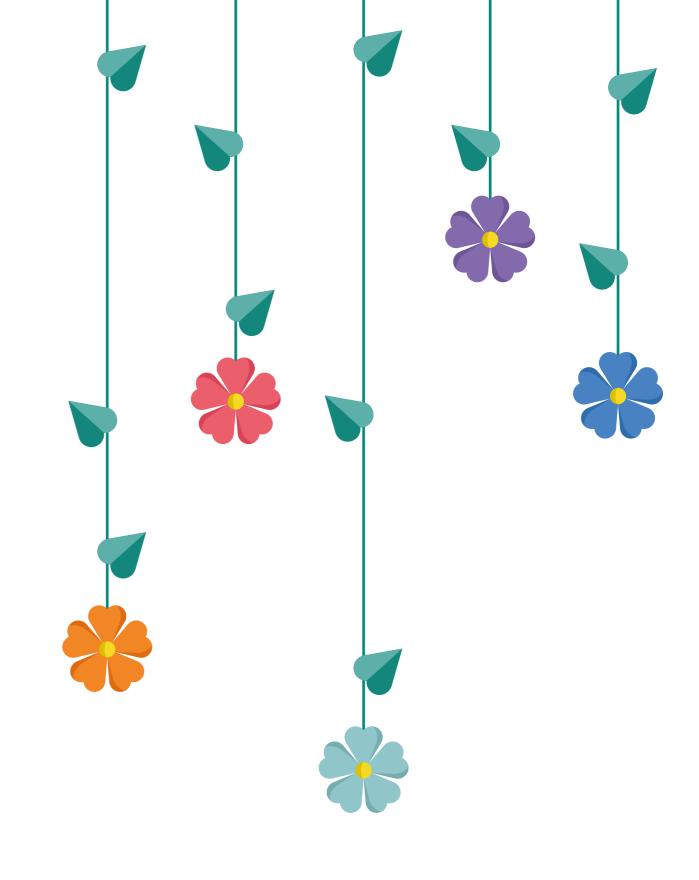
### Common Challenge Report



We estimate that 80% of our Community Food Gardens in Amsterdam are at high risk of disappearing by 2024. Let's cultivate solidarity!



Tiny list with information about people who made this file

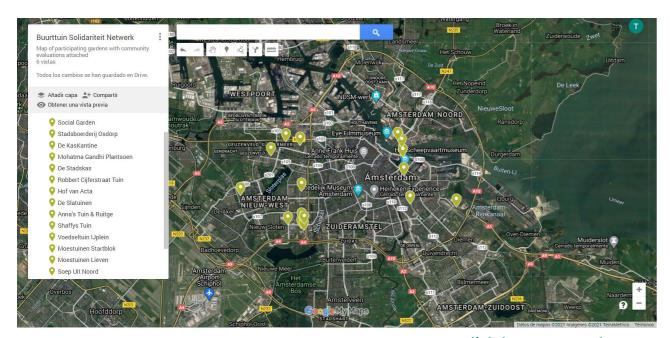
### Introduction

Welcome to the Common Challenge Report of 16 community food gardens (buurttuinen) in Amsterdam. This report is made by and for care-takers of common green spaces where food is grown and shared in diverse social and ecological communities. We invite you to be part of this collective learning process as we deepen our understandings on the most common challenges and support each other to overcome them.

Welcome to this composting within which our Buurttuin Solidariteit Netwerk is emerging.

The fertile insights which compose this report are primarily sourced from 16 community garden evaluations that took place in Autumn 2020. The evaluations facilitated the identification and elaboration of the garden's most significant challenges and successes along 5 dimensions of experience. They also encouraged gardeners to evaluate the state of reciprocity within their community, with other food gardens, the neighbourhood, the Gemeente and knowledge institutes. From this dream relationships were imagined that overcome challenges, build on successes and can be realized with small and practical steps.

The map below shows you the location of the participating gardens and by clicking on them you can access the concise write-up of the evaluations as open Creative Commons resources. All of the gardens area open to receiving visitors and new community members. Different to Amsterdam's schooltuinen and volkstuinen, community food gardens are primarily governed and cared for by neighbours with deliberate activities to grow and share food together on open common land.

