



Garden Learning Engagement

LE 5 Community Interview

Background

There are many ways to collect data and gather information to explore a “Should We” question. Talking to gardeners, farmers, beekeepers, landscapers, etc in your community is critical because “Should We” questions explore the connection between the natural world and human lives, choices and behaviors. Agriculture is a practice that humans have been evolving all over the world for thousands of years. All cultures have agricultural and horticultural practices, many of which look different from the dominant Western styles of gardening and farming, and some of which include doing very little to the land and letting the more-than-human world do most of the gardening themselves. Community interviews are one way to reveal a variety of cultural and value systems that influence how gardeners make decisions. This LE will help you do this type of community-based research.

Purpose

- Community interviews can assist you with your field-based data collection (LE 6):
 - The community member can share their experiences, and give you clues about resources to read or types of data to collect.
 - The community member can help you explain your findings from your field-based investigations or can help you think about the next questions to ask.
- Community interviews will inform your thinking about the “Should We” question:
 - This can be an important moment to consider who else is affected by this garden decision (human and more-than-human).
 - Interviews can reveal the variety of cultural and value systems that influence gardeners decisions and purposes for gardening.
- Community interviews can expand our views of gardening:
 - Talking with a variety of gardeners can show us how to be in the garden – what to pay attention to, how to walk through the garden, etc.
 - Elevate garden expertise in our community as intergenerational and interdisciplinary.

Connections to family and community gardening knowledges and practices

This learning engagement focuses on eliciting information via community experts, such as a community gardener, a local farmer, a neighbor, etc.

MATERIALS

- » Pen and paper to record questions and answers from interview
- » Clipboards or hard writing surface to take into the garden

