

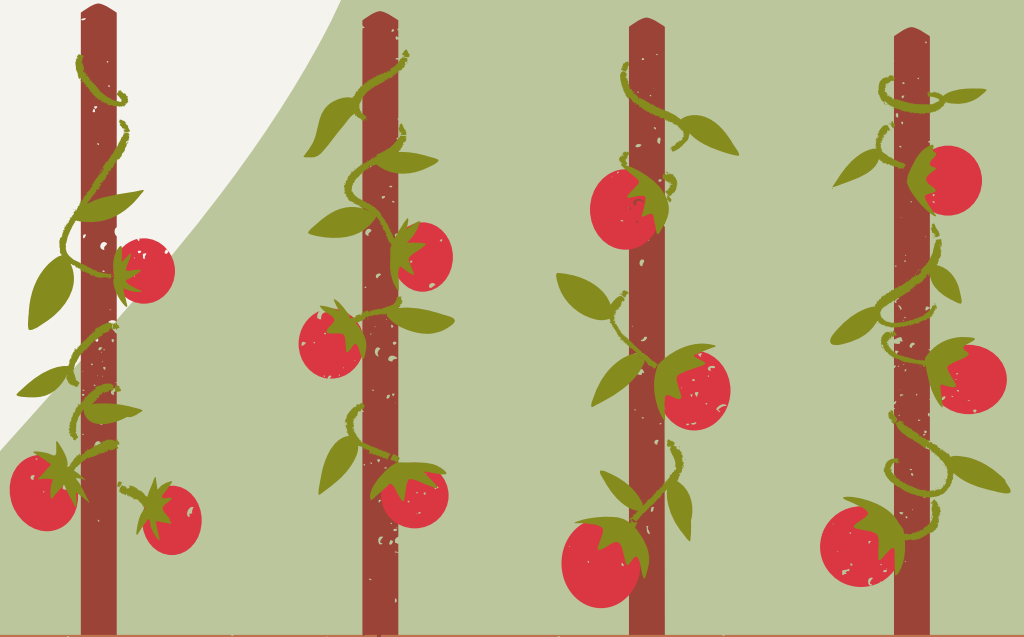
COMMUNITY GARDEN ROUNDTABLE

February 2024

SUMMARY AND LIST OF RESOURCES



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LAND HONOURING

Our region's first ever community garden roundtable brought together community members who work and live on unceded Coast Salish Territories, specifically that of the Lək̓ʷəŋən peoples, also known as the Songhees and Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) First Nations, the W̱SÁNEĆ Nations also known as the W̱JOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), BÓKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), STÁUTW̱ (Tsawout), W̱SIKEM (Tseycum), MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat), Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nations, as well as the T'Sou-ke, Pacheedaht, and Pune'laxutth' (Penelekut) Nations.

Community gardens offer a vital opportunity to nurture connections within communities and with the land, but even so, many community gardens are still colonial projects. As settlers living and working on these territories, it is essential to continue to work towards decolonizing these spaces to create accessible and culturally relevant foodscapes.



Learn more about local Indigenous food initiatives and other decolonial resources here



Victoria Native
Friendship Centre



ŚW.ÇENENITEL
Indigenous Foods Initiative



PEPAKEN HÁUTW̱
Foundation

INTRODUCTION

This gathering arose out of a shared interest to bring together voices from the various community gardens across the capital region. Despite the fact that there are over 30 community gardens in Victoria and the surrounding region, much of the amazing work done in these spaces has been isolated from other efforts. This gathering offered the opportunity to bring folks together to share resources, offer support, learn from one another, and ultimately to forge lasting relationships between community gardens.

Our roundtable was brought together with the support from Michael Ip who was interested in sharing his research on the community gardens across the capital region. This presentation provided the attendees with a framework of how to establish and maintain a successful community garden. The presentation sparked an exciting conversation about opportunities for collaboration and learning from one another.



EVENT OVERVIEW

Our roundtable discussion took place at the Dock Centre for Social Impact where we hosted over 20 participants both in-person and online. We were joined by community garden organizers and members from food literacy and food sharing organizations.

