

REPORT  
on the  
HOME AND SCHOOL GARDEN MOVEMENT  
of the  
RECREATION COMMISSION

Prepared by the  
Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research  
April, 1918.



**DETROIT BUREAU OF  
GOVERNMENTAL RESEARCH, INC.**

100 GRISWOLD STREET

THE DETROIT BUREAU OF GOVERNMENTAL RESEARCH IS ORGANIZED WITH A TWO FOLD PURPOSE-

1. TO GET THINGS DONE FOR DETROIT THROUGH CO-OPERATION WITH PERSONS WHO ARE IN OFFICE, BY INCREASING EFFICIENCY AND ELIMINATING WASTE, AND

2. TO SERVE AS AN INDEPENDENT, NON-PARTISAN AGENCY FOR KEEPING CITIZENS INFORMED ABOUT THE CITY'S BUSINESS

April 17, 1918.

To the Recreation Commission,  
City of Detroit,

Gentlemen:

At the request of Mayor Oscar B. Marx, the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research has undertaken a study of the organization and administration of the Recreation Commission.

As a part of this study there is transmitted herewith, a report on the Organization and Administration of the Home and School Garden activity of the Recreation Commission.

Very truly yours,

Lent D. Upson,

Director.

## INTRODUCTION

The home and school garden movement is the promotion of the maintenance of gardens by school children. Where children have a plot of ground at home available for garden purposes they are encouraged to use such land, but in neighborhoods where children cannot have home gardens, a plot is made available for those desiring it, in a community garden. In some instances community gardens are adjacent to or on school grounds and so are sometimes called school gardens. The method of operation is to organize those children who enlist for garden work into garden clubs.

Detroit owes its home and school garden movement to the Twentieth Century Club, and to this group of women the thanks of the city are due for founding so commendable an institution.

Up to 1913 the Twentieth Century Club bore all the expenses connected with promoting the community garden idea among the school children and with maintaining a number of community gardens. In 1913 the Board of Education identified itself with the movement by appropriating \$750 annually, which amount supplemented the funds of the Twentieth Century Club for the work. The Board of Education continued to appropriate this money until 1915, when the "home and school gardens" were turned over to the Recreation Commission under whose direction it has been carried on

since that time. Mrs. Grosvenor, who for years was one of the leaders in this work for the Twentieth Century Club, has been employed by the Recreation Commission as head of its garden department, and is still acting in that capacity.

The Twentieth Century Club has also been selling, at a nominal price, packages of seeds to the school children of Detroit, an enterprise which entails considerable work on the part of a large number of women in making up thousands of penny seed packages from seed bought in bulk.

## PRESENT ORGANIZATION OF GARDEN WORK

### RECREATION COMMISSION

Nominally, the Recreation Commission is responsible for the children's garden movement in Detroit, but actually the honors for the work done in the past seem to be divided between the Commission and citizen agencies, particularly the Twentieth Century Club. The gardening organization maintained by the Recreation Commission consists of a director of gardens, employed for the full year and such assistant directors employed during the summer months as the funds allow. The following tables giving the amounts of money appropriated and expended in the past two years, show the extent of the organization:

<u>Period</u>		<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
July 1, 1916 to July 1, 1917	Salaries	\$1,500	\$1,335.00
	Wages		212.11
	Supplies	700	490.00
July 1, 1917 to July 1, 1918		To April 1, 1918	
	Salaries	\$2,085	994.50
	Wages		310.80
	Supplies	800	218.25

For the summer of 1916 the director of gardens had two assistants from May through September. In the summer of 1917, the director had three assistants paid for by the Recreation Commission employed as follows;

one from July 1 to September 15; one from July 16 to September 1, and the third from September 27 to October 15, which made practically two assistants for the entire season.

In addition to these assistant directors of gardens, the play leaders organized garden clubs, having a total membership of 800 children, and supervised the gardens of these children two half days a week during the early part of the season, and one half day a week after the summer playgrounds were opened.

