

Outreach & Engagement

TIPS

PP101

P-Patch TIPS are reference documents that address topics related to the development and ongoing management of P-Patch Community Gardens.

Importance of Outreach and Engagement

The P-Patch Community Gardening Program believes that “community” is the most important word in “community gardening.” Just as a diversity of plants leads to a healthy garden, strong community is built when gardens are inclusive and representative of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

Equitable engagement supports the participation of people of color, immigrant and refugee communities, and low-income individuals in the outreach and public engagement processes of neighborhood groups. This type of engagement is about building strong, trusting, and sustainable relationships and partnerships. A key component of making engagement processes responsive, inclusive, and culturally appropriate is building the capacity to understand the implications of race, culture, and socio-economic status in decision-making.



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Taking the First Steps

- Engage beyond your circle of friends to the larger community. Find the abundance within your neighborhood.
- Be open to change, especially changes that are responsive to community insight and allow for shared power between communities.
- Emphasize lifting up the voices of under-represented people and bringing them into the decision-making process. Focus less on how many people were reached.
- Ask the question: Do the people who make up my P-Patch community reflect all the people in my neighborhood?
- Learn about how you can help create an anti-racist environment in your garden. Start by reviewing the [anti-racist information](#) on the P-Patch website.
- Make outreach ongoing. People get involved at different times for different reasons such as garden infrastructure projects, formal gatherings, and work parties.
- Continue learning: The City of Seattle’s [Race and Social Justice Initiative](#) homepage has many relevant resources.
- Keep your chin up. You can do it.

TIPS should not be used as a substitute for codes, regulations, or rule requirements. Individuals are responsible for compliance with all code, regulatory, and rule requirements, whether or not described in this TIP..

Learning about Your Neighborhood

To prepare an inclusive engagement strategy you should begin by learning more about the people in your neighborhood.

Explore who lives in your neighborhood with the resource: [Patterns of People in Seattle](#).

Build Trust

- Ask the community how they would like to be engaged.
- Go out to the community instead of asking them to come to you. Underserved communities are more likely to engage when you take steps to enhance their relationships.
- Ask the community what they would like to see in the garden.
- Learn about the community with a sincere interest.



Develop Your Message

Meet with fellow gardeners to outline why individuals or groups have not previously been engaged and what efforts would engage them:

- Establish a vision – Describe why your garden exists and the activities you do to achieve your vision.
- Create a welcoming environment — Be willing to change and empower others to create a space that is welcoming to all.
- Resource needs – Describe what you have and what you need to make outreach and engagement possible.
- Outline an outreach strategy — Determine why and how you want to do outreach, and include ways that gardeners, old and new, can get involved.
- Measure success — Decide how you will gather feedback to calculate the efficacy of your outreach. Some options include surveys, feedback boxes, or in-person questionnaires.

Do not schedule an event that overlaps with a cultural holiday or event

- Check out the City of Seattle calendars for pre-planned events: <https://www.seattle.gov/event-calendar>
- Look on local blogs for events scheduled in your neighborhood
- Note cultural and religious observances: <http://diversity.missouristate.edu/observances.htm>

Outreach Methods

To ensure that you reach a broad and representative group of community stakeholders you will need to use a variety of outreach methods. These should include:

- **Door to Door:** Tell people about the garden and be open.
- **Print and Online Advertising:** Post informational flyers in the garden and at other public spaces like local businesses and neighborhood websites. Think about translation into other languages. Visit the City of Seattle Ethnic Media Directory, a list of ethnic media outlets serving the City of Seattle: www.seattle.gov/iandaffairs/EMP
- **Host Events:** Organize community gatherings at the garden or other community spaces and share food.

Some examples include:

- At-risk youth programs and shelters
- Mental illness housing and service centers
- Elderly homes and senior service centers
- Domestic violence shelters
- Ethnic service centers
- Homeless shelters or service centers, and soup kitchens
- Healthcare facilities
- Family services organizations
- Drug/alcohol recovery programs
- Schools and universities
- Business owners
- Places of Worship
- Cultural organizations



These groups could be engaged to participate in a communal plot, help with giving efforts, or connect you to individuals who might be interested in a garden plot. Many of these organizations have activity coordinators who will be your primary contact for connecting with these groups.

