likely to eat a healthy number of fruits and vegetables on a daily basis(Manzanete, 2021).


# Cultural Belonging and Exchange

* Community gardens can help increase cultural ties and economic opportunities. Little Haiti Garden in Miami is one example of a garden where recent immigrants use their knowledge of traditional farming techniques to grow callaloo and calabaza (MacKenzie, 2016).
* One study of refugee gardeners in Midwestern cities of the United States found that gardening practices are an important way to promote inclusive views of agriculture, cities, and sustainability for these communities (Strunk and Richardson, 2019).
* A study comparing two different urban gardens in food insecure areas of New York found that longevity and success of the garden’s food justice efforts were connected to strong ties to neighborhood and nonprofit organizations as well as involvement of individuals with knowledge as well as commitment to the importance of growing food for the community (Aptekar and Myers, 2020).
* A garden at the Arab American National Museum in Michigan helps immigrants stay connected to their roots by growing plants such as red and purple figs, grape vine, olive tree, amaranth, thyme, red lettuce, cherry tomatoes, flat parsley, green onions, strawberries, and jasmine. The garden also highlights the importance of gardening to local members of the refugee and immigrant community by displaying signs with cultural histories alongside the plants (Kai-Hwa Wang, 2023).
* Community gardens are important to increase food security as well as sense of cultural belonging for many immigrant and refugee communities (Harris et al, 2014).
* In community gardens, families with children can spend time together outside, meet others with similar backgrounds, as well as get to know people from other parts of the community (HIAS, 2023).
* When planning an inclusive garden, it is helpful to consider whether different people will easily be able to access the site and have enough space to grow the plants important to them. It is also recommended to avoid requiring formal management meetings or aesthetic practices. It is likely that food justice will not be achieved solely through the gardens, so continuing to advocate for additional access and other programs is important (Turner, 2021).

# Habitat for Bees, Birds, and Other Animals

* Adding diverse plantings to a community garden can, over time, increase the presence of beneficial insects and pollinators such as native bees (Pawelek et al., 2009).
* Planting different types of fruiting trees and shrubs are especially beneficial to animals who eat nuts, berries, and seeds in different seasons, even if they are not edible to humans. It is also helpful to provide nesting habitats for birds with evergreens, small dense shrubs, and groundcover plants (Fort Williams Park Foundation, 2016).

# Case Studies

**Ron Finley “Gangsta Gardener,” South Central Los Angeles, CA**

* + Finley began an effort to combat food apartheid by planting food such as avocados and bananas behind his house and exchanging them with community members for donations. He has since created a nonprofit as well as a Master Class (Toone, 2024).

2

# Langton Green Community Farm: Millersville, MD

* This example is based within a residential community that supports adults with intellectual disabilities. The farm provides training and work opportunities, as well as food and income (*Langton Green Community Farm*, n.d.).

# Marvin Gaye Greening Center: Washington D.C.

* Incorporated within this park and cultural hub is an educational site that includes farm beds and hoop houses, an orchard, a stage, and an outdoor kitchen for the community (*Marvin Gaye Greening Center, in Partnership with Washington Parks & People*, n.d.).

# Resources

**Websites**

* Nature Sacred Fire Souls: https://naturesacred.org/our-work/firesoul-network/firesouls/
* Native Roots Farm Foundation: [https://www.nativerootsde.org/](http://www.nativerootsde.org/)
* USDA Urban Growers: [https://www.farmers.gov/your-business/urban-growers](http://www.farmers.gov/your-business/urban-growers)
* Cooperative Gardens Hubs: [https://www.coopgardens.org/](http://www.coopgardens.org/)
* Pollinator Pathway: [https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/](http://www.pollinator-pathway.org/)
* Brooklyn Botanic Garden: [https://www.bbg.org/article/make\_your\_garden\_a\_haven\_for\_insect\_diversity](http://www.bbg.org/article/make_your_garden_a_haven_for_insect_diversity)

# How To

* Karen the Farmer: [https://www.karenthefarmer.com/faq-index](http://www.karenthefarmer.com/faq-index)
* City of Vancouver Plan for Inclusive Community Gardens: https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/2014- 02\_Vancouver%20Inclusive%20Community%20Gardens\_Lowcock.pdf

# References

Aptekar, S., & Myers, J. S. (2020). The tale of two community gardens: Green aesthetics versus food justice in the big apple. *Agriculture and Human Values*, *37*(3), 779–792. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460- 019-10011-w

*Community Gardens: What Are They and How To Find Them*. (n.d.). Retrieved March 10, 2024, from [https://www.nourishingneighbors.com/articles/32-community-gardens-find](http://www.nourishingneighbors.com/articles/32-community-gardens-find)

*Cooperative Gardens Commission*. (n.d.). Cooperative Gardens Commission. Retrieved March 10, 2024, from [https://www.coopgardens.org](http://www.coopgardens.org/)