There is no question of the value to be derived from taking advantage of the play leaders' contact with the children in the various neighborhoods to organize garden clubs and to stimulate interest in gardens; however, there is a question as to whether the play leaders as a class are qualified to supervise gardens, and to give instruction adequate for obtaining maximum results. It is true that in the summer of 1917, a number of play leaders were remarkably successful with two gardens in their charge, but this circumstance was probably due to a deep interest and aptitude for the work. As a rule gardens suffered because of the incidental amount of time which could be given by play leaders to this part of their duties.

To prepare themselves for garden supervision, the play leaders were supposed to attend lectures on gardening given under the auspices of the Twentieth Century Club, but unfortunately the lectures were planned at such times as to make it impossible for the play leaders to attend without

neglecting their regular duties. To meet the situation of the Recreation Commission organized its own classes before which Mrs. Grosvenor, Mr. Kinde-  
man, and Mr. Burger lectured and gave demonstrations.

There seems to have been an absence of hearty cooperation between play leaders and garden departments of the Recreation Commission, or at least that intimacy of relationship which the common aim warranted did not exist between the two departments. Miss Sidney Bock, supervisor of playgrounds, who was responsible for coordinating the play leaders' efforts with those of the garden department, thought it advisable, under the circumstances, to transfer to Mrs. Grosvenor, the director of gardens direct responsibility for the garden work of the play leaders. This was done August 1, 1917.

To all intents and purposes, the garden department has been an independent unit, planning and carrying out its work program without supervision or direction either from the Recreation Commission itself or from the Superintendent of Recreation. It is evident from the annual report of the garden department, that citizen organization, notably the Twentieth Century Club and the Detroit Branch of the National Plant, Flower and Fruit Guild, had a larger share in the home and school garden program for Detroit than did the Recreation Commission.

### Citizen Cooperation

Foremost in cooperating with the Recreation Commission was the Twentieth Century Club which in 1917 “distributed 259,672 packages of flower and vegetable seed to the public school children of Detroit at a penny a package. It also made a donation of approximately \$60 worth of flower and vegetable seed to the Recreation Commission, furnished automobiles upon several occasions to make tours of garden inspection, and provided the salary of a garden supervisor to assist the director of gardens for a period of four months. In addition, the chairman, and members of the home and school garden committee of the Twentieth Century Club served as an advisory council for the home and school gardens during the season. Also, they acted as judges of the childrens’ vegetable contest”

“The Detroit Branch of the National Plat, Flower and Fruit Guild in cooperation with the Twentieth Century Club and Extension Department of the Michigan Agricultural College maintained and conducted during the season a Patriotic Garden Bureau and Garden School for the benefit of garden teachers and the public who desired knowledge in modern scientific gardening”.

Another important cooperating factor in garden work was Mr. E. C. Lindeman, state leader for boys and girls clubs.

Cooperation of citizens bodies should be welcomed and encouraged in all public movements but the City of Detroit is remiss in its duty

when it depends upon the gratuitous and altruistic spirit of private agencies to carry on an activity which should be as universal as other activities in the schools or of the Recreation Commission.

### SCOPE OF WORK DONE

As it stands now, the Children's Garden Movement is a minor factor both in the educational and social activities of Detroit, which, except by the citizens bodies mentioned above, has not been seriously considered nor appreciated by the community at large. This situation is entirely due to the lack of aggressive interest on the part of the two city departments, the Board of Education and the Recreation Commission, which should feel themselves responsible for the promotion and extension of the movement. The Board of Education, in a measure, had it as a part of its department but beyond appropriating \$750 annually did nothing to further the garden idea, and when the Recreation Commission was organized transferred its responsibility to this body with apparent relief. Since 1914 under the Recreation Commission, the garden work while receiving more money, obtained scant attention. Lack of funds cannot be given as a reason, because more money could undoubtedly have been obtained if a program warranting it had been presented properly.

