

A PATTERN LANGUAGE FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS

by

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(Under the Direction of Richard Westmacott)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines seven community gardens in the southeastern United States to determine if there are certain physical and aesthetic aspects of community gardens that help create a sense of community. After a description of the seven gardens, common themes found within the gardens are identified. These themes are used for the creation of a series of design vignettes, or 'patterns,' that reflect the vernacular design tradition in southeastern community gardens.

INDEX WORDS: community gardens, landscape architecture, pattern language, vernacular design, community building

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



Fig. 1-1

It's late afternoon on the first day of summer vacation. Village at Carver, a housing project in Atlanta, is bustling with young children excited about their first day off. They are all over the street and the lawn, chasing each other, yelling, and riding bikes. But one eight year-old boy is not with them. He is sitting on the edge of his garden plot patiently explaining to me what he's planted and when he's going to eat it. He's got cabbage planted up one edge that is just weeks away from being dinner, and tomatoes and squash that he won't be eating for some time yet. When I tell him his garden looks good, a smile spreads across his face, and he tells me with pride that it should look good, that he's out here almost every day pulling weeds, squashing bugs, and making sure it stays watered. And where did he learn how to garden, I ask. From his great aunt, he tells me,

and the other ladies out here, and he nods at two older women sitting a few yards away in lawn chairs in the shade of a water oak.

This scene is reenacted every day in any of the thousands of community gardens across the country. They exist in virtually every city, in every type of urban neighborhood, and their numbers are still growing, as they have been for the last thirty years.

What exactly is a community garden? Von Hassell defines ‘community garden’ as an “umbrella term to describe all urban gardens that involve a certain degree of community involvement” (2002, 57). Given the limited scope of this thesis, discussion will focus specifically on urban gardens on non-residential land in which multiple gardeners participate in growing vegetables and other plants. Commonly, gardeners each have control of a small bed within the larger garden, which they can plant however they choose. In this way, a community garden is both a collective and individual effort.

The social benefits of community gardens are touted by many. The restaurateur and community garden proponent Alice Waters speaks of the transformative effect of community gardens on school children: “There is something essential about the physical undertaking of taking care of plants, harvesting and bringing them into the kitchen and cooking them, and then offering them to your schoolmates. I believe that such learning can transform people and communities” (quoted in Ives 1999, 30).

Sylvia Simmons, a gardener at a San Francisco community garden, explains how the garden benefits her:

I’m in a community where there are a lot of hurting people. The garden will be one of the most positive things going on here, a meeting place for people to come together in a different role. I look at gardening as a healing

process—letting the Lord just breathe down on you, and realizing that you don't have to focus on all that negativity that may be going on at home. (quoted in Thompson, 1993).

Part of the role of community gardens is purely functional. They are places of production where landless people can engage in one of the oldest human activities: growing their food. Perhaps more significantly though, they are sites around which community is centered. This thesis arose from a question posed to me by a friend who was starting a community garden. She asked how we could design a community garden that, by its very layout and appearance, engenders a sense of community. While community is not built upon layout and appearance alone, her question led me to ask a larger one. Are there certain physical aspects of community gardens that help create a sense of community, while maintaining a productive environment? To find this answer, I chose to examine existing community gardens to see what can be learned from them.

I began this investigation with a thorough review of the literature on community gardens. Many of the studies look at community gardens as responses to symptoms of urban congestion and decay. Consequently, there is much examination of the social benefits, organizational structures, implications for city planners, and political aspects of community gardens. The literature review I conducted revealed very little information specific to design or aesthetics of community gardens.

One of the main themes established by research is that community gardens act as a catalyst for community building. The combination of the public and participatory nature of community gardens increases social contact between people, and thus helps build a sense of community (Landman 1993; Jamison 1985; Spirn 1998). As Patel notes, “Gardening promotes a community atmosphere and gives people an opportunity to meet

others, share concerns, and solve a few problems together”(1991, 8). Jamison quotes an unnamed municipal agency director on this subject:

Across this country...different ethnic, racial, and economic groups [are gardening] side-by-side oblivious to any differences. It is of little concern whether they are rich or poor, black or white...They are sharing in the same experience of watching things grow, of producing their own food. They view each other as equals, as partners (1985, 479).

Economic and health benefits for the gardeners are also written about. Access to land for food production by landless urban dwellers is an extremely important aspect of community gardening. For financially strapped people, savings from food production can be substantial (Patel 1991; Warner 1987). Community gardens are often mentioned as part of the solution to problems of urban food security. These issues, namely hunger; poor access to fresh, affordable produce in inner city neighborhoods, and health problems associated with poor nutrition in urban diets are discussed by USDA (2003) and Brown (2002).

Other studies link gardens and the sense of community they create to positive effects on the surrounding neighborhood. Hynes (1996) describes gardening projects in four cities— New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Philadelphia— that were integral parts of urban revitalization movements in these cities. Citizen involvement in the neighborhoods in her study increased, opening the door to beautification and economic improvement.

Sara Ferguson (1999), writing about community gardening in the Bronx in the 1970's states that the gardens touched off a wave of grass-roots community development. She quotes Amos Taylor, a gardening activist, “Once people succeeded with gardens,

they went on to other things like fixing up the schools, housing, creating jobs, whatever was needed” (quoted in Ferguson 1999, 85)

Von Hassell (2002), in her recent book *Struggle for Eden*, explores the cultural dynamics within New York community gardens. She is most interested in community gardening as part of a self-empowerment movement, and the creation of a radical political culture which spills out of the gardens to affect the politics of the larger community.

Will Atwater, a former staff member at SEEDS, a community garden in this study, remarked to me on the effect of the garden on the neighborhood:

A lot of new businesses have moved into the neighborhood in the last couple years, there are a lot of renovation projects going on, so a lot of us feel that the SEEDS garden was a catalyst for all this stuff, because for a while that neighborhood was this unsightly, sketchy, dangerous place to go, if you didn't have any reason to stop, as you're moving from A to B, you wouldn't. But over the years, SEEDS has been able to bring a lot of people to that neighborhood.

Much of the theory behind why these gardens are catalysts for community building is based on ideas of “community ownership” or “symbolic ownership.” Symbolic ownership, as defined by Hester, arises from a combination of three factors: a sense of jurisdiction over a space, a perception of value of objects or activities on site, and the perception that the space meets the users special needs (1975, 57-61).

Hough (1984) and Jamison (1985) both discuss the benefits of community gardening arising from a sense of ownership, though without looking too closely at the specific manifestations of that ownership. Hough attributes this largely to ownership through participation.

This sense of ownership becomes more visible when community gardens are compared with more traditional parks and green spaces. For example, Francis suggests that traditional open spaces are often over designed, but under maintained and underused (1984, 5-7). Hester argues that the most common cause of park failure, including disuse and vandalism, is lack of community input and “symbolic ownership” (1975, 3-35).

Hough notes that since the days of Olmstead there have been two distinct urban landscape traditions. The first, which he terms the “pedigreed landscape,” is “what we see in public parks, recreation areas, civic spaces, landscaped industrial estates and shopping centers.” It is typified by “mown turf, selected trees, and specified shrub borders,” and is built almost exclusively for aesthetic and recreational intent. The “vernacular landscape,” however, is “a product of spontaneous cultural forces,” (1983, 54-55). The vernacular landscape is the product of the desires of the users, and as such, is far more responsive to their needs—aesthetically and functionally. Spontaneous vernacular urban landscapes or landscapes designed with a high degree of public input are far more likely to engender a sense of ownership, increase involvement, and strengthen a sense of community (Von Hassell 2002, 65-68).

Community gardens fall within the vernacular landscape tradition. The contrast between community gardens and more traditional parks and greenspace is readily apparent in terms of both activities and aesthetics. Most have no formal design, but are the result of an organic process of contribution by various members. In the instances where design assistance is offered, the designer should, according to landscape architect and community activist Karl Linn, play the role of facilitator (Thompson 2000, 54-55).

There are several resources available to individuals interested in setting up community gardens. The American Association of Community Gardens is a national non-profit organization that “works to promote and support all aspects of community food and ornamental gardening, urban forestry, preservation and management of open space, and integrated planning and management of developing urban and rural lands”(ACGA, 2003) They provide information on their website (www.communitygarden.org) and an assortment of publications. Another organization, Foodshare Metro Toronto, publishes a book, *How Does Our Garden Grow* (Berman 1997), detailing necessary steps in setting up a community garden. The majority of the information in this book relates to site acquisition, funding, organization, and gardening advice. Little space is devoted to design or aesthetics in either one of these publications.

Vernacular Design—a Contradiction?

On the surface, the idea of offering design assistance for what are inherently vernacular landscapes, products of “spontaneous cultural forces” (Hough 1983, 54-55), seems like a contradiction. Yet, there is some merit to this proposal.

Christopher Alexander developed an architectural approach outlined in two books, *The Timeless Way of Building*, and *A Pattern Language*, that is built upon the vernacular building traditions. He believed strongly in the vernacular, which he refers to as “the timeless way,” and wrote about it in an almost mystical tone.

A building or a town will only be alive to the extent that it is governed by the timeless way... This quality in buildings and in towns cannot be made, but only generated, indirectly, by the ordinary actions of the people, just as a flower cannot be made, but only generated from the seed (Alexander et. al. 1979, ix-xi).

Without the help of architects or planners, if you are working in the timeless way, a town will grow under your hands, as steady as the flowers in your garden (Alexander et. al. 1979, 8).

Of major importance to Alexander is the role of community in the vernacular tradition. Much of his work is centered around the principle that:

Every family and every person is part of society [and] requires bonds of association with other people—in short, requires a place in society, in which there are relationships with others, (Alexander et al.1985, 24).

Alexander believed that professional advice is not necessary for good design. He did believe, however, that it is possible to identify themes that emerge from the “ordinary actions of the people,” themes that typify the vernacular tradition. In his book *A Pattern Language*, he attempts to capture the wisdom of the western vernacular design tradition and collect it in a concise form that others can draw upon. He defines a design vocabulary made up of discrete ‘patterns,’ design vignettes ranging in scale from macro to micro, from “The Distribution of Towns” to “Half-Inch Trim” (Alexander et. al. 1977).

In this thesis, I use Alexander’s approach to study community gardens. Using several community gardens as case studies, I identify common themes, and use these to define “patterns” that help engender a sense of community while maintaining a productive environment.

Goals

Much of the work on community gardens examines social and organizational aspects without looking at physical and aesthetic ones. I propose that there are commonalities to community gardens that help forge a sense of community. In this thesis

I present seven existing community gardens and identify common themes. These are primarily physical and aesthetic themes, though it is impossible not to include certain social aspects that are more directly tied to the physical sides of the gardens. I recognize that these themes reflect the needs of the gardeners for both productive spaces and community, as well as any explicit missions of the gardens. While organizational structures are included to a minor degree in this study, they were found to have less effect on the garden than initially believed.

After identifying themes in the community gardens, I will propose the beginnings of a design vocabulary for community gardens, consisting of discrete patterns distilled from the common themes found in this study.

It hardly needs to be pointed out that my conclusions are only a beginning. The community gardens I studied represent only a small, regional sample of the thousands of gardens throughout the country. There are most likely many regional and cultural expressions of community gardens that would differ from those found here, but the scope of this thesis has been limited due to considerations of time and concision.

Methodology

My research focuses on seven community gardens in the southeastern United States. The case studies were chosen using the snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. All gardens are in urban areas and have been in existence for at least four years. All but one of the gardens are within easy travel distance of Athens, allowing me to make repeated

visits. The seven case studies were selected to sample a diversity of gardens, specifically a diversity of garden missions, land ownership, and gardener demographics.

Once the case studies were chosen, all gardens were visited on several occasions. All gardens were mapped, and physical observations were recorded. Multiple visits were made to each garden for the purpose of conducting interviews. A questionnaire was used to structure discussions about the gardens (appendix A). The first interview was always of a garden organizer and concerned the history, infrastructure and organization of the garden. In addition, an average of three to four gardeners were interviewed at each garden. Gardeners were interviewed about a range of topics including gardening technique and food production, community and social aspects of the garden, aesthetics, and organization. Most interviews were tape recorded, though a few gardeners declined to be recorded and detailed notes were taken instead.

Organization

Chapter 2 contains a brief overview of the history of community gardening in the United States. In Chapter 3, I detail histories and descriptions of the community gardens chosen as case studies. Chapter 4 contains the results of my investigations, identifying common themes found in the community gardens that help engender a sense of community while maintaining a productive garden. In Chapter 5, I translate, or distill, the themes identified in chapter 4 into discrete ‘patterns,’ or design ideas, for use in community gardens. Chapter 6 contains some closing thoughts on the application of these findings to community gardens.

CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

Community gardens, as we know them today, have their roots in the English allotment garden. Allotments, lands set aside and leased cheaply for the cultivation of gardens, began as a rural phenomenon in the eighteenth century. They soon appeared in the city, though, where they provided a model for future urban gardens.

Two historical trends coincided in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century, providing the impetus for allotments. The first of these was the Enclosure Movement. Over the course of a century, the vast majority of what had been considered “common” land was fenced and titled to private landowners. The impact on the rural economy was profound. Up until this point, most villagers had relied on access to these lands for at least part of their subsistence: a plot of vegetables, pasture for an animal or two, or wood for timber or construction. The enclosures cut off access to the commons and threw a great many into poverty. (Warner 1987, 9-12)

Simultaneously, the industrializing English cities were being flooded with rural migrants seeking wage labor in the factories. Prior to industrialization, gardens had been an important component of the city fabric and economy, but as populations and housing pressures soared, many of the gardens gave way to development in increasingly dense cities.

The need for gardening land was met with one of two responses: public assistance and self-help. In response to the sudden and obvious increase in poverty and relief spending in rural areas, many charitable organizations and landowners provided land for garden plots at reasonable rents. Some of these rents were subsidized by the government in an attempt to trim some of the relief spending (Warner 1987, 13)

In England at this time there was an ambivalence about the poor that was apparent in America as well. While the poor were, at times, given assistance, this was almost always accompanied by a degree of scorn. Even when rents on the allotments were subsidized, this was not assistance freely given. These gardens came with a set of rules that reflected a condescending attitude towards the poor. A typical set of rules governing the use of a rural allotment is as follows:

No occupier will be suffered to re-let his allotment.

No occupier will be allowed to plow his land, but be required to cultivate it solely by spade husbandry.

No occupier who is at work for the parish, or for any employer, will be allowed to work upon his land after six o'clock in the morning, or before six o'clock in the evening without permission from his master.

All occupiers will be expected to attend regularly at Divine service, to conduct themselves with propriety at all times; and to bring up their families in a decent and orderly manner.

Any occupier who may be convicted of thieving, or of any other offence against the laws of the country, will be deprived of his garden. (Barnett 1967, p.170)

In the industrial cities, the response to the need for gardens was different. By and large, gardens sprang up as groups of citizens banded together to rent cheap fringe land on which to garden. These gardens, begun from a self-empowerment philosophy and more under the control of the gardeners themselves, faced a different set of problems.

Just as rural allotments were plagued by paternalistic rules, the urban gardens were beleaguered by insecure tenure. As cities grew, land values increased and formerly fringe land often became too valuable to garden on.

In the nineteenth century, perhaps as a way of reducing relief spending, the government acknowledged the need for rural allotments, and in 1819 parliament passed the first in a series of acts that mandated the creation of allotments where there was a demand for them. A century later, for much the same reasons, a law was passed mandating the creation of urban allotments (Warner 1987, 12).

The first notable examples of public urban gardening in the United States were brought about, like the English allotments, by the need for poverty relief. In 1894, in response to a nationwide depression, Detroit mayor Hazen Pingree established a series of vacant lot gardens for the unemployed. Dubbed “Pingree’s potato patches,” this idea quickly took hold around the country. By the end of the depression in 1897, governments and charitable organizations were running “potato patches” in dozens of cities. This program, like the English allotment system, showed shades of paternalism. Part of Pingree’s rationale for establishing the gardens was morally based. He believed that, in addition to providing subsistence, the act of providing for themselves would give the unemployed a sense of dignity that a handout or make-work program would not. “Self-help and freedom from public charity through cultivation of vacant urban land were associated with the spirit of the independent yeoman,” writes Bassett (1981, 2-3)

Upon establishment of the program, it quickly became clear that the majority of the applicants to the gardening programs were not familiar with agriculture. The governments and charitable organizations running these programs discovered that

offering the land was not enough; training also had to be provided. (Warner 1987, 14)

This trend has continued all the way up to present. Even in today's community gardens, generally organized by the gardeners themselves, education and training is an important component of many garden programs.

At the advent of the 'potato patches', attitudes towards the needy were a bit more charitable. The poor were seen more as victims of a flawed economy, rather than simply those who lacked the will to support themselves. However, societal ambivalence towards the poor reemerged when the depression ended in 1897. Support for the potato patches dwindled. The lack of institutional support and the gardeners' lack of control over the land they gardened, coupled with rising urban land values in the years after the depression, led to the closure of most of the potato patches by the end of the century (Bassett 1981, 2).

The next wave of public gardens, the school gardens of the early twentieth century, reflected and amplified the moral overtones of the potato patches of the 1890s. The emphasis of the school gardens was less on production and more on the moral and social training of children. Arising from the Nature Study movement, the gardens reflected the beliefs that contact with nature, efficiency, and manual labor built strong moral and social fiber in students. These gardens were large urban fields, usually divided up into plots allocated to individuals who were responsible for their production. These gardens were highly regimented and intended, as the founder of New York City's DeWitt Clinton Park School Garden, Mrs. Fannie Parsons said, "to teach them in their work some necessary civic virtues; private care of public property, economy, honesty, application,

concentration, self-government, civic pride, justice, the dignity of labor, and the love of nature” (in Bassett 1981, p.3).

