

GROWING COMMUNITY BY GROWING FOOD: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
TWO COMMUNITY GARDENS IN NORTH TEXAS

by

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## ABSTRACT

# GROWING COMMUNITY BY GROWING FOOD: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO COMMUNITY GARDENS IN NORTH TEXAS

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Community Gardens are a burgeoning trend in the U.S., blooming in many different cities and for different reasons including social activism, sustainability, health, education, ecology, and community. Their popularity also reflects a current trend where people are more attentive to their relationship with food and concerned about where it comes from. This thesis examines two community gardens in North Texas, University of Texas at Arlington Community Garden in Arlington and Deep Ellum Urban Garden in Dallas. Despite community gardens' popularity, no studies on community gardens have been done in Texas. However, North Texas is home to the 4<sup>th</sup> largest metropolitan area and its demographics mirror the U.S. making this an excellent area to study community gardens. By examining these two gardens, this ethnographic research compares the history, structure, leadership, and the reasons why gardeners participate in these gardens to determine how and why people in North Texas utilize these gardens. Through the lens of urban anthropology, these two gardens also offer a chance to examine how it is

difficult to forge community in urban settings by looking at two different methods of management: top-down and grassroots; and in two different sites: the city and the suburbs, all within the same area and culture of North Texas.

This project is ethnographic through participation and observation, comparative, although both gardens are in North Texas, and participatory through the author's work in her garden plot and learning how to garden. At both gardens, utilizing the garden to grow and foster community among the gardeners is of utmost importance. However, different methods of management can affect how gardeners participate in and view each garden and thus the community in the garden. This research reveals that in order for the garden to achieve their goal of being a successful community-building venture, it is the gardeners' participation and having a personal stake in the garden which is vital to the garden's ability to grow and foster community. Thus, while grassroots management can create a successful community garden because the gardeners are involved from start to finish, top-down management can also work as long as there is active participation from the gardeners.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Tilling the Soil

*I went to the gardens today to see if my plot was dry enough to “prepare the soil” for the fall season. The man I bought the compost from told me to work in the compost a good 4 inches or so with the soil and then put a layer of 1 to 2 inches of compost on top. I poured on the compost and mixed it in with a tool from the shed that had three long prongs on it. After mixing, I poured a layer of compost on top and smoothed it out and then soaked my plot with water. It was now ready to be planted.*

(Fieldnotes10.17.13, DUG)

Community gardens, along with farmers markets and community-supported agriculture (CSAs), provide people with alternative ways of consuming food, for example purchasing food grown within 150 miles (farmers markets) or buying a portion of a farmer’s crop (CSA’s). They are also alternative ways of using food to do more than simply sustain bodies such as using nature to live sustainably and creatively and forging connections with others. A community garden is “any piece of land gardened by a group of people” (American Community Garden Association 2009). A garden can be in an urban, suburban, or rural area and can grow flowers, vegetables, or simply community. Due to its ownership, access, and democratic control, a community garden is also defined as a “public garden” (Ferris et al. 2001:560). Community gardens also offer additional

benefits besides providing food which include social interaction, a way to conserve resources such as water and compost, preserving green space, and allowing opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural connections.

The definitions above are broad. Yet in providing these definitions as well as allowing others, there is no imposition of “arbitrary limits on creative communal responses to local need” (Ferris et al. 2001:561) which, as I will show, allows two community gardens 23 miles away from each other to create a garden from their local community and maintain their unique identity through the same goals of growing food and building community. The ethnographic method offers an opportunity to examine these “creative communal responses to local need” by allowing me to capture the particular characteristics of each garden, for example how and why it is built, and of the gardeners, for example, why they choose to belong to the garden.

Today, there are approximately 18,000 community gardens throughout the United States and Canada (American Community Garden Association 2009). There are structured organizations with a lot of history located in large cities such as the New York City Green Guerillas, Seattle P-Patch, Boston Urban Gardeners, and Philadelphia Green, which provide resources for creating and maintaining gardens. There are also smaller, community-led efforts to establish gardens. Community gardens large and small have popped up all over the U.S. from Anchorage, Alaska to Arlington, Texas (Lawson 2005; Wakeman 2010). The American Community Garden Association (ACGA) also saw an increase in cities and communities wanting to start a program from 150 in 1992 to 400 in

1994. While the growth of community gardens is clear, these dates indicate there have been no current surveys of community gardens in the U.S. or Texas.<sup>1</sup>

My thesis addresses the gap in the scholarship of community gardens by highlighting four elements. First, by taking an anthropological approach I present a nuanced, in-depth account of community gardens different from past literature, which has focused on sustainability, health, and economics as well as disregarded the gardener's voice and experience. Not only do I focus on community rather than sustainability, health, and economics, but my research presents two specific case studies which garner considerable attention to individual gardener's experiences. I also highlight a sensorial account of the gardens and pay attention to the gardener's sensorial experience of the garden. Second, I "study up" (Nader 1972:285). I not only look at gardeners but also examine the leadership of each garden, how these leaders make decisions, and how they enforce rules. Nader believes studying up can "raise important questions as to responsibility, accountability, [and] self-regulation" (288), and by studying "those who have responsibility by virtue of being delegated power" the questions we ask will change (290). Third, unlike previous studies, which examine gardens in major cities such as New York City, Detroit, and Philadelphia, I emphasize the unique locations of Arlington and Dallas. Community gardens within a suburban setting have not been well studied and therefore it is important to discover if there are fundamental differences in community gardens based on their setting in relation to an urban environment. In addition, there have been no studies on community gardens in the North Texas area. Fourth, I provide a

comparative study of these two gardens, which is critical to my analysis of gardeners' participation and the communities they form.

This thesis is an in-depth, qualitative study that compares two community gardens in North Texas, one in Arlington and the other in Dallas (Figure 1). Arlington and Dallas are part of the larger Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex (DFW), a growing area. Forbes named both Fort Worth and Dallas as two of the best cities for job seekers (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jennagoudreau/2013/01/23/the-10-best-cities-for-job-seekers/>). This research will not only be relevant in the current age, but also for the future of DFW, which is situated as a diverse community that is attracting new jobs meaning more people.

By 2050, it is estimated that the population of the area will double and that 70% of the population will live in cities (<http://www.visionnorthtexas.org/Issues.html>; Barrett 2012:1). Vision North Texas, of which UTA is a supporter, also uses this year as a marker of significant change and is concerned with the “future quality of life, economic desirability and long-term sustainability of the 16-county North Central Texas region” of which Arlington and Dallas are a part of (<http://www.visionnorthtexas.org/about.html>). It names population growth, the changing makeup of the population, the urban landscape, and food availability as issues that North Texas will be facing in the upcoming decades (<http://www.visionnorthtexas.org/issueslist.html>).

Richard Florida, an urban theorist and founder of the Creative Class Group, which has partnered with UTA, is championing North Texas as a premier and key player within

the global world. He believes the “future economy will increasingly be dominated by knowledge, creativity, and innovation” (Carter 2012), and that creative individuals, communities, and organizations will help achieve greater prosperity and well-being. I see community gardens as part of that knowledge, creativity, and innovation which will be crucial in order for DFW to move forward into the future.



Figure 1 Map of DFW area showing existing community gardens

My research is anthropological and builds on ethnographic literature.

Anthropology is the study of the human experience. Cultural anthropology more specifically employs participant observation and interviews to holistically study and analyze how people live in and make sense of the world around them. I utilize participant-observation, interviews, and photographs to examine the multi-faceted gardens from their history and design, leadership and meetings, to the gardeners’

experience and my own journey of learning how to garden. I use pseudonyms to protect the identity of the gardeners and those who helped create the gardens and clean up quotes in order to achieve better flow and clarity. I place emphasis on what gardeners say as well as observations from my fieldwork because I wish for the gardeners to have a clear voice in conjunction with my narrative. I code interviews and field notes based on specific words and phrases I heard while researching which also allows for the gardeners' experience and understanding of the garden to emerge.

Anthropology is no stranger to the study of gardens, exemplified by Bronislaw Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islanders' Coral Gardens (1935). Through this work, Malinowski demonstrates the ability of anthropology to utilize participant-observation and detailed, in-depth research to appreciate a community's lived understanding of gardens and their importance to the social fabric of the Trobriand Islanders' lives. Malinowski discovers there is "no other aspect of tribal activity as fully and as naturally controlled by magic as the tilling of the soil" (1935:x). He vividly describes these gardens and the language of magic. Magic, via the *towosi* or garden magician, controls the preparation and planting of the garden, men's physical labor in the garden, and, in the end, the success of the garden. The success of the garden equals the success of the village: "Its produce is the foundation of native wealth and the root of political power and of law and order, that in all the exchanges it plays a dominant part" (1935:48). Anthropology and community gardens, however, have a shorter history. Anthropologists in the United States started to pay attention to community gardens in the 1990s, especially within the realm of urban anthropology, a relatively new discipline,

which focuses on urban life. This sub discipline is becoming increasingly relevant as more of the world urbanizes and more of the population lives in urban settings, which, consequently, also draws light on immigration and the movement of people. As a result, anthropologists find community gardens in urban areas, for example Jay Sokolovsky and Andrew Flachs, who have studied community gardens in New York City and Cleveland.

Sokolovsky (2010) studies the community garden movement in New York City and its significance to the elderly and civic ecology, where “local citizens use collective action to reorder a physical space into a more enabling environment” (2010:244). He shows, through the creation of community gardens, elders not only help to beautify neighborhoods but also brought to the garden a unique personality. These elders helped sustain the garden by “creating alliances across generational, economic, and ethnic lines,” also providing a wealth of knowledge about gardening, including what can be grown and what different produce can be used for either cooking or healing (2010:244).

Flachs (2010) looks at community gardens in Cleveland and shows how economic and environmental concerns are not mutually exclusive: poor populations may garden in order to save money but they are aware of their environmental impact as well. At the same time, more affluent gardeners may be motivated to participate for environmental as well as economic reasons. Flachs demonstrates the “complexity of use, function, and intent in these communal spaces” and participants’ ability to use these gardens for multiple reasons (2010:1). Even within one city, gardens can fulfill various needs and

ideologies of community members, demonstrating the flexibility and almost limitless reasons to participate in a community garden.

This thesis is mindful of anthropologists' call for the discipline to remain "close to its purpose." Thus not only do gardens benefit from being studied through the lens of anthropology but studying community gardens today can be beneficial to the discipline of anthropology as well. As a study of "the everyday in modern life, of the changing character of mundane matters like food, viewed from the joined perspective of production and consumption, use and function, and concerned with the differential emergence and variation of meaning" this study takes forward Sidney Mintz's proposal for ensuring anthropology remains "close to its purpose" (Mintz 1985:213).

My love for cooking led me to develop an interest in garden. I was a sophomore in college, studying in Italy, and discovered I had no clue what I was doing in the kitchen but somehow had to figure out how to feed myself. Due to my lack of income and because I was not brought up eating out on a regular basis, I had to buy my own food and learn what to do with it. Whether it was the lack of my mother, looking over my shoulder forcing me to learn how to cook, or I was inspired by Italy, I came to appreciate not only the time and effort it takes to create a meal but how creative one could be in the kitchen and how important food is to sustain a body. Over the years, while I still maintained a desire simply to cook, I became more interested in food and health, local food movements, and people's relationship to their food, or how they view their food, for example do they see it as a weakness, life-giving, inconsequential, source of bonding

with family and friends, or fun. I became an avid consumer of different ways of knowing and consuming food, for example through farmers markets, community supported agriculture, organic food, non-genetically modified foods, and then, community gardens.

My research took place from July 2013 until March 2014 at University of Texas at Arlington's (UTA) Community Garden (UTA CG) in Arlington and Deep Ellum Urban Gardens (DUG) in Dallas. These two communities of North Texas range in size but they are all diverse, each composed differently and citing different purposes for their gardens. Each city and many of the surrounded cities have not only one community garden but multiple gardens. Fortuitously, there is a community garden on UTA's campus which I research not only because I live in and go to school in Arlington but because I am already familiar with the garden, its leadership, and some of its members. Through one of my professors, I made contact with another student who was involved with DUG and so I chose this garden to be my second research site. I quickly learned how different these two gardens are. But because they are both newer gardens I was able to capitalize on their journey of becoming a community garden.

I met with two representatives from the City of Arlington Parks and Recreation Department, George Smith and Kristina Camp, as well as the UTA Sustainability Director, Molly Reese in November 2012 in the Sustainability Department offices to discuss a possible internship position working with the UTA Community Garden. This meeting was very informal and I took minimal notes. Smith, Camp, and Reese discussed their concerns for the viability of the garden and whether or not "group cohesion" (their

term) can be achieved. As described by Smith and Camp, group cohesion involves a certain attitude about the garden and the members' role in the garden. It implicates that members see the garden as a cooperative project and that the gardeners take an active role in co-ownership and responsibility. But people are acting and gardening individually with no apparent interest in maintaining the garden communally or acting to promote a sense of community within the garden, demonstrated by the lack of attendance or interest in monthly meetings concerning the garden. This problem reflects concerns about individualism and a lack of social integration in our society today (Macias 2008). Smith voiced this opinion as well saying that his and Camp's idea of group cohesion might not be possible because people simply want to garden individually. This paradox was apparent throughout my research in both gardeners' and garden leaders' comments. Why do people join a community garden yet have no desire to be part of or do not actually participate in its "community"?

I have met with Smith and Camp since this initial meeting as well as attended a UTA community gardening meetings where Smith, Camp, and UTA community gardener members were present. My interaction with Smith, Camp, and Reese, offers an opportunity to "study up" (Nader 1972:285), paying critical attention to those people who are in positions of power and examining how they interact with the garden's members and how the members approach and interact with them. Nader I created a Facebook page for UTA's community garden in an attempt to use social media as a platform to gain more interest and participation and as a way to contact people. But the internship experience ended there and the City of Arlington did not utilize me in the manner or as

much as I thought they would. I reconsidered my role with the city and instead of working for the garden, formed the idea for my thesis around it, maintaining contact with Smith, Camp, and Reese.

Smith, Camp, and Reese's term, "group cohesion," will be henceforth referred to as community because this word is used more often by the gardeners than the term group cohesion. Community or group cohesion is seen as a factor which contributes to the garden's success as a whole, or at least a feature which is desired for this particular garden, as expressed by Smith, Camp, and Reese. The community garden in Dallas also stresses community in order for the garden to be successful and as part of the identity of the neighborhood within which it is located. This desire for and opposition to community within the garden will be examined in depth. But what is community?

In order to understand the word and concept of community in this thesis, I must explain it through the gardeners' understanding of the word. First, community is present in a community garden because, even though individuals garden in their own plot, these plots are on common ground. Furthermore, this ground is defined by its many plots and the *group* of gardeners, not by any one individual plot or person. Second, in order for this type of garden to work, the individuals must work together to care for and maintain their garden. Gardeners also share tools and resources like water and compost. Third, gardeners express getting to know others and appreciating the different people which represent the garden as a critical part of the attractiveness of the garden. Finally, the garden is supposed to represent an even larger group than its gardeners. For one garden, it

represents a suburban city and a university. For another garden, it represents a quirky neighborhood within a large city.

This research can be viewed through the lens of urban anthropology. Renato Rosaldo (1989) argues that we believe the urban population is “too transparent to study” because they remind us so much of ourselves (1989:198-199). But urban people, especially the participants of community gardens, have a particular and unique experience of the urban setting through their knowledge and understanding of the garden. Furthermore, UTA CG and DUG showcase how a city and a suburb, separately, came to desire, build, and operate a community garden within their community. More specifically, these gardens illustrate the mechanisms for creating community.

Community gardens today are in a unique situation. In contrast to the community gardens of the 1970s and 1980s, which faced opposition from city leaders and some governments, community gardens are currently supported and being utilized by cities in addition to non-profit organizations, churches, prisons, universities, and grade and elementary schools. They are also becoming increasingly institutionalized as city governments become involved and the need for permits and insurance arises. This display of support demonstrates the ability of community gardens to serve multiple groups of people and recognizes their popularity and effectiveness due to encouragement from governmental institutions. UTA CG and DUG are part of this new wave of community gardens, which create a distinct community of learners who discover their need for food and community.

The sequence of chapters in this thesis mimics the growing stages of a plant and reflects what I have learned through gardening in my own plot and through talking with others. At the beginning of each chapter I include a quote or an observation from my fieldwork, which describes the significance of the chapter's title. Chapter 2, "Roots," discusses community gardens in depth, their history in the United States and within anthropology. This chapter also provides a discussion of community gardens and their relevance to current issues regarding sustainability, health, identity, and more. Chapter 3, "Planting Seeds," discusses my methodology and how I use participant-observation, interviews, coding, and photographs to lay the foundation of my research and my findings. Chapter 4, "Germination," looks at each community garden, its history, structure, leadership, events, and current status. This chapter also begins to look at some of the issues each garden faces, some of the unique features, and reasons why each garden was started. Chapter 5, "Bearing Fruit," discusses what I learned from gardening in my own plot in addition to interview responses and how the gardeners view and act in the garden. Chapter 6, "Harvesting," discusses the findings of this research, especially in comparison with each garden, and examines how the history, organizational structure, and leadership affect how gardeners participate and the communities they form. Chapter 7, "Saving Seeds," discusses the implications of this research and the future of community gardens in North Texas.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND

#### Roots

*Susan mentioned to the line leaders that they need to reiterate how important the watering chores are, especially for the young and new plants. She explained how you really need to water deep because the farther you water, the roots will “smell” it and go to the water.*

(Field notes 10.8.13, DUG)

This chapter demonstrates the long history of community gardens in the U.S. along with their changing purposes and structure. Anthropological research, ethnographic and applied, exhibits how anthropological methods are suitable to investigate how local communities realize and respond to community gardens. In addition, applied methods attempt to create change through the study of and implementation of community gardens. UTA CG and DUG reflect a growing trend in the United States of the popularity of community gardens. A community garden’s strength and a weakness, which makes it hard to understand and define, are its broad definition and the multiple forms it takes. It is a weakness because the garden is open to interpretation, even to its own members. However this ambiguity is a forte because it allows people, communities, and organizations to determine why they want a community garden and how they will use it to meet their needs or goals. For example, UTA CG creates another way for the

university to be sustainable as well as incorporates the larger Arlington community, whereas Deep Ellum Urban Gardens uses the community garden to fortify the identity of the neighborhood of Deep Ellum. I will discuss these motivations and their significance later in my thesis (Chapter 6).

#### History of Community Gardens in the U.S.

Community gardens have gone through three evolutionary stages in the United States. I call the first “Antecedent Period” which started in the 1890s and continued into the 1940s. The “Classic Period” took place during the 1970s and 1980s in major cities such as New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, and Washington D.C. The third period covers the 1990s to the present day and is characterized by the spread of community gardens across the United States.

The distinct names of the gardens in the Antecedent Period as well as the specific years in which they were popular helps us to understand the context in which these gardens emerged and how they were utilized to solve specific problems. Vacant Lot Cultivations during the 1893 depression helped unemployed people grow their own food to consume as well as sell it as a source of income. The Children’s School Garden Movement, which also began in the 1890s with the Putnam School in Boston, was an attempt by teachers and local organizations to bring gardens into the school curriculum. Favor with these gardens declined in the 1920s, as exemplified when the federal Bureau of Education closed the Office of School and Home Gardens in 1920 after a short period of 6 years. Relief and subsistence gardens during the depression of the 1930s and Victory

gardens during World War II demonstrated the effectiveness of gardens in providing food and income as well as promoting patriotism (Lawson 2005). At the end of the Second World War, the popularity of gardens declined due to economic recovery.

In the 1970s and 1980s, what I call the “Classic Period”, gardens reappeared to meet needs in addition to food production as part of a grassroots initiative at urban renewal which involved beautification, crime reduction, and open spaces (Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasney 2004). At this time, growing concerns about destruction to the environment through industrial agriculture and blight of city life through the urban environment as well as the attractiveness of organic food also influenced the presence and popularity of community gardens (Draper and Freedman 2010; Guthman 2003).

Though there are many individual benefits to gardening such as reduced stress levels, exercise, and better nutrition, the Classic Period gardens arose out of grassroots efforts in an attempt to make urban life better. Organizations such as Boston Urban Gardeners, the P-Patch Program, and the Green Guerillas used gardens to enable community members to reclaim the urban spaces around them and instill in them a sense of empowerment and ownership of their neighborhoods. Urban life was characterized by a loss of jobs, discrimination which secluded minority groups in the inner city, deserted buildings, crime, and poverty (Lawson 2005:218). Juxtaposed against planners and politicians who saw the solution in gentrification, community gardens became “urban activism” by the community members themselves who wanted their environment to change (Lawson 2005:218). Groups and individuals turned vacant, ugly lots into

beautiful, green spaces and places of fruition which not only provided fresh food but also strengthened the neighborhood and sense of community around the garden. For example, an organization called Gardens for All stated: “the more people who have large fruit and flower gardens the better they, their community, and their nation, and the world will be able to solve environmental, economic, and social problems of our time (Garden for All cited in Lawson 2005:220). This organization believed in and saw the effectiveness of the garden in their community. For instance, community gardens have enabled some community members to come together to resolve community-wide problems such as crime, encourage others to become involved in local politics, establish a neighborhood watch, build a playground, and create community babysitting (Armstrong 2000).

The spread of community gardens, what I call the “Dispersal Period,” is a transitional stage in which the location, character, and function of community gardens is changing. Though there are still many extant Classic Period community gardens, which, as I have said arose out of grassroots efforts, there is a new momentum to create gardens in smaller cities and suburban areas with different types of leadership and for relevant issues today such as sustainability and health.

But why have community gardens become so popular now? These gardens demonstrate how individuals today are becoming more attentive to their relationship with food, hungry to know where it comes from, how it is grown, and the multiple ways food can be used. UTA CG and DUG are part of the dispersal period which attests that community gardens can encompass multiple reasons for existing as I explained when

discussing their broad definitions. For example, because of recent concerns with health and obesity within the United States, community gardens are a way to not only exercise but to encourage a healthier lifestyle by eating more fruits and vegetables. First lady Michelle Obama, along with local elementary school students, broke ground on the White House Kitchen Garden as part of an effort to educate kids about health and nutrition (Let's Move n.d.; also visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1vUBYr0-LE&feature=plcp>). Alaimo et al. (2008) show those who participated in a community garden or who had a household member who participated ate fruits and vegetables 1.4 more times per day than those who did not participate and they were 3.5 times more likely to eat fruits and vegetables at least 5 times a day.

Community gardens are also an alternative to industrial agriculture where concerns exist about pollution, waste, soil degradation, use of chemicals, loss of biodiversity, and more (Bell and Cerulli 2012). As an alternative, gardens can also be part of a broader concept called urban agriculture which confronts the accessibility and provision of food in and around cities while at the same time addressing some of these concerns. Community gardens decrease pollution by reducing carbon emissions because food is not being transported from far away. In addition less energy is being used for food packaging, refrigeration, and grocery store cooling, heating, and lighting. Gardens also decrease waste by utilizing strategies such as composting which uses kitchen scraps and yard waste in the garden rather than transporting this waste to landfills (Okvat and Zautra 2011). The community garden at University of Texas at Arlington is a crucial part of UTA's commitment to sustainability and is spearheaded by the UTA Sustainability

Department. Ferris et al. (2001), like UTA, believe community gardens can be utilized to implement and encourage not only sustainable practices but other issues under the umbrella of sustainability such as environmental justice and poverty. In their study, they recognize that community gardens “can be very positively linked to the implementation of Local Agenda 21 and sustainability policies” which address conditions of poverty and environmentally degraded environments experienced by the poor and disadvantaged (2001:567). Community gardens, therefore, can address very specific ways to be more sustainable and also encourage healthy eating and lifestyles by becoming closer to the actual production of one’s food.

#### Community Gardens and Anthropology

Ferris et al. (2001) believe in a broad definition of community gardens so that there is no imposition of “arbitrary limits on creative communal responses to local need” (2001:561). Through examples of ethnographic case studies and applied anthropological studies, I show how a community garden can serve a different purpose than the next and how each garden can also implement sustainable practices and aid in education. These case studies are all ethnographies, which make use of participant-observation, site visits, surveys, photographs, and formal and informal interviews and address topics such as community, civic agriculture, race, age, and the environment.

