



**American  
Public Gardens  
Association**

# Council of Communities

## Handbook

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## American Public Gardens Association Community Definition and Purpose

The American Public Gardens Association Communities promote networking among public garden professionals sharing common interests and advance the mission of the Association. Communities are discipline-focused, bringing together garden representatives for information sharing and networking opportunities. Community members share their expertise through the Association's many professional development opportunities. (See the Professional Development Manual for Communities for more information). Each Community has its own area of the website that provides useful information and opportunities for interaction with other Community Members.

### Current Communities

Communities represent field-wide disciplines and issues unique to public gardens. Communities range from plant conservation, horticulture, and exhibitions, to development, education, and operational sustainability and represent all facets and specialties of member professionals. Please see the Communities page of [publicgardens.org](http://publicgardens.org) under Professional Development for the most up-to-date list of current Communities.

### Association Staff Liaisons

Every Community has an appointed Association Staff Liaison. (See the current Liaison list [publicgardens.org: https://www.publicgardens.org/communities/leadership](https://www.publicgardens.org/communities/leadership)). Association Staff Liaisons offer assistance and resources that are invaluable to realizing Community projects. Association Staff Liaisons should always be included on invitations to attend committee or planning meetings or general Community discussions.

Association Staff Liaisons have access to long-term planning and communications calendars. Please consult with your Association Community Staff Liaison before beginning work on Professional Development or other Annual project efforts. Staff Liaisons can provide useful historical data on previous projects and events and assist with planning and marketing for new events. They can also provide access to technology and communications platforms.

Association Staff Liaisons do not arrange meetings, collect minutes, or design meeting agendas for the Community (see Community Leadership on page 5).

## Communications and Marketing

### Joining a Community and Communicating with Community Members

Communication among Community members is a great way to share ideas and serves as a resource to other community members. The American Public Gardens Association has online Discussion Forums, Blogs, and a Resource Library available for each Community. To participate, members of the Association need to log on to the Association website ([publicgardens.org](http://publicgardens.org)), search for “Communities” under “Professional Development,” navigate to “All Communities” and click the green “Join” button to the right of a community.

### Marketing the Community

The American Public Gardens Association will assist Community leaders in marketing a Community’s Professional Development event(s). Association Staff need all relevant content, including images, concise descriptions, and other promotional materials in a timely fashion to facilitate marketing. Please refer to the Professional Development Manual for Communities in the “Participate” area on the Association Communities platform.

An Association Staff liaison may also help promote Community vitality by posting resources to the library, ensuring that important Community accomplishments and/or events are promoted in the Association’s marketing channels appropriately.

### Annual Benchmarks

Each Community is unique and the needs of its membership will determine its functionality. Communities may elect to conduct surveys of its membership to gauge interests, trends, and discussion items for meetings, annual projects, and the provision of online resources.

Recruiting and securing Leadership by election of a Chair and Vice-Chair is conducted biannually and is a common requirement of all Communities (see Governance page 11).

#### 1. Maintaining Communication Streams

Community Leaders and members are expected to maintain regular membership communication. Association members may access Community online platforms and join by logging into [publicgardens.org](http://publicgardens.org). The Community pages offer a discussion board, announcements, and resource library features which may be utilized used by Community members for communications on current field and topic- related issues and news . (See page 13 for Publishing Guidelines) Association Staff Liaisons can assist with a variety of communications needs. Community leadership meetings may be based on Community and annual project needs and can be held monthly or quarterly.

## 2. Professional Development and Project

Community Leaders may use Association resources to produce and deliver Professional Development opportunities or plan projects based on the topic/audience. Association Staff Liaisons support their Community through all phases of Professional Development event creation. See the **Professional Development Manual for Communities** for detailed information on each opportunity. These can include, but are not limited to:

**Town Hall, Lunch & Learn, Webinar, Virtual Workshop, Virtual Professional Development Symposia, In-Person Professional Development Symposia, In-person Workshops at Association Annual Conference, In-person Concurrent Sessions at Annual Conference, Article in the Public Garden**

## 3. Annual Meetings

All Communities are given time to hold a meeting at or aligning with the Association's Annual Conference. Association Staff schedule all Community meetings to avoid perceived conflicts, but they may occur. The Chair, Vice-Chair and other key Community members are asked to coordinate the content and structure of this meeting. Community meetings may be used to generate interest in the Community while providing productive work sessions to directly further the work of Community projects. Meeting minutes or other documentation are strongly recommended and should be posted on the Communities Resource Area on the Association website.

## Community Leadership

Communities are led by a Chair and Vice-Chair, who serve a two-year term that coincides with the election of the American Public Gardens Association Board President. There is no previous leadership requirement to run for Chair or Vice-Chair positions. Chairs/Vice-Chairs are required to run for election to hold the Chair office (see Governance on page 12).

