

# 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*

Dear DUG Gardener,

Thank you for being part of the important movement of community gardening. In a rapidly changing city, you are helping preserve land and important community spaces. In an era of fast food and food insecurity, you are a big part of the solution by creating localized, healthy food access. In an era of divisiveness, you are fostering trust and building community.

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 the 6 county Metro Area, for healthy and impactful community use!

Denver's rapidly evolving urban environment affects many of us. In this time, it is vitally important that DUG's mission of healthy food access and community building continues. That is why we are launching DUG's new Garden Membership Program, which is intended to be a step toward sustaining and sharing in DUG's mission. Implementing a membership program will contribute to DUG's capacity to remain a strong partner for your garden and a force for the DUG garden network throughout the Metro Area.

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

**1. Sustainability:** DUG must continue to diversify our funding sources to sustain our current level of service to gardens. As the DUG garden network has expanded, so too has the volume of required work to maintain the network and raise its profile within city agencies, institutions and key partner organizations. In the past, the work of DUG's staff was supported by general operating funds, in large part from a couple of major government-based sources. However, due to changes over the past several years in the fundraising environment, large grants for general operating use 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 by an average of 10 new gardens on an annual basis. DUG conducts extensive coordination



and technical systems work behind the scenes to ensure the sustainability of all the gardens. We acknowledge that the typical DUG gardener is largely unaware of what DUG's role is with their garden. Through the membership program, we intend to raise awareness of this "behind the scenes" work conducted on their behalf.

### The work of DUG in support of gardens:

- 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/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.; and
- Providing networking opportunities between garden leaders and for gardeners.

### **How the Membership Program will work:**



- The suggested membership contribution is \$25 per gardened plot, per year, which we are asking you, the gardener, to contribute in full or in part on the basis of your ability to pay. If you are unable to contribute the full amount, consider half. If you are able to contribute more, please consider “paying it forward” to the greater DUG gardening community.
- DUG staff will work with each garden to determine the garden’s annual contribution amount, being sensitive to each garden’s ability to contribute.

### **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 spring and 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
- Compost (as needed)
- Replacement tools (as needed)
- Repairs and improvements (as needed)

**As a DUG gardener, you are part of a system-changing community, a movement that fosters metro-wide change and nationwide awareness. Thank you for being a part of Denver Urban Gardens.**