

MINUTES

COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK MEETING

Saturday 1st February 2014

At Knocknaheeny/Hollyhill Community Garden, Cork

History

As there were a lot of new members at the meeting, Dee gave a brief account in how it began in 2011, starting with her approaching Suzie Cahn (who she had heard had been involved in setting up several community gardens in Wexford) in relation to setting up a Network. Following discussions with GIY, a workshop was hosted at the GIY Harvest Festival in Waterford in September to sound out the idea and a lot of interest was shown from various people and organisations in creating a network which Dee volunteered to coordinate.

The first meeting was held in the Greenhouse in Dublin in November 2011, with over 40 participants and the commitment to develop. ([See notes here](#)).

Meetings have since been held every 3 to 4 months in different parts of the country ([notes available here](#)).

Thanks to Sandra, a forum based NING website was put in place by September 2012 (see www.communitynetwork.ning.com) which requires membership to be approved and login details provided (this was necessary to stop spam). The NING gives individuals and groups a place to upload information on their gardens, access to helpful documents and information as well as links to social media information (facebook & twitter contact details) and to contact representatives for each province. It is possible to have pictures in the profile and each garden can have its own page within the main website. Instructions on how to sign up a garden and upload photos will be available (see action points). In January 2013 the network bought the domain name www.cgn.ie which has been set up as a separate website linking access to all social network sites.

The key point to remember is that the Community Garden Network is non political and independently run and open to everyone interested in community, allotment and CSA gardening in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Review of notes from last meeting & general discussion

Instructions on how to use the NING are still outstanding. It was felt that the NING site is a useful resource and the Reps will help to promote it within their gardens. Once people begin to use it, more will follow. An additional .ie website has been created that doesn't require any sign up and will point people in the direction of all the other ways people can link with community gardeners. It has an event page, a content page (including facebook and twitter links) and an "about us" page including a video.

Action: Conor Lynch will advertise a volunteer role for looking after the NING website through activelink.ie (and will liaise with Sandra).

How can we promote the network and the community gardens?

Events and campaigns such as the “Better Together” video (created by Lily de Sylva) featuring video. Lily has offered to create a more professional video once she has more material.

Action: everybody to send Dee existing material or to film gardens/gardeners to be part of this new video to the community garden network email (thecgn11@gmail.com).

Certification issue for community gardens: social enterprise/organic growing (expensive to get organic certification and pointless because selling locally. Trust bond is already in place. Bring in buyers to see/taste/check). What is relevant? What is necessary? How to get it?. Could we develop a specific certification for community gardens (i.e. “GCN certified” branding)? Need to have an insight discussion.

Action: Sean to write an update on the NING site about the Ballybeg Greens’ experience, including funding issues (funding was withdrawn because they are not a Limited company.) Change in legislation may be required.

Eoin to continue to pursue this and looking for feedback on his blog post on the NING site.

Financial reports

GIY helped initially paying for venues and facilitation.

The website couldn’t have kept going without financial assistance of FCFCG and Healthy Food for All.

2013 started with €2.70 in the bank account.

Entered Bloom garden competition and everything was donated, from vegetables to tools, raised beds to willow. Bord Bia gave a grant of €200. Dee and Sandra spent €213.00 but managed to raise the network’s profile significantly. [A link to how it was created can be found here.](#)

In 2013 the network were awarded from the AIB/GIY “Get Ireland Growing” campaign, a grant of €2,500 which has enabled us to offer a workshop element into the meetings.

CGN Maintenance costs:

€15 (monthly) for the website/NING forum

€24 a year for domain.

Various bank fees, Government levy etc.

Expenses for meetings.

[A link to the income and expenditure information for the network can be found here.](#)

How can we raise funds?

- Hosting workshops and charging attendance - start with donation box to gauge amount that people can afford (Suggestion not to have a membership fee for the moment).
- Corporate social responsibility
- Sponsorship

Action: Laura to identify potential sponsors for CGN (specific to the community, local sponsors).

Increase visibility and public awareness – i.e. ECO EYE episode on community gardening/have leaflets at festivals, blogging, social media.

Potential topics for next meeting:

- Pests & diseases
- Social enterprise
- Funding – instructions on how to apply for grants etc.
- Speaker on social enterprise/charity (how to register)/co-operative.
- Leadership/communication courses
- Turning a job into a workshop (i.e. tree pruning).

Action: Eoin to draft questionnaire to send to the group re topics for next meetings, Dee to set up survey by next month.

All: to email Eoin with items for discussion in the questionnaire (eoin.craven@gmail.com)

Reps & volunteers

Everybody to promote gardens and the network.

The role of reps is to deal with queries, encourage groups to join in, post useful info & photos, assist in the organisation of quarterly meetings.

Prepare a starter pack (i.e. how to set up a community garden). Listed as “useful info”.

New reps:

Joanne – Donegal

Sean – Waterford

Aisling – Clare

Laura – Louth

Action: Dee to write a press release on today’s event to include all current reps.

22 gardens currently signed in the CGN network and a request was made for CSA groups/allotments/ box schemes to be included which was agreed. Also discussed different ways to sustain each other i.e CGN “couch surfing” offers to members to enable them to attend the meetings countrywide.

Events/opportunities

- Bloom festival in Phoenix Park on June BH weekend - (Communities to create “postcard gardens” – paid €200. **Action:** anyone interested in participating on behalf of the network to get in touch with Eoin (eoincraven@gmail.com).
- Cork food strategy
 - Saturday 4 March “Feed the city” – feed 5000, celebrity chefs, demos etc.
 - September – free up space to create community gardens in Cork
- Cloughjordan event 22-23 February “How does a community live and tell its story?” bring communities together to inspire and get support from others.

Action: Conor to link in with Cork Food Strategy

Code of conduct

We’ll aim to get a template up on the website (Sandra)

Next meeting will be held in May/June in Ballybeg (likely topic would be the history of Ballybeg Greens - transition from community garden to allotments to supporting 11 restaurants)

Action: Eoin/Sean to liaise on potential dates – include in survey