Coinciding with the school gardens, and infused with a similar sense of civic responsibility, was the Garden City movement of the early twentieth century. Believing that beautification through greening and gardening would bring “happiness and prosperity to all” (Bassett, 1981:4), city reformers promoted citizen improvement of streets and parks. In the interest of achieving a gardenesque style for the city, activists encouraged widescale gardening along sidewalks, in window boxes, backyards, and empty lots. Garden clubs formed nationwide, and encouraged by the rhetoric of the garden city movement, vegetable gardens sprung up on vacant lots. During this time, vacant lot gardening had a much broader appeal than the poverty-relief gardens of the last century.

The crisis of the First World War brought another gardening movement motivated by a sense of civic duty. European allies, facing severe food shortages as a result of the war, relied heavily on American imports. To free up domestic agricultural products for export to Europe, a wealthy lumberman named Charles Lathrop Pack organized the National War Garden Commission to encourage people to grow vegetables. While some of these gardens were small backyard affairs, many were more public, on vacant or municipal land. The War Garden Commission strove to portray



Fig. 2-1: “Every Garden a Munitions Plant,” WWI propaganda poster. (Pack 1919, 183)

gardening as a highly patriotic act. Conjuring up such slogans as “Every Garden A Munitions Plant” and “Can The Kaiser” the War Garden Commission propaganda tried to show that “the bearing of one implement [the hoe] was as patriotic as the other [the rifle]” (Pack 1919, 9-21). In the last year of the war more than five million gardeners produced over 525 million dollars worth of food (Pack 1919, 30-32). Despite Pack’s efforts to keep the patriotic gardening movement alive (he coined the term ‘Victory Garden’ to keep the movement going in the post war years) the gardens faded after the armistice.

Once again, the gardeners didn’t have control of the land or own the movement. As soon as the municipalities or private landowners revoked support and tenure, the gardens died. Pack was partly to blame for this, as he advocated a top-down organization, claiming that individuals had proved too unmotivated and untalented to create and run their own gardens (Pack 1919: 16, 80).

The great depression brought another wave of relief gardens to America similar in many ways to the potato patches three decades before. In both crises civic and government leaders used gardening as a way of easing the strain of unemployment and destitution. Under Roosevelt’s New Deal, a federally funded gardening program was established in 1933. The relief gardens under the New Deal were divided into two types: the individual plot and the collective garden. The individual plots were managed and harvested by the individual it was assigned to. The collective gardens were modeled on the regimentation of a factory, and were managed similarly. A plan for maximum vegetable production was drawn up, labor schedules devised, and workers were compensated (with produce) based on how many hours they contributed.

There was much debate amongst the proponents of both types of gardens as to their relative merits. The advocates of the individual, or allotment, garden argued for the “joy of possession” experienced by those who had been made so needy by the depression. They believed that control over one’s plot was a way to maintain dignity and a sense of independence (Bassett 1981, 5-6).

Those in favor of the collective garden believed that this approach was of greater benefit to the community at large than the individual gardeners. Proponents argued that the collective gardens, like the factories they were modeled upon, were more efficient and thus produced more food for more people. Proponents also argued that in the collective gardens labor was divided and highly regimented, just like in the factories they were modeled upon. This was believed to be easier for the urban worker to adapt to, as they were used to repetitious work in the company of others, rather than working individually on a task from start to finish. (Bassett 1981, 5-7)

Arguments about the types of gardens that emerged in the early part of the 20th century are relevant because these same patterns have emerged in the community gardens of today, albeit in different forms. The community garden of today is most typically a cross between these two schools. Often the individual has responsibility and control over their own plot, but within the context of a collective gardening effort. The fruits of that collective effort are not necessarily shared produce, but more often a sense of community and the collective voice the gardeners can bring to achieve their aims.

The New Deal garden program also included a “subsistence homestead” program for urban workers. Several new suburbs were built with houses on one to three acre lots that were planted with fruits and vegetables. The intention was that workers, gardening

part-time, would be able to partially free themselves from the vagaries of industrial economics and be able to achieve a decent standard of living, even in times of depression (Warner 1987, 19).

Support for the relief garden program came to an abrupt end in 1937. The USDA unveiled its new food stamp program, and relief gardens were seen to be in direct conflict with this program. (Warner 1987, 19) Once again, a large community gardening movement was shut down because the organizers were not the gardeners, yet controlled access to the land on which the gardens were built.

World War Two brought another wave of public gardens, similar in many ways to the war gardens of the teens. Dubbed ‘Victory Gardens’ after Pack’s name for the post-WW1 gardens, these were again accompanied by much patriotic language and imagery. Advertisements encouraged Americans to see that “food is no less a weapon than tanks, guns, and planes,” and “the duty of every loyal citizen is to do everything possible, to accept any sacrifice, so that there shall be plentiful supplies of food for the fighting forces and facilities for delivering them.” (Quoted in Bassett 1981, 7) The message resonated with the public. Victory Gardens were wildly popular with citizens from all walks of life. At their peak in 1944, over 20 million gardens produced 44% of the produce eaten in America (Warner 1987, 19).

The end of World War Two brought the end of the Victory Garden movement. A very small handful of gardens managed to survive the end of the war, and some have persisted into the present. Notable examples include Fenway Gardens in Boston, Cornell Oasis in Chicago, Dowling School Garden in Minneapolis, and Warren/ St. Marks Garden in New York (Von Hassell 2002, 41). Other than these few exceptions,

community gardening essentially disappeared in American cities until the mid 1960's, when community gardens reappeared in the form that we see them today (von Hassell 2002, 41-42)

The community gardens we see today are perhaps the first that can accurately have the moniker 'community' attached to them. The most notable difference between most existing community gardens and those discussed up until this point is the degree of control that the gardeners have over their gardens. The typical community garden today has been conceived of, and often organized, by the gardeners themselves, rather than a charitable or governmental organization. If there is assistance from outside, it comes at the behest of the gardeners, and serves their aims. While land tenure is frequently a problem in the continued life of the gardens, it is most often the gardeners who first claim space for the garden: vacant lots are cleaned up and planted, landowners or governments approached for rights to unused land. This harkens back to the self-empowered gardening movement in the English industrial cities of the 19th century.

At the core, this movement illustrates a dramatic shift in organization. City dwellers and landless suburbanites who wanted to garden stopped waiting for institutional support and land. Instead, they organized themselves and found land, often appropriating vacant lots and unused margins.

The scope of issues surrounding community gardens today are far more diverse than they were under the more narrowly focused institutionally based programs of the past. While generalizing about the motives of the multitude of community gardeners would certainly be an oversimplification, there are some obvious trends. Besides growing food, the most noticeable trend is the impetus towards community. Frequently, gardeners

are motivated as much by a desire for community and public green space and a sense of neighborhood ownership as by the desire for produce. (Landman 1993, 104-111; Linn 1999, 42-43). Bernadette Cozart, the founder of the *Greening Harlem Coalition* states that “city people are gardening to make their neighborhoods more habitable, beautiful, and safer. Urban gardeners want to reconnect with the earth they love without having to travel to a national park. They want to give their children an alternative to the streets” (Cozart 1999, 35-36). There are also food security issues, and economic motivations. Bassett, writing in 1981, states that “over forty percent of existing community gardening programs began in 1975, a year of sharply rising food prices” (Bassett 1981, 7). All told, the motivations are myriad, but sociologist Michael Jamison devised four broad categories to explain participation in community gardens: “increased self-worth and confidence, increased self-reliance and self-sufficiency, neighborhood improvement and community development, and promotion of cooperation, equality, and democracy” (Jamison 1985: 476).

The modern community garden grew out of the civil rights movement and the counter-culture of the 1960’s. Both movements had a focus on self and community empowerment and a loose ideology of resistance to the dominant power structures.

According to Warner, the strongest force in new community garden politics came from the cooperation of white and black leaders that began during the civil rights movement. Not only were white and black leaders (and thus their organizations) cooperating more, but there were also more community groups forming. During the 1960’s, many federal social programs required the formation of community groups as the implementing force. The resulting groups, coupled with the civil-rights ideology of self-

empowerment, created many strong communities with active and determined leaders. (Warner 1987, 20) From the maturing civil rights movement and counterculture emerged broader concerns about poverty, housing, labor and the environment. Environmental concerns, and the response that led many to organic gardening and green space creation, coalesced with social justice agendas that spurred on the community garden movement. (Von Hassell 2002, 41-44)

At the same time, space for gardens was becoming abundant. Coinciding with the changing politics of the 60s and 70's, cities were experiencing major demographic shifts. "White flight" and urban renewal were leaving impoverished inner-city neighborhoods and large tracts of abandoned land. Out of these conditions sprang the first of the grassroots community gardens.

The community gardening movement since the 1970s has received mixed support. There are now various municipally organized support programs (Philadelphia's *Philadelphia Green*, New York's *GreenThumb*, Seattle's *P-Patch*, amongst others), a national non-profit umbrella organization (American Community Gardening Association), and a slew of often cleverly named local non-profit community garden advocacy groups (San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners –SLUG, Boston Urban Gardeners—BUG, Denver Urban Gardeners—DUG). There are still struggles, though, often related to land tenure. Just as the urban gardeners in 19th century England often lost their tenure as the land values of their gardens soared, many American community gardens have lost their tenure for the same reason. While some governments may value gardens in theory, often when land pressures increase, community gardens are the losers. Von Hassell describes how the revitalization of Manhattan in the late 1980's and 90's

brought a dramatic increase in housing demand and property values. This was followed by a spate of garden closings—gardens built upon private or city land that was considered too valuable for gardening alone. While the New York City government was not deaf to the needs of community gardeners (it had, after all, founded and funded *GreenThumb*, now the largest community gardening program in the country), it did certainly put the perceived need for housing over the need for gardens (Von Hassell 200, 45-57). Between 1984 and 2000, over 90 community gardens were bulldozed by the city of New York. (Von Hassell 2000, 159-162).

Throughout the history of community gardening in America, we see there have been range of factors, often having little to do with physical layout or aesthetics, which have helped forge community that. The most common force was a shared sense of purpose. These purposes varied, but all served to bind the movements together. In both the relief gardens and the school gardens there was an attempt to instill the gardeners with such civic virtues as self-sufficiency, dignity of labor, and economy. The war gardens, on the other hand, were bound together by a strong sense of patriotic duty. Unlike other movements, the Garden City movement was motivated by a belief that improving urban aesthetics could increase civic pride and community spirit.

While today's community gardens are a bit more overt in their focus on community building as a goal, trends from past public gardening movements can be seen in this present phase as well: a shared sense of purpose, self-sufficiency of gardeners, and the belief that aesthetic improvement of urban neighborhoods can increase community pride and cohesion.

We move now from the general to the specific. The trends described above can be seen in the seven community gardens that I chose as case studies. Descriptions and histories of these gardens are contained in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDIES

This chapter gives a description and history of the seven community gardens that I chose as case studies. All are in Southeastern cities: five in Atlanta, one in Athens, Georgia; and one in Durham, North Carolina . The seven case studies were selected to sample a diversity of gardens, specifically a diversity of garden missions, land ownership, and gardener demographics.

Family Housing Community Garden

History

The first community garden, in Athens, Georgia, has no official name, but is situated on the grounds of the University of Georgia Family Housing complex. I will refer to it henceforth as the Family Housing Garden. This garden was created after requests to the University by residents of Family Housing for a place to garden. These requests led to the establishment of a garden in 1999 . The head of Family Housing, Ken Goyen and head of the University Grounds Department, Dexter Adams, picked an open lawn area for the site of a garden. The university grounds department ran a water line to the site, and tilled up a space for approximately fifty 4x12' beds. At the beginning of this planting season (2003) the garden was expanded to almost twice its original size, now providing space for eighty-four 4x12' beds.



Fig. 3-1: Family Housing Community Garden.

	- building		- trash can
	- arbor		- flower pot
	- tree canopy		- cut-barrel planter
	- fruit tree		- small arbor arch
	- shrub/ shrub masses		- sign
	- ornamental perennial		- table
(no symbol)	- grass or bare soil		- bench
	- wood chips		- chair
	- concrete		- sculpture
	- brick		- stepping stones
	- pool		- sand box
	- raised bed (low)		- vermiculture box
	- raised bed (tall)		- lumber pile
	- bed without edging		- water tank
	- ornamental bed		- cold frame
	- educational bed		- barbeque grill
	- herb bed		- fence
	- unusual bed		- gate
			- wall
			- brick or block edging
			- stone edging
			- mulch pile
			- compost pile
			- compost bin
			- water spigot

Fig 3-2: Key for all maps in this chapter

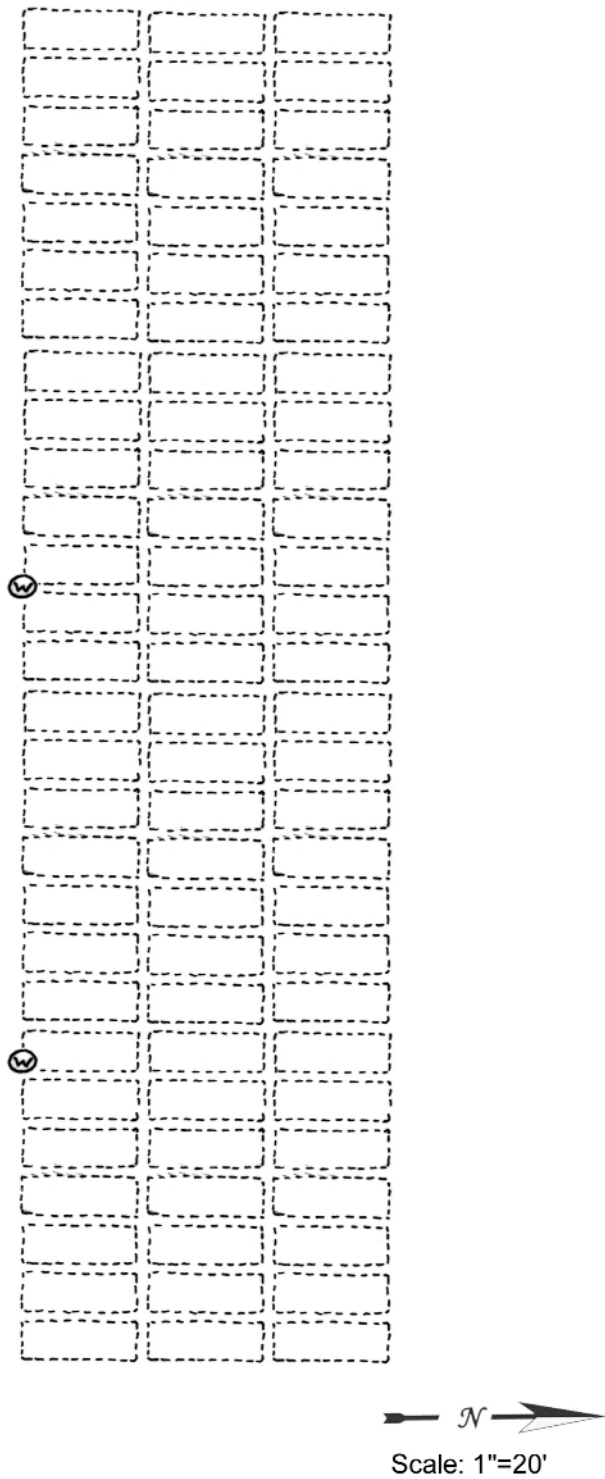


Fig 3-3: Family Housing Garden at University of Georgia, Athens.

Layout and Amenities

The Family Housing garden is situated in an open space that runs along the back of a line of student apartments. This lawn area is the main green space for this group of apartments, and is well used, especially on weekends and evenings. I saw residents strolling behind the apartments, playing with their children, and using the basketball courts that lie to the north of the gardens.

The garden itself is a simple plowed rectangle, 140'x40,' within the lawn. None of the beds have permanent edging for they are redefined every year when the UGA grounds department tills up the area, and divides it into individual beds. The beds are separated from each other by a simple depressed path, barely a foot wide. There is no fence around the garden to separate it from the lawn that surrounds it. Other than a small minority of gardeners who plant flowers purely for aesthetics, and an equally small number who have placed garden sculptures in their beds, there is virtually no ornamentation in this garden. Except for the paths, there are no common areas, though the lawn surrounding it could serve this purpose if needed.

The gardeners here must be residents of UGA family housing in order to receive a plot. The plots themselves are given out on a first come/ first served basis on a registration day in February. Until this year, there were always more people interested in gardening than plots available. This year, while there still aren't quite enough plots to go around, the number of potential gardeners denied a plot were few.

The beds are reallocated every year. Thus, there is no guarantee that gardeners who had a plot the previous year will receive one again, and there is certainly no guarantee that they will be able to claim the same bed as the year before. Because of the

annual reallocation of beds, there is little incentive for extensive soil improvement in the beds.

Of all the gardens in this study, the Family Housing garden provides the fewest services to its gardeners. Two water spigots and hoses are available, and in the spring, the beds are tilled.

Community and Social

Most of the gardeners at the family housing garden are foreign students and their families. The families do not just include spouse and children. In many cases students bring parents and in-laws with them as well. The gardening techniques and plantings strongly reflect the international makeup of the gardeners. In most of the beds, food plants and herbs not commonly found in American gardens dominate. Elaborate vertical structures made of bamboo and sticks increase the productive area of many of the plots, especially those of the Chinese gardeners.

There are no defined rules governing this garden, nor any defined leader or 'head,' other than the director of family housing, and his role is minimal.