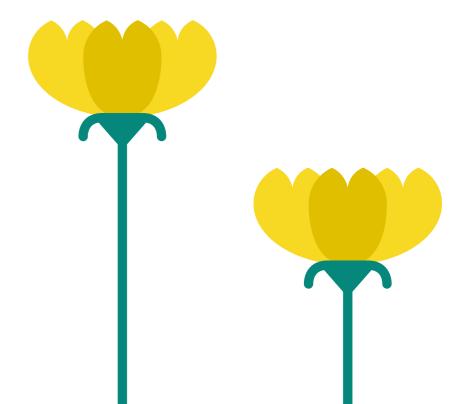


click here to see the map

As you may already see from the map, we have only been able to include a segment of the total number of community food gardens in Amsterdam. Most of the participating gardens (10) are in Stadsdeel Nieuw-West and they still represented half of the gardens we know to exist in the district. We reached 3 out of 7 districts (Nieuw West, Oost & Noord) in Amsterdam, 16 out of 99 neighborhoods and not everyone from each garden attended the evaluation. Furthermore, we were unable to include the perspectives of gardens primarily governed and care for by women with Moroccan and Turkish heritage in Nieuw-West and women with African and Caribbean heritage in Zuid-Oost.

Therefore, this common challenge report is not a complete representation of the challenges faced by all community gardens in Amsterdam. It is a record of a work in progress to start the formation of a solidarity network amongst community food gardens. It is a synthesis of our learning and efforts to connect the care-takers of Amsterdam's green spaces who grow and share community food. We believe that together we are stronger and that we have enough in common to be of mutual-support.

The rest of the report is structured by elaborating on the two most common challenges for each of the five dimensions of experience (ecological, political, social, technological and economic). We also include potential allies and successes from participating gardens that may be useful in overcoming challenges. We hope that some of the common challenges resonate with your experience and that some of successes can be relevant and adaptable to your own garden's situation.



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# Most Common Ecological Challenges

By ecological challenge we mean the living environment, the ecosystem within which community food gardens exist and a focus on the non-human community.

#### Regeneration of Soil Health

The most common ecological challenge experienced by the community food gardeners is regenerating soil health. Most gardeners confirmed the source of healthy food and biodiversity is a healthy soil organism high in organic content and life.

#### **Challenge Elaboration**

Shaffy's Tuin is a typical case of this challenge in Amsterdam whose industrial legacy left much of soil contaminated with toxic heavy metals. This meant that grow beds are raised above the ground and detached from the larger soil organism. The soil in the grow beds has so far been imported and there are challenges with holding water in the soil and restoring nutrients after the plants use them.

The Mohatma Gandhi Plantsoen (MGP) is a complementary typical case of this challenge in Amsterdam, because the parent soil layer is separated from the top soil. This is due to the standard dumping of a thick layer of sand by the Gemeente. The sand is nutrient poor, leaky and prevents plant roots from connecting with the rich soil layer below. Natural nutrient cycling is disrupted.

This community garden found a solution by importing organic soil into circular beds with enough depth for shallow edible plants to feed from this healthy soil and then be safely eaten themselves. This was seen as an expensive and unsustainable solution because it depends on taking soil fertility from elsewhere. Now MGP has started experimenting with innovative neighbourhood compost systems and invites support on learning and sharing best practices.

A collaboration with neighbouring Artis Zoo and Taste Before You Waste started an experiment that combines food waste and green cuttings with bokashi microbes. The compost process is much faster than worm or traditional compost and also recycles cooked foods. Furthermore the garden is using cardboard as a sheet mulch and trying to make the Gemeente worm hotel work. A new learning question is how to make leaf compost from neighbouring trees with different and complementary mineral profiles?

These two cases illustrate a common sentiment and willingness for community gardens to break past our dependence on importing organic soil and transform the abundance of waste nutrients in our neighbourhoods into food for the soil. A range of solutions are available that all involve working more sensitively and skilfully with nature to recycle nutrients from local resources and waste.

#### **Sharing Successes**

Thankfully, Ann's Tuin & Ruigte has found success with a combination of permaculture techniques. The garden rotates crops so that the soil can have a break from heavy feeders, such as tomatoes, and be replenished by nutrient providers (legumes, e.g. beans). The use of edible perennials means that microbial life in the soil is not harmed by digging each season.

Also the use of mulch and wood chips paths means less soil life disturbance and the promotion of fungal life that circulate nutrients. The integration of wild plants into the garden is a crucial factor. This includes the growing of comfrey with deep tap roots that can be chopped and dropped onto grow beds. Also the use of clovers (nitrogen fixers) as a winter cover and a living green manure. Don't leave soil naked and exposed!



tenthacrefarm.com/comfrey-uses/

Green Tribe found success working with pioneer species, e.g. willows, that grow abundantly and support surrounding plant life. They also make 'compost teas', one from diluted sterile urine and another from foraged nettles in their surrounding environment. Using soil tests they saw improvements in the nutrient profile of the soil from these techniques. They also made connections with a local supplier of horse manure and bought large quantities of semi-industrial compost. Human manure is in the waiting as the final frontier.

