

P-PATCH COMMUNITY GARDENING PROGRAM

ORGANIZING WORK PARTIES

Work parties and other events need coordination and leaders. Anyone leading a work party should work with other garden leadership to determine tasks and provide reminders. Four elements make a successful work party:

1. Good leadership
2. Clearly designated tasks
3. Multiple forms of notice (e.g. some mix of regular mail, email, phone calls, posted flyers, or social media)
4. Food (Work parties also serve a social role helping build community in the garden.)

Good Leadership. At the spring Gardener Gathering, people can choose a specific work party date to lead.

Alternately, site leadership can recruit work party leaders prior to the spring gathering from the task list, supplied by the P-Patch office. The list identifies those who showed interest in leading work parties on their application form. Some people will naturally take to leadership in the garden so look to those people who demonstrated leadership abilities at previous work parties. Assigning leaders at the beginning of the year lightens work party leader burnout. Be sure to confirm with the work party leader a week or so prior to the work party.

Clearly Designated Tasks. Common areas of the garden must be maintained by gardeners. These include common flower and food bank beds, orchards, compost areas, and sheds. Work party leaders should send a reminder of the upcoming event to all gardeners and consult other leaders in the garden to identify tasks. A specific project or a list of tasks helps gardeners get right to work when they arrive. For gardeners that cannot make it to the work party, you may want to post the task list at the site for them to work on a different time

Food. Have someone or group of people assigned to bringing snacks and beverages. This is great task for those who are more physically limited. Another option is to advertise a potluck in conjunction with the work party to allow time for socializing.

Notice. Good attendance requires sufficient notice and phone and/or email reminders prior to date of work parties. Two weeks prior to work party, draft text and send it to your city staff person for a postcard mailing. Someone in the garden should send an email a week to few days prior to date of work party. If your garden uses social media, post invitations and reminders about the event. Having a volunteer make a phone call the night before is very effective.

Utilizing Community Volunteer help. Large groups of volunteers from the wider community can really help get things done. It is often best to get help with large projects, new construction, or large weeding projects. When a community group volunteers, you'll want to provide drinks, maybe lunch, gloves, plenty of tools, and a first-aid kit. Always send a thank you note after the work party - so make sure to get folks to sign in with their contact information! Some sources for volunteers are the United Way, school service learning programs, corporate community service days, garden clubs, faith organizations, Girl and Boy Scout groups, etc.