Ruth Landman (1993) gives us an early account of community gardens in the Washington D.C. area. Her work is about community, city life, and the efforts people make to connect the two, through community gardens. Her thesis is that a community

garden can succeed “because the social and the economic are embedded within each other and provide a texture that intertwines the actors in a rather dense web of relations” (1993:8). The text is formed by questions and answers gathered by an urban anthropology class and supplemented by interviews conducted by the author in 1989 in 11 community gardens. Along with describing the physical layout of each garden, members were asked why they joined the garden. Responses included: gardening is an extension of faith, keeps one in touch with nature, a chance for a newly married couple to spend time together, and as therapy for leaving one’s homeland (1993:105). Many gardeners also revealed that they enjoyed getting to know the other people in the garden. About half reported sharing produce with friends or interacting with other gardeners in some way and three-fourths believed the gardens built a sense of community (1993:109). The majority engages in friendships with other gardeners and belongs to the committee for the garden. Landman demonstrates how the community gardens facilitate production of food, community, and personal benefits within an urban lifestyle.

A second case study further examines the community, questioning how community gardens can build sociocultural capital for the sustainability of the entire community. Through an examination of gardens in Fargo, North Dakota and Moorehead, Michigan, Brown (2012) learns how each garden helps the community “lessen a particular social issue [because] civic actions help to make the Fargo-Moorehead [community] more sustainable through the social interactions these gardens have” (2012:56). For example, gardens help a large population of New American families gain access to fresh food and facilitate contact with their community neighbors; and they

provide healthier lifestyles to the overweight and obese by providing exercise and healthy food. This case study also demonstrates how these social interactions create sustainable communities through the presence of sociocultural capital. The community gardens are sites of bonding, bridging, and linking capital, which enable individuals to share knowledge within a space, which also has ties to the larger community.

Moore's (2005) study, which takes place from 1997 to 2000, examines class and race and the ineffectiveness of a community garden because of class bias. In a Black neighborhood of lower and middle-class residents, the community garden Rose Park in Philadelphia was built as part of a neighborhood beautification campaign. Though an improvement from the trashy vacant lot it once was, many lower-class residents are offended by the garden. It remains inaccessible and they do not see it as beneficial to or productive in the local community's construction of their identity. This garden, constructed by middle-class activists is, in fact, creating a greater sense of segregation and inequality within this neighborhood and preventing the possibility of a unified, multi-class black community and identity. This negative example of a community garden serves to point out that the garden can be vital to the identity of the community in which it is located and the reasons for its establishment must be understood and accepted by a majority if not all members.

Another example of a community garden which demonstrates particular challenges is Chung et al.'s (2005) study of a community garden in Michigan and its relationship to civic agriculture. They look to see if public space and public work is

evident in order to create civic agriculture. They define public space not as “a particular place; rather it describes a particular culture of working together” and that which makes public work possible (2005:100). Public work entails a diverse group of people working together for the good of many within a public space. The authors find that this particular garden is not a good example of civic agriculture because public work and public space were not present. Instead, many gardeners belonged to the garden in order to fulfill personal desires to grow their own food in attempt to grow organically or know the origin of their food. Gardeners reflect this finding stating: “I think the quality of food is what’s important to me and that’s why I garden with City Gardens” (2005:104). Another gardener said:

You know there’s a lot of potential for a sense of community in these types of gardens. I don’t think the potential is quite realized here. At least not for me... you can see some people when they come here, you can see they’re sort of interacting... They just come and get their stuff and they go and plant it and they weed it... Then they go home and they don’t stay around to talk or anything. (Chung et al. 2005:104).

In this particular garden, public work and public space are not being realized in order to achieve civic agriculture. Instead, people’s individual needs are being met by gardening and there is little interaction between the garden’s members.

On the other hand, Pena (2006) demonstrates how a community garden can be a successful and vital part of a group’s identity. In South Central Los Angeles, community

gardens serve Mexican migrants and native-born Chicana/os in preserving their tradition of home gardens as well as reinforcing their Mexican identity and empowerment through growing and making one's own choices about food. Pena uses autotopography which is "self-telling through place-shaping or place-making," to demonstrate the importance of these gardens to the families and individuals who belong, especially regarding the way gardens facilitate new communities being formed in new places (2006:4). Gardeners reveal that their gardens provide them with an opportunity to maintain their identity because they are able to plant the same foods and eat the same meals that they did in Mexico which reminds them of home (2006:8). In addition, growing their own food also provides them with fresh, safe, and locally grown food, often leading to healthier lives (2006:9). In this study, the gardens enable its members to not just grow food but serve as places of social life and communal wealth through the maintenance of the garden.

These case studies reflect the ability of ethnographic methods to capture a variety of the types of community gardens in the United States as well as their role in its members' lives and the greater community around them. Anthropologists have discovered that the presence of community gardens can strengthen as well as hurt the identity of a neighborhood or group of people. They can also facilitate sustainable communities by building sociocultural capital and allow people to contribute to a safer, cleaner environment. Gardens can also be sites where knowledge is shared and preserved and a healthy life is realized. I now show how applied anthropologists have become involved in community gardens and their significance to food security, our food system, and implementing practices such as sustainability and education.

## Community Gardens and Applied Anthropology

Because community gardens respond to a community's local needs, it is not surprising that anthropologists study these gardens under the rubric of applied anthropology. Applied anthropology can be viewed as "anthropology in use" (Van Willigen et al.:187) and demonstrates anthropologists' ability to adapt to the present by continually utilizing their skills as well as adapting those skills and speaking to an inclusive audience- those outside academia and outside anthropology. It is a way of doing anthropology that especially recognizes and utilizes anthropological knowledge, methods, and theory to "inform policy and to initiate action that alleviates some of the most pressing social, economic, health, and technological problems facing communities and organizations" (Kedia and van Willigen 2005:1). It is especially critical and useful in today's world because more and more anthropologists are obtaining jobs outside academia (Kedia and van Willigen 2005). Many community gardens have been built in direct response to certain social, economic, and health problems which some communities face. Applied anthropology can thus be utilized not only to study the benefits and effectiveness of gardens but also to implement and utilize gardens in certain communities which might benefit from them. While my research is not an example of applied anthropology, the following examples demonstrate how anthropology can utilize its multiple methods and different approaches to more fully understand the ways community gardens can be used.

Community gardens have been recognized as spaces which can help teach and carry out sustainable practices especially on school grounds. At the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a program called Project Green Leaf (PGL) helps anthropology students to hone their skills, learn about local food practices, and gain entry into the workforce. This program, through experiential learning, recognizes the importance of placing anthropologists within our food production and consumption system (Andreatta et al. 2004). Bartlett (2011) outlines how different campuses across the country are becoming more sustainable in their services especially regarding food. Community gardens specifically offer learning experiences that teach sustainable growing practices and awareness about growing seasons and local ecosystems. Some campuses even integrate experience and academics and a portion of the produce from these gardens is often donated to a local food bank or even used in the campus's dining service meals.

A unique study in a rural, middle-class town in Massachusetts not only uses anthropology to study school gardens but teaches 5<sup>th</sup> graders anthropological methods through their work in the garden (Sands et al. 2009). These gardens are part of the farm-to-school movement and are integrated into the school curriculum providing an educational opportunity to learn about food, gardening, farms, and food systems. The students use Photovoice method, which involves students taking photographs and then writing about the pictures they took. Students then selected a certain number of photographs for an exhibition which demonstrated what they grew and what they learned from participating in the garden. Students also participated in observation, analysis, focus groups, and peer interviewing to understand students' reactions to hands on learning

through their school garden. The students not only learn anthropological methods but the relationship between the soil and food and about local foodways and local economies. This project demonstrates the vast amount that can be taught through a school garden.

Thorp (2005) studies a school garden in a poor, urban elementary school in Michigan where over 60 percent of the children are eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch plan (2005:122). It is obvious this project is very dear to Thorp who quickly realizes the garden can not only provide an educational opportunity but an opportunity to feed hungry children through cooking the food grown in the garden. In addition to the vegetables and flowers grown, the garden also serves as a tool for the teachers to creatively develop lesson plans and use the garden to teach about other subjects. The garden becomes an important site in the lives of these poor and hungry children. It gives them a sense of ownership of something outside of school; it gives them a sense of “wonder” within a sometimes bleak urban environment; and it gives the students an opportunity for hands on learning in a time and place where, as the author says, children are “starved for experience” (2005:129).

Behrman (2011) shows the application of community-based research and service-learning (CBRSL) projects between academic and non-academic people to address real world problems such as food insecurity. The author and her undergraduate students worked with a Milton School fifth grade class in Akron, Ohio to study and implement a program in order to resolve the fact that kids were eating differently at school at the end of each month due to reduced food availability at home. At school, they would eat more,

eat more intently, and take more food to save and eat later (2011:83). They initiate a “PB&J” program to give kids free meals every Friday after school. Because of the success of this research and project, the author begins to study how a community garden could address the food quality of the students’ diets, though this project was only in the beginning stages at the time of the paper. This research stresses the importance and ability of anthropologists in community-based partnerships to not only use their research skills but to see “local knowledge as transformative” (2011:94). This specific CBRSL project demonstrates the ability to utilize anthropological knowledge and methods in conjunction with local community knowledge in order to confront and solve problems surrounding food and hunger.

These applied anthropological studies show how community gardens can be used as teaching tools as well as sites to implement sustainable practices. They also show how gardens can be significant across ages and class, providing both food and an opportunity to learn. In addition, these studies also show how applied anthropologists can work with a community in order to study and solve issues such as food insecurity.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### Planting Seeds

*The DUG committee was discussing a gardener who was frustrated because his plants were not growing as much as he would like. Susan said this man was trying really hard but sometimes, if your seeds don't come up, then plant some more. Then plant again. If those don't come up, then plant some transplants. You can't just give up.*

(Field notes 11.12.13, DUG)

*His plot was all dirt, pristine and smooth. He was on his knees, close to his plot. He punched a hole in the dirt with his fingers, not very deep, and then put a couple seeds in the hole then covered it in with dirt.*

(Field notes 10.2.13, UTA CG)

My methods of data collection are shaped by the method of participant-observation, unstructured and semi structured interviews, and visual documentation through photographs. I utilize interviews in order to more deeply understand individual member's meanings and their own understanding of the significance of the gardens and their participation.<sup>ii</sup>

This project gathers cultural data and thus uses nonprobability sampling, which does not attempt to infer results from the sample of people to the larger population.

Nonprobability sampling is adequate for this type of research because I conduct in-depth studies of two cases of community gardens and the point is not to be representative but to adequately describe the events and meanings within each specific garden as well as its participants. I use purposive sampling, seeking out my data and informants at the community level of community gardens; therefore, my sample represents patrons of two community gardens in North Texas. In addition, I seek out those in administrative positions in governmental or organizational entities, especially those within the Parks and Recreation department of the City of Arlington and within UTA as well as those involved in other community garden endeavors in North Texas.

#### Participant-Observation

Traditionally, anthropological field research has taken a year or more but today, due to time or monetary constraints or depending on the object of study, field research can take a few months, a few weeks, or even a few days (Bernard 2011). My research lasted seven months from July 2013 to March 2014. In this time I was able to gain entry and familiarity with both gardens, establish rapport, build friendships, learn how to garden, and successfully plant in my own plot. Luckily, the nature of my study and the friendliness and openness of the gardens and gardeners made it easy for me to join the community of gardeners whether I was observing, attending meetings, or gardening.

Participant-observation entails a continuous dualism of participating and observing. The researcher needs to be able to observe and yet participate in order to gain a deeper and personal understanding of what she is studying. I had no prior experience

gardening but the more I learned about gardening and at the point when I actually begun gardening my own plot, I felt better prepared to ask questions pertaining to participation and gardening which allowed me to more easily converse with others and facilitated inclusion in the gardens. This first-hand knowledge and experience also helped me to more deeply and viscerally understand the day to day activities of a gardener and encounter the inevitable struggles and benefits associated with the particular work. Because I obtained a plot and gardened and learned beside other gardeners, I had a heavy participatory component in my research, which enabled me to be reflexive and give a firsthand account of what a gardener experiences from planting her first seeds to harvesting food. I also was able to garden through different planting seasons, fall and spring, because of the length of my research, which allowed me to experience two different seasons and their accompanying weather and specific plants, which are planted for each season.

As a participant-observer I volunteered to help others garden, took part in general meetings and committee meetings as well as events hosted by the garden, and learned any vernacular and rules which were pertinent to my participation. My day to day activities consisted of visiting each community garden several times a week, observing and recording everyday interactions and informal conversations by making jottings and writing field notes. It was also crucial to record observations of the weather, the sounds, smells, and feel of the garden as I moved through it.

Initially, I attempted to team up with what I call a “garden partner.” At each garden, every plot was currently being gardened by a person or an organization and both gardens had a waiting list so I could not personally obtain a plot. I attempted to connect with one person at each garden who I asked to contact me whenever he would go out to the garden to plant, harvest, clean, or simply water. I made it clear that I was willing to help with whatever was needed and that I just wanted to learn about gardening, their garden routines, and day to-day care of their plot. I only went out four or five times to each garden with my “garden partner” at which point I was no longer contacted. Whether they did not go to their plot (one “garden partner” did not renew his plot), schedules conflicted, or life got too busy, this concept did not go past a few visits.

I felt frustration at not having a plot and that my “garden partner” idea was not successful especially since I was so eager to help and learn. Thus, I was forced to awkwardly and frequently hang out at the gardens, walking around, looking at the plots, and upon seeing someone, hope they would talk to me after I explained why I was wandering around the garden. It is true that fieldwork is the most awkward yet rewarding and eventually comfortable (and fun) part of one’s research. I have heard and read stories of anthropologists’ first field experiences but no one can relay and it is hard to comprehend until you have actually been through it. Then you say to yourself, “Boy, are the stories true,” and you can relate to some of the incidents and be reassured you will eventually become comfortable in this setting. I clearly felt stages of fieldwork while in the gardens, at the meetings, as well as in interviews. Stage one: complete confusion and entirely embarrassed. Since I never had a plot at UTA CG and at DUG at the beginning

of my research, I would go to the gardens and walk around or sit or take pictures. While I can be friendly, I do not have my mother's ability or *desire* to talk to anyone and everyone about anything and everything. Thus at the beginning, I felt like an intruder and was uncomfortable lurking around. I had to literally push myself through some kind of imaginary force field which was preventing me from approaching people. I just had to do it. I had to introduce myself a thousand times, tell people what I am studying, why I am approaching them, and be prepared for a vast array of facial expressions, responses, and questions. And even blank stares and completely uninterested reactions. Step two: I think I got this. This part is where I actually almost feel at home with the places and the people I am studying. I know my way around, I recognize a face or two or even three, I am comfortable approaching people, and I almost feel like I *should* be here. Step three: I made it, or what was all the fuss about? I cannot believe that I ever felt strange or uncomfortable in this setting and with these people. They are used to my presence, my questions; they are who I go to for help. When I have a question about composting or when a plant will be ready to harvest, and sometimes, they even ask *me* questions.

The experience of not having a plot and then having one affected my sense of belonging to the garden, knowing the garden, and accessing the garden. First, not having a plot at either garden and second, having one at DUG and not having one at UTA CG. I experienced two very different ways of being in and belonging to the garden as well as two very different ways of knowing the garden. The difference between not having a plot and having a plot will be discussed more thoroughly when I talk about learning to garden. The difference in having plot at DUG and not having one at UTA CG made my role as

participant-observer very allocated and severely felt at each garden. I was more an observer at UTA CG because I did not have a plot and more a participant at DUG because I was able to gain a plot at the garden about halfway through my study. Though I still felt very comfortable at UTA CG because I had spent a lot of time here and had gotten to know people even before my actual research started, I did feel more part of the community of DUG because I had a plot. I also became part of the board of DUG and served as their secretary.

### Field Notes

My participation observation was recorded in three formats: field notes, a diary, and a log, all of which were essential to forming a complete picture of my experiences and of each garden. I physically could not and did not want to take notes while gardening or at work days. Walking around with a notebook and pen would be awkward when trying to dig my hands in the dirt or when trying to connect a hose to the water faucet. I also did not want to draw too much attention to myself with these specific tools, foreign in a garden setting, when the usual tools are a shovel and hose. Especially when I went to UTA, even though I did not have a plot there, I did not want to seem closed off to the idea of helping, of using my hands to gather my field notes and in essence, to get to know a person through my hands by helping them with their garden. However, when I would have a good conversation or experience something awesome in the garden I felt anxious that I might forget details or some insight I might have had during that particular experience. Therefore I had to train myself to vividly remember feelings, sounds, and

more so that I could capture every detail when I got home to write. I did immediately go home and write my field notes after every visit to the garden or after every meeting so that I would not lose any detail. Sometimes, when I would get in my car to go home, I would first make some jottings of important details or I would record my thoughts and feelings on the audio recorder tool on my phone. I did write field notes during general and committee meetings; however when I became secretary for DUG, I was more focused on taking proper minutes than I was with taking field notes. I was able to observe how these groups of people interacted with each other, the important topics discussed, and the decisions made.

Even though my field notes are three in one: methodological, analytic, and descriptive, I needed another space wherein to write my personal feelings, frustrations, and questions, and “other emotions that make fieldwork difficult” (Bernard 2011:294). I kept a diary throughout this research and wrote in it usually when going over field notes or interviews or when I had a really good or bad experience at the garden. This diary was more sporadic and messy than my field notes but it allowed me to work out problems I was facing in the field and contextualize my experiences. Below are some excerpts from my diary.

Now that I have gone to meetings and a work day I feel a little better about approaching people and not as awkward around them. Most everyone I have talked to has seemed nice and most are interested in what I am doing. I hope I

hear from Finley about helping out with her plot (s). And I need to double check with Kelly about getting the gate and shed codes and using them.

Ever since I sent out the email to Cynthia with the link to the Facebook garden page there have been more people that have liked it. Yay!

It's awkward. It is so awkward for me to go up to random people who might wonder who I am.

It is getting darker earlier now, so there is not as much daylight to be at the garden and people can't be out that late there. Even though there is lighting at the Deep Ellum garden, Kelly said in the meeting she would not recommend being out there when it is dark out.

I feel more involved and invested at DUG because now I have a plot there. I wonder if I should actually serve on the committee—if that will put me at a disadvantage because my roles at the two gardens will be uneven.

I still feel UTA should be more involved in the garden somehow. Their “vision” still isn't coming to reality and the bulk of that responsibility and angst seems to be falling on the shoulders of the City of Arlington. Does this mean their “vision” is unrealistic? Or does the garden/city simply need to “weed out” (pun intended?) the bad seeds which are the people that prohibit the garden from becoming more communal? Those are the people who do not want to invest themselves in the community aspect of the garden by attending meetings and workdays and

donating 50% of their harvest, but instead simply use this space to garden for themselves.

What will the garden do in the interim if they cannot find an organization to take it over?

How will this organization and the community interact if/when they find an organization to sponsor it—will people from this organization only get to garden here or will it still be open to the UTA and Arlington communities?

I also kept a log, which kept track of money spent and my calendar of daily tasks, garden visits, meetings, and interviews. This log was important not only to ensure I spent enough time in the field and stayed on task, but it provided a larger picture of the commitment—monetary, time, and learning about how to garden—it takes to be involved in a community garden.

#### Informal and Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted informal and semi-structured interviews in order to dig deeper into the garden's members' attitudes and understanding of their participation. Informal interviews are the casual conversations one might encounter in the garden with a fellow gardener. People did not necessarily know I was asking questions for my research, and I might not have been. Instead, I might have been asking for help with my plants. In addition, these are conversations and not a question and answer session.

Semi-structured interviews were scheduled, recorded, one on one meetings with gardeners who were willing to talk with me. I also interviewed committee and council members and those people who represented the City of Arlington (George Smith and Kristina Camp) and the University (Molly Reese). In all, I interviewed 11 people. These interviews were important because they allowed me to get “‘inside’ the decision-making process” allowing me to examine different ways of knowing through lay and expert knowledge as well as how this knowledge flows or is transferred, specifically through the structure and people of a community garden (Liewbow in McDonald 2002:304).

I met the interviewee at a predetermined time and location and I used an interview guide to direct me through the interview and to help me remember important questions (See Appendix A). At the same time, these interviews were casual, friendly, and more like a nice conversation over coffee (and we did usually meet in a coffee house). For example, I met all the DUG gardeners at a local coffee shop in Deep Ellum because every person was familiar with the place. We began talking about how our plot was doing and what we were growing, which easily led me to my list of questions. At times, I did not even need to reference my questions because the flow of the conversations usually covered what I wanted to ask. I wrote down additional questions as they came to me based on what the interviewee said, for example if they mentioned a spouse or child, I would ask if their family was involved in the garden or if they mentioned a particular problem they experienced how this affected their experience of gardening, and let the interviewee talk as much or as little as he or she wanted.

Interestingly, I experienced a continuation of the flow of conversation after I finished all the questions I wanted to cover. One interview session lasted for thirty-eight minutes and another interview session lasted for an hour and forty-seven minutes. The interviews were stories of the gardeners' experience in the garden and so they were personal and enjoyable as well as insightful. These in-depth interviews are beneficial in order to discover the personal relationship and feelings people experience with the food they grow, consume, and donate; the relationship they form to the garden itself and the other gardeners; and how people's responses reflect the different characteristics and structure of the two community gardens. Gardeners from UTA CG were more likely to discuss issues they were concerned with and improving the garden. For example, UTA CG gardeners mentioned theft, the lack of a fence, and gardener involvement whereas DUG gardeners were more likely to mention the process of how they became involved in the garden, the Deep Ellum neighborhood, and the gardeners they knew or wanted to get to know. These responses reflected UTA CG's ongoing process of determining the best practices to improve and successfully manage the garden whereas DUG's responses reflected an interest in maintenance of the garden and its full integration into the Deep Ellum neighborhood.

### Coding

Corbin and Strauss (2008:65) recommend using "in vivo coding" which takes actual phrases that people use to name themes. I found this very helpful because I began to use these phrases myself and so understand them better in the context of a gardener's

explanation. I also used my own words and phrases when coding. I looked for repetitions, unusual terms, and common words used in unusual ways for example, amended; do your part; community; that's why it's called a *community* garden; compost tea; heirloom (Bernard 2011:430).

## Photographs

The use of photographs allowed me to capture the character of each community garden, those who participate, and the events that took place while also allowing me to reflect on my own investments in these ethnographic moments that I felt deserved visual recording. In addition, I used photographs to record the progress of my own garden plot as well as how the weather can affect the garden and its produce.

Photography, as a research method, is another way of observing and adds to a holistic presentation and understanding of the object of study (Collier and Collier 1986). The “mechanical support of field observation extends the possibilities of critical analysis, for the camera record contributes a control factor to visual observation” (1986:10). However, if used, the photograph needs to be privy to the same analysis and interpretation as the text, especially when it comes to issues of representation. Cuyper (1997-98) states that the photograph in ethnography has not held as much power as an ethnographic tool as the text or even film. The risk, here, is that “these representations, because they are created without an analysis of photography or its interpretation, can end up reinforcing the very ideas we seek to challenge” (1997-98:3). Therefore we need to make the photograph more relevant, not just “records and keepsakes” but part of the

research “constructed with conscious intent” (1997-98:3). If photographs are used in this analytic way, then we can produce “the possibility of sensory knowledge” (Edwards 2005:27) which creates more than a visual representation but a performance of oral history.

For example, one of my co-gardeners at UTA CG, Anne, described how critical timing can be when harvesting okra, each photograph reflects a certain season and a specific moment in time, which is crucial to the experience of the garden at any moment. The pictures below illustrate how time and the changing of seasons can affect the appearance of the garden and the quality of the plants. The first photo (Figure 2), taken the 1<sup>st</sup> of October at DUG, depicts a sunny, vibrant, growing plot.



