



Welcome and thank you for all you do for your community, Garden Leaders!

We are so glad to have you as part of the DUG network! Our goal is for you to feel supported and appreciated as a Garden Leader (also referred to as 'GL') with DUG. This guide provides an overview of DUG, our expectations of community gardens, gardeners, and Garden Leaders, highlights resources available to you, and provides tried and true tips for effective garden management. Reviewing this guide and understanding the information inside is both your responsibility as a Garden Leader and one of the best ways to access key information quickly.

We are delighted you're here and look forward to seeing you in the garden!

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ABOUT DUG

Denver Urban Gardens (DUG) was first established in the late 1970s as a way to support Denver residents in creating sustainable, food-producing neighborhood community gardens. We formed as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) in 1985 and since then, our network has expanded across six Metro Denver counties as we have championed the power of plants, the people who grow them, and the communities they nourish.

DUG is now the largest independent, food-producing community garden organization in the United States with more than 190 community gardens. Our gardeners come from every walk of life with all imaginable life—and gardening—experiences to share and learn from.

We design, build, and support community gardens in partnership with community members, cities, parks departments, school districts, housing authorities, and private communities. We have recently begun adding food forests across the city, including in some community gardens. Food forests are dense plantings of food-producing perennial trees, bushes, and vines. It is a permaculture concept that adds food production, shade, biodiversity, carbon capture, and water retention, enhancing the garden ecosystem. Please reach out to our garden team if you'd like to learn more about how to add a food forest to your community garden!

In addition to gardens and food forests, DUG offers youth and adult education classes on organic gardening and soil regeneration, as well as our Grow a Garden program, which distributes pay-what-you-can seeds and seedlings to help more Denver area residents grow their own food.

DUG's Pillars

Our VISION is a sustainable urban future where people are deeply and directly connected to the earth, each other, and the food they eat.

Our MISSION is to provide access, skills, and resources for people to grow healthy food in community and regenerate urban green spaces.

Our VALUES are to:

- Earn TRUST
- Demonstrate INTEGRITY
- Embrace EQUITY
- Build COMMUNITY
- Inspire CURIOSITY

How DUG Community Gardens Work

There are 190+ active community and school-based gardens in the DUG network. With the exception of a small number of gardens that serve specific communities, DUG community gardens are open to the public and managed by more than 300 Garden Leaders. The diversity of our gardens is reflected in their sizes, organizational structures, community cultures, and internal community policies.

DUG gardens have several separate garden plots, each cared for by individuals or families. Community gardeners care for and harvest from their own *plots*, or growing spaces. Plot sizes vary from garden to garden but most are 10 feet by 15 feet, or around 150 square feet. Shared spaces like pathways, perennial herb and flower beds, sheds, and gathering spaces are cared for by all community members. Many gardens also have spaces dedicated to growing extra produce for community redistribution in partnership with local food banks, community organizations, and mutual aid groups.

DUG gardens are created with and for the surrounding community. Neighbors and gardeners are encouraged to participate in all levels of development, site maintenance, and garden events. Individuals of all ages and backgrounds are encouraged to unite in the spirit of community to enjoy the community gardens, whether gardening, resting on a shaded bench, or meeting with friends and neighbors in the garden.

We have found that a garden enriches and provides lasting benefits to a neighborhood when it:

- Is collectively initiated by community members who participate in its organization, design, construction, and ongoing care
- Is planned for and protected as a highly valued neighborhood asset
- Is inviting, well-maintained, and accessible to all people
- Is aligned with the broader purpose of its site, as in the case of a garden in a park, on the grounds of a school, or as part of an affordable housing development
- Provides access to healthy food and promotes healthy lifestyles while its members celebrate growing, cooking, and eating together
- Encourages individual self-sufficiency and integrity while collectively developing strong social networks in which participants look after, learn from, and share with each other
- Models environmental stewardship through its organic practices and its efficient use of resources, including composting and water conservation
- Fosters a sense of belonging and attachment as an important place in both the lives of the gardeners and in the life of the neighborhood
- Honors diverse viewpoints and values the strengths of each gardener
- Bridges differences, promotes understanding, and develops respect through the unifying act of gardening together

How We Support Our Community Gardens

- Cultivate community-driven garden leadership, including GL recruitment and placement
- Provide garden maintenance support
- Provide fiscal management of garden accounts
- Provide liability insurance coverage for gardens and serve as a liaison between gardens and city officials, agencies, and water providers
- Establish working relations with garden property owner agencies and negotiate and maintain garden site use agreements
- Coordinate volunteer groups and supervise large maintenance and improvement projects
- Mediate inter-community gardener conflicts as requested
- Organize peer-to-peer networking and learning events for gardeners and GLs
- Secure water access for all gardens
- Acquire funding to maintain all gardens regardless of ability to pay
- Design, build and coordinate new community gardens and food forests as requested by community members throughout metro Denver
- Provide expert education on all elements of organic gardening to new and experienced gardeners alike

Each community garden site is locally managed by a neighborhood Garden Leader or Leadership Committee. DUG encourages management by a Leadership Committee, which allows the responsibilities to be shared so that one person does not become overburdened. More info on leadership roles + suggested committees is offered in '*Garden Leadership*.'

All DUG gardens have a DUG Gmail account specific to each garden in the format of *communitygardename@dug.org*. This email address is available on our website, shared with any interested new gardeners, and should be used for all garden communication. It is also the primary way DUG shares important information, including financial statements. Sharing email access with all members of the leadership committee is recommended. Please contact DUG at *dirt@dug.org* if you need assistance with accessing your *@dug.org* email account.

Plot Application Process

For our public gardens, we work directly with Garden Leaders to ensure a successful plot application process each year. DUG's online plot application is made available to Garden Leaders annually around February. GLs are then responsible for sharing the plot application with their current gardeners and those who may be eligible from a running waitlist. (More info on best practices for sharing the plot application is available under the '*GL Responsibilities*' section).

Our insurance carriers and most landowners require gardeners to complete the DUG plot application and waivers to secure the property. All plot applications are due by June 1st. If a plot is being reassigned or

there is extra space for a late-comer, gardeners may join after June 1st, but please let DUG know and make sure these gardeners submit their plot applications as soon as possible.

