



BURLINGTON
**AREA
COMMUNITY
GARDENS**



2019 Site Leader Handbook

**BURLINGTON AREA COMMUNITY GARDENS
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION**

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Introduction and Background

Thank you for volunteering to be a community garden site leader!

The BACG program is a network of 14 community and neighborhood garden sites. Each site operates in an independent fashion, however because the program is operated and funded by Burlington Parks and Recreation, there are many shared resources and systems that interconnect us.

Some of these shared resources are:

- Shared Revenues – all of the direct operating expenses of the BACG program are covered by the revenues and donations raised by plot fees and gardeners generosity. Some sites direct operating expenses are subsidized by the revenues from other sites.
- Parks and Recreation Resources – the administration of the registration and the leadership and volunteer coordination provided by the Land Steward are subsidized by the Parks and Recreation Department budget. Also, there are two dedicated funds that support garden infrastructure and maintenance enhancements – specifically the Penny for Parks Fund and the Conservation Legacy Fund.

Community gardening in Burlington started in 1972. Since this start, the program has evolved through private underwriting (1972-79) into a nonprofit structure (1980-85) and eventually to a program within the municipal government (1986-current day). Throughout this process the constant has been the citizen engagement through communities of gardeners at each site. This is where the site leader comes in.

Your active participation in the BACG program is very valuable to the community. Over the past 45 years, the site leader position has arisen as the most pivotal role in the community garden system. It is through your participation and guidance that others are able to succeed, and thus it is through your efforts that the BACG program can succeed.

Site Leader Roles and Responsibilities

As a site coordinator, you will have a PRIMARY responsibility:

To ensure that the garden runs smoothly.

How do you know if you are effectively fulfilling this responsibility?

Gardeners feel supported & Gardeners have a successful experience

In the following pages of this handbook we will breakdown the Site Leader position and how it empowers and supports the garden and its members.

Know your gardeners

The most basic, yet possibly the most important role of the site leader is to know your gardeners. This can seem like a daunting task, especially for some leaders who coordinate large gardens. As a Site Leader there are specific activities and practices you can use to get to know your gardeners.

Orientation – All gardeners new to BACG must go through an orientation. Orientation to the site is when new BACG gardeners will first learn where their plot is, how to access site resources, and most importantly it is when they will likely be meeting you for the first time. The amount of new gardeners to the program varies year to year, but on average 40- 60% of your gardeners are new. With this in mind, right out of the gate you will have the chance to get to know gardeners new to BACG at the beginning of the season.

Orientation Checklist:

- Introductions and sharing:
 - o Start off by getting to know your gardeners. Tell them about you and learn about them.
- Site Overview:
 - o Explain the history and the story of your site.
 - o Show gardener's sheds, storage areas and other common resources.
 - o Explain any important practices and functions of the site and the community.
- Show gardeners their plot
- Remind gardeners of the Plot Maintenance Policy and show them where it is posted/available.
- Share your contact information and reinforce your availability to them.

Being Available – Being available and accessible to your gardeners is important. When gardeners feel comfortable approaching you and speaking with you, many challenges and issues can be prevented or minimized. Some of the strategies to “being available” are simple, but they go a long way.

- Say “hello” to gardeners.
 - Get to know your gardeners names.
- Introduce yourself to folks you haven’t met before.
 - o This is a very important piece because many gardeners have additional gardeners who help with their plot. This could be a spouse or family member, a housemate or a friend.
- Express interest in gardeners’ plots. Take time to get to know about their garden, what they have growing etc...

Celebrating Together - Pot-lucks and gatherings at the garden site are encouraged! What better way to get to know your gardeners than sharing food and fun with them?

Provide Structure and Education

Garden sites have complex needs that span between individual gardener’s plots to the common areas that are available to all. There are structures as well as policies that gardeners are accountable to which help manage this complexity. In regard to individual plots, all gardeners enter the season having signed a registration form that acts as a waiver of the gardener’s acknowledgement of these structures and policies. In these same waivers, gardeners have signed on to accepting 4 hours of community service for the season. This work supports the common areas of the garden.

Site Leaders are charged with managing and directing community work at the site. This can be accomplished through work days as well as assigning specific tasks that can be accomplished over time. Site Leaders are responsible for helping to remind gardeners of policies and in some cases play a role in enforcing them.

Education about gardening techniques and strategies can go a long way toward preventing any circumstances that would lead to enforcement of plot maintenance policies. Providing gardeners with creative options and for managing their gardens can lead to positive solutions.

Coordinating Gardenteeer Support – It is not uncommon that one or several gardeners who you work with will encounter an unplanned life change that will create absence from the garden. In these scenarios, a role that the site coordinator can play is to coordinate gardenteeer support.

During Orientation, make sure your gardeners are aware that it is their responsibility to inform you of planned or unplanned absences from the garden that could affect their ability to maintain their plot.