Upon election, the Chair and Vice-Chair of a Community join the **Council of Communities**, a body consisting of all Community Chairs and Vice-Chairs (see more regarding the **Council of Communities** page 10).

## Benefits of Serving as a Community Leader

Community Leadership provides a direct connection with a robust national and international network of professional public garden peers who share the challenges and triumphs that are unique to your field and specialty. By taking a Leadership role in a Community, you will have a voice in identifying important new industry trends and tools and be part of shaping the national conversation on topics that are crucial to your industry and field of expertise. By volunteering time to your professional Association and Community, you may expect to receive invaluable returns in expertise, long-term relationship building, and constant exposure to new ideas and thoughts.

## Chair and Vice-Chair Qualifications

The Chair and Vice-Chair should be individual Association members who have spent at least one year as an active participant in the Community. Prospective Community Leaders have demonstrated leadership in the specialization of the Community, shown commitment to achieving the Community's purpose, and will continue to actively support the Association's mission and goals. Leaders must commit the time to fulfill the work for the entire the term of their office, preferably with the support of their institution.

**In the event a Community Chair or Vice-Chair becomes separated from their institution, the Chair or Vice Chair position will remain with the individual (unless they submit their resignation) until the following election regardless of the individual's' employment status.** Chairs and Vice-Chairs must maintain active membership status.

## Community Chair Responsibilities

The Community Chair leads the Community, actively involving members and ensuring a Community's stated objectives are accomplished on an ongoing basis. The Chair communicates regularly with Community members, informing them of relevant activity and resources, and is highly encouraged to participate in all quarterly Council of Communities meetings to keep abreast of Community business. The Chair actively mentors the Vice-Chair and Community members to ensure continuity of leadership.

Responsibilities of the Community Chair include:

- Planning and facilitating all meetings and activities of the Community and Professional Development events.
- Submitting an attendees list and minutes of the Community's annual meeting to the Association Staff Liaison.
- Submitting any changes or updates to the Community Statement of Purpose to the Association Staff Liaison to be approved by the Board of Directors.
- Using appropriate planning tools to provide leadership on annual project goals and submitting work plans or other products to the Association Staff Liaison for posting.

## Community Vice-Chair Responsibilities

The Community Vice-Chair assists the Chair to lead the Community. The Vice-Chair is highly encouraged to participate in all quarterly Council of Communities meetings to keep abreast of Community business. The Vice-Chair helps to plan and facilitate all meetings and activities of the Community. The Vice-Chair recruits and mentors members to take leadership roles, takes on the Chair role should the Chair become unable to serve, and learns the role of Community Chair, but is not required to run for the Chair position.

Responsibilities of the Community Vice-Chair include:

- Communicates regularly with Chair
- Participates in quarterly Council of Communities meetings

## Additional Community Leadership Roles

Creating additional leadership roles promotes involvement and vitality in a Community's membership. Community Chairs and Vice-Chairs are encouraged to collaborate and recruit/appoint Community Members to take on leadership roles that help accomplish Community work. For example, they may choose to convene committees with specified goals and end dates to accomplish finite projects such as programming for a Professional Development symposium.

The following roles are recommended to manage work in most Communities. Not all leadership positions or committees described below need to be established by every Community. However, they provide a means of dividing workload, promoting, and developing future Community leaders, and ensuring that service and participation are rewarding for all involved.

### Communications Leader

A Communications Leader can assist the Chair and Vice-Chair in keeping the Community discussions active and facilitate member engagement (see Communications and Marketing page 4).

Responsibilities of the Communications Leader may include notetaking during Community meetings, regularly following and promoting inquiries in the discussions area, and communicating on behalf of their Chair or Vice-Chair. They may also announce and distribute surveys through the Community discussion platform, or communicate project opportunities, meeting results, or other announcements.

### Resource Area Leader

Each Community has the opportunity to house a variety of valuable professional resources in the Community resource library. Because these resources are only visible to professional members, the library may house a variety of documents, including ones that are not always publicly accessible. Examples include best practices documents, master plans or project blueprints, curated archives from *Public Garden* articles or other sources, job descriptions, relevant permits or other government forms, or recommended source lists for plants or other materials.

Responsibilities of the Resource Library Leader may include soliciting member input to determine needs through surveys or monitoring discussion board conversations. They encourage Community members to submit materials and facilitate the collection and transfer of these materials to Association Staff Liaisons for posting on the website when appropriate (see page 13 for Publishing Guidelines).

### Professional Development Leader

Professional Development opportunities take many forms (see Community annual projects on page 4) but are open to all American Public Gardens Association members and are encouraged to meet the needs of professionals from all garden sizes and scopes.