DUG's annual standard plot fee is \$20 for a small plot (under 50 square feet), \$40 for a medium plot (50-120 square feet), and \$60 for a large plot (over 120 square feet). These fees go to the garden to help cover water and compost costs, purchase gardening tools and hoses, or invest in garden improvement projects. In addition to the plot fee, DUG charges an annual administration fee of \$25 per gardener, referred to as 'DUG Dues'.

If gardeners cannot pay the full plot fee or DUG Dues, they are invited to pay what they can. No DUG gardener will be turned away if they are not able to pay their plot fee. We adhere to a no questions asked policy. However, even if they cannot pay, every gardener must still complete a plot application.

Gardeners may also pay more than the designated plot fee as a donation to the garden. Please ensure that the amounts are indicated on the application in the plot fee field - it makes our accounting much easier. Though DUG holds and tracks the garden funds for each garden, GLs are also responsible for tracking funds. This is a great system of checks and balances. When a gardener submits a plot application, a copy of the application is sent to your garden's @dug.org email address to help you keep track of applicants and know who has paid for their plot.

Note: DUG holds the funds for all public DUG gardens that are not part of another nonprofit. Plot fees are collected and tracked for ongoing garden expenses. DUG Dues do not appear in the garden financial statements. More information about this is available in the *'Financials'* section of the manual.

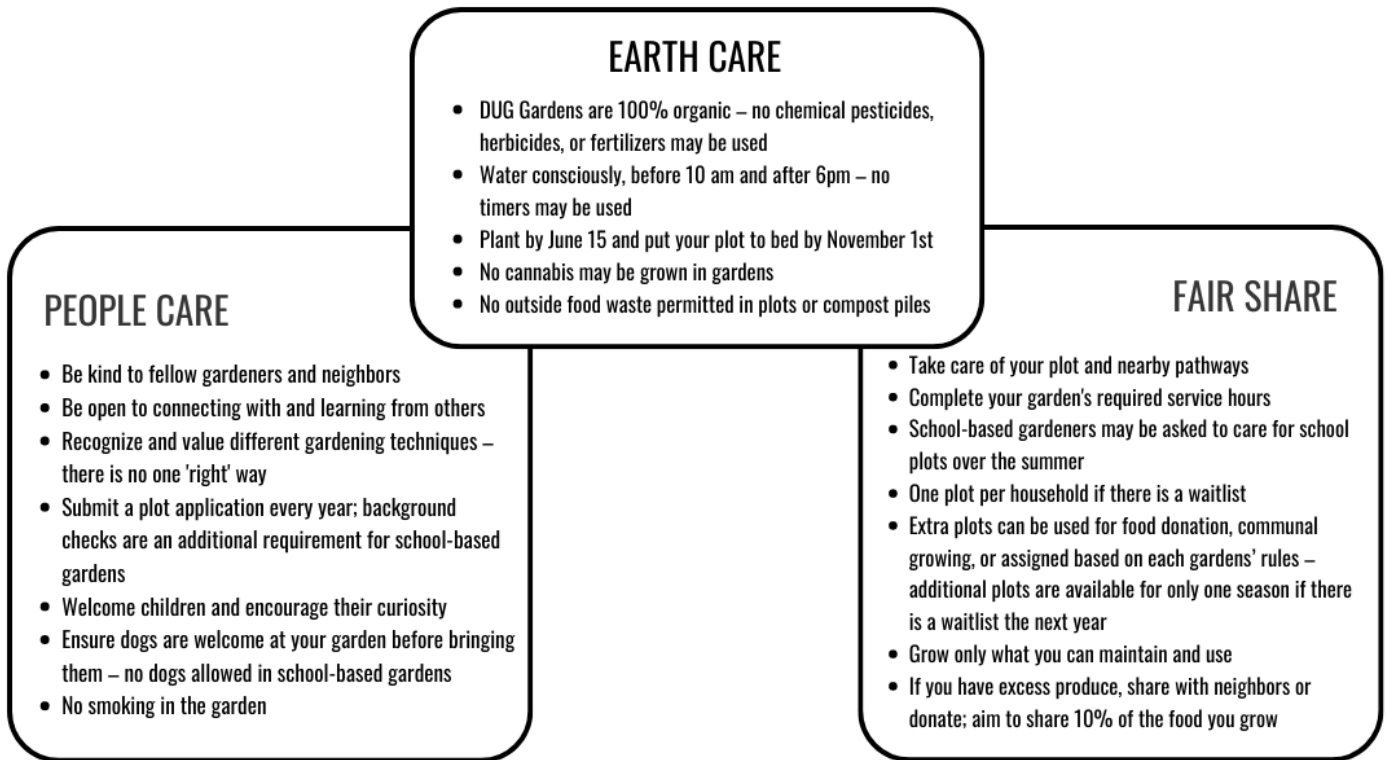
School Garden Plot Fees Policy

Fees at DUG's school-based community gardens are waived for plots that are planted by teachers and students. Typically, 1/3 or fewer plots are reserved for school use. If the school is not using a plot, the community may use it for a gardener on the waitlist or as a food donation plot. If the school would like it back the following year and it is available, they may have it. However, if an active community gardener is using the plot, the school gets added to the top of the waitlist for the next available plot and can assist with perennial plots, perimeter plantings, fruit trees, or food donation.

School plots are primarily intended for use in school garden programming, with the harvest from the plots used by the school, its teachers, students and garden program volunteers, or donated. If a teacher would like a plot for personal use, they are considered a community gardener and will be asked to pay a plot fee for their personal plot.

Community Agreements

DUG has a set of community agreements that all gardeners agree to adhere to when participating in the DUG network of community gardens. These agreements are found in the plot application and waiver forms distributed to and signed by all gardeners and posted within the gardens. Garden Leaders should also inform all guests and community members using the garden of these agreements.



GARDEN LEADERSHIP

The Spirit of Community Garden Leaders

As a Garden Leader, you serve as a representative of your garden and DUG. Garden Leaders are the heartbeat of DUG community gardens. By modeling a spirit of inclusivity that encourages cooperation, shared responsibilities, and garden sustainability, GLs foster a sense of unity in their garden while encouraging mutually beneficial relationships between gardeners, neighbors, and visitors. Their work expands the local food security in their community and makes their neighborhoods safer, healthier, and more beautiful.

