

**“A Garden is an act of faith and of prayer--of encompassing meditation  
-- of generosity and community.  
It is a belief in the earth as a sacred place;  
a sacred gift -- to nurture,-- to reap and to sow  
It is that place of grace within us which freely gives and receives.” (Alison Wood-Osmun)**

### **A Faith Garden Development Manual**

**This manual is an attempt to help those envisioning a Faith Garden, or those wishing to improve their current garden to develop a strong foundation by dealing with the issues that come with establishing a garden. It can also aid in the endeavor to have the garden reflect and support your organization’s beliefs and outlook. It will help facilitate the building of a strong volunteer base while encouraging full congregational support. This document will give you insight into the issues to be addressed, if you read it through first before attempting to write your mission statement and developing your action plan. Focus on the points that may pertain to your organization and the faith garden you wish to create or improve on.**

**For both purposes, bear in mind that these are merely suggestions and general guidelines to help spur your own ideas and develop or improve your own unique garden. Do not attempt to incorporate all the ideas the first year, merely read through and highlight those things that may fit with your organization and slowly add components each year.**

**After reading through the manual, if you have questions or wish help in establishing or developing any of the concepts mentioned please contact Multifaith Grows through the Multifaith Council and we will assist you. – Godspeed ---Alison Wood-Osmun**

**<http://gardens.multifaithjourneys.org/gardens.html>**

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### Writing a Mission Statement for Your Faith Garden

A mission statement is a good way to ensure that your spiritual/religious ideals are reflective of how you wish to establish and continue to grow into your Faith Garden. Your mission statement is a few sentences conveying the project's purpose and focus—in other words what the garden will represent, achieve and be. This helps to define guidelines and goals to keep in mind as you develop and carry out the evolution of your garden. As your garden and your congregation grow spiritually, periodically review your mission statement and expand or shift it as necessary to reflect that growth. The next step will be developing an action plan which defines the specific steps to carry out your mission. (See page 3)

**Step One:** -List the focus and purpose of your garden in outline form (if your organization has a mission statement you may want to review it so your faith garden statement mirrors similar aspects)

- ✚ Focus/Purpose -the main components (what is important) what will the garden provide, teach, convey, uphold, reinforce. Some Examples:
  - Environmental issues
  - Addressing poverty and hunger
  - Spiritual connection and education
  - Bring members together
  - Outreach to the larger community
  - Connection to the earth and food
  - Distribute/Provide fresh produce

**Step Two:** Take your outline and flesh it out into sentence form. (Listed below are some basic examples based on the simple outline above)

- ✚ The (name of org.) faith garden will connect our members to the land, each other, and the community. It will further reflect our values of ecological responsibility and spirituality.
- ✚ The (name of org.) faith garden serves to provide fresh produce to our members and the community. It will serve as a teaching tool to promote both ecological awareness and good nutrition.

## Developing an Action Plan for Your Faith Garden

Every successful project begins with a well thought out plan. Every plan encompasses the forethought of looking at the goals to be reached and then creating a realistic timeframe to take action and accomplish those goals. An action plan serves as a guide in setting and scheduling the requirements (volunteers, financings, church calendar of events, equipment and plants) for each year's course. When it is set within the perimeters of a timeframe, and built upon obtainable steps or phases, it enables your organization and members to proceed with the project smoothly adapting and adjusting plans accordingly. It alleviates stresses on the budget and the congregation's time. Further, your action plan becomes an excellent tool of review in pinpointing what worked for your organization in the past season and what did not.

Take your time and create a thorough plan and timeframe to make decisions and implement the tasks. An easy way to accomplish this is by mapping out all activities on a month by month basis. This will help you visual when one aspect needs to be started and then completed before the next step can be implemented.

Use your mission statement (refer to page 2) (we will be using one of those example mission statements here for illustration purposes) to ensure you are incorporating your ideals into the steps of your action plan so they will seamlessly be reflected in your garden and what you hope to accomplish in the project.

