Descriptions of Volunteer Positions

In larger gardens, there is a garden committee that meets several times during the season. During these times, they make plans and decisions between the all-gardener meetings in spring (Spring Registration) and at some gardens in the fall. Large decisions like changes in garden policy or plans to expand or build at the garden are made democratically by discussions and voting at the all-gardener meetings.

Good gardens are successful because of the people helping out. This document walks through different ways that volunteers can be involved.

**REGISTRAR**

The registrar holds the waiting list for people who want plots, runs Spring Registration, and assigns plots. S/he takes calls from people who would like plots at the garden. The Registrar also coordinates the activities that occur on Registration Day. At large gardens, a committee shares the work of the Registrar.

Other duties include:

**Pre Spring Registration**

- Keep a list of each person who wants a plot, with their contact information and the date they called.
- Gardens Network (GN) asks that most new gardeners begin with 1/2 plot (200 square feet) their first year so that they can learn and keep up with their weeds. If new people are very experienced, they might start with more space if it is available.
- Contact each person on the waiting list by phone call or a post card to inform them when Spring Registration is

**During Spring Registration**

- Help the Coordinator and Treasurer lead Spring Registration. If space is tight, encourage gardeners to request smaller plots so that all can fit.
- Help gardeners fill out their registration forms and collect these at the end.
- Most gardens have a system for giving out plots that gives preference to returning gardeners, people who live nearby, people who come to Spring
Registration, and people who are on the waiting list. See Quann Plot Assignment Criteria for a strategy that gardeners developed to be fair to all. You might need to meet with interested gardeners as a Registration Committee to develop a policy for plot assignment at your garden.

- Attend Opening Day, bringing the map of the garden to use to lay out the plots. Post the map on the bulletin board so that all gardeners can see where their plot is.

**Post Spring Registration**

- Keep a waiting list of people who want plots (or want another plot). Fit new gardeners in when plots become available.
- Give copies of the garden map to the coordinator, monitor, and Gardens Network.
- Make up a map of the whole garden, assigning plots to as many gardeners as possible. If there are extra plots, they can be assigned to gardeners who want multiple plots. Ask gardeners to pay for as much space as they want while warning them that the top priority is giving some space to everyone who wants it. Then the treasurer can mail refund checks if space runs out, rather than having to track down people to pay again if it turns out that extra space is available.

**COORDINATOR**

The coordinator gathers the gardeners together for events, workdays, and meetings, encouraging all to share in the work and decision-making of the garden. S/he also works to get other gardeners involved, recruiting people to take on tasks and responsibilities so that the garden and gardeners are cared for well. At some gardens, there are two people who co-coordinate. At the large gardens, there are committees of gardeners who take on the role of coordination, meeting monthly during the growing season.

- Call together garden volunteers in late winter to plan Spring Registration, set Opening Day and other dates on your Garden Calendar, plan for any needed tilling or water system preparation needed, and decide if any major improvements will happen this season.
- Coordinate preparation of Welcome Packet.
- Take notes at planning meetings and distribute to volunteers involved in planning.
- Work with the Treasurer to budget for the season and discuss major expenses and purchases.
- Set a Last Planting Date, by which gardeners need to have planted their plots. Monitors will check the plots then, and several more times through the summer, to make sure that plots are being used.
• Work with the Communications Leader to plan for translation when needed. Contact the Gardens Network for help with this.
• Plan for regular or as-needed workdays, asking a different gardener to lead each one.
• Make policy decisions, with input from other Garden Leaders, and check out major changes with all gardeners at Spring Registration.
• Communicate through email, mailings, or phone calls for smaller gardens.
• Conflict resolution is occasionally part of the coordinators’ work.
• If space is available at the garden or if you want to reach out to more neighbors to get involved, some simple publicity can be done by the Coordinator(s) and the Registrar.
• Call together garden volunteers as needed during the summer to plan workdays, potlucks, workshops, or any other events you want.
• Plan for a Closing Workday to get things tidy for winter in late summer.
• Recruit gardeners to take on the small but important tasks of running the garden rather than trying to do it all yourself.
• Support gardeners with disabilities, and discuss any needed raised beds or other accommodations with the Gardens Network, who can help.
• Keep a record of your garden’s procedures in writing, so that coordinators that come after you will have a place to start.