Support for Atlanta Community Gardens

Many of the community gardens in Atlanta receive support from two organizations: the Atlanta Community Food Bank(ACFB) and the Atlanta Urban Gardening Program(AUGP). While it is not necessary to go into a great deal of detail about these organizations, a brief mention of them is important. Institutional support plays a role in all of the gardens in this study (though in two instances, the garden is itself the institution).

The Atlanta Urban Gardening Program (AUGP) is a government program sponsored by Fulton and Dekalb County and the Georgia Department of Agriculture Extension Service. Headed by Bobby Wilson, an Atlanta area extension agent, the AUGP strives “to improve the basic quality of life for participants, to improve diet and meal planning while reducing grocery bills, and to teach participants to appreciate the environment and natural resources.” (Fulton County, 2003). Bobby Wilson often works closely with Fred Conrad, an employee of the non-profit Atlanta Community Food Bank (ACFB) and head of their Community Garden Initiative. Both groups work with interested community groups to help them locate land for gardening, plan the garden, find donations of materials and money, find and organize volunteers for installation and periodic upkeep, and generally provide ongoing assistance and advice to intown community gardens.

The AUGP organizes a garden club consisting of members of all the community gardens with which it works. Three of the gardens in this study are members of this garden club: Ashview, Capitol View, and Carver. Every month but January, the gardeners get together for a lunch meeting, usually at one of the gardens. The meeting provides a forum for education and organizing. Often there is a guest speaking on a topic of community interest, not necessarily garden related. Bobby Wilson and Fred Conrad are usually present and give a few words on gardening practices and organizational hints. Gardeners have a chance to ask questions to each other and to the extension service. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the monthly meetings is social. Every month gardeners strengthen their community; connecting and reconnecting with gardeners from dispersed neighborhoods to create a broader, city-wide community of gardeners.

Capitol View Community Garden

History

The Capitol View Community Garden, named for its south Atlanta community, is located on a corner lot in a neighborhood of single family homes. The garden occupies what was once an abandoned house lot. It was founded by Jesse Dill, a community member who's initial concern was to clean up a lot that was being used as a dump and a parking lot. According to Jesse, two surrounding houses were "drug houses" and drug activity spilled out onto this lot as well, resulting in an unsightly and socially unsavory space. In 1995, with the help ACFB and the AUGP, Jesse Dill approached the city, who had repossessed the land for back taxes, with the idea of starting a community garden. The city leased the land to Jesse and interested neighbors, and donated truckloads of mulch and compost.

Layout and Amenities

The garden today contains a grid of 31 personal raised beds, edged with landscape timbers. Most are 4'x16,' but towards the back of the lot they get smaller, responding to the space and slope. All of the personal beds are on the south half of the lot due to heavy shade from two ancient oaks on the north side. The personal beds, as with most of the gardens in this study, are allocated to individual gardeners and are primarily dedicated to vegetable growing.

There are two small tool sheds sitting on the house pad, containing all the tools needed at the garden. Both sheds are kept locked. Behind these sheds lie composting bins and a pile of railroad ties and other useful materials.



Fig. 3-4: Capitol View Community Garden.

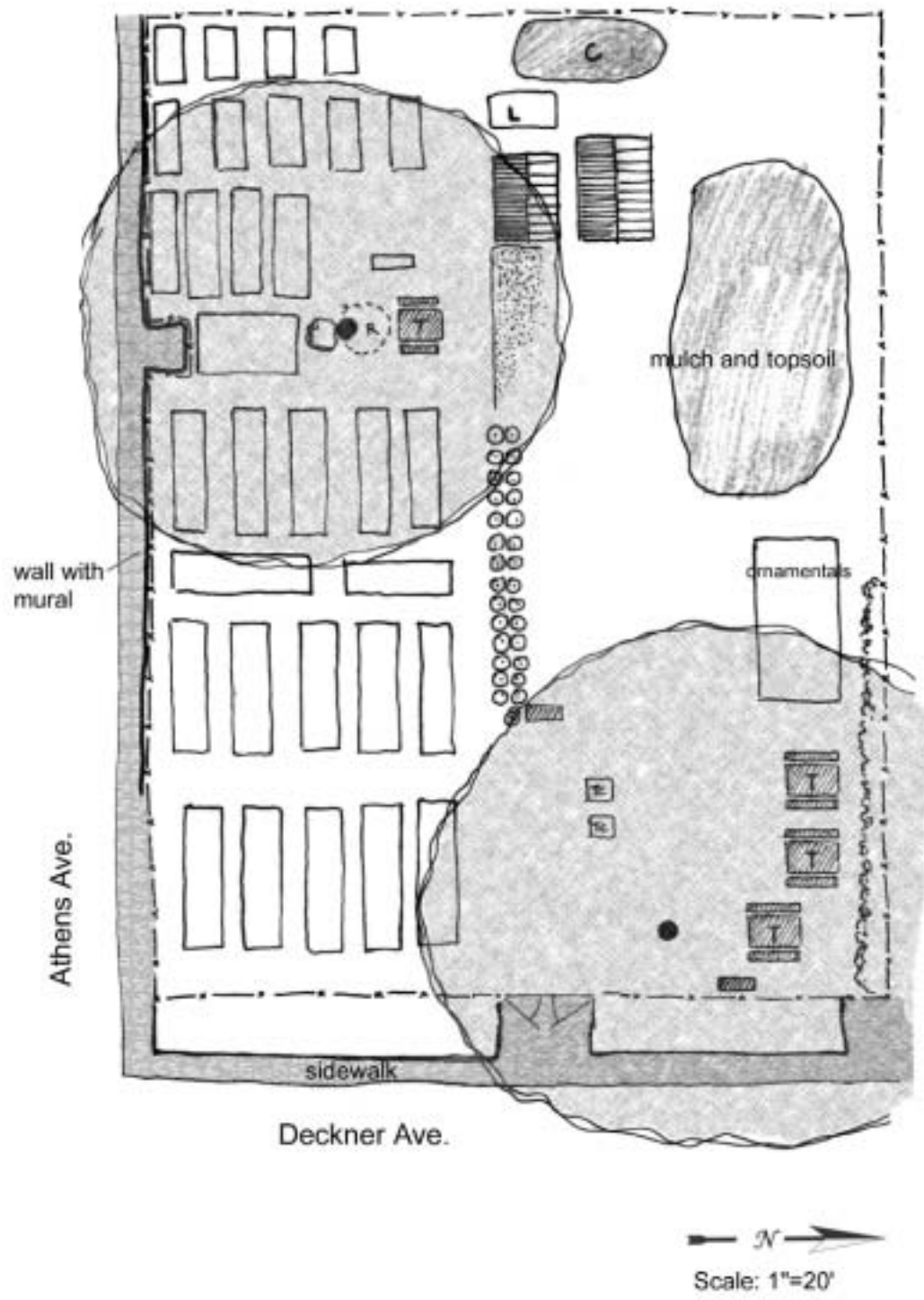


Fig 3-5: Capitol View Community Garden. Atlanta, GA

On the north side of the garden, nestled in the shade at the edge of the lot are three picnic tables and a bench. These sit next to a large lawn area, and are arranged to serve for gatherings and meetings at the garden. There is also a picnic table and a bench set in the shade near the tool sheds.

The gardeners at Capitol View garden are provided with water, tools, mulch and compost, and a key to the padlock on the gate. Seeds are provided by the AUGP, which also provides horticultural and community building assistance through monthly meetings of the AUGP sponsored community garden club.

The Capitol view garden is surrounded by a padlocked chain-link fence, to which all of the gardeners have a key. One section, apparently the easiest to climb, has been topped with razor wire. This fence is a response to a prevalent, though declining, level of crime in the neighborhood. I was told that without the fence, the vegetables and tools would certainly be stolen.

Aesthetics

Running along the whole front of the garden, outside the fence, is an ornamental bed full of flowering perennials and a few ornamental shrubs. Flower beds are also scattered throughout the garden. There is a large bed edged in landscape timbers in the shade against the north fence in which various flowers and cacti have been planted. In the center of the garden, a double row of planters made of 55 gallon plastic drums, cut into thirds (an AUGP addition) once functioned as a children's garden, but now serves as a bed for ornamentals. Around the base of the white oak at the rear of the garden sits a less well defined bed holding irises. A handful of gardeners have also planted flowers for

ornament in their personal beds. One gardener plants little else besides ornamentals in his bed.

In addition to the ornamental plantings, there are a few artistic notes in the garden. The most obvious is a mural running nearly 100' along the retaining wall at the southern edge of the garden, outside the fence and adjacent to the sidewalk. This mural is the work of many hands who over the years have been involved with the garden, including volunteer groups, participants in the children's garden, and the members themselves. One section of the mural memorializes five members of the garden who have passed away since the garden began.

Community and Social

The number of garden members was put at "12 faithful members" by Jesse Dill in March of this year. There have been in past years a small number of members who had a plot but were not active, or barely so. The garden, therefore, is not full. Several members tend two plots, and there are still unplanted plots. There seems to be little recruitment at this garden, and membership is stable. There are tentative plans to use the unclaimed beds to grow produce for charitable distribution.

There are few social activities taking place at the garden, though the gathering area is occasionally used. In addition to an annual AUGP garden club meeting hosted by Capitol View, the gardeners also have a cookout for the police, a 'thank you' for watching out for the garden. Through the summer there are infrequent, informal picnics hosted by members of the garden.

Carver Community Garden

History

Carver Community Garden is located within the Village at Carver, formerly known as Carver Homes, a federal housing project in south Atlanta. This garden was begun in the late 1980's as an outreach project of three local churches. The original garden was laid out in large communal beds, but when the gardeners had an opportunity to move the garden to a site in front of the Carver Homes recreation center, they switched to an arrangement of smaller personal beds.

In 2000 Carver Homes was remade as Village at Carver. All buildings were demolished and rebuilt in a more contemporary style. Half of the units were kept as subsidized, while the other half are intended to be rented out at market rates. Due to the renovations the Carver Community Garden was forced to move to their present site: a parcel offered to them by the Housing Authority. The AUGP and ACFB assisted with the move and helped find materials and soil amendments for the rebuilding of the garden. The current site is in a back corner of housing complex, bordered on two sides by the tall steel fence that surrounds the whole community. The site slopes strongly to the south, but there is a relatively flat area in the middle on which all of the personal beds are built.

Layout and Amenities

The garden contains 25 personal plots, all 16'x4' except for two. One of these is truncated by a tree trunk. The other is larger, and built in a U-shape, and raised 3' off the ground for the benefit of one elderly member who has trouble bending over. All the beds are raised and edged with landscape timbers. In addition to the personal beds, there are three large communal plots for vegetables that need more room than the smaller plots can



Fig 3-6: Carver Community Garden.

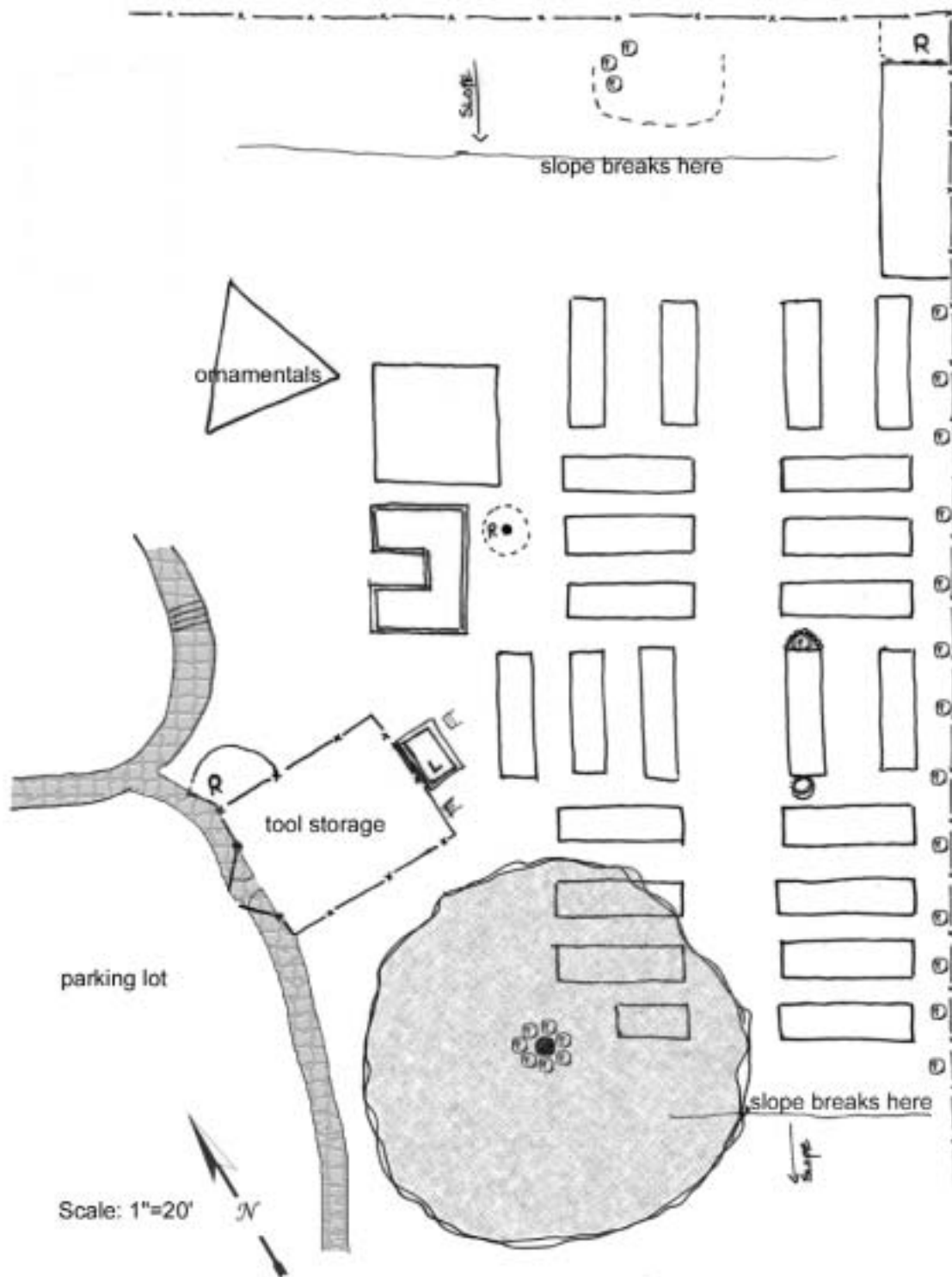


Fig 3-7: Carver Community Garden. Atlanta, GA

provide. Two are rectangular, timber edged beds planted in sweet potatoes, corn, squash, and cucumbers, while one is an unedged informal planting of melons.

At the front of the garden is a large, roofless, fenced area in which the garden's tools are kept locked up. This structure was built to contain trash dumpsters, but at the time of writing the housing authority has not installed any. The gardeners have been told that they must store their tools elsewhere when the dumpsters are brought in.

The gardeners at Carver Community Garden are provided with water and access to tools. They were given a truckload of compost by the city when they moved to their current location, and have been promised more. At the time of writing, however, it has not appeared.

Carver community garden is a member of the AUGP community garden club, and the members receive seeds at the meetings when they are given out, though most of the gardeners don't rely on this as their only source.

Aesthetics

At the time of writing, this garden is only in its second full growing season, and consequently has a rough, slightly unfinished look. The grass in the red clay paths between beds is spotty, the ornamentals planted around the site are still small, and shallow erosional gullies left from construction snake across part of the site.

There are many ornamental perennials planted about the site. One large triangular bed in the northwest corner is dedicated wholly to ornamental plantings. There are also plantings of ornamentals mixed with vegetables around a light post and around a large willow oak at the southern end of the site. A line of canna lilies and raspberries is planted along the fence at the eastern edge of the garden. A few gardeners have ornamentals

planted in their beds, and one gardener has created a small, semi-circular bed at the end of her plot for a rose bush. The bulk of the plots, though, are obviously planted for maximum vegetable production.

Other than the above mentioned plantings, there is little other ornament in the garden. Amongst the plantings under the light pole, one gardener has placed a ceramic sculpture of a cat, though it was intended as a scarecrow as much as a sculpture. Most of the gardeners have labeled their beds with their names, either writing them directly on the timbers lining the beds, or upon a piece of granite rip-rap (taken from a pile at southern end of site) leaning against their bed. This is the only garden in this study in which people labeled their beds.

Community and Social

All of the members of this garden are residents of Village at Carver. All are black, and most of the members are older women. There are a few children who have their own beds, something the members of the garden have actively encouraged. The previous location of the garden was in a more prominent site in front of the community recreation center, and drew enough children to have a special children's gardening program. The involvement of children was seen as a positive thing, and members hope that more children will be attracted to the new location.

There is no designated social or gathering area on site, though someone has brought a couple of chairs out to the garden. I have seen gardeners pull these into the shade of the willow oak to sit and talk.

The Carver garden annually hosts one of the AUGP garden club meetings, but does so in a nearby meeting room, not in the garden itself. There are no other regular social events in the garden.

Ashview Community Garden

History

The Ashview community garden is located in the Ashview neighborhood in southwest Atlanta. Ashview is a middle income, predominantly black neighborhood of single family houses. The history of the Ashview garden is similar to that of the Capitol View garden. The lot it sits upon is owned by CSX Railway, but was not actively used by them. As such, it had succumbed to the same fate as so many deserted lots— it became an informal trash dump and neighborhood eyesore. Local resident Robert Abbensett took it upon himself to clean up this lot and put it to use. For one dollar he obtained a 99-year lease from CSX. With help from AUGP, ACFB, and support from the city, he cleared years of accumulated junk from the lot, organized gardeners in the neighborhood, tilled beds, and improved the soil. In 1996, the gardeners in Ashview planted and harvested their first crop at the garden.

