

# Shoestring Gardening

How to leverage your garden budget for nonprofit, community gardens  
(and ideas for private gardens, as well)

West Linn Garden Club Presentation - March 2023

Gordon & Sue Piper  
Cal-Oregon Gardens

## A brief word about us

- Served as an adopt-a-spot partner with the City of Oakland at two parks/open spaces and an adopt-a-highway partner with CalTrans at two locations in Oakland as the Oakland Landscape Committee.
- When we moved to West Linn in January last year, we refocused our efforts on developing our property in West Linn.
- We've named our effort Green PLANeT Gardens.
- Our goal is to showcase drought tolerant, pollinator and native plants in the home garden.



Gordon & Sue Piper at Gateway Emergency Preparedness Exhibit Center in Oakland on their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2021.

# Our nonprofit in brief

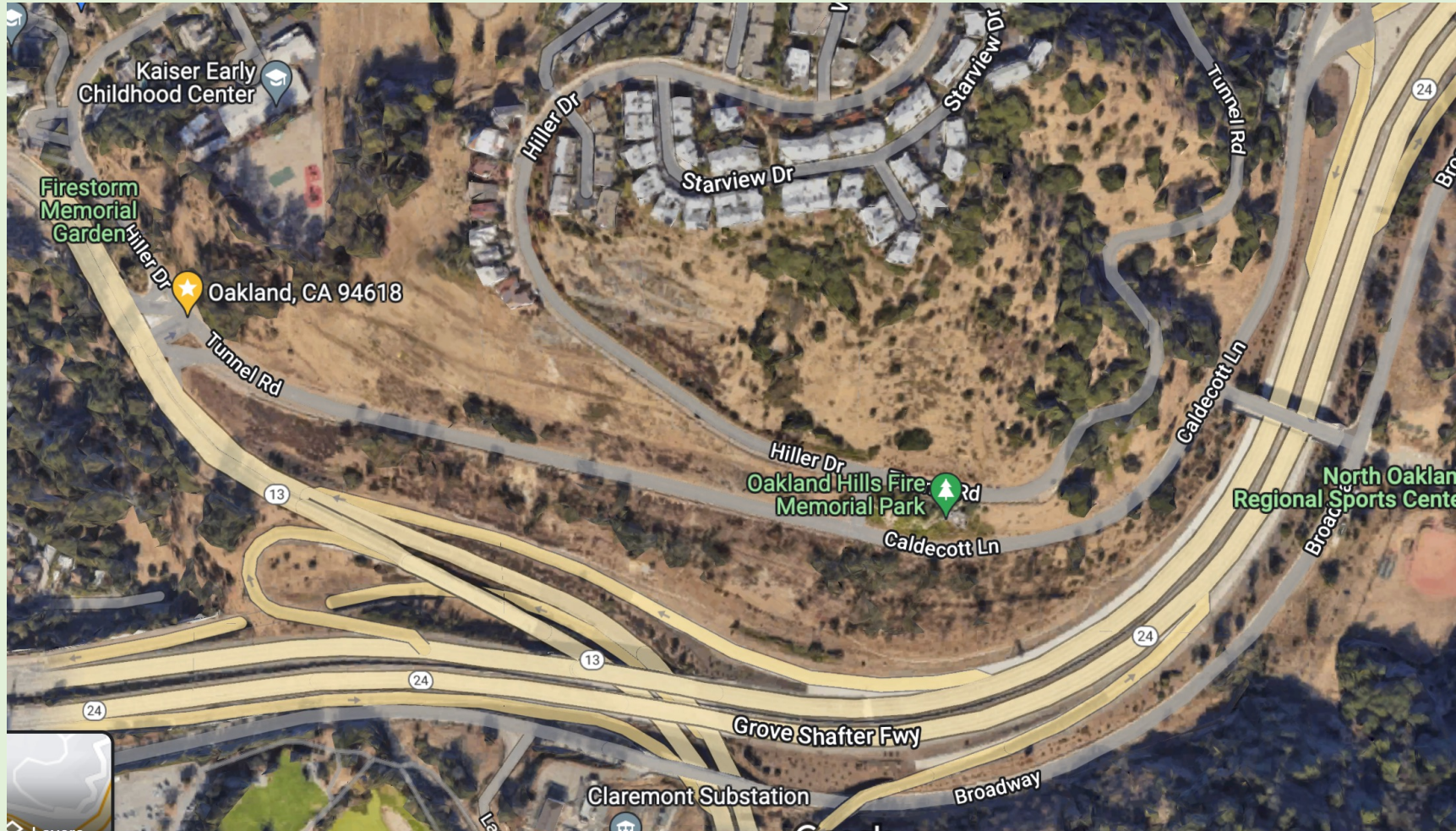
- Oakland Landscape Committee established in 1991, following the Oakland Hills Firestorm, to create and maintain public and school gardens in Oakland, CA. The Oakland Parks & Recreation Foundation served as our 501c3 fiscal agent.
- Over the years, we created a dozen school gardens and four public gardens.



