

2016 Gardeners Survey: What Did We Learn from You?

Many thanks to all the gardeners who responded to our Estes Valley Community Garden survey this fall! The EVCG Board was delighted with the many positive comments, took careful note of constructive criticism, and will be using many of your ideas as we plan for another great year of gardening in 2017.

Below are some general observations as well as quotes of specific comments from the survey questions.

What worked well for you?

The most praise was directed at the availability of water and, more specifically, the drip irrigation. Thanks to Floyd Wright for designing the drip system ("an engineering marvel!") and to the volunteers who helped him build it. Thanks also to the many volunteers who labored over the fencing, built the garden frames, and hauled dirt. That worked well for all of us.

- "Having access to the watering lines was wonderful, and then having the drip system working for us was a HUGE help!"
- "Having the plots ready to go, complete with a fertilizer boost, was so helpful!"
- "I had a great season with my garden. I had radishes, mescal greens, baby romaine, and kale from June through October. My green beans and sugar snap peas also did great until those cold nights in September."
- "I appreciated your ongoing informational emails. You were positive, supportive and shared info freely, including getting the hail cloth. We will know so much more next year :-)"
- "Thank you!! It was a delight just to open the gate and walk into the garden...a jungle of happiness!"

What did not work well for you?

- "The only thing would be if the water could stay on later in the season. I was thinking I had another month of greens, anyway. I think it's probably the town who turned it off?" [Actually it was the Recreation and Park District, and we'll work on a longer season for water next year.]
- "The things that didn't work for me were tomatoes and peppers; yet I saw other gardens where tomatoes seemed to flourish. Who knows? Perhaps some brands were better than others."
- "The hail storm did not work well for me, but provided a very practical & valuable lesson."
- "I really don't have any recommendations unless you can make a deal with Mother Nature!"

Suggestions for improvement

Most frequently addressed were the desire for composting onsite and a system to share surplus produce. While we recognize the challenges of composting with wild animals for neighbors, we will be working on both of those issues in 2017.

- "Make sure all the gardeners understand the capabilities and schedule of the drip system very early in the new season - before planting if possible."
- "Encouraging them not to be wasteful in allowing produce to spoil without picking or sharing. If they don't want their produce but don't want anyone messing with their garden perhaps there could be a bin to leave produce for others."
- "Informational feedback gathered and disseminated from gardeners themselves on their successes and failures...so we can all be more successful."
- "Don't we need a compost bin?"

Suggested educational topics

We will be offering a series of monthly educational programs starting in February. Stay tuned for more information!

- "Programs about what plants grow well here and when they should be planted. Maybe we need some tips on when to harvest vegetables. Some people may not have experience growing gardens and need more education."
- "Perhaps a program addressing garden pests or plant blights (and suggested treatments) would be good for next year."
- "How to manage succession planting (especially for salad greens) in our short growing season."
- "Finding out from our gardeners which veggies were the best producers, the worst, tips for growing specific veggies, a list of all veggies/fruits/flowers grown in 2016 and evaluation comments for each from each gardener." [We hope to compile and share a list with some of this information before the next growing season.]