- Steps for Providing Gardenteeer Support
 - Find a Gardenteeer – first reach out to gardeners at your site to see if anyone would like the opportunity to perform community work or extra volunteer hours. If your request for support doesn't produce anyone, contact BPRW to inform them of the need.
 - Through a variety of volunteer networks, BPRW often has volunteers who have the capacity to support gardenteeer needs at your site.
 - In the event that you cannot find a gardenteeer, you will work with BPRW to develop an alternative plan to address the needs of the plot.

Managing and Directing Community Work – Traditionally, community work is accomplished at the site through “Community Work Days.” These events are highly encouraged, and Site Leaders should strive to offer at least two during the season. However, Site Leaders also are responsible for using creativity to identify and assign specific tasks for community work outside of work days. It is very uncommon that all gardeners can accomplish their community work through work day participation, so these additional tasks are crucial.

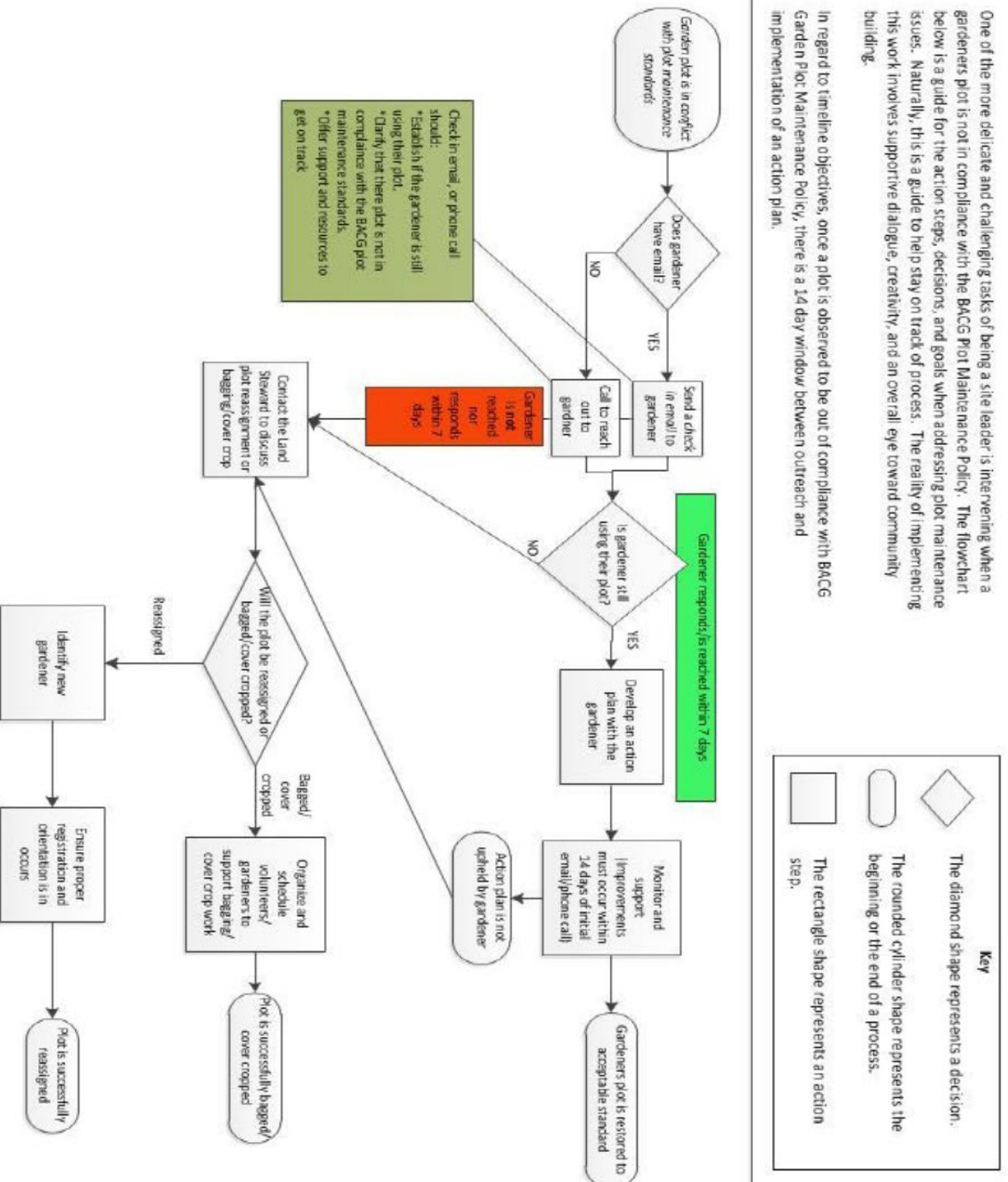
Addressing Plot Maintenance Issues – Addressing issues with the Plot Maintenance Policy can be one of the more challenging roles of the Site Leader. However, it is critical for the health of the garden that plot maintenance issues are addressed in a timely fashion. On the next page you will find a flow chart that breaks down the process for addressing plot maintenance issues.

BACG Site Leader Intervention Plan

Garden Plot not Conforming with Garden Maintenance Policy

One of the more delicate and challenging tasks of being a site leader is intervening when a gardener's plot is not in compliance with the BACG Plot Maintenance Policy. The flowchart below is a guide for the action steps, decisions, and goals when addressing plot maintenance issues. Naturally, this is a guide to help stay on track of process. The reality of implementing this work involves supportive dialogue, creativity, and an overall eye toward community building.