From our experience, successful community Garden Leaders are:

- Patient, community-minded individuals willing to collaborate with their fellow gardeners, neighbors, and DUG to create a deeply-rooted community in the garden
- New and/or life-long gardeners who wish to learn from and with others
- Strong communicators who provide consistent, clear communication to gardeners, neighbors, and DUG about the garden, including expectations and needs. GLs regularly listen to gardeners, gather feedback, and hear concerns with equity, inclusivity, and tolerance
- Welcoming to other gardeners, neighbors, and visitors of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. They empower individuals to use their unique gifts and skills to participate in the garden in meaningful ways, utilizing differences to create a stronger sense of community
- Facilitators who promote opportunities for gardeners to get involved, have their questions answered, and forge relationships with other gardeners
- Mediators who understand that conflicts between people naturally arise from time to time and who are willing to mediate minor disagreements between gardeners, knowing DUG is always there to step in to assist with particularly challenging conflicts
- Effective organizers who track details, including membership, waitlists, gardener service hours, and garden budgets; and also provide thoughtful coordination for community workdays, produce donations, and events
- Willing to operate with transparency while making decisions with gardeners based on what is best for the garden as a whole

How We Support Garden Leaders

The hub for all resources for Garden Leaders can be found at our website on the Garden Leader Resources page (www.dug.org/gl). There you'll find quick links to Garden Leader-specific forms, the GL calendar of events, access to DUG Online, how-to videos and articles for infrastructure maintenance, and more.

We encourage you to stay connected with us in the following ways:

- Attend a beginning-of-the-year 'Garden Leader Training' session
- Attend the annual 'DUG Symposium' in February
- Join the DUG Online 'Garden Leader Circle'
- Join Garden Leader continuing education opportunities and meet-ups during the season
- Read the monthly 'Garden Leader News' newsletter
- Reach out to DUG gardens staff for check-ins and meetings as needed
- Attend the 'Harvest Happy Hour' in November

We also hope you will take advantage of DUG programs and share these opportunities with gardeners:

- 'The Underground News' monthly newsletter (www.dug.org/subscribe)
- DUG Online (<https://community.dug.org>)
- Micro Network events (www.dug.org/micro-networks)
- Urban Roots Garden Education workshops (www.dug.org/urge)
- Master Composter Training Program (www.dug.org/master-composter)
- Grow a Garden seeds and seedlings program (www.dug.org/growagarden)
- DUG Spring and Fall plant sales (www.dug.org/events)
- Gardening Resources (www.dug.org/gardening-resources/)
- Follow us on Instagram and YouTube for seasonal garden tips and organic gardening info

GL Responsibilities

Garden Leaders' basic responsibilities include:

1. **Be professional, respectful, and kind.**
2. **Regularly check your @dug.org Gmail account and communicate in a timely way** with new and returning gardeners.
3. **Communicate guidelines and community agreements** for each garden participant, their household, pets, and guests.
4. **Be the bridge of communication between gardeners and DUG.** Each season, notify DUG when your garden is full, so we can update our website. Inform DUG of infrastructure and leadership changes and needs of the garden. Attend GL events, trainings, community events, and take our end-of-year survey.

5. **Coordinate plot assignments.** Plots are available to community members on a first come, first served basis, regardless of their affiliation with DUG, the GL, or the landowner. Best practices for filling plots are:
 - a. Maintain a waitlist of interested gardeners by the date of inquiry received.
 - b. Returning gardeners may have the same plot every year or have priority to choose a new plot if one is available.
 - c. Only one plot per household is allowed if there is a waitlist.
 - d. After filling plots with returning gardeners, offer open plots to gardeners on the waitlist.
 - e. Inform everyone left on the waitlist that the garden is full for the season.

6. **Ensure that every gardener (even in shared plots and partners or spouses) fills out DUG's online plot application.** If gardeners have tech, language, or literacy barriers to completing the online plot application, DUG staff or volunteers can come to your garden and help your gardeners sign up. Please contact volunteer@dug.org and let us know if you would like assistance and if language interpretation is needed. For school-based community gardens, ensure each gardener submits a background check. This is a requirement of all school districts we work with.

7. **Communicate with your gardeners their annual plot fees so they can pay the correct amount in their online plot applications.** If online payment is not possible, collect cash or checks made out to Denver Urban Gardens and deliver them to the DUG office by June 1st. We ask that GLs (not gardeners) bring cash and checks to DUG, noting the breakdown of the fees to the gardener (eg. \$X in plot fees and \$X in DUG Dues for X gardener).

8. **Share yearly water restrictions and best practices with gardeners following Colorado water conservation guidelines.** If your garden's irrigation is in a timed zone, share the specifics of this with your gardeners. Gardens should only be watered before 10 am or after 6 pm, and plots should be mulched with straw, leaves, or other organic material to retain moisture.

9. **Organize community workdays (weeding common areas, maintaining the compost bins, organizing the tool shed, general upkeep of the space) and social events.** Each garden is responsible for its own maintenance. In the plot application, gardeners commit to helping at the garden beyond working their own plot, with the standard being two service hours a month per gardener. In addition to group workdays, some gardens organize committees for specific tasks or have a volunteer sign up sheet for tasks gardeners can do on their own time.

10. **Mediate issues within the community garden.** Conflicts between gardeners can arise. If the GL is not able to resolve the conflict, please contact DUG to provide additional support. Once an issue gets elevated, DUG has the "final say" in the way forward.

11. **Keep gardeners and community members up to date** on all DUG events, workshops, and learning opportunities, and utilize DUG Online. GLs are asked to join the Garden Leader Circle and encouraged to set up a Circle for their garden.

School-Based Garden Leader Responsibilities

At DUG's school-based community gardens, we recommend a leadership committee including at least one GL from the school. The School GL may be a parent, teacher, or staff member who can represent the interests of the school and act as a liaison between community gardeners and school administration, faculty, and participants.

