

## Conducting the Community Garden Inventory (Garden Hike) with Youth

### **Time Required**

- Before meeting with youth: 1-2 hrs
- Preparing the youth for the Community Garden Inventory: 1-2 hrs
- Conducting the Community Garden Inventory: 2 hrs
- Discussing and entering the data: 2 hrs

### **Product**

Youth will compile their results and contribute them to the online Community Garden Inventory database.

### **Materials**

For each youth

- Clipboards, paper, and pencils
- Copy of *Community Spirit Makes Garden Magic* available at <<http://www.hms.harvard.edu/chase/projects/chicago/news/Communitygarden.htm>>
- Copy of *History of Community Gardens Science Page*
- Copy of *Community Garden Inventory Form*
- 3x5 inch cards (optional)

For entire group

- Camera and film, or digital camera
- Computer with Internet
- Copies of *Gardener Permission Form* (Section VII)
- *Photo Guidelines* (Section VII)
- Drinks and snacks



### **Procedure**

#### Before Meeting with Youth

1. **Conduct this *i-m-science* investigation with gardeners who are dynamic and knowledgeable and who enjoy interacting with youth.** The garden manager is often the best person for this activity.
2. **The ratio of youth to gardeners should be no greater than 6:1.** This allows all the youth to have an important role asking questions and taking notes, and ensures that everyone can hear the gardener. If you have more than six youth, you may want to divide into groups, each group interviewing a different gardener.
3. **Contact the garden manager or other knowledgeable gardeners to arrange the visit.** Discuss the Garden Mosaics project with them. Be sure to describe your group and explain your purpose for coming to the garden. Arrange a time for the youth to conduct the Community Garden Inventory.
4. **You may need to arrange for a translator** if the gardener speaks another language. Some of the youth or a volunteer in your group may share a language with the gardeners and be able to translate.
5. **Ask for permission to photograph the gardeners and garden.** Also ask for permission to use the photos on the Garden Mosaics website. Have the gardeners sign the *Gardener Permission Form* (Section VII).
6. **Decide which concepts the youth need to go over before conducting the Community Garden Inventory.** If the youth are familiar with gardening, they should have enough background to ask good questions and make good observations. Some youth may need to read the Science Pages and conduct some of the learning activities on the back of these pages before conducting the Community Garden Inventory.

Preparing Youth for the Community Garden Inventory

1. **Lead a discussion on community gardens.** Ask the youth:
  - Have you ever visited or seen a community garden?
  - What are community gardens?
  - What are the differences and similarities between a home garden and a community garden?

2. **Have the youth do some background reading and discuss what they read.** Below are some suggested readings along with some discussion questions.

*Community Spirit Makes Garden Magic*

- What activities take place in community gardens?
- Why might community gardens be important to gardeners?
- Why might these gardens be important to the community?

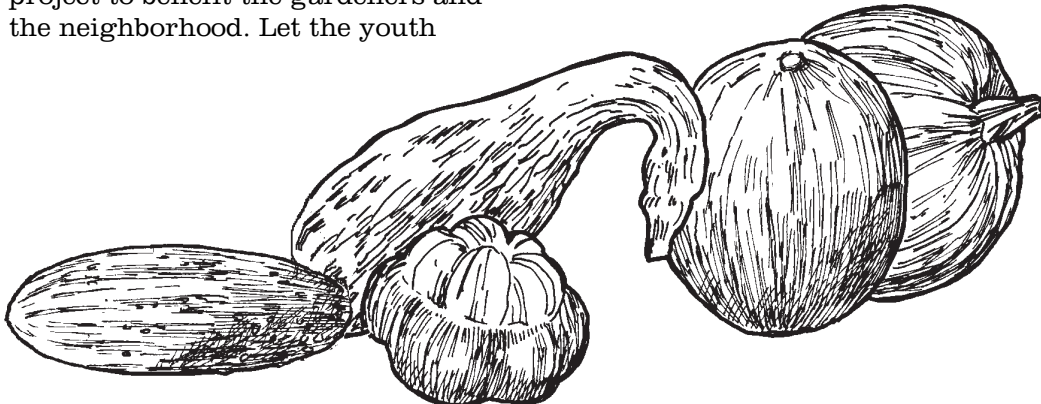
*History of Community Gardens*  
Science Page

- How has the purpose of community gardens changed over time?
- What are some of the main differences between early community gardens and ones created in the last 20-30 years?

3. Have the youth **access the Community Garden Inventory i-m-science database** on the Garden Mosaics website and read over some of the existing descriptions of gardens.
4. **Remind the youth about the Action Project**, which will involve doing a project to benefit the gardeners and the neighborhood. Let the youth

know the information they collect during the Community Garden Inventory will be used for two purposes. The first is to provide data on community gardens for the online Community Garden Inventory database. The second is to help them learn about the gardeners' interests and concerns so that they can plan their Action Project. If you or your group has already decided on a focus for the Action Project, discuss with the youth what questions they might ask the gardeners to help plan the project.