In 1917 community gardens were maintained in the following places by the garden department: Field, Lingeman, Carstons, Wingert, and St. Aubins Schools; the Martindale Normal Training School botany classes; at

the Rescue Home and the Kirby Avenue community garden. The play leaders maintained gardens at the Gershon and Gruesel Schools, the Detention Home, at Cass Avenue near Toledo and one on Baldwin Avenue. A garden was also maintained by the boys botany class at the Northern High. In all there were fourteen community gardens in Detroit in 1917, of which the Kirby garden with 220 plots was the largest.

The following summary extracted from the 1917 report of the garden department gives a more definite idea of how much was accomplished last year, and how far reaching the work was:

Total number of children enrolled for gardens		1315
Total number of children caring for garden		949 *
Total number of children completing all Requirements		12
Estimated value of products raised		\$3,558.75
Amount of vegetables and fruit canned at centers		883
Estimated value of canned products		\$283.23
Total value of all products, fresh canned		\$3,841.93
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No. of garden and canning clubs	17 members	365
No. of club meetings during year	135 attendance	1,854
No. of field meetings during year	179 attendance	2,758
No. of demonstrations during year	173 attendance	2,655
No. of leaders training classes	18 attendance	345
No. of other meetings	36 attendance	2,447
No. of canning centers	9 attendance	
No. of demonstrations		79

\*Cared for gardens all summer but did not write.

No criticism is offered as to the proficiency and effectiveness of the work actually done, nor of the benefits educational and social, accruing

to the 1,315 children enrolled in the garden movement. Criticism is due the Recreation Commission, however, for this negligible percentage of Detroit's children engaged in garden work, after two summer's control of the movement by the Commission.

Comparisons with other cities are not always a fair basis for judgment, but a summary of the 1917 report of the City of Dayton, Ohio, indicates how far Detroit is lagging behind in the home and school garden movement. Dayton had 3,109 children's home gardens, 29 model school gardens in which 900 children were engaged and 2,250 vacant lot gardens cared for by adults, the last also under the same supervision as the children's gardens.

Whether Detroit's shortcoming in this respect is due entirely to a lack of interest on the part of the Recreation Commission or to a lack of comprehensive organizing ability on the part of the director of gardens, it is difficult to state. It must be evident, however, that the home and school garden movement has missed such aggressive leadership as was and still is necessary to take it a serious part of the educational program for a large proportion of Detroit children.

#### Garden Supervision

Undoubtedly the keystone of a successful garden season is adequate supervision. For 1917 the supervising staff in addition to the director of gardens was made up as follows:

1 - July 1 - Sept 15	Employed by Recreation Commission
1- July 16 - Sept 7	Employed by Recreation Commission
1 - Sept. 27 - Oct 15	Employed by Recreation Commission
About 40 play leaders	Employed by Recreation Commission
1- Four months	Employed by the Twentieth Century Club
2- Volunteers – regular attendance	

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Total number of visits to school garden	288
Total number of visits to home gardens	1165
“Each home garden received at least five visits”	

More than 300 children were enrolled at the community gardens leaving somewhat less than 1,000 of the 1,315 engaged in gardening, enrolled as home gardeners. The total number of visits, 116, to the home gardens was insufficient to bring about the best of results.

The community gardens received intensive supervision, particularly the Kirby Garden, which had 220 children’s plots, and upon which the Director of Gardens spent most of her time and the two volunteers all of their time.

Sufficient funds were appropriated for 1917 to employ more supervisors but inability to obtain them is given as the reason for not having employed more. Up to April 1, 1918, \$1,305.30 of the \$2,085 appropriated was spend for salaries and wages, leaving \$539.70 after deducting the full salary of the director, which could have been used last summer for hiring additional supervisory help.