The School Garden Leader responsibilities include:

- Communicate the garden's guidelines and expectations to the school plot holders
- Be the line of communication between the school, community gardeners, and DUG. Attend DUG events, trainings, community events, and take our end-of-year survey.
- Work with the other leadership committee members to coordinate plot assignments for school and community plots
- Support the Community Garden Leaders in collecting background check forms and plot applications, including for parent volunteers
- Lead or help coordinate student programming in the garden
- Inform the school community of opportunities DUG provides at the garden and for the broader community. Post or share community garden events and general DUG events' fliers in the garden and school and distribute them to school plot holders
- Inform the community gardeners or community Garden Leaders of the school's plans, activities, and programs to encourage their involvement and support

Garden Leadership Roles + Suggested Committees

We believe it is through the welcoming of all viewpoints that a deep sense of community can be created. We also believe that everyone in a garden, at one time or another, should be given the opportunity to help lead, and we've found that a periodic change in leadership is often a healthy process. Everyone should approach each season, however, with the understanding that ultimately, all gardeners, not only the Garden Leader or the leadership committee, are responsible for the welfare of the community garden.

We encourage gardeners to join together in a spirit of common unity, utilizing all differences as a circle of strength, realizing that it takes a group of diverse people to create community. Each gardener supports the full potential of all gardeners to augment garden-based skills, talents, and leadership. Through respect, open communication, and understanding, community gardens are learning environments that celebrate the joy of being together, expanding the collective sense of accomplishment and welcoming many voices.

DUG suggests a garden leadership committee of three members: *Administrator*, *Membership Coordinator*, and *Treasurer*. Some community gardens have more or fewer people in leadership positions, depending on the size and culture of the garden. As directed by the entire community garden membership, the leadership committee is responsible for conducting the community garden business and ensuring a positive, rewarding

experience for all gardeners. We recommend that GL positions are a two-year commitment with the potential to renew. We also recommend that each leadership team finds the best way to delegate roles and communicate with each other, like a group text, email thread, and/or consistent leadership meetings.

Administrator: The Administrator is the main point person for communication, often the first person DUG approaches with questions about the garden. Their responsibilities include:

- Communication between gardeners, committees, and DUG
- Bring suggestions/requests from gardeners to the leadership committee
- Maintain garden guidelines, records, and documents
- Coordinate workdays, garden meetings, and events
- Oversee required garden service hours for gardeners
- Mediate conflict within the garden if necessary

Membership: The membership coordinator communicates with interested gardeners, ensures plots are assigned, and plot applications are submitted. Most membership coordination happens in the early spring. The responsibilities of the membership coordinator include:

- Keep an updated list of garden members and map of plots
- Respond to plot interest from community members in a timely manner
- Manage a rolling waitlist that carries over year to year, if needed
- Distribute the plot application link and make sure every gardener fills it out annually, including all gardeners sharing plots
- Inform DUG as soon as your garden is full each year (www.dug.org/full-garden) so we can mark it as full on our website
- Distribute the link and instructions for background checks (for school-based community gardens only)

Treasurer: The Treasurer's primary responsibility is to manage the garden budget and conduct the financial business of the community garden, including:

- Keep track of plot fees paid, donations made to the garden, and all garden expenses.
- Review financial statements from DUG's finance team and raise any issues as they arise to finance@dug.org.
- Create and manage an annual, self-sustaining garden budget in which plot fees fully cover operating expenses.

You are welcome to pursue grants or other fundraising activities to provide additional funding for your garden for events or special projects. If your garden has excess funds, consider donating them and paying it forward to DUG's Baseline Infrastructure Initiative fund (www.dug.org/bii) for under-resourced gardens.

The Treasurer may request to keep a petty cash fund for up to \$200 (pending available funds in their garden account) to buy nominal supplies and materials for the garden. At the end of the season, the Treasurer should submit itemized receipts for all petty cash purchases and any remaining cash to DUG. For some gardens, DUG HQ receives the water bills directly - in these cases, DUG will pay the bills directly from your garden account.

Other Suggested Committees

Gardens succeed when Garden Leaders delegate tasks to gardeners and everybody participates. At your garden's opening meeting, ask everyone what they enjoy doing and how they envision fulfilling their required garden service hours. These can be done on workdays or in the gardener's spare time. Please make sure there are opportunities for everyone to give back regardless of their experience or physical ability. Use our 'Sample Volunteer Task Sign-Up Sheet' for your opening meeting and workdays (available at www.dug.org/gl)

- **Community Building Committee:** Plan and execute community-building activities for the community garden.
Examples: Outreach events in the surrounding community, a garden newsletter and/or social media, organizing social events like potlucks or a garden tour
- **Maintenance Committee:** Ensure the upkeep of the garden's physical infrastructure.
Examples: Identifying improvement projects, repairing plot borders and maintaining pathways, upkeep of the tools and storage shed, maintaining common or perennial beds, maintaining the irrigation system
- **Garden Mentoring Committee:** Provide training and advice for new gardeners, share information about your Micro Network events and DUG's URGE workshops, and hold educational or skill-building classes within the garden
Examples: Specialty training on organic gardening, water-wise gardening, composting, beekeeping, seed saving, garden carpentry, gardening with children, nutrition and cooking with garden produce
- **Compost Committee:** Maintain the garden's compost program, including compost education and working the garden compost piles. Get this committee started by requesting a Master Composter presentation at the garden or attending a Master Composter presentation in your Micro Network.
- **Fundraising Committee:** Apply for community grants for garden improvements, engage in fundraising efforts to support the garden, or seek out local businesses to donate gardening supplies or food for events. Remember to submit an in-kind donation form.
- **Food Donation Committee:** We encourage all gardens to share their abundance of produce with a local food bank, nearby families, or in a basket on the garden fence. This committee can manage a donation plot or organize the distribution of excess garden produce into the greater community. Please visit www.dug.org/food-access to learn more about ways to give.

