

P-patch Program

A. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The P-Patch Program actively supports and promotes community gardening in many forms. Community Gardening is community based organic urban agriculture and other greening opportunities that are culturally and neighborhood appropriate. Each community garden is unique and transforms un-used open spaces of the city while revitalizing the spirit of the neighborhood and building a stronger community. They are places to grow safe, culturally appropriate food; places where community mixes (classes and ethnicities); and where immigrant gardeners retain status within their families. Community Gardens combine green spaces with public art, develop self-reliance while improving nutrition through education and hands-on experience, foster neighborhood pride and individual self-esteem through involvement, teamwork, and beautification, donate fresh produce to others in need, foster an environmental ethic and all this while providing a place to visit for the larger community and food and shelter for winged wildlife.

Basic gardener statistics for whole program

- Approximately 2000 plots and 6000 gardeners
- Number of gardens, 69 – Four more are in development for 2008
- Ethnic break down—23% people of color (*From a 2004 Survey-A 2007 survey is coming*)
- Income levels (15% < poverty; median slightly less than Seattle—*from 2004 Survey*)

Basic Garden Characteristics

- Sizes of gardens—they range from 7 plots to more than 250 plots, or 1900 square feet to 3 acres
- Types of gardens—allotment (or rent a plot), communal, market gardens and youth gardens
- Ownership—80% are on public land including five owned all or in part by DON; balance on private land

Partnerships

- Most City Department--especially City Light, Sea Tran, and Parks
- Low Income Housing Providers—especially Seattle Housing Authority
- Other government agencies—King County Metro and Cooperative Extension, Public Health
- Non-profit agencies—especially P-Patch Trust, Seattle Tilth

How gardeners get plots

Waitlist for allotment plots

- Each garden has a sign with phone number to get on the waitlist
- Word of mouth and periodic media exposure excite interest
- Fliers are posted in libraries and Neighborhood Service Centers.

To reach under served communities

- Door to door canvassing
- In Seattle Housing Authority sites-community builders

Staff Statistics

- Staff manage 2200 plot holders organized in sites ranging from 7 gardeners to 220 gardeners
- Staff on average oversee about 450 people or about 15 gardens—(a more ideal number is 11); size of garden is somewhat irrelevant to organization—same set of tasks: leadership development; interagency coordination; resource coordination;

B. PROGRAM AREAS

For the last few years, P-Patch has been divided between Cultivating Communities, which focused on low income communities, and P-Patch, which over saw everything else. In the past year, P-Patch has dedicated time to a planning process to take stock of our overall program and clearly identify our primary areas of work. This will help us manage our activities and develop the program into the future. These are our primary areas of work, some are well established, others are emerging.

Community Gardens

These are “traditional” community gardens. This is the backbone of our program in which individuals, families, sometimes senior or school groups, assume responsibility for a single plot and in the process build community with their fellow neighborhood P-Patchers. Together, all gardeners take responsibility for maintaining the common areas of the garden. These gardens serve as community managed opens spaces accessible to the surrounding neighborhood which offer many amenities; communal flower areas, children’s gardens, educational signs, native plant areas, and orchards to name just a few.

- 69 gardens throughout City
- Management model is shared responsibility: Staff administer applications, fee collection and plot assignment. Bulk of time is spent developing, implementing systems to build, support and sustain volunteer capacity. (leadership development, finding resources, interagency coordination, developing educational materials). Gardeners directly maintain the sites and guide improvements.
- Recently developed sites have come about through Pro Parks funding, through development of unimproved street rights of way and are almost all in areas near expanding urban villages, through special council funding.
- New sites usually are community initiated and directed
- Staff facilitate 13 gardens in Seattle Housing Authority garden communities and other low income housing sites. They primarily serve a limited English and low income population. In order to reach populations with limited English, Cultivating Communities uses interpreters and door to door outreach to build a base of gardeners. These gardens have been developed and supported by Cultivating Communities and we are now considering the best ways to integrate them with the broader allotment P-patch gardens.

Market Gardening

- Three market gardens in New Holly, High Point and Rainier Vista give 20 low income and immigrant families the ability to earn modest supplemental income and develop marketing skills while providing baskets of produce to more than 80 families in Seattle. This program has been part of the work of Cultivating Communities.
- With funding from City Council, a new market garden is in the development phase at 51st Ave S & S Leo. We are interested in exploring ways to encourage more urban market gardens in the future. Encountered lead issues in 2007.

