

Sprouts

March 2005

Newsletter of the DSM Community Gardening Coalition

Garden of the Month

Meredith Neighborhood Community Gardener Shares her Gardening Legacy

My love of Midwest gardening began at a very early age. Living in California, we traveled to Iowa in the summers to visit my relatives. Near a dear to my heart, are the memories of my aunt showing me how to make “flower ladies” in fancy dresses from Hollyhocks and picking Four O’clock seeds to take home to California.

I know life on the farm was hard for my Aunt but regardless of her long days and hard work, she always had a beautiful small flower garden next to her house. Her flowers were probably her respite from the hard work of the farm and her personal little luxury.

Unknown to me then, those early experiences influence me as a gardener today. My life in the city is certainly different than hers, but the garden serves the same purpose. It is my therapy and my joy, and in difficult times, it has been my solace.

For me, gardening is a legacy I share with family that has come and gone before me. I have flowers in my garden that came from relatives gardens, and they are special to me. It is a hobby that affords a great sense of well being and I would like to share this pas-

sion with others by introducing them to community gardening.

The rewards associated with community gardening are many. It is a great way to exchange garden knowledge and to share plants from your garden. It is an excellent way to network and learn more about the people living in our neighborhoods. It’s great exercise! It teaches children about how things “grow” and about caring for our land. And it is a great way to change our neighborhoods from sterile reflections of our busy lifestyles to areas that foster the idea of “community.”

A couple of years ago we organized a small project with the Meredith Neighborhood Association. The goal was to beautify a couple of weed filled island beds at the entrance to our neighborhood. This spring is the third or fourth year of the project and it has definitely been a huge improvement to our neighborhood. We get free annuals from the city and neighbors donate the perennials that are the foundation of the gardens. The planting only takes a few hours on a weekend morning.

Neighborhood associations are a great place to be-

gin a community gardening project. These groups often already have the infrastructure in place to make coordinating a project easier. (They often have newsletters; email lists for folks in the community; contacts in the community and most importantly they often have money! Working with an association also gives the project the approval and support needed to take an idea and get it done.

We all have very busy lives but you might be surprised by how little effort it takes to get a community garden going. You don’t have to be talented or have special skills to get started since Mother Nature does most of the work. It is very empowering to drive by a community garden and think to yourself, “I did that!”

So... my life may be different than my Aunts. But I am just as busy with home, work, community and family. Most important to me is that in a sense...I am carrying on her legacy by exposing people to the beauty of a simple flower garden. And maybe teaching a few to make flower ladies from Hollyhocks along the way....

submitted by LaShell Staley



“Sprouts” is published monthly by the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Dept. It’s free. Contact Community Gardening Coordinator Teva Dawson at the Parks Department, 3226 University Avenue, 323-8907 or email: TLDawson @dmgov.org. Save paper by receiving E-Sprouts - sign up by sending us an email.

Forming a Garden Team

Building a Community Garden that Exists beyond Your Individual Efforts.

Six Reasons for Building a Garden Team

1. Working in isolation doesn't allow you to get constructive feedback on your ideas.
2. Few people have all of the skills required to build a successful community garden: gardening knowledge, experience organizing projects, understanding how to work with people/volunteers, arts and crafts, carpentry, landscaping, childcare, nutrition, etc.
3. Many hands make light work.
4. There's power in diversity as mirrored in the garden.
5. Teamwork demonstrates democratic, noncompetitive, co-operative working relationships.
6. Build a community garden that will succeed and exist over time – even when you're no longer involved.

Build an "All Weather Team"

The folks on this team will stick with the project through thick and thin. Include these committed leaders in decisions starting from planning through implementation. You'll need at least 6 people on this team.

Know your "Fair Weather Team"

The folks on this informal team are there to help occasionally on your project but don't feel a big connection to your mission. Know who they are and how to keep them informed and involved without having to come to meetings.

The Community Garden Team's Role

Set at least 4 regular meetings a year.