The Piper Family in front of their former home one week after the 1991 Oakland Hills Firestorm.



# The California Gardens:



Firestorm  
Memorial Garden

Gateway  
Emergency  
Preparedness  
Center

Now both  
maintained by the  
North Hills  
Community  
Association



# Firestorm Memorial Garden



**Created in 1993 for inspiration as firestorm survivors rebuilt the neighborhood**

- Now an iconic landmark at the entrance of Hiller Highlands, center of the 1991 Oakland Hills Firestorm where 3,500 people lost their homes and 25 people died.
- Built on ½ acre of Caltrans property at entrance to the neighborhood
- Maintained by volunteers
- Irrigation water supplied by adjacent private school

# Gateway Emergency Preparedness Exhibit Center & Fire-Resistant Demonstration Garden

**Created in 2003 on City of Oakland property.**

- Raised \$500,000 for funding and donated materials for construction.
- Scenic overlook designed pro-bono by architect who also lost home in 1991.
- Fire Resistant Demonstration Garden added in 2017 with succulents and other appropriate plants to showcase landscaping for defensible space.





# The Green PLANeT Gardens: Our new Veggie Garden

- 10 3x3x10 foot raised beds
- 21 4x4-foot grow trays
- 7 fruit trees
- 8-foot-tall deer fencing
- Drip irrigation
- Gravel pathways





# Coming in 2023: New Cut Flower Bed



- Replaced two aged, diseased pine trees
- Planted 9 peonies and 9 lillies
- Put in 15 bare root roses donated by Weeks Roses,
- Starting from seed Zinnias, Delphinium, Stock, Foxglove and other flowers
- Will plant lavender around the borders to deter deer



# Coming Soon: Green PLANeTDisplay Garden

- ½ acre of south end of pasture
- Need to develop and implement design
- Add drip irrigation
- Install specimen plants from one or more nurseries
- Surround with 8 foot tall deer fence



# Lessons Learned:

## 1. Avoid paying retail for materials

### Seek in-kind donations

- Free wood chips from local tree companies.
- Free donated plants from nurseries
- Free donations from local plant societies
- Free soil, plants, gravel other items off of Craigslist, Next Door, etc. Use wanted section with a photo of preferred donations)
- Cuttings of favorite flowers from neighbors' gardens.
- Dumpsters from local waste management resources

**Keep in mind: you will need to do your own hauling!**



### Seek heavily discounted items

- Go for broken bags of mulch and marked down plants past their prime at Home Depot, Lowes, etc.
- Marked down plants from local retail and wholesale nurseries.





## Grow your own starters

- Buy plant plugs from online auctions on EBay and grow in home nursery for later planting: Knox Nursery—30-250 plants for \$9.99 + shipping.
- Some nurseries will sell liners—ask for a discount
- Grow seeds in grow trays or vertical light systems with growing trays for use indoors
- Convert a portion of your home, garage or shop as a year-round location for starting plants



Purchase Wholesale- Emerald Coast Nursery & others here in Oregon

Search for free or inexpensive plants from private sellers or nurseries advertising on-line. Free section on Craigslist and Next Door.

Estate and garage sales— wait to the end sellers will take a low offer or give items away for free

Community College Plant Sales—often offer plant plugs at \$1 or less.

Boy Scout plant sales

End of Season Sales at Retailers

Join another garden club—they have door prize drawings, auctions and plant sales.

An excellent way to get plants for pennies on the dollar!



# Lessons Learned:

## 2. Build relationships with volunteer sources

- Church groups
- Boy and Girl Scouts
  - Eagle Scout Projects
- High school students needing community service credits
- Local Service Clubs
- Corporate Volunteers
  - Team Depot (Home Depot)
  - Salesforce
  - Republic Waste Management National Neighborhood Promise Program
- Local colleges/universities (fraternities & sororities, environmental clubs)
  - Clackamas Community College's Landscape Management Program



**Eagle Scout Project to repair and replace steps at Gateway Exhibit Center in 2021.**

**Remember to have  
volunteers sign waivers!**

# Other Volunteer Resources



Gordon Piper with WWOOFER at Firestorm Memorial Garden in 2018.