# **Companion Planting that Increases Biodiversity**

The second most common challenge is finding effective and simple combinations of mutually-supportive plants that increase food production and biodiversity.

#### **Challenge Elaboration**

For KasKantine the challenge is to be disciplined enough to learn simple and replicable combinations of 2 or 3 companion plants that are best adapted to the changing climate and mostly sand soil of Amsterdam. Copying tomato and basil from the Mediterranean fails in the colder, wetter and windier city. They were yet to see a successful copying of the Native American 'three sisters' of pumpkin, beans, and maize. Perhaps because there needs to be a different time order in planting and the use of more locally acclimatised seeds.

KasKatine invites other gardens to dedicate themselves to (re)discovering their own original 'three sisters' of Amsterdam. If many gardens commit a small space to experiment with a new and different combination then the risk of lower production can be shared as well as the learning and seeds! A good start is to adopt and adapt well-known companion plantings or polycultures from similar contexts or to start from naturally occurring combinations of wild plants in the surrounding local ecosystem.

Soep Uit Noord expressed a common wish to more effectively integrate weeds and native plants in their food growing. A lot of work is being spent to fight back plants that can grow abundantly with minimal human care, not requiring additional water or compost. They realised that many of the so-called weeds are in fact edible, highly nutritious and

medicinal. The challenge is to learn more about their growth and incorporate them into delicious recipes so people will value them more.

#### **Sharing Successes**

Hoektuin has successfully increased the biodiversity in the garden by including wild versions of tasty herbs go to flower, such as wild oregano. Many weeds are native to the area and flower early or late in the season which allows for a greater diversity of beneficial insects to inhabit the garden. The garden has a mature soil with years of building organic content which means it can accommodate a greater diversity of plants. By orienting to wild herbs for community tea drinking the garden creates more social experiences.

Eelco shared the success of growing "plant guilds" (permaculture term) where 3 or more plants, usually including trees, complement each other and mature into a self-sustaining community. This has meant including more wild perennials such as horseradish and comfrey with more conventional vegetables. Also including flava beans to add nitrogen to the soil and flowering plants that attract pollinators. Including fruit and nut trees in the mix is highly beneficial, but also a challenge due to restrictions from the Gemeente.



#### **Potential Allies**

Rens — renspanjaard@gmail.com

Food forest and natural health pioneer. Rens is co-designing a bee garden that continuously flowers and feeds pollinators. Rens uses maps to locate trees in local neighbourhoods and make leaf compost. Recommends the Bijenboom (Bee Tree)!

Cityplot — info@cityplot.org

Offer an excellent annual course on urban permaculture called 'Get Down Get Dirty' and can provide bespoke workshops on composting and ecological planting.

Lynn — www.urban-herbology.org

A local expert on urban herbology foraging with a great course.

## Most Common Political Challenges

By political challenge we mean being able to do what you need or want to do for a community gardens. This includes getting permissions from authorities, being part of decision-making and a focus on power relations.

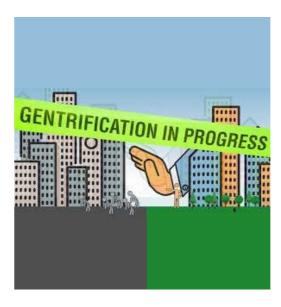
#### **Long-term Land Access**

The most common political challenge experienced by almost all community food gardeners is securing long-term access to the land they take care of. In collaboration with Gabi Murillo a series of maps that explains the precarious situations of community gardens, of which 80% are at high risk of disappearing by 2024. Check the story here.

#### **Challenge Elaboration**

Heroically the Voedseltuin Ijplein has survived a 3 month rolling contract with the Gemeente for 6 years. Their public relations committee invites politicians and civil servants to celebratory harvest events. They also enter competitions and win awards for top community/civic green initiatives to keep proving their value. The community are well connected and leant on by the Gemeente for green city promotion.

From these connections they have learnt that urban planners have limited power to safeguard community gardens that are even located on green areas. Ultimately, the Gemeente's 'Grond en Ontwikkeling' direct zoning plans (bestemmingsplannen) and replace gardens and green areas with more 'profitable' land uses. They follow a neoliberal logic that is legally enforced by the 'Markt en Overheid' Law. This free market law means land use is mostly decided by how much money is extractable from the land and ignores measures of the multiple human and ecological goods that community food gardens generate.



