

NOTES FROM THE COMMUNITY GARDEN STEERING MEETING HELD AT THE GREENHOUSE, DUBLIN ON SATURDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER 2011

Present - Aidan Faughey, Anne O'Leary, Arlene Walsh, Austin Herron, Caroline Jolley, Ciaran Walsh, Davie Philip, Dee Sewell, Elaine O'Mahony, Georgina Buffini, Grace Brady, Jackie Dempsey, Jenny McGettrick, Liam O'Neill, Mary Gunning, Mary Marsden, Michael McEvoy, Patricia O'Sullivan, Paul Redmond, Pauline Whittle, Peadar Lynch, Robert Moss, Sarah Jane Flaherty, Sean Corrigan, Suzie Cahn, Willie Brennan

First of all I'd just like to thank everyone for taking the time to travel and attend the community garden network meeting at the Greenhouse in Dublin. Also thanks to Davie Philip for doing such a great job at facilitating and keeping us on track and to GIY for funding the cost of the room for the afternoon.

A G E N D A

1. Introductions
2. Exploring the need for a network
3. Exploring the objectives what do we want to achieve - our aim & mission
4. Running the network - steering group
5. Next Steps

1. Introductions

Almost 30 people attended this meeting which started by everyone introducing themselves and what community garden they are involved in.

2&3. Exploring the need for a network, the objectives what do we want to achieve

Davie read out the proposed objectives of the GIY Community Network Group.

The objectives of the GIY Community Garden Network are:

- A. Provide a comprehensive listings map of existing community gardens on www.giyireland.com so that people who are interested in joining or visiting a community garden can find one in their locality.
- B. Map demand for community gardens – use mapping software to facilitate people that are interested in starting a community garden to come together in a community, i.e. they put a pin on the map to indicate their interest.

- C. Provide best practice guidelines on starting and maintaining a community garden.
- D. Provide advice for landowners that are interested in making space land available for a community food growing project.
- E. Provide a dedicated online forum for community garden members to share ideas, expertise and best practice.
- F. Facilitate face-to-face meetings of community garden members via the GIY Annual Gathering and regional events.

The group then broke into pairs to discuss whether they could add to these objectives and the following needs were highlighted:

- * The network group needs to promote, educate and sell the idea of community gardens to the community, with involvement from the community.
- * Mapping is essential and land share promoted with a land advisory service to give legal expertise to people who wish to 'lend' land.
- * Find others working in/with community gardens in and outside our communities.
- * More cooperation is needed from councils to aid promotion with a dedicated contact in the council.
- * More networking meetings, regularly and annually, with a blend of networking as well as raising agenda points.
- * A guide is needed for funding, applications etc. as currently each group has to 'reinvent the wheel'. It should be recognised that the north and south will be different.
- * Councils should have a policy guidance document (which may need to be lobbied).
- * Group insurance scheme and legal advice.
- * Lobby planners to include space in their plans for community gardens (goes with policy).
- * An all island could leverage funding with North / South participation.
- * We can't ignore that administrative issues with the north and south that are there and that a northern rep may be able to manage them.
- * Establish a committee for the network group with one coordinator from each province.

4. **Running the network – Establishing a steering group.**

The group then went on to discuss how the network should be run. It was strongly felt by many independent and group representatives that the network should be independent as was originally agreed at Waterford. A long discussion on the pros and cons of a GIY named network was held.

- The All Ireland Community Garden Network supported by GIY was suggested and not the GIY Community Garden Network.
- The network needed to be run by the stakeholders.
- If it is a GIY network will all community gardens need to become GIY gardens.

- The network needs to incorporate lots of bodies and the worry was that if it were called the GIY network it would appear exclusive
- There are barriers that may be perceived to exclude low income/ethnic groups
- The corporate sponsorship of GIY did not sit well with some
- There were concerns about how independent the network would be if it were under the GIY umbrella - who would hold the mailing list, be responsible for updating the map, would all community gardens then be GIY gardens, could they apply for funding if they weren't GIY members? Also by making it a GIY Community Group it may exclude other interested parties in the future.

Ciaran outlined GIY's objectives that they were willing to put up to €15K in resources to ensure the group was a success and that they're planning to fund community gardens in a project they're working on for 2012. Davie outlined his experience with networks and that without the drive of an organisation like GIY it was unlikely to move forward.

The name of the group was therefore a stumbling block that prevented us moving on. It was left that Ciaran would go back to the board to discuss the name of the group further and update Dee.

5. Next Steps

As we all wanted to finish on a more positive ending, we looked for volunteers from all provinces to represent community gardens to the next stage and form a steering committee. These are...

Connaught

- Arleen Walsh
- Patricia O'Sullivan

Dublin

- Georgina Buffini
- Grace Brady
- Robert Moss (DGC tbc)

Leinster

- Dee Sewell
- Aidan Faughey
- Anne O'Leary

Munster

- Elaine O'Mahony

Ulster

- Jenny McGettrick
- Michael McEvoy

6. Date of Next Meeting

The discussion points outlined will give the steering group a good basis to work on when they meet in the New Year in Athlone.

Davie Philip has agreed to facilitate the next meeting if he is available.

7. Action Points:

Ciaran to discuss with GIY the issues surrounding the network group name.

Dee will liaise with steering group members and make arrangements for the next meeting.

The following are notes taken from the first meeting by Davie Philip at the GIY Conference in Waterford who also acted as facilitator.

Objective and outcomes of the meeting on the 10th September 2011 at the GIY Gathering, Waterford

Objective

- Introduce the GIY Community Garden Network
- Identify what a network could offer community gardens
- To determine how the network might operate
- Identify people to join a steering group

Each speaker had 2 minutes outlining why a national network for community gardens is important. They spoke in the order listed above. From their inputs and those of the participants the following points were made.

Advantages of community gardens

- Builds community – brings people together
- A place to teach horticulture and other subjects such as composting
- A site for community composting
- Increased biodiversity and environmental benefits
- Supports policy
- Reduces vandalism and anti-social behaviour

What a network can offer

- A place on the web where people can go for information
- An all-Ireland focus
- Determine demand for community gardens
- Map the gardens that are in operation
- Map places that could be sites for community gardens

What the network can do

- Promote the concept of community gardens
- Lobby for new community gardens
- Engage with local authorities
- Identify and apply for funding to support community gardens in Ireland
- Facilitate the sharing of information and tools
- Help people move from individual growing
- Connect people, networks and other organisations
- Host an annual national community garden gathering