Sign up for World Wide Opportunities in Organic Farms (WWOOF)

Volunteers from around the world work for free in return for room and board





# Lessons Learned: Managing your tools

- Arrange for sufficient tools      OR
  - Local tool lending libraries
    - Green Lents Community Tools  
<https://www.gtl.toollibrarian.net/TL/ourtools.php>
    - SE Portland Tool Lending Library  
<https://sites.google.com/septl.org/>
  - Commercial tool rental sites
    - Home Depot \*
    - United Rentals, Clackamas
    - Johnson Creek Rental, Portland
    - Pioneer Rental, Oregon City
    - C & E Rentals, Inc, Tualatin
    - Barbur Blvd. Rentals, Portland
    - YardRents, Portland
  - Encourage volunteers to bring their own gloves and tools.
- Establish your own cache
  - Accessible storage
  - Fund through grants
    - Home Depot Store Managers can approve up to \$1000 in donations for tools and supplies
    - Also can partner with their employees under Team Depot as a project
  - Pick up at garage & estate sales, swap meets.
  - Search on –line- try to avoid paying retail.
  - Be sure to carefully mark your own tools to differentiate from borrowed tools.

Always count your tools before and after the project so that you return the right tools, if they are borrowed, and maintain control over your own tools after the event.

# Gardening on a Shoestring

## Q & A

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# Best Practice for Volunteer Teams

1. Assign a supervisor.
2. Appoint a safety coordinator--reminds volunteers to take hydration breaks and keeps track of tools.
3. Orient volunteers to the work plan and tool safety.
4. Assign one or two volunteers as go-fors—removing green waste to the common dump spot.



Gordon Piper orienting World Mission Church of God volunteers at a workday at North Oakland Sports Field., 2017.

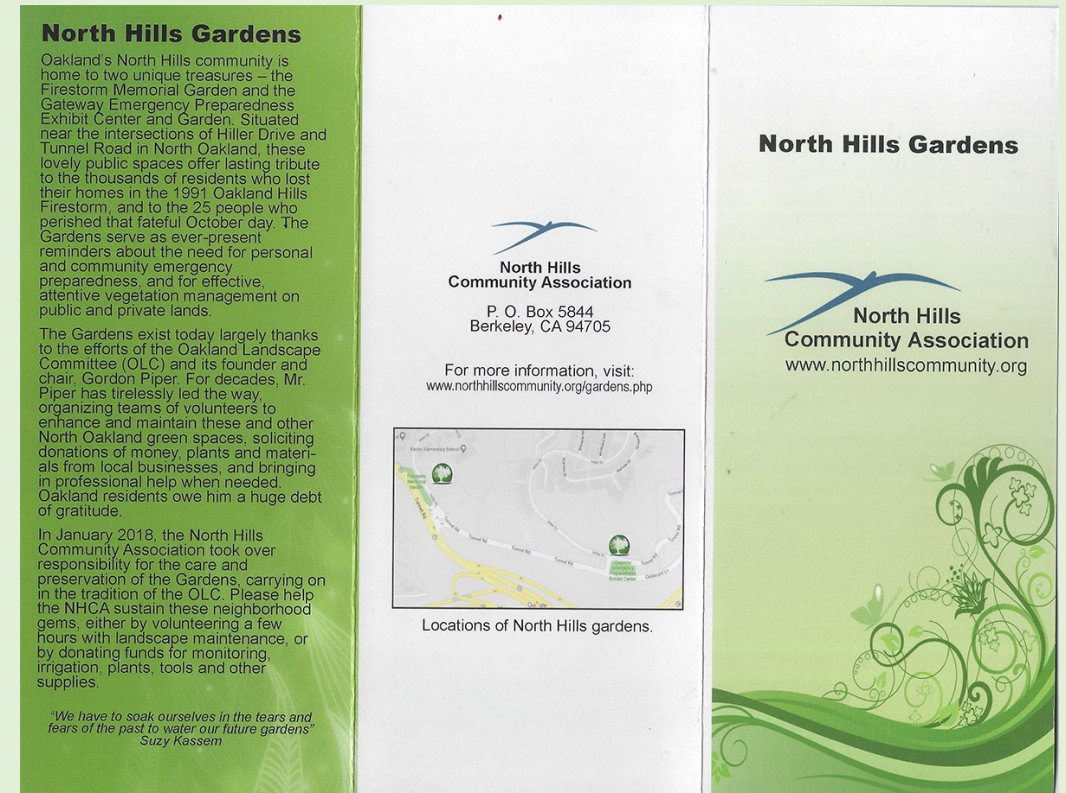


- Schedule workdays on known “green” event days:
  - Martin Luther King Day of Service—January
  - Earth Day--April
  - Arbor Week- April
  - Wildfire Prevention Day-May