TREASURER
The treasurer will work with other garden volunteers to budget for the season and then approve expenses. At some gardens, there are two treasurers. It’s a good idea to have several co-signers on the bank account for convenience. A few gardens do not have treasurers and the Gardens Network collects plot fees at those sites.

Other duties include:
• Collect garden fees and deposit them in designated garden bank account
• Pay garden bills
• Authorize spending in consultation with other gardeners
• Manage grants that the garden receives (if applicable to garden)

MONITOR
As garden monitor, volunteers will make sure that all gardeners are planting, maintaining, and harvesting their plots. If gardeners are not able to meet deadlines and garden rules, they have to address it. Help from the Gardens Network staff is available and a good way to help resolve conflict to avoid division between a garden’s monitor...
and the gardeners. A friendly approach by the Monitor, as well as clear expectations and deadlines can go a long way. We all want the gardens to be a place to build community, so feel free to call for a little help with mediating.

Duties include:

- Check that plots are planted soon after the Last Planting Date
  - Contact the Registrar to reassign plots if they are not planted or tidy by the set deadline
  - Contact the person who hasn’t planted to let them know that their plot has been reassigned.

- Check that plots are being maintained throughout the season. (Many times it is good to do this during scheduled workdays)
  - Each garden has their own rules for plot maintenance, but tall weeds are a sign that the gardener needs help. Call the gardener to see whether they need help or want to give up their plot.
    - If they want help, try to pair them with an experienced gardener who can help. Give them a deadline for having the plot tidy.
    - If they do not want the plot, ask the Registrar to reassign it.

*Note: Most gardens use this system because they have found that gardeners who do not plant by the ‘Last Planting Date’ rarely succeed with their garden plot. If the plot can be reassigned quickly in early summer, someone else will be able to use it for the season. Otherwise, the plot will most likely we weedy throughout the season, since it is hard to find a gardener to take on a plot in midsummer or later.

COMMUNICATIONS LEADER

The communications person makes sure gardeners are in touch through meetings, phone calls, mail and email, and with help of interpreters when needed.

- Send postcards announcing garden events, or make phone calls if this will work better.
- Arrange for translation so that all gardeners can participate in activities and management of the garden. The Gardens Network can help.
- Work with the Coordinator to send in news of your garden to the Gardens Network for publication in the spring, summer, and fall issues of Community Garden News.
Lots of Madison gardeners do not speak English, others don’t speak Hmong or Spanish! Our goal is to make it easy for all participate equally in their garden’s management.

Bilingual gardeners are important as interpreters throughout the garden season to ensure inclusion. They are needed during all events as gardens around Madison house very diverse populations.

**GROUND LEADER**

- Find volunteers to lead each workday and make sure you have materials and tools needed
  - It’s especially important to have one or several people leading the two big workdays: Opening Day and Closing Day.
- Help organize any improvements to the garden like signs, bulletin boards, fences, water system improvements, etc.
  - Keep a list of requested tools or supplies, ask a volunteer to shop for these things when needed.
- Keep a to-do list of things that you notice or other gardeners suggest and share those priorities with workday leaders
  - i.e: Keeping common areas like tool sheds, compost piles, and paths in good condition is a big part of the job.
  - If a plot is abandoned, the Monitor will let you know and you can ask a volunteer to mow the plot to prepare it for a new gardener or keep it under control until the end of the season.
- Coordinate a Water Committee that takes care of leaky hoses, broken faucets, etc. (If needed)
- Arrange for compost delivery, by calling the Gardens Network when your supply is low.

**SOCIAL / EDUCATION LEADER**

The social committee leader organizes and publicizes potlucks and other parties at the garden. They can also set up educational workshops (the Gardens Network can help) and connect new and experienced gardeners with a buddy program.

- Host a spring garden event with other leaders such as a potluck or other gathering. Some gardens include musical performances at their events.
• Plan educational workshops such as basic organic gardening, crafts (Hmong gardening baskets), cooking and preserving, extending the season for fall harvest, organic pest control, and gardening tips taught by gardeners of various ethnicities.
  o The Gardens Network can help set any of these up, and recommend great teachers in Madison who can come to your garden to teach.
• Offer new gardeners assistance by teaming them up with experienced gardeners.

SECURITY
The security leader works on strategies to minimize theft and vandalism. This can be done with collaboration of all positions and other volunteers.