



Our How-To Guide:

Creating an Organization to Donate Fresh Produce to People in Need



Contact Us

Website: <https://www.pvillegarden.org/>

Email: info@pvillegarden.org

Pleasantville Community Garden

@pvillegarden

@pvillegarden

WRITTEN BY: Devin Juros with David Juros, Beth Devito, Katie Beatley, Steve Lord

MANAGED + ORGANIZED BY: David Juros

EDITED + MATERIALS BY: Sonia Mahajan, Liby Kokes, Nianguo Liu, Fiona Laird, Pralaya Cuomo

EDITED BY: Margot Juros, Wendy Fried, Mariel Pica

GUIDE LAYOUT + DESIGN: Jenny Wei

WEBSITE DESIGN: Luci Jones

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Anjali Sauthoff



Our Story

The Pleasantville Community Garden started in 2012 with the seed of an idea. After learning that **one in five** people in his county were affected by hunger, 11-year-old Devin Juros was determined to make a change. After much independent research, Devin learned that the short shelf life and high price of **fresh produce** often make this nutritious food unavailable to people in need. He decided to create a **donation garden** and wanted to bring the community together to help build and maintain it as they supported their neighbors in need.

With a mission but no experience, Devin turned to his parents, David and Margot, for help. Seeing his passion, Devin's parents supported his idea. They planned out the initial fundraising and organizing needed to bring the community-run donation garden to fruition. Reaching out to friends and local experts, the family founded a not-for-profit organization, the Pleasantville Community Garden. As they got the word out, a strong base of supporters committed to their mission. Two years later, in 2014, ground was broken, and the garden that Devin had imagined was created, a testament to the hard work and passionate volunteerism of a whole community.

Recognizing that the **need** in Westchester County was huge and growing, the Pleasantville Community Garden organizers knew there was much more to do. An agreement was made to grow vegetables in local school gardens and also with farmers to collect at the local farmers market. Their annual donation grew rapidly from 1,500 pounds of fresh produce that first year in 2016 to about 15,000

pounds or more each year since. **As of 2020, the PCG has donated a grand total of nearly 90,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables grown and gathered.** All fresh produce is donated to local food sharing organizations, namely Hillside Food Outreach, A-HOME, and Neighbors Link, who directly provide it to low-income Westchester residents in need of good nutritious food.

At its conception, the garden seemed a daunting challenge. But with plenty of hard work, careful planning, and reliance on the community, Devin's dream grew into a reality that exceeded his expectations. The purpose of this guide is to show you that your "pipe dream" garden is closer than you would think.



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Introduction

Who Are We?

We are the Board Members of Pleasantville Community Garden (PCG), a local volunteer organization in Pleasantville, New York that grows and gathers fresh produce to donate to area food pantries. From our birth in 2014, we have expanded to growing in three gardens and collecting leftover produce from the local farmers market. As of October 2020, after just six years of growing and gathering, the Pleasantville Community Garden donated nearly 90,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to those in need.

Find out more about the Pleasantville Community Garden with the [PCG website](#) [0.1]

What is This?

This How-To Guide is a compilation of experience and best practices from the organizers and Board of the Pleasantville Community Garden and the combined knowledge of numerous community experts. This information includes documents, photos, and links that will help garden organizations and well-established gardens alike. This teaching guide is geared toward community-run donation gardens, as this was the experience of the Pleasantville Community Garden. Some of the information will be more applicable to your garden project needs than others, so we suggest that you jump around to different chapters or sections to find what is most useful. We encourage you to use the appendix at the end to sift through the attached documents and links more easily.

Why?

The goal of this How-To Guide is to expand the mission of the Pleasantville Community Garden, to help others battle food insecurity by providing people in need with healthy fresh produce. We want to help passionate people in other towns, cities and organizations to create their own community-run donation gardens, strengthening their community and supporting those in need. We also support the proliferation of gardens in general! Whether you are making a donation garden, teaching garden, a home garden, or plan to sell garden plots in a community garden, we hope this Guide will provide materials that support your project. Please reach out to the contact information below for additional questions or comments.

Contact Us

Please contact us with any comments or questions about this guide. We are excited to hear from you!

info@pvillegarden.org

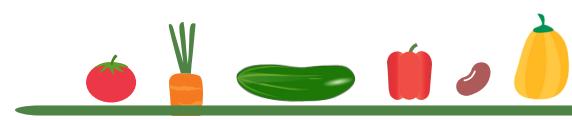




List of Other Community Gardens

Provided below are lists of community gardens in the NYC Metropolitan area. We encourage you to reach out to other community gardens to get their advice, and to make more connections. Additionally, if you decide to delay your garden project now, we encourage you to get involved with one of these other gardens!

- [Westchester Community Gardens](#) [0.2] (you will have to make a quick, free account to see this map; add your community garden to the map with this [map populating form](#) [0.3])
- [New York City Community Gardens](#) [0.4]





Chapter 1: Benefits of Gardens

Community gardens are associated with numerous benefits that promote health and wellbeing, along with ecological and economic advantages. If you decide to donate produce from your community garden, these health and community-building benefits only increase. It is also important to note that many of these benefits intersect and overlap with one another, such as mental health and community wellness. In this chapter, we will delve into some of the benefits of community gardens with a donation aspect, but are also applicable to various types of gardens, like teaching, community, donation, and home gardens. We hope that this chapter gives extra encouragement to your desire to start a garden project and intend that this information can be used in presentations or communications to fundraise and gather support for your organization. Here are just a few benefits of gardens (we are certain you can come up with many more):

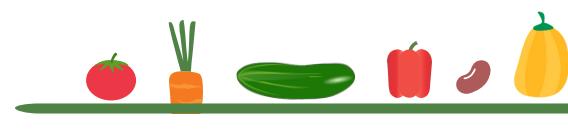
Community Wellness:

- Give residents control over local land, generating a sense of empowerment ([Cumbers et al., 2017](#))
- Provides space for engagement with kids ([Okvat and Zautra, 2011](#))
- Facilitates new community connections (often multigenerational) ([Kingsley and Townsend, 2006](#))
- Improves community resilience (extremely important in times of crisis) ([Okvat and Zautra, 2011](#))
- Reduces social isolation ([Grenade and Boldy, 2008](#))
- Increases assistance between neighbors ([Okvat and Zautra, 2011](#))
- Accessible green space (like gardens) has been linked to reductions in crime and violence ([Kuo and Sullivan, 2001](#))
- If the produce is donated, the strength of the community is improved through support of the people most in need in the community ([Blaine et al., 2010](#))
- Growing food locally ensures better food security ([Feenstra, 1997](#))



Mental Health:

- Safe space allows for people to connect with nature (promoting tranquility and relaxation) ([Wassenberg et al., 2015](#))
- Planting, weeding, and harvesting on a regular basis have been found to decrease stress and depression by lowering stress hormone levels ([Detweiler et al., 2015](#))
- Turning attention away from negative thought patterns and onto the task of gardening improves overall mood and reduces mental fatigue (horticulture therapy) ([Detweiler et al., 2015](#))
- Gardening can reduce anxiety ([Hassan et al., 2018](#))
- Gardening can improve self-esteem ([Wood et al., 2016](#))
- Contact with a particular bacterium in soil increases brain serotonin levels, reducing depression and anxiety ([Lowry et al., 2007](#))
- Social inclusion and connections facilitated by a community-run garden improves mental health and wellbeing (this can aid in coping with illnesses) ([Diamant and Waterhouse, 2010](#))
- Gardening and socializing in community-run gardens have been shown to slow the progression of dementia ([White et al., 2017](#))





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Physical Health:

- Increased physical exercise improves physical health and overall fitness in children and adults ([Soga et al., 2017](#)).
- Increased movement during gardening reduces joint and muscle pain ([Detweiler et al., 2012](#)).
- Donated produce will help to provide healthy fruits and vegetables for people in need in the community who may not have access to fresh produce due to its high price (especially important for people with illnesses like diabetes) ([Basu et al., 2014](#)).
- Gardens encourage healthier lifestyles and eating habits through education on nutrition ([McAleeese and Rankin, 2007](#)).

Climate Health and Ecological Restoration:

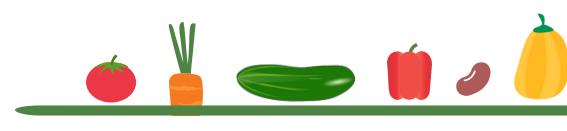
- Gardens improve water regulation when they replace sealed surfaces like concrete (improves absorption of water runoff) ([Gittleman et al., 2017](#)).
- Plants reduce air pollution by absorbing carbon dioxide ([Okvat and Zautra, 2011](#)).
- Gardens can improve air circulation and cool the surrounding area ([Okvat and Zautra, 2011](#)).
- Composting improves air quality by reducing methane usually released when solid waste rots in landfills ([Okvat and Zautra, 2011](#)).
- Composting recycles waste into nutrient dense soil ([Claassen and Carey, 2013](#)).
- Greater local food production reduces greenhouse gases generated during long distance food transportation ([Kulak et al., 2013](#)).
- Hub of biodiversity and conservation (sanctuary for birds, insect pollinators, etc. (hopefully not animals eating your food!)) ([Goddard et al., 2010](#)).
- Time spent in community gardens can lead to an increase in environmentally conscious behavior and a greater awareness of present environmental issues ([Okvat and Zautra, 2011](#)).

