

Q: How was the particular institution identified for establishing the garden?

A: The place where the garden is—the church where the garden is—has a food pantry that supplies food for about 100 families each week in the Sterling area and it was, it has, a nice area of open land that was a great place for a garden that could supplement the food pantry, so that's how it was identified.

Commented [RS1]: SG

Q: Ok great. Plus you were already a member there, right?

A: And I was already a member there.

Q: As was I. OK. How was the leadership of the institution approached, if you know?

A: Well when the idea came up for this garden, we approached the, I believe it was the executive pastor and just gave them the idea that it would be great to have fresh vegetables for the food pantry because those can be much harder to come by as far as donations and they looked at it and thought it was a great idea and were willing to support it.

Commented [RS2]: SG

Q. Great. And were there any major hurdles or convincing that had to be done in getting the leadership of the church to buy into the project.

A. Not that I'm aware of. Of course, you know it was going over the financial works just to make sure that it something that could be handled by the church but, they were willing to do that.

Commented [RS3]: SG, FG

Q. So you found that they embraced it pretty enthusiastically?

A. Yeah, they were very excited about the idea of having fresh produce for the clientele of the food pantry.

Q. Ok, so I think I can safely say that the buy-in in this particular case seemed pretty easy?

A. Yeah.

Q. Ok. How about in terms—you kinda touched on a little bit before—I want to divide things into sort of the initial costs and the continuing costs. How were the initial startup costs handled?

A. So the initial startup costs, that was—the big expense was in building the fence to keep the deer out, building the raised garden beds, and using materials that last, you know, for a long time like cedar, cedar planks and then having the soil to fill the garden beds. And so I believe there may have been a private donation by an individual that did help that a lot. So and then now there are ongoing costs that we approach the leadership periodically for to help with.

Commented [RS4]: SG, FG

Q. Yeah, and then like—what are some of the ongoing costs?

A. So the ongoing costs would be—yearly supplementing the garden beds with compost—you know as they settle—fill them in with more dirt, mulching the area around the garden beds for the walkways, the fertilizer, the seeds, cover crops, adding more fencing for things that can climb. So those would be our ongoing expenses.

Commented [RS5]: MG, FG

Q. OK. And who pays for those ongoing expenses?

A. Some of them are covered by the church, like the mulch and the additional dirt but some of them are through donations, some of it by those who work in the garden. We've also had local business so some donations. So it's a mixture.

Commented [RS6]: MG, FG

Q. Ok. And, how did you assemble the initial group of volunteers who work on the garden?

A. Initially there was, I think, yourself and another gentleman that you knew, and he had some friends who helped with the original building of the garden, and then I came along because I had found out about it and then we ultimately did a church morning in the service where we shared with the congregation what we were doing and through that we got a number of volunteers. And other volunteers have often come just by driving past it every day and inquiring about it and they wanted to come on board with helping.

Commented [RS7]: ET

Q. And yeah I should mention that I think I met you because you were hauling dirt in a wheel barrow and filling the beds—just took it upon yourself—and I think that’s how I initially met you.

A. Well I knew the gentleman that was helping you build the beds—he had told me about it. And that’s how I got involved.

Commented [RS8]: ET

Q. OK. Have you had to educate the members of the team at all?

A. You know—just in working—we, as we work—we’re with them you know, planting techniques—yeah we educate them on what’s going on in the garden. Some of—it’s a real variety of knowledge of the people coming in. Most of them are coming in really wanting to learn so we kinda educate as we go.

Commented [RS9]: MG, ET

Q. So it’s more sort of just informally as you’re working with people as opposed to actually like having a seminar or anything more formalized?

A. Exactly. We haven’t done the seminars yet.

Commented [RS10]: ET

Q. OK. How has responsibility for the various tasks in the garden been allocated?

A. A part of it is based on people's schedules—what they're available to do—what they want to do. Some of it is just kinda of based on the experience—so people get jobs because they have more experience in a certain area. So basically a lot of people have just volunteered and said, "hey, I'd be willing to water these days of the week" or "I'm willing to come in and pull weeds," so yeah, em.

Commented [RS11]: ET, MG

Q. Have you had problems getting enough help in the garden?

A. Initially we didn't have quite enough volunteers but now we have a really good number of people who are willing to come in.

Commented [RS12]: MG, ET

Q. OK. And how is the progress in the garden measured? Are there any benchmarks that you use to measure the progress of the garden?

A. We keep weekly records of everything that is picked. Basically it's weighing the produce that we get and we weigh a gross weight and we also weigh each plant that we pick individually. So you know like how many pounds of peppers, how many pounds of tomatoes and we keep records of you know how much we're picking each year.

Commented [RS13]: MB

Q. And is there any continuing back and forth with the leadership of the church regarding the garden?

A. Somewhat. They do keep records as well. The food pantry keeps records of what we bring in and then the church on a yearly basis—each ministry of the church gives basically an accounting for what they did that year and so they keep records of what we do as well.

Commented [RS14]: MB

Q. OK. And my final question is—what would—if somebody who was a member of another congregation came to you and said—Sharie I want to do the same thing at my church that you're doing at your church. What piece of advice would you give them?

A. Oh, what would I tell them to do?

Q. Yeah, let's say that they said oh, I have a church and we have a lot of land there too. And I see what you're doing and I see what you're doing at your church and I'd like to do that at mine. Any recommendations to me as to what I should do? How I should approach people or what I should do?

A. Yeah, I think it would be nice if they had—first I think they'd need to the leadership of the church and see if it's something that they would be willing to support. Obviously you would have to ask them if they can even use the land for that purpose. There is an initial expense in setting it up and they would need to know how they were going to fund that—it could be through the church or through the donations. And then it would be getting word out to the congregation for volunteers. Volunteering could be everything from a weekly basis helping in the garden to a, you know, one-time volunteering of their time helping to build during the construction. So kind of like that. Getting all that done up and then knowing what they're going to do with their produce. Do they have a food pantry or do they have other places in the community that they could make their donations?

Commented [RS15]: T1

Q. Ok. Great. Anything that if you could do it over again you would do differently?

A. Not that I can think of.

Q. Other than maybe not planting kale?

A. [Laughter] You know I probably would have put down plastic on the whole bed first and then put down the mulch. But not in how we did it.

Q. Sharie thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

A. Oh you're very welcome.

Initial Code List

Starting a garden for a food pantry (SG)

Maintaining a garden for a food pantry (MG)

Establishing a garden team (ET)

Financing the garden (FG)

Measuring garden benchmarks (MB)

Teaching other institutions about starting a food pantry garden (TI)

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