Responsibilities of the Professional Development Leader may include surveying Community members to determine emerging trends and research to guide selection of themes for Professional Development while working closely with Association Staff Liaison on all planning logistics. For specifics, please refer to the Professional Development Manual for Communities on the Association website.

### Annual Project Leader

Responsibilities of an Annual Project Leader include working with Community Members and/or the Association Staff Liaison to determine what an annual project may be and identifying and recruiting Community members to help in its completion. An annual project may include formats other than professional development offerings, such as the creation of resources or documents that further the goals of the Community. The Annual Project Leader will encourage the Community members to participate in the annual project.



## Council of Communities

Communities are unified by the **Council of Communities**, a body consisting of all Community Chairs/Vice-Chairs as well as a Chair and Vice-Chair appointed for the Council itself. The Council Chair serves as an ex-officio member of the American Public Gardens Association Board of Directors. The **Council of Communities** was formed by the Board of Directors at the request of the Community Chairs to facilitate communication and networking across all Communities.

The role of the Council was initially defined by the Board in consultation with the Chairs. The **Council of Communities** serves the Association membership by communicating to the Board issues of importance to gardens, identifying issues that may be relevant for multiple Communities to address, and addressing these issues through professional development program suggestions.

The Council serves to recommend and endorse the creation of new Communities and suggests potential dissolution or consolidation opportunities (action resides with Board of Directors). (See Creating a New Community on page 13 for more details on creating new Communities).

By identifying future leaders for the Communities and the Association, the Council ensures continuity of Leadership. As the Council evolves, it is expected to develop its role within the Association.

### Council of Communities Chair Responsibilities

The Council of Communities Chair provides support to Communities going through leadership transitions and mentors incoming Community Chairs. The Chair schedules, sets the agenda for, and facilitates quarterly annual meetings of the Council of Communities.

Responsibilities of the Council of Communities Chair include:

- Fostering communication and information sharing throughout the year
- Serving on the Nominating Committee for the Association Board of Directors
- Serving as an Ex-Officio member of the Association Board of Directors, attending all meetings
- Committing to this position for at least 2 years

## Council of Communities Vice-Chair Responsibilities

The Council of Communities Vice-Chair provides support to the Council of Communities Chair and may be asked to step up and serve in the Chair capacity when the Chair is unable to facilitate meetings, resigns, or is otherwise unable to serve.

Responsibilities of the Council of Communities Vice-Chair include:

- Assisting the Chair to schedule, set the agenda for, and facilitate quarterly annual meetings of the Council of Communities
- Fostering communication and information sharing throughout the year
- Providing support to Communities going through leadership transitions, and mentor incoming Community Chairs
- Committing to this position for at least 2 years

If a Community member would like to communicate with the rest of the Community, and cannot achieve this communication online, the member should email or speak with the Community Chair and the Association Staff Liaison, who can send out the request on the Member's behalf.

## Community Governance

### Elections and Transfer of Leadership

Chair and Vice-Chair Election Process & Terms:

Members of each Community shall nominate and elect a Chair and Vice-Chair. These elections are approved every two years by the Board of Directors and affirmed once annually. Changes in leadership should occur at the time of the Annual Conference, with outgoing Chairs completing all old business and the incoming Chairs handling ongoing and/or new business. This includes the Council of Communities, which elect a Chair/Vice-Chair from their membership. All Chairs/Vice-Chairs are asked to agree to a two-year term.

Elections take place every two years for Chair and Vice-Chair of the Community and must be completed prior to the Annual Conference. Elections are facilitated by the Association, with input from the Council of Communities Chair/Vice-Chair.

## Elections Process

1. An announcement calling for self-nominations will be made by Association staff in February of the election year. Upon announcement of election season, the Association liaisons will provide a link to a nomination form with a deadline. The deadline is mid-March for self-nominations.
2. In the last week of March, Association liaisons will post all candidate profiles to the discussion boards along with links to ballots and dates when the elections will begin and end. All members of a Community may vote for Chair and Vice Chair positions for that Community.
3. The deadline for voting is mid-April. Votes are tabulated and nominees contacted by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council.
4. Elections will be decided by simple majority. In the case of a tied vote, the Board of Directors Governance Committee chair will decide the vote with a coin toss.
5. The Association Staff Liaison shares the election results directly with the newly elected chairs and Council of Communities Chair in an email, requesting confirmation of their willingness to serve.
6. Upon confirmation, the liaison will post to the Community platform to introduce the new Chair and Vice-Chair.