Please treat these guidelines and phases as only general example of issues to explore and when to implement them as you develop your own specific action plan. Remember your plan should not be a rigid model but rather be allowed to evolve and change as you gain experience and make progress with your garden.

### **Mission Statement:**

- ✚ The (name of org.) faith garden serves to provide fresh **produce to our members and the community**. It will serve as a **teaching tool** to promote both **ecological awareness and good nutrition**.

**PHASE ONE Information and decisions** - a good practice is to always set the next meeting date during the current meeting. This way it is on the calendar and also gives a deadline for completion of tasks and research so timely decisions can be made and you can then proceed. Again this is a general template; steps can be combined or skipped.

**Step One-Meeting to discuss possibilities and research options** (We will reconvene by \_\_\_\_\_ again set a specific date with answers to the issues brought up in this meeting)

Examples on some things to consider:

- Finances
  - Grants, fundraisers, donations, general fund
- Ideas on garden type and size-look over the area and call in experience advisors if necessary. Things to consider:
  - Type of irrigation (location of system or taps for hoses)

- Sun and wind exposure
- Soil condition
- Foundation and pot plantings
- Ground level or raised beds
- Develop whole area now or add on each year
- Incorporating mission statement components-it is important to keep these in mind especially in discerning the size of your garden:
  - Which vegetables, herbs, and flowers (feed members and community –adopt one shelter or have a neighborhood giveaway?—the size of your garden should be portioned to how much you wish to give away and use in your organization)
  - Butterflies, birds, toads, bats (ecological awareness) –plants and housing, feeders
  - Soil and materials used, chemical free area and locally grown plants (support community and ecological awareness)
- Volunteer Corp
  - How much help will you have in the garden construction and then in long-term garden care
  - Choose a leader or co-captains
- Education (good nutrition and ecological awareness)
  - Research available educational materials
  - Your plantings and habitat should further the education and messages of your organization
  - Classes, sermons, ceremonies

**Step Two –Meeting to share info and make decisions-** Discuss findings and decide what will be the focus—what you know you can accomplish for the first year. Map it out by month so you can see that A needs to be started by \_\_\_\_\_ then finished by \_\_\_\_\_ so B can happen by \_\_\_\_\_

- Establish the garden and the layout –be sure to consider
  - All garden tools needed for number of volunteers
  - Secure storage area and volunteer access to tools, hoses, trash bins, winter pot and rain barrels
  - Set a date for ground breaking (Fall or Early Spring)
    - Consider rental times and material purchases
- Make a checklist of all needed materials for construction and maintenance
  - Have someone research materials and set up purchase and delivery
    - If spring - plants and seeds
    - If fall –soil amendments
    - Garden tools
  - Houses and abodes
    - Incorporate wildlife aspects now or wait until next year?

- Build or purchase houses and feeders?
- Prepare information for congregation
- Education
  - Establish a few lessons that will coincide with the stages of garden development and planting
- Community outreach
  - Based on size of garden, etc.—what can we provide to others—how will we accomplish this?

## **PHASE TWO-Garden construction, planting and maintenance**

### **Step One – Groundbreaking and building the infrastructure of the garden**

- Installing the garden beds (autumn before or during the early spring) and/or amending the soil
  - Raised or ground level
- Building and installing houses and feeders –fall and winter
- Set dates for indoor seed starting with children (Jan/Feb)
- Developing schedules for all congregational participation and services in major garden events
- Developing schedules for the volunteer corps for planting and maintenance

### **Step Two -Planting and maintenance with volunteers and congregation (for some guidelines on related issues see pages 9 &14)**

- Establish specifics for pre-season and post season bed cleanup
- Establish specific timeframes for various plantings
  - Cool season and warm season crops
- Set up a weekly watering and care schedule

**PHASE THREE- Year-End Retrospective –Evaluation and Creating Solutions-**This is the best time to gain some perspective on your garden project. If you had any type of garden and grew even the smallest amount of vegetables or herbs then your garden was a success. You now have a season's worth of knowledge and experience to build on. By the end of this fun retrospective meeting make sure there are at least a few components to be worked on or researched (potential solutions to be brought to the next meeting) and also set the specific date for the next meeting.