Almost all of the gardens are on land legally owned by the Gemeente. Soep Uit Noord, Shaffy's Tuin and the KasKantine are on temporary-use land which is destined for income/rent generation while the rest are on public land designated as non-commercial green areas. Almost all the gardens have very weak agreements with the Gemeente, either informal agreements or short-term land leases (1-2 year user contracts). Despite regenerating neglected and marginal areas, the gardens remain in precarious situations. Situations that the Gemeente is structured to 'cash' in on if the market value of the land increases and developers want to build.

#### **Sharing Successes**

Anna's Tuin and other gardens shared their success of being mapped into Amsterdam's Main Green Structure (Hoofdgroenstructuur). This is the minimum amount of green space the Gemeente wants to protect. Although not legally protected, the time and cost to get permission to build on land in the green structure is an effective deterrent for property development. They attributed the success to having a Gemeente ecologist in their founding team and having wild land of high biodiversity value.

Shaffy's Tuin also demonstrated the value of forming into a legal entity such as a stichting (foundation) or vereniging (association) to have rights and access to decision-making processes. Gardens also had success by forming coalitions with neighbouring grassroots groups (Soep Uit Noord with Voortuin van Noord), institutions (Ann's Tuin with UvA) and/or commercial entities (Shaffy's Tuin with Metabolic) to renew and extend land use contracts.

#### **Spoiler Alert!**

The Main Green Structure is to be scrapped with no ambtenaar (civil servant) being dedicated to it. This is because of the new Omgevingswet (Environmental Law) which is expected to enter into force on 1 January 2022. This Omgevingswet requires the making of new area plans where local residents have more rights to participate and decide on the form and use of our neighbourhood's environment. Let's get ready to rumble.

# Be a Strong Civic Movement that Secures Public Resources for Community Care of High Quality Green

#### **Challenge Elaboration**

For Social Garden and Cascoland this challenge is more than the Gemeente recognising their contributions to social cohesion, greening, biodiversity and climate resilience on the neighbourhood level. They want to be compensated for the green maintenance work they do in the public space and change the status quo. This is similar to KasKantine and Soep Uit Noord that want primary care-takers of high quality green who also coordinate social and educational programs to be compensated/rewarded.

The status quo is that maintenance workers are contracted to follow strict aesthetic guidelines set by Gemeente designers and landscape architects. Green is reduced to a picture that is nice to look at. Research from Cecile with Cascoland shows that maintenance workers would prefer to care for multifunctional and interactive green space in partnership with the neighbours. This would require training and better salaries.

When the Gemeente allow neighbours to intervene and make their own community gardens or greening initiatives they are expected to maintain them by themselves with no municipal resources to sustain the initiatives. Instead of enhancing green and building partnerships by co-maintaining, the Gemeente makes self-maintenance agreements with the gardeners. Why not share resources, such as seeds and compost?

The KasKantine shared that most neighbours are unaware of their rights to decide what happens in their local environments. For example, there is the Neighbourhood 'Right to Challenge' a public service, such as green maintenance, and for a collective of neighbours to do the service for the same price. Another issue is that it takes time for different gardeners to build trust and become a united group with common objectives.

#### **Sharing Successes**

The Hof van Acta has been successful in extending their quality care of neighbourhood green beyond the borders of their garden. They voluntarily clean surrounding areas of rubbish and trim the grass with a scythes replacing fossil-fuelled machines that shred plastic and contaminate the environment. They use the grass cuttings for composting and are asking the Gemeente to purchase bee-friendly flower seeds in exchange.



GroenGoed is a foundation that maintains 8 urban gardens in Rotterdam and used the Right to Challenge to be recognised for their valuable work, collaborate on an equal footing with the Gemeente and gain access to stable funding.



#### **Potential Allies**



Is a grassroots NGO that campaigns for social and environmental justice in our food systems. They support small-scale food providers and defend community food initiatives, such as Boterbloem Farm, from being turned into cement.

Commons Network — jens@commonsnetwork.eu

Invites you to comment on and co-write a commons transition plan for Amsterdam where food becomes more of a commons than a commodity.

Food Council MRA — a.vdvalk@chello.nl

Is a civic platform that works to co-create sustainable policies relating to food in Amsterdam and metropolitan region



## Most Common Technological Challenges

By technological challenges we turn to the technical difficulties that are blocking community gardens from fully flourishing. A belief is shared that they can be resolved through physical and social technologies.

