



## Volunteer Position: Community Garden Leader

The Community Garden Leader is a vital link between community gardens, gardeners, and the resources available to them. Garden Leaders listen to and help gardeners establish and reach their goals. They organize and facilitate gardeners and resources, paying attention to the details of the garden while staying acquainted with opportunities in the surrounding community. Garden Leaders connect the community with Garden Project (G.P.), and enable more effective gardening services by advocating for their community garden.

**Multiple people per garden can be Garden Leaders and can split the duties described below. We encourage a Leadership Team of *at least two individuals*.**

### Description of duties:

- **Maintain active communication** with gardeners through all necessary means
- **Identify needs and concerns**, work to facilitate resolution, and convey necessary info to G.P.
- **Recruit and train gardeners/volunteers** to fulfill specific roles
- **Ensure gardeners have access** to necessary physical resources (water, fertile soil, etc.)
- **Organize workdays and other events/gatherings**
- **Participate actively in outreach** and public relations activities for the garden
- **Meet and seek input** from neighbors, businesses and others to improve the garden's asset map

### What this looks like over the course of the season...

- Serve as a point person to **communicate** with interested gardeners during the off season and generally be available for any questions that gardeners have
- Assist/lead **garden registration**, either by collecting registrations or obtaining an updated registration list from the GP in advance of the garden opening
- Assist/lead **plot assignments**
- Assist/lead **staking** out the garden and marking the plots
- Send a **welcome email/phone calls** to 'open' the garden for the season
- Provide **seasonal information** to gardeners on an as-needed basis
- Providing **leadership/facilitation** for any garden projects, workday tasks, and volunteers that need it
- Generally, serve as a **welcoming, encouraging presence** at the garden, helping gardeners *grow healthy food and cultivate connections*, which is the Garden Project mission.

### Qualifications

- Enjoys gardening and leadership
- Pays attention to communication
- Respect for other people's opinions
- Cultivates relationships with others
- Desire to empower others and build community through consensus

## **Training**

- Garden Leaders Training and Sustainable Gardens Training is available for all prospective coordinators each winter/early spring.
- Technical gardening classes/workshops available through *LetsGardenLansing.org*

## **Supervision**

- Community Garden Leaders work closely with Garden Project staff to meet their gardens' needs. Help is available by phone or email, at our Resource Center by appointment, and through on-site visits to your project.

**Contact Garden Project often to allow us to serve you better.**

Staff site visits are available!  
We can consult on your site in Ingham, Eaton, Clinton, Shiawassee, Gratiot, Isabella & Clare counties.

## Tips for Garden Leaders

We all want to have the widest possible participation in garden activities. **Here are a few tips that can help.**

First, establish as many lines of communication as you can with your gardeners. A **Facebook account** might be useful; an **e-mail address** is one of the more efficient ways to get messages back and forth to/from the group. You may be lucky enough to place a **bulletin board** on site if you have a shed or an adjoining building, like a business (Northwind Garden has a bulletin board inside the business next door.) Note that a business may be willing to give you space if you're providing them with traffic. Perhaps you can find a volunteer to publish a **regular newsletter**.

If you have members who don't have email, you may want to create a **phone brigade**—where one passes the message onto two others and so forth. This could be used for date specific announcements, such as a common work day.

Find some place to **post common chores**, perhaps with a checklist that allows people to initial when they've completed the chore. Find any possible way for gardeners to contribute, even if that seems minimal to you. We recently appointed a 'rain monitor' who will notify members of cumulative weekly rainfall, since rain at the garden doesn't always coincide with rain a mile or two away at the residences.

**Create teams** or pairings as much as possible. The sense of unity and responsibility toward the garden is enhanced by these teams or pairings.

**Pass on compliments** or comments about the garden to the members. This helps **build pride** in the garden project and a sense of community. You may want to seek media recognition for the efforts put into the garden. Local media are often receptive to a community based story.

Involve all the members in **decision-making** as much as possible. Sometimes this means holding off on an action, but the sense of engagement you're building with the members will be worth it in the long run.

It's generally better to **praise good examples** than criticize poor ones. I've found that other gardeners are often envious of the attention a member gets for a good effort or outcome and wants to follow that model. This is also a good way to spread innovative or more effective ideas. You could encourage gardeners to try what others have done successfully, "You may want to try what Susie has done because . . ."

Schedule common work dates with **specific objectives**. The membership grows closer by sharing accomplishment.

You may also want to schedule **purely social gatherings**. For example, Northwind has four or five potlucks at the garden each year. Gardeners get to know each other and can swap ideas or resources at these events.

As a garden leader, try to find a way to **vent your frustrations** without taking them out on the members. There will always be a hose left out or a plot not properly weeded; it's helpful to voice your complaints or difficulties to someone other than a garden member. Once you've 'let off steam' you may be able to handle the problem more effectively.

**Northwind Garden:** 4960 Northwind Dr., East Lansing, MI 48823