POLICIES + GUIDELINES

Guidelines for Setting Group Agreements

1. Open, friendly communication is one of the keys to a thriving community garden. There may be times when it is appropriate for Garden Leaders to make decisions on their own, but as much as possible, you should represent the desires of the gardeners and make decisions representative of the whole of the garden.
2. Gardener input is invaluable in this process and ensures gardeners' deeper commitment. Generate group agreements collaboratively. Have a leader or team of leaders facilitate, but be sure that gardeners know it is their garden and their expectations that they are creating.
3. Once someone shares a suggested agreement, be sure that everyone has a clear and concrete understanding of what it means for the group (i.e., “supporting each other” may be watering a neighbor’s plot when they’re out of town; “giving feedback” could be offering thoughtful solutions to issues anonymously using a suggestion box)
4. Make sure that everyone feels that they can live with the agreements and agrees to abide by them. Pay particular attention to those that may not feel as comfortable sharing their opinions in a group. Consider requesting input through another medium like a suggestion box in the garden or an online tool like Survey Monkey or Google form to solicit suggestions. Ensure that there are multiple means of providing feedback to accommodate different communication styles and language needs.
5. Ask gardeners how they will hold themselves and each other accountable to garden agreements. Ensure everyone has a copy of the agreements. Consider posting any garden-specific agreements within the garden, such as a tool shed or communications board, and send them to everyone via email, translated into all necessary languages.
6. Agreements should be revisited and revised as necessary.

Facilitating a Gardener Engagement Meeting

DUG requests that Garden Leaders hold a meeting at the beginning of each season with all gardeners to welcome everyone into the garden, go over the DUG community agreements, and set garden-specific expectations.

This is an excellent opportunity for everyone sharing space over the season to meet each other, introduce them to DUG, and establish a common understanding for the garden. We find that gardeners who feel part of a collective project are more likely to remain engaged participants throughout the season and adhere to garden agreements. It is easier for everyone to hold each other accountable if they are a part of building the garden's culture from the get-go.

Meeting at the beginning of the season is also an excellent time to ensure all gardeners have filled out plot applications and/or to have paper applications or tech assistance available for gardeners to register that day. Let DUG know when your garden meetings are, and if available, a DUG staff member can attend to share more about DUG and help gardeners fill out plot applications.

Before the meeting:

- This meeting can happen in the garden or at a nearby community venue. Let DUG know if you would like to reserve space at the DUG offices. While in-person is preferred, a video meeting is an option if that works best for all gardeners.
- Ensure that everyone is invited to participate and that the date and time work for most gardeners. For those unable to attend, provide them with the opportunity to share beforehand by having a GL or a fellow gardener speak on their behalf and provide a summary of what was covered to anyone unable to attend.
- If gardeners speak languages other than English, make sure appropriate interpretation is provided. Reach out to DUG if you need assistance acquiring interpretation or translation services.
- To start the meeting, introduce everyone and set any guidelines.
- Introduce yourself and your role in the garden, and share your gardening experience or something about you.
- Ask each gardener to introduce themselves and share what brings them to the garden.
- Set group meeting guidelines like:
 - Acknowledging every person brings a valuable perspective to the table
 - Speaking in turn without interrupting
 - Asking for clarification when needed
 - Being willing to compromise

Topics to cover in a gardener engagement meeting:

- DUG's Community Agreements that all gardeners are asked to adhere to
 - Setting your own garden-specific agreements that the group decides upon together
- How to communicate
 - Availability and best ways to get in touch with each other
 - To whom, how, and when to ask questions
 - Forums for communication and appropriate times to use them: message board, DUG Online, newsletter, email, phone, text
- Attendance and participation
 - DUG classes and events
 - Your gardens schedule of events and timeline for the season
 - Your gardens service hour requirements and how to meet them
 - Expectations for attending workdays, events, meetings, and/or joining committees
- Gardener accountability
 - How to hold one another accountable to community agreements
 - How to resolve conflicts in the garden if they arise
 - Reasonable consequences for not adhering to policies or agreements

- Decision-making processes
 - Which decisions does the leadership make on behalf of the garden?
 - Which decisions require the whole garden's input?

Some guiding questions to consider asking the group:

- What does it mean for this space to be a community garden?
- What makes community gardens different from backyard gardens?
- What are your visions for this garden?
- How do you want the space to look and feel?
- What skills does each member have to contribute to the group?
- What do we value as a community? How can we practice those values in the garden?

Closing:

- Thank everyone for coming and for committing to participate in the community garden.
- Have everyone share what they are most excited about for the season.
- Consider partaking in a potluck meal together or continuing the gathering of gardeners informally at a local community hangout.

Suggested Month-by-Month Activities

January - February:

- Create a monthly plan for your garden and event schedule for the year
- Go over your site plan or garden map (call DUG if you do not have one) and connect with the previous year's gardeners to determine who is returning to which plot and which plots, if any, are available
- Review your waitlist for new community gardeners. Lists should be "rolling" and first come, first served and not started new each year unless previous wait list members have indicated they are no longer interested
- Prepare a garden budget, including estimated water expenses, compost, and new equipment needs
- Encourage gardeners to apply for DUG's Grow a Garden program for seeds and seedlings
- For school-based community gardens, connect with the school garden liaison to determine which plots the school will be using
- Start a Circle for your garden in DUG Online
- Sign up for a spring Garden Leader Training to learn or review the nuts and bolts of being a GL
- Attend the DUG Symposium in February

March:

- Share DUG's plot application with returning and new gardeners and let them know their plot fee for the garden. Let DUG know if you need on-the-ground support with plot applications or language interpretation support
- Fill vacancies in the garden from the garden waitlist list or community inquiries made to the @dug.org email account
- At school-based gardens, review the status of gardeners' background checks and renew any that are expired/expiring as well as confirm background checks for any new gardeners
- Determine if any garden structures need repair, repainting, or improving
- Water shrubs and trees during warm spells (over 40 degrees). Continue this from March through the fall
- Prune trees, especially any crossing limbs or broken branches
- Organize a spring cleanup day - usually planned for April

April:

- Hold the beginning-of-season 'Gardener Engagement Meeting' to meet each other, discuss community agreements, garden guidelines, plot assignments, events, and community workday schedules
- Do a spring cleanup workday including repairing any winter damage to common areas, and ordering and amending plots with compost (find information on where to order compost for delivery at dug.org/gl)
- Hold a training or education session and ask gardeners what skills and gardening knowledge they would like or that they can share
- Continue to assign garden plots as needed, get all plot applications filled out and submitted via the online form or paper applications turned in to the DUG office by June 1st

May:

- PLANT!
- Continue to respond to community inquiries via the garden email and notify DUG and community members when all garden plots are full
- Water will typically be turned on in the first week of May. DUG only turns on the water at about 30 of our sites. The rest are managed by the garden landowner partner (If your water is not on by May 15th, contact DUG)
- Encourage gardeners to mulch their plots with certified weed-free straw, and mulch garden perennials and trees with wood chips to conserve water
- Build community by holding a garden get-together, potluck, or event
- Schedule a Master Composter Training and work the garden compost pile
- Attend garden Micro Network's Events and share them with gardeners
- Attend DUG's Spring Plant Sale at the DUG office to get everything you need for the season