In regard to timeline objectives, once a plot is observed to be out of compliance with BACG Garden Plot Maintenance Policy, there is a 14 day window between outreach and implementation of an action plan.



Important Dates 2019

Below are important dates that Site Leaders are responsible for informing/reminding their gardeners of.

- **April 13th** – Spring Pot Luck
- **May 2/9/16/23** – Site Opening Day
- **May 18th** – BACG Plant Sale at Bibens Ace Hardware on North Avenue 10am-2pm – Proceeds benefit the Community Garden Scholarship Fund
- **May 23/30 June 6/13** – Plant by date – This is the date the Community Gardeners need to have started working on their plots (This date can be adjusted by Site Leaders if weather conditions have delayed) Essentially this date is 3 weeks after the opening of your site.
- **June 1/June 8** – Potential Hay Delivery – More specifics on what day Hay delivery will take place will be forth coming. This is weather related.
- **October 4th** – Returning Gardener Registration Begins for 2020
- **October 5/12/19/26** – Site Closing Days – Depending on Site
- **December 13** – Returning Gardener Registration Ends

IMPORTANT BACG STANDARDS

- All sites are **organic**. Be sure to communicate this during orientation. If you notice issue with this at your site, contact the Land Steward for support.
- Email is the main communication method for sending notices etc... when sending emails to all of your gardeners please use the **BCC**: The intent of this is to protect gardener's privacy.
- When using email, **cc: BPRW** on all BACG related emails.



Plot Maintenance Policy

All BACG Gardens Are Organic

- ◆ Every gardener is expected to follow organic practices.
- ◆ No Genetically Modified Seeds (GMO) may be used.
- ◆ Only organic fertilizers and pest control products may be used. For a complete guide to organic materials, please refer to the Organic Materials Review Institute listings at <http://www.omri.org/omri-lists>

Abandoned Plot Process

A plot may be deemed “abandoned” if no work has been done in a plot by the date in which the site leader sets at the beginning of the season.

Abandoned Plot definitions (any of the following):

- ◆ No signs of planting.
- ◆ No signs of garden maintenance.
- ◆ Weeds have gone to seed.
- ◆ Gardener has not responded to inquiries from the site leader.
- ◆ Harvest rotting on the vine.

Once this date passes the following process will be set in motion:

- ◆ Site leader will follow up with gardener by phone or email.
- ◆ If the garden plot is overgrown one month after the plant by date, the site is considered abandoned. The site leader will notify the Parks & Recreation Department for follow up.
- ◆ Abandoned plots will be re-assigned by the Parks & Recreation Department and they will make the decision on the gardeners’ status.

Maintenance

Gardeners are expected to keep their gardens in reasonable condition and be respectful of other gardeners by:

- ◆ Planning the garden to allow ample room for growth. Plants that spread should not be planted too close to plot borders so that they do not stray from assigned plot.
- ◆ Keeping vines and stray plants out of neighboring plots, pathways and mowing areas.
- ◆ Planting tall plants so that they do not shade neighbors' plants.
- ◆ Visiting the garden at least once a week.
- ◆ Being a good neighbor and getting to know fellow gardeners.
- ◆ Notifying the site leader if help is needed or if gardeners will be away due to vacations or illness.
- ◆ Weeds should never be allowed to go to seed because they compete with other plants and quickly become invasive, affecting neighbors' plots.
- ◆ "Reasonably maintained" means weeds are under control (they can be distinguished from plants), and plants are regularly watered and tended.
- ◆ Crops must be harvested once they mature. Harvesting crops on a regular basis helps to deter theft. Keeping plot free of over ripe, spoiling vegetables minimizes pests and disease.
- ◆ Large woody plants and all others that have reached the end of productive life must be removed or mulched to prevent the spread of disease.

Compost Pile

- ◆ Only plant material may be placed in the compost area.
- ◆ No diseased plants (bag diseased plants and dispose in home trash).
- ◆ Soil should be knocked off roots of plant material prior to placement in the compost pile.
- ◆ Do not place rocks or stones in the compost pile.
- ◆ No home or off site materials in site compost (unless otherwise indicated by your site leader).

Tilled Plot Fall Clean Up

- ◆ Gardeners are responsible for cleaning out their plots at the end of the season.
- ◆ Plots must be cleared of all non-plant materials (i.e. stakes, fencing, plant cages, burlap, twine, etc.) and ready for mowing and tilling.
- ◆ Weeds should be at a minimum.

No Till Plot Fall Clean Up

- ◆ Gardeners are responsible for cleaning their plots at the end of the season.
- ◆ Plot should be cleared of all plants that are no longer producing or will not be overwintering by the date indicated by the site leader.
- ◆ Failure to clean up plot properly may result in suspension of gardening privileges for the next garden season.
- ◆ Weeds should be at a minimum.
- ◆ Plot must be neat and free of debris and trash.