Economic Benefits:

- Gardening is linked to a reduction in crime (improve economy of the community) ([Kuo and Sullivan, 2001](#)).
- Higher property values associated with areas close to community gardens (A study found that within the poorest neighborhoods with a community garden, property values within 1000 feet of the community garden increased as much as 9.4 percent over a five year period after the community garden opened, while properties farther away from the garden had a property value increase of 2.4 percent) ([Voicu and Been, 2008](#)).

These **web lists** are wonderful additional resources:

- [Health Benefits of Gardening \[1.1\]](#)
- [Environmental, Health, and Social Benefits of Gardens \[1.2\]](#)
- [Benefits of Gardening for People with Disabilities \[1.3\]](#)





Chapter 2: Fundraising

In order to begin and maintain your garden, you will need to obtain funding. The start-up costs are just one aspect of your necessary garden funding. Once you have built your garden you will need a steady flow of funds to provide for its upkeep year after year.

There are **many ways to raise funds** for your garden. One of the first things you must do is clarify the **type** of garden you are building and create a *mission statement*, a summary for the values and aims of an organization. This allows donors to make an informed decision with regard to their donations.

Below are a handful of fundraising techniques that we have found most effective from our experiences with the Pleasantville Community Garden.

EVENTS

Events are a great way to bring attention to your cause while raising money. A key issue with events is ensuring that the **cost of the event does not outrun the money you raise** with the event.

Some ways to keep the costs down are to:

- Find a venue that will donate space for your event
- Have the event at a volunteer's home or in a public space
- Ask local vendors if they will donate food or drinks or at least provide them at a reduced rate



GRANTS

Many organizations set money aside as grants for various charitable organizations such as community gardens. The Pleasantville Community Garden raised half of its initial funds (about \$5,000) through grants. It continues to apply for grants for specific projects to extend its mission. Here are some ways to find grants:

- *Friends and Family:* All of these people potentially have connections to organizations that offer charitable grants or know of grant-offering organizations.
- *Local Businesses:* Local businesses often want to become involved in local service projects and will be willing to contribute financially.
- *Google:* A simple Google search of "garden grants" or "food justice grants" will help you to identify numerous grant opportunities.
- *Grant Search Engines:* These websites make it easier to search for grants (ex. [CANDID](#) [2.1] (\$40 per month), [Grants.Gov](#) [2.2] (federal grants, free))





Here are some general tips on **grant** searching and writing:

- Grants vary greatly in size, so it is important that you have a well-laid-out plan assessing your need based on a clear, realistic, and concise budget.
- The application process for a grant can take time, so do plenty of research and pick the grants that most accurately fit your mission and magnitude of monetary need to avoid wasting time and effort.
- Having one or two people in your organization who are responsible for this process is helpful because if you do receive the grant, there is follow-up information that the grantor agency will request be provided to them. Follow-up is extremely important if you plan to seek subsequent grants from that grantor in the future.

CROWDFUNDING

Crowdfunding is another avenue that many organizations use to raise money. Crowdfunding is useful when raising funds for a specific goal that you can promote, such as raising the funds to begin your garden. If you choose to go this route as part of your fundraising efforts, make sure to do your research into the various platforms to determine the fees associated with the utilization of that specific platform. Here are some crowdfunding options to investigate:

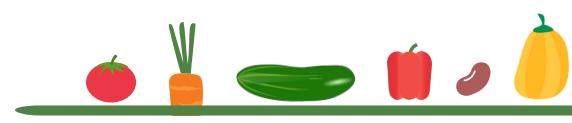
- [Kickstarter](#) [2.7]: If you fail to reach the goal, you do not get any money. A 5% fee if you do reach your goal.
- [Indiegogo](#) [2.8]: You keep the money no matter if you fail to reach the goal, but up to 10% fee (we used this crowdfunding site).
- [Fundly](#) [2.9]: You keep the money no matter if you fail to reach the goal, but up to 8% fee - great for charities.

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Cultivating a list of individual donors is extremely important, especially for creating a steady flow of year-after-year income to your garden. Always make it EASY to donate! Try to cultivate a way for donors to set up regular giving schedules such as monthly, quarterly, or annually. It is important to always look for new individual donors; regular donors may not donate repetitively if you continue to fish from the same well.

Opportunities to maximize individual donations:

- *Friends and Family*: Friends and family will often be willing to donate to your charitable cause, especially if you demonstrate your passion for it. A simple set of letters or emails can fundraise hundreds or even thousands of dollars with a minimal cost. Here is an example [friends and family donation letter](#) [2.3] that we used. Here is a [consistent donor letter](#) [2.4] that we sent to our consistent donors to ask for more donations to expand our mission.
- *Coffee Events*: We used these "coffee" events several times to fundraise for the construction of the garden. This event is a small party in which you ask a friend to invite 10-20 of their friends. Small snacks and coffee are provided at this event during which you can present about your cause and plan and mingle with potential donors. Your friend bridges between you and these possible donors. At the end of the event, provide an easy method to donate. This is a great way to make new contacts as well. Here is an example [coffee event presentation](#) [2.5] that we used.
- *Local Groups*: Getting information out through local groups such as religious organizations, sports organizations, and civic groups is another way to attract individual donors. Here is a [donation form](#) [2.6] we asked a local group to distribute on our behalf, along with additional information.





SALE OF PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

The sale of items related to your garden is a way to make money and get the word out about your organization. You will want to sell items that require little financial outlay on your part but allow a large enough mark-up to be profitable. This is typically not a way to make a large amount of money but is useful for small costs and can function as a good form of advertising. Make sure the items have the same tone as your organization.

Examples of promotional items:

- *Logo Reusable Bags:* We sell these at certain events (especially a town pride event at which we have a booth) to offset event costs. People promote the garden whenever they go shopping!
- *Logo Shirts or Hats:* These can be sold to volunteers, potentially at a small price, as another form of promotion.
- *Plaques/Bricks:* Companies, families, organizations, or individuals can sponsor your garden by donating a set price so that you buy a brick or plaque printed with the group or individual name to be placed in the garden. However, this item has less promotional value as it will stay at the garden.



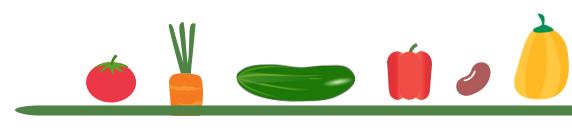
SALES OF PRODUCE

This is a tactic that the Pleasantville Community Garden has never taken (as we are committed to donating 100% of the fresh produce we grow and collect) but is a viable option for a garden organization. If you and your organization deem it necessary, the sale of the produce of the garden can provide a steady stream of income to cover overhead costs for the garden.



Possibilities for This Type of Sale

- *Garden Plots:* You could rent out sections of the garden to members of the community who want to grow produce for their use but do not have their own garden. The renter would take care of their section and then be able to harvest the produce. You can decide if the renter is allowed to take home all of the produce or only a portion (with the rest of the produce being donated to people in need).
- *Direct Sale of Fruits and Vegetables:* This option could constitute selling the produce to a local farmers market or restaurant, or setting up your own mini farmers market to sell your produce. However, be wary of legal requirements before embarking on any of these tracks and consider consulting with local officials or lawyers if possible. Look here for some [tips about legal regulations for selling produce](#) [2.10].





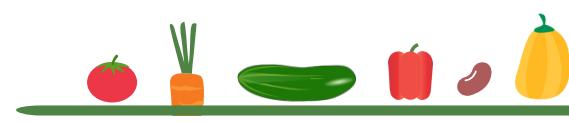
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OTHER NOTES

- The location that you choose for your garden can impact your fundraising capabilities. For example, the Pleasantville Community Garden's main donation garden was built on a piece of land of a local church in Pleasantville. This church was willing to give us use of the land for free, cover our cost of utilities, and allow our organization to function under their 501c3 (nonprofit organization), allowing the Pleasantville Community Garden to get off the ground quickly with low overhead. Due to this connection to the church, several people were hesitant to write us checks as they had to be written out to the church. Also, certain funders restrict religion-affiliated organizations from applying for their grants.
- The Pleasantville Community Garden raised \$10,000 to build our 600 square foot garden and have a base annual overhead cost of about \$2,000 (not including one-time purchases and special projects). Don't be scared off by these large numbers! Don't think you have to raise this much for your project! This is just an example for the Pleasantville Community Garden's unique experience, and it is certainly possible to build and maintain a garden for a fraction of the cost, depending on the size of the garden and your materials. Our initial cost was so large mainly because we wanted to use high quality cedar wood for the fences and beds so that the garden would last longer, along with a costly irrigation system so that constant watering was less of an issue. These seemingly insurmountable budgets were scary for us at first as well, but hard work and multiple fundraising tactics put this goal within our reach. A fairly accurate initial cost and annual overhead cost for your organization will allow a more targeted fundraising plan.



- If you are able to properly articulate your plan and goal to others, it will be easier for them to make a decision to donate money, goods and services to make your passion a reality.
- If you are struggling to fundraise enough money for initial construction or annual overhead, try to find ways to lower costs in addition to looking for funding options.
- Keeping records of the amount of produce grown, collected, and donated can help immensely in asking for donations or grants. These numbers give people a concrete quantification of how much they are helping. By keeping poundage records, you can also set realistic goals of how to expand your mission.
- Always keep fundraising! Never become comfortable with what you have in the bank account because these funds will always slowly drain away. Be proactive and continue to fundraise every year in case of disaster and to maintain funds.