5. **Guide the youth through a brainstorming session to develop a checklist of questions to ask the gardeners.** The questions should cover the items on the *Community Garden Inventory Form* as well as other items the youth are curious about. Share the data form with the youth and make sure that all the questions on the form are on their list. Remind the youth that the information they collect during the Community Garden Inventory will be used to help plan their Action Project, so they want to include questions about the gardeners' concerns.

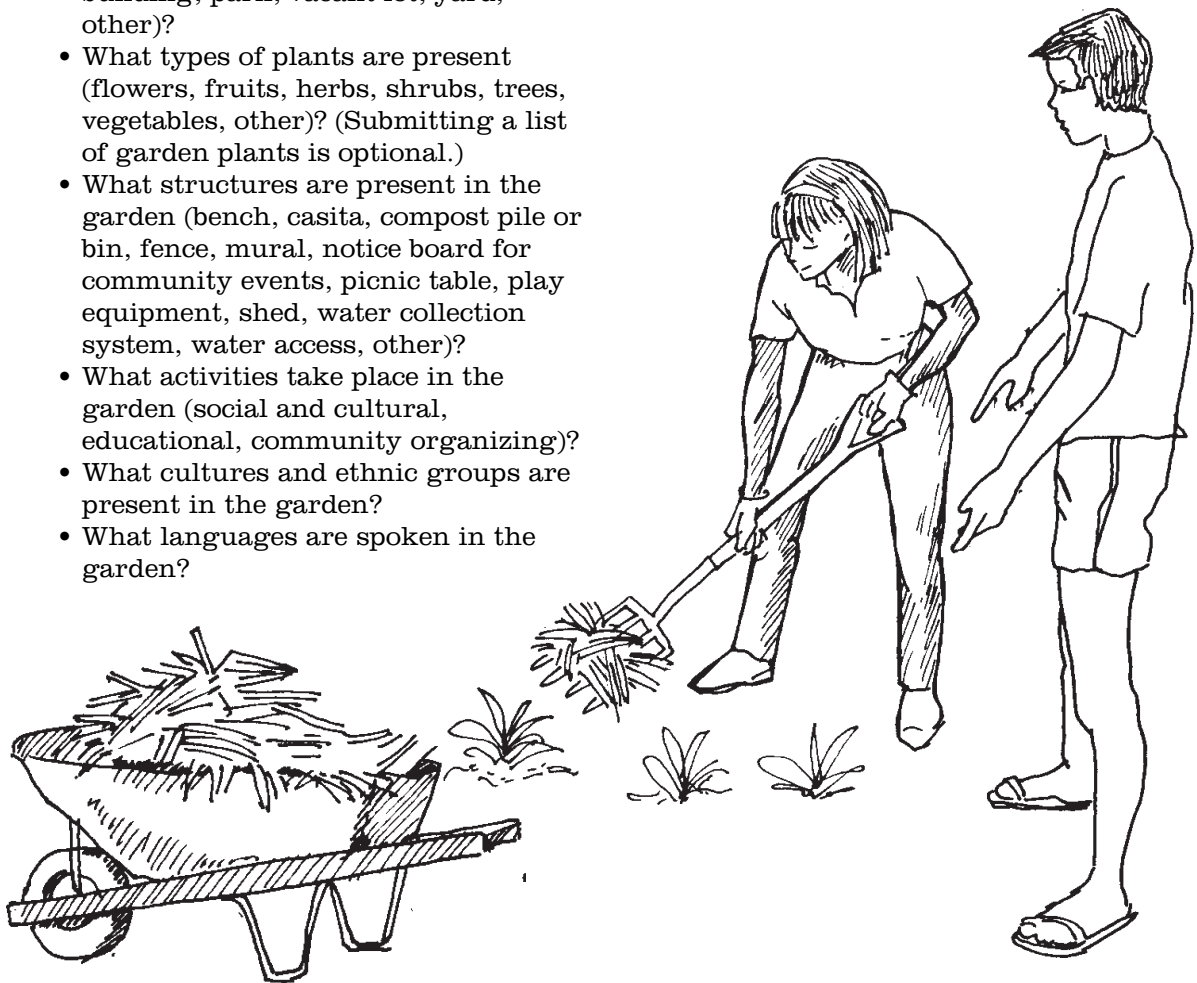


Questions the youth will need to answer to fill in the online *Community Garden Inventory Form* include:

- What is the name of the garden?
- What is the address of the garden?
- What type of community garden is it? (community center, neighborhood, public housing, senior center or housing complex, school, church, other)?
- Who owns the garden? (city, private, land trust, other non-profit, other)?
- How many members does the garden have?
- Who founded the garden (city agency, Cooperative Extension, non-profit, residents, other)?
- When was the garden started?
- What was on the site before it was turned into a garden (abandoned building, park, vacant lot, yard, other)?
- What types of plants are present (flowers, fruits, herbs, shrubs, trees, vegetables, other)? (Submitting a list of garden plants is optional.)
- What structures are present in the garden (bench, casita, compost pile or bin, fence, mural, notice board for community events, picnic table, play equipment, shed, water collection system, water access, other)?
- What activities take place in the garden (social and cultural, educational, community organizing)?
- What cultures and ethnic groups are present in the garden?
- What languages are spoken in the garden?

