

Garden Leadership Committee Toolkit

Communicating general and seasonal updates to all garden members

Overview

Share garden-wide updates with all garden members, such as resource announcements and seasonal updates.

Time commitment: Feb. – Oct.; frequency depends on how often updates are shared.

Keys to success

- Be strategic about how often gardeners receive new information. It should be concise and relevant to all gardeners – otherwise, they may stop reading/responding to updates.
- Take a varied approach to communication using different methods so information is accessible to everyone.

Communicating with every member of any group is challenging. Too many emails will cause people to stop reading; too few and people will disengage.

Examples of seasonal updates to share with all garden members:

Spring

- When garden registration opens
- When compost has been delivered
- Upcoming workdays or weed checks

Summer

- Irrigation updates
- All-garden theft prevention

Fall

- Garden cleanup information
- Winterizing needs

Anytime

- Information on relevant local gardening workshops.
- Notifying members of any site changes that would impact all gardeners.

It is important to find multiple ways to communicate with the gardeners, especially when it comes to emergencies or time-sensitive information.

Below are some common gardener communication options and suggestions about what method to use and when.



Texting is best for many New Americans and others with limited English so they can **take the time to ask someone to translate or translate with an app**. Texting pictures of translated flyers or links to websites can be helpful and does not require you to know another language.



WhatsApp is a text/call app frequently used by New Americans because it **does not require cell service and can be used with just Wi-Fi**. It can also be accessed through a computer app.



Facebook Messenger is a text/call app that requires a Facebook account to use. It is great for **groups and members that already exist on Facebook**, but can be challenging for people who don't/can't/won't use Facebook.



Google Voice is a call/text app that is a great option for anonymity. This app can be used with an existing cell number or with a new number created through a Google Account. **Texting ability is limited to a maximum of 7 people in a group**. It is free and accessible through Google Suite.



Regular phone calls are always an option, but it is important to consider the person's English proficiency/comfort in talking on the phone, work hours, home life distractions, etc.



Email is a great way to send a lot of information that can be referenced later. It is best practice to send emails to multiple recipients by using the blind carbon copy (BCC) feature to avoid publicly sharing emails. Sending to fewer than 50 addresses per email helps keep bulk emails out of spam filters.

Each type of communication — written, spoken and visual — has advantages and disadvantages to consider, as well as considering individual preferences.

Written communication

Advantages

- Permanent record of messages.
- Allows more preparation/planning.
- Good for messages requiring a more official tone.
- Gardeners are able to read or revisit messages at any time.

Disadvantages

- Feedback can be slower and more difficult.
- Messages can feel more impersonal.
- If sending by mail or creating flyers, messages can be expensive to print.

Spoken communication

Advantages

- Can be more personal and encourage getting to know each other.
- Quick/immediate and accurate.
- Voice tone helps convey message.
- Opportunity to receive feedback immediately and check for understanding.

- Good for handling discreet or sensitive topics and conversations.

Disadvantages

- No record kept.
- Can be time consuming.
- Can be more challenging for those with limited English proficiency without immediate translation options.

Visual communication

Advantages

- Can be easier to remember.
- If filmed, can reach a larger audience.
- Easier to gain attention.

Disadvantages

- Potentially limited reach — in person, can only reach the person present.
- Can be time consuming.

Find a balance between what you can do and what works best for your fellow gardeners. Reach out for help if you need support. For example, fellow committee members may have the skills and passion to help update Facebook groups or call a certain group of gardeners.

Gardeners will appreciate knowing what is happening and why!

Additional documents

- [Translated common garden phrases](#)

Further reading

- [MailChimp](#): To help organize emails for large batches
- [Immigrant and Refugee Resource Collaborative \(IRRC\)](#): Tips for communicating with people who speak other languages
- [Harvard's Tips for Effective Communication](#): Although meant for a corporate world, effective communication can help anywhere.