Land Use

The use of land at the Ashview garden is unique in this study. The garden more resembles a rural vegetable plot than an urban garden, in both size and planting. Rather than personal plots cared for by an individual, the majority of the space is divided into several large, communally tended beds, with whole rows and beds dedicated to single crops: corn, tomatoes, squash, onions, sweet potatoes and others. This approach is



Fig. 3-8: Ashview Community Garden.

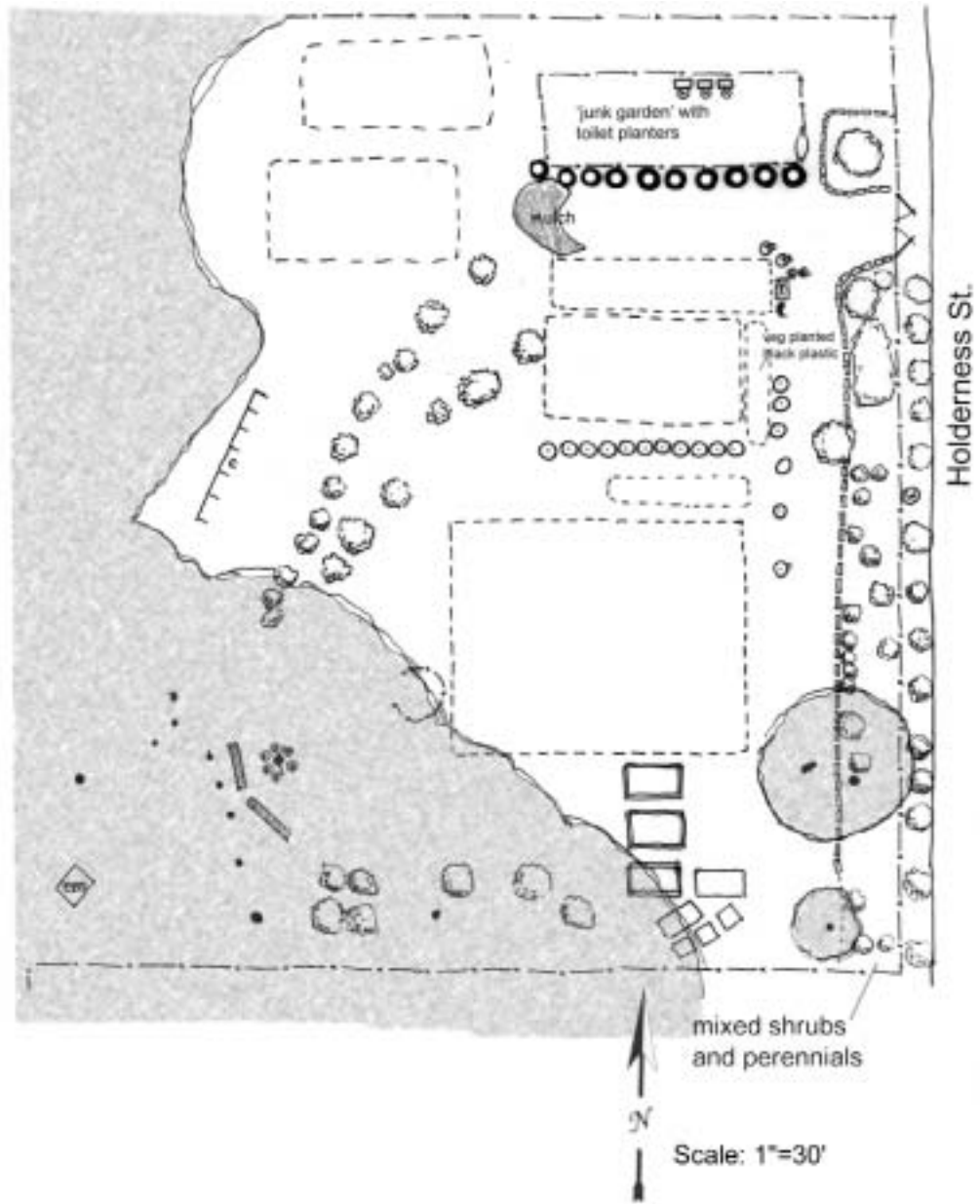


Fig 3-9: Ashview Community Garden. Atlanta, Ga

unusual. Most gardens opt for individual control over small beds. Some, like Carver, began with a communal arrangement like Ashview, but moved to individual plots. This use of space is not the only aspect in which Ashview differs from other gardens in this study. Unlike most gardens, the majority of the produce from Ashview does not end up on gardeners' tables. While anyone who participates in the garden is welcome to a share of the harvest, and many do take some, most of the produce from Ashview ends up being distributed to non-gardening neighbors, the Atlanta Community Food Bank, and to other charity kitchens and pantries.

As would be expected with the communal gardening arrangement, personal investment by the gardeners is lower than in gardens dominated by personal beds. According to Robert and his wife Martha, most of the work is done by a small handful of people. Some gardeners do, however, choose to take a row or part of a row as their own. There is also a cluster of eight small personal beds of mixed sizes in the southeastern corner of the garden available. Four of these are raised three feet off the ground specifically for elderly gardeners. They are not greatly used, though, and most of the gardening is performed communally in the larger beds.

This garden, more than any other in this study, reflects the vision and strong leadership of its founder. In that vision, as described by Robert, the garden serves to improve the appearance of the neighborhood by transforming a neglected lot, acts as a tool for community building, and as a tool for sharing produce with those less able and fortunate.

Layout and Amenities

The Ashview community garden provides its gardeners with water, compost and access to tools. Though gardeners are not automatically given a key, Robert told me that

anyone who asks can have one, or simply ask him to open the gate for them. Rather than being kept onsite, tools are stored at Robert's house about 1¹/₂ blocks away.

The Ashview garden is sunny in the east (front) and north, and shaded by a fairly heavy tree canopy in the back. The beds are situated in the sunniest areas of the garden. In the back, southwest corner, there is a small seating area consisting of two church pews in the shade of a large water oak. Behind this seating area is barbeque grill made of unmortared cinder block (one stipulation of the lease is that no permanent structures be built on site). Security is a concern here, and the garden is surrounded by a locked chain-link fence. In the early years of the garden, there was a serious problem with crop theft. Since the fence has been up, there have been no more theft problems.

Aesthetics

There is a wide (15' in some places) bed of ornamental shrubs and perennials straddling the fence along the whole front of the garden. There is a perennial bed inside the fence to the right of the entrance. There are also planters made of found materials, mostly tires and plastic barrel sections, planted with ornamentals. On the north end of the garden is an area, fenced off with wooden trellising and found metal fencing, that once housed a children's' garden tended by students at a local elementary school. When the children recently began another garden at their school, this area was transformed into a 'junk' garden. While currently housing only three toilets to be used as planters, the plan is to fill the area with more found objects and garden art.

There is a wide area of grass running straight from the entry gate, a divider between the 'junk' garden and the main vegetable patch. At the back of the vegetable

beds, this path veers, and becomes a narrow alley lined with an eclectic planting of shrubs. This alley leads to the shady seating area in the back of the garden.

The front ornamental bed is edged with cinder blocks that have been hand painted by some of the children and volunteers that have passed through this garden. Painting is repeated on a row of plastic barrel sections (provided by AUGP) that serve as planters for herbs and ornamentals .

Overall, the appearance of the garden is eclectic, obviously the product of many hands and contributions, but neat. The grass between beds is well mown, the front ornamental beds are frequently weeded, and materials are stored out of site behind the 'junk' garden.

Community and Social

The neighborhood gardeners at Ashview are generally elderly women, for whom the act of gardening seems to be as important as the food produced. These elderly gardeners tend to the garden when they can, though the bulk of the work, both gardening and maintenance of non-garden areas, is done by volunteers. Many of these volunteers are organized and brought to the garden by Fred Conrad from the Atlanta Food Bank. Another major source of labor comes from an arrangement that Robert has with the City of Atlanta whereby probationers work off community service hours in the garden. The community building possibilities of this garden are probably most noticeable with the probationers. Few, if any, of the probationers are residents of the Ashview neighborhood, and yet the effect of the garden and their work in it is dramatic. I was invited to a barbeque for past and present probation gardeners, and saw first hand how a sense of community had been forged. Probationers and neighborhood gardeners described the

sense of family that emerged from working together in the garden. One past probationer, who did not live in the neighborhood, said that he intended to come back to the garden and plant his own row. “I was one of them [probationer] and I’m here now. I’m free with mine and I’m here because I love the people I’m around.”

The Ashview Community Garden is a member of the AUGP garden club, and every year hosts one of the monthly meetings.

Scott Park Community Garden

History

The Scott Park Community Garden is situated in downtown Decatur, Georgia. It is located within a public park behind the Decatur Recreation Center, a prominent and well visited area. This garden was originally founded in a slightly different location in 1972 by residents in Philips Towers, a neighboring retirement home. The original garden, planted upon city land, was moved to an adjacent lot in 1991 to make way for a municipal parking deck. When the garden was moved, the city provided the labor and materials for the new garden. Once it moved to Scott Park, the garden was adopted by the Decatur Recreation Department as one of its programs.

Layout and Amenities

The garden is fairly small (85’x40’) and enclosed by a waist high, decorative fence. There are 22 individual beds in the garden, most 11’x6’, though there are slight variations between them. The garden is compact and quite orderly. Its arrangement is wholly symmetric across a central axis.



Fig 3-10: Scott Park Community Garden

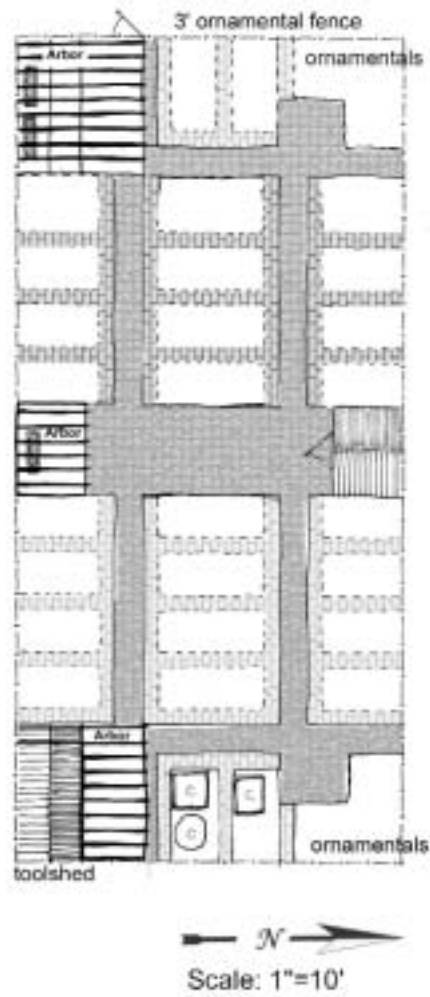


Fig 3-11: Scott Park Community Garden. Atlanta, Ga

In addition to the individual beds, the garden has two seating areas, shaded by vine-covered arbors. The paths and seating areas are all concrete, and the beds are delineated with brick edging. In the southeast corner there is a locked tool shed where both communal tools, and the gardeners personal tools are stored. The gardeners at Scott Park are provided with water, mulch, compost, fertilizer, access to tools, and a key to the tool shed. Security has been a concern, and there have been repeated problems with vegetable theft from the garden. Several gardeners hinted that it almost wasn't worth growing vegetables there for it was rare that they actually got to harvest them. Especially prone to theft are tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and peppers. This may account for the large numbers of ornamentals grown in the garden. Since the garden sits on city land in a public park, a locked fence is not an option. Scott Park's response to theft is to encourage police to increase their patrols by the garden, though this has been difficult to achieve.

Aesthetics

The Scott Park community garden has the most orderly and lush appearance of any garden in this study. As mentioned above, the hardscape and symmetry give the garden a great deal of order. The lush appearance is due mostly to the great number of ornamental flowering plants growing here. Most of the gardeners have ornamentals growing amongst their vegetables. Several gardeners grow exclusively ornamentals. In addition to the flowers in individual beds, perennial beds fill the two northern corners. These are known as 'memory gardens', a tradition started by the gardeners from the Philips Towers. There are beds in which plants from deceased gardeners were planted as a memorial. These beds still serve this purpose, but they are now maintained by volunteers from the "Master Gardener" program, a state-sponsored amateur horticulture

training program. These gardeners put more emphasis on neatness and appearance than sentiment.

There is a great deal of emphasis on neatness in the garden. One of the main rules of the garden is that gardeners must keep their plots weeded and all dead plants must be removed. The rules state that if two weeks pass without weeding, a gardener may lose their plot, though this rule is not upheld as strictly as written. Part of the emphasis on a neat and ordered appearance is at the behest of the Decatur Recreation Department. According to Mary Miller, director of the Recreation Department, its location in a public park necessitates a “certain look.”

Besides the ornamental plantings, other decorative additions include several pieces of garden sculpture, purchased by the Decatur Recreation Department to enhance the garden for its appearance in the Decatur garden tour this year. The building of a decorative sundial garden is planned for this summer.

Community and Social

The demographic of the gardeners at Scott Park have changed in the last few years. For most of its history, gardeners have been seniors, residents of the Philips Towers. Its move to Scott park increased its exposure, and the efforts of organizer Christine Lewis over the past two years have greatly increased the diversity of gardeners. While still not as representative of the Decatur community as Ms. Lewis would like, it is moving in that direction. While nearly all white, there is a good deal of diversity in age. To have a plot at the Scott Park garden, one must be a resident of the city of Decatur and sign up with the Recreation Department before the cut-off date in the spring (this year it

was in February). The garden has been full for the last two years, and there is a waiting list.

For the last several years, the Scott Park Garden has been on the annual Decatur garden tour, a self-guided, three day long tour of mostly residential gardens in Decatur, coinciding with the annual Decatur Arts Festival. This is viewed as valuable by the organizers of the garden. It offers a good opportunity to increase public awareness of the garden, a chance to share their gardens with the public, and to show off a little.

Community building is recognized as an important aspect of the Scott Park Garden, and one of the most important tools is a monthly meeting of the gardeners, held over lunch in the recreation center. The meeting is ostensibly to discuss garden business, but Christine Lewis told me that “we only do about 10 or 15 minutes of business and the rest of the time is for them [the gardeners] to get to know each other.”

Oakhurst Community Garden

History

The Oakhurst Community Garden is located in Oakhurst, a residential neighborhood adjacent to Decatur, Georgia. This garden was founded in 1997 when Oakhurst resident Sally Wylde became concerned about the impending subdivision and development of a half-acre lot in her neighborhood. She and her husband bought the land to preserve it as greenspace in Oakhurst. They then created a non-profit organization to manage it.

The garden sits on a corner lot and is sunken well below street level. Bounded to the south and the east by roads, the garden is backed by the heavily wooded banks of a



Fig 3-12: Oakhurst Community Garden.

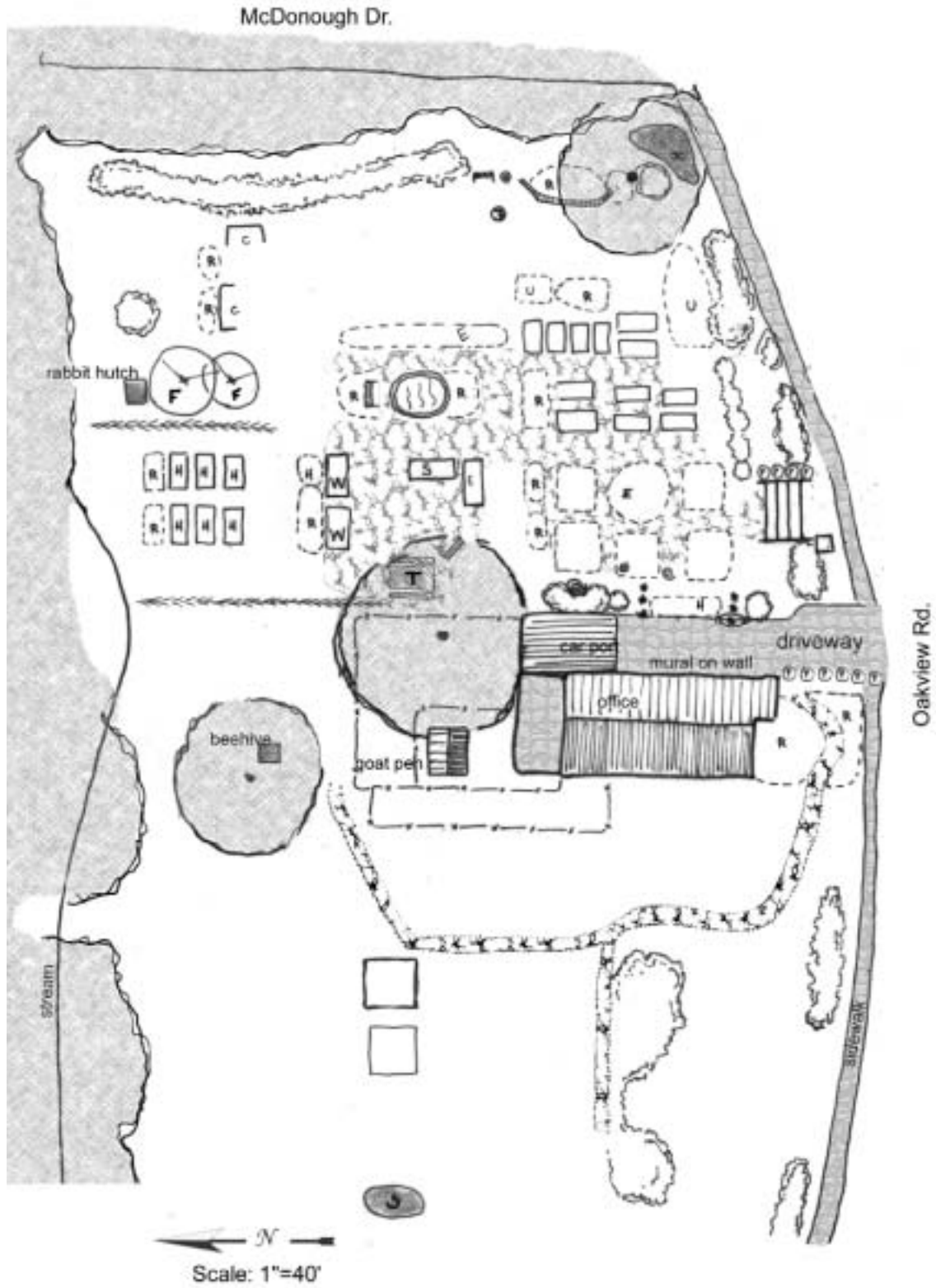


Fig 3-13: Oakhurst Community Garden. Atlanta, GA

small stream to the north. The garden has grown in size since its founding. An adjacent lot to the west was donated by a neighbor, and across the street to the east, the garden purchased a sizable woodlot through which the stream that borders the garden flows. This woodlot is not intended for gardening but was purchased with the goals of habitat restoration and greenspace preservation.