Figure 2 1 October, DUG, Growing, green plot

The second photo (Figure 3), taken 4<sup>th</sup> of December at DUG, shows the effects of the cold, winter weather. Frost protectors, which help preserve plants in below freezing temperatures, can be seen covering some of the plots and one has been partially blown off

from the wind. From this photo, it is apparent that the plants are suffering from the colder temperatures, some of them wilted and dead.



Figure 3 4 December, DUG, Plots being protected from the cold

I arranged my photographs with the text as opposed to putting them in one place at the end of the text not just because it is frustrating flipping back and forth to refer to a photograph, but because I used the photographs in order to help me tell the story of the gardens. In this way, the reader sees what I saw as I am “walking through the garden” with them and they with me. I am very careful with the placement of each photograph, as I never interrupt a sentence or a complete thought with a photograph. Photographs not only add to the visual aspect of research but create a deeper analysis and a different dimension which contributes to a more holistic and meaningful research.

Participant-observation, “anthropology’s most famous oxymoron” can be awkward, reflecting “the uncertainty of an author who attempts to participate and observe a phenomenon at the same time” (Stoller 1986:155). It can also be rewarding. And as inevitable and necessary as it may be, the anthropologist still has a choice in her approach to participant-observation and the way she will consequently write. It is through these methods discussed above that I now turn to the heart of my thesis. In the following chapters I present an account, “fusing thought, action, and sentiment,” of two gardens, its gardeners, and their story of growth and community (Stoller 1986:154).

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CASE STUDIES OF TWO COMMUNITY GARDENS

#### Germination

*I'm at the point where I can put some plants in the ground, give them a little water, and they'll grow and some of them will survive [laughs]. I think it's more about the desire to than the ability. Because the ability just comes after time. You stick your thumb in the ground enough it will turn green [laughs].*

Jeff (personal interview, April 9, 2014, UTA CG)

The UTA CG and DUG were conceived and built around the same time. This timeline provides an opportunity to examine and compare how each community built and currently maintains its garden as well as how each garden deals with problems they encounter along the way. Both gardens and the people involved take a “learn as you go approach” and realize just how much time, effort, and continued work it takes to have a successful community garden. I first describe each garden and its location and follow with the history of each garden. I then discuss the characteristics of each garden as well as garden events such as meetings and workdays.

#### University of Texas at Arlington Community Garden: A Cooperative Feat

The City of Arlington is almost directly in between Fort Worth and Dallas. The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) is a public university with over 33,000 students and 180 degree programs. Because the garden is on UTA property, and therefore public,

there is no stipulation regarding who can or cannot obtain a plot. Though the majority of people live in Arlington, there are some gardeners who also live in Fort Worth or other surrounding areas.

UTA CG is on the far west side of campus, visible from the main road, however it is easy to miss if you are not purposefully looking for it. It is enclosed by the Sweet Center on one corner, a YWCA Day Care on another corner, an apartment building at its back, and a field to its side, south of the day care. It is accessible all around the gardens however it is most accessible via the parking lots which are on either side of the Sweet Center, one to the north and one to the east of the garden. There does not seem to be much traffic at this end of campus so noise from cars passing by is not loud but some days, the kids from the day care can be heard screaming and laughing. Walking from the north parking lot, you stand taller than the garden for a bit, then roll into the garden down a little slope. There is no fence so I easily transition from the cement of the parking lot to the garden floor covered in gritty sand and in other areas, with sticks and wood of various sizes which, if you are not wearing tennis shoes, will poke and cut at your feet. The beds are arranged in perfectly neat rows and each gardener's plot stands alone. From this angle, especially as you are bombarded by seemingly overgrown plots, I have to meander through and around the plots, stepping over some plants coming into the walkways or avoiding an aisle altogether because there is not way I could walk through it. I step into the middle of the garden and notice the tool shed (unlocked as of now) which stands in the south west corner under the shade of a tree and is a plain looking, sand color (Figure

4). Next to it are two blue compost bins which look like trash cans and north of those are three picnic tables underneath more trees.



Figure 4 UTA CG toolshed housing hoses and tools shared by the gardeners



Figure 5 A shaded picnic area for people to congregate

There is a wooden cover which houses a plexi-glass covered bulletin board and a picnic table (Figure 5). I walk around the garden, looking at various plots. The infamous lufas, which seem to grow easily and take over every plot in which they are planted, cascade over several beds' wooden boundaries and into the walkways. I bend down and touch one, expecting it to be hard like a zucchini but it is soft and gave a little. I was sure not to squeeze too hard the next couple pinches I gave it. I go on to another plot which has leafy sprouts coming out of the dirt. I see two placards, one that says "cauliflower" and is next to a leafy, green, and scalloped-leaf plant, and then one that says "broccoli" next to a more smooth leafed plant. I walk to the end of the plot and notice a root of some sort laying on the surface of the dirt. I pick it up, wipe the dirt off it and peeled off some

of the outer layers. It looks like a garlic clove but with shoots coming further off it, and then, breaking into the outer layer and actually into the plant, I put it to my nose and smell it. It smells of chives. It was such a crisp, refreshing smell. And I honestly do not know if it was because I was outside, because I just picked it from the dirt, or what, but it smelled extremely fresh and clean and uniquely onion-y. I walk around more and I am amazed that some of the plants are as tall as me, if not taller, reaching more than five feet tall, and that I do not even have to look down at the beds if I want to see what is growing. If I am surrounded by these tall plants on either side, I suddenly feel enclosed; like I am in a jungle (Figure 6).



Figure 6 A jungle in the garden

The feeling is oddly strange and pleasant at the same time, unfamiliar and yet comforting. If I am the only one at the garden, it has an especially serene and calming effect like I have discovered a secret garden. Until a bee whizzes by my ear and I feel its vibrating little body hover and dance for a second then fly on and my adrenaline spikes and my heart pounds. Walking around the garden, it feels like going through a tangled and endless labyrinth where the plots seem to keep popping up and there is a plant you have not seen yet at every turn (Figure 7).



Figure 7 Growing to the sky

Walking from the east, the garden is laid out before me, almost all of it easily seen in once glance because there are no huge plants to block my view and there is a wide walkway perpendicular to me which allows for a break in the amount of greenery and growth. A wooden sign telling me this is the UTA garden almost blends in with the woody, brown garden floor and the other sandy colors of the cement and grass surrounding it (Figure 8).



Figure 8 Garden sign for UTA CG

I look straight ahead and see the tool shed at the back and to the right, the benches, creating an imaginary border to the garden.

## UTA CG History

In May 2009 Arlington Life Shelter approached the City of Arlington because they wanted to identify property close to their location to start a community garden. The city made inquiries about available land that was also close enough to the shelter but none was available. In 2010, Captain Andy Miller with the Arlington Salvation Army inquired about some land directly north of their location to develop a community garden. But this idea was rejected by the city manager's office as that land was being held for future commercial development.

With continued community interests on the radar, Kevin Fife, vice president for administration operations at UTA was contacted. Hall disclosed that a community garden "has been on our list of sustainability projects" so he put the city in contact with Reese, the Director of the Office of Sustainability. The city and UTA met and looked over three land parcels, finally deciding on the garden's current location at 406 Summit Avenue (<http://www.uta.edu/sustainability/news/>).

At the time, in early 2010, the city reached out to the two organizations who had expressed interest in building their own community garden, Arlington Life Shelter and Salvation Army, to see if they wanted to partner with the garden or be involved in some aspect. Neither organization came to any meetings the city hosted or expressed any interest in the project: "They went silent," said Smith (personal interview, September 23, 2013).

The City and UTA moved forward with their plans for the community garden. In September 2010, the staff reached out to Katherine Hall, an employee with the City of Coppell, who helped start two successful community gardens, the first one started circa 1998. The UTA CG is modeled after these gardens; their plot size is similar as well as their design and the city pays for water as does the City of Arlington.

In late 2010, there were several public meetings to discuss the garden project. The city reached out through their website, had a general press release, and contacted specific organization such as the Conservation Council and the Arlington Woman's Club. There were good turnouts and participation at these meetings as questions were already being asked about organic versus the use of chemicals, security, and putting up a fence. However, with the seeming interest, Smith observed that: "even then we began to notice that there was kinda an abundance of ideas and absence of leadership within the group itself" (personal interview, September 23, 2013). People were not really coming forward to lead or express an interest in how the garden was going to be run and by whom, which would foretell many of their future problems.

In March 2011 the city and Arlington community members came together to build the garden. There was a "call for help" that brought out mostly community members who showed up and helped build the gardens plots. Smith later pointed out that, "we have effectively built a garden without clarity in terms of who is going to manage it" (personal interview, September 23, 2013). Hall commented that because there was no clear leadership from the beginning and the city ultimately had to claim responsibility for the

garden, the city will have to assume its oversight for the foreseeable future or until the garden fails, if that should happen (personal interview, September 23, 2013).

Hall's experience in Coppell differed greatly from UTA CG because members of the community of Coppell approached the city with interest for a community garden, whereas in Arlington, the city and the university proposed the idea to the community. From the very beginning, Coppell's community gardens established a committee where officers serve 6-month terms and are responsible for orderliness of the garden, clean-up days, contacting people, and maintaining newsletters and websites. Hall's role is minimal and the gardeners themselves sustain the garden.

Smith explained that "UTA is a very passive partner" (personal interview, September 23, 2013). The University provides limited support such as emptying the trash cans which are on site, and they contribute soil through a composting center which is run by a UTA employee, Brandon, who also has a plot at the gardens. The University also provided food and refreshments during the construction of the garden and allow use of the Sweet Center for restroom access and garden meetings. This building houses the Veterans Assistance Center but is conveniently located right next to the gardens. From the beginning, UTA has maintained its focus on environmental sustainability without getting into daily garden operations. The agreement with the University is that the City will care for and maintain the garden.

UTA did not put any money into the garden. Though they are providing the land and they offered architectural services for the pavilion, the City of Arlington obtained

authority to use \$50,000 towards the garden. The budget has a couple thousand dollars left and the funds collected currently from plot fees and donations are in a separate account and will be used for future garden needs, for example when new beds need to be repaired or rebuilt. One of the main goals for the city today involves relieving the city of some of the day to day operations and establishing a group of gardeners to be responsible for the garden, taking care of responsibilities such as an annual calendar, work days, how to enforce rules and discipline rule breakers, and maintain contact with the gardeners.

#### Deep Ellum Urban Garden: A Garden in the City

Dallas is the third largest city in Texas. Though the garden is located in Dallas it claims an even more specific home: the neighborhood of Deep Ellum. This neighborhood is east of Downtown Dallas and is known for its bars, restaurants, and artsy atmosphere. It is a very close and supportive community. While I was standing in line at a coffee shop, I overheard the man in front of me and the woman taking his order discussing the location of a new building about to open in Deep Ellum. A woman sitting down with her coffee jumped in the conversation, knowing exactly what the man was talking about, and tried to help him explain to the woman where the building was. Another woman in line behind me also entered the conversation, aware of this new building and its location. The woman in line described the location “next to where Dave parks his truck.” The other two people agreed to this statement and the woman behind the counter immediately knew the location they were describing based on the knowledge of where Dave parks his truck. This story serves as an example of how involved and tight the community of Deep Ellum

is. Not only are people aware of new things happening in their neighborhood, they are also helpful, friendly (willing to talk to strangers), and they know mutual people even if they do not know each other. The garden is an extension of the Deep Ellum neighborhood from its gardeners to its creativity and artwork but especially in its pride in being identified as the Deep Ellum Urban Gardens.

DUG is located on a median surrounded by streets on all sides and a highway overhead. It is located in the neighborhood of Deep Ellum in Dallas and less than a mile away from downtown (Figure 9). Driving to the garden, whether coming from the west and going through downtown or coming from the north and going through Deep Ellum, there are always people out whether they are walking their dog, walking in groups, or walking back from a restaurant, riding their bike, or jogging. The actual garden is surrounded by a chain link fence with two gates which remain locked. Also on the median, outside the fence, are several shade trees, benches in the form of tree stumps, and artwork painted on rocks and the bridges and overpasses. It is across the street from a dog park and within walking distance to the main street of Deep Ellum.



Figure 9 Garden median

There are 124 plots, one large community plot, two pollination gardens outside the fence, and several individual small pots as well as trees throughout the garden. I always park in a gravel lot across from the garden, which is the property of a warehouse but they have given gardeners permission to park there. If you park here, you have to cross a street, which has a sharp corner so you have to be careful of cars racing around the corner and all of a sudden are right next to you. Across the street, I come up to the gate, passing one of the butterfly gardens that runs along the outside of the fence which is usually covered by vines, making it impervious. But in the winter, the chain link fence looks unusually bare and cold. I pick up the gold, heavy lock in my hand and twist it awkwardly so I can see the numbers on the bottom. I turn each number to reach the

correct combination, the numbers satisfyingly clicking with each turn, and I look up aware of the rushing cars or honking semi-trucks just up above me roaring past on the highway and, sometimes, idle due to a traffic jam (Figure 10).



Figure 10 A garden under the highway

I enter the gate, shut it, and hang the lock on the fence. Suddenly, everything goes quiet. I do not even realize I cannot hear the traffic overhead or I am so distracted by what is in front of me I do not think about the noise. The beds are arranged in neat, orderly lines which are named A through K and each line has a “line leader” who gardeners can go to for questions. Unlike UTA CG, these lines of beds have several individual plots in each line so different gardeners’ beds are closely connected at the border (Figure 11). Thus,

you can see the unique arrangement and assortment of plants that that individual picked out for his or her plot. Some plots are even decorated with a garden gnome, a wrought-iron sun, or other cute ornaments demonstrating how the gardener put his or her touch on the plot (Figure 12; Figure 13).



Figure 11 Green in the city



Figure 12 Gnome couple in a gardener's plot



Figure 13 Gardener's plot in a line of beds

Some plots are sparse or look like the plants are in need of some water or nutrients while other plots are teeming with lush, brightly colored, and healthy looking plants. As I walk by, I usually run my hands over the plants or feel individual leaves, amazed that I can see Romaine lettuce—they look so good!—little, tiny tomatoes and

peppers gently hanging on branches, or big yellow squash bathing in the sun. The rows of beds acts like a maze and I weave in and out and in between the lines. The freshly laid mulch makes me feel like I am on a boat, rocking back and forth, my left foot then my right, as I feel the give and take beneath me. At the north end of the garden, by the other gate, are two benches sitting underneath a wooden trellised covering and to the right, a cute tool shed with a locked door and a bright blue garage door. To the right of the tool shed is the compost section which has three heaps of compost in a wooden structure and blue tubs which are the “super composters” (Figure 14).



Figure 14 DUG compost piles showing three different stages of decomposition

Walking to the north entrance of the gardens, I am hidden under the crisscrossing highways overhead. It is cool, dark, and the sound of the cars overhead is muffled. Then when I reach the median, I burst out of the darkness into the piercingly bright sun if it is sunny, or into a different cover of dark greyness if it is cloudy, or into fresh, whipping gusts if it is windy. The grass, trees, and bright artwork greet you like a foyer does in a house (Figure 15).



Figure 15 Artwork in the DUG garden

The big, colorful mural for the garden is like a proud family portrait (Figure 16).



Figure 16 Front door to the DUG garden showing a mural by a local artist created specifically for the garden

I swing the gate open, my eyes stunned by the blue color trim around the reflecting window panes of the tool shed. I look away to the right and my eyes feel shaded by the wooden trellis covering the two benches which look so inviting to sit down in for a while listening to the cling clang of the wind chime (Figure 17).



Figure 17 Shaded area at DUG to relax and view the garden

### DUG History

The idea for DUG began in 2009 with the Deep Ellum Community Association (DECA), an organization responsible for many arts and music events as well as raising awareness and spreading love for the Deep Ellum area, community, and history. They were interested in a sustainable and green project so they reached out to the neighborhood of Deep Ellum to see who would be interested in starting a community garden. Though about 60 people showed up to a meeting, the project did not get enough support or impetus to continue. The idea was revisited after fifteen 3x8 mural garden planters, or mini-gardens, were built throughout the neighborhood. These mural planters provided an

incentive to find a different space to “do some more green things” and provide the people of the neighborhood, who do not have a lot of porch space if any, a place and possibility to have their own food. But finding a piece of property within the neighborhood proved difficult. After inquiring about some property within the dog park located in Deep Ellum, the City of Dallas approached DECA and instead offered them a piece of land on a median which already had water and electricity on it. With this piece of land, the idea of a community garden became a reality and the Deep Ellum Urban Gardens Committee was founded and they immediately began to raise money. The median is actually owned by TXDOT and being leased to the City of Dallas. The DUG committee thus had to get permission from TXDOT which involved bringing in a senator to make sure the garden would not be competing with the Dallas Farmers Market (which is less than a mile away). The committee then established a MOWmentum agreement with the city, which means as long as the property is cared for, or mowed, then the property can be used for the garden.

Susan Lewis, the project leader who has been involved with volunteering in Deep Ellum for several years, volunteered to lead the project: “It was one of those things where I raised my hand and I really had no clue what it was about to entail,” she remarks (personal interview, September 27, 2013). But she had a lot of support from the garden board and they learned as they went what it took to start and build a community garden. They established subcommittees: a design committee, a grow committee, fundraising, and a PR committee so that people were able to pick the area they wanted to be a part of and contribute their expertise. The board created a business plan and together they drafted the rules, making sure each subcommittee had a chance to include any pertinent

information related to their area. Luckily there was a lawyer on the board who helped with legal aspects, wording, and protecting the garden's interests. Just like UTA CG had, DUG contacted Katherine Hall, who happens to be the mother of one of their gardeners, and looked at the Coppell gardens as an example. "She wouldn't like me to say this but she's a guru for most of us that do it" Susan comments about Katherine: "She [started community gardens] when nobody else did it" (personal interview, September 27, 2013).

As I found out later, each garden contacted the same person, Katherine Hall with the City of Coppell, for guidance and help in starting their community garden. Katherine is viewed as an expert on community gardens and the gardens which she helped start are perceived as successful. Since 2008 Katherine has been approached by over 200 groups about starting community gardens. She realizes the importance of sharing her knowledge and experience, conducting workshops and providing others with the means to start their own gardens. She says, "The community gardens that were started then became resources for others. Like a drop in the bucket, it just keeps expanding" (e-mail to author, February 6, 2014).

Though fundraising can be a nightmare and a lot of work, the neighborhood of Deep Ellum demonstrated how generous and helpful they are when the garden began to gather funds and equipment. Almost \$30,000 was raised for the garden. Most of the money came from individuals and also included a \$4500 grant from the Deep Ellum Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and, in order to allow downtown Dallas residents the chance to obtain a plot, Downtown Dallas Incorporated gave \$10,000. When it came time to

build, the DUG committee advertised for help through DECA, Deep Ellum Texas, and by word of mouth “because the neighborhood is very tight knit” (personal interview, September 27, 2013). Several garden board members and people who donated to the garden were not gardeners or initially had no interest in gardening but have a plot now. A generous donation of \$2000 was dropped off; a security system was donated by a Deep Ellum resident; and a board member who owns a construction company was able to use his equipment as well as demolished building parts to help build the garden. These efforts demonstrate how a neighborhood, even non-gardeners, worked together to transform their idea for community and sustainably growing food into a reality, a very different process from UTA CG.

Today the garden’s budget is maintained through their annual plot fees of \$75 per 4x4 plot or \$150 per 4x8 plot. While Susan knows this is almost double what other community gardens charge, because of this fee, the garden does not have to worry about continually raising funds or relying on donations to survive. And she is not worried that this price will drive others away: “[if] people say that’s too much then there’s ten people behind you that will take it” because “when you’re in an urban space... that’s prime real estate” (personal interview, September 27, 2013), indicating that DUG gardeners are not lower class because they can afford a higher plot fee than what most community gardens charge. The size of the plots is also small compared to other community gardens. The “most they’re gonna get as individuals is a 4x8. That’s not a lot” so gardeners are encouraged to be creative with their space utilizing trellises, running over and along the sides (personal interview, September 27, 2013). But “we’re trying to make it worth their

\$75 by giving them things that are above and beyond the average community garden” for example, a shed which houses tools and hoses, several sitting areas, shade trees, compost, pollination gardens to bring bees in, not to mention free artwork which is painted on the stones and bridges and overpasses surrounding the garden (personal interview, September 27, 2013).

There is also a large 16x24 community plot that all gardeners can plant in as well as take from. For example, someone does not have to grow a specific herb in their plot if there is some already growing in the community plot. The garden’s current goals today are upkeep and maintenance. There is an upcoming workday to build a rain catch system for the garden and there are thoughts about putting in a greenhouse on the north side of the garden. DUG has obtained a second plot of land with the same MOWmentum agreement with the City of Dallas. This land will hopefully be used for “Phase Two” which will put a second community garden in the neighborhood about a half a mile from the current community garden.

#### Characteristics, Workdays, Meetings, and Current Issues

Now that I provided a description and the history of both gardens, I will describe the characteristics of each garden. Then, I will focus on a more detailed account of how each garden is managed. These accounts describe events such as workdays; meetings both general and executive; current issues; and a typical day at the garden exemplified by an encounter from my field notes. This section will allow the reader to see more minutely the differences in organization, structure, and characteristics of the gardens.

Table 1 gives a quick comparison of the amenities of each community garden. Clearly the two gardens share many similar characteristics. The most important differences are plot size, number of gardeners, security, websites, and the mission statement. Because DUG is located on a smaller piece of land than UTA CG, their plot sizes are smaller. The smaller plot size allows them to have a greater number of gardeners, as well as a fluctuating total number (since gardeners can choose from two different sizes of plot), than the set 78 gardeners at UTA CG. DUG also has security cameras at several places around the garden and a locked fence. UTA CG has no fence but they recently put a lock on the toolshed to prevent theft. DUG has one website (<http://deepellumtexas.com/community/projects/deep-ellum-urban-gardens/>) and a clear and visible mission statement. UTA CG has two websites through the City of Arlington (<http://keeparlingtonbeautiful.com/community-garden/>; <http://naturallyfun.org/parks/272/272>) and is briefly mentioned on UTA's Campus Sustainability News page (<http://naturallyfun.org/parks/272/272>). UTA CG has no clear mission statement. These differences are significant and discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Table 1 Side by side garden comparison

Amenity	UTA CG	DUG
Website	✓ (multiple)	✓
Sponsors	City of Arlington; UTA	DECA; DUG
Board/Council	✓	✓
Rules/regulations	✓	✓
Contract required	✓	✓
Cost	\$35	\$75
Number of plots	78	124
Plot size	4x16	4x4; 4x8
Number of plot owners	77	150
Waiting list	✓	✓
Organic garden	✓	✓
Tool shed w/tools, hoses, etc.	✓	✓
Raised beds	✓	✓
Compost available	✓	✓
Rain catch system	✓	(in progress)
Water provided	✓ (paid for by city)	✓ (paid for by garden)
Electricity provided		✓
Wi-Fi provided		✓
Fenced		✓
Security Cameras		✓
Bulletin board	✓	
Trash cans	✓	✓
Benches	✓	✓
Parking lot	✓	(small lot adjacent to garden; given permission to use)
Mission statement	No particular, clear mission statement	GROW—food, health, knowledge, beauty, community

Both gardens have workdays, designated days in which all gardeners are encouraged to come to work in the garden in order to accomplish a specific task. This task could be cleaning up, getting rid of the pesky Bermuda grass which plagues both

gardens, or it could be clearing out plots to prepare them for the next planting season. A workday could also entail reconstructing garden beds, building rain catch barrels, sanding new benches, or spreading new mulch. DUG and UTA CG also have general meetings, for all the gardeners, and executive meetings, the Garden Council for UTA CG and the Committee for DUG, the ruling bodies for each garden. UTA CG Garden Council and DUG Committee make important decisions regarding the garden, field questions from gardeners, schedule workdays, general meetings, and other events, and enforce rules and regulations.

#### UTA CG

UTA CG workdays are usually scheduled to coincide with general meetings which are followed by a potluck. The workdays also are scheduled so the garden has access to UTA student volunteers. These volunteers are essential for this garden because workdays are not mandatory therefore a lot of the gardeners do not show up. A workday in August started out early one Saturday morning before it became too hot. The day's tasks were to clear walkways and plots from weeds and to spread mulch, which would help prevent further weeds from returning. Dead or overgrowing plants also needed to be removed to prepare for the fall season. There was a big group of UTA students who were helping out and how they helped! Their numbers were a big assistance to the garden seeing as not many gardeners themselves showed up (Field notes 8.24.13). About 15 gardeners showed up over the course of the three hours we worked, some tending to their own plots and not helping with the communal activities such as spreading mulch.