#### Climate proof watering

Climate proof watering was by the far the most common challenge that brings together the technicalities of water management, automating irrigation, meeting 100% of water needs on-site, and integrating canal water.

#### **Challenge Elaboration**

Amsterdam endured an extensive drought in spring 2020 and intense summer heatwaves again as clear evidence of the climate emergency we are living in. The intensity of the heat and the lack of water was particularly for the community gardeners and farmers in the region. Many gardeners shared how they had to water more often to keep our green oases alive while the surrounding Gemeente 'grassphalt' was toasted brown.

Moestuin Robbert Cijferstraat and Moestuinen Lieven are challenged by not having a consistent water supply as they take water from their own homes to the food gardens. They both also realised they needed more knowledge on the particular water needs of different plants to not over and underwater. Green Tribe realised they need more technical know-how and social technology to organise water irrigation, sustain a watering rota, and make a pond for water for more water storage and biodiversity.

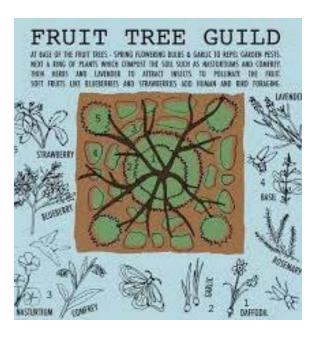
Voedseltuin liplein want to capture and store as much water as possible to reduce stress on Amsterdam's domestic water supply. They are trying to implement a water harvesting system that collects water from the roofs of adjacent buildings (schools and housing associations). This is a complex facilitation process that requires a lot of cooperation, including support from Waternet and money.

Hof van Acta have set up rainwater harvesting, but want to meet 100% of their water needs on-site. They found that a clay layer is too difficult drill to make a well and are now looking to Olimpiatuin for a solar solution which can pump clean canal water adjacent to the garden. Shaffy's Tuin and Soep Uit Noord also want to pump canal water, but are challenged by the technology and the salt-content of the water.

#### **Sharing Successes**

The KasKantine encourages a 'just do it!' approach. They drilled 5m deep and set up a simple electric pump that flows water into an irrigation and sprinkler system. You're welcome to visit and learn how it works and can be done (kaskantine@gmail. com). Shaffy's Tuin has also succeeded in making DIY rainwater harvesting and is happy to share know-how and have visitors (gerbinaa@gerbina.nl).

To be self-sufficient in water need Hof van Acta realised they needed to adapt to climate



change. This means they are now selecting plants and crops that are drought resistant. They increase their organic content in the soil and use lots of mulch to contain moisture and when they are very water stressed they only water the new plants, trusting that the older plants have more established root networks. They also continue transforming their garden into a biodiverse and productive food forest with self-sustaining guilds.



Hof van Acta

#### Less Backbreaking Work, More Self-Sustaining Gardens

#### **Challenge Elaboration**

Many of the community food gardeners intuit there are techniques and environmentally-friendly technologies nearby that make their work of weeding, composting and watering less arduous. A belief was also shared in many gardens that once the soil health is regenerated and plants become more established, the garden matures and becomes more self-sustaining.

Soep Uit Noord are particularly challenged by horsetail (Equisetum arvense). They have learnt it will take two years of consistent weeding for the horsetail to leave the site. Due to limited number of volunteers it is not possible to weed the whole growing area at once, this means the horsetail rhizomes survive easily.

Anna's Tuin have been applying the permaculture design strategy of zoning. This means having different zones in the garden that require more or less human care work (maintenance). Their challenge is to be more disciplined with this as they have added in vegetables that need a lot of water and weeding in zones designed to need less attention. They also opting for edible perennials more than labour-intensive annual crops.

#### **Sharing Successes**

Stadsboerderij Osdorp have had success are reducing their collective workload by implementing a chicken run around the edge of the garden. The chickens can eat the pests, do the weeding and add manure to the garden. They also use a lot of compost

and woodchips that they have sourced from the Gemeente by being pro-active. Having lots of mulch and organic contents means less weeding and watering.

Successes have also come with social technologies. Many gardens, such as Slatuinen, use Whatsapp groups to share harvests and ask for support in watering outside of the usual work days. Stadsboerderij Osdorp, KasKantine, Soep Uit Noord and Ann's Tuin all offer educational and social programmes which attracts more volunteers to commit more regularly to the care work. This includes courses and internships with practical work, weekly study groups and also skill shares for future co-designs and crop plans.