- Which aspects were successful
- Which components need to be improved on
  - Weeding or maintenance? –research pre and post season suppression techniques
- Make the garden bigger? smaller? same size?
- Add new components?
  - Rain barrels, bird houses, raised beds?

- Celebrations in the garden
- Expand into the community somehow
  - Donate more next year?
  - Have a few communal, neighborhood plots
- Build a stronger volunteer base
- More or less congregational time
- Add more sermons, activities that are garden related
- Revise the mission statement and action plan
- Institute more ecologically friendly practices

**Suggestions for Incorporating the Faith Garden into the Values,  
Teachings and Activities of Your Organization**

**In order for your Faith Garden to thrive it must be a vital and positive bond that strengthens and enhances the congregation's sense of community and participation inside and outside of the organization. This occurs when the garden itself, and its purpose and focus are blended into, and reflected in, your organization's values, activities and teachings.**

- ✚ The Faith Garden embodies the philosophy of the organization
  - Perhaps environmental responsibility
    - No pesticides---do no harm
    - Composting and rain barrels
    - Reuse and recycling
    - Gardening education
  - Perhaps spiritual or religious enlightenment, atonement, reflection, meditation or education
  - Creating a garden refuge
    - Meditation benches, labyrinth etc.
    - Use of religious symbols
    - Sensory and healing herbs
    - Beauty or Memorials
  - Promoting refuge for creatures
    - Plants and niches for pollinators
    - Toad abodes, mason bee hive, bat or butterfly house, bird feeders
  - Perhaps outreach to the community
    - Giving all or some of the weekly harvest to a food bank or shelter
    - Inviting neighbors to help on harvest days and share the produce with them
    - Have a weekly give away at the church
- ✚ Sermons and Worship Services
  - Themed sermons
    - Honoring the body with nutritional food
    - Honoring the earth with proper care
    - Scriptural passages on gardening, animal or earth care
  - Conduct services in the garden area- add specific dates to church calendar
    - One or two services during season
    - Blessing ceremony for planting and harvesting
    - Praying during the service for the gardeners and harvest
- ✚ Religious education sessions
  - Teaching related lessons in the garden
    - The value of all life
    - Nurturing the Earth
    - Nutrition and fresh food
    - Work ethic

- Children help with seed starting
- Children help work in the garden
- ✚ Education and knowledge
  - Incorporate plants that reflect the teachings of the organization or will be used in ceremonies or celebrations
    - Plants that attract butterflies for symbolic metamorphosis
    - Horseradish or specific herbs
    - Flowers



**General Guidelines for the Annual Planning Meeting to Schedule  
The Faith Garden Volunteers and Interrelated Church Garden Activities**

Conducting planning sessions are a very good way to ensure that your Faith Garden receives adequate oversight for revisions and that it receives proper seasonal care. These guidelines are meant to act as a template for your garden schedule. They will aid you in deciding how often help will be needed in the garden and provide some foresight so you can add any specific event dates to your church's annual calendar.

- ✚ Three essential meetings
  - Before the season starts to determine what will be planted, changes in design, ordering materials
  - A scheduling meeting to set dates for planting, weekly maintenance, and watering
  - End of season—to review what worked and what needs improving
- ✚ Both an all congregation Spring and a Fall cleanup and soil prep day
  - Mid-March through early April
  - Mid –October through early November
- ✚ Planting days scheduled in Spring, Summer, and Fall for different crops
- ✚ If desired an indoor seed starting day and twice a week care of seeds and seedlings (January- early February)
- ✚ Daily watering plan
  - In the beginning to keep seeds and seedlings moist
  - As the summer progresses to keep plants hydrated
    - Several days in a row of high temperatures means an extra watering will need to occur
    - Deeper watering means deeper root system
- ✚ A once a week all volunteer group work day for weeding and maintenance
  - Smaller weeds with shorter roots are easier to pull out
  - Must weed----weeds take up nutrients and water and crowd out vegetable plants
  - Staking, thinning, grooming, caging, etc.
- ✚ Twice to three times a week harvesting at height of season
- ✚ Weekly/Monthly/End of Year record keeping/documentation
  - Handwritten notes weekly
  - Computer data entry once or twice a week
  - Photos
    - Garden updates in church newsletters and bulletins

