

Gardener Welcome Packet – Precious Stones of Avon

2016

Welcome to *Your* Community Garden! This Welcome Packet contains important information about how the garden will operate and who to contact with questions. It also contains information about how you can get involved to make the Garden run smoothly and efficiently. Because Community Gardening requires a fair amount of work beyond tending to your plot, every Gardener is asked to participate to the best of his or her ability in the management and upkeep of the entire Garden.

Welcome to Community Gardening

A Community Garden is a place to grow food, flowers and herbs in the company of friends and neighbors. For others, it is a place to reconnect with nature or get physical exercise. Others use Community Gardens simply because they lack adequate space to have a garden at their house or apartment. Regardless of why you are choosing to take part in a Community Garden, the activity comes with both responsibilities and rewards.

Responsibilities: Successful and vibrant Community Gardens rely on the dedication of each and every Gardener to: 1) maintain his or her own plot and 2) contribute to the upkeep and management of the entire Garden.

Rewards: Community gardening has the potential to offer a range of benefits to individuals, families, communities and the environment. Benefits include, but are not limited to:

- **Food Production** — Community Gardens enable people to grow high quality vegetables and fruits for themselves, their families and their communities.
- **Nutrition** — Community Gardeners eat more vegetables and fruits than non-gardening families.
- **Exercise** — Gardening requires physical activity and helps improve overall physical health.
- **Mental Health** — Interacting with plants and nature helps reduce stress and increase Gardeners' sense of wellness and belonging.
- **Community** — Community Gardens foster a sense of community identity and stewardship among Gardeners. They provide a place for people of diverse backgrounds to interact and share cultural traditions.
- **Environment** — Gardens increase biodiversity, reduce runoff from rain, recycle local organic materials and reduce fossil fuel use from long-distance food transport.
- **Learning** — People of all ages can acquire and share skills and knowledge related to Gardening, cooking, nutrition, health, culture, etc.
- **Youth** — Community Gardens provide youth a place to explore nature and community.
- **Food Budget** — Produce grown at Community Gardens may be used to offset food purchases.
- **Crime Prevention** — Community Gardens can help reduce crime.
- **Property Values** — Property values around Community Gardens increase faster than property values in similar areas without Gardens.

Success, Safety and Security at the Garden

- **Plan to visit your Garden two to three times a week during the growing season.** Because your Garden is not located outside your front or back door, it is sometimes easy to forget that there is weeding, watering, staking or harvesting to do.
- **Attend scheduled meetings and workdays.** This will help you meet other Gardeners and become part of your Gardening Community.
- **Make friends with other Gardeners.** Experienced Gardeners are an invaluable resource at your Garden. Pick their brains for gardening tips.
- **Volunteer for a Garden job or committee.** By pitching in on a certain job or project, you'll be supporting the Garden as a whole and ensuring that the work is spread among many people.
- **Educate yourself.** Check out books from the library, or attend classes. There's always something to learn about Gardening. The more you learn, the more success you'll have.
- **Know your neighbors around the Garden site.** Learn the names and a little about your non-gardening neighbors. Share some extra produce. Take the time to visit with them and talk about how the Garden works.
- **Harvest produce on a regular basis.** During harvest season, let Garden leaders know if you plan to be out of town for more than a few days. Gardeners can harvest for you and donate the food to a local service.
- **Grow more than you need in case some is lost.**
- **Use common sense.** Only garden during daylight hours. Garden in pairs or keep a cell phone nearby if it makes you feel more comfortable.

Leadership for the Garden Group

The following have volunteered for the following jobs at the garden this year.

Garden Co-Chairs

- Angie Corte – 320.356.8621 (CELL-Call or Text) – acorte@stellarwinds.net
- Marie Schutz
- Jorine Dennis

Garden Facebook Page: [Click Here](#) or search for preciousstonesavon when logged into Facebook.

Plot Coordinator (Volunteer needed)

Grounds & Maintenance Crew – Angie Corte (More volunteers are needed!)

Treasurer (2 Volunteers needed)

Communications – Angie Corte

Outreach and Community Relations Marie Schutz

What are we trying to accomplish?

This group is so very new that we do not have a board, mission statements etc. A decision was made to find interested parties to plant gardens again this spring and tend to organizational matters after planting has occurred. Simply put, we are attempting to create a Community Garden here in Avon.

We will strive to provide you with a Garden that provides food, fellowship and a nurturing spirit to the community. The vision of this group is to produce our own fresh produce during Minnesota's brief growing seasons. We would like to see you produce for your own household, for friends or neighbors around you, or volunteer time to tend a plot that will directly benefit our own food shelf or other emergency food distribution organizations in our area. There are many, many other possibilities that you, the community at large, can share. Will you join us in answering God's call to work together as a community and support one another?

A thought for you to consider when deciding what to do with extra produce you grow this season:

Consider this...

"Every city in America has its share of hungry people. In the United States, 18% of children are reported to live in "food insecure" households (Ladner, 2011). This means that they have no access to healthy food options. From 2006 to 2010, the number of Americans receiving support from food banks, soup kitchens and shelters increased 46% (Ladner, 2011). It is important and necessary for food banks to supply healthy options for the community. In addition, it is important to educate the community about food choices and selecting healthy options. The food industry spends about \$1.6 billion on advertising, mainly on unhealthy options full of salt and sugar. The average family in need spends 22% of their grocery money on unhealthy options and 12% on fruits and vegetables. (Ladner, 2011). Largely because unhealthy food options are cheaper than fruits and vegetables. Low-income families often prioritize rent, heat, and transportation costs before food, and food often is the most adjustable portion of the budget (Ladner, 2011).

An opportunity exists for food banks to not only provide healthy options to families in need, but to build the capacity of these families to be able to grow their own food. At times, food banks have been criticized for providing only the cast-off foods from industries, or food with little to no value. Food banks have also been criticized for introducing nutritional food dependency on families, teaching families to accept unhealthy foods, and the mentality that they deserve these options (Ladner, 2011). This criticism reveals the opportunity for food banks to provide fresh produce to families in need and to teach community members how to grow their own food to support a healthy lifestyle."

Source: Community garden project documentation for The Bemidji Community Food Shelf by the U of M and Extension Service. http://blog.lib.umn.edu/rsdp/northwest/Final_BCFS_Document.pdf

Special Thanks to the City of Avon/Avon City Council, and St. Benedicts Catholic Church for the overwhelming support of Community Gardening. Also Thanks to the following for their invaluable advice and Spirit-led direction: (Rest in Peace) Lyle Danielson(1945-2016) and the committed team from Healthy Community Gardens in Long Prairie, Bruce and Carolyn Pinke Missionaries of WEC International and the "Salt and Light" of North Minneapolis, Fr. Roger Klassen formerly of Sacred Heart Church Garden in Freeport.