Four AUAS technology students designed a vegetable, fruit and garden waste shredder to feed the first underground worm container in Netherlands. The standard worm hotel has been ineffective due to big temperature fluctuations above ground and the large size of the materials fed to the worms. More students and researchers are involved with other innovations coming out. Let's get universities to support us directly



#### **Potential Allies**

#### ${\bf Rainproof}-{\bf www.rainproof.nl}$

A well funded private-public partnership that transform urban environments to increase resilience to heavy rain and prolonged drought. They install simple rain barrels to harvest rainwater.

#### Well installer —

Person X has installed many wells for community food gardens across Amsterdam. A bottom-up city hero.

ANFP — amsterdamnetwork4foodplanning@gmail.com

The Amsterdam Network of Food Planners is reactivated and work to transform Amsterdam's food system into one that is truly sustainable. They can mobilise their network to connecting with universities to make knowledge and innovations that respond to the needs of community food providers.

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## Most Common Social Challenges

By social challenges we centre on the human relationships within the community garden itself and also the surrounding neighbourhood. This includes relationships between cultures and also societal groups.

# More Social Diversity that Reflects the Neighbourhood

The social dimension had the greatest variety in the challenges experienced by community food gardens. 31% of garden shared that their greatest challenge relates to wanting to be more inclusive of social diversity.

#### **Challenge Elaboration**

Slatuinen is located on a green area that neighbours social rental housing and privately owned houses. Their diversity challenge relates mostly to class or socio-economic situation. Most of the gardeners are house-owners. They had the free time, know-how and confidence to collaborate with the Gemeente and get the resource to design and implement the garden. Due to the popularity of the garden there is a waiting list. Some people in more challenging socio-economic situations were unable to maintain their individual plots and so they lost their space.

Voedsel Ijtuin's challenge is more intersectional with race, class, and age involved. Their neighbourhood is mainly social renters from migrant backgrounds. Most of the gardeners are middle-aged, professionals and native Dutch. At the start there were more women with Moroccan and Turkish background participated, but left. The group decided to change from 100% communal growing to open up individual plots for neighbours to join and have autonomy. This has worked and some individual gardeners have joined the community work days and lots of sharing happens. It still remains challenging to bond without speaking the same language.

Soep Uit Noord acknowledged that as a group they are a white, educated, financially rich majority not representative of the neighbourhood. As a new initiative in area that is experiencing rapid gentrification and pressure on social housing, they perceive that there is distrust. They believe it will take time to earn the trust as they continue befriending neighbours. They also gained a subsidy to pay for neighbours with low incomes to do the agricultural course. They also acknowledge that for some people organic food is not a priority.



#### **Sharing Successes**

Startblok is a community food garden shared between young Dutch students and refugees with a residence permit. Although, the group want to improve on the feeling of belonging for non-Dutch speakers they have also had some success. This is because they made time and funds available to celebrate different food cultures. Having facilities for cooking and/or sharing food is a natural facilitator for social bonding.

Slatuinen has also had success by giving space for different activities in the garden other than food growing and sharing. You do not need to take care of the garden to have the right to use it. The garden is used as a place for picnics, birthdays and a study place where new arrivals practice Dutch. Key to this has been including tables and chairs (social infrastructure) and inviting people to use the space without supervision.

Shaffy's Tuin has success with starting a weekly garden after school club. Starting with one child form a class, multiple schools are involved and benefit from the three hour programme. Stichting Dock was credited as a helpful facilitator. Stadsboerderij Osdorp have also built good relations with local schools providing a food education course (linked to curriculum), lots of art and a food garden designed specifically for children.





# Sustaining Community through COVID & Post COVID-19

Without a doubt community food gardens have been a green sanctuary for neighbours during the pandemic. Many gardeners shared how important they have been for their physical and mental health during the lock-down. Nonetheless, the restrictions have meant cancellations of important community bonding activities.

#### **Challenge Elaboration**

Stadsboerderij Osdorp had to cancel their weekly 'buurt keuke' (neighbourhood kitchen) where gardeners celebrate their fruits of their labour my sharing delicious meals with the neigborhood. Furthermore, they had to limit the number of gardeners coming at the same time and keep a distance. There's been a lot of uncertainty on what is possible and not which adds to the fear of being closed and the plants dying. It's been challenging to find a balance between being safe and being social.

Gardeners from Shaffy Tuin felt their biggest challenge was to keep the community together. COVID has prevented the celebration of birthdays where everyone would catch up and make fond memories. They feel a need to continue making meaningful encounters where new members feel they use their initiatives and interests. They feel the community was strongest when they needed to build together to reach a common goal. In these times without meeting and sharing so often, confusion and conflict has become more present.