For a workday to be successful, it is essential for enough gardeners to show up for the task at hand and to work together to accomplish that task. We pulled weeds, dead plants, which we put in bins to be composted; we dug up more grass, and tilled some soil. Others transported compost and mulch. The humidity and heat increased throughout the morning and I was working up a sweat in no time (Field notes 8.24.13). A workday is not easy, you are there to work, and UTA CG benefited greatly from the UTA student volunteers who did an amazing job. These volunteers were part of a student organization at UTA. The garden has coordinated with UTA to have students come out specifically for garden work days for the past two years and plans on working with these students in the future. Those who came out that day got to know each other a little by working alongside each other. We also talked to some of the gardeners who were there about their plots and what they were planting. It felt good to be out there helping them (Field notes 8.24.13), even if, like the UTA volunteers, I did not have a plot. The gardeners were very thankful for the help and the garden was successfully weeded and given a fresh layer of mulch.

General meetings are usually accompanied by a potluck, people bringing homemade items or store bought items. Sometimes there is a reused cardboard box overflowing with produce that someone has recently picked and wants to give away. People settle into the SWEET center, grab a plate of food, and bring it into the main room which has several rows of tables facing the same direction where Smith and Camp usually stand and start the meeting. Those who worked for the workday were thankful for the cool air conditioning. While people eat they talk to each other and though I am not a gardener, I feel included and welcome. And, of course, I brought some food to contribute

to the selection. As the meeting gets underway, everyone stands up and introduces themselves. I have my description of who I am and what I am trying to accomplish through my research down as I have told it over and over. At one meeting, after I introduce myself as a UTA graduate Anthropology student studying community gardens, one man says, “Well can you help us make our garden better” (Field notes 8.24.13)? Everyone laughs but I realize that the people here view their garden as a project in trouble and are aware that it can improve. This realization weighs heavily on me as I think to myself, “I wish I could tell you how to have a wonderful, perfect community garden.” But the fact that there are people at this meeting who are concerned about the future of the garden and will discuss its issues is a hopeful sign.

The general meetings discuss important issues that Smith or Camp put forth as well as issues the gardeners mention. Almost every person talks, bringing up a specific idea or concern, or they give their opinion, for example, on what to do about theft of produce or tools from the tool shed suggesting informational signs and a lock. Gardeners are also concerned that some people are not reporting their produce donations to Mission Arlington or not donating at all, which is part of the garden contract. Others are concerned about the appearance of some plots noticing a lot of dead plants or that produce is not getting harvested, leaving it to rot and waste. These meetings demonstrate there are serious issues at stake and that maintaining and running a community garden is no easy task. There are a lot of different opinions and many people simply do not agree with one another, for example, if people should be allowed to use large trellises or have produce growing out side of a plot. A woman stands up to talk, maybe because she is

shorter and wants to be heard clearly, offering advice about pests in the garden. She says that she had a problem with ants but put corn muffin mix on them and the ants went away. An older man chuckles and jokingly asks, “Did you grow corn muffins” (Field notes 8.24.13)? Any tension from a disagreement is often interrupted by a joke similar to this in which everyone laughs and moves on.

Though Smith and Camp always wanted a council in which garden leaders would make decisions for the garden and enforce rules, there was never a consistent, committed group of people who met regularly to discuss the garden. It was not until 2013, two years after the garden was built, that a group of gardeners was established who seemed dedicated to discussing, improving, and making decisions for the garden. The council meets once a month at the City of Arlington’s Parks and Recreation offices to discuss pertinent issues and make decisions, for example, about the wording of signs to deter theft of produce, how to ensure people donate the required amount, or create the calendar of events. The council meets after office hours so the building is empty and quiet. There is a president, Brandon, and a secretary, Julia. Brandon hands out a list of topics to discuss and one by one, the council, as well as Smith and Camp, talk through the list and determine what course of action to take. Some topics are quickly discussed, everyone agreeing, for example about whether to put a lock on the tool shed. Other topics, like whether or not to implement a three strike rule if a gardener does not comply with the rules, take more time to discuss, evident by the variety of opinions (Field notes 11.14.13).

There are usually between seven and eight people who attend these meetings plus Smith and Camp. However more people began attending recent meetings as new gardeners became interested in joining the council. Any gardener can be on the council and serve as long as they wish. There are no elections and Brandon and Julia volunteered for the positions of President and Secretary. During these meetings everyone is comfortable stating their opinion and the council comes to an agreement or decision when there is a general consensus based on the conversation. At times, conversation surrounding people's experiences of growing a certain vegetable or a question about what to plant eclipse meeting related business, but the council always returns to the meeting's agenda.

Over the months there was a gradual transition of leadership from Smith and Camp to the gardeners themselves, culminating in the final meeting I attended which neither Smith nor Camp were present, or as Brandon jokingly said, "We have no adult supervision" (Field notes 1.9.14). The gardeners successfully managed the meeting. This transition was crucial for the garden. The City of Arlington was handing over a majority of responsibility to the gardeners themselves.

However the UTA CG is a unique case. Even though the gardeners are now in charge of the majority of the garden, because the garden is still a joint project between UTA and the City of Arlington there are stakeholders involved other than the gardeners who need to be included in the discussion before certain action is taken. For example, the council wants a fence to be put up around the garden to protect their produce and tools

from thieves. However, per the original agreement with UTA, UTA will not allow a fence. The mandatory donation is also causing problems, specifically with the logistics of harvesting and ensuring the local shelter gets this produce. As of now, the gardeners are responsible for weighing and taking their produce to a local shelter which some complain is inconvenient. However, leaving the produce to be collected or having someone come harvest also is problematic. Another difficulty is determining how much and when to give. If two tomatoes are ready to be harvested, “do you really want me to give [the shelter] *one* tomato?” asked one councilwoman (Field notes 1.9.14). These two issues demonstrate the uncertainty and difficulty when three individual entities, the gardeners, the City of Arlington, and UTA, are involved with the garden. Because all have a stake in the garden and all have a say, the three groups must work together to ensure each is heard but most importantly that the garden benefits.

The main concerns for the garden are leadership, having the gardeners become more involved with the decision-making process and day to day maintenance of the garden, and participation, building community within the garden, ensuring that everyone contributes to and cares for the garden. The council is a big step forward in addressing these problems. Already they have taken initiative in addressing and resolving problems the gardeners have observed and experienced. There is a lock for the tool shed and signs throughout the garden which tell passers-by to enjoy the garden but please, do not take any produce. As mentioned, the fence and donation aspects will have to be discussed with the City of Arlington as well as UTA so the council knows what the options are and how to proceed.

There were days, even several days in a row, when I would go to the garden and I would see no one. I would go in the morning, at lunch time, in the early evening, and at night and there would be no gardeners, only the plots, going unnoticed and unattended. On other days, however, there would be one or two people and sometimes several. Days when no one was at the gardens, the gardens were peaceful and undisturbed. Days when there were one or more people at the garden, I had a chance to interact not only with the plants but with other gardeners, getting to know one another and learning from them.

One evening I met Peter, a tall, deceptively young looking man from Africa. He was standing in the plot where it looks like there's a bunch of weeds (there's two of them side by side) and I went up to him, told him who I was and asked if these were his plots. He was in among the "weed" looking plants and was picking off leaves from the stems. He told me they were spider flowers. He said he was from Kenya. And then he said, "Isn't it obvious?" He had an accent and was kind of hard to understand but he could speak English well. He wasn't from UTA or didn't go there but just was part of the Arlington community and he said he grew the plants for others also from his native country. He said he was in his 50s and I could not believe this and told him you're joking. He was very easy to talk to and so we had a good conversation going and I felt like I could be myself and even joke around with him.

He was the only one out there at the time and so we talked for a while. Peter asked me if I wanted to pick some and I said yes. We had to bend over a bit to pick the leaves and my back was aching a little. Peter joked that he was getting too old for this

and I said I have even started to feel aches and creaks at 26 and he laughed. We were filling up a plastic grocery sack and it seemed like the leaves were never ending. It was like the more you picked them off the stems, a hundred more grew back in its place. He got the seeds from an African store and said you couldn't find them at a Wal-Mart or any regular store. These plants, which are an heirloom variety, were all over the plots and were the only plant in the plots. He was very talkative and easy to converse with. He asked me so many questions: where I lived, where I was from, do I have a boyfriend, do I have kids, do I smoke. And I told him I don't smoke anymore and he said smoking is very bad for you. He asked me if I had ever been to Africa and when I said no he told me I should and asked when I would go. He said plane tickets are not that expensive, around \$1000 and I was thinking, well, that is expensive for me.

A woman came up with a little boy and they started talking to each other. She got right in and started picking off some leaves. I wasn't sure if she knew English because I just heard her speak to him but then she started talking to me and asking me questions. The man, Peter, introduced us and her name was Rose. I think the boy's name was Cameron but he didn't introduce us. The boy found a plastic ball in the garden and started playing with the ball and became preoccupied. Peter did try to get him to pick some leaves off. At this point I had been picking for a while when Rose came up. The boy seemed a little wary about picking them and I said, "If I can do it, you can do it," and that I was new at it.

The leaves were interesting because they were everywhere along the stems and some of the stems were kind of hairy (Figure 18).



Figure 18 Spindly, hairy leaves of the African Spider flower

After you picked some off, you noticed your hands getting sticky and it was like there was some sort of sap on them. At the end of some of the stems, very tall at that, were these flowers or some sort of blossom and they were white but they looked like a firework exploding because they were just little white points spread out. And some other stems had these green bean looking pods and that's where the seeds were. Peter had told me earlier he was going to pull up the plants and plant more of the spider flower but Rose told him to just leave these because it would be too late to plant another one and that it

would get cold before they actually came up. They smelled really good (Field notes 10.2.13). Peter's work in the garden reflects Pena's (2006) description of how community gardens can be used to strengthen ethnic identity. Peter grows an heirloom plant from his native country and with which he is familiar, telling me who and when people would eat it. He also works alongside people from his African community as well as shares what he harvests, solidifying their African identity and bringing them together through this particular plant.

## DUG

General meetings take place at the garden. People are either walking around or standing talking to each other or getting some work done in their plot before the meeting starts. Kids are running around chasing each other or helping their parents water. In an attempt to appear more like a brunch or friendly get together than a meeting, there is always coffee and some food to enjoy. There is plenty of time to get to know one another before Susan starts the meeting. However the later it gets the hotter it is and when Susan starts the meeting people reluctantly move into the sun closer to her while others refuse to move out from the shade of a tree.

Susan discusses important issues and I learned so much about gardening and how the garden runs in the few minutes she talked. She explained that large plants need to be cut to at least 6 inches before they are put in the compost bins or they will not break down into compost. She explained there was currently a mice problem however you could take a cotton ball and dip it in peppermint oil and place one at the corner of each

plot and this would rid a plot of mice. Susan also talked about the benefits of square foot gardening and handed out a vegetable growing fact sheet. Square foot gardening utilizes the maximum amount of space in a plot by planting a different plant in each square foot. There were a few questions from the gardeners and when Susan finished the meeting, people were able to talk more amongst themselves or return to their plots to finish working.

Workdays are mandatory ensuring that there are as many gardeners working as possible and to facilitate meeting new people and working alongside each other for a common goal. One workday, the goal was to put down cardboard, covering the entire ground of the garden, and spread a thick layer of mulch. This work would help control the Bermuda grass which was plaguing the garden. There were quite a few people out already, hard at work, and luckily it wasn't raining. The fenced in large group of people looked kind of strange amidst the bustling highway above and the deserted streets below on a Saturday morning (Field notes 10.5.13). Everyone worked together to lay down cardboard, sometimes having to cut it up and strategically make it fit together around the beds. The pollination gardens outside the fences were also weeded and dead plants dug up. People with wheelbarrows and shovels were everywhere placing the mulch down over the cardboard in the pollination beds. People talked to each other as they worked, getting to know each other personally, what they were going to plant in their plots, and one woman talking to two new gardeners about each plant as they pulled it up. *It was a successful day.* I was exhausted. We really did need all those people because just in those few hours we were able to get the entire garden covered and mulched. We accomplished

what we needed to and it was fun seeing all those people come together to work for their garden to address a problem, Bermuda grass, and make it look so great (Field notes 10.5.13).

DUG also arranged events, like the fall potluck, to enjoy eating in the garden, whether it is food picked from someone's plot or food bought, and visiting with other gardeners. The obvious theme is food and while creating a dish using food from one's plot was encouraged it was not necessary. Either way, we still talked about making a dish and what ingredients were used and how delicious it was. However, when a dish was made using food from the garden it would be even more exceptional because we would also discuss how the food was harvested and how difficult or easy it was to take care of the plant, which was accompanied with an immense sense of pride and accomplishment. The committee members showed up early to set up tables and decorate the garden. Three tables, one for food, a second for desserts, and a third for drinks, were placed and decorated with white tablecloths, burlap, lace, and pumpkins (Figure 19). Pam, a school teacher, cut some rosemary and lavender from a plot and placed it on a table, which made the table look elegant and festive (Field notes 11.09.13).



Figure 19 Dessert table; Pam picking from the garden to a decorate table

The food table quickly filled up with various dishes, no two alike, but every one of them delicious. There was cornbread casserole, butternut squash soup, chicken pot pie, roasted Brussels sprouts, macaroni and cheese, and mashed sweet potatoes (Figure 20). We talked about each dish and asked whoever had brought it how they made it. While several people were growing Brussels sprouts, these were not from the garden because they were not ready to harvest yet, as with many of the other plants being grown such as broccoli and cauliflower. The butternut squash soup was a hit and quickly gone. Most people, foregoing a spoon, ladle some into a small Styrofoam cup and sip on it, enjoying its warmth in the cold.



Figure 20 Delicious, homemade food from the DUG Fall pot luck in the garden

People sat on benches or brought chairs, which were arranged in a large circle with the benches so people could easily see each other and talk to one another. There were about 25 to 30 people there, some snuggled under blankets because the evening was turning cold, others hanging around the dessert table or standing by the drink table talking. It seemed very dark all of a sudden, the only light coming from the open garage door of the tool shed. Some people had left while others were still enjoying eating in the garden and visiting.

Committee meetings take place once a month at the community center in Deep Ellum less than half a mile from the garden. Susan leads the meetings and there is a

secretary who takes minutes. Susan hands out a piece of paper with the meeting's agenda. Since Deep Ellum is an active, bustling neighborhood, there is a lot of activity outside the meeting room which looks onto the main street. People from cross fit run by again and again going around the block; people are out walking their dog or to one of the many bars or restaurants located nearby; and there is usually a band playing so the music offers a soundtrack for the meeting.

Since many line leaders are also committee members, they can bring up issues they are experiencing with people in their lines or discuss a specific question which the line leader could not answer. The committee discusses each topic on the agenda and votes on important issues such as using garden funds to buy compost. Susan then asks if anyone has other business to discuss. The meeting is very structured with Susan's obvious leadership and a note taker yet is very relaxed. People feel at ease talking and bringing up their concerns and voicing their opinions. There were a lot of jokes thrown around as well as cuss words and this group of people seemed to enjoy each other pretty well (Field notes 9.10.13).

There are usually around 8 to 12 people who show up and the meeting length depends on this number as well as how many items need to be discussed. Anyone can join the committee, however the committee has to vote on each person before he or she can become a committee member. Line leaders are encouraged to be on the committee because they have a better grasp of current events, issues, and how the committee would

handle a certain situation, thus being better able to answer questions and deal with conflict.

Some of the current issues DUG is working on are signage, building rain catch barrels, and preparing for spring planting. The garden still has no identifying sign easily seen from the road. The garden's goal is to get this sign as well as signs put up throughout the garden, for example, on the compost center explaining what to put in. A work day is scheduled to build rain catch barrels which will help conserve water. Line leaders are responsible for communicating to their line, through email, that plots need to be prepared and planting should begin soon. For example, I received an email from my line leader saying: "I know some of our plots are not looking too good, and haven't bounced back after the ice storms. If you haven't already, please check your plots and take out the dead decaying plants. Leaving them will not do any good and bugs like decaying plants. I'll check with other garden committee members about planting ideas and time lines for the spring. If you have any ideas, please feel free to share them" (email to author, March 11, 2014). This email explicates the requirement that there must be something growing in a gardener's plot during each season. Finally, a long-term goal for the garden is to implement Phase Two, the second community garden. However getting this garden started is not a pressing concern but a project for the future when the committee agrees the time is right.

One afternoon, I got to the garden and saw a woman and a man really close to my plot. The petite woman was on my line and the man was on row K. I asked the woman if

I could water after she was done watering and I'll put up the hose. She said sure, it will be just a couple minutes. A few minutes went by and she asked if I was Rebekah. I said yes, you're the woman from Cleveland I talked to? She said yes, I'm Beth. I watered my plot, not very much it seemed because I had just planted and watered that morning. I told her I just started planting and was just checking it again. She told me she was going out of town for 5 days and if I would like some lettuce. I said sure! I noticed she already had some lettuce in her hands and she kept on picking. I didn't want to pick along with her and get in her plot so I just stood by, talking to her as she picked. As she picked, she started telling me about what she had planted and how she was kind of worried about this one cruciferous plant and pointed to the man's plot across two lines and said she was worried about it "taking over" because his seemed to be taking over his plot and was huge so she thought hers would grow to be big like that (Figure 21).



Figure 21 Plants burgeoning from a gardener's plot

She said she did the square foot planting so she would see how it went. Her plot and plants seemed pretty cramped. It doesn't seem like you can get that many in one square foot if you go by the recommended spacing between the plants and then the rows. But I don't know. The man eventually came over and introduced himself as Stan in a soft-spoken voice. I asked him if that whole plot, the 4x8 was his, and he said yes. He had been here since the spring. Beth and I talked to him about that and told him, especially I did being new to this, that we are trying to soak up [learn] as much as we can. He said it was neat to talk to people to see what they're planting and he said that it was cool when people were willing to listen to you and to talk. Beth asked what his "ferny" thing was, which I was wondering as well because it was just coming way up in the middle of his

garden and it was very green and had soft looking wisps of fern all over it as well as a heartier stalk. He said it was asparagus, which is a perennial, which Beth knew this also (for being semi-new to gardening it seems like she sure knew a lot). But he said you are not supposed to touch it for a year or two. He showed us a tiny tip of one part, which actually looked like an asparagus. He went on about the bulby root plant and how it was shaped and how he planted it. But you're not supposed to touch it for a while to let it mature. And he showed us how one plant had flowered and the other plant I think just had a lot more of the fern stuff.

I told Beth that I was worried that my stuff will come up. The three of us were talking about how our three plots were newer so our soil wasn't as good and it was sandier. Beth said she put a lot of compost on hers and Stan kept saying that he "amended" his plot to encourage more growth. Stan pointed to the plot behind us on Row H, whose plants were far over my head and it seemed like everything was growing so well, and said he uses a compost tea once a week and that's why it is doing so well. I keep hearing that term and how it does wonders for your plot because it is a concentrated liquid extraction of compost which provides your plants with many vital nutrients. Beth told me that her lettuce was doing so well; it just kept coming back and coming back. She joked about how much she loves salads and she likes lettuce but her husband is getting tired of it even though she tries to dress them up and add things to it. So she handed me a huge handful of lettuce and I asked if this was all for me and she said, "Yes!" and she is sure when she gets back on Sunday there will be a lot more that has come up. I was so thankful because I was going to pick up lettuce at the grocery store and now I didn't have

to. Beth said if I ever needed someone to water for me she is out of town a lot but she is also in town and I said sure I'd be willing to do the same (Field notes 10.22.13). This exchange of personal information and experiences in the garden contributed to a sense of building community because it enabled us to get to know our fellow gardener, share knowledge about gardening, and physically share food. Brown (2012) demonstrates how gardens are excellent spaces to share knowledge, which creates bonding capital and an increase in sociocultural capital. These exchanges at DUG imparted a reassuring sense of belonging and identification with the greater garden community.

## CHAPTER 5

### LEARNING TO GARDEN & RESPONSES FROM INTERVIEWS

#### Bearing Fruit

*The cherry tomato plant, we planted probably too many of them and it just exploded and we got like a thousand cherry tomatoes all at once... they just went crazy.*

Luke (1.26.14, DUG)

I did not grow up gardening and recently have only attempted to grow basil and rosemary on my apartment patio. Therefore I was not confident about gardening or even being around people who garden because I was not familiar with it and did not have gardening knowledge. But eventually, yet slowly, I learned. I signed up for a How to Vegetable Garden class which I took long before I finalized my thesis topic. I was becoming interested in community gardens and the class was being offered through the City of Arlington. This class was a good introduction and very simple—simple enough for me to begin thinking that gardening should not be too hard, even though later I learned there was so much more involved. I sat in front of the large projector screen amidst mothers and their children and a few older women, anxiously taking notes afraid I would miss something important. I started becoming familiar with the language of gardening: different types of soil, loamy, sandy (which was bad), clay, the growing seasons, spring and fall, types of plants, bugs, and even the cycles of the moon which some people plant according to which phase the moon is in. This class helped me when I

entered the gardens because it gave me some familiarity especially when I started to talk with gardeners.

Later into my research I realized I had to study up on two specific features: organic gardening and in Texas. Organic gardening does not use any inputs such as pesticides or fertilizers and it also can be more labor intensive, some people picking off each little bug by hand. It is also important to know not only what grows when but where and how well. Here in Texas, with our unique climate, soil, and pests, I had to learn when I should plant a seed, when I should plant a transplant, as well as which bugs like which plants, and what I can do to alleviate pest problems. The book “Organic Gardening in Texas” provided a good overall picture of these specifics providing the date ranges of when to plant, which bugs might be attracted to certain plants, and how to get rid of these bugs. For example, for spring and fall planting, you plant according to the average last frost and first frost, accordingly. In addition, compost rich soil (but not too much compost) is ideal to plant in because it provides nutrients for your plants and it will also allow for good water drainage. Aphids, ants, worms, and squash bugs can be particularly harmful to plants but if you apply, for instance flour on squash bugs or citrus oil on ants, you can remedy these pest problems.

I also utilized various Internet sources searching for a specific question about a plant and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (<http://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/>) provided an excellent source for information about organic gardening in Texas. And, of course, from the very beginning and throughout my research, the gardeners were a good

source of information. In the garden, at meetings, and in interviews, I was always able to ask a question about gardening, for example, how to get rid of squash bugs, or why are my tomatoes not growing, or how do I utilize the compost bins? But I did not even need to ask: people were constantly talking about their experiences, their problems, or answering each other's questions simply when they came together. While there was some personal talk, most of the talk was about the garden, how well a certain plant was doing, what one tasted like, or how to get a plant to grow better. Most of these conversations began with an excited exclamation of, "My potatoes were huge when I pulled them up!" Or, "There are so many ants taking over my plot!" which was followed by statements of a similar experience or concern for the well-being of that person's plants and the possible solutions to fix the problem. At other times, people would be discussing what they just planted and a gardener would interject with a story of how they planted and cooked that same vegetable last season and recall the recipe from memory, which several people would then write down.

### Getting a Plot

I finally was able to obtain my own plot and put what I had learned to use and quickly found I had a lot more to learn. It was during an interview with Susan that she suddenly and bluntly said, "I have a asshole who lost his plot. A 4x4, you want it?"

I immediately replied: "Yah!"

"You can have it" Susan said.

She then told me the story of how a man gained and subsequently lost his plot due to not communicating effectively and failing to show up twice to meet with his line leader. Susan, after trying to contact him, discovered he should not be allowed a plot because he did not live in Deep Ellum even though he checked that he did on his application. After calling the situation “B.S.” the man became argumentative and Susan, “trying to still be nice,” attempted to explain to him that he needed to live or own a business in Deep Ellum. After telling Susan he did not want to be “any part of your Nazi garden,” Susan gladly told him there would be plenty of other people who would love to have the plot (personal interview, September 27, 2013).