Chapter 3: Building a Garden

The construction of your garden will vary greatly depending on the piece of land you are building on and your goals for the garden itself. In this section, we will provide an overview of the construction of the Pleasantville Community Garden's main donation garden to give you a sense of the process and some materials we found helpful.

Section I: Procuring the Land

The land on which the garden will be built should be identified and procured well before actual construction begins. A thorough evaluation of the proposed garden site should be undertaken and include consideration of:

- **Direct Sunlight.** *A minimum of six hours daily.*
- **Access to Water.**
- **Adequate Drainage.**
- **Local Animal Populations.** You may need a fence to keep out animals
- **Lot Size.** How much growing space will you have?
- **Proximity.** How close is the proposed garden site to you and your volunteers?
- **Soil Quality.** Feasibility of success based on the lot's historical and present usage and soil composition (a soil test [3.1], while not imperative if raised beds will be built, will be helpful to determine if any contaminants are present)
- **Garden Visibility.** How visible is your garden to the public? Are there neighboring residents who can see the garden? This may affect your attention to the aesthetics of the garden. Our garden is on a side yard facing the street, so we added a pergola with flowers in the front, and stained the wood supports a light gray. This aesthetic plan for the garden was more pleasing to the neighbors and therefore more readily accepted.
- Here is some more information on garden site selection and size [3.2], along with some useful tips for planting, plant care, and harvesting. This information is geared toward Westchester County.



Section II: Planning out the Garden

1. Drawings. It is important to do **several** drawings of possible garden layouts in order to develop the best layout possible. Using graph paper, sketch out the dimensions of the proposed garden to create as much growing space as possible while also making the beds easily accessible. Consider the following:

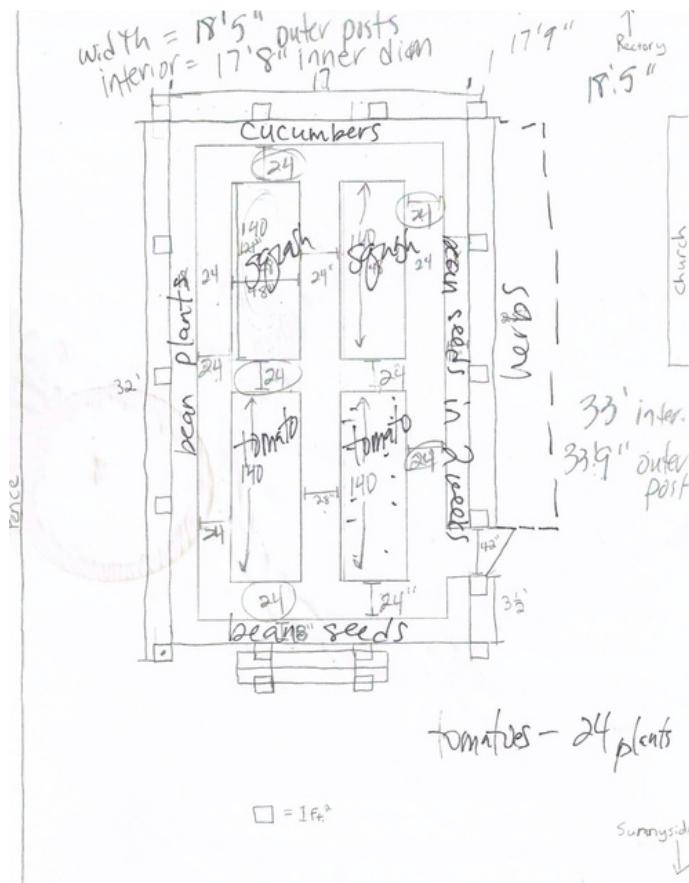
- *Raised Beds:* Raised beds make it easier to tend to the plants of the garden (especially for the elderly and disabled) and allow better control of the soil in which your plants are growing. For these reasons, we strongly suggest using raised beds.
- *Bed Position:* We suggest having a thinner bed around the edge of the garden for plants that climb up the fence (like peas and cucumbers). Then, several larger beds can be made in the middle of the garden for other crops that spread more.





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- Accessibility: Take into consideration access to the plants – are walkways needed? For the PCG, walkways two feet wide between the raised beds allowed for easy access to all beds.
- Growing Space Ratio: Consider the ratio of growing space to total space (aim for 1:2 or greater). Once constructed, there was 600 square feet of total space in the PCG garden with 305 square feet dedicated to growing space in raised beds. Here is our final garden layout [3.3] with what we decided to grow in each bed:



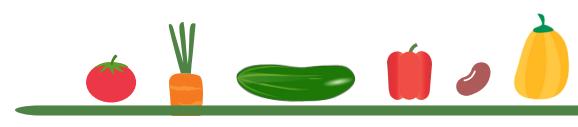
- Animal Control: Plan necessary measures to keep out local animal populations. For the PCG, we have a five-foot chicken wire fence (to keep out deer) which curls at the bottom to go under the garden as well to keep out burrowers. Fencing needs will differ based on location.

- **Building Permits.** Obtaining the appropriate **approval and permits** for your garden is essential to success in building the garden. Here is who you will likely need approval from before construction:

- *Town Building Permits:* Here is a guide to building permits and forms for Westchester County [3.4], with a few town-specific examples. The process outlined in this attachment may help you to understand the general process to obtain town building permits, even if you are not building your garden in Westchester.
- *Landowner Approval:* We presented this presentation for land use [3.5] to the vestry of the church to convince them to allow us to use a piece of the land to build the garden. We also created a memo of understanding with landowner [3.6] to mitigate disagreements.
- *Neighbor Approval:* We sought this approval too late which led to us having to postpone construction while we addressed some of the neighbors' concerns about aesthetics, noise, and parking. Make sure to notify the surrounding neighbors of your plans early to keep them in the loop and in support of your garden. Here is a neighbor meeting invite [3.7] we dropped off at surrounding houses for a meeting in which we explained the project and asked if anyone had concerns about it.

- **Materials.** Give due **consideration to the materials to be used** in the construction of the garden. There is a wide variety of wood, fencing, gravel, compost, soil, seeds, and gardening tools available.

- *Wood:* For the PCG, cedar was the wood of choice due to its weather resistance and durability. When growing vegetables, **DO NOT** use pressure treated wood as the chemicals used in this process will leach into the soil and therefore the produce. Hardwoods are suggested for food growing.
- *Fence Posts:* If building a tall fence to keep out large animals, we suggest using cement for the fence





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posts to make sure that the garden is sturdy.

- *Fence:* Fencing is crucial to keep animals out. To keep animals out and to ensure burrowers could not get in, we used coated chicken wire, which stretched from the top of the fence to 1' underground and then bent horizontal to the ground to 18" under the garden. Needed fencing will differ based regional animals.
- *Landscaping Fabric:* Landscaping fabric should be placed under the walkways before they are filled with gravel. This landscaping fabric [3.8] will minimize the invasion of weeds in the walkways.
- *Gravel:* To fill in the walkways between the garden beds, a large amount of gravel was needed (2" deep on all walkways). Gravel makes it easier to walk through the garden and helps to prevent weed growth in the walkways.
- *Soil and Compost:* The beds will have a combination of soil and compost (see Chapter 4: Gardening).

4. Tools.

You will need an assortment of tools for the construction, planting and general gardening.

- *Land Clearing:* Shovels, pickaxes, hoes, trowels
- *Fence and Raised Bed Building:* Post hole diggers, string, drills, all-weather wood screws, levels, galvanized steel staples, staple guns, wheelbarrow for cement
- *Garden Filling:* Wheelbarrows, large buckets, shovels, trowels, rakes
- *Irrigation System:* Is an irrigation system needed? Using a digitalized irrigation system ensures that the garden receives a base amount of water each day, even when there may be a shortage of volunteers. However, the irrigation system will incur a great cost (around \$2,800 for our garden), so identify if you want an irrigation system early in your planning process to ensure that you fundraise enough. While useful, irrigation systems are certainly not necessary and should not be a barrier to making your garden a reality. Here is some information on selecting an irrigation system [3.9] if you choose to go down this path.

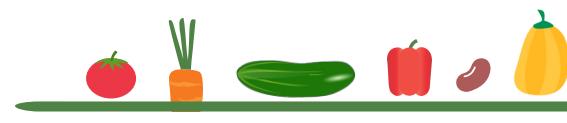
Section III: Organizing Volunteers for Construction

Choose the number of days for construction depending on the size of the garden you are building, if you are using concrete for the fence posts, and the number of volunteers who will be helping. Planning and promoting an actual event around the construction of the garden will attract volunteers to come out and help (see Chapter 5: Volunteers). Food and drinks should be provided for volunteers. Here is how we split our construction into two consecutive Saturdays:

- **Day One:** Clear and flatten the land where the garden will be and install the fence posts with concrete. A limited number of volunteers with strength and/or carpentry skills was effective for us for this day.



- **Day Two:** Create the raised beds; put down gravel, soil, and compost; and then plant. This is when we had many multi-generational volunteers of all skill levels join in.





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Section IV: The Building Process

Once final calculations have been made, and all the materials have been procured, it is time to **start construction**. Every project will be different, but here is information that may be helpful, taken from the PCG experience.

- Fencing:** Once the area has been adequately cleared, two-foot-deep postholes were made with posthole diggers. Cement was used to ensure the stability of the posts, with scrap wood used to keep the posts in place until the cement set. For the PCG, we halted day one construction once the posts were in place to allow the cement to completely dry. Upon returning a week later, crossbeams were attached to the fence posts with all-weather wood screws. Next came the coated mesh fencing, attached with galvanized steel staples.

