

Community Gardens Research Symposium
 Convened by Matt Morris (UC) and Andreas Wesener (LU)

Friday 8 December, 2023
 University of Canterbury

Attendees:

Andreas Wesener	Senior Lecturer, Head of School, Landscape Architecture, Lincoln University
Jam Kelly	Coordinator, Waiutuutu Community Garden, University of Canterbury, CCGA committee
Lin Klenner	Coordinator, New Brighton Community Garden CCGA committee
Sandi Bobkova	Head Horticulturist, Climate Action Campus and school teacher for horticulture; involved in school garden CCGA committee
Peggy Kelly	Canterbury Community Gardens Association Patron
Rachel Vogan	Capacity Builder, Canterbury Community Gardens Association
Jiabei Xu	Doctoral student, Lincoln University
Amelia Threadgould	Doctoral student, University of Canterbury
Harry Baitz	Food sovereignty project, CCGA committee
Tessa McLellan	Coordinator, Linwood Community Garden, CCGA committee
Georgina Stanley	Manager, Smith Street Community Farm, CCGA Chair
Roslyn Kerr	Community Partnerships, Parks Unit, Christchurch City Council
Shannon Davis	Senior Lecturer, School of Landscape Architecture, Lincoln University
Melissa Robson-Williams	Researcher, Manaaki Whenua, and also Canterbury Community Gardens Association, and a member of the Rolleston Community Garden, CCGA committee
Claudia de Silva	MURS student, University of Canterbury
Matt Morris	Sustainability Manager, University of Canterbury

Apologies:

Gwen Grelet	Manaaki Whenua
Gradon Diprose	Manaaki Whenua
Jo Cavanagh	Manaaki Whenua
Tyler McNabb	Doctoral student, University of Canterbury
Nick Cradock Henry	GNS
Sara Tolbert	Assoc. Prof., School of Teacher Education, University of Canterbury
Sarah Edwards	Manaaki Whenua
Jo Fountain	Lincoln University

Introductions

Andreas Wesener	Interested in resilient local urban gardening and increasing the impact of bottom-up research through a community garden-practitioner-focused research network focussing on community-based research needs and questions. Interested in extending the role of the researcher from an external observer to a more active, integrated participant (e.g. living lab approaches).
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Jam Kelly	Interested in the social aspect of gardens (community connection), not just food growing
Lin Klenner	<p>Interested in sandy soils, soil conditioning, sea breeze. Have an enclosed garden. Working with volunteers can be hard, so it is great to have two staff members who can have each others' back. Working with people with mental health issues, disabilities, and an expectation to get the work done. Interested in the following research questions/topics:</p> <p>Soil regeneration over time , this is inspired by the sensory garden versus nb gardens soil , it made us think how community gardens or even temporary urban farms could help to not only improve soil but also drainage issue which we are having more and more of.</p> <p>2.Waste management , how , why or why not, gardens are involved in food waste management from surrounding businesses , what is the capacity versus what is happening and what are the barriers, what impact if any does this have on the big picture of waster management</p> <p>3.Would community gardens /urban farms work better and increase local involvement if set up by government and than handed over to the communities, eg if taking out the endless fundraising efforts, building /setting up beds and even planting trees/landscaping. Would people feel more inclined to participate as the fundament work is done and one can just get on with it?</p> <p>4. What makes a successful community gardens/urban farm coordinator? What training, background and skills are needed.</p>
Sandi Bobkova	Interested in medicinal & edible plants
Peggy Kelly	"Community garden veteran" - Has been involved since the beginning of the Organic Garden City Trust (1997). Founded Packe St Park. Has an interest in better utilisation of peri- urban soil.
Rachel Vogan	There are now 74 community gardens in Canterbury that Rachel is in conversation with. Is interested in how to quantify the benefits of community gardening for the community. Shared the 2022 CCGA community garden survey (PDF shared with the group).
Jiabei Xu	Just started study, looking for feedback and ideas – is interested in quantitative & qualitative methodologies for reporting community gardens benefits & impact.
Amelia Threadgould	Now doing PhD which includes work on identity formation in gardens. Masters was in food sovereignty
Harry Baitz	Work in people's homes in a food sovereignty project, and connecting those people. Has a background in social work. Feels that food banks are not a good enough method for resolving food security issues. Focused on empowerment of people through food growing, and connecting people to own community gardens. Is interested in barriers to accessing community gardens – helps people to get involved in local CG and overcome access barriers.
Tessa McLellan	Tries to focus on their community garden being a safe space and supporting mental health. There are a number of elderly people in the gardening group. The garden was built on a carpark, and there is an ongoing battle with weeds. Is interested in how to connect more with the community.