After accepting the plot, I was ecstatic that I would finally be gardening and have a plot of my own! Immediately after this joyous feeling I felt a nervous pit in my stomach because I knew I would also have to *grow something* and I did not want to let the garden or myself down. This feeling of not gardening up to my expectations or the perceived expectations I thought the other gardeners would have, reveals already a sense of belonging and feeling accountable to this new community I would soon join. Being a completely inexperienced gardener, I felt pressure to grow and garden well in order to make my garden proud.

I started with soil, with a completely square, dried-looking array of mulch, soil, and as I later learned sandy soil versus the compost rich soil the first group of plots received (Figure 22). The sandy soil was not as nutrient-dense and therefore not as helpful in creating a good place for plants to grow well.



Figure 22 My first glimpse of my plot, not amended

I first had to “amend” my plot bringing in nutrients and preparing the soil for what I was going to plant. I went to the internet, to books, and I repeatedly asked others how to amend my plot just to make sure I did it correctly. My mother was with me the day I prepared my soil because she was visiting. I was excited to have her with me because she is an avid flower and herb gardener and I knew she would enjoy helping me. I told her what I had learned about determining if your soil was too wet to add compost. If you made a fist with the soil and the soil clumped up then it was too wet. If the soil fell through your hands it was dry enough (Field notes 10.17.13). Though I felt the soil may be too wet, we went to the farmers market to buy compost because I knew I needed to plant soon because it was late in the fall season. The following paper was given to gardeners at both gardens and was a good guide to understanding the different seasons, Spring and Fall, what could be planted, how it should be planted, and when (Figure 23).

The dates correspond to the last freeze, Spring, and the first freeze, Fall which can leave seeds or new transplants vulnerable.

## Vegetable Planting Guide

### Planting Times for North Central Texas

Vegetable Types	Planting depth in inches	Distance between rows	Average crop height ft	Spring planting dates* North Central Texas	Fall planting dates* North Central Texas	Days to crop maturity
Asparagus	8-12	48-60	5	Feb. 1 - Mar. 1	Not Advised	700
Beans, snap bush	1-11/2	24-36	11/2	Mar. 18 -Apr.15	Aug. 1 - Sep. 15	45-60
Beans, snap pole	1-11/2	36-48	6 - 8	Mar. 18 -Apr.15	Jul. 30 -Aug. 10	60-70
Beans, Lima bush	1-11/2	30-36	11/2	Mar. 18 -Apr.15	Aug.15 - Sep.15	65-80
Beans, Lima pole	1-11/2	36-48	6 - 8	Mar. 18 -Apr.15	Jul. 25 -Aug. 15	75-85
Beets	1	12-24	11/2	Feb. 1 - Feb 15	Sep. 1 - Oct. 1	50-60
Broccoli	1/2	24-36	3	Feb. 1 - Feb 15	Aug.15- Sep.30	60-80
Brussels Sprouts	1/2	24-36	2	Feb. 1 - Feb 15	Aug.15- Sep.30	90-100
Cabbage	1/2	24-36	11/2	Feb. 1 - Feb 15	Aug.15- Sep.30	60-90
Cabbage, Chinese	1/2	18-30	11/2	Feb. 1 - Feb 15	Aug.10- Aug.30	65-70
Cantaloupe	1	48-96	1	Apr. 5 - May 1	Jul. 30 - Aug. 10	85-100
Carrot	1/2	12-24	2	Feb. 1 - Feb 15	Sep.1 - Sep.30	70-80
Cauliflower	1/2	24-36	3	Feb. 1 - Feb 15	Aug.15 -Sep.20	70-90
Chard, Swiss	1	18-30	2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 3	Aug.15 -Sep.15	45-55
Cilantro	1/2	12-24	2	Feb. 1 - Apr. 1	Sep. 1 - Sep. 30	40-60
Collard (Kale)	1/2	18-36	2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 3	Aug.25- Sep.20	50-80
Corn (sweet)	1/2	24-36	6 - 8	Mar. 18 -Apr. 30	Aug. 10 -Aug.25	70-90
Cucumber	1/2	48-72	1	Mar. 18 -Apr. 30	Aug. 25-Sep. 10	50-70
Eggplant	1/2	24-36	3	Apr 1- Apr. 30	Jul. 30- Aug. 25	80-90
Garlic	1 - 2	10-18	1	Feb. 1 - Feb 15	Not Advised	140-150
Kohlrabi	1/2	12-18	11/2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 10	Aug.15 - Sep.20	55-75
Lettuce	1/2	12-24	1	Feb. 1 - Mar. 31	Sep. 1 - Sep. 30	40-80
Okra	1	24-36	5 - 7	Apr. 1 - Apr. 30	Jul. 1 - Aug. 25	55-65
Onion (plants)	1/2 - 1	12-18	11/2	Jan. 1 - Feb. 15	Aug.15 -Sep.15	80-120
Onion (seed)	1/2	12-18	11/2	Jan. 1 - Feb. 15	Sep. 1 - Sep. 20	90-120
Parsley	1/2	12-24	11/2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 15	Aug.15 -Oct. 10	70-90
Peas, English	2 - 3	18-36	2	Jan. 20 - Mar. 3	Sep. 15 - Nov. 1	55-90
Peas, black-eyed	2 - 3	24-36	21/2	Mar. 30- Apr. 30	Aug.15 - Sep. 1	60-70
Peppers	1/2	24-36	2 - 3	Mar. 30- May 30	Jul. 30 -Aug. 25	60-90
Potato, Irish	4	30-36	2	Feb. 1 - Feb 15	Jul. 30- Aug. 10	65-100
Potato, Sweet	3 - 5	36-48	11/2	Apr. 15 - Jun. 1	Not Advised	100-130
Pumpkin	1 - 2	48-96	11/2	Mar. 25 -Apr. 25	Aug.10 -Aug. 25	75-100
Radish	1/2	12-18	1/2	Feb. 10 - Apr. 15	Sep.20 - Nov.15	25-40
Spinach	1/2	12-18	1	Jan. 20 - Mar. 10	Sep.15 - Nov. 1	40-60
Squash, Summer	1 - 2	24-60	2	Mar. 25 - Apr.15	Aug. 1 - Aug.30	50-60
Squash, Winter	1 - 2	48-78	1	Mar. 25 - Apr.15	Aug.10 - Aug.30	85-100
Tomato	4 - 7	24-48	3 - 6	Mar. 20 - Apr. 30	Jun. 15 - Jul. 30	55-100
Turnip, Greens	1/2	12-24	11/2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 10	Aug. 25 - Nov.1	30
Turnip, Roots	1/2	12-24	11/2	Feb. 1 - Mar. 10	Aug. 25 - Nov.1	30-60
Watermelon	1 - 2	60-96	1	Mar 30 - Apr. 30	Jul. 20- Aug. 10	80-100

\* Last avg. frost date March 20 - First avg. frost date Nov. 17

### Soil Temperature Requirements

The numbers in parenthesis indicate minimum soil temperatures at which each vegetable should be planted in order to obtain optimum germination of seed and growth of transplants. Planting in soil that is too cool can lead to poor germination, seed rot, diseases and slow root and top growth of plants. For best results, plant during recommended dates, but only when soil temperatures reach the point designated. Proper temperature should be maintained to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. A kitchen thermometer (probe type - temperature range is 0° to 220°) is the easiest, most available and least expensive product to use for this purpose.

#### Vegetables from Transplant (Optimum Soil Temperature for Planting)

Onions (45) Broccoli (50) Kohlrabi (50) Cabbage (55) Chinese Cabbage (55) Tomatoes (60) Peppers (70) Eggplant (75)

#### Vegetables from Seed (Optimum Soil Temperature for Planting)

Carrots (50) Onions (50) Leeks (50) Peas (50) Potatoes (50) Spinach (50) Lettuce (50) Radish (50) Parsley (55) Chard (55) Collards (55) Cabbage (55) Beets (55) Chinese Cabbage (55) Snap Beans (60) Cucumbers (60) Turnips (60) Sweet Corn (65) Black-eyed Peas (65) Lima Beans (70) Squash (70) Watermelon (70) Cantaloupe (75) Okra (75) Sweet Potatoes (75)

Figure 23 Vegetable planting guide

It was a gorgeous day. It was cool enough where I had to wear a jacket, even in the full sun. It was about 3 pm when we got back to the gardens. I heaved the bag of compost over my shoulder and unlocked the gate. I walked over to my plot and told my mom that the first thing we have to do is make sure all the weeds were removed. There wasn't too many and we threw these away. I then got a mini shovel and started putting about half the bag on top of my plot and then my mom and I took other tools with which to mix it. My mom commented on how good it smelled and after a few minutes I could smell it too: fresh, woody, mulch-y smell. After a while of mixing it in, I took the other half of the bag and spread it evenly over the top. I then walked to the shed, got a hose and a spray nozzle, attached it to the water faucet caddy corner to my plot and across a row, turned on the water, and watered my plot. I tried to soak it pretty well because I read somewhere that you want to soak your plot after you turn the soil and prepare your bed. Even after working outside, in the sun, I was still not that warm in my jacket. (Field notes 10.17.13)

Just a couple days later, after talking with the garden store employees and buying various seeds and transplants and then planting these, my plot looked completely different (Figure 24). Instead of a dry, empty plot, I now had rich compost and plants growing in my plot.



Figure 24 Author's plot after adding compost and planting transplants and seeds

### Gardening in my Plot

I am glad I got to experience *not* having a plot and having a plot because I experienced the drastic and dramatic difference between the sheer ignorance of not knowing how to garden and the little seed of comfort I developed with my plants and the knowledge I gained afterward, actually gardening. As I mentioned above, I felt pressure to garden well. I was just certain I would mess up something when I planted and so sure

that nothing would come up. I remember thinking, “Oh, no, I bet I didn’t do this right or this. Everyone around me is successful. I’m going to be *that* gardener who cannot grow a thing!” I was literally and legitimately scared and fearful that nothing was going to come up. I remember vividly my anticipation and nervousness going back to the garden to check on my plot. I slowly unlocked the gate, wanting to go in and look but not wanting to look.

I walked quickly to my plot, the other plots with their huge leaves and bursting new life teasing and taunting me along the way. Can I even look? I look. I let out a yell and jumped up and down, a huge smile across my face. There, barely peeking up from the layer of soil and the layer of compost on top of that, were a few, teeny, tiny little sprouts. I could not contain my joy. I did it! Even though I could barely see them, especially through my camera lens, there they were. And I was one proud momma! Now, I would never describe myself as maternal. But yes, these plants were my babies. I was proud of them and I was not going to let anything happen to them. My feelings of pride and protection truly reflect that of a parent. I was disappointed when they did not seem to grow and asked myself, “What am I doing wrong?” I was again, joyful, whenever they seemed to be particularly in bloom. I was angry and *protective* when someone else watered them and bent back and crushed into the compost their delicate little leaves and I thought, “How dare that person!” I carefully watered and I lovingly covered them before a frost, hoping they would survive.

I was fully invested at this point: not only monetarily, hoping that something would show for my money spent; not only temporally, driving twenty miles to check on them, water them, and fertilize them; but emotionally, realizing that these plants not only represented me but also that they had changed me. And I never thought myself capable of achieving this sort of feat. It was empowering and it was an awesome feeling. I wanted now to try more, everything. I felt a sense of: “What’s next?” I can do and plant so much! Orchards, flowers, berries, this vegetable, that vegetable, the possibilities and the potential are endless! There is an excitement I felt by knowing I can grow and create so much in my little plot.

I *dreamed* about the garden. Not at all in relation to my research and writing (those were dreams of a different, horrifying sort) but about my plot and my plants. I dreamt that I came back from out of town and after the freeze and that everything was dead. I dreamt that I went through an intense process of making a list of things to plant in the spring and then purchased those seeds. The transformation of my little plot mirrored my own transformation in my confidence and ability to grow food and the sheer amazement and joy I received from gardening.

Because of my aforementioned interest in local food, especially Farmers Markets, and the fact that I ate and continue to eat mostly fresh-prepared meals versus ready-made or frozen meals, when I was growing I thought I did not have the mentality that “food comes from the grocery store.” However, I still stood in awe, and I am still amazed, at how stunned I am at the food growing in the gardens, especially in Deep Ellum with the

highway roaring overhead. The beautiful, perfectly lined rows of lettuce of shades of green, purple hues, and their gorgeous, ruffled edges; the great leafy plants that you have to search through to find out if it is broccoli, Brussels sprouts, or maybe even some other plant. The surreal feeling you get when you see all these different plants that you could drive three miles, to the nearest grocery store and find, but think, no, I do not need to go there because I have this food growing right here. The confusion and delight, and sometimes stupidity, you feel when you look at a plant, have no idea what it is, but find out it is something you are very familiar with. “Oh, that’s how it grows!” you think. I was most surprised with how asparagus grew. I asked a gardener about a particular plant in his plot, looking at its long, wispy tendrils and was shocked to learn it was asparagus, looking, at first glance, nothing like the stalky bunches you see in the grocery store. As I looked closer, however, I could see the little tops of the asparagus growing up. It was even more interesting that asparagus takes over two years to grow before you can harvest it, ensuring the gardener learns patience!

Never have I appreciated rain more and never have I watched the weather reports with such acuity and planning. The one thing you cannot control in gardening, the weather, influenced my garden as well as my research. It seemed to rain an abnormal amount over my research period. And when it does, you don’t have to worry about going to the garden that day. Every time it was my line’s turn to do chores at DUG it either rained all week or the water was shut off because the temperature was below freezing. My plot seemed to get a beating over the winter with the below freezing temperatures, the rain, the ice, and the fluctuating temperatures. One week it would be freezing and rainy

and the next week it would be dry and sixty degree weather. I planned around the drops in temperature so that I could cover my plot with either a bed sheet or a frost protector. I had it completely covered for an entire week several times.

When I would uncover my plants I was just sure there would be no return for them this time. The leaves of my Swiss chard and my Brussels sprouts were wilted and mushy. A lot of my little sprouts refused to show their little green tops anymore. I became at peace with the fact that I would have to abandon these plants, not seeing them grow to any more than they were, and pull them up and start over in the spring. The photos below demonstrate how the Swiss chard, once bright green with large, crunchy looking leaves diminished in size, color, and vivacity (Figure 25).



Figure 25 Swiss chard before (left) and after (right) the freeze

But my plants, after getting some more sun and warmer weather, dried out and seemed to rejuvenate. I then became intent on saving these plants, determined to harvest and eat them, and plant more in the spring.



Figure 26 Brussels sprouts' growth (left) from the small transplants (right)

The photos above, taken about 4 months apart, show how my Brussels sprout leaves have grown exponentially and taken over my line of spinach leaves (Figure 26). In the photo on the right you can clearly see how small the Brussels sprout plants were and that there was not spinach coming up yet. I had to get several bamboo shoots to stick in the soil alongside the Brussels sprouts so their leaves would grow up and away from the

spinach. I still have about three carrots hanging on to dear life and the spinach has surprisingly burst up in the last two weeks.

### Feel the Sting, Taste the Rewards: Working and Eating

Being in the garden and having a plot inevitably means being outside—a lot. I like the outdoors and I am not one to squirm when pushing a worm through a fishing hook. So I do not have a dislike for bugs but I may have an unnatural fear or hatred of bees and wasps. My dad would probably call it annoying and melodramatic for I have upturned many a dish while eating outside and shrilly interrupted a quiet moment if one of these ugly flying things happened to get too close to me. Being outside and in a garden I knew I would have to face bugs of all kinds; and I did, most memorable being bees, mosquitos, and fire ants. Some of the first times I spent in the gardens I remember running, or quickly walking if there were other people present, from a particularly persistent bee. Even in the middle of talking to people I would try to inconspicuously dodge or move away from a hovering bee. But over time, and as I learned more about the pollination gardens at DUG and how important these creatures are, I became a little more tolerant of them (even though sometimes in my head I would have to repeat like a mantra: “If you don’t bother them, they won’t bother you”). And eventually I came to accept these bees as part of the garden. Interestingly, I found I would revert to my normal state of fright and panic of bees in places outside the garden. But as long as I was in the garden, they would not bother me.

During the Texas summer, mosquitos are particularly annoying and even dangerous amidst the West Nile Virus that seems to be plaguing North Texas. On one exceptionally balmy late summer evening at the gardens I could feel their sting of a bite all over my legs and arms as I walked around the garden and especially when I stood still. When I was reaching through tomato vines I did not feel them but saw the effects in slightly raised, red bumps. However this is nothing new to me and I have learned to put up with my seemingly irresistible attraction to these spindly critters.

But I learned mosquitos are not the only bugs which can sting. One Saturday morning workday at UTA CG, I was working alongside two other gardeners on one woman's plot that was completely taken over by Bermuda grass. Camp said the woman had "inherited" the plot from the previous owner, recently vacated, suggesting it was not the woman's fault for the sorry state in which we found the plot. Not fifteen minutes into pulling up grass and working with a hoe, ants were everywhere and they started crawling up my ankles and my arms, getting caught in my socks, in my gloves, and under my watch. I kept working, brushing them off and trying to ignore some stings of the bites I felt. I noticed there were two or three piles of them, now running over the plot and each other after being disturbed by our digging. I could not shake them off and I ran away from the area and started brushing them off, pinching and killing them. The bites now stung like crazy, all over my wrists and ankles, and I could already see the white marks and welts forming from each tiny yet piercing bite.

At this point I became slightly paranoid, overwhelmed by the number of ants crawling over my body and the enormous itching I was feeling everywhere on my body, my hands shaking when I looked down at them. I went to my first aid kit in my car and found some anti-sting insect wipes and wiped the cool, slightly wet cloths all over my wrists and ankles. They were soothing and the pain immediately felt alleviated. Though my ankles and wrists would be swollen and the bites crusty and itchy for the two weeks, I drank down some water and went back to working, though stayed far away from any site of an ant. I have learned that bugs are part of the garden and crucial to its processes and survival. I have even come to appreciate a single bug's importance in a garden. However I will be steering clear of ants for the foreseeable future.

I have tasted a lot of produce from the gardens which was all given to me by someone else. I finally was able to harvest some spinach from my own plot which miraculously survived a bitter cold and late freeze. My first taste of the garden was at UTA CG with my "garden partner" Matt, a lanky, young man. We were in his plot clearing out unruly and dead vines and rotten or bug-infested vegetables. There was a tall tomato vine with cherry tomatoes on it. Some had fallen on the ground, others were split open on the vine and looked like they had bugs in them, and others were perfectly red and plump. Matt offered me one. I said no, that I only really only like cooked tomatoes. While this may be true, I can stand eating a raw tomato. I was honestly thinking of what bugs might be crawling around in the tomato he offered even though it looked intact. Matt found another tomato, offered it to me, and I reluctantly took it. I did not even think to brush what dirt may have been on it but quickly popped it in my mouth. I was thinking

of the bugs, waiting to be crushed by my teeth along with the tomato but it tasted pleasant and juicy, the tomato bursting in my mouth. It was a different experience taking a tomato right off the vine and consuming it in the garden.

My second tasting was with my other garden partner, Fred, at DUG, who helped design the garden. When we were saying goodbye and leaving the garden he asked if I wanted some peppers from his plot. I quickly accepted these peppers as opposed to reluctantly accepting the tomato because I love peppers. He carefully chose which peppers to pick off and gave me a handful and I fumbled with my keys as I grasped at several red peppers of various sizes. A couple days later when I met again with Fred, I told him how I had cut up the peppers and put them in a pasta dish I made the night he gave them to me. The peppers spiced the dish nicely and they also added a bright red color to the white sauce I made.

There is something so simple, awesome, and freeing about being able to pick your own food from your plot. Or in this case, Beth picking her own food from her plot and giving it to me (Field notes 10.22.13). I was so thankful when Beth practically forced a whole handful of lettuce and chives in my hand. That night, I washed and dried the various different lettuce as well as some chives, chopped them up, and made a salad. It was convenient, fresh, and tasted absolutely delicious (Figure 27). I put some chives in my scrambled eggs the next morning enjoying their crisp flavor and bright green color. Eating, I was reminded of the garden and Beth's generosity.



Figure 27 A handful of produce from the garden (left) turned into a delicious salad at author's home (right)

I can't wait to be able to do this [grow food] and to be able to share the food I have grown with others. I got an almost overwhelming feeling of excitement after I had planted my garden because I thought, I am actually planting these and they will (should) grow up and feed me! (Field notes 10.22.13)

In early spring I was finally able to harvest some of the food from my plot. After the cold and brutal winter, I had two hardy spinach plants that were still clinging to life from which I was able to get several leaves (Figure 28). I was ecstatic that I was going to be able to actually eat something that I had grown. I searched online how to harvest

spinach and discovered the plant grows from the inside so it is best to take leaves, which are large enough, from the outside of the plant. I used shears which cleanly and easily cut through the stalks of each spinach leaf with a satisfying crunch. I gathered almost a full gallon baggie of spinach. Once again, I did not have to stop by the grocery store to get lettuce for that night's salad which made me feel self-sufficient and proud to have accomplished what first felt like an overwhelming task to grow and harvest organic food. Even if it were a few spinach leaves.



Figure 28 Tiny sprouts of spinach (above) grown into full spinach plants from which I harvested (below)

## Interview Responses

The story of my learning to garden and being in the garden replicates the interviews with other gardeners. These interviews were stories of how people began to garden—some going back to their childhoods—their frustrations about gardening, their joys, and the garden’s significance in their lives. I immensely enjoyed these friendly conversations from which I learned so much about each individual gardener, tips about what or what not to plant or how to care for a specific plant, recipes, and why they garden.

I call them conversations because every person I interviewed also asked questions about me: my research, what I have learned, the other garden and how it is managed, and what I am growing in my plot. This section is built mostly around interview responses but also includes exchanges and observations from my field notes which augment these conversations. My voice will be less noticeable and the individual gardener’s voice more vivid because I want the reader to understand the gardener’s experience in his or her own words. I arrange this section into themes which were most occurring and important in the interviews: community; participation and following rules; sharing and learning; organic, compost, and life; and gardens and the senses.

### Community First, Garden Second

Both DUG and UTA CG stress community. One could even say the garden is simply a by-product of a group of people coming together. Susan comments DUG has “always said we are a community first and a garden second” (personal interview,

September 27, 2013), stressing personal relationships with other gardeners. UTA CG stresses community through its mandatory 50% donation from each gardener, which emphasizes giving back to the City of Arlington by donating to the hungry. This garden also places importance on growing community within the garden as I learned from talking with Smith and Reese along with other gardeners. However, growing this sense of community and camaraderie is not always guaranteed or unproblematic.

DUG and UTA CG gardeners join in order to meet people, along with the added benefit of growing food, just as Landman (1993) discovered in her study of community gardens in Washington D.C. But even more than the bonus of meeting people, they are excited about and benefit from meeting different types of people. While I would not want to comment on the specific ages or ethnicities of the gardeners as these details were not discussed in depth, varying ages, educational backgrounds, interests, and nationality showcase how community gardens do not attract one type of person. Kathy, an energetic, petite woman, notices how the council is composed of people with dissimilar personalities which she thinks is beneficial for a governing body to possess because there are a multitude of ways of thinking and getting things accomplished. UTA CG has several gardeners from foreign countries including Kenya and India. The majority of DUG's committee members have a degree but they are made up of people with different interests, indicated by their different subcommittees, and have people as young as their mid 20s contributing immensely to the project as well as older people. Whether joining the garden takes a gardener out of her comfort zone, introduces her to new activities, or

helps her appreciate how others think, this diversity helps make the garden an organic, growing, and distinctive community of gardeners.