- Raised Beds:** Next, the actual garden beds were constructed. Recommended heights for raised beds vary from 8 inches to 18 inches. The larger the bed, the more soil and compost will be needed, so consider costs. Make sure that volunteers can reach any plant in the bed. Here are resources providing [general raised bed building ideas](#) [3.10] and [specific raised bed building instructions](#) [3.11]. Here is a [guide on raised beds, soil health, and container gardening](#) [3.12].

- Filling the Garden:** Before the constructed beds are put in place the ground will need to be leveled and weed-suppressing landscape fabric put down over the walkways to help minimize the invasion of weeds. Then, it is time to place the beds and fill them by wheelbarrow or bucket load. Volunteers of any age can help bring buckets of soil and compost to fill the beds and buckets of gravel to pour on the walkways. The gravel, compost, and soil should then be leveled with a rake.



- Aesthetics:** The PCG included a small un-fenced bed on the outside of the garden for herbs and zinnias (which deter deer and other pests). In addition to being aesthetically pleasing, volunteers are invited to help themselves to the herbs and flowers over the course of the growing season. Another aesthetic touch was the construction of a pergola, which was easily put together from a kit and placed at the front of the garden where donated rose bushes would be planted and, in time, grow up and over. Aesthetics may seem unimportant and superfluous, but this can be a vital part of the garden construction to ensure that the landowner and the neighbors remain supportive of the garden.

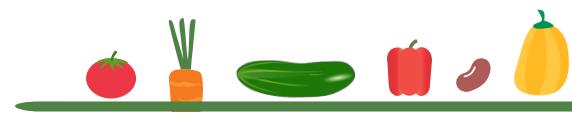


- Gate:** A pre-constructed gate was attached to provide easy access for the volunteer gardeners while keeping out animals.



- Irrigation System:** The last step for the PCG was the post-planting installation of a digitalized irrigation system of holed hoses that runs through the raised beds of the garden, watering the beds every day at 5am for about an hour. The irrigation system has a weather monitor to decrease its daily watering if it rains.

- Container Gardening:** Though the PCG has experimented less with this, growing vegetable plants in containers (pots, buckets, etc.) can increase growing space if your area is limited or an odd shape. We grew some tomatoes in pots at one of the gardens with which we work, with the pots at the ends of raised beds, which maximized the available growing space. Here is some information on [growing vegetables in containers](#) [3.13]. We also grow potatoes in bags which are kept outside of the garden, as they are largely left alone by pests.





Chapter 4: Gardening

Once the garden was built, it was time for planting. The soil and compost were already dumped in the raised beds, so planting was easy. In this section, we will delve into soil maintenance, what to grow in your garden (based on region and climate), and the different types of jobs that must be done in your garden.

Section I: Soil Maintenance

The soil is the most important part of the garden and must be maintained regularly. We learned from farmers that healthy soil will produce healthy plants and healthy plants naturally keep pests away. Pests like to attack sickly plants, so maintaining healthy soil is vital.

The key to healthy soil is making sure to add nutrients. Plants, especially vegetable plants, use soil nutrients to make strong plants and big vegetables, so there are a couple of steps to take to keep your soil healthy. Here is some specific information on soil maintenance [4.1]. Following are general tips:

- **Soil Layering.** Always layer your beds - never turn the soil. The biology of the soil is such that the bacteria and "good" bugs that live one foot under the surface cannot survive on the surface and vice versa. Always layer new soil on top as rain and watering will allow the nutrients to seep into the lower soil layers.
- **Compost.** In the spring, add a thick layer of rich compost on the top of the beds to kick start the season. Compost can be purchased in bags at local nurseries or home improvement stores or from farms in bulk (possibly by truckload), depending on how much is needed.
- **Organic Supplements.** Any organic supplement with nitrogen will add needed nutrients to your garden. A thin layer should be spread monthly during the growing season.
 - Green Sand [4.2]
 - Kelp Mix [4.3]
 - Lobster Compost [4.4]



- **End of Growing Season.** At the end of the season, when harvesting is complete, clip the dead plants (leave the roots in the ground to decompose) and fill the beds with dead plant matter, leaves, or hay. Water this new top layer and throw additional dirt on top to hold everything in place. This new top layer will decompose during the winter and leave nutrient-rich soil for the next spring.
- **Cover Crops.** You can also plant cover crops at the end of the growing season. Cover crops are winter plants that replenish the soil with nutrients. Here is information on choosing cover crops [4.5] and how to best plant them.





Section II: What to Plant

We worked with a local farmer and several local gardeners who gave us great advice when choosing which plants to grow in our garden. We usually plant tomato plants in two of our big beds and then yellow and zucchini squash in the other two big beds. Peas and cucumbers (with beans and lettuce interspersed) were planted on the outer beds of the garden because these plants like to climb and grow up the fence that surrounds our garden. We plant an herb and flower bed outside of the fence with basil, parsley, zinnias, and rosemary. These plants are natural pest repellants, so they help to keep the garden safe from critters.

General Tips for Choosing What to Grow in Your Garden:

1. Grow simple food. If you are planning to donate food to people in need, you should plant basic, familiar vegetables and fruits. Lettuce, squash, tomatoes, beans, and peas are easy to grow, and most people know how to use them. Your volunteers will also have an easier time distinguishing simple vegetable and fruit plants from other plants and will have a better idea of when to harvest their produce.

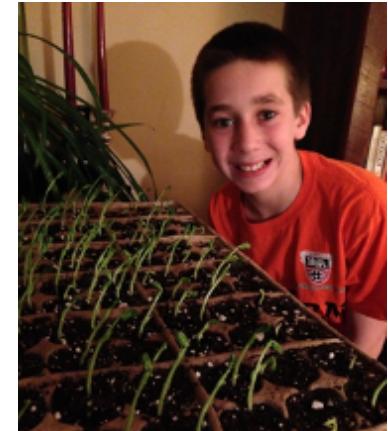
2. Do not try to do too much. Limit the number of types of vegetables and fruits you are growing and do not grow many different varieties. Starting out, you will need to learn what works best in your garden and for your volunteers. Too many varieties can become complicated and overwhelming. As you gain confidence and knowledge, you can add new vegetables. Here is our [PCG planting chart](#) [4.6] with times to plant and harvest.



3. Know your growing climate. It is important to do in-depth research on which types of plants will grow best in your garden based on your location and climate. This website provides [vegetable planting schedules by zone](#) [4.7]. In addition, here is a list of [suggested vegetable varieties to grow in Westchester](#) [4.8] and a [fall growing guide for Westchester](#) [4.9], with information on what to grow and how to keep the plants healthy.

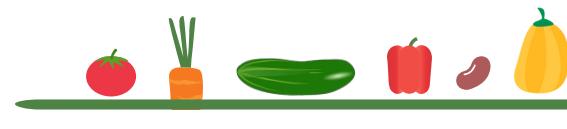
4. Start certain plants indoors and others directly as seeds.

Some plants are easy to grow from seeds directly in your garden while others need to be started early indoors.



- *Plants to Start Indoors:* Tomatoes and peppers and two vegetables that are generally recommended to start as seeds indoors and then plant in your garden as small plants. You can start plants indoors a few months before you intend to plant them outdoors, or you can purchase small plants at nurseries. Small started plants should not be transplanted outside until the threat of frost is past. Here is information on [starting plants indoors](#) [4.10], a [simple seed starting pamphlet](#) [4.11] we sent to volunteers starting seeds for us, and a [guide for planting cycles and native plants](#) [4.12] with a focus mainly on New York.

- *Seeds to Plant Directly:* Most other plants are best to plant directly as seeds in the garden. Snow peas, sugar snap peas, squashes, cucumbers, and lettuce all grow best when planted directly in the ground. Peas can be planted as soon as the ground thaws and other vegetables can be planted according to the growing zone. We find that these plants grow better from seed as transplanting shocks these plants and can result in stunted growth.





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- Here is a great [vegetable planting calendar for Westchester](#) [4.13] with information about which crops can be planted directly as seeds or started indoors and then transplanted.
- We suggest buying seeds from [Johnny's Selected Seeds](#) [4.14]. You can also buy seeds and plants from a local plant nursery or home improvement store.

5. Change your growing plan based on which plants work best. Gardening is powered by trial and error and you can increase your yield annually by noting which plants perform best in your garden. Certain plants may not grow well in your climate, soil, or with your amount of sun exposure. Annually testing out new fruits and vegetables will help you to discover the most productive plants for your location. We have found tomatoes to be our most productive crop. On the other hand, cucumbers were unsuccessful in our garden, so we have stopped growing them. Meanwhile, we have tried new crops including carrots and apples.

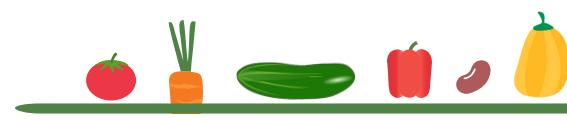
6. Grow plants to support pollination. By using flowers and native plants to attract pollinators, while limiting the use of pesticides, you can support local pollinator populations. This has beneficial impacts on your local ecosystem and some of the pollinators may even help pollinate your flowering vegetable plants, like tomatoes. Here is a [guide for supporting pollination](#) [4.15].