### General Guidelines for Maintaining a Thriving Faith Garden Volunteer Corps

It is essential for the survival and growth of your faith garden to have a thriving and vibrant volunteer corps. They not only care for the plantings, but are also the garden ambassadors to your own congregation and the community at large. It is extremely important that the volunteers work in groups and that the tasks are well defined and shared. This serves to ward off feelings of isolation, of being burdened or of being overwhelmed. Further, the project needs to be well incorporated and blended into the consciousness and values of the organization as well as its teachings and activities (see page7). This reinforces that the volunteers' work has purpose, is appreciated, and enhances the faith lessons and sense of community within the congregation.

- ✚ Establish a list of the types of volunteers and tasks required (see page 12)
  - To attract all age groups
  - To ensure a strong network of skills and talents
  - To gain a good mix of personality types
- ✚ Divide responsibilities making sure each task includes at least two volunteers (to avoid potential feelings of isolation and of being overwhelmed).
  - Fosters more participation and creativity
  - Enables everyone to focus on specific tasks instead of trying to do it all
  - Coverage for vacations, illnesses etc...
- ✚ Establish a once or twice weekly volunteer group work day. Working as a group, and sharing the workload, creates a sense of camaraderie and community which makes the tasks seem easier and keeps isolation and boredom at bay
  - Schedule a set day and time to work in the garden together
  - There will be faster and more visible signs of progress made providing a sense of accomplishment
  - If needed, schedule one morning and one evening group work session on different days to accommodate more volunteers.
- ✚ Have at least two volunteers scheduled for all daily watering
  - This can be done on a rotating schedule so the workload is shared
- ✚ Include congregational and organizational support and involvement and enter the specific dates on the church's annual calendar
  - An all congregation work day to help on big cleanup and planting days
  - Congregation also volunteers to help do specific end or beginning of season tasks
    - Clean and sharpen tools

- Help repair or build
  - Wash buckets, pots, etc.
- Supply refreshments or potluck lunch on planting and cleanup days
- Create a harvest event to express appreciation for the volunteers' hard work
- Tie the faith garden into sermons and lessons
- Allow volunteers time during the worship service to give updates on the faith garden
- Give volunteers space in the bulletin, newsletters and website to report on the faith garden.
- Organize and conduct a fund raiser for supplies

### Suggested Types of Faith Garden Volunteers and Tasks

**Your organization's Faith Garden will require volunteers with varying skills and talents to fulfill the variety of tasks that come with having a garden. Base your requirements on what you hope this Faith Garden will come to embody. This will help guide you in determining what you will need to achieve your goals. This outline is not only meant to serve as a guide to pinpoint your organization's volunteer needs but to also define some of the needed tasks. Do not overlook the importance of the historical, outreach, communication, and data entry components as these ultimately aid in allowing the entire congregation to build solidarity, gain knowledge and be involved in this joyful, faith enhancing endeavor.**

1. Daily Volunteers –at least two or three people (rotating or together)
  - To water
2. Weekly or twice weekly group of Volunteers- be sure to schedule set days and times
  - Working as a group and sharing the tasks creates a sense of camaraderie and friendship –workload is lighter and goes faster
3. Historical/Documenting Volunteers
  - To take photos of the progress in the garden
  - To provide video of the major events –if desired
    - Planting day, worship service, blessing and harvest ceremonies etc.
  - To keep track of what was planted each year (include specific names of plants— (early girl, snow queen snap peas, twinkle eggplant) and how well each grew
  - Record diseases, pests and treatment (be specific)
  - Record fertilizer use and quantity (include name and makeup)
4. Computer and Data Entry Volunteer
  - Enter all notes and photos on the garden for each year
  - Maintain a spreadsheet of plants
  - Update website
5. Journalism and Communication Volunteers
  - Written and spoken updates on all the garden activities for the church newsletter, website and Multifaith Grows project- copies given to the historical stewards
6. Outreach, Activities and Developmental Volunteers
  - Liaison with the community to distribute produce
  - Coordinate joint projects with other organizations
  - Coordinate and develop inter organizational activities
  - Liaison with journalism , historical and computer volunteers so all info is shared and recorded