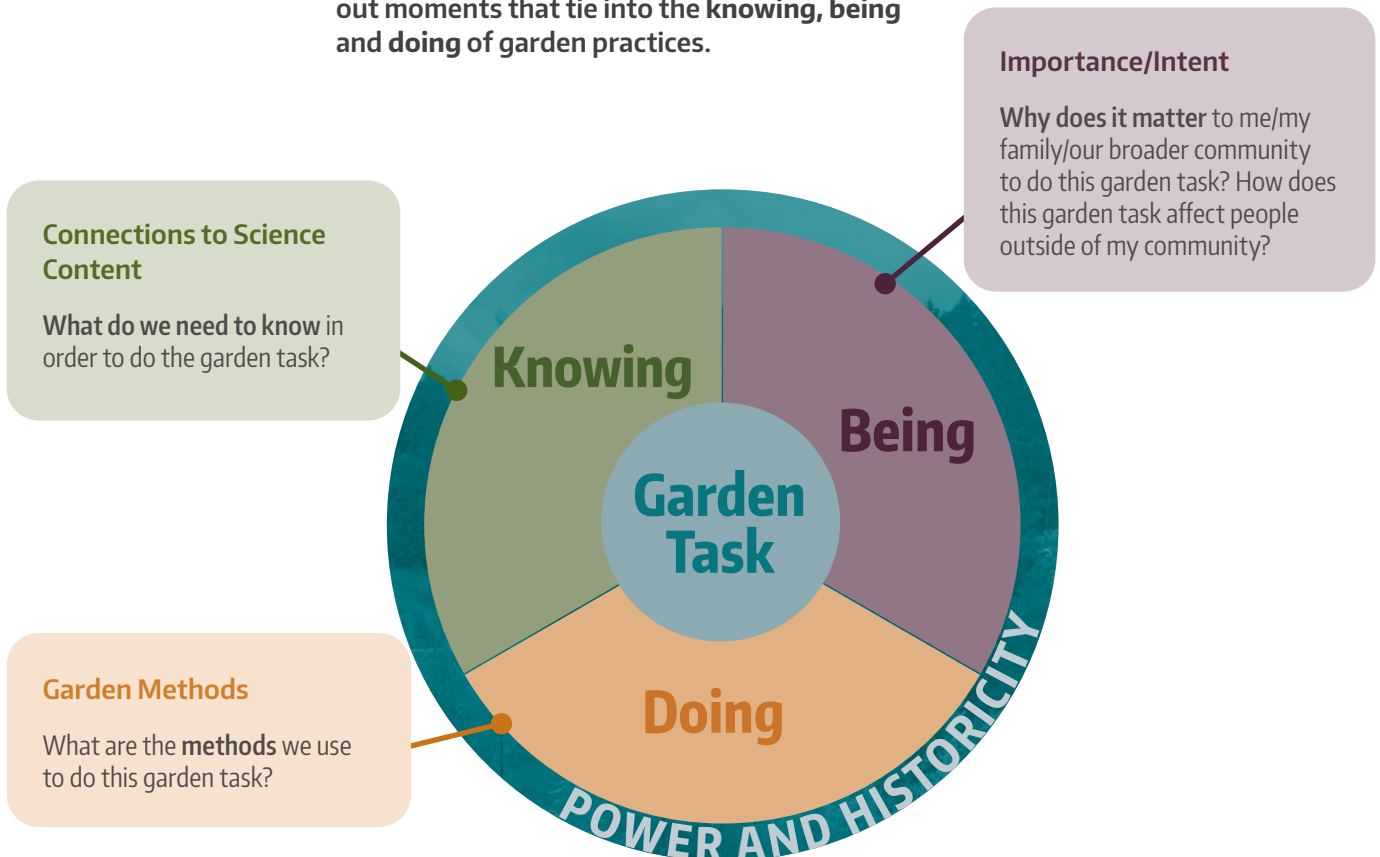
LEARNING GOALS

- **Learners will...**
 - » Learn about the range of purposes and practices of gardening in our own communities and beyond.
 - » Gather evidence from community experts to inform our gardening decisions.

Centering Equitable Practices:

- **Broaden what counts as science and science knowledge**, who does science, and where science is done: Science is often taught from very narrow conceptions of what counts as science, who does science, and where science is done. Conducting a community interview gives you an opportunity to open up the thinking space in science to include family- based knowledge, and community expertise as learners begin to engage in place-based investigations.
- **Encourage human connections to ecosystems**: It is commonly assumed in some western cultures that humans are bad for natural places and human engagement should be restricted. For example, human interaction with natural places in National Parks is often quite restricted, even when Indigenous peoples had been caring for that same place since time immemorial, prior to a National Park’s creation. Gardening can be one way to illustrate complex interdependent relations between humans and the rest of the natural world. How does the gardener you are interviewing promote healthy ecosystems in ways that are mutually beneficial to other organisms?
- **Places communicate values**: Gardening in cities is not neutral; garden design communicates who is welcome and who is not. Where are gardens located in your city? What values are communicated in these spaces? Who has access to these places? Who is welcome in these places? How is gardening happening in limited green spaces?
- **Make visible and reflect on decision making**: Various people have made decisions about the land you are on: regulations, laws, and rules have impacted the ways humans relate to the land. Make visible and ask questions about the types of governance that impact garden decisions.

Throughout the instructional sequence we call out moments that tie into the **knowing, being and doing** of garden practices.



Instructional Sequence

TIME

1 hour



Part 1: Deciding on a community member to interview (10 minutes)

Identify someone in the community who knows about the garden task (see our gardening tasks guide on the cover page) and the questions you are asking. These people could be community gardeners, people who have a job that is related to your “Should We” question like biologists and farmers, or people who enjoy being in gardens.

Once you decide on who you want to interview or talk with, invite them to talk to you about this topic. Sometimes you might feel unsure about how to ask someone to talk to you, but you’ll be surprised at how excited people are to share their knowledge! In case you need some help reaching out to community members, here is an example note you could send:

Dear [their name],

My name is [your name] and we are trying to explore the question [your “Should We” question]. You are someone who lives in our community and knows a lot about this topic! We were hoping that you would be interested in talking with us about this topic so that we can learn from you!

We think this might take about 10 minutes. Would you be interested? If so, please email me back at [your email address]. We are excited to talk to you and hope you are available!

Thank you,
[your name]

Part 2: Coming up with questions to ask (10 minutes)

As a group come up with questions you want to ask your community expert. Sometimes, even though you know what you want to learn about, it’s hard to come up with questions to ask. Here are some suggestions below to get you started. You can read more example questions in Educator Backpack Field Guide.