This garden has a much broader mission than any of the gardens discussed previously. In addition to providing space for gardeners to grow produce, there are many other facets to this garden. From its inception, the garden was seen as a way to preserve greenspace in the city. The recent acquisition of the woodlot and floodplain across the street demonstrates this is still a goal. This greenspace is intended to be used by all neighborhood residents. The garden is used by many as an informal gathering space or park.

There is also a very strong public outreach component to this garden as well. In addition to educational displays and demonstration beds, the Oakhurst Community Garden runs many youth programs focused primarily on environmental education, but encompassing aspects of community building, health, and social responsibility.

Layout and Amenities

Personal garden plots fill a small area of this garden. There are currently 9 plots allocated to individual gardeners, though that number can change a bit from year to year. Some demonstration and ornamental beds can be converted to personal vegetable plots when interest is high, and vice-versa when interest wanes. The beds vary in size from 4x8' to 10x12'. The allocation of the beds is done informally, though senior members seem to have the largest plots. The smaller (4x8') beds are raised beds, edged with

lumber. The larger beds are not raised. These beds sit in one of the sunniest sections of the garden, the southeastern corner, just inside the main entrance. They are arranged in a fairly regular grid, though the grid is broken in one place by a circular demonstration bed. This grid continues beyond the personal bed area, with demonstration plots and herb beds arranged in the same alignment. This year two large (roughly 10x10') communal tomato beds were created for the gardeners on the newly acquired western lot. These were built in the hopes of avoiding diseases that have been plaguing gardeners in their personal plots.

As stated earlier, the tending of personal plots is only one activity at this site. Much of the garden is dedicated to its other roles as an educational site and community greenspace. There is a house on the original lot that serves as an office, with tool and equipment storage in the basement. The educational focus is very apparent here in the numerous demonstration beds, some of which are used by the youth programs. Many of these beds are laid out in the grid established by the personal plots, but some are in a much more organic, or haphazard arrangement throughout the site. For social activities, there is a central woodchip-covered social area with a picnic table and several chairs. With the accumulation of a few pieces of play equipment and a sandbox, this area has taken on a bit of a playground feel. Near this playground is a small pond and water garden, built by an inspired neighbor. There are two different composting areas on site, one with signs explaining the composting process

This garden is the only one in this study that incorporates animals (other than fish) into its program. Living at this garden are two pygmy goats, a single chicken, and a hive of bees. In the past there have also been rabbits and ducks living at the garden.

Aesthetics

This garden has a prominent and attractive main entrance off the street. A vine covered arbor frames a large sign bearing the name of the garden, and covers a set of wide steps leading down to the garden. Outside the entrance is a box containing information about the garden, as well as a sign inviting visitors and explaining the rules of the garden.

The aesthetic here is eclectic. There are large numbers of ornamentals planted here. Some of these are in dedicated beds, while others are simple plantings. There are several pieces of art distributed throughout the garden as well, including ornamental bird feeders; small metal and concrete garden sculptures; a shrine of sorts made of a rowboat, a gazing ball, and a painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe; a painted mural on the side of the house; and a mosaic on a small retaining wall in front of an ornamental ‘peace garden’.

It is apparent that much of the ornament, plantings and art reflect the inspiration and work of many individuals over time.

Community and Social

Oakhurst Community Garden is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a board of directors and three paid staff, an executive director, an environmental education director, and a full time intern. Much of the staff’s time is taken up by what has become a major aspect of the garden: the youth programs. There have been a variety of different programs run at Oakhurst garden since it’s inception, but all are intended to “focus on fostering a sense of community, ecological place, and responsibility”(Oakhurst Community Garden, 2003).

After-school programs are run for all ages of students focusing on environmental literacy and community service. In the summer, Oakhurst runs a garden-based girls camp emphasizing entrepreneurial skills. There is also a summer program seeking to help ease the transition of immigrant children into American society. In the planning stages now is a garden for handicapped community members. This possibility was included in the original planning of the garden- I was told that the grid of personal beds was laid out with wide north-south paths with the idea of future handicapped access. Plans are being drawn now to build a handicapped accessible ramp from the street down into the western part of the garden.

Oakhurst Community Garden receives some funding from the Decatur schools system for the after-school programs they run, and the rest comes from donations and grants. Gardeners are charged a fee (\$30-\$50 per year, based on plot size) for their plots, though it is not a significant source of income for the garden.

SEEDS Community Garden

History

The SEEDS Community Garden is located in central Durham, NC. It lies between an industrial district and a predominantly black, lower income residential neighborhood. This garden is the first and primary garden of the non-profit group called SEEDS (Southeastern Efforts Developing Sustainable Spaces). It was founded in 1994 by two women, Brenda Brodie and Annice Keenan, with the purpose of transforming a neglected urban lot into productive land that fostered community and providing economic opportunity.



Fig. 3-14: SEEDS Community Garden

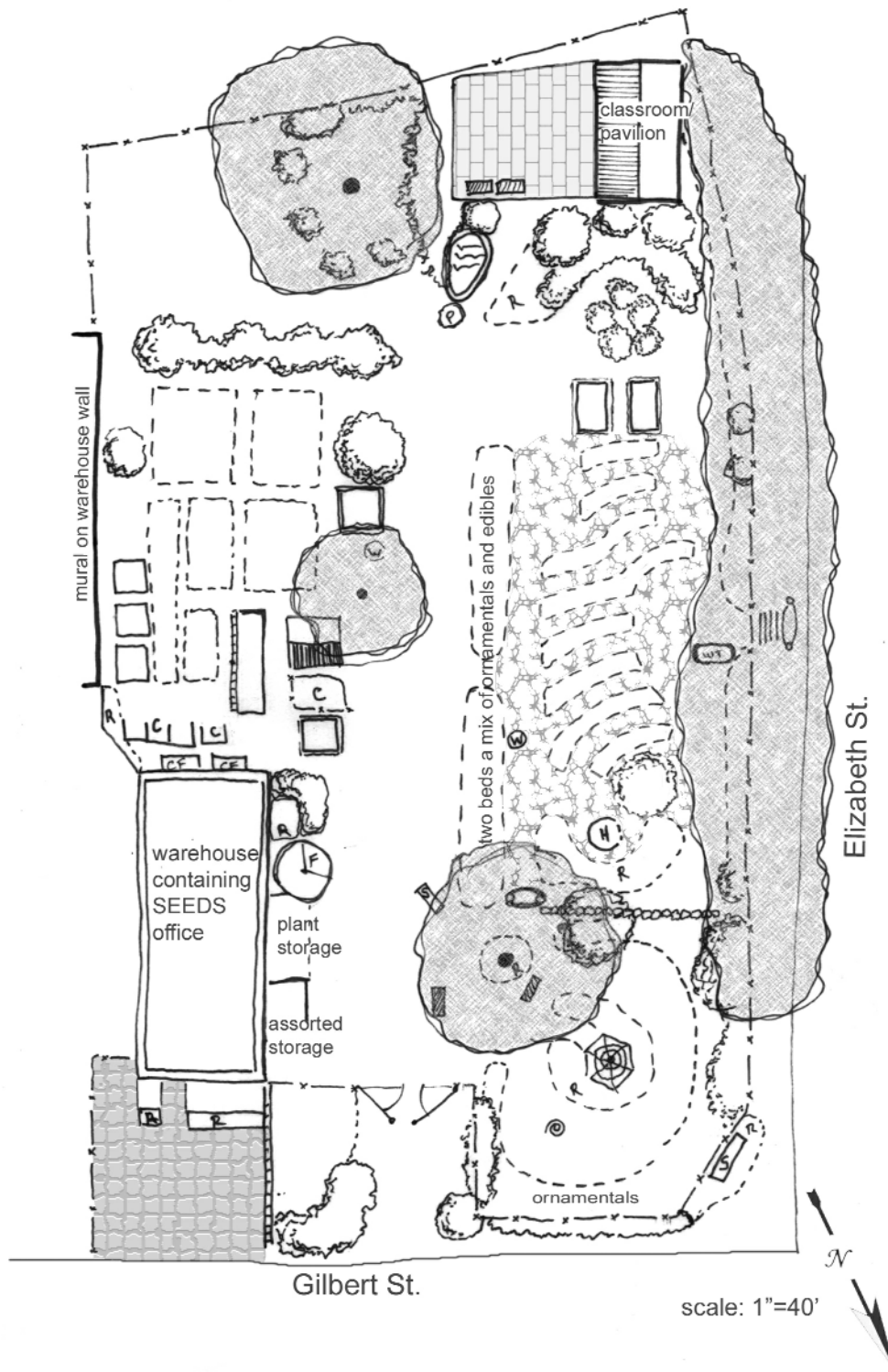


Fig 3-15: SEEDS Community Garden. Durham, NC

The garden is located on an abandoned industrial site behind a now refurbished warehouse. The land is leased by SEEDS, but they are attempting to raise money to purchase the lot. The SEEDS offices were off site until recently, when the organization was able to rent space in the refurbished warehouse next door. SEEDS also leases a lot across the street to the north for Durham Inner-city Gardeners (DIG), a youth gardening program.

Mission

This garden resembles the Oakhurst garden in the breadth of its vision and its desire to be in the public eye. Like Oakhurst, this garden has a mission that goes far beyond simply providing space for community gardeners to grow produce. As their literature states, “SEEDS helps neighborhoods and communities create sustainable green spaces for gardening, gathering, and education “(SEEDS pamphlet, no date).

Since its inception, SEEDS has run various programs that create economic opportunities and encourage community development. The two main programs now run by SEEDS are Community Harvest, a program that helps neighborhoods set up their own local, community gardens, and DIG, an entrepreneurial youth market gardening program. This site is used to support these programs.

Fostering community amongst local residents is an important part of SEEDS’ mission, and this garden, like Oakhurst, functions as an informal park. So, while there are personal garden plots at the SEEDS garden, its larger function is to serve as a community hub and demonstration site to inspire and teach urban gardening.

Layout and Amenities

The SEEDS garden is on a corner lot, bounded on two sides by streets and one side by the wall of a warehouse. There are two entrances to the garden, the main one at the north end with a very ornate metal gate, and a secondary one to the west, with a small arbor and steps coming off the street. The personal garden plots are located just inside the secondary entrance. There are only 10 beds in the area set aside for personal plots, and one of these has been set aside for preschoolers from a day care center. Eight of the ten beds are curvilinear and unedged, while the other two are 2 ½' high lumber edged raised beds, built to accommodate elderly or disabled gardeners. This is the only garden in this study with curvilinear beds. The beds vary in size, averaging about 2' wide and up to about 20' in length. In between, there are very wide, mulched paths. I was told that these beds were redesigned this year, and the wide paths and heavy wood-chip mulch is an attempt to control a wire-grass problem.

The gardeners at the SEEDS garden are provided with water, mulch and compost, access to tools, and a key for the gate.

At the eastern end of the garden, against the warehouse wall, is another set of beds. These are much larger, and used by DIG to grow cut-flowers for market. The rest of the DIG beds are in a separate lot across the street from the main SEEDS garden. Security has been an issue throughout the history of this garden. When it was first built, a locked fence was erected in response to tool thefts and the generally high crime rate of the neighborhood. A decision was made to remove some of the fence a few years ago in an attempt to give the space a more public feel, but after chronic produce and plant theft, the garden was re-fenced this year. There is still public access, though. The gates are

unlocked during the day, Monday through Friday, and all gardeners with plots receive a key.

The SEEDS garden is often referred to in their literature as the ‘demonstration garden’ and has several educational elements. Running through the center of the garden, alongside the area of personal garden plots, is a large bed demonstrating edible landscaping. Containing a mix of fruit trees, berries, herbs, and ornamentals, this bed is known as the ‘food alley.’ At the eastern side of the garden, near the DIG flower beds, there is an extensive composting site with large signs explaining the composting process. A more subtle educational tool is found in small signs, irregularly placed about the garden, giving the names of certain plants.

Besides the SEEDS office, there are three other structures on site. At the southern end of the garden is a large patio and covered pavilion that serves as an outdoor classroom and main gathering space. At the northern end of the garden is a spiral of lawn surrounded by lush perennial beds. At the center of this spiral is an artistic circular metal arbor. This serves as an outdoor gallery for ‘Art Grows in Durham’, an annual summer art festival held at the garden. A large area in the southeast corner of the site is kept open for use during this festival. The final structure is a small roofed pad that was built to house a mud-oven that is planned for the future.

Aesthetics

The appearance of the garden is eclectic, but quite lush and colorful due to the ornamental plantings. In addition to the food alley in the center of the garden and the perennial beds around the art arbor, there are extensive shrub and perennial plantings

around the outdoor classroom, and around most of the garden's perimeter. Just off the patio of the outdoor classroom is a fishpond and water garden.

Art is also an important component of the garden's appearance. In addition to the very ornate entrance gate mentioned earlier, there are several pieces of garden sculpture, some obviously created for this purpose, some simply found objects used as decoration. There are hand-painted bricks used as edging along some perennial beds, two rustic wooden arbors, and visible from almost anywhere within the garden, a large mural covering most of the warehouse wall at the east of the garden.

Community and Social

SEEDS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a board of directors and five paid staff. Funding for the garden is mostly through donations and grants, though there have been programs in the past that generated income. It is hoped that DIG will be able to generate income as well. The long term goal for SEEDS is economic self-sufficiency, and there are various ideas about how to achieve that. Suggestions have included a partnership with the Durham parks department, or renting out the garden occasionally as an event facility. SEEDS actively recruits volunteers, and finds them essential to the running of the garden. Most of the maintenance and construction is done with volunteer labor.

Table3-1: A chart of case study garden elements

Garden	Neighborhood	Age (years)	Mission?	# of Beds	Materials Provided	Security Fence?	Social Space	Meetings?	Dominant Demographic
<i>Family Housing</i>	University housing	4	N	84 personal.	water	N	None	N	Intl. students
<i>Capitol View</i>	Single. fam. residential	8	N	31 personal	water, tools, compost, seeds	Y	picnic area and lawn	Y, monthly	older black women
<i>Carver</i>	Housing proj.	15+ (2 at cur. site)	N	25 personal. 3 communal.	water, tools, seeds	N	informal seating	Y, monthly	older black women
<i>Ashview</i>	Single. fam. residential	7	informal	4 communal 8 personal	water, tools, compost, seeds	Y	informal seating	Y, monthly	older black
<i>Oakhurst</i>	Single. fam. residential	6	formal, written	9 personal 2 communal	water, tools, compost, mulch	N	picnic area, playground	N	mixed ages, white
<i>Scott</i>	Single. fam. residential	31 (13 at cur. Site)	N	22 personal	water, tools, compost, mulch, fertilizer	N	informal seating	Y, monthly	mixed ages, white
<i>SEEDS</i>	Between industrial & snl. fam. residence	8	formal, written	10 personal	water, tools, compost, mulch, fertilizer	Y	covered pavilion, lawn, art display area	N	mixed ages, races

Table 3-1 (continued)

Garden	Education Programs?	Children's Program?	50(c)(3) status?
Family Housing	N	N	N
Capitol View	N	former	N
Carver	N	former	N
Ashview	N	former	N
Oakhurst	Y, youth oriented	Y	Y
Scott	minor	N	N
SEEDS	Y, gardener workshops, youth entrepreneurial	Y	Y

CHAPTER 4

COMMON THEMES IN COMMUNITY GARDENS

The findings presented in this chapter are based upon my observations and interviews at the seven community gardens described in the previous chapter. In order to present these findings coherently, I have created artificially discrete categories. In this attempt, as with all categorization, the divisions between categories are never as neat as I make them appear.

A useful tool to examine the use of space in community gardens is the balance between community building and production. Though these two aspects generally compliment each other, and often are inseparable, there is a discernable balance at each garden.

At all seven gardens I asked whether there was a guiding philosophy or mission. Oakhurst and SEEDS both have formal mission statements and a non-profit organization structure that give these gardens a sure rudder in defining themselves, and the community/ production balance. From the mission statements alone it becomes clear that community building is a strong priority at these two gardens.

The Oakhurst Community Garden Project teaches environmental awareness to diverse local students through hands-on gardening and outdoor education programs. We are dedicated to empowering young people to become active members of the community by engaging in projects that address real needs. Respect for the earth and each other underlies all our efforts. By teaching about wellness, teamwork, and conservation, we hope to empower youth to take charge of their own

health, as well as that of the environment (Oakhurst Community Garden 2003).