Even though Deep Ellum is a tight-knit and involved community, a separate and unique community project like the garden gives people the opportunity to get to know and build relationships with different types of people. Rachel, who always seems to be smiling when she talks, learned about the garden through a Deep Ellum volunteer organization that informs residents of new things happening in the neighborhood. She said she became involved in the garden because it gave her an opportunity to meet “different people in the neighborhood that I don’t normally see” (personal interview, December 13, 2013). She goes on to explain how meeting different people, for instance those people who frequent different venues or events she does not normally attend, is exciting and it introduces people to new activities:

I like the idea of the community, really embracing your neighbors and finding out what there is to know about different people and really involving yourself with all that, meeting new people with different thought processes it’s really been interesting... I’m used to being around the same [people]. You get your little niche-y friends and so it’s nice to hang out with—I mean, I ran into Sam at the car races one time, you know it’s random. You run into people that you’re like going oh we do actually go to the art galleries together we just never really hung out before. Like we all went and saw Susan last night. I’m not normally a coffee shop

band type... But you never know so it opens your mind to checking out new things.

Even though the Deep Ellum neighborhood is close-knit, there are a great number and variety of different venues and activities with which to be involved. Rachel is very involved with Deep Ellum. However, through the garden and by meeting more people, she has met people who have different hobbies and who have introduced her to new events and venues. This expansion of her social network has allowed her to feel even more involved and connected with the Deep Ellum community because she can now recognize more people she knows at the events she frequents and because it has introduced her to new venues which she may have never have gone before.

Luke thought joining the garden would be a good activity for his family to do together and saw the chance for him, his wife, and four year old daughter to meet people. The mandatory workdays are especially helpful for meeting new people because it “forces people to show up at the same time and then you’re just going to inevitably meet other people” and that the more “you get to know everybody the more invested you are in it,” Luke explains. He expressed a sense of this investment and belonging to the garden when discussing the “community guilt” he would experience if he were to not participate. He says: “It’s the guilt... you know you’re going to see people, not daily, but every once in a while you’re going to run into them and they’ll [ask] where have you been” (personal interview, January 23, 2014)? Luke interestingly explains the commitment to DUG through his description of community guilt. This guilt exemplifies accountability to the

DUG community as well as demonstrates the presence of this community in the day to day within Deep Ellum.

Susan, being as active in the Deep Ellum community as she is, still meets new people through her involvement with the garden. She enthusiastically describes how the garden project “brought [people] out and now they’re well known and we, you know, go out to beer or whatever and we’re close friends. So I love that about the project” (personal interview, September 27, 2013). These responses signify the individual relationships that can be formed by belonging to the garden. However, there is the garden community as a whole, which, in order for the garden to be successful, must work together and view the garden as a place shared by all. Susan shares how it is difficult to form this community:

We just thought automatically everybody was just going to do community magically, hang out, have you know, some drinks at the gardens or eat or whatever. And it didn’t happen. –Susan (personal interview, September 27, 2013)

DUG attempted to foster this community by creating “lines,” dividing and naming each row of plots, A through K, each row having a line leader. “People were just crossing paths to water and... so we thought the smaller lines would build smaller communities and they wouldn’t be overwhelmed and then they would get to know their neighbors more and then maybe that would cross germinate, no pun intended, um to you know, the line next to you and that way” (personal interview, September 27, 2013). Each line has a line leader who shares the responsibility of communicating with the gardeners in their

line about workdays and other events, important news, as well as enforcing the rules. Garden chores are also divided by line. Each line rotates weekly and the people in the line are assigned chores such as watering the two pollination gardens, watering the front trees and pots, cleaning the tool shed, and taking out the recycling and trash.

Samantha, who rode her bike to the coffee shop to meet me, joined the garden so she could still compost in the city after moving from the suburbs understands the significance of community in a community garden. She has no interest in growing vegetables because she grew up gardening and it “was torture” (personal interview, February 1, 2014). However, because she has a plot she still has to do line chores when it is her line’s week. She makes sure she does her part: “On the weeks where it’s our week to water, I’ll go out there because I think that’s part of being a community garden, whether I take care of my plot or not, I think it’s important to take care of the garden” (personal interview, February 1, 2014).

However, not every gardener has the same mentality as Samantha. At a committee meeting, a committee member discussed a person in her line who was complaining about doing the line’s water duties for the week. Another committee member replied to this saying incontestably, “It’s a community garden,” and Susan responded, “Everyone has chores at a community garden” (Field notes 9.10.13). These two responses demonstrate the understanding that everyone must contribute to the garden as a whole if they wish to be a gardener. However the committee understood that the individual who expressed discontent with completing the chores might not understand

this concept as well as the fact that the pollination gardens and other greenery serve a purpose for their garden as a whole: they attract bees which pollinate the garden. The committee resolved to make sure the gardeners are aware of the purpose of some of the garden's attributes at an upcoming meeting which may help gardeners be more willing to do their line's chores for the week.

While some gardeners like Rachel, Luke, and Samantha not only cherish the community but realize it takes a community for the garden to thrive, others are not as willing to participate or have any desire to be part of the larger community. This sentiment could be because people do not realize how big a time commitment the garden takes or they do not apprehend the necessary chores and duties involved in contributing to the garden as a whole, for example weeding around your plot or being involved in workdays. As discussed above, UTA CG has a difficult time getting their gardeners to come out to workdays and thus relies greatly on UTA student volunteers. At a general meeting, one woman said she "didn't know if this was just a garden or a community garden" commenting on the concern about some gardeners' lack of commitment to the garden (Field notes 8.24.13). Some gardeners suggested meetings and workdays should become mandatory. But a lot of people did not like that idea, one woman saying, "we're all adults" insinuating making events mandatory would treat the gardeners as if they were children (Field notes 8.24.13). She also mentioned that taking care of her plot is enough of a time constraint as it is and that some people just do not have the time or effort or desire to attend meetings or work days, especially when some already clean up around their plot and maintain their plot, which are part of the rules of the garden.

Gardeners are also failing to participate in the mandatory donation for UTA CG. It is required that gardeners donate 50% of their harvest in weight, record this, and report it to the City of Arlington. As mentioned before, a lot of the problems surrounding the mandatory donation is simply logistics. The gardeners are responsible for harvesting their produce and taking it to the shelter. Some people dislike having to take their produce to a separate location; others have a hard time giving 50% when their produce is not ready to be harvested all at once but instead is ready at different times. For example, Anne asks, “When is something ready to pick? I might have one pepper ready to pick or one cucumber and so, you’re gonna cut a cucumber in half” (personal interview, November 20, 2013)? One woman said she has even gone to the grocery store to purchase food to donate in order to fulfill her required donation (Field notes 8.24.13).

But there are some people who simply do not donate. Now that there is a garden council, this group of people, along with the City of Arlington, has been keeping track of who is and who is not donating. The council then contacts those gardeners who have not reported any donations to remind them of the requirement. UTA CG, as well as DUG, has concerns about maintaining community amongst their gardeners which can distract from those who find gratification in the community of the garden.

Let us now hear from some gardeners from UTA CG about community and why they joined this garden:

Besides getting you know the vegetables... meeting the different people out there and you have all different ethnic groups, you have all different ages, uh socioeconomic

and educational background and I always think it's a great common denominator... there's always something you can learn from everyone. –Anne (personal interview, November 20, 2013)

Anne, who speaks purposefully in a calm, cadenced voice, also serves on the council and appreciates working with people of different ages and backgrounds. Identifying herself as one of the oldest gardener there, she observes diversity in the garden when she is working in the garden as well as by serving on the council. Through her conversations with other gardeners, for example the Russian mother with two little girls or a young UTA student, and the difference of opinions which arise in council meetings, for example what some people consider to be strict and others not, Anne seems to value the fact that different types of people can create and contribute to a common effort, like the garden, even perhaps making the garden better.

Kathy, who also serves on the UTA CG council, also notices and appreciates the diversity of people and personalities within the garden. Though she joined the garden to grow food, she enthusiastically explains a different reason for joining the council: “I joined the council because I want to be involved in the community in which I live... And this is something I *love*, this is something I can really put my heart into because it means something to me” (personal interview, January 9, 2014). She goes on to say, “I wanted to be part of the balance” and even though some people are “polar opposites we can come together and I feel like I can work well with people on coming together” (personal

interview, January 9, 2014). Kathy's personality and her optimism enable her to work in an environment of difference of which she is proud to be a part.

#### How to be a Good Gardener: Participation and Following the Rules

The community gardens want good gardeners. But being a good gardener does not necessarily mean being successful at gardening. Camp had suggested advertising the 15 available plots in the UTA faculty newsletter because this worked so well last year. But Brandon suggested this would be too exclusive. Bonnie suggested they do it on the Facebook pages because a lot of people see those. Ryan said, "That's not to say we'll have great gardeners in there," to which Kathy replied, "It's not about great gardeners." (Field notes 1.9.14)

This interaction at the UTA CG council meeting demonstrates how some people would like to have "great" gardeners belong to the garden in the sense of experienced gardeners who will be able to grow and produce a lot of food. However, Kathy understands that belonging to a community garden is not just about being a successful gardener but something more.

As I talked to and grew to know the gardeners, I was surprised by the amount of people who had no prior experience gardening, just like me. While there are some master gardeners at each garden, the fact that there are a lot of new gardeners indicates that gardening is not the priority because a person does not have to yield an abundant, successful garden plot in order to belong. Instead, in order to be a "good" gardener, gardeners have to be part of the community through participation and abide by the rules.

If the gardener participates and follows the rules, she is viewed as a productive part of the garden, which will in turn contribute to the overall success and growth of the garden.

DUG realizes that growing food can be difficult, especially for new gardeners. If my plot was any indication of my talents as a gardener I would have probably been kicked out quickly! But planting and growing is not only a process in itself, it is a learning process, especially growing organically. Susan talks about some new gardeners: “Some of them have really had to work to get a better start, but, um, at least we know, you know, ‘cause it might be very easy for some of them to get frustrated to put something in that makes their plants grow quicker, but they’ve been really good about being patient and researching how to [garden]” (personal interview, September 27, 2013).

DUG would more quick to discipline or even kick out a gardener if she was not obeying the rules or being disruptive. If the story of how I got my plot is any indication, DUG will not tolerate insolence:

One of the things we have been really strict about is if you can't get along with your fellow gardeners, you get one warning. And if you still can't get along and you're the cause of it, then you need to go. And same thing, if you're not communicating with your line leader, if you're making it where they cannot get a hold of you, you're gonna get a warning. If you continue to not communicate, then you're gonna be asked to leave at the end of that season. Sometimes, we're gonna ask you to leave in the middle of the season if it's a real problem. And the way we set up our contract, pretty much protects DUG on everything. – Susan (personal interview, September 27, 2013)

DUG wants to be able to maintain a good community of gardeners rather than a garden that simply produces a good harvest. However, this ideal is not contradictory. UTA CG also understands that being a good gardener means actions speak louder than what is produced. Anne thinks it is silly to not participate or follow the rules because belonging to the garden “is such a great deal” (personal interview, November 20, 2013). Those who do not clean up around their plot, making it impossible to walk in the walkways, or those who have never responded to Smith or Camp “in *any way*” make it harder for the other gardeners who actually show up to a work day and it shows a lack of disrespect. “It’s a commitment and you sign up to do something and you do it. Or you lose out,” says Anne (personal interview, November 20, 2013).

Now that the UTA CG council is in place, they are becoming more aggressive enforcing the rules because they feel they have a legitimate method to enforce the rules which includes a revised set of rules and a fixed group of people who are willing to enforce those rules. This group of people is key because they have taken responsibility for the garden and acknowledge the necessity of having people in authority, which will help ensure each gardener is accountable to the garden and other gardeners. Camp agrees and acknowledges this fact saying, “We’re not playing games this year” (Field notes 9.26.13). At a council meeting, the council worked efficiently, freeing up plots whose owners had not responded to the council’s multiple tries to contact them. They determined: Plots will not be renewed if you do not donate or do not comply, exemplifying how important it is for gardeners to adhere to the rules.

DUG and UTA CG both believe in the importance of rules and enforcing those rules in order to create a fair, peaceful environment and to contribute to the success of the garden, for example communicating with your line leader and pulling your weight by participating in workdays, weeding, and adhering to what can and cannot be grown. Furthermore, participation and following the rules also speaks to the community of gardeners. Instead of merely producing food, by belonging to these community gardens, each gardener is accountable to one another, and respecting other gardeners and the concept of the garden as a whole. Each garden also demonstrates how important participating and following the rules are through their disciplinary actions.

### Sharing and Learning

Gardeners often report not seeing other people at the gardens when they are there due to individual constraints and schedules. However, when there are other gardeners at the garden, respondents always discuss talking with these gardeners, or at the very least saying hello. Many of the gardeners also go to the Internet to answer their questions about how to grow a certain plant or what to do about pests. But more than the Internet, the gardeners use each other as sources of information. At meetings, potlucks, and in the garden, people continually share their experiences of gardening and are more than willing to offer advice on how to get rid of squash bugs, spray soapy water on them, how to cook kale, with salt and balsamic oil, and what to do with dead plants, simply cut them up and fold them back into your soil. Sharing with other gardeners and family members and

learning from one another are present at both gardens and significant to how gardeners act in the garden and with each other.

Several gardeners believe the garden is beneficial for their children. Susan, who has a young daughter, was excited to teach her about gardening because she grew up gardening and believes gardening to be a pure, healthy, and community-building endeavor. She says “I love being able to take my child. She plays and hangs out. She’s been to every [event] down here” (personal interview, September 27, 2013). Susan has also noticed how the garden has affected other families and the community of Deep Ellum: “You don’t see a lot of families down here. People just assume that kids don’t live in Deep Ellum but they do. They just don’t have any reason to come out... but now the gardens will bring those [families] out” (personal interview, September 27, 2013).

Luke, who became involved with DUG because his wife was interested in the garden thought the garden would be a “fun family project” (Luke interview). The garden also benefits his daughter by acting as a park and a way for her to contribute to her parents work in the garden. Because they live in a high rise, Luke knows the garden is a good place for her to be outside and run around. He has even noticed “that when we say we want to go to the garden she gets excited” (personal interview, January 23, 2014). Luke’s daughter, even though she “usually ends up playing with the water hose, she likes to get in the middle and wants to dig with the shovels” (personal interview, January 23, 2014). He sees how important it is for her to feel like she is helping. Even though Luke is

a novice gardener, he sees the opportunity to teach his daughter something new as well as create a new family activity which is especially conducive to their life in the city.

For those people who do not have kids, they share with other family members as well as friends. Rachel says the knowledge of community gardens, especially DUG, has “grown... through other people noticing it now” and she helps spread that knowledge through sharing her experiences, especially gardening organically and using compost, with her family and her coworkers. Her mother, who thought she was “crazy for actually getting a plot” has now, along with Rachel’s sister-in-law become interested in the garden, taken a composting class, researched a gardening technique called square foot gardening, and learned about gardening organically (personal interview, December 13, 2013). Her mother saw the success of Rachel’s garden, at times asking Rachel to run by her plot and pick up broccoli for dinner or kale to garnish a turkey with, and thought if Rachel could do it then she could be successful as well. Rachel’s coworkers have also started growing on their own in potted plants and have “started researching more of the gardening and organic stuff that I did. They give me tips like online I saw this or I heard so and so was doing this. They give you tips that you didn’t think of” (personal interview, December 13, 2013). I experienced being able to share the garden as well:

I got a hose and hand sprayer and started to connect the hose to the faucet but he grabbed it and said, “Let me do that.” So I let him hook it up and turn on the water. I was surprised how he just took over and watered my plot, asking if he was doing it right. I

was talking the whole time about my plants and some of the other ones around me. (Field notes 11.8.13)

This account with my boyfriend has taught me that I am very proud to belong to not only an activity like this, which stresses community and organically grown food, but this garden and the neighborhood of Deep Ellum. I thoroughly enjoy being able to show and talk to him about the garden and why it is there. I felt proud when, on just his second visit to the garden, he automatically got a hose and started watering my plot, leaving me to walk around and look at other people's plots. I also enjoyed taking my mom and showing her around because I knew she would love not only looking at the plants and flowers because she loves to garden but also find amusement in the fact that I was actually gardening when I wanted nothing to do with gardening as a child. I feel a part of the community by belonging to this garden and taking part in the meetings, events, and workdays. I have explained my research to a lot of people. But being *in* the garden, showing *my* plot, and sharing them with someone else are a completely different and rewarding experience.

Almost every conversation, whether in an interview, at a meeting, or at a workday, includes someone sharing a recipe or a personal story of eating something grown in the garden. This type of sharing about food is welcomed by those present, except maybe when it sidetracked business in a council meeting. Gardeners are constantly seeking innovative ideas of what to do with their produce and willingly sharing and receiving ideas and suggestions from others. For example, when someone

asked what Asian eggplants were at a UTC committee meeting, Anne said they were good to plant and went on to describe how you can cook them by slicing them thinly, drizzle with olive oil, and bake at 400 degrees. She said they are so good she eats them off the tray (Field notes 1.9.14).

I learned about plants I had never heard of before and how to cook different parts of a plant. Peter told me about the African spider flower and how its leaves provide a lot of iron. You can sauté them like onions and they taste like garlic (Field notes 12.2.13). Rhonda told me you can cook the vines of the sweet potatoes and said they taste better than spinach (Field notes 9.25.13). These conversations took place in the garden, which provided a different experience because you could look at and touch the plants we were talking about. At another time at the garden, I was speaking with a woman who told me she found an awesome recipe where you wilt down Swiss chard with 2 tablespoons brown sugar and 1 tablespoon vinegar and serve it over onions. She said she ate 6 cups all by herself it was so good (Field notes 12.4.13).

This last experience perhaps impressed me most of all. I was at UTA CG and had never seen this woman before who was accompanied by her husband. Our entire interaction probably lasted less than five minutes and yet I learned everything from what her sister does in Colorado to this recipe. This experience at the UTA CG, along with the other excerpts, demonstrates how willing people are to share their knowledge with others. Furthermore, it speaks to not only the willingness but the *desire* to share first, because you find commonality with a fellow gardener based on similar experiences and second,

because it results in a sense of belonging, to the garden, and pride, in your gardening.

DUG gardeners exhibit this pride and belonging in their desire to create a DUG cookbook which will allow gardeners to share their recipes in print and also stand as a testament to individual gardeners' accomplishments and the garden as a whole.

The gardeners are also a good resource for learning about gardening:

He said, "Thank you for letting me share with you," and talked about how nice it was to talk with the fellow gardeners and see what they're planting. Beth kept going on and on about how she was trying to learn what the other people are planting and learn what each one looks like because it can be kind of hard to tell if it's just the leafy part. Stan said it was neat to talk to people to see what they're planting and he said that it was cool when people were willing to listen to you and to talk. (Field notes 10.22.13)

Though there are books and Internet resources about gardening, the majority of gardeners said they went and would rather go to other gardeners if they had a question about gardening. Rachel enjoys learning as she gardens and seeing the diverse approaches around her, saying: "It's been a learning experience to find out what makes their garden work, everybody has different ideas on it" (personal interview, December 13, 2013). Luke, who likes the "basic function of gardening," enjoys gardening more in the setting of the community garden because "you can glean stuff off more experienced people. You're not having to learn every single thing the hard way... That's probably one of the strongest benefits of the community gardens is getting that mix of professionals and amateurs" (personal interview, January 23, 2014).

As Anne and Susan voiced, the different types of people present at the gardens also includes the level of skill. There are beginner gardeners and those who have many years of experience. Gardeners can take comfort in the fact that other beginners have had the same troubles, like having too many leaves and not enough tomatoes on your plant, and that the more experienced gardeners are willing to share tips and what they have learned over the years. Luke believes having this mix of experience and having people willing to share makes gardening easier than if he was to garden for the first time alone, at home.

Kathy looks at the success of the plots around her: “Other gardeners, you know, you’ll see something being very fruitful in their plot and I’ll ask them hey, what’s going on there and they’ll tell me” (personal interview, January 9, 2014). Anne also takes advantage of talking to other gardeners:

I’ve learned a lot by just asking questions and there are a couple of master gardeners out there who know so much. And when I found out that you can look at the blossom of a squash and know if it’s a male or a female and they both grow on the plants and you have to have both for the plant to get fruit. And I didn’t know that (personal interview, November 20, 2013).

These excerpts demonstrate how the community of gardeners utilizes each other for information about gardening. Sometimes gardeners actively seek help from more experienced gardeners and other times these exchanges occur by happenstance. From these responses, it is evident the gardeners are curious and excited about what they can do

with the food they grow. The sharing and learning that takes place at the gardens and at meetings also speaks to the desire to have a community of people who can take advantage of each other's knowledge, experience, and ability.

#### Of Nature: Organic, Compost, and Life

Each garden is organic. Therefore compost is a necessity for this type of garden and chemical inputs are not used. Organic gardening and composting can be a lot of work, but the gardeners genuinely appreciate these aspects of gardening and the life it brings to their plants:

It's just really important that people understand it's not harder to grow your food organically, it's not more expensive necessarily to grow your own food organically. And it's better for the environment. Because we're renting those plots, somebody's going to come behind you and they need to know what you put in that soil. – Susan (personal interview, September 27, 2013)

Luke also observes the benefits of being able to grow organically. Before he joined the garden, his family was conscious about trying to buy organic food, but if you “go to Whole Foods, you can pay a lot of money for something that you can grow just as easily” (personal interview, January 23, 2014).

Rachel perceives an entertaining aspect of gardening organically. She says:

It's kind of fun and interesting about the organic to figure out stuff like plant food or anything like that. Instead of just being given a bottle that already has it all

mixed up, it's kind of interesting to see the chemical makeup of it yourself. You need this and this and this is the reason you need this because the soil needs nitrogen or whatever instead of just being oh, just pour this on it or spray this on it. It's intriguing and it's a learning process, it's like you're actually learning instead of somebody just giving you a bottle (personal interview, December 13, 2013).

Susan, Luke, and Rachel describe that growing organically gives them a sense of control and empowerment. Instead of buying (potentially expensive) organic food at a store or a pre-mixed bottle of plant food, these gardeners are enabled through their conscious decisions to grow what they could purchase and know that it is only through their efforts that they have produced this food. As Rachel mentioned, the gardener is also given a chance to learn *how* your food grows and what inputs it needs to grow well. As I learned, you do not have to do much for lettuce to grow tremendously in the winter as it comes back tenfold each time you take some to eat. In the summer however, the Texas heat can be brutal and if your tomato leaves are yellow or there are no tomatoes on the vine, then you may need to remedy the problem by adding more nitrogen to the soil or checking if there is a fungus problem. The gardener can determine the problem herself and fix it exactly how she sees fit. This process not only teaches the gardener about the science of gardening but also allows her to be responsible for the food she grows and consumes.

The gardeners also appreciate, via organic gardening, that life is continuous and cooperative which allows them to see the big picture of how different facets of life fit together. Samantha recalls her childhood, commenting: “I think it was just ingrained in me as a child [recycling and not wasting]. There’s something very cool about seeing the cycle of life... it’s food, goes in the compost as rubbish, turns back into humus, goes back into the garden, turns into food, it’s just that cycle” (personal interview, February 1, 2014).

Organic gardening does come with its challenges. However, as Anne explains, she realizes some challenges are necessary aspects of the process: “A challenge is that you get a lot of bugs. But I really feel like we’ve taken so much of their space that they’re entitled to have whatever they can eat [laughs]. I don’t like them to take everything, but I don’t get mad when they take something. It’s their environment too” (personal interview, November 20, 2013). Jeff, who believes organic gardening is the only way people should garden, is amazed by the process of compost and the regenerative life cycle like Samantha is, and describes in detail black soldier fly larvae:

Composting is really interesting. Black soldier fly larvae are very rapid and they eat everything. And one of the great things about them is because as they mature they’re going to turn into the fly and they wanna climb up out of the container. What people do is they put this ramp so it allows them to get out and up and they’ll put them into jars or directly into a chicken yard. Chickens love them. Tilapia love them. It’s stacking functions, it’s making the most use you can out of

the different things. I like finding those natural patterns that we can use (personal interview, February 4, 2014).

Growing vegetables is not an easy task and it is a learning process for many gardeners, as it was for me. The gardeners could probably not live off their produce but some gardeners do not even plant what they would eat. Instead, some gardeners plant what they perceive as easy to grow just so they can grow something in their plots. When they gain more confidence or become more curious, they start to grow food they would actually eat or an unfamiliar plant:

I guess because we're beginners we wanted to try things that were not too hard to grow like peppers and tomatoes. Herbs are pretty hardy and so that's what we started with. I don't think we organized the plants very well to start. We had some plants that we didn't realize how big they were gonna get and they crowded out some of the other plants. So next time, I have to go and cut down a lot of the stuff that's already died off and when we start again we'll know a little bit better how to organize, because some of the plants that we really wanted didn't do very well because it just got smothered mainly by the cherry tomatoes they just went crazy.