- » How did you learn about [this topic]?
- » We are asking the question: should we [put your should we question here]. What do you think is important to know about this before we try to answer this question?
- » What do you think is the best way to investigate this?
- » How did [this topic] come to be in our community? What is the history of [this topic] in our community?
- » What resources do you think would be helpful for us to use?
- » Are there other people who you think we should talk to?

Knowing

Asking an expert garden what is important to know when doing a certain garden task can make visible the wide type of knowledges gardens use when making decisions in the garden.

Part 3: Getting ready and conducting your interview! (25 minutes)

» Once you have your date set and your questions prepared, it's time to do the interview! Make sure you have...

1. The questions written out on a piece of paper so you don't forget them, and
 2. A pen or pencil to write down the answers. You can also ask permission to record the interview on a phone. But it's totally ok just to write down some notes!
- » Educators, take notes of learner ideas and expertise that arises during the community interview. Often the expert's comments will remind learners of garden practices they do with their families or communities.

Being

Prompt learners to connect to why the garden practices they do with their families and communities is important to them.

- » Consider taking a walking interview! How does the gardener walk through the garden? What do they pay attention to?
- » Learners will likely come up with many thoughtful interview questions on their own. As you look at the interview questions that learners have suggested, reflect on if there are questions in each of the categories: relationships, place and decision making. If there are holes, prompt the learners by asking "We don't have any questions about how the gardener makes decisions. What kinds of questions can we ask to learn about this?" If learners are having trouble identifying questions then suggest one of the specific prompts found in the Educator Backpocket Field Guide. "Should we ask the gardener, what values do you use when making decisions about this garden task?"

Part 4: Summarizing your Data (10-15 minutes)

This can be done in partners, small groups, or as a whole group.

- » Look over the information you learned from the community interview and figure out what you know about your "Should We" question now that you've done the interview.
- » Using **Table 1: Summarizing your Data**, record the themes or patterns from your community interview. You can record on a white board with the whole group, or have learners copy the table into their garden journal to discuss in pairs.

Table 1: Summarizing your Data

DATA SOURCE:	WHAT ARE SOME THEMES OR PATTERNS THAT WE'RE SEEING FROM THIS DATA SOURCE?
Community Interview	

- What are some themes or patterns that you are seeing from the community interview?
- What evidence do you have for those patterns?
- How does this help us address our "Should We" question?
- What are you wondering about now?

- » In LE 7 you will have a chance to bring all of your data together (from your daily garden observations, your family knowledge, your garden methods and your community interview) to see what you've found out and how you can decide on your next steps.

LE 5 Educator Backpack Field Guide

TIME	
10 min	Deciding on a community member to interview
10 min	Coming up with questions to ask
25 min	Conduct the interview
15 min	Summarizing your Data

Our “Should We” Question:

Focus on Decision Making:

make visible the way expert gardeners make socio-ecological decisions in the garden:

- How did you learn about [this topic]?
- We are asking the question: should we [put your should we question here]. What do you think is important to know about this before we try to answer this question?
- What do you think is the best way to investigate this?
- How did [this topic] come to be in our community? What is the history of [this topic] in our community?

Connections to Families and Communities:

- Who can we invite from our families and communities that know about our garden task?
- How did [this topic] come to be in our community? What is the history of [this topic] in our community?
- Are there other people who we should talk to?

Centering Equitable Practices

Encourage human connections to ecosystems:

- What are the questions you ask yourself when you do this task?
- How do you promote healthy ecosystems in ways that are mutually beneficial to other organisms?
- What are important relations to consider with this garden task?

Places communicate values:

Gardening in cities is not neutral; garden design communicates who is welcome and who is not.

- What values are communicated in these spaces?
- Who has access to these places? Who is welcome in these places?
- How does the place you are gardening affect the decisions you make about this garden task?

Make visible and reflect on decision making:

Point out and ask questions about the types of governance that impact garden decisions.

- What values do you use when making decisions about this garden task?
- How does the natural world impact your decisions about this task? How is the natural world impacted by your decisions?
- How have you seen [this garden task] change over time?

Our Interview Questions:

Reflect on the interview and summarize the data:

- What are some themes or patterns that you are seeing from the community interview?
- What evidence do you have for those patterns?
- How does this help us address our “Should We” question?
- What are you wondering about now?