Section III: Garden Jobs

The general tasks of weeding, watering, replanting, and harvesting fluctuate based on the time of the year and progress of the garden. Here is our general [PCG Garden Operations Calendar](#) [4.16] that gives an outline of when garden tasks need to be completed for our organization. (In the next chapter, we will delve into mobilizing volunteers to complete these tasks.)

- **Weeding.** Weeding needs to be done frequently so that your plants have better access to nutrients. It is important that your volunteers can identify your seedlings and avoid weeding them, or else we suggest limiting weeding until the seedlings are more easily identifiable.
- **Watering.** If you have an irrigation system, you may only need to water when it gets very hot and dry. Our drip system is used 1 hour per day (5 am – 6 am) which takes care of most of our garden watering. When volunteers water, be sure to have them water gently so as not to inadvertently dig up seeds or kill small plants. The best judge of garden moisture is not the surface but two inches down. Teach your volunteers to use the “finger test” by pushing a finger two inches into the soil to see if it is moist under the surface. The best times to water your garden are the early morning or late afternoon. Because the sun is not at its height during these times, the water will not immediately evaporate and the plants will also have time to dry before night.
- **Reseeding.** We suggest reseeding certain plants throughout the growing season. For example, lettuce and bean seeds should be planted every two weeks throughout the season so that your crops can cycle and produce abundantly throughout the season.
- **Harvesting.** Perhaps the most fun part of gardening, harvesting needs to be carefully managed. Volunteers are very excited for the opportunity to harvest, but you should give

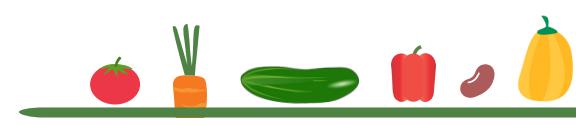




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guidelines as to the right color and size the vegetable should be for harvesting. Early harvesting of vegetables before they get to their full potential will lead to a lower yield and less nutrition provided to people in need, if you are donating the produce. Here is a [chart of optimal storage for fruits and vegetables](#) [4.17], which will help you determine if you need to refrigerate your vegetables right after harvesting or not.

Two of our volunteers created a [growing guide](#) [4.18], which we laminated and have hanging in our garden. This **growing guide** helps volunteers with identifying seedlings, when to harvest all of the vegetables and fruits, and how to harvest the produce that we grow. We suggest that you create your own growing guide with the vegetables you are growing to put in your garden for your volunteers.





Chapter 5: Collecting Produce

As the Pleasantville Community Garden progressed, a farmer from our local farmers market offered to give us left over produce at the end of each market. This started the next important phase of our work. We learned that we could greatly increase our produce donations by collecting produce from local sources, such as the local farmers market, supermarkets, and community-based "fresh food" drives. These collections have become a vital part of our work and significantly increased the amount of produce that we are able to donate each week.

1. Farmers Markets

- Originally a farmer at the market reached out to us to set up a donation process. Her rationale was that she goes to one farmers market each week and ends up composting the food that doesn't sell. Other farmers told us the same. The benefit to the farmers is that they don't have to transport unsold food back to the farm and are glad it is going to help people in need.
- In NY, another benefit for the farmers is that they can receive a tax write off for the food donated. We keep weekly records so that they can submit for tax write off.
- Twice a year, we run Farmers Market Donation Events where we ask customers to buy extra fruits and vegetables from the farmers to donate to us. This gives the farmers a nice boost of sales and reminds the community of the amazing food donated by the farmers every week.
- We have set up an efficient system with volunteer "veggie drivers" and "veggie haulers" who help us gather and weigh the produce donations and then drive the produce directly to food pantries where it can be used..

2. Supermarkets

- Produce waste in grocery stores is a huge problem and this is a great opportunity to redistribute to those in need.
- Grocery store managers can be approached to determine if the store would be willing to donate produce .
- There may be concern about the liability of donating, but most states have laws protecting organizations and companies when donating food
- Care needs to be taken to ensure that the produce is fresh enough to be able to donate to others. The rule of thumb is that food shouldn't be donated that you wouldn't feed to your family. This is a great way to consider freshness.
- Once an agreement is made with the grocery store, then a process needs to be created to pick-up the food on a consistent basis and get the food to the food sharing organizations quickly for distribution.

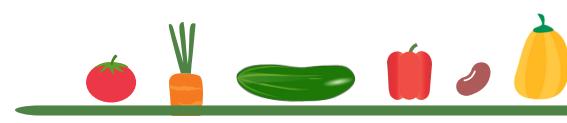




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3. Food Collection Events

- We have had great success with Fresh Food drives which are similar to regular food drives, but specifically for fresh fruits and vegetables. We have run these events at local schools, asking students to bring fresh food items on a specific day. At the high school, we've been able to work with teachers to give extra credit for students who bring fresh food to class. Our volunteers then pick up the collected fruits and vegetables and deliver them to the food sharing organization. Typically these food drives will result in 200 - 500 pounds of fresh food to donate!
- We have also worked with local organizations, such as Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, a local tennis club, and the Garden Club, to include a fresh food drive to an event that they are hosting. For example, we worked with a local tennis club to show a movie about Food Waste to their members and the admission price was a bag of fresh produce. These events will typically result in 200-400 pounds of fresh food per event.
- Finally, we have also promoted our work during town-wide events and celebrations and not only collected fresh produce, but also signed up volunteers to work with us. These events can be a great opportunity to promote the work of the organization as well as to donate additional food to local organizations and get more community support!





Chapter 6: Volunteers

Volunteers will form the base of your organization and are integral to the success of your garden. You will likely rely on these volunteers for the majority of the tasks of the organization, especially the gardening and at events. The Pleasantville Community Garden estimates that it includes about **200 active volunteers** every year. This number may seem daunting, but we have built up to this level over several years. In this section, we will jump into the various types of volunteers that you should target, plans to organize volunteers, and several opportunities for how these volunteers can contribute to your organization.

Section I: Types of Volunteers

- **Key Supporters.** This type of volunteer refers to the initial people who are key to the creation of the organization. The Pleasantville Community Garden gained the support of these integral supporters during our two-year planning period before our garden was built. For this group of key supporters, seek out people with specific skills that you or the organization is lacking but needs. This group of key supporters also acted as a type of start-up organization during the early stages, which will be explained in Chapter 6: Organization Setup. Here are some key supporters that we initially sought out in our community:

- Grant Writer
- Gardeners
- Logo Designer
- Landscape Architect (helped us to plan out our garden)
- Lawyer (helped us in seeking permits and later in making legal documents for the garden organization, like our policy against sexual harassment [5.1])
- Corporate Fundraiser



- **Groups.** There are many types of groups that get involved in local community service that may be willing to volunteer for your organization. Some groups reached out directly to us, but we have also contacted groups that we thought may like to volunteer at our garden. The key to groups of volunteers is to have **an organized plan** of what the group will be doing and to make sure that there is enough work for the number of volunteers. We always make sure to talk to every group about our project and mission at least for a few minutes during these volunteer events. We also provide food and drinks for participants, and usually some promotional items as well, such as logoed pens, bracelets, or bags. Here are a few types of groups that have volunteered with us that you may want to reach out to for volunteer help:

- Boy/Girl Scouts
- Sports Teams - Club and School Teams (even a basketball team from a local university)
- Religious Groups (Confirmation Classes, Mitzvah Projects, J-Teen, etc.)





- **Individuals.** Individuals can serve numerous roles in your organization, including gardening, distribution to food pantries, special events, organizational roles, and even specialized jobs based on skill set (ex. artwork, promotional videos). This is an interested set of volunteers that can help you achieve specific needs. We attempt to use individual volunteers of every age and demographic to fully involve the community.
- **Networks.** As was explained above, it is important to **develop a base of key supporters** at the beginning of your organization. This job will get easier the further you delve into the project because of networking, which consists of the creation of a web of intertwined contacts that will grow as your project grows. With the garden, we found that with each new person we talked to, we gained another two or three contacts to follow up with. In this respect, our volunteer base started to multiply rapidly from our initial core. It is vital to **take advantage of networking** to identify new opportunities for your organization. For example, our networking led to a farmer at our local farmers market hearing about our organization from a friend and reaching out to donate to us their leftover fresh produce. This initial networking has led to a partnership that has allowed us to donate tens of thousands of pounds of fresh produce to local pantries. Volunteer networking will **increase your public visibility** and allow you to identify more key supporters and new opportunities to expand your mission, accelerating your project.

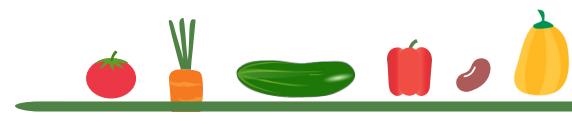
Section II: Volunteer Programs

- **Own a Week.** We developed the Own a Week program to organize volunteers maintaining our garden throughout the year. This method of organizing volunteers let us have a continuous stream of volunteers throughout our growing season while using a relatively small pool of volunteers who could take care of the garden with flexible hours.



For a week, a volunteer (or family) "owns" the garden, including weeding, watering, and harvesting. This program requires a **small time commitment** and is **flexible for volunteers** with a busy schedule as they simply come to the garden whenever they have time during the week. We make sure to train and give tours of the garden to every volunteer who will "own a week," to ensure that anyone from the community can participate. We also make sure to tell our participating volunteers when to harvest the produce (in line with when we have drivers to donate the produce) and where to store it. We have found that the Own a Week program is great for families and people who want to garden but do not have their own garden.