## Alternatives to Having a Faith Garden

**Your congregation would like to participate in a gardening project but may have limited funds, resources, space or volunteers. There are a number of fun alternatives to the traditional idea of a Faith Garden. A congregation only needs to let prayer and creativity guide them to a fulfilling endeavor that will enhance their faith, their appreciation and care of nature and allows them to touch the community in a positive way. Whatever you decide, be sure your “Faith Garden” not only reflects the values of your organization but is also incorporated into its teachings and activities so everyone benefits and the project continues to thrive. (See page 7) Let the following suggestions inspire you to find your own path.**

- ✚ Partner with another organization’s Faith Garden-creating a garden network
  - Your members establish a volunteer group to help another organization
    - Plant, maintain, and harvest their garden
    - Carpentry, artistic, writing, design, manual labor
    - Help with the record keeping and photography
  - Give or host vegetable canning or preserving lessons to other entities that have a garden
  - Participate in a Gleaning Program
- ✚ Develop a garden produce donation system
  - Members with gardens donate their excess produce weekly
    - Produce is taken to a food bank or shelter
    - Produce is given away to the neighbors or have a community swap
    - Produce is used in cooking for all fund raising dinner or luncheon or eaten at the after service coffee break
- ✚ Support local or global gardens
  - Members have fund raisers and donate proceeds to a local community, faith garden or to a third world community
    - Heifer international or World Vision
    - Toledo Grows
    - Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
- ✚ Educational garden activities for the children in your organization
  - Vegetable and flower seeds are started and cared for at your organization to promote education, nutrition and earth awareness
    - Seedlings can then be planted at home, on organizations grounds, or donated to other gardens
  - Force bulbs and flowering branches for decorating
  - Provide building foundation plantings for pollinators in all life stages
    - Petunias, hyssop, snapdragons etc.
  - Build and incorporate butterfly houses, basking stones, bird feeders, toad abodes, mason bee tubes, bat houses around your building’s foundation or parking lot
    - Children fill feeders weekly

- Children and adults learn about these beneficial inhabitants-incorporate in sermons and lessons
- ✚ Use creative spaces for growing and use harvest for dinners and lunches, bake sales and craft shows (dried and pressed herbs and flowers—soaps, candles, stationary, sachets)
  - Container gardening outside (pots, vertical, bags)
    - Lettuce, herbs, patio tomatoes etc.
      - Use self-watering pots or have volunteers water
  - Container gardening indoors at a sunny window or entry
    - Herbs year round-sensory, cooking, healing and use in crafts
    - Dwarf lemon and orange trees etc.
  - Foundation plantings
    - Flowers for pollinators and butterflies
    - Mix in vegetable plants with flowers
      - Tomato plants
      - Beans and peas on trellis
      - Garlic and onion bulbs
  - Employ Conservation and use to educate
    - Use composters, rain barrels and recycle
- ✚ Create an indoor meditation area if no outdoor space is available
  - Use potted edible herbs
  - benches
  - A smaller fountain or water feature for soothing sound
    - Build one or use a small store bought tabletop type
  - A walking area
    - Indoor labyrinth mat
    - A specified indoor path through the church with symbols and plants along the way
- ✚ Give presentations on gardening and ecological issues
  - Available to congregation
  - Available to general public
- ✚ Volunteer at a Toledo Grows Community Garden or to help another MultiFaith GROWs garden.