

Engaging Diverse Communities Through Community Gardening

Community Growing Network
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OVERVIEW

Despite their many benefits, community gardens have been criticized for the destructive role they can play in relation to broader structures of injustice and oppression. They can be exclusive places, that are unwelcoming to marginalized people in communities.

EXAMPLES TO BUILD UPON

H.O.P.E and Milky Way Garden are located in Parkdale, Toronto and are managed by the non-profit Greenest City. H.O.P.E.'s strength is in the democratic decision making carried out by it's gardeners, and the community building through workshops and potlucks. Milky Way Garden's strength is that it is located on land owned by a community land trust.

Farmers on 57th is in Vancouver and managed by the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities and is located on the grounds of George Pearson Center which is home to 120 people living with disabilities. This garden's strength is in it's therapeutic garden with wheelchair accessible pathways and raised beds, as well as garden tools provided for people with various mobility issues.

La Finca del Sur in the Bronx, NYC was created and is led by a board of directors made up of women of colour. The garden's strength is in it's interest not only addressing food insecurity and injustice in their neighbourhood but in linking these issues, through their programming, to global inequality and systemic systems of oppression.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Meaningful consultation** – outreach to grassroots organizations; involvement in planning; democratic
2. **Accessible information and communication** – multi-lingual and in multiple formats materials, signage and meetings
3. **Accessible, welcoming garden design** – cognisant of legislated requirements
4. **Inclusive and engaging programming** – culturally appropriate; provide funding
5. **Community empowerment beyond gardening** – experience practice and learn democracy; outdoor community center
6. **Encouraging attachment to place** – need relatively permanent location

For an in-depth discussion of the above, please see the full research of the Community Growing Network paper available at <http://bringfoodhome.com/bfh-papers/>.