– Luke (personal interview, January 23, 2014)

Susan, who used to hate planting in the fall, had a particularly good fall when her lettuce grew abundantly. She then “had a yellow squash plant that just produced insane amounts of yellow squash. I don't really eat a lot of yellow squash so I gave them all away. You know, I now realized I wanna start growing things that I actually [eat] instead

of just experimenting with a lot of stuff” (personal interview, September 27, 2013). As a gardener learns her abilities and becomes more confident, she is more likely to experiment or start growing different plants for reasons other than they are easy to grow.

While it does depend on the gardener, there are some plants that are known to be “easy to grow” for example, tomatoes and peppers in the summer and lettuce and spinach in the winter. Herbs are also easy to manage throughout the year. Tomatoes and peppers are able to amazingly stand up to the heat and lettuce will not die in the winter. I even had success for my first time with peppers and lettuce and spinach and some really abundant and fragrant oregano. There are other vegetables many gardeners find hard to grow. Susan mentioned that for some reason Brussels sprouts never do well at DUG and many people at UTA CG refuse to grow squash because the squash bugs can get so bad and infect others’ plots. But Susan, at DUG, had success with her squash and because she does not eat squash, gave it away. Brandon, at UTA CG, similarly gave away his turnips to Anne. He grew them because they were a heavy vegetable and would contribute to the required weighted donation and not because he enjoyed eating them. Anne, however, was excited to take them, even offering to trade them for some of her cabbage. When Anne asked Brandon if he liked cabbage he replied, “No, I like cheeseburgers” (Field notes 11.12.13).

Since many people grow what they do not necessarily eat, their produce is given away to someone else in the garden, as seen in the exchange between Brandon and Anne, or donated, for example, to Mission Arlington for UTA CG or the local soup kitchen for

DUG. Giving produce to another gardener solidifies the community of gardeners. As I discussed earlier, I felt very grateful when Beth gave me a handful of her lettuce. It was nice to think that people are generous and I appreciated eating the lettuce more knowing that it came from someone who gardened along side me.

Rachel first started growing broccoli because she had success growing it the first season she planted it. But as she learns more she is experimenting with new plants, once again, describing the process as fun: “It’s been kind of fun to just try tomatoes or something like that or some random peppers just to see if you can do it. I’ve been picking one plant that I have no clue of, like this time I picked rhubarb, and I don’t know how that grows but we’re going to learn and see” (personal interview, December 13, 2013).

Anne continues to plant tomatoes even though she finds them hard to grow. She says: “my favorite things to plant are not what does well [laughs]. But that would be tomatoes because I eat tomatoes all the time. And I have planted without **any** success, lots of heirlooms. And I’m sure it’s just me. But every year I hope to be better” (personal interview, November 20, 2013). Kathy also demonstrates Anne’s dedicated attitude by naming different plants she has tried to plant and her resolve to be better:

Tomatoes has been a big one because they’re fairly easy and you get quick results. My squash didn’t do well at all, the bugs got to them. Peppers do very well too, I’ve done that, I’ve done cucumbers, I’ve done melons. Melons have done well. This year I want to branch out and do some different things. I’ve never done okra. I’ve heard it’s easy. I wanna do okra. I did eggplant but it failed. I’m gonna try

eggplant again. I want to do onions and maybe some potatoes because the potatoes I did before did not do well. I'm gonna be at the garden at least two times a week so now I can put more effort into it. So this spring I plan to be better. Hopefully this is my best year (personal interview, January 9, 2014).

For most, tomatoes are easy to grow and they are very abundant even though I never got any tomatoes to grow on my plants during the summer. Anne also found out that heirloom tomatoes, different from the cherry tomatoes most gardeners plant, can be very difficult because they are delicate and not as disease resistant as other tomatoes. These tomatoes have become increasingly popular in recent years because of the amazing variety and because of the personality of each tomato, which really does have a unique color, flavor, and history. For example, a particular heirloom tomato seed can be passed down in a particular family for generations. For Anne, the difficulty in growing these tomatoes did not deter her from attempting to plant them again. In fact, the challenge of successfully growing heirloom tomatoes seems to motivate Anne. And as Rachel pointed out, it is fun to pick an unfamiliar plant, though unsure of how successful you will be, and enjoying learning how to grow it.

These gardeners reiterate that belonging to these gardens is not contingent on their success as a gardener or even being able to eat what they grow. Instead it is the growing practices which signify the goals of the garden which are important. Failure, success, experimenting, failure again, and perseverance are all part of these gardeners' experience attempting to grow food. Some see growing a tomato or an eggplant as a challenge. One

day, they will successfully grow one. Others test themselves to see if they can grow one new plant a season. The gardeners grow alongside the plants they plant as they become more confident or more adventurous.

### Taste, Touch, Smell, and Feel: Gardens and the Senses

As a gardener, each person works in a plot and in the garden, eats the food grown from the gardens, spends time being in the garden, and experiences feelings of awe and accomplishment. This section examines gardener's sensorial perceptions and experiences of being in the garden through taste, touch, smell, and feelings.

### In the Garden: Being, Taste, and Smell

Being in the garden affects the gardeners physically and emotionally. Some gardeners expressed coming to the garden to relax from a hectic day and take joy in the physical aspect of gardening. Susan is altered by the space of the garden. She says, "It's very Zen for me at time to go and just water or stick my hands in the dirt (personal interview, September 27, 2013). Kathy calls visiting and working in the garden therapeutic and also comments about working in the dirt: "I love digging in the dirt. I love the whole process, the planting, the harvesting, watching it grow" (personal interview, January 9, 2014). Samantha, who is in charge of turning the compost, a hard job, enjoys the work because she does not have to think about the work. Instead, she just does it manually and enjoys turning off her brain for the time she is at the garden (personal interview, January 9, 2014). Working with the compost might seem like a dirty job, but Samantha is fond of the process and the experience: "Compost has a smell. You

may have a sour compost but a good compost has a fantastic smell and then it's just always interesting to start moving the compost and to just see how much life is in there" (personal interview, February 1, 2014).

Of course, the gardeners also experience tasting the food they grow, which they describe as rewarding because they grew it themselves instead of buying it at a store. Luke is amazed at the process of putting something in the ground, growing it yourself, and being able to harvest and eat what you have grown (personal interview, January 23, 2014). Rachel not only appreciates the knowledge and hard work it takes to grow your own food but believes the food "tastes really good because you [grew] it" and enjoys being able to drop by the garden, "pick some lettuce on my way home [and] have a fresh salad" (personal interview, December 13, 2013). Kathy also believes that her hard work is rewarded through the food she is able to enjoy: "You did the work, you babysat that plant, you watch it grow up, it's the fruits of your labor. To me, it just makes it so much more satisfying" (personal interview, January 9, 2013).

Being in a garden involves smelling, feeling, and tasting. These responses demonstrate how a garden can be a place to escape from a hectic life, a place to enjoy the ethereal feeling of dirt in your hands, and a place to savor unique, fresh, and delicious tastes. The garden also leaves the gardeners feeling a particular sense of accomplishment and pride from the work they put into their plot. These feelings are specifically unique to the experience of a gardener.

## Sharing the Garden: Excitement and Awe

Along with these experiences of tasting and being in the garden, gardeners express a sense of awe and wonder at what they can grow. In interviews, when gardeners talk about the plants they are growing, what they do with their harvest, or their experience of growing, they would become excited. The gardeners love to talk about specific plants they are growing or a problem they have with a particular plant and they always ask what I was growing, without even knowing I had a plot. Their excitement is contagious and it made me, a beginner gardener, eager to experience what they were describing.

Rachel talks with pride as she describes how she shares her produce from her plot with her family. She believes being able to get produce from her plot is “kind of handy... When I did make my turkey, it needed some fresh herbs, one of the recipes had rosemary and sage and thyme and so I just got fresh ones and just grinded them up and put them in there, it was kind of nice instead of getting all the little bitty bottles of [spices]. And if you want to have broccoli tonight, stop by and grab some [laughs]” (personal interview, December 13, 2013).

Susan describes the particular excitement new gardeners feel when they are able to harvest: “We know when people are new, they have ten peppers, pulling that one pepper, or even if you got one pepper you were very excited” (personal interview, September 27, 2013). Anne recounts this excitement from her first year of gardening: “And I was thrilled the first year, I had cantaloupe and I thought they were doing great. I

had vines, I didn't know that they *will* vine, even when they're big like this [holds up both hands about the size of a volleyball] they'll be on a vine and won't fall off" (personal interview, November 20, 2013).

I experienced this delight and enthusiasm as well. One time at DUG, I was walking toward my plot when I heard a woman yell from all the way across the garden, "I got a carrot!" She said it very excitedly and loud and I laughed a little at her enthusiasm (Field notes 11.11.13). The following excerpt from my field notes demonstrates a particular thrilling moment for me:

My kale looks the same but healthy. My little sprouts coming through are even bigger than before! This makes me so excited and encouraged (Field notes 10.22.13)!

I particularly identified with Susan when she describes encouraging a particular plant to grow: "I had talked to this plant, I had sung to this plant. And I knew it was gonna fruit when I was gone two weeks to Colorado. And by God, it waited right until I left to fruit. And I came back and it still fruited. But in the hottest part of the summer when it's not supposed to do well. And they're kind of a sweet cucumber. It's really good (personal interview, September 27, 2013).

One night at UTA CG, Eric came over to his plot with a bucket and a knife and started cutting up the vines on top and then digging out the actual sweet potatoes under the dirt. He was putting the vines in the bucket to put in the compost later. He dug up a huge sweet potato and I stood in awe as he pulled it from the ground and brushed off the

dirt. I could not believe how big it was! I asked if I could take a picture of him with it and he stood up tall and held it up and looked proud of it (Figure 29) (Field notes 9.25.13).



Figure 29 Eric proudly holds up a large, freshly unearthed sweet potato at UTA CG

This chapter has shown how gardeners sensually experience the garden and the food they grow. Gardeners feel physically different when they are in the garden and are aware of how different it is when eating the food they have grown themselves versus food they buy, for example, at a grocery store. Gardeners also voice a sense of attachment, pride, and excitement for the process of growing food and the food they are able to harvest. They respect the time and effort it takes to grow their food organically and the cycle of life which growing food represents and entails. Gardeners also realize

the importance of experiencing a sense of ownership of the garden in order to feel they are part of the community of the garden. Most significantly, gardeners value the garden because of its potential to create a community through meeting new and different people.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

#### Harvesting

*Okra's funny. Because if you look at it one day, it's about this tall [holds up fingers to demonstrate the size] [and] well, that's too small. And the next day it might be like this [holds up fingers again to show a bigger size] or in two days and then that's really kind of too big. And in a week it could grow to be like that [holds up hands showing an even bigger size] and then it's too tough, too fibrous.*

*Anne (11.20.2013, UTA CG)*

I will now turn to a discussion of the significance of the characteristics of each garden as well as the responses from the gardeners by comparing the two gardens. The most important themes to compare are structure, management, and leadership; garden identity; and growing community.

#### Structure, Management, and Leadership

By “studying up” as well as down, I examine how decisions which affect the garden and its gardeners are made, how conflict is dealt with, and how the power to discipline is enacted. I do not simply look at a group of gardeners and why they garden, but how the gardeners contribute, and how acceptably they contribute, to the success of the garden as a whole. This approach also enables me to see both sides of a coin: on one side, the experience of the gardeners and on the other side, the experience of leaders and

the decision-making bodies. Understanding both sides creates a more complete picture of how each garden operates, its success, and the actions which lead to its success.

The most obvious differences in these two gardens are how they began and the individuals and groups involved. Consequently, these factors affect each garden's structure and its management. UTA CG is spearheaded by the City of Arlington and the University of Texas at Arlington. The University owns the land where the garden is located. After expressed community interest, the City of Arlington used its own money and resources, with some help from the University and Arlington community members, to create and build the garden. The City funds and maintains the garden and a Garden Council is responsible for day to day responsibilities, making decisions concerning the garden, and communicating with gardeners. Gardeners enjoy large garden plots to grow organic food and they donate part of their harvest to a local shelter.

DUG was created by people of the Deep Ellum neighborhood who wanted green space in their community. Along with emphasizing community and personal relationships, DUG presents a different endeavor from the many music, dining, and art activities in the neighborhood—it offers fresh food and green space. DUG became a nonprofit organization and created a committee board to plan, build, and maintain the garden. DUG is part of DECA, Deep Ellum Community Association, a volunteer community group representing residents and business owners in Deep Ellum. DUG is located on a median leased from the City of Dallas. Described as a grassroots,

“anarchistic” effort of creating, working for, and building this garden, DUG gardeners and the committee fund and maintain the garden (Field notes 9.10.13).

Because there are three separate groups involved with UTA CG- the City of Arlington, UTA, and the gardeners, managing and maintaining the garden can be challenging. These three groups must work together to ensure the garden is successful. The garden council and two representatives from the City of Arlington meet and communicate regularly concerning the operations and current issues of the garden. Though the University has a limited participatory role, they still have a say in and are affected by how the garden is run, its current issues, and how the garden council approaches these issues.

Concerning a popular topic amongst the gardeners, having a fence due to concerns about theft, Brandon acknowledges that this discussion will have to take place in front of Smith and Camp, who have more knowledge of how flexible UTA will be on this issue (Field notes 1.9.14). Brandon’s observation reveals two things. First, it reveals that, as President of the council, he is not aware of the exact position of UTA regarding the fence. Much confusion has surrounded this issue and in previous council meetings, even Smith and Camp have expressed uncertain and conflicting statements about UTA’s stance (Field notes 11.14.13). Second, his statement shows that UTA, the City, and the council are not communicating effectively with one another. It has also been suggested that UTA could make an overriding and binding decision because the University owns the land on which the garden is located.

Though UTA CG is still establishing how effective the council will be in its leadership role for the garden, it needs to be determined how, in the future, the council will work with the City and the University most effectively and efficiently, especially regarding important decisions. While the council is encouraged to reach its own conclusions and decisions for the garden, reinforced by George who, at one meeting tells the council this is *their* garden, it will always have to work with UTA, perhaps even being acquiescent to UTA's policies (Field notes 11.4.13). I am concerned with how this might affect how the council perceives its role of acting for the gardeners and getting tasks accomplished. While there is a general attitude of gratitude towards UTA and the City of Arlington for the existence of the garden, there may come a point when the gardeners' goals do not align with what UTA or the City of Arlington will allow.

The garden has received and continues to receive tremendous support from the City of Arlington in general and Smith and Camp in particular. While UTA does not take an active role in the garden, Smith and Camp, from the very beginning, have been the leaders for the garden, communicating with the gardeners, answering questions, and heading meetings. They now encourage the shift of this leadership to the council. During this transition phase, Smith and Camp continue to support the council and their ability to manage the garden. They truly want the garden to be a successful, gardener-run project.

The council's leadership is now crucial to the garden. It allows Smith and Camp a respite from managing the garden, an ultimate goal. The fact that, after three years, this council is just now effective suggests the City did not know how big an undertaking

maintaining a garden would be as well as reflects poor planning of not establishing a ruling body like the council in the past. It could also signify there was not a group of gardeners who were willing to take on the task of managing and leading the garden. The current garden council accepts this challenge. The council also allows the gardeners themselves to have a stake and say in the garden and thus a desire to fight for the success of the garden.

This ownership, via the council, has been expressed by the gardeners as an important factor in the success of the garden. This ownership signifies a responsibility for and to the garden, for example, caring about the cleanliness or appearance of the garden; thinking of not only an individual plot as “yours” but the garden as “ours;” and actively taking part in maintenance and concern for the future of the garden:

A lot of folk come in and it's their plot they're just kind of like going to the grocery store, in and out, this is my plot I'm outta here kind of thing [so] instead of just showing up and let UTA and the Parks Department do everything I think we should take ownership. – Kathy (personal interview, January 9, 2014).

Kathy has noticed how, in the past, gardeners did not worry about how the garden was being managed or by whom. “But,” she says, “that’s what you get in a growing organization so I’m really glad that we have the council now” (personal interview, January 9, 2014).

Anne also wishes the gardeners would rise up and take a bigger role in caring for the garden. She says, “I’d like to be self-sustaining” showing the desire to have a garden

managed by the gardeners (personal interview, November 20, 2013). The council recognizes the significance of the transition of leadership and through their hard work and commitment, has demonstrated they are willing to work for the success of the garden.

DUG, even though it is sponsored by DECA, is a self-sustaining organization. The committee is responsible for raising and maintaining its funds and approving any changes or big decisions which affect the garden. Because of this single body, DUG and its methods of operation are much more contained. The committee, who also has to vote and pass an important issue in order for it to be implemented, works together effectively and efficiently. They are successful because they created and have maintained this form of leadership and decision-making before the garden was even built. The committee still has to get permission or permits from the city if they want to, for instance, install a logo for the gardens. However, once the committee knows its options, it is only the committee which decides how to proceed. The land is essentially theirs as long as they care for it—the City of Dallas does not have input like the University does with UTA CG.

UTA CG and DUG provide two different examples of how a garden can be maintained and organized and the challenges and benefits of each. While UTA CG has monetary and moral support from the City of Arlington and land given by the University, DUG has to maintain its funds from plot fees, potential donations, and possible fundraising efforts, if large expenses have to be made. These structures also affect how efficiently the garden is managed and how leadership is enacted.

Because the City of Arlington was such a strong presence from the beginning, the gardeners allowed the City employees to be the main people responsible for the garden and did not realize how the gardeners themselves could take ownership of the garden and that gardener ownership was actually desired by the City. DUG, on the other hand, has known from day one how much of a monetary and temporal commitment it takes to keep the garden running. Thus, UTA CG's gardeners had to learn not only could they become more involved in managing and being leaders for the garden but that it would create a stronger community as they have seen already by creating the council. DUG has solidified its organization and leadership from the beginning and is able to focus on different projects including supporting a local urban farm and organizing social events for the gardeners.

#### Enforcing Rules and Taking Action

Both the UTA CG council and DUG committee are responsible for enforcing the rules and ensuring the gardeners follow these rules. Susan discusses how important it is to use organic gardening practices but more importantly, how crucial it is for the gardeners to adhere to the rules. She explains, "We have a very strict rule: if you're busted once, you're gonna get a warning. If you don't fix it, you're out" (personal interview, September 27, 2013). Remember, part of being a "good" gardener is following the rules of the garden. This adherence ensures the garden is successful and that the garden is being used efficiently and as it was intended. Equally important is enforcing those rules. Each garden has a list of rules, a "do not grow" list which outlines plants not

allowed to be grown in the garden, and a contract that each gardener signs. These features ensure the garden is protected as well as the DUG committee and line leaders and UTA CG council who are responsible for addressing and resolving any conflict, rule breaking, or intolerable behavior which may arise.

The council and the committee are made up of the gardeners. Anyone can volunteer to become a member, though the DUG committee will have to vote in each member. The committee and the council also make decisions as a team. Therefore, abuse of power is limited. For example, DUG committee and UTA CG council both discussed issues which were brought forward by a member before any action was taken. At UTA CG there was a man who could not speak English and it seemed as if he was caring for three plots but it was unclear how he obtained these plots. This situation was troublesome because the council did not know whom to contact about renewing the plots' leases for the next year. The council decided to ask a gardener, who they thought could communicate with the man, to talk to him. The council resolved the issue by getting an interpreter and speaking to the man who explained his daughter and another friend gave him their plots. The council was able to relay to him how a person can have only one plot and that it needed to be registered each year. This example demonstrated how the council was able to work together to effectively solve a problem.

Each garden has shown it can successfully enforce its rules as well as resolve conflict. Whether it is giving a gardener a warning, explaining the rules in case of misunderstanding, or, in the case of my plot's previous owner, kicking someone out, the

committee and the council have a right to act in order to protect the garden and its gardeners. They share the burden and responsibility by discussing and deciding a course of action. This shared responsibility further signifies the communal aspect of each garden and its importance by demonstrating how the group and the garden as a whole is more important than one individual.

### Building a Definition of Garden Identity

The formation of each garden and its management also greatly affects the identity of the garden and therefore affects how the gardeners act within the garden and towards each other. Throughout this thesis, it is clear that each garden has its own character, history, and strategy for moving forward. Each garden creates their own unique definition and understanding of what they want their community garden to be. This identity and the fact that it is organic are essential because it reflects the gardeners' conception of their garden and its importance.

### Our Neighborhood Garden

DUG's identity is certainly intertwined with the neighborhood of Deep Ellum. DUG grew out of and is representative of Deep Ellum. Susan comments even though DUG is technically in Downtown Dallas's planning district, it is the neighborhood and people of Deep Ellum that worked to build the garden in order to have "something green and unique and community based." She goes on to say: "There is a neighborhood here, it's called Deep Ellum. And so we really wanted this to be our project and people to understand that we're not just a bunch of bars and music venues. There are people down

here that do things like garden” (personal interview, September 27, 2013). Susan’s observation suggests DUG perhaps is helping to create a new image of Deep Ellum. The garden can still identify with the neighborhood but it is a contrast from the bars and music venues.

It is only the imaginative and inclusive features of the neighborhood of Deep Ellum which allows for a garden to stand alongside these bars and music venues. The unique and creative personality of this neighborhood and its residents led to the creation of the garden. DUG is proud and confident of their identity as a green space which advocates community within an urban environment. The close and supportive nature of this neighborhood, along with dedicated and hardworking people, easily facilitated the creation of their garden as well as its acceptance: “It’s a very prominent place and I think the community works well with acknowledging that and I think the gardeners keep up with it... they’re proud of it, they want it to be a landmark in Deep Ellum and I think everybody has pretty much been on board with that” (personal interview, December 12, 2013).

### Proprietorship

While DUG has a stable and organic sense of their identity, UTA CG is struggling to define and conceive of their identity. Part of UTA’s identity as a garden is its location and relationship with the University and the City of Arlington. Anne is grateful for what she receives at the garden, especially at the price she pays, and believes “you should respect what the city has given to you” (Anne interview). Kathy, also voicing an indebted

attitude says: “We need to kind of mind our p’s and q’s or UTA could take [the garden] away” (Kathy interview). These remarks demonstrate a proprietary relationship with the University and the City and even an unpredictable existence for the garden. Because it is UTA’s land, there is always a possibility the University could decide to use the land for something else.

Another facet in this relationship is the fact that the University and City decided these gardeners will donate a portion of their harvest and designated a specific organization to which they must give. While most gardeners did not have a problem with donating, Kathy commenting, “I love [donating] because it helps so many people in our town,” others, as I have mentioned, have a problem with the logistics or being forced to donate to a specific organization. Jeff is concerned with the limits of donating: “I’d like to see more diversity in the different kinds of projects we work with” (personal interview, February 4, 2014). Anne adds, “I don’t like being told *who* to donate to... I wonder what their thought process was and why they picked Mission Arlington and why they couldn’t say you can donate wherever as long as you donate” (personal interview, November 20, 2013). These comments voice confusion regarding the motives behind certain decisions about the garden, made by the City and the University, suggesting disconnect between how gardeners identify with the garden and how the City and University view the garden.

Though UTA CG may still be working on trying to create their own definition over time and through the issues they face, the gardeners have come a long way. For example, UTA CG realized that part of their definition of their garden includes its

exclusivity: you have to be a member of the garden in order to garden in or take from the garden. They learned this through their experience of theft which they responded to by putting up signs. They also believe their definition includes a requirement of some participation and commitment to the overall garden. This creation of identity also signifies that this identity is not stagnant or restrictive. The gardeners have been able to mold and form their identity as a group and will only continue to do so in the future. While each gardener has to agree to and comply with the established rules, thus the mandatory donation, there needs to be more communication and a greater understanding between the gardeners and the City and the University. The proprietary relationship is not necessarily negative but it could be problematic for the gardeners and their attempt to take ownership and more of a stake in the garden, which is encouraged strongly by the City.