June - July:

- Make sure all plot applications are turned in to DUG by June 1st
- Keep gardening and event information posted in your garden and encourage your gardeners to join you in your community's Garden Circle on DUG Online
- WEED! Especially in common areas. Weeding should occur on a regular basis
- Re-assign any unused or neglected plots after June 15th after calling to check in with original gardeners
- Make a plan for produce donations and connect with Fresh Food Connect (www.freshfoodconnect.org) to find your local food bank or to get food picked up from your garden
- Review the service hours your gardeners are completing and contact them with suggestions of how to help if needed
- Attend DUG Micro Network events and share them with gardeners

August - September:

- HARVEST! Try to harvest all warm-weather produce on a regular basis
- Distribute extra produce to neighbors or food banks
- Have garden workdays and events as needed
- Check in with gardeners whose plots need care - see how they are doing and if they need a hand
- Continue weeding and begin cleaning any garden plots not being used for fall crops
- Encourage food preservation for winter months
- Attend garden Micro Network events and share them with gardeners
- Attend DUG's Fall Plant Sale at the DUG office to get all you need for fall and winter growing and soil rebuilding

October:

- Have a fall garden cleanup day to have everyone clean their own plots and help with common areas. Let DUG know if you would like extra volunteer help
- Prepare the garden for winter by planting cover crops such as winter rye or winter hairy vetch and cover with straw mulch. All plots should be "put to bed" by November 1st or transitioned for season extension growing
- Make sure compost areas are worked and that plant material has been chopped into small pieces and is not overflowing. Connect with DUG if you have excess garden waste to be composted
- Clean and store tools and supplies for winter including cages or mobile supports from plots
- Have an end-of-season gathering to celebrate and reflect on the year
- Evaluate the season for next year's improvements with your fellow gardeners
- Attend DUG's annual Gather 'Round Gala to celebrate the season!

November- December:

- Attend DUG's Harvest Happy Hour and celebrate a great season with other fantastic community members
- Take a breather and reflect on the lessons of winter

Suggested community event ideas:

- Movie night in the garden
- Music in the garden
- Potlucks
- Garden cocktail/mocktail party using herbs and items from the garden
- Salsa contest
- Caprese party with tomatoes and basil
- Preservation party, how to can and preserve your harvest
- 'Putting the garden to bed' pajama party
- Spring seed swap
- Plot marker painting party

Maintenance Guidelines

Community garden landowners require DUG to ensure that gardeners keep their garden sites clean, attractive, and orderly, including during the off-season. The garden must have a year-round unified and tidy appearance to landowners, city officials, and the general non-gardening public.

The benefits of a well-maintained garden are:

- The land use agreement with the landowner remains in good standing
- The entire community recognizes the community garden as a community asset
- Your community garden will harbor fewer pests and weeds and will be healthier from season to season

All gardeners must have a role and responsibility regarding the sustainability of the community garden. Prior approval is required for all new permanent structures, and DUG requires gardeners to remove personal items, including vertical growing structures and tomato cages, at the end of the season. While it is the responsibility of the community gardeners to ensure compliance with garden upkeep, DUG can assist with the fundamental site elements required for successful garden function, including plots and pathways, perimeter fencing, and tool storage. DUG can also help provide community volunteers if your garden needs more helping hands for a workday or project.

For any repair other than irrigation (which DUG must handle - please alert DUG asap if a water issue arises**), the first step is for the garden to fix what it can internally**, either utilizing gardener expertise or following DUG’s How-To Videos and resources found at www.dug.org/gl.

If you are not able to do the work, please submit a maintenance request form on the website, and we’ll be in touch. DUG prioritizes physical infrastructure projects using our Baseline Infrastructure Initiative to ensure that our gardens are equitably resourced.

If your community garden has a break in the irrigation system, gardeners are asked to find the backflow device or the main shut-off valve and turn off the water. Once the water is off, contact DUG to complete the repair. If the break is underground, gardeners will need to dig up the ground around the break to expose the broken pipe, including digging a hole large enough to allow for the repair, including the ground below and on either side of the break. Contact DUG ASAP with any water issues.

Troubleshooting in the Garden

Planning Ahead

Many common problems in community gardens can be avoided by planning for contingencies. Find out early who has skills in carpentry, landscaping, plant/weed identification, experience as master gardeners and master composters, entomology, and relationships with community groups.

Ask everyone to exercise their skills to maintain the community garden and troubleshoot issues. A little proactive maintenance goes a long way! For example:

- If you drain and put your hoses away in fall, you’re less likely to need replacements in the spring
- If every gardener has a clear understanding of garden agreements and expectations, they are more likely to follow them and stay engaged
- If gardeners understand and embrace the spirit of inclusiveness, celebrate diversity, and get to know each other, interpersonal conflict can be minimized

That said, all community gardens experience issues and conflict somewhere along the way. Don't get discouraged— get organized. The key to success for community gardens is not about preventing problems from ever occurring but working together to solve them when they do.

We’ve identified some common issues that can arise in community gardens, along with some tried-and-true suggestions for resolving them. Most problems can be proactively handled within the garden community. You can also ask for suggestions in the DUG network or from other community Garden Leaders and reach out to DUG for assistance.

Communication

Clear community garden agreements and strong garden leadership can go a long way toward minimizing misunderstandings in the garden, but communication problems can arise. It's the job of the garden leadership committee to resolve these issues. If something is not clearly spelled out in the agreements, modifications or additions can be made.

Language barriers can sometimes be a source of misunderstanding. Garden Leaders should make every effort to have interpretation at community garden meetings where participants speak languages other than English and have signs and documents translated. Please reach out to DUG if you need language support.

When working with other organizations in the community garden or with landowners, it is often helpful to put your arrangements in writing. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is often used to document expectations, responsibilities, outcomes, and timelines between groups. Once signed by both parties, the MOU provides a reference point throughout the growing season, particularly if there is a conflict. Ask DUG for support writing MOUs and share all completed ones with us

Full Gardens/Waiting Lists

Make sure to let DUG know when your garden plots are full each year, so we can update our website to let interested community members know. When community gardens fill, so do gardener waitlists. Community members are often anxious to know about availability in the garden, so it is best to be transparent from the start and communicate in a timely manner to inquiries.