Georgina Stanley	<p>Has a degree in Anthropology and Pacific Studies. Realised we were running out of good productive soils, and decided to learn how to be a farmer. Experienced rain issues/flooding on peri-urban farming space by Lincoln – decided to shift. We have the soils, but we don't have the farmers. How can we grow to support a domestic economy – how can we support those who are most food insecure: eg migrants, single parents, elders, Māori, Pasifika.</p> <p>As a practitioner, I would like to see an inquiry into the idea of theft from a community garden. I suspect the public see community gardens as a source of free food, whereas due to the sweat equity nature of many of our community gardens, participants within gardens see the produce they produce as their own. The aim of this inquiry would be to educate the public as to whether kai is available for public harvest or for participants only.</p>
Roslyn Kerr	<p>Was once Dean of Faculty of Environment, Society and Design (ESD), now CCC manager of Parks Unit; they are very keen to support this Kaupapa, and having many discussions internally about how best to do that.</p>
Shannon Davis	<p>Is focused on landscape planning, and especially peri-urban food production. Why do we design cities that don't include integrated food production, but we are dependent on long supply chains. Design future productive landscapes, looking at the loss of high class soils to low density (sub)urban sprawl.</p>
Melissa Robson-Williams	<p>A number of colleagues at Manaaki Whenua are working on community gardens-related research. Projects include biodiversity, resilience, knowledge, awareness about food inputs from community gardens</p>
Claudia Silva	<p>Completed Master's thesis with focus on Bromley as case study (UC) with the title "The Fruit Loop: How multi-nodal interstices of food commons can aid in building community resilience" (PDF shared with the group).</p> <p>Key findings were:</p> <p>"1) that the Bromley community has limited food access due to time and transport; 2) growing food was restricted by limited confidence, knowledge, time, and resources; 3) the main concerns for the Fruit Loop were related to people's lack of trust in the community alongside their perceptions of aesthetics and socially acceptable behaviour; and 4) the Fruit Loop would aid the food resilience in Bromley."</p>
Matt Morris	<p>Is interested in the history of community gardening in New Zealand and is writing a book on this topic. Would like to connect with people involved in community gardens from several decades ago</p>

Informal Presentations

Amelia Threadgould: Social Identity and Community Gardens

- feelings affect our behaviour
- identity can be nurtured through participation. Through participation, identity becomes more salient, and behaviour can change, and increases participation.
- Looking at school gardens and education. The Eurocentric curriculum de-emphasises the importance of learning from the land

- Food growing children are more likely to become food growers.
- Focus on pre-service teachers: the earlier we get them participating, the less chance of proso-shock and loss of teachers in the first five years.
- Teachers are well placed to nurture identifies, but they don't know how.
- Amelia worked with pre-service teachers, and Jam from the UC community garden, to hold range of workshops on seeds, compost, insect management, weeds as food, mushroom logs.
- Children were involved as well, which helped build the identity of teachers as food growers. Some even started growing their own food.
- Active participation is key. If teachers are just observing children they feel less connected.
- A second study had a focus on community gardeners. How do we get community gardeners involved in continued attendance?
- Took a short term ethnographic approach, attending working bees, observations, field notes.
- How do we get people who are food insecure involved?