### Growing Community

The history and leadership of each garden and the identities they construct lend to the unique character for each garden. UTA CG is a cooperative effort between three entities which demonstrates how multiple parties can contribute to a common goal but these multiple parties also demand extra effort and coordination. DUG is a proud neighborhood garden which exhibits what individuals who come together can achieve. One of the common threads in these gardens is the desire for community.

At both gardens, gardeners expressed a desire to meet different people and be part of a larger group. However both gardens had a difficult time instilling that sense of

community in the beginning and they continue to struggle to make it endure. UTA CG experienced low attendance at meetings and on workdays and a lack of care for the garden as a whole. DUG made workdays and meetings mandatory in order to increase their gardener attendance at these events. How does a garden create community? Can you force people to create and maintain community?

DUG has attempted to create more community by designating lines, each with a line leader. The line leader is encouraged to communicate regularly with the people in his or her line and suggest outings for the line to do together. DUG, in addition to maintaining the cleanliness of and around your plot, has chores for the gardeners. My experience below demonstrates how a gardener can feel more attached to the garden and included by performing the garden chores.

I was scheduled to water the community plot outside the fence closest to the parking lot. Even though my line has had two times before this for chores, this was my first time to actually do any because the first time it rained all week and the second time the water was shut off because the weather was freezing. Even though it's supposed to rain tonight, I wanted to get out there and do my part. It was kind of fun and I felt even more part of the garden and like it was partly mine. It was a neat feeling. It was so cold outside and the water dripping down my hand from the hose attachment was so cold but I had my hoodie sleeves pushed up my arm because I did not want to get those wet. There was no one else there at

the garden. I then struggled to put up the long hose as it kept getting tangled.

(Field notes 2.3.14)

By doing chores, I not only felt like I contributed to the success of the garden but I also realized the importance for the other gardeners to complete their chores when it is their turn. If a gardener does not complete her chore when it is her turn, the garden may suffer because of her neglect. For example, plants in the communal bed may die from lack of water or if the beds outside the fence are not watered, these plants may die and not attract butterflies and bees, which are important to pollination. In addition, if a gardener does not complete her chores when it is her turn, it is not fair to those gardeners who always do their chores and this creates resentment. Several line leaders have expressed frustration with certain gardeners who never do their chores, even when the line leaders reminded these gardeners (Field notes 11.12.13). Appreciating the significance of the chores allows the gardener to see the garden as a cooperative and communal endeavor makes each gardener responsible to one another. For the garden to be successful, it needs each and every gardener's contribution. Finally, this garden also tries to schedule events at the garden such as the Fall Potluck to encourage people to interact and get to know one another.

UTA CG has not had any events outside of meetings and the potluck, which usually accompanies those meetings. The council is a big step towards enabling the gardeners to become more involved in the garden, however only the council members

benefit from this experience. One council member discusses the importance of the council's role in fostering community in the garden:

I'd like to see the garden community become more of a community and I don't know what it's gonna take to make that happen unless the garden council spear heads that. If we become more cohesive and remain that way and then we kind of get everybody else to be, I think that will help (Field notes 11.13.14).

Kathy continues this line of thinking with specific ideas saying, "Have a potluck and things like that. Maybe have some Christmas lights on the pavilion thing and do something that you start at 4 o'clock and you go on till seven. And not all the time because people have their lives to live but I would love that" (personal interview, January 9, 2014). Jeff agrees with Kathy when he says he would like to see gardeners "reaching out and really trying to make those connections and start those events, like hey, let's go out and have a barbeque or hey, let's go out and have a game day" (personal interview, February 9, 2014). But he has yet to see any effort or desire for these events. Time will tell what strategies and ideas the council will implement to increase participation and community in the garden and if these ideas are effective to the degree the council desires.

The feeling of community however is not completely missing from these gardens. As demonstrated by the interviews responses, several people have enjoyed being able to share advice, swap food, and learn from one another. There are other instances where gardeners felt they were part of the larger community of gardeners:

He said they were getting ready for the fall/winter season and were planting leafy plants like lettuce and Brussels sprouts and broccoli. I asked if he usually sees people out at the garden and he said not really. But one time he met his neighbor out here and the neighbor told him he watered his plot every so often because it looked like it needed it. R.J. appreciated that and said you really sense the community with that action. (Field notes 10.2.13)

DUG committee members demonstrate how they have individual ties to one another and care about one another. During meetings there is a lot of personal talk. Everyone seems to know what is going on in someone's life or where someone has gone on vacation or for work. One evening, multiple people came up to Pam and asked about her new job. They were genuinely happy for her. Another evening, Susan asked Donna if she wanted Susan to have people get meals together for her family since Donna's family member is going through chemo. This gesture by Susan was heartfelt and I was touched by her desire to help Donna's family.

The committee also has gone out for dinner at a restaurant in Deep Ellum instead of having a committee meeting. While there was some talk of the garden, most of the conversation involved what was happening in their personal lives. These examples show how intimate the gardeners are and the relationships they have formed through the garden. While UTA CG council members do not exhibit this intimate type of conversation with each other, it does not necessarily mean they will not in the future.

This council may need more time together to build this type of relationship with one another.

#### City versus Suburban

Because DUG is located in Dallas, a city, and UTA CG is located in Arlington, a suburb, I thought DUG would have a more difficult time instilling and creating community because people would be busier and have larger networks of people they know and with which they can socialize. However, over time, I learned that the dynamics of the neighborhood of Deep Ellum and its exclusivity, supportiveness, and smaller size (in comparison with Arlington) may give DUG an advantage over UTA CG. Because DUG gardeners are already part of the Deep Ellum neighborhood, they share the connection and attachment to the neighborhood. DUG gardeners also frequent the same businesses and know the same people, exemplified by Luke's description of "community guilt" and the conversation I overheard in the coffee shop in Deep Ellum. In contrast, UTA CG gardeners are UTA students, UTA faculty, Arlington residents, Fort Worth residents, and residents from other cities. UTA CG gardeners are more spread out and they do not necessarily go to the same churches, their kids do not go to the same schools, and they might not frequent the same places outside the garden (George Smith and Kathy).

The neighborhood aspect also affects how the garden was imagined, created, and built. As Jeff observes, UTA CG very noticeably reflects its institutionalized sponsors who designed the garden. He says: "I'd love to see a little more out of this box type

thinking because we have box, path, box, path. We have so much path and I'm thinking, ok, how could we do some different concepts and doing more curves and different things like that" (personal interview, February 4, 2014).

While gardeners are able to creatively express their individual tastes by decorating their plots, demonstrated through photographs, only gardeners of DUG were able to design their garden, creating a design committee. Those who were artists and wanted to be creative could join this sub-committee and there was no restriction on what could be imagined and included. Susan describes DUG's approach: "[We] basically did the math and figured how we can fit as many [beds] as possible on that piece of land. Once we did the fence, we knew how much space we had to play with" (personal interview). The difference between UTA CG and DUG is first, UTA CG gardeners did not help design the garden while DUG gardeners did and second, Susan's use of the word "play" exhibits a more imaginative approach to the design. DUG flows seamlessly between other businesses and artwork in Deep Ellum, reflecting the personality and vibrancy of the neighborhood.

Look again at these two photographs shown previously. It is obvious there is dissimilarity in color and overall feel. The first photograph (Figure 30) shows neutral colors and rigid lines while the bottom photograph (Figure 31) shows bright colors and a quirky-shaped garden.



Figure 30 UTA CG



Figure 31 DUG artwork

Two more photographs demonstrate the discordance in design exemplified through color and form. UTA CG's toolshed is a pale, single color and a simple, square design (Figure 32). DUG's toolshed is brightly colored and imaginatively designed with a large, garage style door (Figure 33).



Figure 32 UTA CG's toolshed



Figure 33 DUG's brightly colored toolshed

While a feature like the design of the garden may seem unimportant, DUG demonstrates how their gardeners were involved in the creation and planning stages, which may affect how gardeners view or identify with the garden. DUG is a vivid and true reflection of Deep Ellum- a neighborhood- and thus its gardeners. Their design helps the garden maintain its unique identity, that of “Our Neighborhood Garden” and aids in

gardeners taking ownership because they can identify with the garden that is located in their neighborhood. On the other hand, UTA CG is a reflection of the University and the City- institutions- instead of its group of gardeners. Because UTA CG is sponsored by the University and the City of Arlington, there are some decisions which are institutionally-driven, for example the design of the garden. UTA CG gardeners identify with a “Proprietorship” view of the garden, which may inhibit the gardeners from identifying with the garden and taking ownership thus prohibiting participation—or creating community—in the garden. However UTA CG’s current council is a reminder that UTA CG gardeners are willing to put forth the effort to make the garden feel more like it belongs to the gardeners and less to the University.

I have shown differences between UTA CG and DUG in terms of their structure, management, and leadership; each garden’s identity; and their attempt to grow community. These differences affect how the gardeners act in the garden and view the garden. Ultimately, DUG’s organic, grassroots, and self-contained nature better enables the gardeners to manage, identify with, and be part of the garden community. UTA CG’s institutionally-supported nature hinders gardeners from seeing the garden as anything other than the City’s or the University’s garden.

DUG is looking to the future and will eventually build a second garden near the original one. UTA CG, while not necessarily struggling, is fighting to find firm footing with managing the garden and attempting to define and strengthen its identity as a garden. While DUG provides an exceptional example of a community garden, UTA CG

also provides a good example of a cooperative effort to create a garden. UTA CG may just have to work a little harder to achieve the type of garden they desire.

## CHAPTER 7

### IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

#### Saving Seeds

*I have a ton of seeds. I'm saving seeds. I have some seeds for okra and all different kinds of pepper and tomatoes. From this year you know.*

Anne (personal interview, November 20, 2013)

*Okra is really easy to propagate because once it dries out you just pop the seeds out and there's your next year's supply.*

Jeff (personal interview, February 4, 2014)

This research responds to a popular and growing trend—community gardens—and explores how people's "social and cultural demands" call for these gardens in their community (2007:6). Irrespective of gender, sexuality, or social, educational, or ethnic backgrounds, community gardens attract different people and create a space which thrives from this difference because it is a creative endeavor which anyone can take on and which places more emphasis on food and community than on difference. While participating as a community gardener, I observed that gardeners enjoy being able to meet different people, which means people who may come from different social and economic backgrounds, people with dissimilar hobbies, or people who think differently (exemplified in each garden's committee's makeup of members). This difference creates

a rich dynamic between the gardeners and contributes to the allure of belonging to the garden.

This project is ethnographic through participation and observation, comparative, examining two gardens in North Texas, and participatory through my work in my garden plot, learning how to garden, and experiencing two gardening seasons. Thus, this thesis furthers the connection between applied and practicing anthropology within the context of urban anthropology.

#### Metamorphosis: Amending Gardens, Amending Community

Most predominantly, and importantly, these gardens have demonstrated commitment and growth. Again and again they have “amended” their garden through learning as they have confronted logistical issues and difficulties with communication, discipline, and community. These issues were not always easy or quick to solve and some still have not been solved. But they exhibit, like a gardener who refuses to let her plants die, a fighting spirit and determination. These efforts work because the gardeners believe in what the garden can realize: green space in a city; community; fresh food; and self-reliance. Whether it be individual gardeners—through educating themselves and asking questions about how to be a successful gardener—or the committee and council—learning through trial and error and remaining dedicated to the garden—UTA CG and DUG are persistent and demonstrate a community of learners who are committed to making their garden better.

The gardens facilitate this desire and capacity to learn. As I experienced through gardening in my own plot, and as seen in other gardeners' excitement and pride in their food they grow, gardening awakens a sense of wonder, curiosity, and appreciation about how food is grown and the efforts it takes as well as the rewards it gives in order to grow that food. I never would have imagined I would grow my own food and eat it and even enjoy growing my own food. Other gardeners, too, discover they enjoy learning about plants, learning how to garden organically, and sharing this information with others, which strengthens the garden community.

I have been truly impressed by these two gardens—their desire for community, fresh food, and the effort they gave and continue to give to ensure the gardens survive. To see, walk in, and work in a garden like DUG or like UTA CG, hidden under an overpass or tucked away on a university campus, is a surreal feeling. Reading the great amount of literature on community gardens does not compare to being in the garden and working alongside its gardeners, though I attempt to give the reader a better sense of past literature by focusing on a sensorial experience and providing rich, detailed descriptions. These gardens are truly a great addition to their surroundings not only for providing something beautiful to look at but what the gardens signify: groups of people – a quirky, small neighborhood within a city, a university and its students, a city's Parks and Recreation Department, and a suburban community's residents— representing men and women, children, those from the U.S. and those who have immigrated, and those from different social and educational backgrounds, coming together to create something as big, beautiful, and unique as a community garden.

Setha Low, an anthropologist who studies public space and embodied space, allows us to think about how the public space of community gardens offer a unique opportunity to socialize and reconstitute these particular spaces with new meaning relative to those who built and work in them. She explains in *On the Plaza* (2000) how spaces can be much more than simply a place but sites which are “politically motivated artistic expressions” and which have historical, cultural, and political forces embedded in them (204). UTA CG and DUG demonstrate how individuals have (re) claimed public spaces and transformed them into a unique, community-led endeavor embedded with specific meanings. Specifically, DUG’s creativity demonstrates how a group of people can transform a city-owned median, which was useless, into a beautiful space in which to grow food. Furthermore, this median is an extension of the Deep Ellum neighborhood, created out of the desire for green space and which is a unique addition to the culture of Deep Ellum. UTA CG, in the same way, utilized a previously unused University piece of land to become part of the University’s commitment to sustainability and a place where UTA students and Arlington residents can grow food. These spaces represent a combined effort by a particular group of people to transform and utilize the spaces around them to create spaces where people, in the city, can grow food, learn from each other about growing food, and garden alongside others in a public space. These unique features create, within a distinctive space, a common bond that binds the gardeners to the garden and to each other.

UTA CG shows how a cooperative effort can build and manage a community garden albeit with the challenges of leadership, communication, and struggling for the

gardeners to identify with the garden. But UTA CG has demonstrated success by building community through the garden council. It is heartening and encouraging to see how this group of people has come together to fight for something they wish to see continue. UTA CG improved as far as transferring responsibility from the city to the gardeners themselves. While they had trouble maintaining some form of gardener led governing body, a reliable council was implemented and they have successfully conducted meetings, made changes and improvements, resolved conflict, and taken ownership of their garden through their desire to work for the garden's success.

However, UTA remains fragmented. Though the gardeners receive a lot of support from the City, more communication needs to happen between all parties, including the University. The council is identifying problems and offering solutions. The next step will be to find a position with the University, which addresses these problems as well as allows the gardeners to recognize the garden as *their* garden. The council also faces a challenge from individual gardeners and their desire for a stronger feeling of community. Ensuring the gardeners follow the rules by enforcing those rules is the first step in creating a community of gardeners who are participatory and active in contributing to the success and goals of the garden. The council has demonstrated they are willing to enforce those rules to guarantee this success. However, the council may need to come up with some creative ways to achieve the degree of community they are seeking.

## The Future

Richard Fox (1985) warns that anthropology is “intellectually threatened to the same degree that anthropologists have become an endangered species of academic” (1985:186) and, as anthropologists, we are responsible for “recapturing anthropology’s authority at present” and maintaining anthropology’s relevance within our world today (1991:2). Or as Field and Fox (2007) explain it, we must ensure that anthropology “works” in today’s world, meaning that anthropology’s “knowledge claims [have] to be accepted as valuable in the wider society” (2007:2). To be accepted, anthropologists are increasingly doing research in their own times and in their own backyards versus in “primitive” cultures seemingly suspended in time. Anthropologists are also conducting research in response “to changing demands” and not based on an “essential anthropology” which defines “on its own which issues to highlight” (2007:6). This thesis—an ethnographic study of community gardens—attempts to salvage and reinvigorate anthropology by conducting research in *my* backyard, the suburb I currently live in and the city I frequently explore. Even though I am familiar with these areas, the site of the garden was strange to me. Paying attention to the popularity, growth, and use of community gardens, especially via an ethnographic approach, enables anthropology to examine the significance and changing use of community gardens today. Furthermore, as more institutions and organizations become involved with community gardens, this research will prove useful to those multiple players who wish to utilize gardens within their community.

Today, as more and more people become concerned with where their food is coming from, community gardens will become an important endeavor, offering a space to not only become closer to people but closer to food, which means knowing where it comes from and growing it yourself. Because of this, community gardens like UTA CG and DUG will continue to grow all over North Texas empowering people, those skilled and beginner gardeners, but all curious and willing to try, by making decisions about living in their community through growing food and fostering relationships. As UTA CG and DUG show, these gardens are creative and beautiful spaces which hold special significance to the gardeners who are able to meet different people; learn from and share with gardeners; appreciate the food they grow and its representation of life; and be inspired and imaginative through the plants they grow.

I have no doubt that with its strong leadership and impassioned people, DUG will be a part of the neighborhood of Deep Ellum for a long time to come. The garden has been able to maintain a large committee with many members who have been there from the beginning; it has become an important part of Deep Ellum serving as a learning garden for a local school and a feature of the neighborhood where several businesses and restaurants also garden; and most impressive, DUG does not limit itself to what it wants to accomplish or be a part of. For example, it has offered canning and preserving classes, has started supporting an urban garden by donating compost and labor, and it continues to desire a community-centered garden with strong relationships between its gardeners and the Deep Ellum neighborhood.

However the future of the UTA CG garden is unclear. Currently the garden is functioning well with the City's support and the council's leadership. There are however the three groups, the University, the City, and the gardeners, which must work together effectively to ensure the garden continues. In order for the garden to remain, first, the council needs to continue its leadership and commitment to the garden in addition to finding ways to foster community. They have demonstrated their leadership by maintaining a council who is dedicated to keeping the garden as well as improving it by enforcing rules and demanding the gardeners be responsible for the garden. Second, the University, the City, and the gardeners need to communicate quickly and efficiently in order to resolve certain issues, for example, whether or not a fence can be installed. Moving forward, a discussion between these three parties should outline a mission statement. The gardeners' participation is crucial in forming this mission statement because if they are not involved, this will only reinforce the idea that the garden is the University's or the City's and not the gardener's.

Will the garden succeed and the council continue if this desired community cannot be achieved? What if people refuse to become more involved in the garden? How will the University react to certain requests made by the gardeners and will the University's relationship with the garden ever change? Future research will demonstrate how UTA CG gardeners will respond to the council's leadership and if this garden will become a permanent feature of the University and the City of Arlington. Current and future community garden leaders can use this thesis to think about the significance of their garden's identity and the participation of its gardeners as well as plan for issues they

might encounter similar to those UTA CG and DUG have experienced. As demonstrated by the individual stories of DUG and UTA CG, each garden is different and will have to continue on its own necessary course for the future. But these gardens teach us the power of creativity, the ability of a group of people to come together to create a beautiful, organic, and unique space and that it is necessary to have leadership and participation from gardeners in order to create a strong distinct community of individuals who take pride in and enjoy growing their own food.

APPENDIX A  
ORAL INTERVIEW SCRIPT FOR GARDEN LEADERS

## ORAL INTERVIEW SCRIPT FOR GARDEN LEADERS

How did this community garden come about, whose idea was it, etc. and what was the City of Arlington's role and your specific role in it?

Did you consult anyone about starting/maintaining a community garden in particular?

Did you follow a particular model for building your cg?

What were the main reasons for starting your garden?

Who was involved in the ideas for the building, design, etc.?

Were any community members involved in the planning stages of the garden?

How did you fund the creation and building of your cg?

Who was part of the decisions regarding the architecture, rules and regulations, and how did you decide on these?

Were there any complications in particular that you faced while starting the garden?

If there is something you could have done differently, what would it be?

Did you always plan on staying or leaving/being involved in the garden? Does the city and UTA have equal part in the garden?

How is the garden currently funded?

What is the current status of the garden? Are there any current issues or problems?

If there is anything you could do now to improve your garden, what would it be?

APPENDIX B

ORAL INTERVIEW SCRIPT FOR GARDENERS

## ORAL INTERVIEW SCRIPT FOR GARDENERS

How long have you had a plot at UTA/DUG?

How long have you been gardening and why did you start?

How did you hear about the community garden at UTA/DUG?

Why did you decide to participate in a community garden and why this one in particular?

Does anyone else in your family garden or help you with your plot?

What kind of plants do you plant or what are your favorite things to plant?

What do you do with the produce? Do you eat everything you grow?

Do you like the mandatory donation aspect of belonging to the garden?

How often do you go out to your plot?

What times during the day or the week do you usually go?

Do you normally see other people when you go to the garden?

Do you know the people who have the plots around you?

Do you interact with other members of your community garden? How and when?

Do you attend meetings and other garden events regularly?

Have you interacted at all with anybody from UTA?

What is the best thing about your garden?

If you could change one thing or several things about your garden, what would those be?

How could your needs be better met in this community garden? Do you dislike anything about it?

Who do you go to for help if you have a question or concern about your plot or the garden in general?

Are you involved in any leadership position with the garden?

(If on committee) What led you to serve as a committee/council member? What do you as a council hope to accomplish for the garden?

(If been at the garden for a while) How has the garden changed or struggled or improved over its initial years?

Do you like growing organically? What are the benefits and challenges of organic gardening?

What is your favorite season?

What are your favorite things to plant?

Do you eat a lot of what you plant? What is that like, eating food you have actually grown?

(If respondents mention or discuss about how they feel or see or hear, etc. during our conversation) How does your body feel after gardening? What are the sounds you hear while gardening? Does the weather influence when or how you garden?

(If respondent hasn't given clear answer to why they garden or what it means to them)

Can you sum up in one sentence why you garden?

APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Compost tea: made by soaking or steeping compost in water, which is then sprayed on the leaves or applied to the soil. This tea provides nutrients to the plants and soil.

Square foot gardening: method of planting which maximizes your space by planting a different plant in each square foot.

Work day: organized event at the garden where all gardeners are invited to attend in order to accomplish a specific task or tasks, for example, mulching, weeding, or building beds.

Cover crop: a crop planted in order to manage soil erosion and soil quality. Planted on a plot that is not claimed or planted in, for example, in the winter, in order to keep the soil fertile. Cover crops include buckwheat and black-eyed peas.

Compost: organic matter that has decomposed and is used as a fertilizer and soil amendment.

Compost bin: areas or actual containers that hold the organic matter until it decomposes and turns into compost.

Amend: to repair your soil by adding compost or nutrients in order for plants to grow better.

Heirloom variety: a cultivar not used in large-scale agriculture; usually maintained by gardeners or farmers in particularly isolated or ethnic communities

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<sup>i</sup> There have also been no studies of community gardens in Texas. By focusing on Dallas and Arlington, I examine a region that has not been studied, North Texas; a city with a short history of community gardens, Dallas; and a suburb, Arlington. Currently, there are over 50 community gardens in the North Texas area registered with ACGA; however neither garden in Arlington and Dallas is part of ACGA suggesting a much higher number of gardens (Figure 1). In addition, several organizations are utilizing community gardens as part of their business demonstrating their perceived importance and popularity such as Real School Gardens, International Rescue Committee in Dallas, Refugee Services of Texas in Fort Worth, Tarrant Area Food Bank, and North Texas Food Bank (<http://www.tafb.org/comm-gardens.html>; <http://www.tafb.org/comm-gardens.html>).

<sup>ii</sup> I disseminated a survey, which attempted to take a quick look at the demographics of each garden's members and their reasons for participating. I used Google docs to create the survey and sent the survey via a link in an email, which explained who I was and what my research was about. I also made paper copies for those who did not have access to their email. I sent out the link two times for each garden. At the end of the survey, I left a blank space for people to fill out their name and contact information if they wished to be interviewed. There were not enough responses to utilize the results from the survey, but they did allow me to contact people to interview.

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Rebekah Rupel graduated from Texas Christian University in 2010 with a B.A. in Anthropology and Sociology. While at UTA, Rebekah was inducted as a member of Phi Kappa Phi, one of the nation's oldest academic honor societies. Rebekah's research interests include topics related to local food, food and health, cooking, and eating together. Rebekah's long-term goals include working for a non-profit that works with the hungry or continuing her work with community gardens.