



GREATER LANSING
foodbank
GARDEN PROJECT

Creating an Inclusive Garden

Ideas and practices to create a welcoming, cross-cultural garden where immigrant and refugee gardeners (IRG), also known as New US Americans, can find belonging in an inclusive community space. These are not linear or hierarchical, but cyclical and repetitive entry points.

Be Social

- Greet everyone when they arrive at the garden. Learn people's names, family names, or wave.
- Use diverse strategies to communicate deadlines and gardener responsibilities.
For example: welcoming info packets, email, texts, pictures, infographics, WhatsApp videos.
- Find ambassadors (who speak some English or are fluent) to communicate and remind people of gardener responsibilities and gather their feedback and suggestions.
- Focus on building relationships... not just being a "garden leader".
- Promote a "let's do this together" approach to getting communal tasks done.
- Thank everyone for their participation and membership.
- Be flexible about deadlines and gardener responsibilities.
- Appreciate the growing skills of others. Walk around the garden and say things like "that is beautiful" and "great job!"

Find Common Motivation

Find common motivations of why fellow participants are gardening.

Congratulate people for how much time they spend at the garden.

Congratulate everyone on their harvest. Say things like "congrats", "beautiful", and "great job".

*"I know others will look at me at the garden. And I know the first time we planted amaranth, people were inquiring, 'what is this?' and we shared the nutritional content of it and everything. I feel like I am able to contribute a little bit of knowledge there."
-Anonymous IRG*

Ask questions about unknown plants & different growing techniques.

Some sample questions:

- What are you growing?
- How do you grow it?
- How do you use it?
- Who taught you that?
- Will you teach me how to do that?
- Why do you grow this plant this way?

HAVE FUN!

Have fun in the garden! Share your gardening stories with immigrant and refugee gardeners and listen to their gardening stories too.

Create Spaces

- Develop spaces that people want to be in, like a play area, picnic area, shaded area, or a space where gardeners can share produce with fellow gardeners.
- Facilitate the sharing of resources. Address needs and wants of IRG and all members of the garden.
- Have “office hours” or a designated spot where people can find you to talk.
- Host a focus group or drawing exercise to gather insights on desired visions and resources for the garden. (This is easier early in the season before everyone is busy.)

Expand your knowledge

- Practice learning some words in other languages and help IRG learn some English equivalents as well. Vegetable plant names are a great place to start!
- Host a potluck! Ask how to use, cook, and eat an unknown plant.
- Host a seed swap, ask for seeds, and ask to be mentored on growing a new plant!
- Hold a teach-in or create opportunities for IRG to share their knowledge.

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- As a garden leader, check for *understanding* after communication. We cannot expect people to follow directions they do not understand!
 - Acknowledge *why* there may be a communication gap in the garden. Many native English-speaking gardeners think communication gaps exist because *others* don't speak English. In actuality, communication gaps exist because there isn't a common language.
 - Ask for, and accept, feedback from garden members on what works well and where there is room for improvement. We all have room to grow!

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