

# COMMUNITY GARDENING 103

## POLITICAL SCIENCE: LEADING YOUR GARDEN EFFORT.

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### **DEFINING A LEADER:**

A person with any one of these qualities is a possible leader. All leaders continuously work toward possessing all of these characteristics.

**Vision:** Leader has the ability to envision something different.

**Creativity:** Leader is a creative problem-solver.

**Critical Thinking:** Leader can inspire others through their actions, such as dedication, persistence and kindness. People are inspiring when their values and actions correspond. A leader needs to have a deeper source of inspiration that can carry them through difficult challenges.

**Perspective:** Leader can see the forest AND the trees (big picture and practical steps.)

**Trustworthy:** People follow those they trust.

**Confident:** Leader is not afraid to speak out about what is right.

**Humility:** A true leader does not hold power over others, but encourages others to participate and take charge as well.

**Cooperative:** When many people are encouraged to lead, individual people need to be able to put aside personal agendas of status or control in order to achieve goals that benefit the whole group.

**Motivated and reliable:** A leader shows up and sticks with it.

**Integrity:** The actions and words of a leader are consistent with one another.

**Time:** A leader spends time walking around the neighborhood meeting folks, attending community gatherings, listening to community members, visiting with individuals, and chatting about how their week went. Time is invaluable in developing relationships and trust with community members and for understanding the community's interests, skills and needs.

**Caution:** A leader should be aware of pre-established power dynamics, alienated individuals and relationship histories between community members.

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### **DEVELOPING LEADERS:**

It is important to develop a strong core of leaders that can take charge of the project and nurture it. Everyone with a desire to take responsibility for the well-being and improvement of their community can become a leader.

### **How can you become a leader?**

1. Jump in and try
2. Observe others leading
3. Find a mentor
4. Take a class, do any exchange program, attend workshops
5. Join a leadership group
6. Read books about leaders and leadership
7. Attend the Building Communities Workshop hosted by Green Spaces Alliance

### **Model Leadership:**

1. Set realistic expectations: Buoy a group with tangible success.
2. Divide up and delegate work: Assign each task in a reasonable chunk to individuals with the ability to carry out their task, and then let them carry it out in their own way. Show you care whether it gets done by checking on progress.
3. Show appreciation for work well done: Recognize efforts in conversations, at meetings, in newsletters. Give thanks, certificates and awards. Respect all contributions no matter how small.
4. Be organized: Know the plan, the resources and where to find tools ahead of time.
5. Welcome criticism: Members need to feel that the leader can accept criticism without feeling attacked. Create opportunities for constructive criticism.
6. Help people believe in themselves: Build people's confidence by showing that they can accomplish what they have never accomplished before. Demonstrate authentic optimism to energize everyone.
7. Inspire trust: Always maintain the highest standards of honesty. Air your doubts about potential conflicts of interest and personal limitations.
8. Herald a greater purpose: Be able to articulate the purpose. Celebrate every victory. People will get and stay involved if they believe in the project.
9. Convince others they can lead: Make your role clear. Invite others to lead. Sharing leadership guards against burnout.
10. Create structures that increase skills, support and accountability: Plan for regular meetings, allow for clear communication, and share information in an accessible format. Sharing allows others to work without the leader being present.