

OL 304 Assignment Five Discussion

Online Learning: Vegetable Garden Care and Maintenance for Family Gardens and Community Gardens.

Center for Sustainable Development: <https://csd-i.org/vegetable-garden-care-family-gardens-community-gardens/>

This week we're going to study special, regionally specific challenges that your gardeners might be having in their gardens.

Part 1: Determining Underlying Causes

Gardening isn't all a bed of roses. Some regions are burdened with rocky/sandy soil, too much water, too little water, steep hillsides, insect infestations, or soils that have been depleted through overuse or erosion.

In Assignment One I asked you to evaluate one or two special challenges that your gardeners are faced with – and in this assignment we're going to evaluate them and seek appropriate solutions.

Our evaluative process will be very much like the process that we used in the very first assignment, from the very first course where we looked not only at the problem -- but also at what were the underlying causes to that problem. It's fine to say that the soil isn't a good enough quality to grow robust crops. We need to first understand what caused this problem: is it the natural state of a desert soil, was it caused by unsustainable farming techniques, or was it caused by water or wind erosion taking away valuable topsoil?

This will be something that you can probably determine yourself -- but you should involve your gardeners in the investigation of the problem and the quest for solutions -- so that they have ownership of this segment of the project. They may also have historical information about the problem which will help you in clarifying the underlying causes.

It's possible, that this is one of the most important segments of the project, because it may be an all important problem which is preventing them from being successful gardeners and farmers. A sound solution, and ownership by the community, can have long-term and lasting positive impact in food security and nutrition.

You can conduct this assignment with your gardeners either casually, one-on-one during your periodic follow-ups -- or you can hold a short meeting to review the challenges which have been brought forth -- and then discuss potential solutions.

Part 2: Seeking Solutions

I would encourage you to speak with colleagues, and look through resources that we have provided in this course and explore the Internet for solutions -- but I would also encourage you to seek scientific studies which investigate whether or your solutions have shown evidence of having solved the problem that you're faced with. Here is an example study that looks at soil and water technologies:

http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/rb15_17.pdf

The solutions that you come up with might be quite simple as in using partially buried plastic bottles to direct water to plant roots -- and be immediately implementable. But then again, solutions may be expensive or time-consuming -- such as terracing a steep hillside, or planting grass contour bunds to reduce erosion on hillsides. If this is the case, you may want to put together a simple step-by-step plan for the implementation of the solution that is appropriate for the community.

Please move on to Assignment Five Homework.