

# Dowling Community Garden Frequently Asked Questions

## Where is Dowling Community Garden? How large is it?

Dowling Community Garden (DCG) is located at 3901 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55406. It is part of the larger Dowling School site at 3900 West River Parkway. The Garden consists of about 4 acres, divided into 185 plots. Average plot size is about 400 square feet, but plots vary substantially in size. The land is rented from the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). A map of the Garden and the plots is available online at:

<http://www.dowlingcommunitygarden.org/pdf/dowlingmap2012.pdf>

## What is the history of the Garden?

The Garden was originally created in 1943 as a World War II Victory Garden. A complete history of the Garden is available online at:

<http://www.dowlingcommunitygarden.org/pages/history.htm>

## How is the Garden Organized?

The details of the Garden organization are spelled out in its bylaws, which are available online at:

<http://www.dowlingcommunitygarden.org/pdf/Bylaws.pdf>

The Garden is run by the DCG Steering Committee.

## What are the duties of the Steering Committee?

The Steering Committee is responsible for all aspects of running the Garden. A sample list of duties (by no means complete) follows:

- Negotiate rent and conditions with the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) for use of the Garden space.
- Arrange for Insurance (required by MPS)
- Provide ongoing interface with MPS and Dowling School
- Establish an annual budget for the Garden
- Establish and collect plot rents from all Gardeners
- Establish and enforce Garden rules
- Arrange for services and resources for the Garden, e.g., tools, water, manure, wood chips
- Pay all Garden bills, e.g., rent, insurance, new tools, manure, website, etc.
- Organize events for all Gardeners, e.g. plant sale, meet and greets, cleanup days
- Maintain communications with all Gardeners through website, e-mail, shed kiosk and direct mail
- Communicate as required with school, community, press or other outside organizations
- Organize the collection and delivery of surplus Garden produce to area food shelves.

## **Who belongs to the Steering Committee?**

The Steering Committee is made up of volunteer Task Coordinators. Each member of the Committee coordinates at least one task. Not all Task Coordinators choose to be members of the Committee, but each member of the Committee must serve in at least one Task Coordinator role. In practice, most Committee members coordinate more than one task. Any Gardener may volunteer to become a Task Coordinator. If selected, they become eligible to join the Steering Committee. Most Task Coordinator positions require 20 – 40 hours of service per year, some require substantially more. The Committee generally meets monthly. Each meeting lasts 1 to 2 hours. This time is in addition to time necessary to fulfill Task Coordinator responsibilities.

## **Are Steering Committee members paid, or do they receive other benefits?**

No. Steering Committee service is entirely voluntary. Dowling Community Garden has no paid staff. Committee members pay the standard rent for their plots and receive no special benefits or privileges.

## **How are plot rents determined?**

DCG is a non-profit organization. Near the end of each year, the Steering Committee prepares a budget for the coming year. This budget includes all anticipated expenses for the coming year, such as MPS rent, insurance, tools, services, etc. The total of all anticipated budget expenses becomes the total amount of plot rent that must be collected for the coming year. The Committee develops a formula to collect the necessary total from all Gardeners in an equitable manner. For the past 10 years, the formula has been based upon a fixed amount per plot, plus a variable amount based on plot size. In 2014, the fixed amount was \$10.00, and the variable amount was \$4.00 per 100 plot square feet or part thereof. Hence, the lowest rent, for a plot of 100 square feet or less, was \$14.00 for the 2014 season. For the average plot size, 301 to 400 square feet, the rent was \$26.00. The highest plot rent was \$62.00.

## **How are the Garden rules established?**

The Garden rules are written, published and enforced by the Steering Committee. When Gardeners sign their enrollment and renewal forms, they agree to obey the Garden rules. The rules include all measures necessary to run the Garden. Many are based on MPS policies (e.g., no herbicides or pesticides), others are based on the terms of our MPS rental agreement, still others on Minneapolis city statutes or Minnesota state laws. The rest are common sense measures designed to prevent Gardeners from harming their neighbors or offending the community.

DCG rules have changed little for many years. Virtually all rule violation citations issued in the last decade fall into one of three categories:

- Plot neglect (plot abandonment; excessive weeds; large amounts of unharvested produce)
- Offenses against neighboring plots (impinging on or over-growing paths or neighboring plots, e.g. raspberries; trees or structures shading others' plots)
- Failure to perform and report required Garden service