A numbered running list is a great way to stay organized. Include a name, phone number, e-mail, address, or any other pertinent contact information, as well as the day and time of contact. Waitlists should stay updated and not start each year anew. As plots open, prospective gardeners should be contacted in the order they expressed interest. Only remove prospective gardeners from the list after you have verified they are no longer interested.

Gardener Turnover

Turnover in community gardens happens. Sometimes people sign up for plots and then don't follow through. Gardening may be more challenging than anticipated, people move, and life happens. If a gardener registered for a plot and has not shown intent to plant (working the soil, communicating plans with leadership) by June 15th, the plot may be reassigned. For later in the season, garden guidelines can be set, like gardeners forfeit the right to their plot if they fail to maintain it regularly (specifics agreed upon by gardeners). While gardeners should be given every opportunity to follow through, leadership may reassign the plot if they do not utilize or maintain their plot after several reminders.

Garden Leaders often find themselves in a tricky place at the end of winter as community members begin inquiring about plots. A reasonable deadline should be set for returning gardeners to commit to their plots for the following year. This helps the leadership identify the number of plots that will be available for new

gardeners. It is also advisable to conduct a renewed community outreach plan each year by contacting neighborhood groups to let them know about the community garden and plot availability.

Produce Theft

It's important to remember that most produce theft is not malicious. People taking produce out of the garden may face food insecurity and take from the garden if an opportunity presents itself. Recognizing the incredible disappointment when a long-awaited vegetable is taken, seasoned gardeners tend to adopt the attitude that "if they needed it that bad, I hope they enjoyed it."

DUG recommends the following strategies for deterring theft:

- Install a Donation Basket outside of the garden fence, where gardeners can easily donate their extra vegetables on their way out of the garden. Ideally, the basket should include a sign offering the extra vegetables to neighbors. Donation baskets make non-gardeners feel welcome and included, which can go a long way toward creating a sense of community in your garden and neighborhood and preventing theft.
- Designate a community plot cultivated specifically to provide produce for donation (either for a donation basket at the garden, for a food bank, or with a donation partner like Fresh Food Connect.)
- Plant Perimeter Eatables outside the garden fence, such as a raspberry hedge, grapevines, or cherry tomatoes that people walking by can snack from, potentially curbing their temptation to enter the garden and take vegetables from individual plots.
- Educate the Broader Community About Ways to Engage with the Garden: Create signage that explains how the community garden works, how to get involved, and what food (if any) is available to harvest or take.
- Request a 'No Harvesting' sign from DUG, which outlines how the garden works and asks passers to respect the space.

Communication is critical with every strategy, including talking to someone you see harvesting from a plot without permission. If you see this happen, approach them without judgment, and explain how a community garden works. Let them know that taking produce without permission is not allowed and offer suggestions for available community resources. Then, invite the person to get involved as a gardener or volunteer. Let them know that gardeners are generous and tend to be very willing to share their harvest— but they are especially willing when asked.

Consider ways to make your plot less inviting by planning your plot to deter theft, like planting potatoes, other root crops, or less desirable vegetables at the edges of your plot. Be sure to harvest crops like tomatoes and peppers daily as soon as they ripen.

Garden theft, while frustrating, is usually an act that comes from a place of hunger or misunderstanding. By their nature and location, community gardens will always be more prone to theft than home gardens. As a community gardener, you will have a much happier growing season if you acknowledge and accept that garden theft sometimes happens, regardless of the steps you take to prevent it.

Garden Vandalism

The best solution to vandalism is to be as inclusive as possible and provide ample education about the garden to the surrounding community.

DUG encourages community gardeners to invite neighbors and young people to enjoy common garden spaces and get involved as participants. Community gardens tend to be left alone when gardeners and neighbors know each other and when everyone values and understands the purpose of the garden and feels welcome and included.

- **Visit the Garden Often.** Encourage all gardeners to visit the garden regularly, including spending social time there. A garden that gardeners continuously populate is the best deterrent to vandalism.
- **Invite Neighbors to Join a Garden Celebration.** Host a potluck or picnic in the garden and invite the whole neighborhood to build a sense of community beyond the garden gate.
- **Include Young People in the Garden.** Arrange a project for community youth to paint a mural on a shed or bench or to hang on the outside of the fence. A mural can include a request for the community to respect and look after the garden and a message about how much the gardeners care about their garden. Often, youth involved in the garden become the garden's best protectors.
- **Add Lighting.** Consider requesting alley or sidewalk lighting from the city or installing solar-powered lights on the interior of the garden.

Trash/Compost

If your garden has a compost system on-site, all gardeners must know how to use it. Request a Master Composter training from DUG, have clear step-by-step signage, and schedule regular maintenance of the compost pile.

Ensure gardeners know how to sort correctly, what to compost, recycle, and trash. Trash cans placed in accessible areas are helpful to keep a tidy community garden, or a clear carry-in carry-out policy should be in place.

Insects/Pests

Many insects are beneficial. They feed on other insects that are pests, and some can help pollinate desired crops. The best ways to promote beneficial insects are to provide habitat and food for them and to be able to identify them at different life cycles so they are not accidentally destroyed as a pest.

However, some insects can cause damage in several ways. Some insects eat the crop by eating or damaging the leaves. This reduces the plant's ability to photosynthesize. Some pests also tunnel and eat

the stalk of plants (mining), which weakens them structurally. Other insects lay their eggs on leaves and stems, which stresses the plant. Techniques. Providing education and encouraging gardeners to remove diseased and pest-ridden plants can help the issue not spread. Remember to explain to gardeners that only organic pest management methods are allowed. Find resources on DUG's website for integrated pest management techniques (www.dug.org/gardening-resources)

Financial Policies

DUG believes that Garden Leaders should focus their energy and expertise on growing food and building community instead of getting weighed down with the necessary and often onerous administrative tasks of running a community garden. Therefore, DUG has built the financial infrastructure to collect, hold, distribute and report on each garden's income (plot fees, grants, and donations) and expenses (maintenance, improvements, and events) so garden leadership does not have to.

