

From: Helmrich, Steve
Sent: Tuesday, June 22, 2010 4:39 PM
Subject: Peoples Garden supplemental guidance

Dr. Knipling asked that I provide uniform guidance within the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) community and respond to many questions that have been posed about the People's Garden Initiative (PGI) criteria, allowable time commitments, funding, and contact points.

USDA Secretary Vilsack announced his PGI in February 2009, and challenged USDA employees, as well as non-USDA organizations across the Nation, to create their own People's Gardens. The Secretary reaffirmed this message to all employees in July 2009, as did additional internal ARS communication in March 2010.

Supplemental ARS guidance is that the People's Garden provides an opportunity to highlight and showcase ARS research and exemplify how our efforts contribute to a stable and healthy agricultural environment. Examples could include soil and water stewardship best practices, improved varieties of fruits and vegetables, new and improved garden management techniques, etc. People's Gardens may be located within grounds of the ARS location or within the community. The key is that the garden should be readily available to the public. PGI's should be developed with one or more of three criteria in mind. First, sustainability, i.e., demonstrate sustainable production and conservation practices. Second, community benefit (e.g., through instructional handouts or signs, or by sharing of produce). Third, collaborative effort (e.g., accomplished with community participation).

The above guidelines serve as a general guide. Meeting all these criteria may not be attainable in all scenarios when collaborating with community members and stakeholders. In those instances the Garden should serve as the best practical agricultural example for the community and be of educational value.

The ARS Office of National Programs (ONP) People's Garden Coordinator is Dr. Kevin Hackett, George Washington Carver Center (GWCC), Kevin.Hackett@ARS.USDA.GOV. Dr. Matt Smith is the alternate ONP coordinator, Matt.Smith@ARS.USDA.GOV. Sandy Miller-Hays (Sandy.MillerHays@ARS.USDA.GOV) is the contact person from the Information Staff, and Stephanie Ritchie (Stephanie.Ritchie@ARS.USDA.GOV) is the contact person from the National Agricultural Library. For questions or guidance please contact Dr. Hackett or another member of this Coordination Team.

Many questions have been posed regarding working on or maintaining the People's Garden. The following applies:

PGI Voluntary Efforts

Voluntary efforts supporting PGI are encouraged. Volunteer hours supporting PGI shall be completed outside the employee's regular tour of duty such as during normal lunch periods, before or after work, or use of credit hours or annual leave. Location team efforts are encouraged to share and spread the time required.

Working on PGI within Position Description

If work to further PGI aligns directly with an employee's position description such as grounds maintenance or equipment operation, an employee may work on it on regular time with supervisor awareness and approval.

Working on PGI outside Position Description

If an employee's supervisor determines that PGI activities do **not** directly fit within an employee's position description, an employee may be granted a reasonable amount of regular time per FY to work on PGI at the discretion of and with prior approval from their supervisor.

Credit and Compensatory Time for PGI

Credit or compensatory time may **not** be earned for PGI activities.

PGI gardens and their respective locations should be listed in the USDA PGI database available at www.longport.usda.gov. Please notify Kevin Hackett when new PGI initiatives are planned or for assistance with updating the PGI database, as required. PGI signage may be requested through the Department PGI database.

People's Gardens should be accomplished within a Location's or Unit's existing allocations and resources. Authority to incur PGI expenditures must be approved by the Location's or Unit's supervisory fund holder and should be consistent with ongoing research or grounds or facilities maintenance costs.