SEEDS helps neighborhoods and communities create sustainable green spaces for gardening, gathering, and education (SEEDS, no date).

Only one other garden, Ashview, has a defined purpose that is generally agreed upon by most members. While not written, it was clear through conversations with the organizer and gardeners that Ashview's mission is to actively better the neighborhood by providing food for the needy and improving social ties throughout the whole neighborhood. Food is grown collectively at Ashview and distributed to elderly neighbors, the Atlanta Food Bank, a battered women's shelter, and several neighborhood apartment complexes. Through the outreach of food distribution and through communal gardening they find that that social ties throughout the neighborhood have improved.

The other five gardens find that balance more organically. As with any vernacular landscape, the current landscape is the product of its past, tempered by the desires of its current users. Ultimately, the community/ production balance, and its reflection in use of space, aesthetics, social organization, and infrastructure, is constantly being remade according to the needs of the individual gardeners. In this chapter I am looking for commonalities that will begin to define the physical side of southeastern community gardens.

Community building:

Community building, as defined by the National Community Building Network, is "an ongoing process where members of a community share skills, talents, knowledge and experiences that strengthen or develop themselves and the community" (NCBN,

2003). Community gardens act as catalysts for community building. They provide both a physical site and a social environment that increases community cohesion. Increasing cohesion in a community, as noted previously, can have a great impact on the surrounding neighborhood. More cohesive communities show a greater degree of community pride and investment, both social and economic, in the neighborhood.

Garden as neighborhood gathering space.

One of the primary functions, and community building tools, of the community gardens in this study is as neighborhood gathering space. Every one of the gardens in this study functioned to some degree as an informal park. The social function of these gardens is primarily for the gardeners, though some of the gardens did attract people from outside the gardening community.

One of the key questions I asked gardeners in conducting my research was what made them want to garden *at this community garden*. Let me note that this is different from personal motivations to garden, of which there were many, and will be discussed later. While all gardeners responded that they needed space to garden, the majority of them also mentioned the social nature of the garden. Over and over, I heard from people that the gardens had a rich social side and were great places to make friends. A former gardener at the Family Housing Garden told me that “gardening in the community garden provided...an opportunity to get to know neighbors that I may never have had contact with otherwise...it was very much a social event for us as women and stay-at-home moms.” Another gardener at the same garden told me that he believed “the real purpose of the garden was to enhance the social interactions of the residents [at Family

Housing]”. At most of the gardens in this study, the social climate grew up around the gardening. It is the activity that draws people together and acts as social catalyst. One female gardener at Carver told me “sometimes it will be a lot of [other people at the garden]. Because a lot of them have gardens down here, in the afternoon it will be seven or eight of them down here, and I really enjoy it, when we all get out here.”

One of the recurring features throughout the case studies is an area set aside as social space. Of the seven gardens, only the Family Housing garden did not have such a space, though it is surrounded by an open lawn that can serve this purpose. There are several types of social spaces evident in the gardens. The most common is a simple seating area, consisting of chairs or benches. Examples of these can be found at Scott, Ashview, and Capitol View. Carver has the simplest arrangement of all: two chairs which are moved to follow the shade of the large oak on site. In all cases, these areas were



Fig. 4-1: Simple seating areas.
Clockwise from top left: Carver,
Capitol View, Scott Park

placed in the shade, a response to the hot southern summers and the use of sunny areas for gardening. In one case, at Scott, a shade structure has been constructed over the seating areas. There are plans for a gazebo in the picnic area at Capitol view.

Though only two regular outdoor events occur each year, Capitol View maintains a large picnic area that is nearly 1/5 the size of the site. This is simply a lawn with picnic tables along two edges. The entire area is in the shade of a large oak, so that while the area is prized (one gardener told me that she would like to spruce it up with nicer tables) its size is partially a reflection of the unsuitability of the area for vegetable gardening.

SEEDS and Oakhurst have missions that involve a much greater degree of public outreach. They, unlike other gardens, try to attract non-gardeners and host social events, workshops, and after-school programs. Their public face is easily seen in their land use, and in the construction of public space. Both SEEDS and Oakhurst have large open grassy areas that are kept open for the occasional festival and party. SEEDS hosts an annual, weekend long art-festival, and uses their lawn area for bands and audiences. They also have an artistic, metal arbor structure which acts as the outdoor art gallery for



Fig 4-2: Larger, more elaborate social areas. From left to right: Oakhurst, SEEDS

the festival. In addition, there is a covered pavilion and open brick patio that is used as an outdoor classroom, as well as a space for picnics, workshops, lectures, and other smaller gatherings. The social spaces at the SEEDS garden are a very obvious, important component of the whole garden.

Oakhurst also has a large portion of their garden devoted to public gathering space. They have a central lawn around which is arrayed picnic tables, benches, and a small assortment of plastic playground equipment, including a sandbox suitable for very young children. There is another lawn area kept open for the occasional garden party, such as the Earth Day celebration in 2001 that drew more than 300 people.

Social activity at the gardens is not limited to gardeners alone. In some cases, non-gardeners are attracted to the gardens and the social environment they create. This was remarked upon at several gardens, though significantly more at the three gardens with the most public presence: Scott Park, Oakhurst, and SEEDS. The shaded seating areas are a draw to passers-by at Scott Park, and the park-like feel and social events are attractions at Oakhurst and SEEDS. One gardener at SEEDS described the web of connections amongst neighbors stimulated by the SEEDS garden. Local children play together at the garden, providing an opportunity for parents to meet each other. Garden parties also provide another way for non-gardening neighbors to meet each other. Though he had only lived in the neighborhood for three months, one gardener told me “So far as right here on this block, where you can see the garden, I basically know everybody, and through the garden.”

Sense of ownership

For a community garden to become a space around which community develops, it is important for the gardeners to have a sense of ownership towards the space.

Suttles, writing on territoriality in cities, remarks on the identification of a group with its 'locational base' (1972,170). Similarly, Sommer, in his essay on "Territory" writes on the importance of a 'home range'. This home range is a physical place that defines and is defined by a person's identity and role in their community. He defines the home range as space that is owned, both actually and symbolically. (1982, 268-269). As Hough has noted, active participation and involvement with a place is a very important part of engendering a sense of ownership (1984, 231-2). Gardening is, by its very nature, a participatory relationship with a place.

The motivations for participation in the community gardens are complex. When asked, most gardeners gave multiple reasons for gardening in their community garden. Some reasons were based on the sociability of the gardens or the desire to grow food, but many gardeners told of more personal, solitary reasons. One man told me that he gardened because it gives him something to do outside of the retirement home where he lives. Another gardens because "it's like therapy." Many people garden as a hobby, or for exercise, or contact with nature.

Attachments to the gardens are often forged first on a personal level. Many gardeners' ties began with the ownership of their own bed and their activities in that bed. This is reflected in the division of space seen in the gardens. In all of the gardens except Ashview, gardening took place primarily in individual beds. This was remarked upon by Louise Watley, one of the organizers of the Carver Community Garden. She told how the

first incarnation of the garden was a collection of large communal beds. When they moved to a different site a few years later, they moved to a setup of all individual beds. She said that these were more successful because “there wasn’t a sense of ownership” with the communal beds. The sense of individual ownership is seen very strongly at the Carver Community Garden, where all the beds are labeled with the gardener names, either written directly on the timbers that line them, or upon a stone leaning against the bed. While this is the only garden in which beds bear the names of the gardeners, the beds in the other gardens all bear the personal stamp of the gardener. Some gardeners ornament their beds with garden sculptures or flowers, while others show their individual tastes in the vegetables they plant or in the sometimes elaborate structures to support plants.



Fig 4-3: Symbols of bed ownership



Collective ownership

The sense of ownership of the garden extends beyond the individual gardeners to encompass the collective efforts of the whole community of gardeners.

Some of what ties the community of gardeners together is a sense of shared endeavor, not specifically reflected in the physical garden. The American Community Gardening Association emphasizes that a democratic, responsive organizational structure is a necessity for a successful garden (2003), though in my conversations with gardeners, I did not find this to be as significant a factor as this suggests. When asked whether they felt they had a voice in the decisions at the garden, nearly everyone answered either ‘yes,’ or that it was not a concern. This can be explained in two ways. One explanation is that the organizational structures are responsive to the gardeners’ needs, which seemed to be the case at most gardens. A second explanation is that the rule making and decision making at the gardens may not be as pressing a need as other factors. In one case, at the SEEDS garden, I was told by David DeVito, one of the organizers, that unless the individual gardeners were on the board of directors, they did not really have a say in the decision making at the garden. Despite this, the gardeners that I spoke with there did not feel less invested.

As stated earlier, three of the gardens in this study have an articulated mission. While this would seem to encourage a feeling of a collective, goal oriented effort amongst the gardeners, I found this to be the case only at Ashview. This garden is unique in that the gardening is almost wholly a collective effort. The goal of growing produce primarily for others has created a strong bond and engendered a sense of purpose in the gardeners. As one gardener told me, the garden has “pulled the community together...everybody knows everybody. That way you cut down on crime because people are watching other people’s houses.”

The formal missions of the Oakhurst Garden and SEEDS, on the other hand, do not seem to affect the group identity or sense of community amongst the gardeners. Note that by ‘gardeners’ I am referring specifically to those who cultivate individual plots in these two gardens.

A more significant element in the building of the sense of collective endeavor are the regular monthly meetings held at four of the gardens. These meetings play an important role in maintaining social connections between gardeners. Due to the varied schedules of the gardeners and the haphazard nature of social interactions in the gardens, these meetings are the only time when all gardeners are gathered together. The gardeners at Ashview, Carver, and Capitol View attend the monthly meetings hosted by the Atlanta Urban Gardening Program. Not only do these meetings aid in the social cohesion of the individual gardens, but they also help create an even larger community, one encompassing nearly a dozen Atlanta urban gardens. Scott Park has mandatory monthly meetings which allow the gardeners to discuss garden business, socialize, and renew friendships. Capitol View also has a monthly garden meeting in addition to the AUGP meeting.



Fig. 4-4: AUGP garden meeting

Aesthetics

The appearance of the gardens is another element that both creates and reflects the sense of community surrounding the garden. As discussed by Hough, community gardens are very much within the vernacular landscape tradition. Characteristic of this tradition, as seen in the community gardens in this study, is a layout and appearance that is slowly emerging, organic, and participatory. While an organic development does produce an individual character at each garden, there are common threads which run through the appearances of these gardens.

Geometric beds

The most common arrangement for garden beds is a rectilinear grid. This is the primary arrangement for beds, both individual and communal, in every garden except SEEDS. Agricultural and gardening tradition in America has nearly always encouraged

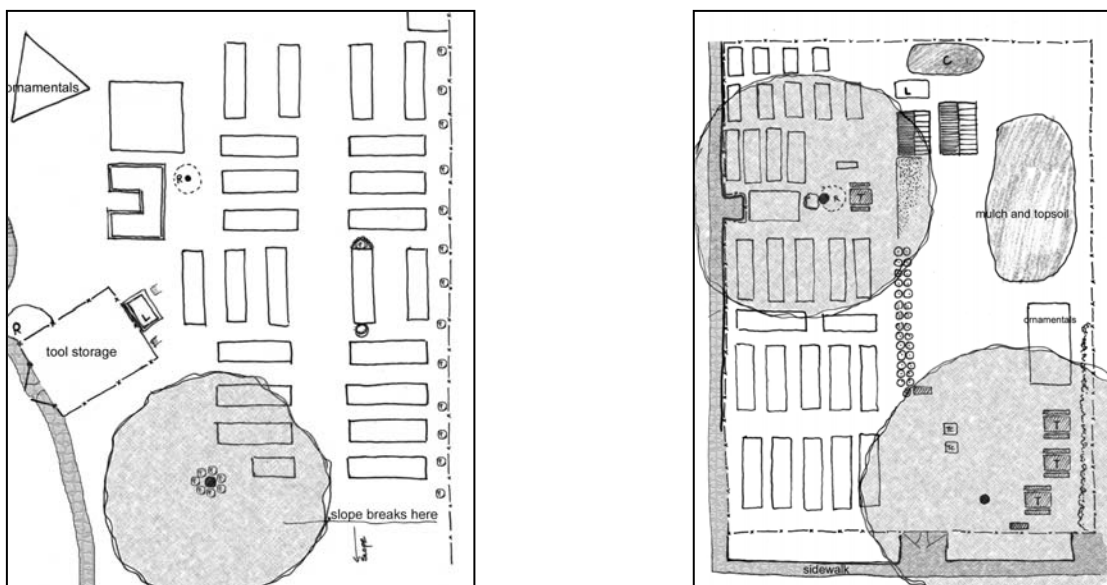


Fig 4-5: Geometric bed layouts at Carver (left) and Capitol View

the

linear arrangement. Even the term ‘row-cropping’ defines a type of agriculture by its planting arrangement. While this linearity certainly has practical reasons (ease of cultivation, ease of harvest), the size of the beds in most of the gardens make these benefits slight. The main attraction, it seems, to the rectilinear grid is an aesthetic one. This arrangement gives an inherent order, as well as an appearance of productivity, that most gardeners find pleasing. One gardener at SEEDS, where the beds are curvilinear, told me “If I could change anything, all their rows were in an arc. I’m used to mine being straight. That’s just nothing; I’m just used to straight rows.”

Even though the SEEDS garden has curvilinear beds, all of the neighborhood gardens that they help arrange through their ‘Community Harvest’ program have their beds arranged in the more familiar, rectilinear alignment.



Fig. 4-6: Garden beds. Rectilinear are most common, but SEEDS (right) chooses curved beds

Neatness

When asked what they liked about the look of their community garden, one of the most common responses gardeners gave was ‘neatness’. Neatness generally means a well maintained garden— grass mown, weeds pulled, shrubs pruned, trash picked up. When

asked about the appearance of the SEEDS garden, one gardener told me “Dave [DeVito] mows it and weed eats it, he keeps it up to par, so it looks nice.”

The desire for neatness included both public and personal areas of the gardens. I talked to many gardeners who had small complaints about other gardeners not keeping their beds weeded, or leaving empty pots and the like in their bed. Of the three gardens that have a set of stated rules (Scott, Oakhurst, and SEEDS), each had a rule that



Fig. 4-7: Mown lawn, bed edging, and weeded and mulched plots helps create a neat appearance at Ashview (left) and Scott Park.

gardeners must keep their plots weeded, though the reasons for these rules are as much to prevent the spread of weeds as they are about preserving neatness. At Scott Park Garden, however, the desire for neatness came in part from the Decatur Recreation Department and its feeling that the garden, being in a public park, must maintain a certain publicly acceptable appearance.

This desire for neatness is evident from the beginning at two of the gardens. Capitol View and Ashview were started primarily as a way of cleaning up derelict lots.

Order

While neatness is prized at the community gardens in this study, this does not mean that orderliness is as well. This is where the difference between Hough's 'pedigreed' and 'vernacular' landscapes is most obvious. While the common urban landscape, both public and private, generally strives for order, many of the gardens I looked at had a less orderly, more eclectic look.

In the gardens with a tight grid of beds, the grid itself imposes a unifying order on the space, and the more area in the garden devoted to personal beds, the more outwardly uniform they appear. Scott Park and the Family Housing Garden are wholly gridded, and as such would seem to present a very orderly face. Late in the season at Family Housing, though, the ordered grid is mostly obscured by the verdant vegetation and myriad trellises erected by gardeners.



Fig. 4-8: A gridded order that is evident at the Family Housing Garden early in the season (left) is obscured by mid-summer (right).

There is an interesting balance between the order of the grid layout and the eclectic appearance of a collection of beds, each reflecting the gardening practices and personal taste of the individual gardeners. At all of the gardens I was told that the individual could do whatever they liked in their bed, as long as it was legal, and in some

cases, kept weeded. Christine Williams, organizer at Scott Park Garden told me, “the more creative the better”. In a way, this is almost the perfect visual metaphor for the community that arises from the gardens: a collective whole made of unique individuals and ideas.

Lushness

Just as neatness was mentioned by many gardeners as important to an attractive garden, so was lushness. Many gardeners commented on lushness and richness as important to the look of the gardens. As one gardener at Oakhurst told me when asked about the appearance of the garden, “later in the spring it’s really exciting—it’s very lush.”



Fig. 4-9: Ornamental plantings. Locations clockwise from top left: Capitol View, Scott, SEEDS, Oakhurst.

Far and away the most widely used decorative elements at the seven community gardens are ornamental plants. With the exception of the Scott Park Garden, ornamentals are generally not grown in personal beds, though a minority of gardeners do plant a few flowers in amongst their vegetables. At Scott Park most gardeners plant large numbers of ornamentals, with a few gardeners planting them exclusively. By and large, though, ornamental plants are grown as decorative elements in the public areas of the gardens. All of the gardens that have defined public space (which is all except Family Housing) have communal beds dedicated to ornamental plantings. These beds are clearly different from the personal beds. They are rarely in the same grid arrangement and are nearly always different sizes and shapes. In addition, most gardens accentuate the non-productive areas, with ornamental plantings—perennials and shrubs—loose in the public areas, in hedges, and alongside paths, fences, and walls.