- **Open Garden Saturday.** Once we decided on the Own a Week program, it became apparent that a complementary program was necessary. There needed to be a time to train the volunteer "owning" the garden for the week and for our volunteers to check on the garden regularly. We also wanted to set aside a time for curious people or new contacts to come and see the garden or get a short tour. Open Garden Saturday was our solution to these gaps. Every Saturday during the growing season (from 10 am to noon) the garden would be open to anyone who wanted to come, while we had one or two experienced garden volunteers present. The volunteer "owning" the garden for the next week was also instructed to come during this time to be trained on the necessary tasks for the week. During this time, the experienced garden volunteer can ensure that all of the plants are growing well and without disease. They can also check to make sure no animals have broken in, the irrigation system is running well, and that there is no damage to the wood or fence of the garden.





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- **Produce Collection.**

Produce collection will differ depending on your organization and its reach. The Pleasantville Community Garden found that we could greatly expand the amount of produce that we donated by collecting produce by various means. We collect extra produce from people's home gardens. We collect produce from fresh produce drives held



with different groups, including sports teams and school groups. **Through a partnership with a local farmers market**, we also collect leftover produce from vendors at the end of each weekly market. We constantly need volunteers to organize these collection events, weigh the produce for our records, and pack the produce into the cars of people who distribute the produce to local pantries. Here is the [farmers market donation manager responsibilities](#) [5.2] that should give a good overview of our operations at the farmers market.

- **Produce Distribution.** The final step in our process is bringing the produce that we have grown and collected to the local food pantries and food distribution organizations. We have a set of volunteers who have the job of driving this produce to the pantries when necessary. It is important to coordinate the collection and harvesting of your organization to limit the number of driving trips necessary for volunteers. We have all of our volunteers who collect and distribute the farmers market produce sign this [transportation waiver](#) [5.3] to protect the PCG legally. Here is a [list of Westchester food pantries](#) [5.4] you might be able to partner with for produce distribution.

- **Special Tasks/Events.** Your garden organization will invariably need volunteer help for a wide array of tasks and events, so it is important to be willing to hand the reins of some of these tasks to other volunteers who perhaps have more specialized skill in this field. Sometimes we approached volunteers we knew had specific skills and asked them to do a certain task, but other times we created a task to utilize the particular skills of a volunteer. These special tasks and events had promotional functions as well as often collecting fresh produce. Here are a few special tasks that we have doled out to specific volunteers:

- *Artistic Design of Posters and Banners for Events*



- *Running of High School Fresh Food Drives*
- *Creating Simple Recipes* (these [Simple Recipe Cards](#) [5.5] include our grown vegetables and are given to the food pantries we donate to along with donations)





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- Building Wood Signs for Plant Identification in Our Garden



- Running Booths at Town Events (signing up potential volunteers and generating community interest)



- Building a Tool Shed (Eagle Scout project)



- Healthy Cooking Demos at the Garden



- Yoga at the Garden Events (here is a [yoga at the garden email communication \[5.6\]](#) we sent)
- Short Information Videos (see this [Hunger Video \[5.7\]](#) made by a local middle school student)





Chapter 7: Organization Setup

The setup of the organization, or governing body, behind your garden will be **vital** to ensuring that your garden is structured, funded, and firm in following its mission. The best organization setup will vary for every organization and depends on an assortment of variables like the time and resources available, the number of people involved, and your end goal.

For the Pleasantville Community Garden, our leadership body went through three distinct phases as the organization was developing, which will be described in this chapter. These three organization setups may not directly apply to your organization, but they provide potential ideas with varying sizes and degrees of control that might inspire your organizational setup.

Section I: Early Organization

As the founder of this community-run donation garden, Devin and his family initially lead the organization. A determined middle-schooler, he created the goals and decided which problems to tackle.

His mission? To battle hunger in Westchester County with fresh produce. His general plan of action? A community-run donation garden.

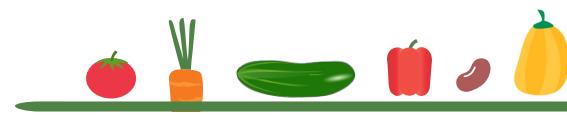
Devin had created both mission and plan on paper before he approached his parents for support. David and Margot loved his mission and passion. They immediately joined their son. Together, the three created and ran the organization during its startup phase, pouring in time and energy.

With only three people involved, communication was easy: Tasks were distributed according to the strengths and abilities they knew each other had; yet, each learned every aspect of the organization as they filled in for each other. This PCG setup, however, was draining. First, it was enormously time consuming. Second, the pressure of the project's success lay on their shoulders. In addition, they **recognized the need for input from others in order to make impactful, often difficult, decisions.** A simple conversation shifted the scope of the organization and allowed PCG to flourish into what it is today.

Section II: Starting a Committee

As they neared the building of the garden, it became apparent that there was more work than one family could handle by themselves. They needed to bring new people into the governing body of the organization. They created a Garden Committee so that the organization would be larger with more novel ideas being introduced. This temporary setup distributed some of the workload in order to get them through the building of the garden. They planned to expand this committee into a Board of Directors with well-defined roles after the garden's construction.

The Garden Committee was **simple in design.** The initial family of three brought people on the committee as they needed their skills for various tasks. These committee members had already been involved in the organization and had a set of skills that were needed at the time. The family would periodically meet with the Garden Committee and communicate with individual members to coordinate tasks. The Garden Committee allowed the initial three to divvy up and distribute tasks to others with more experience in their respective fields. These community members were willing to donate a relatively small amount of time to help the project in their specific skilled areas, which ultimately reduced the workload on the shoulders of Devin, David, and Margot. Here are the various jobs filled by Garden Committee members:





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- **Grant Writing.** A professional grant writer helped us by finding and applying for grants to help pay for the construction and initial maintenance of the garden.
- **Garden Design and Planning.** A landscape architect helped to plan the physical structure of the garden to maximize growing space while taking aesthetics into account.
- **Logo Design.** A graphic designer made several potential logos that we could choose from for the visual symbol of our organization. On the right top is the original logo that a graphic designer made , and our new and improved logo made by the same graphic designer is on the right bottom.
- **Garden Expertise.** An avid gardener with much experience aided in determining which crops to grow based on our climate, space, and sun availability.
- **Church Connection.** As our garden was on the grounds of a church, we wanted the minister of the church to be part of this committee to ensure that the desires of the church were being met.



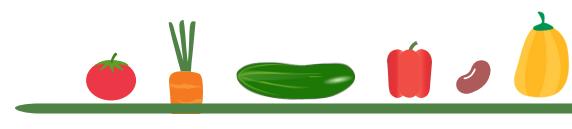
Section III: Board of Directors

The Garden Committee, an amalgamation of devoted volunteers with specific skills, was an effective way distribute work in order to get through the building of the garden. After the building of the garden was complete, the initial family wanted to create a more permanent and organized leadership: the Pleasantville Community Garden Board of Directors. This organization setup would split all of the aspects of the organization into different committees that were headed by different people. This change brought in more opinions, organization, and experience, which gave the Pleasantville Community Garden more direction and permanence.

Our Board of Directors [6.1], is composed of several committees that form the body of the Board. These Board members utilize their individual expertise to manage a different aspect of the project, vital to the success of the organization. We decided that each Board member would serve two-year terms. We wanted people to stay long enough to have an impact on the garden but not so long that they would feel strapped down for longer than they wanted.

Here are the committees on our Board of Directors:

- **Finance & Fundraising.** Managing the finances of the PCG including setting the annual budget and determining our fundraising needs for the year, updating finances once a month and ad hoc fundraising needs
- **Communications & Marketing.** Monthly communications and engagement with our volunteers and prospective volunteers and managing annual events to get new volunteers. Communications two to four times a month, annual events, ad hoc ordering of marketing materials and media relations
- **Gardens.** Manage the planting, growing, harvesting, and maintenance of the garden we built at the church and the two school gardens we partner with in the summer. Managing growing and harvesting volunteers during the growing season (April - Oct.) for the main garden and summer growing season for school gardens (June - Aug). Requires some annual planning, but plenty of volunteers to do the work.





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- **Food Distribution.** Manage the volunteers and the process for collecting produce from the farmers market and other produce collection locations and events and bringing the produce to our food distribution partners. Weekly emails to drivers, veggie haulers, produce distribution partners; ad hoc training of new volunteers
- **Groups & Events.** Manage special events and group activities, e.g. Boy & Girl Scouts, Bar/Bat Mitzvah projects. Ad hoc managing of group activities and special events as they come up during the year

In addition to Board members, there is a Chairperson who mainly functions to organize the Board and set up and preside over Board meetings. The Chairperson sends communications to the Board and also leads annual Board seat filling as necessary. The Chairperson communicates with the Board members to create the Board meeting update [6.2] for each meeting. The Chairperson has a three-year term so they can truly direct the organization. Here is a document that describes the Responsibilities of the Chairperson [6.3].

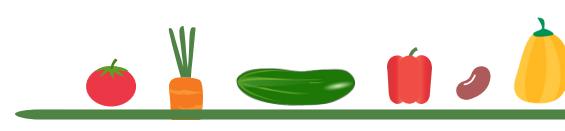
Another position, the Executive Director, manages the strategy and vision for the organization, including gardens, collection programs, distribution partners, and consulting. This is a permanent seat and the replacement is chosen by the sitting Executive Director and the Chairperson together.