Recently created garden's such as Moestuinen Lieven and Stadskas elaborated that COVID has made it impossible for new gardeners to join the team. Startblok has had to cancel their social activity program and Ann's Tuin is missing big volunteer days where lots of work can be done. Such days are important for longer-term gardeners' sense of belonging as they educate and share valuable skills with newcomers.

#### **Sharing Successes**

Many gardens such as Voedseltuin Ijplein and Greentribe have been sustaining their community by keeping to regular days of work with group meetings. The use of Whatsapp groups and group e-mails have served as an effective substitute to organise activities, express personal preferences and reach group agreements.

For example, at Voedseltuin Ijplein some members prefer to maximise production whereas others want minimal soil intervention and maximum ecological care. When both groups are able to recognise and accept the value differences by making concessions the community sustains.

With Greentribe and Mohatma Gandhi Plantsoen success is attributed to having space for experimentation where anyone regardless of their experience can contribute and use their initiative. Greentribe has mix of own and shared spaces for growing food which promotes a balance self-initiative and group consensus.

Stadsboerderij Osdorp is using this time of relative inactivity to re-design the garden and crop plan collectively. There is more time to learn together and enhance their garden with fruit trees and permaculture guilds. Usually those who design and plan (decide) a food garden are those most attached and committed to a garden. Now new members can have this experience and be co-creators of community food gardens.



#### **Potential Allies**

Bloei en Groei — info@bloeiengroei.org

Is a project of several community, food and healing gardens in Zuid-Oost. The garden is led by women of colour and dedicated to inter-generational learning and bonding.

Mama D — communitycentredknowledge@gmail.com
Facilitates community learning processes that raise intersectional awareness
and encourage the building of sensitive solidarities.

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## Most Common Economic Challenges

By economic challenges we centre on accessing resources to grow and flourish. This include getting funds and cash to buy resources and also sustainable alternatives such as self-sourcing, bartering and social solidarity economy.

# More common and renewable resources, less financial inputs

#### **Challenge Elaboration**

This challenge speaks to the wish of many gardens to not depend on paying for external inputs like compost and seeds. Greentribe has the know-how to do composting, but is unable to source enough organic residuals from their local environment. They also acknowledged that they are dependent on buying from seed companies to be ready for different planting seasons. Reclaim the Seeds festival would have greatly helped if it had not been cancelled. Now there is motivation, as with Hoektuin to reach out and set up neighbourhood-scale and/or stadsdeel-scale seed swaps.

Moestuinen Lieven have the challenge of reducing gardener's yearly investments by having common resources. They feel this requires gaining funds and getting permissions to set up rainwater harvesting and a tool shed. This would also make gardening more accessible to people with lower incomes. Startblok has common tools but some of them have not been returned. Both the gardens existing within semi-public housing corporations are entitled to receive significant financial support but they are delaying/ withholding.

Voedseltuin Ijplein and Moestuin Robbert Cijferstraat recognised that they had a dependency on funds because they did not have enough money within the community. The challenge for Voedseltuin Ijplein is to keep up the momentum to compete in contests to access funds. Thanks to experienced grant writers its been possible, but there is also fatigue. How to reduce this dependence?

#### **Sharing Successes**

Mohatma Gandhi Plantsoen volunteered to be an information points for the Farmsterdammer event in May where hundreds of citizens freely exchanged seeds and seedlings in May 2020. The event spun off into a lively discussion group of 1000 members where people in Amsterdam continue exchanging. Furthermore, instead of building a kitchen, the garden community reached out to Taste Before You Waste and used their kitchen to make community pestos from nettles and nasturtium.



Soep Uit Noord had success with accessing funds for vital infrastructure that builds self-sufficiency such as two wells for drip irrigation, wood chips and worm compost to found the soil. They have been supported by Placemakers that is partly funded by the Gemeente to do participatory area development in Noord. This made it easier to gain funds from the municipal programme Groene in de Buurt and access other subsidies.

Hof van Acta successfully crowdfunded a 3 year planting plan. Members attended a crowdfunding workshop (http://voornatuur.nl/) and used a platform where the Noord Province matches 50% of the funds donated citizens and neighbours. The plants are perennials and trees that will not need to replaced each year.

#### **Sharing Harvests**

Almost all of the community food gardens are on public space in which everyone has the right to access and use the space and democratically participate in deciding its future. All the gardens are open to neighbours, the broader public and wish to share their harvests. This comes with challenges.

