

Cooperative Gardens Commission

Community Agreements

This is a living document, approved in its current iteration by the CGC in August 2020.

Main Points:

We center all our organizing around these:

- **We make space for learning and processes of decolonization**
- **We aim to gather and organize from a practice of respect, love, and openness.**
- **We practice needs-based resolution versus punishment**
- **Language is important and the key to this movement**
- **Through our community work, we reconnect to our cultures and traditional lineages**
- **As a collective being we support Reparations**
- **Working Group Etiquette**
- **This is a living document please add your input**

Main Point Explanations:

We center all our organizing around these:

- **We make space for learning and processes of decolonization**
 - Decolonization is the process of recognizing, examining, and questioning societal beliefs that maintain the status quo and racial hierarchy established through colonization.
 - We are all leaders and we center People Of Color and other marginalized folks in our work.
 - We listen and believe the stories and experiences of Black, Indigenous, People Of Colour and other marginalized communities
 - Black, Indigenous, People Of Color folks are parents, healers, artists, and stewards of ancient knowledge; our people are treasures, valuable, and must be treated as such.
 - Treat everyone fairly and equally without discrimination (sexism, racism, ableism, social economics, education, location, gender, skin color, citizenship, health insurance, transportation, ageism, ethnicity, body type).
 - Non-assumptive: Do not assume pronouns or make assumptions or generalizations about people or groups. Let others self-define.
 - i. A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone that is being talked about (she, that, he, them, and this).

Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze/et cetera) specifically refer to people that you are talking about.

- We respect Mother Earth, Nature, and all Natural resources
 - We practice regeneration of the ecosystem, building sustainable and long-term waste reducing systems.
 - We consider the impact of our actions on our neighbors, communities, local ecosystems, and individual plants and other animals.
- The knowledge of seeds and the spirituality of stewardship is key to our survival.
- We believe in and share Open Pollinated, Heirloom, Free & Non-patented Seeds & we share agricultural knowledge that is culturally specific to us, combating Cultural Appropriation.
 - Cultural appropriation occurs when the dominant culture takes or exploits elements of a marginalized culture without permission and has very little understanding about what it is that they are appropriating. Thus, cultural appropriations are often very problematic as they can promote misrepresentations and (typically negative) stereotypes about the marginalized culture.
- We honor and respect our Elders.
- Establishing localized food sovereignty. We support small farmers, cooperatives, and a regenerative trade economy. Community supported, collective ownership of accessible food hubs.
 - We strive for decentralized, autonomous networks
 - Black, Indigenous, People Of Color led initiatives
 - Sending seeds to hubs
 - Beginner seed saving educational material that is easily replicable
 - Short and long-term financial assistance
- **We aim to gather and organize from a practice of respect, love and openness.**
 - We work with people in an open and receptive way
 - i. Ouch and Oops
 - Ouch when you feel offended / triggered, Oops to acknowledge the harm caused and will to reflect later.
 - Forgiveness and embracing mistakes: We believe that great things can come from mistakes which are part of the learning process and can result in new discoveries. Mistakes are never intentional.
 - ii. We encourage folks that have been taught to take up less space to take up more space, and for those that have been taught to take up space to share space with others.
 - iii. Intentional communication: Non-offensive

- iv. Curiosity: Speak to learn, not to be right; listen for understanding, not to respond.
- Self Care and Collective community care; Mind, Body, Spirit, Emotions
- **We practice needs-based resolution versus punishment**
 - i. We call for accountability, mediation, and restorative justice processes to be available.
 - ii. We come from a place of learning and listening while taking the initiative to educate ourselves on the many different forms of racism and prejudice.
- **Language is important and the key to this movement.**
 - i. “We/Our” is really important for a stronger union
 - Collective action: We want to move from individualistic forms of being in the world to a collective form of learning, building, and acting with one another.
 - There is no lesser, no such thing as a subordinate needing a gatekeeper. No hierarchy.
 - Avoiding theying or othering.
 - It's more effective to approach a situation (microaggressions, gatekeeping, cultural appropriation, etc) as a community. Doing so keeps the focus on the issue at hand and avoids writing problems off as divisive.
 - ii. Communicate from personal experience using “I” statements
 - especially in a conflict situation.
 - If using specialized language from your own educational experience or work background, explain the terms or assumptions you are operating under.
 - We invite you to ask yourself what your needs are to participate in this movement.
- **Through our community work, we reconnect to our cultures and traditional lineages.**
- **As a collective we support Reparations**
 - Reparations are Personal Acts and Social Policies of Restorative Justice: reparations are a real and present-day Apology and Recompense for cultural acts of genocide, slavery, child theft, exploitation, land theft and injustice that established the inequities we live with and are harmed by or privileged with, here and now. Reparations are inevitable, reparations are real, and reparations serve to right the relationship between those actively harmed by, and those privileged by, inequitable and unfair norms, assumptions, laws, and mass culture.

- Returning land to Indigenous, First Nations, Bands & Families via sharing collective land and bestowing of legacy estates
- **Working Group Etiquette**
 - Self-care: staying present with personal experience to make sure that personal needs are taken care of
 - Organize at a rate equal to how we absorb: In crisis, we want to act quickly and move fast. But being intentional is important not only because it is purposeful, but also because it allows us to offer at a rate equal to that which we absorb. Slowing down gives us space to consider and grow. It feeds the movement in a considered way.
 - Confidentiality: Things shared are not taken outside of the working group or organizing group, including people's personal information (such as name, telephone number, email) or stories.
 - Take up less space, call into groups, do not push an agenda or force a decision.
 - Being intentional about emails that go out to working groups
 - Avoid flooding the entire list of all and/or Working group(s) with one mass message.
 - Using positive communication and respectful, harmonious conduct