This doesn't mean that garden leadership should not keep their own records, but know that DUG devotes significant time and resources keeping things in order for you.

Note: DUG serves as the use agreement holder, insurer, authorized 501(c)3 corporation, and primary representative for community garden participants with city officials and funders. In turn, DUG must report to funding agencies and foundations the status and benefit of their contributions. DUG must also report on your behalf regarding the status of your community garden to neighbors and city agencies, such as Property Inspection Services, Assets Management, Office of Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, and Public-School Districts.

Garden Finances

Revenue - Cash In

All revenue will be collected by DUG and meticulously tracked to each garden's account.

Plot Fees

Each garden's primary source of revenue comes from plot fees. Plot fees are collected from all gardeners in all plots each season, based on each gardener's ability to pay. Plot fees are essentially a season's "rent" and allow the gardener to use an assigned space.

Grants

There are organizations that provide grants to community gardens. Grants do not need to be paid back but often come with a reporting requirement once the grant term is over. Garden Leaders are welcome to ask

DUG for a list of grants, help writing the grant, or for letters of support. Please be sure to alert DUG when you have submitted a grant application.

Grants can only be given to 501(c)(3) organizations, which are registered non profits. Since DUG gardens are locations within the DUG network, garden grants need to be run through DUG, which permits the garden to receive funding from the granting body. DUG collects a 10% fiscal agency fee for all grants over \$500 as they consume significant time and resources to administer.

Donations

All gardens can receive donations from individuals, organizations, and companies. If the garden is to receive a monetary donation, the Treasurer needs to make the donor aware of the garden's association with DUG. Monetary donations can be accepted as cash, check (payable to Denver Urban Gardens), money orders, or via credit card on our website (www.dug.org/donate). The donor should specify which garden it is for or if it is meant to support DUG's fund for general community garden programming.

Expenses - Cash Out

Each garden is expected to coordinate maintenance, repairs, and social events, which are funded by plot fees, grants, and donations. Just as DUG tracks revenue, DUG also tracks expenses.

Expenses categories:

- 8010 Soil & Supplies Beds & Plots
- 8020 Site Irrigation & Utilities (including water)
- 8030 Vertical Improvements
- 8040 Seeds, Transplants, Plants, Trees
- 8050 Tools and Equipment - Rental and Maint.
- 8086 Garden Events

Funds will not be disbursed to the Treasurer that exceed the funds in the garden's account. However, if your garden has necessary expenses that you are having difficulty funding, please contact DUG.

Garden Treasures should alert finance@dug.org to both revenue and expenses via email and by submitting expense reimbursements using the form on the Garden Leader resources page of the DUG website.

Please submit expense reimbursements, or reports if you are using petty cash, at least once a month.

Improvements/Construction Projects

Physical improvement projects and permanent structures must be submitted to and approved by DUG before the project begins. If your community garden needs assistance with a project, please let DUG know using the form found at www.dug.org/gl as we may be able to provide help with tools, materials, labor, and

volunteer coordination as needed and as our schedule allows. When there is a charge for the work, we will tell you ahead of time, and it will be deducted from your garden account.

If gardens are enlisting a service for the garden (construction, entertainment, etc.) then the individual(s) providing the service(s) must be paid directly by Denver Urban Gardens. The fees will then be deducted from the garden's account. Garden Leaders do not have the option of paying the vendor directly and then being reimbursed by DUG for services provided. If the service is over \$600, the individual(s) providing the services must complete a DUG-issued W-9 and claim the income on their taxes.

Contact DUG and we will provide vendors with 1099 forms at the end of the calendar year, as needed and as required by the IRS. Individuals who are donating their time and/or service(s) to the garden are not required to complete a W-9, but must submit itemized receipts for any material costs requiring reimbursement. The Treasurer is asked to report any in-kind donations to DUG utilizing the form on the Garden Leader Resources page.

Other Financial Matters

Pay it Forward

As many of our community gardens are located in low-income neighborhoods, some gardens are not able to pay for basic costs associated with maintaining a garden (water, compost, general garden upkeep). DUG encourages our gardens with excess funds to consider "paying it forward" into our Baseline Infrastructure Initiative fund to support another garden in need.

Reporting

A monthly financial statement will be emailed to the garden's @dug.org email. Every GL and Treasurer are welcome to contact DUG's finance team at any time with questions at finance@dug.org. The monthly statement will only show activity for this calendar year. See 'Carry Forward Balance' below.

Gardener Donations

Gardeners are welcome to make tax-deductible donations to their garden or DUG above and beyond their plot fee. For garden donations, they can designate what they'd like it to be used for, and DUG donations will help fund the Baseline Infrastructure Initiative, covering expenses for gardens that do not have adequate funds. DUG will provide donors with appropriate tax documentation for their charitable contributions. Seasonal plot fees and DUG dues are not charitable contributions.

Carry Forward Balance

After all Q4 expenses are accounted for, the remaining funds in the garden account will be reviewed by DUG and the Garden Treasurer to determine what amount will be carried over. As part of the review

process, the garden will be given the opportunity to donate any surplus in its account to DUG's general fund for community garden programming or to another garden in need within the network.

Documents

All necessary documents, including Tax Exempt Certificates (for use when writing grants or if payment is made directly by DUG to a vendor) and Expense Reimbursement Request forms, are available at the Garden Leader Resources webpage: www.dug.org/gl

Closing a Garden

If a DUG garden closes or leaves the DUG network, any remaining funds legally cannot be paid out to individuals. Remaining funds will be applied to DUG's Baseline Infrastructure Initiative to support under-resourced gardens.

Final Thoughts

We hope you'll find this guide supports you on your journey in community building, land stewarding, and placemaking with your neighbors. Becoming a Garden Leader is a meaningful way to co-create relationships with yourself, your community, and the spaces around you, and we are so happy to have you as part of the DUG network.

This 'guide' is offered as such, written over time from our experiences, and it continues to evolve with us. We know that there are several paths that lead to any destination, and we honor those whose experiences and cultural traditions have influenced our 'best practices.' Together, we're planting seeds for a metro Denver that is thriving and sustainable, deeply and directly connected to the earth, each other, and the food we eat. Thanks for growing with us.