# Marketing Tips

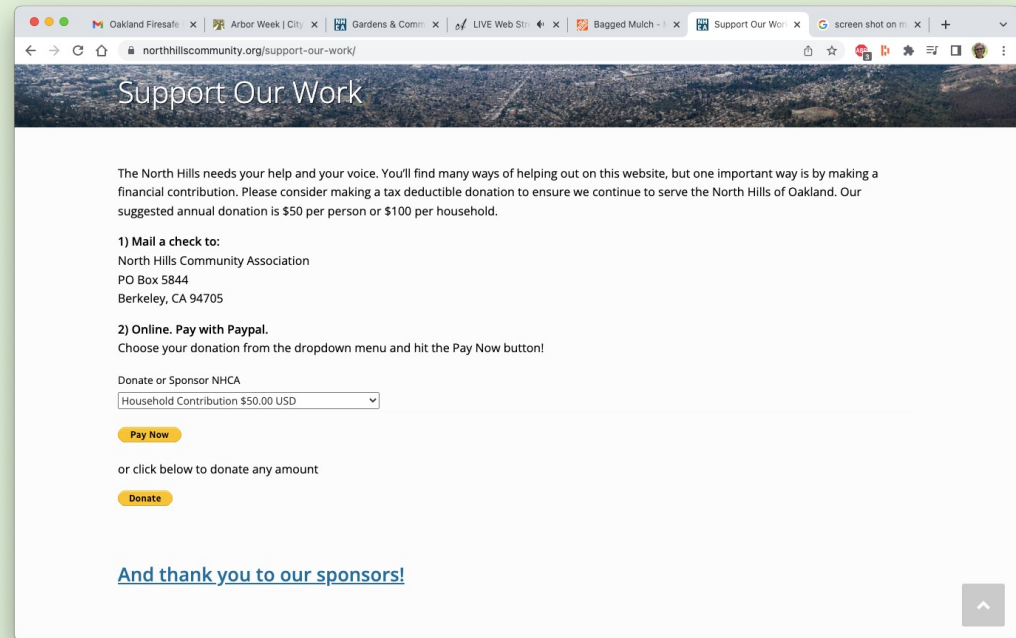
- Develop a brochure /flyer for your organization that people can take home with them
- Hand out business cards so they won't forget
- Develop a website and use social media to get the word out
- Set up a sign board with your organization's name to publicize the workday





# Fund Raising

- Take a letter and walk around the neighborhood near the site
- Use personal Christmas Card List
- Send out solicitation on local listservs, if permitted
- Send out solicitation to previous volunteers
- Seek out grants from
  - Service clubs
  - Online review of potential grants from local foundations, corporations, etc.



- Fund Raising Pitch
  - Share what you have accomplished in the past
  - Share goals for the future
  - Include a remit envelope and/or instructions for sending checks
  - Sign up with Paypal for online donations on your website

# Fund Raising isn't just about real dollars...

- Nurseries might be throwing items out at the end of the season or going out of business,
- Ask for free wood chips and other materials.
- Look for used materials on Craigslist or NextDoor– ask if seller would consider donating.

Sometimes it takes more than one request---- reach out to multiple stores or ask one store several times.



# Lessons Learned: How to manage volunteers

## Plan the work

- Confirm schedule with volunteers and finalize # of volunteers.
- Provide instructions: Typically, wear long pants, long sleeves, sturdy shoes, a hat, bring own gloves, sunscreen and water, and mask, if necessary.
- Have volunteers sign in with name phone and email address, sign waivers, and follow up afterwards. (Set up a data base for future use)
- Break up projects into segments that teams of up to 5 can work on.



- Break up projects into segments that teams of up to 5 can work on.
- Assign a team supervisor from your group to supervise each team.
- Engage with volunteers during the workday— explain purpose of the project, answer questions.
- Write a thank you after the event and try to engage them to come again in the future



Team of volunteers removing French broom for fire prevention at Oakland's Montclair Railroad Trail in Shepherd Canyon in 2018.