Participatory aesthetic

One of the most important community building aspects of the aesthetic at these community gardens is its participatory nature. None of the gardens has a defined aesthetic or landscape plan. Instead the look of the gardens has arisen from individual additions and inspirations. Just as gardeners feel free to do as they like within their individual beds,



Fig. 4-10: Ornamental additions in the gardens.

at most gardens they feel nearly as free to add to and decorate the public areas of their gardens. The appearance thus reflects the tastes of the individual gardeners, and the sense of ownership is affirmed through personalization of the space. The public spaces at most gardens bore the marks of individuals, past and present. Ornament is common, and most gardens contain sculptures or signs brought by members; plantings of perennials and shrubs; and hand-painted bricks, cinder blocks, and tires used as edging. Oakhurst and SEEDS have an appearance that strongly reflects the aesthetic of the non-gardening users as well. Many of Oakhurst's users are participants in the youth programs run there or are neighbors using the garden as an informal park, and it boasts additions by all participants: a pond built by a local artist; a shrine of sorts made from half a boat, a gazing ball, and a plywood icon of the Virgin of Guadeloupe; a memorial garden for victims of the 9/11 tragedy; a mosaic-wall; birdhouses; a wall mural; and dozens of small sculptures and signs.

Murals, a classic urban public-art element, were present at three of the gardens (Capitol View, Oakhurst, and SEEDS).

SEEDS, seeing itself as a demonstration garden of sustainable urban techniques, actively seeks contributions from area artists, landscape designers, and volunteer groups. Only a small portion of the site, approximately 15%, is dedicated to personal garden plots, and, as at Oakhurst, the tending of these plots is just one of several activities that go on there. Consequently the look of the garden is more a product of non-gardening volunteers and interested individuals than it is a reflection of the community gardeners' aesthetic. The resulting appearance is 'funky,' artsy, and lush in a way that the rest of the neighborhood is not.

I wondered about the eclectic look of this and other gardens, in several cases seemingly out of keeping with the neighborhood style. Francis found in a study comparing city parks with community gardens, that the “strict unity, harmony, and formal aesthetics applied to most urban open spaces” was not necessary in order to view an open space as attractive. He found that the meaning that users attached to the community garden allowed them to “value the beauty of the gardens even though they clearly did not include the formal principles of park design” (1987, 110).

I asked several gardeners their feelings about the appearance of the two most eclectic looking gardens, SEEDS and Oakhurst. Just as Francis described in his article, these two were lauded the most by their members. One gardener at SEEDS, who told me repeatedly that the main reason she gardened there was for the food, also told me that she thought that the garden “looks real nice.” “It looks even better than last year,” she told me. The difference? This year, she said, they planted a lot more ornamentals, and the garden looks “more full.” She also said that it looks better maintained, mentioning that last year there were some untended plots and other areas that got overgrown with weeds, which she didn’t like.

Public face/ entrance.

Because of the general sentiment amongst members at most gardens of the importance of the garden to the greater neighborhood, one would expect to find an attractive public face. Five of the gardens in this study did put effort into identifying the gardens with signage and ornamenting the outside and entrance areas. Four gardens (Ashview, Capitol View, Oakhurst, SEEDS) have large public signs bearing the name of

the garden and assisting organizations. Carver, which had a sign at the previous site, is planning on erecting one soon. These signs both help create an identity and mark the garden as ‘owned’ space, an especially important role at the gardens that are built on formerly derelict lots. Two of the gardens (Ashview, Capitol View) improved their

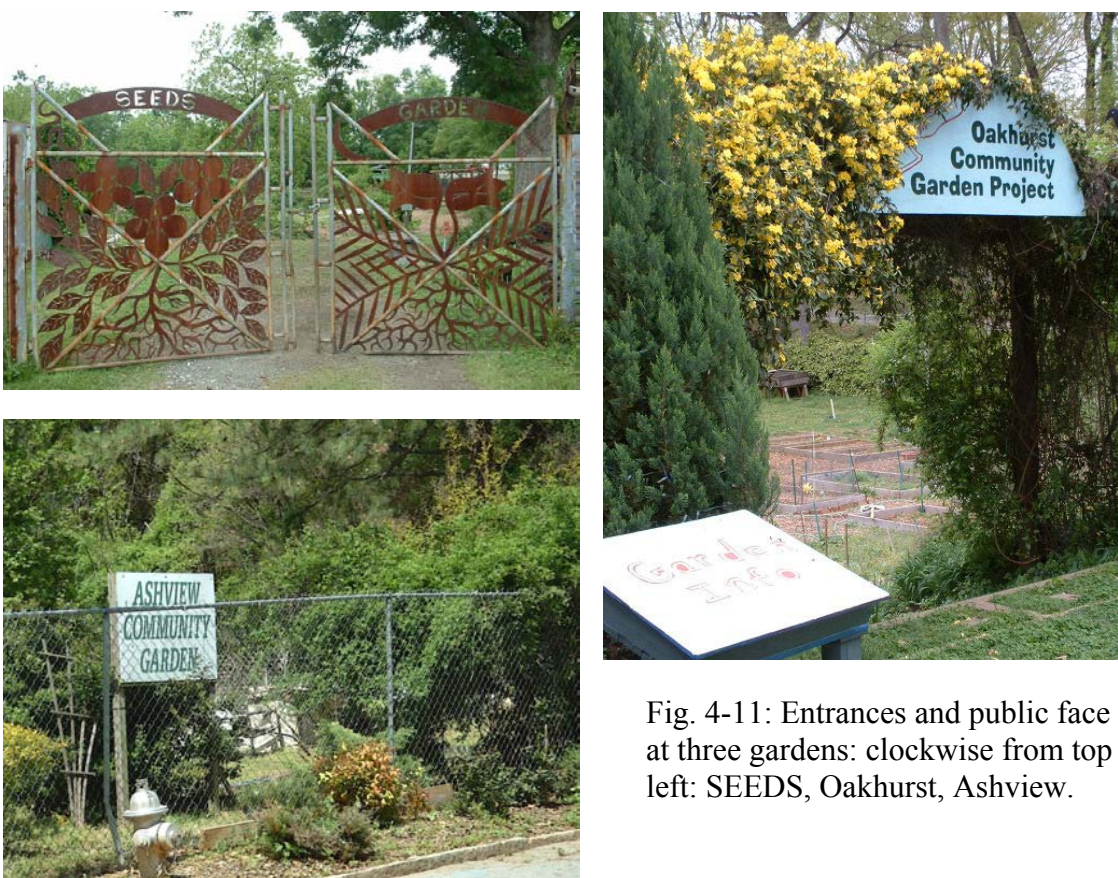


Fig. 4-11: Entrances and public face at three gardens: clockwise from top left: SEEDS, Oakhurst, Ashview.

public appearance with beds of ornamental plantings along the front edge. The three most public gardens—Scott, which is located in a public park, and Oakhurst and SEEDS which have strong public outreach focuses—have prominent, welcoming entrances.

Materials

The materials used at the gardens are generally found or donated. This reflects the economic realities of nearly all the gardens. Most of the gardens have little access to funds, and what they do secure is used for infrastructural improvements, especially fences, tools, and storage sheds. The exception to this is Scott Park Garden, which is considered a program of the Decatur Recreation Department, and a part of Scott Park, and receives enough funding to cover its needs.

The list of materials found on site is a lengthy one, reflecting the resourcefulness and tastes of gardeners. This includes bed edging of landscape timbers, bricks, cinder blocks, and stones; planters of tires, plastic barrels, even toilets; manufactured wooden trellises, as well as trellising made of sticks and bamboo; garden sculpture made of a huge variety of materials, though mostly concrete and metal; compost bins made of pallets and lumber; wooden picnic tables and benches; and plastic sheets used as mulch and cover for cold frames.

Education:

Though only two of the community gardens in this study have a public outreach focus, education is a strong component of most of the gardens. Education at the gardens can be divided between education of the gardening members and education of the public. Besides providing gardening knowledge, education within the garden can be an important tool for creating a shared sense of purpose and increasing social cohesion.

The levels of knowledge among gardeners varies quite significantly. At some gardens, like Carver and Ashview, a large number of the gardeners have rural



Hand-painted block edging at Ashview



Hand-painted brick edging at SEEDS



Tires as edging at Ashview



Sticks gathered for trellis building, Family Housing



Stone edging at Carver



Cold-frame at Family Housing

Fig. 4-12: Examples of found materials used in the garden.

backgrounds and strong gardening knowledge, though at others this is not the case. Much of the gardener education at the community gardens is simple advice sharing between gardeners. This information exchange was, I heard from many gardeners, the basis for socializing. This is especially true at the Family Housing Garden, where there are no organized meetings, no formal education program, and gardeners of widely varied cultural backgrounds and gardening skills. I saw this transfer of knowledge first hand. A few gardeners were identified to me as the experts, and I saw them making the rounds at the garden during planting, showing how to plant this, how much to water that. As the season progressed, I saw the spread of elaborate trellises, as the less experienced gardeners learned from the more knowledgeable.

More formal education, as Warner noted, has also been a component of community gardens since their first appearance in America (1987, 14). This tradition is present at the majority of the gardens. The monthly garden meetings (Ashview, Capitol View, Carver, Scott Park) provide an excellent opportunity for gardener education. At all the Atlanta Urban Garden Program meetings, Bobby Wilson, an agricultural extension agent, is present and answers questions and offers gardening advice. Scott Park also tries to incorporate garden education into their meetings, either through a guest speaker, or an opportunity to question a volunteer from the state's 'master gardener' program.

Another way that gardens incorporate education is through workshops. Workshops have been an important part of both the gardener education and outreach at SEEDS. One of the philosophical goals of SEEDS is to promote organic gardening, and the workshops are geared towards that aim. Though they are aimed primarily at the gardeners at SEEDS and their satellite gardens, the workshops are open to the public and

often attract non-members as well. These workshops have covered general organic gardening practices as well as more unusual subjects such as edible landscaping, beekeeping, and vermiculture.

A major portion of the mission of Oakhurst is educational outreach, and much of this is done through after-school and summer programs for children. One of the three paid staff at the garden is a full-time environmental educator, responsible for organizing and running these programs, and a wide variety are run. Programs in the past have included a summer camp for refugee children, an environmental internship program for high school students, an entrepreneurial summer camp for teenage girls, and a children's environmental literacy program.

Demonstration areas, another educational component, are present at the three gardens with the most public presence (Oakhurst, Scott, and SEEDS). Some of these



Fig. 4-13. Demonstration areas. Compost at SEEDS (left) and plant label at Oakhurst.

areas are obviously intended to teach. They are well labeled, generally with eye-catching signs, and are often intended for the general public as much as for the gardeners. These labeled demonstration areas have a strong environmental focus, including compost

demonstrations at all three gardens, plant identification labels at SEEDS and Oakhurst, and a stream bank stabilization demonstration at Oakhurst.

In addition to the labeled areas, both Oakhurst and SEEDS contain many elements that are more subtle, intended simply examples of possibilities for urban sustainability. Rainwater catchment is featured at both gardens, animals as part of an urban garden at Oakhurst, and ‘edible landscaping’ at SEEDS.

Children’s Programs:

The involvement of children in the garden is, or was, an important part of most of the gardens in this study. SEEDS and Oakhurst both have very active youth programs, Oakhurst in the form of after-school and summer programs, and SEEDS in the form of Durham Inner-city Gardeners (DIG). DIG is an entrepreneurial market-gardening program for half a dozen teens at the garden. The DIG members use space on site and on an adjacent lot to grow produce for market. This is one of several attempts by SEEDS to use the garden to create jobs in the neighborhood, though the first one involving youth. Interestingly, the gardeners that I spoke with described little interaction between the youth programs at Oakhurst or SEEDS and the gardeners who tend plots there.

Three other gardens in this study (Carver, Capitol View, and Ashview) had designated children’s gardens in their recent past. These gardens have since closed or moved, but were described by gardeners as leading to meaningful interactions between the children and the primarily elderly gardeners. Louise Watley at Carver Community Garden strongly believes in the therapeutic and educational benefits of gardens for children. In 1996 she was quoted in a newspaper article explaining that “these children

are carrying heavy burdens. If they get no love and no hugs, sooner or later they start hating folks. To turn that around, you need something positive that they can feel good about. This gardening program gives them that” (Puckett 1996). She also told me how important a garden is to educate children about the relationship between food and gardens, “You’d be surprised at the things they don’t even know. I say everything you get has to come from a garden, if you get collard greens or strawberries—we had to explain it to them, then they understood. They come down to the garden and thought it was something to play with.”

These children’s programs at Ashview, Capitol View, and Carver ceased for a variety of reasons. The children’s garden at Ashview was abandoned when a local elementary school started a garden on their school grounds. Capitol View’s children’s garden lost the support of a local school principal for unknown reasons, and Carver has simply not organized one again since they moved to their new site. Carver, though, has attracted a few young gardeners already, two with their own beds, and the gardeners are optimistic about more children being involved in future years.

The inclusion of children into the gardens certainly increases the richness and depth of the community. As an attempt to involve children in the gardens, the importance of a designated children’s garden seems to depend greatly on the garden demographics. The two gardens without special programs or areas for children, Family Housing and Scott, frequently have children at the garden, accompanying their parents. This is the case at Oakhurst and SEEDS, as well, with children accompany their parents to the garden. At Ashview and Capitol View, though, I saw no children and was told there are very rarely any there. This is due largely to the fact that the gardeners are nearly all elderly and have

no young children. Carver has a similar demographic as Ashview and Capitol View, but is unfenced and in public view in a housing complex with lots of children, and the curious ones come over and get involved.

Production.

The role of community garden as both productive and community space is not a contradictory one. In some cases, for example where an area is designated social space instead of garden bed, conflicts may exist, but more often these roles are complementary. Obviously, the people involved want to garden, and a productive environment is important to any gardener. Yet for many, the most important aspect to a successful community garden is the creation of a strong community. It is clear from my observations and conversations, for most gardeners production is not valued as much as the community and leisure aspects of these seven gardens. I do not believe that this is unique to this set of gardens. Much has been written on the benefits of community gardens, and issues of food security and economics are not the most frequently visited subjects.

Karl Linn, a landscape architect and community garden activist, speaking of a garden in San Francisco that bears his name, said “We’re not only growing crops; we’re growing community—which may be the most important thing we’re doing”(Thompson 2000, 58). He is not alone. Will Atwater, a former SEEDS organizer, told me

I think that the thing that I see it best being able to do is to bring people together so that they can start to have some dialogue, to find a comfortable common ground, to get to know people, to feel people out and then that kind of creates a space that allows people to see what’s going on, and create a dialogue. That, in my opinion, is the largest potential benefit.

This does not mean that the garden space is not arranged to facilitate production, however. At all the gardens except Oakhurst and SEEDS, the main activity on site is the tending of personal beds. It is apparent though, that most gardens are not arranged for maximum food production. At Scott, this is obvious from simply looking at what individuals grow in their beds. Most of the gardeners devote at least a portion of their beds to ornamental plantings, with 5 of the 26 beds planted exclusively in ornamentals. These gardeners of these beds told me that, while they did cut flowers to take home, this was not the main reason for growing them. Only 6 of the beds have most of their space devoted to vegetables.

At other gardens, it is clear from the amount of land left untilled that there are other concerns besides pure production. Wide paths and lawn areas at Ashview, Capitol View, and Carver support this observation, though within the beds, ornamentals are scarce. Only the Family Housing Garden maximizes their space to a degree that could be seen to be production oriented.

It should be noted, however, that in all the gardens that had left large blocks of land uncultivated (Ashview, Capitol View, Oakhurst) these areas were always in the shadiest parts of the garden. Capitol View, in fact, covered the sunny half of the garden with beds, and consequently has more than there are gardeners to tend them.

Bed Allocation:

With Ashview being the exception, the gardening areas of the gardens in this study are dominated by individual beds. This is preferred by nearly all of the gardeners with whom I spoke, for the reasons of individual ownership discussed previously.

Ashview has only a few personal beds, only one of which has been adopted by an individual this year. These beds are small (5'x8') and raised, some 3' tall, which were created mainly for gardeners who have trouble bending over. Most of the gardening is done in large, communal beds. The main difference between gardening practices at Ashview and the other gardens is that the individual impetus for involvement is not directly rewarded with more or better produce. The produce grown at Ashview is mainly for distribution to people outside the garden. Gardeners are given a share of the harvest if they desire, but it is not contingent upon work. As I described earlier in this chapter, this does not mean that the connections between gardeners are fewer, simply that the labor is distributed differently. The labor arrangements at Ashview would not be possible at other gardens, because more than any other garden, Ashview is driven by the vision of its leader. Robert, with his wife and an army of volunteers, does most of the gardening here.

In addition to individual beds, two of the gardens (Carver, Oakhurst) have large communal beds for growing crops that have not been successful in the individual beds. At Oakhurst, two communal 10'x10' beds were created this year for growing tomatoes,



Fig. 4-14. Communal beds at Ashview (left) and Carver.

in the hopes of avoiding a soil borne disease that had plagued gardeners in the past. At Carver, three large communal beds were built for growing vegetables that need more space than is available in the personal beds, primarily sweet potatoes, corn, melons, and squash. The arrangements for tending these beds at Carver are loose. They were planted mainly by two people, and I was told that all of the gardeners would pitch in to help with them. This arrangement, and the belief that all gardeners would look out for the greater good of the garden, reflects the strength of the community. At Oakhurst, the arrangement for the communal beds was equally ill-defined, causing one gardener a bit of consternation.” I’d like to know which tomatoes were mine,” she told me.

Many of the gardens had similar treatment for their individual beds. Raised beds were common, present at five of the seven gardens (Carver, Capitol View, Oakhurst, SEEDS, and few at Ashview). Timber edged beds were certainly the most common raised beds at the gardens. All of the above gardens lined their beds with timbers except Oakhurst, which had an even mix of edged and unedged, and SEEDS, which edged only three tall beds for disabled gardeners.



Fig. 4-15: 3' tall raised bed. Carver

Several of the gardens (Carver, Ashview, and SEEDS) had tall raised beds, generally 3 high, intended for gardeners who have trouble leaning over. In addition, Oakhurst has plans to make a large part of their garden handicap accessible by building a ramp to the garden from the street and installing several raised beds tall enough to tend from a wheelchair or standing position.