When the board was first established, Devin and his father, David, were co-Executive Directors. This decision was made because they both had the most

experience with the project up to that point and had many resources at their fingertips. They then appointed the rest of the Board, picking people who had a lot of knowledge, experience, and connections. Selected Board members also had to be dedicated to the project, so to ensure that they would not suddenly drop off from helping.

We slowly built a powerful Board of Directors with devoted volunteers. As Board members take on the aforementioned parts of the organization, they become experts in these aspects. Eventually, these members will train future Board members in their specific area of the organization. In this way, the initial family of three slowly separated themselves from the organization, letting others take over pieces of it. This was a vital step for the continuity of the organization. The Board of Directors is a more sustainable governing body because it does not depend on just a few people for continuity.

Compared to the early organization with just a son, mom, and dad, the Board of Directors has less fluid communication as there are numerous committees to communicate with and meetings need to be coordinated with many people. It also takes longer for major decisions to be made. However, this setup allows for greater input and opinions, a better organized process for changes, and more structure and sustainability.



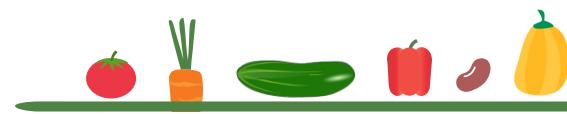


Chapter 8: Marketing & Communications

This section will include information on how to get the word out about your garden project and how to properly communicate with your supporters and volunteers. It is important to maintain a steady stream of marketing and communications to keep people interested in your organization, while being wary of overcommunicating and generating annoyance. A general tip is to always keep in mind who you intend to market toward or who you are communicating with so that you can alter your message toward this specific group. Besides soil, seeds, and special expenditures, marketing and communications have constituted the bulk of our annual budget since the building of the garden. In this section, we will explain an array of opportunities for marketing (Sections I and II) and various forms of communication (Sections III, IV, V, and VI).

Section I: Events

- **Tabling.** We tabled at several town events in the months leading up to the construction of our garden to promote our mission, fundraise, and gather volunteers for the construction. We continue to table at events as we are always searching for new contacts, supporters, and volunteers. For tabling events, we usually have basic information about the PCG on flyers or signs. We also have a few promotional items with our logo that we give out (see Section II (Promotional Items)). In addition, we have two or three clipboards with supporter and volunteer signup sheets [7.1] so that interested community members can put down their name, email, and general interest in the organization. For these tabling events, we usually have a few volunteers give a synopsis of our organization to passing community members before offering free promotional items and then asking if they want to sign up for our email list. Here is an event cheat sheet [7.2] we gave volunteers at an event with fast facts about our garden project that they could tell people walking by if the volunteer forgot them. Here is an event handout [7.3] and a similar event handout slip [7.4] (used for different events) that we had volunteers give out to people walking by.





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Here is a [social media flyer](#) [7.5] we would keep at the table so people could follow the PCG on their preferred social media. Here are a few events at which the PCG tables:

- Local farmers market
- Town day
- Large events with an environmental, community service, gardening, or food justice focus (ex. [Food Forum 2017](#) [7.6] held by Bedford 2020)

• **Creating an Event.** The creation of an event for fundraising purposes has already been explained in this How-To Guide (see Chapter 2: Fundraiser). Besides fundraising, events are a great opportunity to promote your garden organization. If you can develop an event that will bring you a captive audience of potential supporters and volunteers, you can pitch your organization. Depending on the setup of this event, you can present information about your garden and your mission, asking people to put down their email or follow your social media. We have found that creating events that bring people to the garden itself are the most successful in generating support and volunteers. Supporters with special skills in various areas helped us to design and coordinate these events. Here are a few events that we have created with the main intention of marketing the garden to the community, promoting general interest, and obtaining volunteers (some of these were mentioned in Chapter 5: Volunteers):

- Garden-Related Movie Showing (Here is our [garden-related movie showing flyer](#) [7.7]): admittance fee was fresh produce – the film was gardening-related)
- Poetry at the Garden
- Yoga at the Garden
- Healthy Cooking Demo at the Garden

Section II: Promotions

We utilize a wide variety of promotional items to raise awareness for the Pleasantville Community Garden. Promotional items that we sell have already been explained (see Chapter 2: Fundraising). In this section, we will delve into other free promotional items that we give out when tabling or at events. It is vital that you consider the target group for these promotional items and if and how often the target group would use the promotional item, as they can be expensive depending on the item (consider cost vs. benefit). We also suggest that you consider **the visibility of these promotional items**, how often they will be seen by others (ex. car magnets). We always put our organization name, Pleasantville Community Garden, on promotional items and often try to put our **logo, website, and/or slogan** ("Growing, Gathering, Giving"). Be cognizant of costs when selecting promotional items, as the costs can add up. There are many sites that sell promotional items, but the ones that we have used most often are [4imprint](#) [7.8] and [Vistaprint](#) [7.9]. Here is an example [marketing and communications budget](#) [7.10] from a year when the PCG took special effort to push our message. Note that marketing and communications can be carried out much less expensively than this example, but we had the available funds, so we put them to use. Here are some of the promotional items that we have used and had success with:

- *Pens*: inexpensive, good for both kids and adults
- *Business Cards (including a set of "Social Media Cards")*: inexpensive, mainly for adults, great to connect with interested volunteers/contacts
- *Wristbands*: inexpensive, mainly for kids but adults as well, high demand
- *Vegetable Tattoos*: inexpensive, great for kids at events, may not be able to





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- have your logo or contact info (here are the veggie tattoos [7.11] we buy)
- *Refrigerator Magnets*: moderately priced, mainly for adults
- *Drawstring Bags*: moderately priced, mainly for kids, high use, great marketing
- *Reusable Grocery Bags*: fairly expensive, mainly for teens and adults, high use, great marketing
- *Car Magnets*: fairly expensive, mainly for volunteers
- *Hats*: fairly expensive, mainly for volunteers
- *T-Shirts*: fairly expensive, mainly for volunteers

Section III: Email

Email is the main form of communication that the Pleasantville Community Garden uses to stay in contact with our volunteers. At every tabling event, we collect emails of potential supporters and volunteers and add them to our email list. For a few examples of our email communications with Constant Contact, see our volunteer request for event email [7.12], successful event email [7.13], volunteer opportunities email [7.14], and 2019 PCG overview email [7.15]. Here are a few tips for communicating using email:

- **Manage Frequency.** Using email, we attempt to provide our supporters and volunteers with fairly regular updates about the garden. Again, the key to effective communication is determining the correct spacing of communications. We generally send two to four emails per month, depending on the time of year and our events. Here is an email communication calendar [7.16] we made to organize our bimonthly emails.

- **Supporters vs. Volunteers.** A large portion of the people you are emailing will likely be supporters of your mission and organization. Many of these supporters may not donate their money or time but still want to receive your email updates. Emailing supporters benefits your organization as you are spreading the word of your organization and possibly networking (see Chapter 5: Volunteers, Section I (Types of Volunteers), Networks). A goal of your communications should be to convert these passive supporters into active volunteers.

- **Spice it Up.** It is important to vary your communications to keep people interested. Try having someone new create communications. Use exciting subject lines and be concise. The use of photos and short videos is suggested. We also suggest only sending communications for important events, which will only make it easier to make the emails exciting. Here is a garlic growing pamphlet [7.17] we attached to an email to change things up and provide more useful, unique information. Here is an infographic we used on an email communication.





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- **Constant Contact.** If you have the available funds, we suggest buying a subscription to [Constant Contact](#) [7.18], which will allow better organization and design of your emails. Use of this service will cost \$20 per month. For a free email organizer platform, consider using [Mailchimp](#) [7.19].
- **SignUpGenius.** We suggest using this website to organize sign-ups for volunteer events. You can make an event using this website and integrate a link into an email so that your supporters and volunteers can see all available time slots and sign-up for the one(s) that work best for them. A free subscription to [SignUpGenius](#) [7.20] may be sufficient, but you can also pay a monthly fee for better services.

Section IV: Social Media

Though email is our main form of communication, we still utilize several types of social media to spread the word about our organization. This form of communication is less formal and has the primary purpose of generating interest and keeping supporters and volunteers informed about what is happening with our garden. We share a lot of photos and numbers from our events on these platforms. Occasionally, we will ask for volunteers to go to a specific event or contribute to a fundraising campaign for a project via social media. We also use social media to keep supporters updated on the poundage we have donated. Here are the social media platforms that the Pleasantville Community Garden uses

- **Facebook.** This social media is great for targeting adult supporters. Photos are suggested but not necessary. Check out the [PCG Facebook page](#) [7.21].
- **Instagram.** This social media is great for targeting younger supporters. This platform should be used

mainly for posting photos and videos from garden events. Check out the [PCG Instagram page](#) [7.22]

- **Twitter.** This social media can target both young and adult supporters. We have used this platform less so have limited experience in this field. This social media is great for short updates or messages to supporters. Check out the [PCG Twitter page](#) [7.23].