**6. Before conducting the interview, the youth should write all the interview questions on 3x5 inch cards or other paper so that they don't forget any questions.** Encourage the youth to ask questions in addition to those on the list, especially if they don't understand something or are curious to learn more about what the gardener is saying.

**7. Review interviewing skills with the youth.** These skills include interview politeness (for example, shaking hands, eye contact), question asking, note taking, and listening.



**8. If needed, have the youth practice their interview skills.** Divide the youth into pairs (try to place youth together who do not know each other well). Explain that the purpose of this activity is to practice interviewing skills—including polite and respectful behavior, asking questions, listening, and summarizing and presenting what you learn. You may want to suggest a set of topics that the youth are familiar with for a practice interview (for example, place of birth, favorite activities, the best time they ever had) or allow the youth to brainstorm the questions. Have them write down their questions before the interview. Remind them to take notes, as they will present what they learned about their interview partner to the group. After they present the results of their interviews, have a discussion. Ask the youth:

- Do you feel ready to interview a gardener?
- What might be different about interviewing a gardener compared to interviewing someone your own age?

**9. Help the group plan how they want to carry out the interview.** To keep the youth involved, it is important for each youth to be responsible for a particular task throughout the activity (this may mean that some youth have more than one role). Help the youth decide:

- Who will introduce the group and the activity to the gardeners?
- Who will be the note takers?
- How will they make sure that all the questions that they have brainstormed are answered?
- Who will help keep the conversation focused? (Should they let the gardener talk about other things? Why might it be important to let the gardener talk freely? How much should they interrupt to get back to their questions?)
- How should they end the interview?



**10. Lead the group in a discussion of the importance of observations.** Ask them to brainstorm a list of things they want to look for. Have them decide on how they will take notes on their observations.

**11. The day before the scheduled interview, remember to call the gardener(s) to confirm.**

**12.** If possible, **distribute cameras** for the group to use during their Community Garden Inventory. They should take photos for submission to the Garden Mosaics website following the *Photo Guidelines* (Section VII).

### Conducting the Community Garden Inventory

- 1. Begin the Community Garden Inventory at one end of the garden and walk through the garden with the gardeners.**
- 2. As they walk with the gardeners, the youth should ask questions from their checklist.** They also should ask questions about what interests them and about things that seem to be of particular importance to the gardeners.

3. You may need to **encourage the youth to ask follow-up questions**. In some cases, you will have to follow up on what the gardeners say or what you observe yourself. For example, a rain barrel or spigot may lead to questions about watering. Seeing a gardener using fertilizer can lead to questions about soils. A fence may bring up issues of vandalism, whereas a mural or ornamental tree can lead to a discussion of the garden as a beautiful spot. And a casita or other building can lead to questions about what sorts of activities occur in the garden. Also encourage the youth to use the Community Garden Inventory as an opportunity to ask questions about any concerns the gardeners might have, such as soil contamination or insect pests.
4. As the gardeners talk about their plants and planting practices, **use any “teachable moments” to explain to the youth science concepts related to what they are seeing**. For example, seeing beans growing next to amaranth may prompt a discussion of how some plants add nitrogen to the soil, possibly helping other plants to grow. Seeing shade from nearby multi-storied buildings may prompt a discussion of the importance of light to plants. Having the gardeners talk about adding lime to the soil provides an opportunity to talk about pH.
5. **Encourage the youth also to take photos, make observations, and jot down notes about what they see.**
6. When your group has finished touring the garden with the gardeners, **make sure they have answered all of the questions on the Community Garden Inventory Form before they leave the garden.**
7. Have the youth **thank the gardeners** before they leave and later with a follow-up note.



After the Community Garden Inventory

1. **Compile your results and enter them online.** Review each question on the *Community Garden Inventory Form* with the youth. Based on their notes, the group should write down the answer to each question. If they have access to the Internet, the group can fill out the online *Community Garden Inventory Form* on the Garden Mosaics website. If your group cannot directly enter their data onto the website, have them use a paper or electronic file copy of the form, and email or send it to the address on the form. If it is not feasible for the youth to fill out the form, please fill it out yourself.
2. **Discuss the visit to the community garden with the youth.** Ask the youth:
  - What did they learn about the community garden?
  - What activities take place in the garden?
  - What plants are growing?
  - How are the plants grown?
  - Why might these gardens be important to neighborhoods?
  - What did they learn on the visit that they would like to follow up on?
  - What did they not understand?
3. **Use the relevant Science Pages to help the youth understand or learn more about what they saw in the garden.**
4. **Discuss the interviews and observations.** Ask the youth:
  - What did they think of interviewing?
  - What would help them to do another interview?
  - What other questions might they ask?
  - What kinds of observations did they make?
  - What else might they want to observe during a future visit to the garden?