For 1918 there have been allowed thus far by the Board of Estimates, 5 assistant directors, for the six months, each, at \$80 per month, 10

assistant directors for four months at \$75 per month, and enough supervisors to do intensive work with 225 home gardens, assigning 150 gardens to each supervisor.

### PROGRAM FOR THE SUMMER OF 1918

With the granting of an appropriation for fifteen assistant directors the plans for this next summer are naturally more comprehensive than at any previous time. Up to April 15, the director of gardens and one assistant director employed since April 1, have enrolled 401 children for home gardens, and sixteen play leaders reported an enrollment of 490 children on April 16 as a result of one week's work.

It is planned this year to use play leaders only for enrolling children and for organizing garden clubs. The supervision and instruction of garden work will be turned over entirely to the garden department.

A course of lectures similar to that of other years has been started by the Twentieth Century Club, but up to the present time, April 15, the play leaders could not attend because of the hour at which the lectures are given. However, the Recreation Commission has organized its own course which is given by the director of gardens.

## CONSTRUCTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

### Administration

It is recommended:

That the Recreation Commission and the Superintendent of Recreation give the home and school garden movement through its garden department the attention which the importance of this activity merits.

The great value of instruction in gardening, especially to city children, is recognized; and if it is worth carrying on for 1% of the children of Detroit, it surely is worthwhile to be carried for a larger proportion of the children. The granting of fifteen assistant directors for this year affords an opportune time to wage a vigorous campaign for the extension of the movement and for placing it on a real basis.

That the Recreation Commission, while the garden movement is within its jurisdiction, consider itself the sole agency, charged with the responsibility for promoting this movement; that it continue to welcome citizen cooperation, but as subordinate and subject to the policies of the Commission and its authorized executive.

In instances where educational innovations were initiated by private agencies, the latter ceased being dominating factors when the public agencies adopted such innovations and assumed responsibility for them to the community. Kindergartens furnish a prominent example. The same should be true of children's gardening, which has passed the experimental stage and is recognized as worthy of public support.

It is believed that centralized responsibility for garden work in Detroit in the Recreation Commission will clear up what seems to be a complicated situation and should prove beneficial to the garden movement.

That awards be given for the best home gardens, as is now being done for community gardens. That inspection tours by interested private organizations be encouraged.

### ORGANIZATION

It is recommended:

That the superintendent of Recreation devote as much time to this work as is necessary to build up an effective organization, and to produce results commensurate with the value of this activity.

Heretofore little attention was given to the garden department by the Superintendent of Recreation.

That all of the fifteen assistant directors supervise gardens and instruct the children.

It is now contemplated to use the five assistant directors, at \$80 per month, as district supervisors, and the 10 assistant directors at \$75 per month, as instructors under the directions of these district supervisors. The organization, it is believed, is not large enough to warrant the employment of district supervisors.

That the Director of Gardens spend all of her time in general supervision and direction of the work, instead of doing intensive work at any one community garden. If found necessary, however, an assistant director can any time be assigned to aid in general supervision.

That an adequate system of records be installed. It is suggested that an individual record be kept for each garden or garden plot and that a

system of daily reports from assistant directors be inaugurated.

The Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research will be glad to aid in devising a reporting and recording system.

That no play leaders be used as supervisors of gardens unless they are transferred as full time employees of the garden department; that they be used exclusively in organizing and maintaining garden club as part of their centers.

### TRANSFER OF GARDENS TO BOARD OF EDUCATION

It is recommended:

That the children's home and school garden movement be transferred to the Board of Education of Detroit.

It is believed by the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research that this movement should become a part of the educational system and should be extended as universally as is possible in a city like Detroit. However, a transfer is advised only when the Board of Education is prepared to give gardening proper attention, even when it is not a popular war measure. By this it is not meant that the Board of Education immediately inject gardening into the curriculum and introduce it in all schools, but that the board of education should assume responsibility for promoting gardening as a part of the educational system as rapidly as conditions permit.