



## Community Garden Network Group

### Notes of the Meeting held at The Organic Centre, Leitrim

September 2013

#### Attending

- Dee Sewell - Greenside Up, Blogger, CGN, Co. Carlow
- Sandra Austin-CGN, Dublin community Growers, St Patricks college Co. Dublin
- Miriam Turley- Belfast and N Down, Federation of City Farms and community Gardens
- Ingrid Foley- Bundoran Community Garden, 1 world project Manorhamilton, Sligo I.T, St Angelas, Co. Sligo and Leitrim
- John Keane-Ballybeg Greens, Co. Waterford
- Billy Phelan- Ballybeg Greens, Co. Waterford
- Gerry Mulhern- Ballina GIY, Co. Mayo
- Miren Maialen Sampe, Dublin Community Growers, Blarney Park Community Garden, Co. Dublin
- Joanne Butler, Gortahork, Letterkenny, Dunfanaghy community gardens, Co. Donegal
- Milo Butler, Co. Donegal
- Declan Fitzpatrick- Belturbet /Drumlane community Garden, Co. Cavan
- Natascha Telford- St Michaels garden/community orchard, Globe House, 1 world project, HSE/ St John of Gods community garden, other Sligo area Com. Gardens. –Co. Sligo and Leitrim
- Eoin Craven- Virgin Mary Community Garden, Ballymun, Co. Dublin
- Margaret Moggan- Sligo community Garden

#### **For Actions, skip to end of document**

#### **Part 1-Sandra Austin-CGN summary presentation**

Sandra presented us with a talk and slide show which summarised the founding of the CGN its aims, events attended to date and some members projects

#### **Key Points**

The CGN aims to be:

All Ireland

Inclusive

Accessible

Representative

It hopes to **advocate**, **support** and **link** community gardens and allotments as well as **promoting** and **raising awareness** about community gardening

The purpose and basic functioning of the CGN ning site was explained. The idea is that it provides a 'virtual hub' for community gardening in Ireland. In addition the idea of the network is that members and representatives from various community gardens meet face to face 3-4 times annually.

CGN has been represented at various events and venues to date including:

Convergence Festival, Bloom 2013, Maynooth ( EU conference on urban farming), Cloughjordan/the village

A spin off from the Bloom festival included a two page article in the Irish Independent

Feedback/Recommendations from the 'Innovation Academy'

Apply for Charitable Status

Pursue a greater web presence

Case Studies of two gardens involved in the Network

**Ballybeg Greens**-a horticultural project began in 2009 as part of a wider community development initiative. It has since been expanding every year, at present it :

- Offers Accredited Training-FETAC level 3,4 and 5

Runs a :

- Plant propagation unit
- Landscaping Service
- 'Rent a herb'/ restaurant herb growing scheme
- Sells Salad bags
- Fledgling garden centre

This was juxtaposed with the **Goresbridge Community Garden** which is also involved with the CGN but is on a much smaller site but has initiated a novel exchange programme with a local restaurant which may act as pilot project to investigate the viability of becoming semi-commercial.

Within this pilot project surplus produce is given to the local restaurant, the restaurant responds, by offering garden members a 'free dinner' which consists of the sample menu provided by the in house chef.

This allows the garden group to begin dialogue with a local restaurant without having to provide any surety on what fruit and vegetables it can provide. The project might lead onto a more official contract whereby the garden could create revenue/funds through the sale of produce or it might just stay as another novel, enjoyable spin off of community gardening.

These two examples showed the range in size of community gardens that are involved in the CGN and also how community gardens are exploring creative projects for revenue creation and social entrepreneurship that are appropriate to the gardens size and its member's needs.

A wider debate developed as to the benefits/limitations of community gardens seeking official organic status and the legality of what terms can be used when marketing produce from uncertified organic gardens

***Further debate is encouraged and welcomed on this issue and should be developed on the Ning site***

Topics to explore might be:

- What certification options are available for Community Gardens?
- What are the costs?
- What is the value/benefit of certification?
- What are the legalities around Community gardens marketing produce
- What Terminology should be used when marketing produce that is not certified organic from Community gardens/Allotments
- Lobbying the Organic certification bodies for a more accessible and appropriate label
- 'Community Certification' –the Spanish model

## **Part 2**

### SWOT analysis

Dee talked us through the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

### Raising The CGN Profile

Develop stickers

Update Flyers

Business Cards

Attend Bloom in 2014 and create 'Postcard garden' (Volunteers, designers needed!)

### Future meeting Format

Seminar

CGN consultation

Workshop –practical/ horticultural skills development

Site Visit

**OR**

Seminar

CGN consultation

Workshop-Community gardening 'soft skills' development (conflict resolution, "invisible structures", micro finance/funding ops, integrating the wider community, etc)

**OR**

A one and a half/two day conference involving- two free workshops (1x soft skills 1x practical) , ample time for presentations, discussion and networking

In essence, the idea is to create 3-4 meetings per year which allow face to face contact but provide a 'carrot'/ incentive for members to attend i.e. - free training, but also that the network provides workshop space for facilitators/teachers to share a skill and have a day's work

Again ***please begin the debate on the ning site so we can get an idea of members needs and ideas***

The provisional plan for meetings is:

Cork (end of Jan. 2014)

Limerick (June)

Midlands (Oct)

Northern Ireland (April/spring 2015?)

Also discussed

Role of 'regional reps'

Partnerships organisations-change wording on website??

Creation of all Ireland map, showing community gardens across the country

Youtube video to promote CGN

'Tec. Experts' from each garden/region identified and encouraged to upload content to site/create debate/ blogging

Change to Charitable Status

Domain name

App. Development

**Actions**

Encourage debate on certification issues	Eoin
Update information on site	All gardens
Youtube/Organic Center Video	Hans, Miren? Any volunteers?
'How to use this site'-update	Sandra
Domain name	Dee
Map	Gerard, Milo