Outline tasks and a timeline, maintain a calendar of activities

Plan the garden design and implementation with input from folks outside the team.

Continually work to increase participating in the garden.

Create a means for feedback from others.

Encourage people to attend trainings and learn new skills in the garden.

Create fun events and programming in the garden (open houses, harvest festivals, gardening how-to demonstrations, build art, hold meetings, etc.).

Establish a way to evaluate your success and identify strengths and weaknesses that will affect sustainability.

Adapted from The Chicago School Garden Initiative and Digging Deeper: Integrating Youth Gardens into schools and Communities.

Possible people to enlist on your team:

Staff – cooks, administrators, librarians, maintenance

Youth

Parents (at a school)

Clients (of an organization)

Neighborhood association leaders

Members from neighborhood organization

Community leaders

Business leaders

Someone with influence in the community (politician, elder)

Someone with a wealth of connections and networks

People with the needed skills and experience (gardener, landscape designer, writer, artist, good communicator and people person, community organizer, etc.)

Possible Roles on your Garden Team

Garden Coordinator – Recruits and motivates team members, facilitates the garden operations rather than being involved directly, enlists the support of the community, helps with fund-raising, predicts and helps manage problems as the crop up, organizes regular meetings with the team and sets the agenda, serves as the liaison to the Parks Department

Planting Day Leader – organizing planting event takes a separate person to take charge of that day's activities, promotes pre-planting activities such as getting seeds started, training others that will help lead activities during the planting event, works with team to figure out planting plan and how tasks will be delegated for the event.

Resource Leader – there are many resources needed to make a garden work from woodchips to water to educational workshop, assess what is needed and coordinate all necessary physical resources (schedules the tiller, gets tools, orders plants, secures water, etc.) or volunteer help including master gardeners, seek donations from businesses/individual.

People person – liaisons with community members by keeping in touch with parents at a school garden, clients of the organization, neighborhood association members, etc. Could also be responsible for recruiting parents and members of the community to assist the garden by volunteering labor, money or supplies.

Writer/Photographer – journals the success of the garden and finds ways of publicizing the accomplishments, writes grants, connects with community newsletters.

Activities Coordinator – schedules fun activities in the garden that ideally coincide with work days. Do more than pull weeds in your garden! More time should be spent in the garden having fun than doing work!

Check it out

Timely reminders for tending the garden or the group

THIS MONTH'S GARDEN ✓

✓ Starting Seeds

Although you can get established seedlings later on, you can start onions, leeks, broccoli, cabbage & cauliflower from seed early in the month. Mid-month, start petunia, celosia, periwinkle, nicotiana, peppers, eggplant, and parsley from seed. At the end of the month plant tomato seeds.

✓ Cold Frames

If you have a cold frame or other season extending devices, plant lettuce, spinach, and radishes now for spring salads in a couple of months.

✓ Pruning

Prune fruit trees, raspberries, currants and gooseberries and grape vines this month.

✓ Fertilize

Fertilize asparagus and rhubarb an organic fertilizer this month.

✓ Garlic

Check garlic plantings. Fertilize lightly if needed.

✓ Garden Debris

Clean up your garden - make sure all dead debris is removed from your annual and perennial gardens.

✓ Soil Test

Test your soil before you add any amendments. Call Polk Cnty. Extension for instructions - 263-2660.

GARDEN LEADERS ✓

✓ More Perennials

Do you need more perennials for your community garden either for existing garden or the creation of a new one? Order perennials through the "Great Perennial Divide". Each spring gardeners throughout Des Moines donate their extra plant material to the "Great Perennial Divide". Last year a over 1700 plants were donated. The plants range from shade loving to full sun, herbs, plants for butterfly gardens, berry bushes, and house plants. If you're interested in receiving some plants this year, please contact our office at 323-8907 by the end of March. The process to receive perennials is simple. We organize long-time gardeners to assist in planning your perennial bed. They will visit your garden in April to discuss

✓ Gardener Meeting

Organize a meeting with all involved to finalize the design, education schedule, meeting times, work days and activities. Make sure all agree upon the rules and has input in the decisions. Share the storage location of the tools & how they can access them.