Involving and Engaging Underserved Populations

Community gardens, by their nature, contribute to social equity by uniting people of different backgrounds in a shared interest and promoting collaboration for a common goal. There are several obstacles to engaging underserved populations that include transportation, language barrier, and isolation. These ideas are just a few of the possible ways to engage specific populations.

Children and Youth

Children and youth need specific projects in gardens that will connect them with the community and the garden vision. There are several youth-only volunteer organizations in Seattle what are often an excellent source of volunteers.

- Connect with schools — Gardens are ideal classrooms for children to develop a sense of place in their local environment.
- Collaboration with teachers — Many classroom lessons can be incorporated into garden activities including: garden science related to compost, plant biology, entomological study of beneficial insects, or garden art. Gardens provide an outdoor, hands-on setting in which students can learn through exploration, observation, and experimentation.

Seniors and People with Disabilities

- Carefully consider the layout of the garden and the types of beds that will be included. Raised beds and table-top beds are two options for increased accessibility and gardening ease. Refer to [P-Patch Tip Sheet 307: Accessible Gardens](#)

Artists

- Gardens are an outdoor space to experiment with creativity and a place for inspiration from nature. Art in the garden moves us closer to uncovering the true artistic and cultural resources that can be found in local communities.
- Invite professional or budding artists to display their work in the garden. This could be a day show of more delicate art or a longer exhibit that can stand up to the weather.
- Plan a garden art workshop and invite an artist to display their skill e.g. painting murals, flag making, laying brick or stone, found object sculpture



Low-Income Support

Although they are frequently lumped together as a group, people living on a small income include a wide variety of individuals whose specific assets can make significant contributions to gardens.

- Offer a variety of gardening options including communal gardening or plot sharing.
- Have a list of local low-income housing, shelters, food banks, and counseling on hand
- Be careful of privacy issues.
- Be flexible to the schedules of the gardeners. They may not show up for weeks or might be in the garden all of the time.
- Build authentic relationships.
- Discover people's unique skills and encourage them to be used in the garden.

Creating a Welcoming Environment

- Provide snacks and appropriate beverages, if three people chip in then one individual doesn't have to bear the brunt of the cost.
- Ask gardeners to bring food. People love to cook and bring food for work parties. This is a great way to share cultural and recipes.
- Create a jobs list based on priorities.
- Hold regular, but shorter, work parties and be sure to send out reminders.

Cultivating Racial and Ethnic Diversity

- Build trust and listen.
 - Think about translation and interpretation. The P-Patch office can connect you with an interpreter.
 - Be flexible with traditional P-Patch requirements.
 - Be open to a variety of gardening styles and techniques. Share seeds, crops, and ideas.
 - Learn how people prepare and eat different parts of plants.
 - Develop relationships with all of the gardeners.
 - Educate yourself about the different cultures represented in the garden. Learn about their customs, land, language, food, climate, and the ways they celebrate.
 - Connect with folks at ethnic service agencies who may offer useful advice on your outreach efforts.
- P-Patcher John Maire describes the Sudanese Annual Harvest Festival called Golida, it is a high point of the year in Sudan. "Every day you will hear drum beats," he said. Every day you will see dancing. We will be making a thanksgiving to God for the food. Then the village eats and celebrates for days and days. It is a time of recuperation after the exhaustion of harvest.' (Growing Home Stories of Ethnic Gardening 145).*
- Involve as many people and agencies as possible to create community ownership and sustainability.
 - Cultivate leadership amongst all gardeners; everyone has something to offer.
 - Encourage cross-cultural communication, don't separate gardeners by cultural group.
 - Speak face to face when possible. People use body language to communicate.
 - Allow for misunderstandings and have patience with the communication process. Remember that the non-English speaking person doesn't bear total responsibility for a lack of communication.
 - Use an interpreter. If possible, find a trained, objective person. Interpreters may be found through places of worship, courts, hospitals, the P-Patch office, or your local community center.
 - When using an interpreter, engage with the person you are conversing with, not the interpreter.
 - Take turns celebrating in different ways. Offer gardeners several options to find what opens people up or what would they do traditionally.

Additional Resources

Growing Home Stories of Ethnic Gardening Susan Davis Price, University of Minnesota Press, 2000. The excerpts included in this document are from this book which gives accounts of a diverse population of gardeners.

[City's Race and Social Equity Index](#)

[Displacement Risk Index](#)

[Find your census tract and block](#)