#### **Challenge Elaboration**

From community garden evaluations, 25% identified the loss of harvest as a significant economic challenge. Stadsboerderij Osdorp had their pumpkins and peppers stolen from their greenhouse. They felt that better connections to local neighbours and youth would be a solution.

Shaffy's Tuin neighbours with the lively bar Hannekes Boot. This has meant quite a lot of drunken accidents where plants have been damaged and harvests lost. Fruits and vegetables have also been stolen from the garden. They invite ideas and ask how they can better retain their harvest?

Hoektuin are challenged with the public harvesting too much and too violently. Again they want to share their harvests with the neighbourhood, but in a way that is more sensitive and respectful. They explained that that unknown neighbours harvest herbs, fruits and vegetables too early and often take out the whole plant. They would appreciate if they follow a foraging rule where you harvest 10% of a plant in an area.



#### **Sharing Successes**

Voedseltuin Ijplein has been growing organic vegetables for a food bank since its inception. They like other gardens want to share their harvest with the neighbourhood, especially those with least access to fresh vegetables. After received many polite refusals for their traditional Dutch vegetables, they decided to ask what the people/clients wanted and now they have adapted their crop plan.

Mohatma Gandhi Plantsoen shares the same sentiment and is linked to the refugee support group, Wereldhuis. They experienced an abundance of nasturtium and found out that it's intense bitterness was too much for many. They processed the nasturtium into pesto with nettles and sunflower seeds and it was a great success.





#### **Potential Allies**

#### Groene in de Buurt

Is a municipal programme to support and fund greening in public space that is initiated by citizens. Most of their funding is directed to the creation of new initiatives, paying for physical items. Some groups have had success adding to or extending pre-existing gardens.

#### Crowdfunding

A good starting point: voorjebuurt and crowdaboutnow.nl

**Reclaim the Seeds** — https://reclaimtheseeds-amsterdam.nl/en/home-en/ls an annual festival at the start of the Spring planing season where seeds and knowledge are exchanged.

# Good to know, but what next?

Many thanks for reading through the most common challenges we are experiencing as a collective of community food gardens in Amsterdam. As seeders of this emergent Buurttuin Solidariteit Netwerk we feel so much gratitude and respect to all the participating care-takers of common green spaces. Thanks for keeping alive the possibilities for sustainable urban living by growing and sharing of food in diverse social and ecological communities.

As mentioned at the beginning, we experience this report as part of a composting process that is necessary for nourishing a healthy and resilient web of mutual-support. By giving time to listen to and learn the challenges of each others' gardens, we gain a deeper sense of understanding on how much we in common. By inquiring positively we also celebrate successes that can support other gardens' to overcome their challenges and who can be potential allies.

This common challenge report seeks to consolidate and communicate our learning from the 16 community evaluations, but what next? We propose to continue collectively composting over the winter period and experiment with the permaculture principles of 'observe and interact' and 'use small, slow solutions'.

We will facilitate 3 monthly winter webinars, open to the public, that recycle the 10 most common challenges highlighted in this report. We will encourage interaction between the community food gardens in Amsterdam and complementary collaborators.

The aims of the webinars are to turn over the knowledge, feelings and experiencing, just like a good compost pile, to further nourish shared understanding and empathy. This provides fertile grounds from which to generate further learning questions and make grounded solidarity requests with a peer-to-peer community.

By March 2021 we hope that the compost will be ready with a wealth of questions and requests as well as a brief 'how to guide' on forming this solidarity network. With this and any other contributions we will host an assembly to launch or plant the 'Buurttuin Solidariteit Netwerk' where working groups and action plans can spring to life.

Join us in cultivating collective care and solidarity across the city. Together we can organise and secure the long-term flourishing of community food gardens and small-scale farms in Amsterdam and beyond.

Let's extend our solidarity further to vital social movements, such as those for racial justice and climate justice. Let's play a regenerative role in the 'peasant food web' and realise our collective right to 'food sovereignty'.

To join the network, attend the winter webinars and/or then co-design the planting of this Buurttuin Solidariteit Netwerk in Amsterdam, send an email to toby(at)aseed.net.



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<sup>1.</sup> The Peasant Food Web – A worldwide community farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, herders, pastoralists, ranchers, landless food providers, beekeepers and composters who use ingenuity in all sorts of adverse ecological and social conditions to produce 70% of the world's food. They control less than 20% of the world's resources but they safeguard 80% of the world's biodiversity while still out producing industrial agriculture.

<sup>2.</sup> Food Sovereignty – The right of all people to design and influence their own food systems; the right to healthy, culturally appropriate, and sustainably produced food (Nyéléni Declaration).