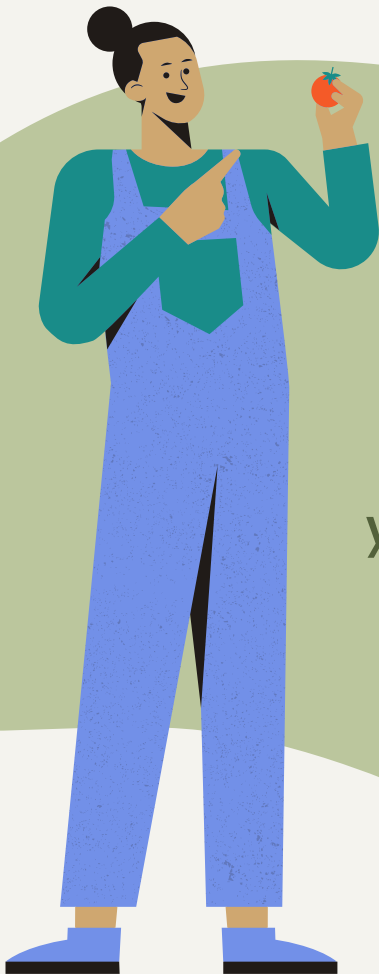
This was followed by an open discussion period where participants asked questions, shared strategies, discussed resources, and made plans for future initiatives.

The event featured a presentation by Micheal Ip on his research into the current landscape of community gardens in our region.



PRESENTATION BY MICHAEL IP

Michael Ip presented his research on the life cycles of local community gardens and shared stories from organizers to help other gardens engage with the community and avoid burnout. He outlined four major stages of the creation of a community garden. These four stages were Preparation, Establishment, Management, and Development.



you can check
out the
powerpoint
here



PREPARATION

A core group comes together with the shared interest of establishing a community garden

A proposal must be created and shared with the community through a consultation process to ensure the needs and interests of the community are being taken into account

Make sure the concerns of the community, such as the long term management, aesthetic appeal, and concerns around pests and wildlife are addressed

The community consultation process is often the limiting factor here, it can take several rounds of discussion, revisions, and promotion to get community members involved and invested in the project

The proposal must then be approved by the municipal government and funding must be secured to get the project started

You also need to foster a community that wants to be involved with the project once it is established



ESTABLISHMENT

Once the project has been approved by the municipal government, funding must be secured to get the project started

Along with the investment of time and expertise from the people organizing the project, there needs to be the physical resources for the project need to be acquired

These resources might include soil, fencing, carpentry for garden beds, and storage facilities for tools and supplies.

Consider the kinds of expertise you'll need at this stage of the project - aside from the people responsible for organizing and outreach, you'll need to connect with experienced builders and labourers to make the proposed design a reality



MANAGEMENT

Administrative needs such as membership agreements, keeping a budget, holding general meetings, and enforcing guidelines are all vital jobs in a community garden.

Many gardens rely on a garden coordinator to oversee the day-to-day operations of the garden, and a board of members generally oversees the larger decisions of the garden

Once the garden has been created and you are beginning to welcome the gardeners into the space, there needs to be a structure in place for the long term management of the space



DEVELOPMENT

Michael identifies three possible outcomes of a community garden: stagnation, decline, or thriving

In order to maintain the momentum of your project, its vital that you engage the community to participate in the garden and help with the management of the space

At this stage the garden is up and running and a system of management is in place, but now this must be maintained and upheld in order to sustain itself

After a period of time there will be some inevitable turnover in the management of the garden so you need to be sure that there is a steady flow of people who are being equipped and trained to takeover management positions as they open up



DEVELOPMENT

The planning of succession is a very important part of the planning process, especially to avoid burnout in the people doing the organizing

Volunteer support is a vital part of the management of the garden, but oftentimes the work that falls on volunteers can become another full time job if there aren't the proper measures in place to keep volunteers and staff happy and supported

When there are periods of low engagement with the community, it can also lead to frustration and serious exhaustion within the organization



