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Inclusive Approaches to Community Gardening & Green Learning Spaces

Experiences and Practices from five european countries

Summary

The *GARDENS project* gave the opportunity to the representatives of some organizations based in 5 European countries to visit different community gardens and green learning through Germany, France, Italy, Poland and Sweden.

Here we worked together to exchange experiences, share practices and activities and compare educational methods. We could observe that green spaces are a potentially inclusive bridge between formal, non-formal and informal education. Moreover, they represent a powerful platform for community engagement and an opportunity for green education.

This publication is the result of an explorative process, focused on sharing experiences and practice with constant testing and self-reflection.

The first part of the publication is thought to give an overview on the different steps needed in order to unleash the potential of a green space to become a place for community, inclusion and learning.

The second part is dedicated to methods which can be put into practice in community inclusive gardens. This part is thought to be used as a handbook: here you'll find the instructions and materials to use these methods right away.

This book can be useful in different moments of the community garden building process: both if you had just started planning over a garden or if you are wondering how to involve the community in its activities.

The different experiences we observed are useful examples to know more about the different organizational possibilities: from municipalities to associations, we explored different management forms of community gardens.



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We touch a different range of themes that can be explored and developed inside gardens and green spaces: food production, ecological education, non-formal learning, job and therapeutic reintegration. We tried to look at those themes with the lens of inclusiveness, keeping in mind how to give value to all community members. It is a collection of different approaches without claiming to cover all aspects of education and inclusion.

Methods you find in the eBook:

1. Green Detective - sensory card game

It's a simple, fun game that can be played anywhere... in the park, on a walk in the woods, in the garden, even on the balcony... anywhere!

2. How to make a toast - design thinking game

Perfect workshop for better understanding of mental models which can help with problem solving

3. Touch Feel See

This game empowers sensory integration, learning by using different senses, and raises awareness of the natural environment. It can be a great inspiration for many activities that get people interested in nature and promote their creativity.

4. Design web

A workshop tool that helps you to design anything from a small garden lot to big projects or even your life. The design web makes us think more creatively and openly.

5. PLANT ME! - Plant Placement Game

An entertaining role-playing game for gardeners to quickly and effectively identify the „perfect“ location for plants.



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6. Grassroots Capacity Building

Capacity Building is a tool for community organising and vision alignment, useful to map the skills of the team and to make the group aware of the diversity of competences which can be put on practice in the project.

7. Searching for Wild herbs

In this activity participants get to know some wild herbs of the surroundings through interactive methods. They share personal experiences, explore intercultural aspects of the herbs and invent a short story.

8. Inclusive meetings

Meetings are essential for group processes, exchanges and decision-making. Here we suggest ideas how a meeting should be structured and what elements are necessary to allow each participant to be included, to take part and contribute, and feel welcome.

9. Photolanguage

Photolanguage is a participative activity, which can also be used as an icebreaker, where participants express, to the group, a thought, a point of view, an idea by selecting a photograph that represents what they want to share. It could be use for example to ask "What is a community garden for you?".

10. Seeds workshop - Understanding & Saving

In this workshop participants are being introduced to the topic of seeds distribution in nature, and they learn how to make a simple handmade bag for seeds.

11. Garden of Needs

This is an exercise for creating a common picture/ vision of a garden without words. This collaborative activity focus on non-verbal language and it is useful to organize the different ideas of the group while creating a sense of community between them.



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12. Barriers Check - Experiencing different starting points

What is a barriers check? A real barriers check can be run by people which daily experience barriers themselves. It aims to spot out and analyse barriers on different levels, in a place or during an activity.

We propose here an adaption in order **to awaken attentiveness about the topic of barriers and to find solutions.**

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