Delshad, A. B. (2022). Community gardens:An investment in social cohesion, public health, economic sustainability, and the urban environment. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, *70*. ScienceDirect. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2022.127549

Fort Williams Park Foundation. (2016, July 4). *10 Tips For Creating Habitats for Birds & Pollinators*. Friends of Fort Williams Park. https://fortwilliams.org/10-tips-creating-habitat-birds-pollinators/

3

Harris, N., Rowe Minniss, F., & Somerset, S. (2014). Refugees Connecting with a New Country through Community Food Gardening. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *11*(9), 9202–9216. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph110909202

HIAS. (2023, September 13). *Community garden offers refugees belonging and a taste of home*. Global Impact. https://charity.org/give-global-blog/community-garden-offers-refugees-belonging-and-a-taste- of-home/

Kai-Hwa Wang, F. (2023, September 6). *How gardens enable refugees and immigrants to put down roots in new communities*. PBS NewsHour. [https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/how-gardens-enable-](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/how-gardens-enable-) refugees-and-immigrants-to-put-down-roots-in-new-communities

Lampert, T., Costa, J., Santos, O., Sousa, J., Ribeiro, T., & Freire, E. (2021). Evidence on the contribution of community gardens to promote physical and mental health and well-being of non-institutionalized individuals: A systematic review. *PLoS ONE*, *16*(8), e0255621. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0255621

*Langton Green Community Farm*. (n.d.). Nature Sacred. Retrieved March 10, 2024, from https://naturesacred.org/sacred\_place/langton-green-community-farm/

MacKenzie, A. (2016, March 1). *Beyond Food: Community Gardens as Places of Connection and Empowerment*. [https://www.pps.org/article/beyond-food-community-gardens-as-places-of-connection-](http://www.pps.org/article/beyond-food-community-gardens-as-places-of-connection-) and-empowerment

Manzanete, L. (2021, July 13). *Community Gardens: An Effective Approach to Food Equity | Institute for Health Policy Leadership*. https://ihpl.llu.edu/blog/community-gardens-effective-approach-food-equity *Marvin Gaye Greening Center, in partnership with Washington Parks & People*. (n.d.). Nature Sacred.

Retrieved March 10, 2024, from https://naturesacred.org/sacred\_place/marvin-gaye-greening-center- coming-soon/

*Meet the Firesouls*. (n.d.). Nature Sacred. Retrieved March 10, 2024, from https://naturesacred.org/our- work/firesoul-network/firesouls/

Oh, R. R. Y., Zhang, Y., Nghiem, L. T. P., Chang, C., Tan, C. L. Y., Quazi, S. A., Shanahan, D. F., Lin, B. B., Gaston, K. J., Fuller, R. A., & Carrasco, R. L. (2022). Connection to nature and time spent in gardens predicts social cohesion. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, *74*, 127655. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2022.127655

Pawelek, J., Frankie, G. W., Thorp, R. W., & Przybylski, M. (2009). *Modification of a Community Garden to Attract Native Bee Pollinators in Urban San Luis Obispo, California*.

*Pollinator Pathway*. (n.d.). Pollinator Pathway. Retrieved March 10, 2024, from https://www.pollinator- pathway.org

Strunk, C., & Richardson, M. (2019). Cultivating belonging: Refugees, urban gardens, and placemaking in the Midwest, U.S.A. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *20*(6), 826–848. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2017.1386323

4

Toone, S. (2024, January 9). *A TED Talk Put Ron Finley on the Map. 10 Years Later, the ‘Gangsta Gardener’ Is Going Strong.* Civil Eats. https://civileats.com/2024/01/09/a-ted-talk-put-ron-finley-on-the- map-10-years-later-the-gangsta-gardener-is-going-strong/

Turner, B. (2021, August 16). *3 ways community gardens often exclude migrants and refugees—And how to turn this around | 1 Million Women*. <http://www.1millionwomen.com.au/blog/3-ways-community-> gardens-often-exclude-migrants-and-refugees-and-how-turn-around/

*Urban Garden Program*. (n.d.). Retrieved March 10, 2024, from [https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/urbangarden.html](http://www.houstontx.gov/parks/urbangarden.html)

*Urban Grower Resources From USDA*. (2022, April 26). Farmers.Gov. [https://www.farmers.gov/your-](http://www.farmers.gov/your-) business/urban-growers

Washington, K. (n.d.). *FAQ*. Karen Washington. Retrieved March 10, 2024, from [https://www.karenthefarmer.com/faq-index](http://www.karenthefarmer.com/faq-index)

*What is a Food Forest? – Project Food Forest*. (n.d.). Retrieved March 10, 2024, from https://projectfoodforest.org/what-is-a-food-forest/

5