Youth Gardening

- Cultivating Youth is our primary youth gardening program. It is managed in conjunction with the P-Patch Trust: It employs one Cultivating Youth Coordinator and one AmeriCorps in a grant funded program to provide hands-on gardening and nutrition education to children and youth. The Program began in 2000 as an after school and summer program in three Seattle Housing Authority communities and with Powerful Schools at John Muir Elementary. It has since become integrated into daytime classroom time with K-5th grade students at West Seattle Elementary School. Funded through Public Health – Seattle & King County by USDA Basic Food Nutrition Education Program (BFNEP). The program’s target audience is low-income youth. The majority of the participants are from immigrant families. – In **2008**, staff investigate realignment of our youth component. Teaching in an elementary school does not align with core community gardening mission of P-Patch. We are looking at ways to bring more youth focus into the gardens; getting out of West Seattle is a first step.
- Some youth gardening goes on in allotment gardens in the form of community managed children’s gardens, youth volunteers from local schools, and when groups of youth adopt a plot through their school, church, daycare, or afterschool program. These activities are very minimally supported by P-Patch staff and could be an area of growth in the future.

New Garden Development/ Redevelopment and Improvement

- Every year we develop 3-5 new gardens managing the process from land acquisition, through community involvement, design, construction, to ongoing management.
- Each year several of our existing gardens need to be redeveloped particularly due to Parks and SHA redevelopments. This requires making temporary arrangements during the redevelopment, advocating to maintain the garden within the new design (especially SHA), and then the same activities of community involvement, design, construction, to ongoing management in new garden construction
- As gardens age, the communities often improve gardens with enhanced community spaces, eco-friendly systems of water catchment or cob sheds, or simply with needed maintenance like improving irrigation systems or raised beds. Most use the Matching Fund and we support the gardener involvement and the design and construction process.

Community Food Security/Policy is addressed by many aspects of our program and by policy work conducted through an interdepartmental team chaired by Laura Raymond and through the Seattle-King County Acting Food Policy Council.

Programmatic Elements:

- Food Bank Gardening: More than ten tons of produce donated annually, 30 gardens have active food bank gardening programs; collaboration with Solid Ground's Lettuce Link program
- Immigrant gardening focus: Through Cultivating Communities and our work with Lao Mien gardeners we are able to offer gardening opportunities that bring cheap, safe and culturally appropriate food to family's tables
- Market Gardens: help establish safe, healthy communities and economic opportunity through development of urban market garden enterprises in low-income neighborhoods

Policy Elements:

- Interdepartmental Team—this team, with members from DPD, SPU, OSE, HSD, DON, Parks and participation from Public Health has a number of accomplishments.
 1. Presented the need for the City to address food issues to the Growth Management Sub-Cabinet and the Mayor's Urban Sustainability Panel. The IDT will report back to the Growth Management Sub-Cabinet in 2007 with a proposed "Food Action Agenda".
 2. Periodic forums bringing in outside experts to brief the team on food security issues
 3. 2006-07 Supervision of two University of Washington projects to: generally characterize the food picture in our area, and to conduct more specific assessments of food access issues in a few particular neighborhoods (with help from Neighborhood Service Center Coordinators).
 4. Inclusion of a food security item in the Mayor's climate change initiative
 5. Partnering with local groups to further food security goals—e.g. The W.K. Kellogg Food and Fitness Initiative 2 yr Planning Grant—Laura is on the planning committee
- Seattle King County Acting Food Policy Council—Laura sits on this council with representatives of local governmental and non-governmental organizations from many sectors of the food system. The group is seeking to establish a formal council with support from the Seattle and King County governments to advise and partner with the jurisdictions to address local food issues.

Greening

This program area is in the exploration stage. It is an area where we see a need and quite a few opportunities. Sandy is leading this effort with her knowledge of the field and her existing relationships with Parks staff who are interested in considering the possibilities. Current activities are

- Explore partnerships with other City agencies that work with open space and the environment to provide new and alternative types of community garden activities and community greening efforts. In 2008, Sandy is working with SDOT on Traffic circles.
- Improve current functional relationship with Parks