TIPS FOR MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WORKSPACE

Having a healthy workspace is an important part of avoiding burnout

Individual Needs

- Take care of yourself and maintain a healthy work-life balance
- Take the time to appreciate and recognize all the work that has been done
- Nurture strong systems of support and trust within the organization, both between staff, members, and volunteers

Organization

- It can be helpful to have a role-rotation system in place to ensure that people don't become bored of their role and maintain a sense of interest and involvement with the organization
- This can also help you retain talented organizers in the community while preparing them for succession because they will already have a breadth of experience in different facets of the organization

Community Engagement

- Creates opportunities for the community to support the work being done and keep people engaged and invested in the success of the garden
- This can also look like collaboration between other gardens and local organizations
- Opportunities for collaboration might include hosting workshops, sharing resources and experiences, or supporting one another with larger projects through collaborative work parties
- Engaging with schools is also a great way to help show kids the benefits of a community garden through guided tours, as well as get help with simple tasks such as harvests, weeding, and composting

CONVERSATION PERIOD

HOW DO WE GET PEOPLE TO COME OUT TO WORK PARTIES TO VOLUNTEER AND TAKE PART IN SUPPORTING THE GARDEN?

- Make community involvement a part of the **membership agreement**
- Offer **incentives for participation** such as food or learning opportunities
- Combine **skill sharing** and labour through interactive workshops
- Offer a **variety of memberships** where increased community involvement can be subsidized by more affordable plots and vice versa
- Centre the reasons **why people would want to show up** instead of advertising what you need from them
- The organization required for different facets of a community garden require **outreach to different people in different ways**, the folks working in the dirt may be different from those doing the administrative work



CONVERSATION PERIOD

HOW CAN WE ENFORCE THE COMMITMENTS OF THE GARDEN COMMUNITY WHILE STILL MAINTAINING AN ACCESSIBLE SPACE?

- Focus on **positive reinforcement** versus negative reinforcement
- Keep in mind that **financial enforcement may be a barrier** to some of the community members who rely on access to the garden
- Try framing the conversation around the **importance of upholding guidelines/shared values**, rather than enforcing a set of rules. Many of these guidelines exist for the benefit of all the members of the garden community
- Try **partnering new members with experienced members** that will be able to help them learn how things work at your garden and receive guidance from an experienced gardener



CONVERSATION PERIOD

HOW DO WE MAKE SURE THAT NEW DEVELOPMENTS ARE SUPPORTING FOOD INITIATIVES?

- Sometimes you can **go straight to the developers** working in the area and they will be interested in supporting food initiatives such as community gardens through allocating space, sharing resources, or providing financial support
- However, a good place to start is **speaking with the city council** about “**amenity rezoning**” for new developments to ensure that food access is being taken into account and prioritized in these projects.



CONVERSATION PERIOD

HOW CAN WE SHARE ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND EXPERIENCES TO HELP ESTABLISH AND IMPROVE UPON EXISTING COMMUNITY GARDENS?

- *The Food Eco District has a resource containing samples of membership agreements and other documents to help new organizations establish administrative operations*

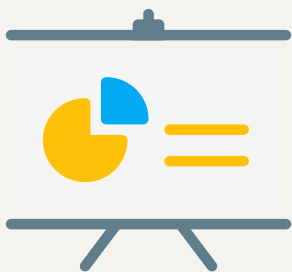
- **Chat with other gardens!**
Many of the gardens in our region have experienced similar struggles both in their inception and in their day to day work. Building relationships between gardens is a great way to learn and share resources



RESOURCES



[GROWING TOGETHER VIDEO:
ACCESSIBLE GARDENING TIPS](#)



[MICHAEL IP'S PRESENTATION
ON COMMUNITY GARDENS](#)



[IYÉ CREATIVE'S CULTURALLY
RELEVANT CROPS SURVEY](#)



[JOIN THE COMMUNITY
GARDEN ROUNDTABLE GROUP
BY FILLING OUT THIS FORM](#)

*Do you have any other resources to share?
Email us at engagement@crfair.ca*

