

Creating Fantastic Gardening Kits

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PURPOSE

Use nature in outreach programming, like providing garden kits to support wellness, and capitalize on local interest in horticulture.

TARGET AUDIENCE

All students, staff, and faculty would benefit from access to gardening kits.

INGREDIENTS

The garden kit consists of the following:

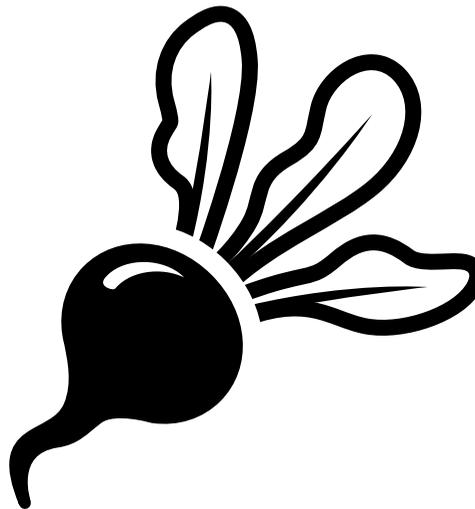
- 5- or 6-piece gardening tool set
- Gardening book (*Square Foot Gardening*, 2nd ed.)
- Set of 8–10 informational guides on common gardening subjects
- Kneeling pad
- Galvanized watering can
- Mobile chest
- Lamination supplies for gardening how-to articles
- Waterproof bag for informational materials (book and laminated sheets)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Conduct an informal needs assessment of the target community.
2. Gather information such as
 - a. personal interviews with potential users;
 - b. input from faculty, administrators, university organizations and units;

- c. literature searches; and
 - d. reach out to informal networks, like listservs and colleagues.
3. Determine the accessibility of garden tools to target users. Some questions to consider:
 - a. What type(s) of gardening is most likely to be conducted?
 - b. Are users likely to use particular flora?
 - c. Has the assessment captured input from diverse sources and user groups?
 - d. Are site observations needed?
 - e. What tools and supplies might academic units or nearby community gardens supply?

4. Determine a budget.
5. Search for reputable garden tool suppliers.
6. Prioritize tool quality, longevity, and ergonomic features; these can influence price, user satisfaction, and availability.
7. Consider all necessary supplies in cost estimates:
 - a. garden tools, storage containers, circulation items such as barcode labels, laminating supplies, and informational/publicity materials.
 - b. Some questions to ask: Are priorities met? Do individual versus kit-ready tools afford the best value? How will repair or replacement costs be managed?
8. Identify funding sources. Communicate with colleagues, library administration, finance officers, and others to suss out possible revenue sources. Consider grant funding.
9. Develop a circulation policy and procedures (*Lending Guidelines*, 2014): Consider the circulation period, liability waivers, if any, fine or fee structure, and maintenance procedures.
10. Determine library locations for returned kits and whether kits are available on a first-come, first-serve basis and/or reservable.
11. Plan and develop a creative marketing strategy. Experiment. Collaborate. Have fun (Newlands, 2015).



- a. Stay focused on target users and their needs.
 - b. Experiment with various social media outlets, in-house print ads, and library marketing publications.
 - c. Explore ongoing methods to gather user feedback.
 - d. Solicit marketing strategies from student employees. They can help draft text and visual publicity materials.
 - e. Cross-promotion opportunities with allied complementary organizations are also beneficial (Potter, 2012, p. 145).
 - f. Generate infectious excitement and fun with ambrosial rollout activities and dazzling promotional items.
 - g. Some ideas: seed packets, gardening magazine(s), seedlings, gloves, maps, garden show tickets, garden crafts, etc.
12. Assess project success. Think creatively at this stage. Brainstorm essential measures of user satisfaction (ergonomic maneuverability, tool variety and functionality, etc.).
13. Assessment may involve a variety of instruments, from surveys (online and print) and interviews to conversation. Some questions to keep in mind:
- a. Do circulation policies or procedures need reassessment?
 - b. Is the general condition of returned tools sustainable?
 - c. Do included print materials satisfy users' informational needs?
 - d. Can this service be expanded to other underserved communities?

CAUTIONS/ADVICE

These kits, along with cases, can command space. Also, have a plan in place for cleaning responsibilities as well as procedures for replacement of lost or damaged items. Be proactive in anticipating possible liability for injuries.

ASSESSMENT

Collect circulation statistics. Survey users about their experiences and suggestions. In addition, leverage social media to promote the kits and measure engagement (i.e., likes, reposts, photos using the gardening kits).

REFLECTION

The local Graduate and Family Co-operative housing has more than forty gardening beds that are awarded by lottery. These students are the primary target for marketing. Faculty and staff could use the kits for transplanting office plants, home gardening, or extended coursework beyond the classroom.

Numerous patrons checked out gardening kits but commented that the toolboxes were too large. Patrons remarked that they would like access to larger tools. However, we do not have the space for such items. We referred them to the large tool library in the public library system. Survey responses were very positive, including: "I was so happy that this was available!" and "Thank you for providing this service! I also appreciated the free seed packs."

REFERENCES

- Lending guidelines. (2014). *Unabashed Librarian*, (172), 26–29.
- Newlands, M. (2015, March 24). 15 Marketing strategies that inspire strategic thinkers. [Web log comment]. Retrieved from <http://www.inc.com/murray-newlands/15-marketing-strategies-that-inspire-strategic-thinkers.html>
- Potter, N. (2012). *The library marketing toolkit*. London, UK: Facet.