## Change of Community Leadership Due to Unexpected Circumstances

If an elected Chair/Vice-Chair resigns, is unable, or is otherwise ineffective in carrying out their duties, this change is communicated directly to the Association's Board of Directors and is typically discharged as follows:

1. Chair Vacancy— Standing Vice-Chair becomes Chair for remainder of term
2. Vice-Chair Vacancy - Community Chair recruits Vice-Chair from Community Leadership for remainder of term
3. Community Member in a Leadership Role or Leading a Committee Vacancy - Chair and Vice-Chair work to recruit new Leader from Community membership

## Creating a New Community

New Communities may be created at any time with the approval of Council of Communities and the Board of Directors. Communities are typically created in response to demand from the Association Membership. The process of creating a new community is:

1. Creation of a brief Statement of Purpose and obtaining the signatures of 20 people interested in this Community
2. Review and approval from the Council of Communities to create the proposed Community
3. COC Chair Presentation and Approval received for the proposed Community by the Association Board of Directors

## Dissolution of a Community

Communities are periodically dissolved or merged by the Association through action by the Board of Directors. This may happen when the Community fails to find leadership to organize and run itself, by a lack of interest evident in roster numbers, or a failure to carry out its stated objectives. The Association and the Council of Communities Chair/Vice-Chair will attempt to maintain the Community's work if it can be accomplished by another Community.

## Publishing Guidelines

It is the mission of the Community Resource Library and the Association Library/Media Center to provide timely and historical public garden focused information to all Association members.

Submissions for the Library/Media Center and/or Community Resource Library are encouraged from all Community members.

- Resources that widely support all members are excellent contributions to the Library/Media Center. Those contributions will be submitted to the Association Staff Liaison for posting.
- The Community Resource Library may be used for content intended only for members of that Community and may contain sample or other specialty documents of value to that Community. Members are asked to submit their contributions to their Community Chair, Vice-Chair or Resource Library Leader, as determined by each individual Community.

Copyrighted materials: The following is based on documentation from the Copyright Advisory Office of Columbia University, Kenneth D. Crews, director ([www.copyright.columbia.edu](http://www.copyright.columbia.edu))

## Ownership of Copyrighted Material

You may post materials to which you hold the legal rights. In general, you are the copyright owner of scholarly and instructional materials that you created independently. Permission from the copyright owner is an important requirement for posting materials to the Association's online Resource Center. Association members are responsible for securing any needed permission and sending written notification of the permission to the Association.

## Fair Use

Fair use is a legal doctrine that allows the public to make limited uses of copyrighted works without permission. Fair use plays a key role in the online world, but it may not be what you expect. Simple, clean, concise rules do not exist in the law of fair use. Do not assume that a particular use is inherently within fair use just because it is for nonprofit and educational purposes, or because you cited the source of the work or restricted access to the materials to event attendees. On the other hand, limiting the amount of material you post on your website and restricting access to the material are important ways of strengthening your claim of fair use.

Fair use depends on a balancing of four factors outlined in Community 107 of the Copyright Act. Because each situation will be different, you must also consider other possibilities and weigh them in the balance for each fair use determination. However, you do not necessarily need to take every possible precaution and satisfy all four of the statutory factors; some adjusting of the implementation of the following procedure may still keep your activities within the boundaries of permitted use.

To establish the strongest basis for fair use, consider and apply the three factors along the lines of the following suggestions. Remember, fair use involves a balancing of the factors and the "fairness" of the overall circumstances. In other words, you do not always need to comply with all of the suggestions listed here, but a strong case for fair use may likely have taken most or all of these variables into consideration.

## Purpose of the Use

- Materials should be placed online only for the purpose of serving the needs of specified Association members.
- Access to materials should be limited by password or other means to deter unauthorized access beyond Association members for which the materials are needed.

- Association members should not be charged a fee specifically or directly for access to materials placed online, and no person or unit at the member garden or American Public Gardens Association should benefit financially from the use of the material.

### Nature of the Original Work

- The selected work should be relevant to the objectives of the Association Online Resource Center.
- The law of fair use applies more narrowly to highly creative works; accordingly, avoid substantial excerpts from novels, short stories, poetry, modern art images, and other such materials.
- Association members should carefully review uses of “consumable” materials such as test forms and workbook pages that are meant to be used and repurchased.

### Amount of the Work Used

- Materials placed online should generally be limited to brief works or brief excerpts from longer works. Common examples: a single chapter from a book, a single article from a journal, or individual news articles.
- The amount of the work placed online should be related directly to the educational objectives of the Association Online Resource Center.

### Effect of the Use on the Market for the Original

- Materials placed online should include a citation to the original source of publication and a form of a copyright notice. If the original work has a copyright notice (e.g., “Copyright 2009, Jane Smith”), copying that notice with the materials is probably a good idea.
- Access to materials should be limited by password or other means to deter unauthorized access beyond Association Membership. (Password control or other limited access is also important to the “purpose” factor, as noted above.) All Association members are able to secure a password for secure access to the website and online Resource Center.
- The online Resource Center should include only material for which the Member possesses a lawfully obtained copy.
- Materials placed online should not include works that are reasonably available and affordable for Association members to purchase—whether as a book or in other format.