Section V: Website

A website should be an integral part of your marketing and communications plan. This website will function as a place for interested people to learn more about your project. We always share [our website](#) [7.24] with potential supporters and volunteers. There are several website-building companies you could use (we have used [Weebly](#) [7.25] and [Wix](#) [7.26] and found that Wix works better for our needs). Building the website is usually free, but there are monthly costs for making your own website domain. These website-building companies have sites that make it fairly easy for anyone to build their own site. Here are a few things that we made sure to include in our website layout (reference our website using the above link to see an example):

- **Home.** On this page, we have a slideshow of photos from our garden. In addition, this page has an update section about notable, new occurrences in the garden and our current poundage donated.
- **About.** The About page includes our mission statement and some information about our development story and our organization setup. We also have a short informational video about the Pleasantville Community Garden and a slideshow of the construction of our garden at the church on this page.
- **Volunteer.** This page has a description of the





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various volunteer opportunities through our organization and photos of these opportunities. Additionally, there is a link to the SignUpGenius of each volunteer opportunity below the description so people can easily and immediately sign up for a time to volunteer if they are interested.

- **Programs.** This is another explanatory page, similar to the About page. On this page, we include descriptions of where we grow and from where we collect the fresh produce. We also include information about the organizations to which we donate the fresh produce on this page. For each organization we partner with, there is a link to their website.
- **Contact.** On the Contact page, we have the contact information (email and phone number) for our organization leaders along with the handles for our social media. We also included a contact form on this page that interested potential volunteers can fill out if they have a specific inquiry or comment.

Section VI: Other Media

Below are a few ways that we expanded our communications beyond our email lists and social media followers. Be creative and find more ways to get the word out!

- **News Outlets.** We often reached out to local news outlets (print, online, and television) when we reached a big milestone (ex. poundage donated goal) or had an important event upcoming (ex. building the garden). Making relationships with news outlets or individual reporters is important to ensure that your content is continually published. This is a great way to promote your project to a new, broad audience. Here is a [press release](#) [7.27] we made and sent out to local news outlets about our success in building the garden and first year growing.

- **Podcasts.** We found that podcasts were another great media to pursue to get the word out about our project. There are a lot of people who have started their own podcasts and are constantly looking for people to interview who fit their general theme. We had two people reach out to us and ask us to be on their podcast: [The Pleasantville Commuter](#) [7.28] and the [Organic Gardener Podcast](#) [7.29]. On these podcasts, we were able to explain our history and mission, answer some more specific questions, and then push people to check out our website or reach out to volunteer and donate. This was another great way to communicate with a whole new group of people, increasing our reach and forming new contacts.





Acknowledgments

We hope that this Guide will help you to create your own garden, teach others how to grow food, let children of all ages be part of the growing process and to provide nutritious fruits & vegetables to people in need.

Our experience has been incredibly fulfilling and our garden has become a part of the fabric of our community - with 200 volunteers working with us annually. We hope our Guide will help you achieve much and help many!

Thank you!

The 2020 Board of Directors of the Pleasantville Community Garden

Abi Wright - Chairman of the Board of Directors
Katie Moses - Student Representative
Katie Beatley Stargiotti
Beth Devito
Reverend Mary Gregorius
Kevin Lange
Helen Meurer
Sarah Hoadley
Ashly Juskus
Andrea Parada
Devin Juros - Ex Officio
David Juros - Ex Officio
Margot Juros - Ex Officio





Appendix

Introduction:

- [0.1] PCG website: <https://www.pvillegarden.org>
- [0.2] Westchester community gardens: <https://arcg.is/0T9LuO>
- [0.3] Map populating form (for Westchester community gardens): <https://arcg.is/18vfXK>
- [0.4] New York City community gardens: <https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/gardensearch.php#map-canvas>

Benefits of Gardens

- [1.1] Health benefits of gardening: <https://healthtalk.unchealthcare.org/health-benefits-of-gardening/>
- [1.2] Environmental, health, and social benefits of gardens: <https://greenleafcommunities.org/the-many-benefits-of-community-gardens/>
- [1.3] Benefits of gardening for people with disabilities: <https://riseservicesinc.org/the-benefits-of-gardening-for-people-with-disabilities/>

Fundraising

- [2.1] Paid grant search engine: <https://candid.org/?fcfref=lr>
- [2.2] Government grant search engine: <https://www.grants.gov>
- [2.3] Friends and Family Donation Letter
- [2.4] Consistent Donor Letter
- [2.5] Coffee Event Presentation
- [2.6] Donation Form
- [2.7] Crowdfunding - Kickstarter: <https://www.kickstarter.com>
- [2.8] Crowdfunding - Indiegogo: <https://www.indiegogo.com/>
- [2.9] Crowdfunding - Fundly: <https://fundly.com/>
- [2.10] Legal regulations for selling produce: <https://bizfluent.com/how-5669685-register-home-kitchen-commercial.html>

Building a Garden

- [3.1] Soil testing: <https://www.planetnatural.com/soil-testing/>
- [3.2] Garden Site Selection and Size
- [3.3] Final Garden Layout
- [3.4] Guide to Building Permits and Forms for Westchester County
- [3.5] Presentation for Land Use (Seeking landowner approval from vestry of church)
- [3.6] Memo of Understanding with Landowner
- [3.7] Neighbor Meeting Invite
- [3.8] Landscaping fabric: <https://homeguides.sfgate.com/use-black-landscaping-fabric-garden-51042.html>
- [3.9] Selecting an irrigation system: <https://www.gardeners.com/how-to/how-to-choose-a-watering-system/8747.html>
- [3.10] General raised bed building ideas: <https://www.lowes.com/n/how-to/how-to-build-a-raised-garden-bed>
- [3.11] Specific raised bed building instructions: <https://morningchores.com/raised-garden-bed-plans/>
- [3.12] Guide on Raised Beds, Soil Health, and Container Gardening
- [3.13] Growing Vegetables in Containers





Appendix

Gardening

- [4.1] Specific soil maintenance tips: <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/vegetables/vgen/vegetable-garden-soil.htm>
- [4.2] Organic soil supplement – Green Sand: <https://www.thespruce.com/organic-fertilizer-green-sand-2539762>
- [4.3] Organic soil supplement – Kelp Mix: <https://www.alisorganics.com/blogs/news/6851688-kelp-and-its-many-uses>
- [4.4] Organic soil supplement – Lobster Compost: <https://coastofmaine.com/product/lobstermeal/>
- [4.5] Choosing cover crops: <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/vegetables/vgen/cover-crops-garden.htm>
- [4.6] PCG Planting Chart
- [4.7] Vegetable planting schedules by zone: <https://www.ufseeds.com/learning/planting-schedules/>
- [4.8] Suggested Vegetable Varieties to Grow in Westchester
- [4.9] Fall Growing Guide for Westchester
- [4.10] Starting plants indoors: <https://homeguides.sfgate.com/grow-seeds-indoors-lights-heat-pads-37305.html>
- [4.11] Simple Seed Starting Pamphlet
- [4.12] Guide for Planting Cycles and Native Plants
- [4.13] Vegetable Planting Calendar for Westchester
- [4.14] Seeds buying: Johnny's Selected Seeds: <https://www.johnnyseeds.com>
- [4.15] Guide for Supporting Pollination
- [4.16] PCG Garden Operations Calendar
- [4.17] Chart of Optimal Storage for Fruits and Vegetables
- [4.18] Growing Guide

Volunteers

- [5.1] Policy Against Sexual Harassment (made by a lawyer volunteer)
- [5.2] Farmers Market Donation Manager Responsibilities
- [5.3] Transportation Waiver
- [5.4] List of Westchester food pantries: <https://childrensvillage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Westchester-County-Food-Pantries.pdf>
- [5.4] Simple Recipe Cards
- [5.5] Yoga at the Garden Email Communication
- [5.6] Hunger Video

Organization Setup

- [6.1] Responsibilities of Board Members
- [6.2] Board Meeting Update
- [6.3] Responsibilities of the Chairman

Marketing and Communications

- [7.1] Supporter and Volunteer Signup Sheet
- [7.2] Event Cheat Sheet
- [7.3] Event Handout
- [7.4] Event Handout Slip
- [7.5] Social Media Flyer





Appendix

- [7.6] Food Forum 2017 held by Bedford 2020: <http://bedford2020.org/foodforum/>
- [7.7] Garden-Related Movie Showing Flyer
- [7.8] Promotional item purveyor: 4imprint: <https://www.4imprint.com>
- [7.9] Promotional item purveyor: Vistaprint: <https://www.vistaprint.com>
- [7.10] Marketing and Communications Budget
- [7.11] Veggie tattoos the PCG buys: <https://www.tatertats.com>
- [7.12] Volunteer Request for Event Email
- [7.13] Successful Event Email
- [7.14] Volunteer Opportunities Email
- [7.15] 2019 PCG Overview Email
- [7.16] Email Communication Calendar
- [7.17] Garlic Growing Pamphlet
- [7.18] Email organizer: Constant Contact: www.constantcontact.com
- [7.19] Free email organizer: Mailchimp: <https://mailchimp.com>
- [7.20] Volunteer organizer: SignUpGenius: www.signupgenius.com
- [7.21] PCG Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Pleasantville-Community-Garden-631664680207519>
- [7.22] PCG Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/pvillegarden/>
- [7.23] PCG Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/pvillegarden>
- [7.24] PCG website: www.pvillegarden.org
- [7.25] Website builder: Weebly: <https://www.weebly.com>
- [7.26] Website builder: Wix: <https://www.wix.com>
- [7.27] Press Release
- [7.28] The Pleasantville Commuter podcast about PCG: <https://www.iheart.com/podcast/256-the-pleasantville-commuter-43075431/episode/09-how-a-good-idea-43923223>
- [7.29] Organic Gardener Podcast about PCG: <https://organicgardenerpodcast.com/podcast-2/128-pleasantville-community-gardens-devin-juros-west-chester-ny/>

