**Start your own community garden!**

Every community garden is different, just as every community is different. For instance, in some gardens, people have assigned plots that they work for themselves. In our garden, everybody works on everything. Both models work, and can generate large donations for feeding others. For some background, here is a flyer about our garden.

* Welcome Flyer (Word)

We are happy to share how we’ve gone about organizing our garden, and some useful sites for information about growing vegetables. It has been critical for our garden to have a core group of people to plan, to distribute the work load, to review how things are doing, and to make the inevitable mid-course corrections. Consequently, in addition to our Garden Coordinator, we have a

* Secretary-- keeps track of hours worked, contact information, and meeting minutes.
* Treasurer—records income from donations and annual $10 fee (per family) from gardeners
* Harvest donation tracker—records pounds of food donated from the garden.
* Watering coordinator—makes sure we have volunteers each week to water the garden
* Communicator—keeps gardeners informed, prepares updates for the church, publicity
* Pickling coordinator—takes orders and directs pickling of okra, cucumbers, salsa for fundraising.
* Saturday Coordinators—direct Saturday workday activities. (Link to to-do list). Currently we have dedicated coordinators and co-coordinators for each Saturday of the month.

As Cullen Whitley, our founding Garden Coordinator famously says, “There are no mistakes in the garden, just learning experiences.” Persons with all levels of gardening experience are welcomed, from no experience to master gardeners and farmers who now find themselves in a city. Our garden is a busy place. We had 102 gardeners in 214, 37 of whom were vested (had worked more than 10 hours, and were eligible to use some of the harvest for personal use.) In 2013, we started a new program, ESL Wednesdays in the Garden. Students in English as a Second Language classes stay after class on Wednesdays, have a light lunch, a short English lesson dealing with the garden, and then spend time gardening. In 2014, we had 56 students from 19 countries participate. Seventeen became vested, and shared in the produce. In 2014, we donated over a ton of produce to Plant a Row for the Hungry and ESL gardeners. In our 5 seasons, we have donated over 10,000 pounds to help alleviate hunger in our community.

Below are links to the documents that we have developed to help our garden function. The Guidelines detail our working structure. The work log we keep in the garden to track the hours that we work. Each gardener completes a registration form, with room for the gardening secretary to keep a running tally of hours worked taken from the work log. We contact the gardeners weekly during the growing season via email with details about our Saturday workdays. Each Saturday during the hot months, we make sure we have volunteers to come during the week to water the garden. If the garden’s rain gauge records even ¼ inch of rain, we can skip the watering. To make sure we have folks signed up to water, we developed a watering volunteer sign-up sheet. Our watering coordinator sends out reminders. We’d also like to share an excellent overview prepared by Cullen Whitley that shows what sorts of things can be done in our garden, even by folks without experience.

* Community Garden Guidelines (Word)
* Community Garden Work Log (Excel)
* Community Garden Registration (Excel)
* Watering Guidelines (Word)
* Compost Do’s and Don’ts (Word)
* Garden Jobs for Everyone (Word)

There are lots of helpful sites on line that can help you with what can be grown in your area, and when to plant. One such is

<http://www.thevegetablegarden.info/planting-schedules>

Another resource is your local land grant university’s extension office, and your state’s department of agriculture (for soil testing.) The best resource of all is someone who has been growing vegetables--someone with experience, and who enjoys teaching others how to grow food. Pray for such a person to step forward, and you will have your garden.