There was a question about allotment gardeners. It could be that allotment gardens are increasing in Canterbury. People who are more skilled might prefer an allotment. Management policies are very different in different gardens. Allotments provide space for (cultural groups) who collectively maintain a plot; potential barriers to allotments include time commitments and (lack of) previous gardening skills/knowledge

How do you measure food growing identity? Two measures: participation (how often does someone participate) and how they see themselves – there are several questions within a scale. Linwood & Smith St gardens run school programmes (fostering “gardeners identities”)

Shannon Davis: Our Land and Water Project

- A 12 month project
- How to design edges of cities to integrate food and housing. Currently it is one or the other, because of zoning rules.
- Two surveys run:
 - Peri-urban residents
 - Peri-urban food producers.
- Residents were very keen on food production, but didn't like spray drift, fertiliser pluming and irrigation. Also, even though they liked having food produced nearby, they couldn't actually access it. They wanted roadside stalls, pick you own options etc.
- Producers were less happy about growing in these areas. There were some benefits to being close to a potential market, and it was good to have better infrastructure, such as high speed internet.
- Team developed a spatialised response to feedback, to inform possible zoning decisions. For example, around housing there could be an organics only area. They developed 12 different spatial typologies, grouped into five, and prototyped these with illustrated examples.
- Of these, the most popular was a multi-functional green belt. People want to be able to access the countryside.
- Community gardens are popping up in these areas.
- Questions were raised related to barriers to access gardens including ethnic and/or gender issues (e.g. narratives around the “whiteness of community gardens” or perceptions of CG as “playgrounds for old ladies”)

George and Claudia: Fruit Loop

It was noted that community gardens (research points to urban farms, more than community gardens being the driver of gentrification) can increase the price of housing – gentrification.

- Around the eastern suburbs there is a dense cluster of community gardens, and these could be linked through green spaces and active transport corridors.
- Idea is to grow fruit in public spaces to increase horticultural literacy and food accessibility. Looking at 'bermaculture', growing fruit trees in, berms, front yards, or growing in public spaces.
- Essentially the concept will result in a community-led landscape plan. The team would like different disciplines of researchers / students to work on this. But how can the team best partner with a university?
- Barriers to participation include time, knowledge, confidence, but also transport. The area is split by a motorway and there are many cul-de-sacs: there are many 'little barriers'. Current (lack of) transport infrastructure is not safe and poses a major barrier.
- People are concerned about theft and safety.
- How to engage school and council in fruit loop concepts? Discussion on maintenance and potential mess of fruit trees if not maintained properly. Could this be addressed by choosing the "right" type of fruit trees for specific areas? Could it be better linked to existing projects that address food insecurity?

The Parks Unit are having internal conversations about how they can support projects like this.

Jiabei: Measuring Impact of Community Gardens

Jiabei has just started work on his PhD.

- What role do community gardens play in the local food system?
- Why is quantifying impact important? There is a growing demand for quantitative research, for example on food production and also food distribution. Discussing governance, management styles, position in urban planning. Goal is to enhance the contribution to the local food system.
- Measuring food quantity and quality
 - Weight of the crop
 - Kg per square metre
 - There is an element of citizen science in this
- Monetary value
 - Clarifies value at the local level
- Energy method
 - Calories and nutrient content
 - Helps understand how community gardens feed people.

It was noted that there is quite a tension about the desire from funders for quantitative measurements, and the realities for gardeners. There is a standard measure for the number of people who can be fed per square metre (what is this measure and where does it come from – how much does it relate to individual local context?)

Growing culturally relevant crops as a qualitative impact factor.

It may be best to focus not on an efficiency framework, but on a (systemic) resilience framework. Can also look at the impact on food production in the area around the garden because of the garden.

Think about the system not as linear, but as a web. Other benefits (e.g. growing seedlings; composting, etc.) how to measure these?

Survey

An inaugural national community gardens survey was conducted in 2020. It is probably time to do this again.

At around 12.30 the group walked to the Waiutuutu Community Garden for lunch, and to continue the conversation.