The inclusion of accessible beds is more of a community issue than one of production. The responsiveness of the garden to the individual needs of the gardeners is both symbolizes and reinforces a sense of community.

The raised beds have both functional and aesthetic virtues. Functionally, the main raised beds improve drainage and oxygen availability to the plants. Another benefit comes the fact that raised beds, by their very nature, have well defined paths between them. These beds are much less likely to be walked in and suffer from soil compaction as a result. (Olkowski 1975, 40-41; Hartley 1998).

I wrote previously about the prevalence in the gardens of rectilinear beds arranged in a grid and the order that this contributes to the garden. The raised beds, especially those lined with timbers, contribute to this order, but even more so to a neat appearance by clearly defining the bed edges. This has obvious aesthetic benefits in gardens where neatness is prized.

Size

The median size of the individual beds at the gardens in this study is 55 ft² (11'x5'). Most of the beds are close to this size, ranging from 48 ft² at Family Housing to

64 ft² at Carver and Capitol View. The personal beds at Oakhurst are of mixed sizes, with a four of the largest ones being 120 ft².

Roughly half of the gardeners that I spoke with told me that the beds were too small for them to grow all they wanted. I heard this with about the same frequency from gardeners at all the gardens. At Capitol View, however, there are enough beds for gardeners to have multiple beds, so space is not currently a limitation there. Ashview's communal arrangement negates this concern as well.

How big should a bed be? There is simply no answer for this. John Jeavons, one of the more respected authorities on intensive vegetable cultivation, writes that 4000 ft² is necessary for a person to produce all of their food, provided they are vegetarian. None of the gardeners with whom I spoke, however, with were striving for self-sufficiency in vegetables, though. Overall, necessary bed size reflects the individual gardeners' motivations and gardening practices. This point to an obvious conclusion: gardeners who are more interested in food production want larger beds.

Infrastructure and Provided Materials

Besides space to plant, water is the most crucial element provided at the gardens. All of the gardens made water available to their gardeners. Without this provision, vegetable gardening would be extremely difficult, especially during the dry summers that have become common in the southeast.

The next most important infrastructural element is a security fence. While this is not needed at all of the gardens, at the gardens where theft is a problem, it is extremely valuable. Three gardens (Ashview, Capitol View, and SEEDS) are encircled by a locked,

chain-link security fence. These three gardens are located in neighborhoods with high crime rates, and have had serious theft problems in the past. Tools, as well as vegetables, have been stolen from these gardens, leading to both the economic hardship of replacing tools, and the frustration of gardeners unable harvest the fruits of their labor. Robert at Ashview told me that during the first year the garden was under cultivation, nearly the whole harvest was stolen. A similar story was told at Capitol View, where tools and produce were stolen. Even after the fence was put up, there were theft problems, and one section of the fence had to be augmented with a coil of razor-wire. SEEDS has gone back and forth on whether to have a fence or not. They installed one initially, but removed it when they felt that it hindered community use of the site. Theft became a major problem, however, and the fence was rebuilt this year. One gardener I spoke with at SEEDS said that she would have been reluctant to garden there again this year without a fence, because last year nearly all her vegetables were stolen.

Another element relating to security are signs, posted at three of the gardens, explaining to visitors what the garden is and what the rules are. It is not surprising that the gardens that have the most non-gardening visitors (Oakhurst, Scott, SEEDS) are also the gardens that have visitor rules posted. The posted rules mainly consist of visiting hours and admonitions not to pick any plants. In a slightly different vein, Capitol View has a sign, prominently displayed, announcing that there is to be “No Trespassing on City Property.”

In addition to providing water, tools are the most commonly provided element at the gardens. Only the Family Housing Garden provides no tools. Usually these tools are locked up on site, although the tools for the Ashview garden are kept, for security



Fig. 4-16: Garden Signage

reasons, at founder Robert Abbensett's house a block away. Gardeners are either given a key to the tool storage area (Scott, Carver, Capitol View), or are given tools when they are requested (SEEDS, Oakhurst, Ashview).

In addition to tools and water, several gardens provide compost, mulch, and seeds. While these are appreciated, they are not as vital as water and security. As suggested by the use of found materials at many of the gardens, community gardeners are resourceful. I saw many gardeners at Family Housing amending their beds with soil dug from a nearby woodlot, often brought in a grocery bag at a time.

CHAPTER 5

THE PATTERNS

We have seen from the examination of these seven community gardens that there are common themes that run through all of these gardens. These are commonalities in spatial organization, aesthetics, infrastructure, and community building techniques. I have proposed several vignettes, ‘patterns’ as described by Alexander, as the beginnings of a design vocabulary. These patterns are based upon the themes presented in the previous chapter.

These patterns are drawn, in a very real sense, from the wisdom of the vernacular. They are not new ideas, but simply a way of looking, with a new eye, at what gardeners already know.

The presentation of these patterns is certainly not an attempt to codify community gardens, to define a ‘right’ way of constructing them. Nor are these intended to be permanent designs. One of the defining characteristics of a vernacular landscape is that it has no rigid design. It is constantly being changed, added to, and tweaked by all participants. These patterns are instead more like words which, together, begin to make up a language, and as Alexander writes, “Each person uses the language a little differently. Each person uses the language to make a building that reflects his dreams, to meet the special needs of his own family, the way they live” (Alexander et al. 1979, 191)

Pattern 1

A grid of rectangular beds within a more organic garden



Gardening tradition in America has established that the look of a productive garden consists of straight rows and hard edges. This look of productivity is best established in a community garden by arranging rectangular vegetable beds in an orderly grid. For the other areas of the garden, however, a grid is not appropriate. This grid does not reflect the more organic nature of a community garden, and is too confining for the spontaneous, ornate appearance of the whole garden. Allowing the ordered grid to break apart outside the vegetable beds leaves room for a comfortable looseness in the rest of the garden. This pattern works with pattern 3, "A participatory and changing aesthetic"

Pattern 2

A mixture of personal and communal beds



Personal beds are the most successful way of building ownership and investment in a community garden. Gardeners cherish the personal satisfaction that comes with control over their own beds. They choose what is planted, how it is grown, how they wish to decorate their beds, and they reap the fruits of their labor at harvest. The individuality expressed in the personal beds provides a strong base for socializing- from friendly competition to the sharing of personal gardening techniques and knowledge.

In addition to personal beds, community gardens benefit from a few larger communal beds. Functionally, they provide a place to grow crops that need more space than is often found in personal plots. Socially, they create a sense of mutual benefit and reliance on fellow gardeners.

The combination of personal and communal beds satisfies gardeners' seemingly contradictory urges for personal autonomy and community participation, the two urges behind nearly all successful community gardens.

Pattern 3

A participatory and changing aesthetic



Community gardens distinguish themselves from other urban green spaces by the degree of community ownership and involvement they exhibit. One of the main ways in which this ownership is both built and expressed is through a participatory aesthetic. Alexander writes that “all people have the instinct to decorate their surroundings” (Alexander et. al. 1977, 1147), and community gardens should encourage their gardeners to do just that. Gardens are enlivened by individuals’ inspirations. The paintings, plantings, and sculptures brought to the garden by its members create a rich, personal, and dynamic landscape. Unlike pedigreed landscapes, which are maintained to be static, the involvement of gardeners in the appearance of the community garden will allow constant change, typical of the vernacular landscape.

Functional changes will occur over time as well, as the gardeners and their needs change. A participatory aesthetic allows all these changes to be reflected in the garden, from the small details of flower selection to large issues like bed arrangement and size.

Pattern 4

A shaded seating area with a view of the garden

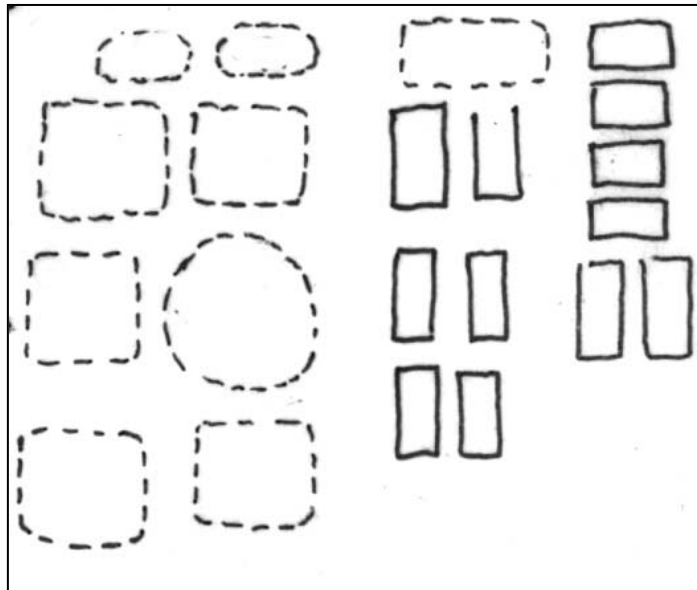


Community gardens are work and social spaces. Gardeners need a shady place to rest from their labors. They also need a place to socialize with other gardeners, to keep fresh the ties of community that holds the garden together.

These seating areas should be placed so that the garden is visible from them. Gardeners like to observe and appreciate the gardens that they have created, and to watch other gardeners' activities. The seating areas can be small. Gardens with a small number of gardeners and few public gatherings do not need large social areas. For these gardens, an intimate corner with a couple of benches or a few chairs underneath a shade tree will suffice.

Pattern 5

A mixture of large and small beds



Not all gardeners are skilled, nor are they all interested in maintaining a large vegetable garden. Many garden simply as a hobby, for therapy, or for the joy of making things grow. Others, however, are interested in growing as many vegetables as possible.

Since space is usually a limited commodity at community gardens, there should be a mixture of large and small beds. The larger beds should be allocated to individuals interested in, and capable of, producing large harvests. Bed sizes and allocation should be reexamined regularly. As gardeners and their needs change, beds should be reallocated or resized as space permits.

Pattern 6

A children's garden



Within each neighborhood there are many children, but they are not always included in the activities of the adult world. Urban children need gardens, for they teach about productive work, self-sufficiency, patience, and positive relationships between humans and nature that can be learned in few other places.

Making a place for children in community gardens is of great mutual benefit for all involved, children and adults. Alexander writes, “old people need old people, but they also need the young, and young people need the old,” (Alexander et. al. 1977, 216). Many urban children don’t have meaningful contact with adults outside of their families and any authorities they encounter. Similarly, many community gardens are elderly adults with few children in their lives. Having a special area or program for children at a community garden provides a wonderful way to desegregate the lives of the old and the young, to broaden the experiences of the gardeners, and deepen the ties of community within the gardens.

Pattern 7

Educational garden meetings



Education has been an important part of community gardens since they first appeared in America over a century ago. Many individuals have the desire to garden, but their urban lives have not given them the opportunity to learn how.

Gardens should organize regular educational meetings at which gardening techniques are taught. These meetings can be workshops dedicated wholly to gardening instruction, or general garden meetings at which part of the time is given over to a knowledgeable gardener willing to share information.

If well scheduled, these garden meetings will strengthen social bonds by ensuring that gardeners with conflicting schedules will at least meet on these occasions. In addition, increasing knowledge of a subject often brings an increased appreciation. Making efforts to improve gardening knowledge and ability can greatly increase the enthusiasm and dedication of gardeners to their plots, and to the whole garden.

Pattern 8

An attractive public face



The benefits of community gardens to surrounding neighborhoods are touted by both gardeners and non-gardeners alike. Community gardens beautify derelict lots, act as symbols of citizen empowerment, and provide a focal point for community cohesion. They are frequently credited with being catalysts for greater neighborhood revitalization. While not all community gardens are entirely public—some are fenced because of security concerns—all are, to some degree, in the public eye. Gardeners are proud of their gardens, and frequently wish to both show them off and invite others to become involved. An attractive public face is important for inviting attention and reinforcing the pride gardeners have in their garden.

The range of possibilities for creating an attractive public appearance is great. A simple solution could be to place beds of ornamentals at the front of the garden. An elaborate approach for a more public garden could involve an arbor or ornamental gate. A sign with the name of the garden is an important part of a garden's public face. It helps create an identity and inform the curious as to the nature of the garden.

Pattern 9*Garden parties*

Garden parties should be a part of every community garden. Social interaction in our cities has declined, and this is perhaps one of the reasons that individual alienation and a dearth of community spirit plague our urban areas. Garden parties can take a small step towards righting this, as well as providing a chance for gardeners to celebrate their accomplishments and their community. The jubilant atmosphere can strengthen the bonds between gardeners in a way that regular meetings cannot. The parties are also an excellent way for the gardeners to show off their work and invite participation and acknowledgement from the rest of the neighborhood and the city.

These parties can take the form of an arts festival, a garden birthday party, an end of the season barbeque, or even a stop on a city-wide garden tour.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Community gardens are a powerful phenomenon in America today. They represent one way for citizens to satisfy, of their own accord, the need for meaningful community. Based on my experiences visiting seven gardens and talking to dozens of gardeners, I would testify to the success of these gardens in fulfilling these needs.

I am not alone in this belief. The number of gardens in existence today is truly astounding. In a 1998 study, the American Community Gardening Association estimated the number of community gardens in America to be 6020, with over 2 million participants (Goodman, 2000). The desire for these gardens is clearly evident, and their numbers are growing.

What I have presented in this thesis is an attempt to see how people are actually building these community gardens in a way that satisfies their needs for community within a productive garden. According to Alexander, people have an innate sense of what they need and how they should build their environments to satisfy those needs. Yet our experiences are often limited, and seeing the approach of others addressing problems similar to ours can trigger our own creativity.

When I began this research, my goal was to identify physical and aesthetic elements that enhance the creation of community. I found these elements, but also found that in many cases they are integrally tied to social elements. The patterns I presented in the last chapter are starting points intended to expand the horizon of possibilities for

community gardeners. They are design ideas that encompass physical, aesthetic, and related social elements to help answer the question, “How do we design for *community* in community gardens?” They are solutions, as Alexander describes in the *Pattern Language*, “in a very general and abstract way—so that you can solve the problem for yourself, in your own way, by adapting [them] to your preferences, and the local conditions at the place where you are making it,” (Alexander et. al. 1977, xiii).

This study is a starting point in another sense. It presents a sample of approaches for a cross section of gardens in the southeast. There are regional traditions and ethnic traditions that this thesis cannot and does not address. I would be pleased to hear that others have found this subject as fascinating as me, and are conducting similar research in other regions, at other gardens.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

History/ Background/ Demographics (for organizer)

How old is garden?
 How/ who started it?
 Any significant changes since it's inception?
 Who owns land? What sort of tenure guarantee (if any) is there?

Organizational structure?
 Leader?
 Board?- Who is on it?
 How much say do gardeners have in the garden?
 How are gardeners chosen?

Demographics:
 How many people?
 Who are they?-
 Race/ ethnicity?
 Age?
 Economic group?
 Any non-gardening users?

Goals/ guiding vision/ philosophy of garden?

Funding- how much? Is it enough? From where?

Rules? What and why?

Infrastructure: what is provided?
 Irrigation?
 Mulch?
 Amendments?
 Tools?
 Seeds/ plants?
 Maintenance of common areas?

Occupancy- full? waiting list?
 Is use increasing or decreasing?
 Does garden coexist well with surrounding community?

Is land tenure secure? If not, is this a problem?

General gardener questions

Name, age, nationality

How far do you live how far from garden? Walk? Drive?

How long have you gardened here?

Do you have anywhere to garden at home? Do you? Why not?

How often are you here? How long do you usually stay?

Motivations

Why do you garden here? What are the most important reasons for coming here?

(Do any of the following reasons apply?)

Food growing (why grow, not buy?)

Gardening as hobby/ creative activity?

Exercise?

Socializing/ feeling part of a community?

Help adjust no new life in U.S.?

Is your involvement primarily centered on growing food or community?

Food Production

Is plot size large enough?

Is sun/ water enough?

How much food do you grow?

What do you grow?

Where do seeds, plants come from?

Have you learned any special techniques from other gardeners?

What do you grow besides food?

Do you grow any ornamentals? For cut flowers?

Do you spend any time or money on appearance of plot?

Do you spend any time or money on appearance of the whole garden?

Community/ Social

Do you ever come here for reasons other than tending your plot?

Do you ever go to any local parks/ playgrounds?

What other activities go on here?

Do you participate?

Are they valuable?

Are any non-gardeners involved?

Do you ever meet friends here?

Do you ever come here to socialize or play?

Are there ever children here?

Do you like having them here? Where do they play?

Physical

What are the other (non-cultivated) areas in the garden? (Describe)

Who maintains them?

What are the most useful (and used)

Aesthetic

Do you like the look of the garden?

Do you think others do? Gardeners? Community?

Do you think much thought went into the design?

Do you like it? Is there anything you would change?

Organization

Who organizes this garden?

Do you take part in the organization?

Do you feel like you have a say in the decisions?

Is there a philosophy here?

Are there rules here? Is anything forbidden?

Assorted

Does the garden benefit the neighborhood/ community?

Is there anything the garden is lacking?

Is there anything here that you especially like?

Do you feel safe here?

Do you feel secure? (land tenure/ possible loss of invested time and resources)

Are there any problems here? (theft...)

APPENDIX B

PORTRAITS



Robert Abbensett. Ashview Community Garden



Mr. and Mrs. Willy Freeman, Ashview Community Garden



Florence Sills, Scott Park Community Garden



Jesse Dill, Capitol View Community Garden



Louise Watley, Carver Community Garden



Shirley Burse, Carver Community Garden



Gloria Hillman and friend, Carver Community Garden

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