✓ Volunteer!

Volunteers are needed at the Botanical Center to help transplant annuals for the neighborhood flower program. Contact Jody at 208-0277.

Get cookin'

Delicious recipes using food from your garden

Spinach Pie

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 cup warm water | 1 onion, chopped and sauteed in 2 tablespoon olive oil |
| 1 tablespoon sugar | 1-inch piece ginger root, chopped fine |
| 1 tablespoon salt | 2 cloves garlic, chopped fine |
| 1 tablespoon yeast | 1/2 tablespoon salt |
| 1 tablespoon olive oil | 1/4 tablespoon pepper |
| 1 pkg frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry or use 1 pound of fresh spinach | |

Make bread dough with first 5 ingredients. Let rest while you prepare the vegetables. Saute the onion, adding garlic and ginger. Add remaining seasonings with spinach and stir well. Divide the bread dough into 4 pieces, and roll each piece flat. Spoon 1/4 of spinach mixture onto dough and fold dough over to enclose the mixture, crimping or pressing the edges together. Prick top a few times, and assemble the other three pies. Cover with cellophane or spritz with oil. these can be left to rise or baked right away at 400 F for 15-20 minutes.

✓ LaShell's tips in starting a community garden

- Locate the spot for the garden. (public property)
- Form a planning committee of a few neighbors
- Identify resources (The city of Des Moines has some great resources available and serves as a clearing house for information for gardeners)
- Seek approvals needed. Sometimes this involves the city.
- Set a timeline
- Recruit folks to work on the installation and upkeep (including watering and weeding!)
- Keep your projects small, low maintenance and manageable. (Don't plant an acre of flowers and expect it to look wonderful mid-summer unless you have an army of committed volunteers who are immune to the Iowa heat. ted volunteers who are immune to the Iowa heat

Neighborhood Flower Orders Online

Public greenspaces including street corners, boulevards, space between the curb and sidewalk and land owned by nonprofits including schools can receive flowering annuals. Neighborhood associations coordinate the flower order for all individuals and groups within their boundaries. Contact your neighborhood association to get included in their order. If you don't know what neighborhood association you are located in contact the City Action Center at 283-4500 or visit www.dmgov.org/ under "Residents-Neighborhoods". The Neighborhood Flower Orders are paperless. Orders can be placed through our website: www.dmparks.org -"Community Gardening".



*Please join the American Community Gardening Association &
the Des Moines Park and Recreation Department*

GROWING COMMUNITIES WORKSHOP

**Leadership
Development**

**Community
Organizing**

**Grassroots
Fundraising**

**Communications
Planning**

through community gardening

March 18th 8:30 - 6:30

& 19th 8:15 - 4:15

must attend both days

Mickel Center 1620 Pleasant, Des Moines, Iowa
\$20 or \$40 for 3 people from the same community group.
Scholarships available. Travel and substitute teacher
scholarships possible as well.



For educators, neighborhood leaders, youth program leaders, volunteers, gardeners, 4-H leaders, artists, PTA

Learn proven strategies that community organizers use to develop dynamic leaders and create strong communities through a participatory approach to community building. You will learn the principles and practices of community organizing, and how to pass these techniques on to others in your community by conducting your own workshops.

AEA staff credit available -
\$20 additional cost.

Participants receive the "Growing Communities Curriculum," a 352 page resource workbook, which includes curriculum materials that walk the reader through the process of conducting training workshops. The Curriculum also addresses Diversity, Asset-Based Community Development, Meeting Facilitation and Group Decision-Making, Developing a Board of Directors, and Grassroots Fundraising - Specific Strategies.

Pre-register by calling Des
Moines Park Dept.
515/323-8907 or email
TLDawson@dmgov.org
www.dmparks.org