

Community Garden Network (CGN) meeting Thomastown School of Food, Co Kilkenny
28/06/2015

Present: Micháil O'Connor, Triona (Knocknaheeny), Maggie (Kinsale), John O'Donaghue, Olive Kearney, Robyn Piggot, Joanne Butler, Dee Sewel, Sandra Austin, Eoin Craven, Lynn (Ballyvaughan), Marco (Ballyvaughan)

We began with a round of introductions about where we are based and what we do.

Sandra facilitated a 'World café event' with three rounds

Round 1 "What do we want to know about funding?"

Round 2 "Sharing of funding experiences"

Round 3 "What do we need the money for?"

Some of the key points derived from the exercise were:

- Who should one contact as regards funding opportunities -identifying possible sources of funding
- The challenges of appropriate language/"the language of funding"/how best to communicate
- Definitions of a community garden- Acronyms and what they stand for

Some basic possible areas of sourcing labour or funding were

- The use of meitheals/community workdays
- Local Authority funding (your local county council)
- Corporate social responsibility
- Creating a small social enterprise (plant sales, etc.)

Useful Contacts for funding opportunities include:

www.bitc.ie business in the community (corporate social responsibility)

Pobal ,SICAP and Tús community employment scheme

www.barnraiser.com Crowd funding

www.epa.ie Environmental protection agency, issue grants from time to time

www.ildn.ie Irish national development network

local business/ private sponsorship

www.etbi.ie educational training boards (formerly fetac?) could help with getting a paid tutor

PPN (Public Participation Network)/ Environmental Pillar

Tidy towns

Heritage Council

We had a tour of the garden attached to the school of food and were introduced to some interesting South American crops including Tomatilloes and Oca.

Afternoon meeting

Financial update: There is now approximately €1000 remaining in our account, approximately €1500 has been spent between now and the start of 2014, this went on paying for facilitators and rooms, website administration and some banners for the CGN.

Update on Collaboration with the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (the Fed)

Sandra filled us in on what she and the Fed have been working on. This is a programme to encourage the co-operation of community gardens and schools. And might include: research, training and development, encouraging members to get involved in schools

ACTION: Sandra to make contact with community gardens seeking feedback on the project

Lynn suggested that the CGN encourage social events aimed at garden volunteers

Legal Structure

At present we are a club/society we have a constitution and a bank account. We asked ourselves, do we need to change our legal structure/status possibly to a Charity with Ltd status. This would allow us to access greater funding opportunities, we would need a board of management to include people with skills that we don't have ourselves e.g. financial , media etc.

ACTION: People are to send on suggestions of Board of Management candidates to thecgn11@gmail.com

Website summary

There are over 30 groups on the website and 330 members
Dee suggested the Federation of Irish Bee-keeper's as a template website

ACTION: Eoin to follow up with Mark Lee as regards group insurance rates for CGN members

Mapping

Joanne spoke about the possibilities of a mapping project for collecting baseline data on the gardens nationally. She suggested that this might be done in conjunction with regional reps. We also spoke about getting in contact with Colin Sage in Cork and GIY in order to access existing mapped gardens. We also spoke about using a wide category such as "Community Food Initiative" for the mapping.

ACTION: Eoin and Joanne to discuss via email

Festival Opportunities and Branding

People were invited to add CGN branding to their garden media, both to add weight to what they are doing but also to promote the network, this could be on t-shirts, business cards, fliers etc.

The logo/badge is available on the ning site.

Banners and other media/branded goods can be made available for people to use at various events

Rose Festival- 18th/19th of July – will the CGN attend

ACTION: John O'Donaghue to broach the possibility of collaborating with the Dublin Community

Growers (DCG) at the event, this will need some thought as to how it will work and how to pitch it to DCG

Joanne mentioned the possibility of getting more t-shirts printed for festivals

Dee filled people in on the plan for Electric Picnic in September

Pollinator Plan

Dee explained about the pollinator plan and how the network can help. This included the Bumble bee monitoring scheme and perhaps tips on how to promote pollinator friendly gardening actions. She mentioned the National Biodiversity Centre might provide some training to gardeners to encourage such activities.

This is to be discussed more at the next meeting.

ACTION: Triona to send on some potentially relevant questions to Dee (this could wait till winter)

AOB

Biogas workshop- There are biogas workshops been run around the country on how to make a small scale biogas system that yields combustible gas and high quality compost. The organisation are looking for venues to host the course, interested parties should look at the CGN facebook page for the relevant post and contact details

Further meetings

The possibility of further meetings being held online was suggested also a preference for locations that were accessible on public transport was mentioned.

The next meeting is potentially to be held in Dublin in October perhaps in the Ballymun area with an option of a visit to the Botanic Gardens in nearby Glasnevin.

ACTION: John and Olive (with some help from Eoin) to organise Dublin meeting (include Santry community garden?)

Tidy Towns and Community gardens -the suggestion of advice on how best tidy towns groups and community gardens might best work together was noted with an idea that the CGN look into it and create something of a policy document on the issue

Chartered Institute of Horticulturists

They are offering 6 months free membership and can also offer chartered horticulturist status

Summary of Actions (some added from Dee's notes)

Sandra to investigate getting the network onto the Environmental Pillar.

Sandra will add a paper to the website on how to facilitate a world café.

Dee to talk to Annette to try and establish who we contact in local authorities countrywide.

Everyone think up potential board members

Sandra put together a draft Strategy Statement and Business Plan and share with coordinators.

John will talk to Dublin Community Growers about representing the Network at the Rose Festival

Triona will represent the network at Blarney at Bloom

Joanne link in for all branding - see ourorganicgardens.ie for contact details

Dee and Triona to liaise about promoting pollinated friendly gardens and bumble monitoring

Dee will look at Survey Monkey to check what people want from the network meetings

Sandra email school questionnaire out again

Everyone research criteria about linking in with Tidy Towns

Triona will find out about a tour of the Botanics

John / Olive to plan the next community garden meeting in Dublin

Dee to check youth hostel price in Dublin for overnight stay

Joanne to keep a check of where the pop up banners are

Sandra - pass on tee shirts and flyers to Triona