

DENVER URBAN GARDENS
Launching New Garden Membership Program
(Pilot Year 2018)



Denver Urban Gardens comes alongside residents, and together, we cultivate gardeners, grow food and nourish community

DUG Garden Leader,

Thank you for being part of the important movement of community gardening. In a rapidly changing city, you are helping preserve land and familiar spaces. In an era of fast food and food insecurity, you are a big part of crafting the solution to localized, healthy food access. In an era of divisiveness, you are fostering trust and building community. You are connecting people to the earth and teaching children where their food comes from. We hope you know what meaningful and amazing work you are doing!

For 33 years, garden leaders and gardeners have been an integral part of creating DUG, a one-of-a-kind organization in our city. In 2017, more than 13,000 gardeners at 165 gardens grew organic food, which directly benefitted more than 25,000 people. Together we are preserving over 25 acres of land within 6 counties for healthy and impactful community use. Incredible!

Denver's rapidly evolving urban environment affects many of us. In this time, it is vitally important that the mission of healthy food access and community building continues. That is why we have created the new DUG Membership Program, a step toward sustaining and sharing our mission. Implementing a membership program provides DUG the opportunity to remain a strong partner for your garden and a force for good in Denver.

Here's why launching a membership program is so important:

1. **Sustainability:** DUG must find new streams of funding to sustain our current level of services. As the DUG garden network has expanded, so too has the volume of necessary work to maintain the network and raise its profile within city agencies, institutions and key partner organizations. You, your fellow garden leaders and DUG volunteers do an amazing job with the day-to-day garden tasks while DUG's staff remains highly engaged with both behind the scenes and on-site work within the garden network. In the past, the work of DUG's staff was supported by general operating funds, in large part from a couple major government-based sources. However, due to changes in the fundraising environment these funds have become increasingly scarce, and subsequently the gap to cover the cost of DUG's core services has widened.

2. **Awareness:** Over the past 33 years, DUG has developed a robust network of 165 gardens, which expands on an annual basis. Many of our gardeners are involved in their neighborhood gardens but are not aware of the extensive coordination and technical systems work that DUG conducts to ensure the sustainability of all the gardens. Membership provides DUG the opportunity to raise awareness within our gardener population about DUG's network-building work and the opportunities DUG provides. It will also allow us to develop a greater identity among our gardeners, reinforcing that they are part of a system-changing community, a movement that fosters metro-wide change and nationwide awareness.

For the first time in 33 years, DUG is asking our community gardens to contribute to help cover the cost of the services provided by DUG. As 2018 will be the pilot year for the membership program, we ask that you, as an invaluable member of our organization and as a community leader, help us promote the good work we do and ensure our ability to serve future generations of DUG gardeners. We acknowledge that a number of our gardeners are also facing financial hardship and will not be able to contribute. In those cases, we are asking those who can contribute "to pay it forward" to the greater gardening community.

The benefits of DUG Membership:

We acknowledge that the average gardener is largely unaware of the work DUG does behind the scenes in support of the DUG garden network. As such, we felt it would be useful to list what this support typically includes for each garden:

- Providing approved access to the land where you grow your healthy food;
- Establishing and maintaining working relationships with garden property owner agencies and negotiating and maintaining garden site use agreements;
- Providing liability insurance coverage for gardens;
- Liaison with city officials, agencies and water providers (e.g. brokering reduced water rates for gardens);
- Fiscal management of garden accounts when requested;
- Garden maintenance support (turning on/off water, helping with the repair or replacement of garden infrastructure);
- Volunteer group coordination and supervision for larger maintenance and improvement projects;
- Providing school gardens with: background checks, approved protocols and programming support (e.g. Garden to Cafeteria, Youth Farm Stands, DUG curriculum);
- Gardener conflict mediation and garden leadership support;
- Handling general public inquiry, gardener recruitment and placement;
- Connecting garden needs with skilled DUG volunteers;
- Offering gardener-desired education programs: Master Community Gardeners, Master Composters, horticulture workshops, school volunteer trainings, etc.;
- Providing networking opportunities between garden leaders and gardeners

How the Membership Program will work:

- The suggested membership contribution is \$25 per gardened plot, per year.
- Communal plots, donation plots and plots that are not gardened will not be counted toward a garden's overall contribution.
- DUG staff will work with each garden to determine the garden's annual contribution amount, being sensitive to each garden's ability to contribute.
- After the garden's membership contribution has been agreed upon, it will be deducted from the garden account in July of every year, allowing Garden Leaders time to collect the funds for the season.
- We suggest a membership amount be contributed by each gardener, allowing all gardeners the opportunity to support DUG on behalf of their garden.
- DUG will send out communications to your gardeners in the Underground News in March and will provide a one-page membership summary to accompany the 2018 plot application.
- Information about the membership program will also be included on the 2018 plot application, allowing gardeners the opportunity to contribute.
- Members will receive invitations to events and discounts at DUG workshops.

Phases of the Membership Program:

There will be two implementation phases of the DUG membership program:

- Phase 1 – Garden Membership: This is an opportunity for our gardens to help sustain DUG. It will pilot in 2018.
- Phase 2 – The Community At Large: We will present opportunities for the greater community and community partners to support DUG. This will be launched in the summer of 2018.

What will not change - garden plot fees:

Garden plot fees have never been a funding source for DUG, but rather a funding source for the individual gardens, and that will not change. As the DUG Membership Program is implemented, the garden plot fees will continue to be held in the garden's account and managed by the garden leaders to cover basic garden costs annually including but not limited to:

- Water consumption
- Compost if needed
- New tools
- Repairs and improvements