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Interview with Sonja Andreas, McCoy Gardens, 2010 (audio)

Sonja Andreas

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0:53 How long have you lived in Portland?

- 3 ½ year

1:00 What Brought you here?

- Family

1:03 How did you get involved with your work with the McCoy Gardens?

- Been a life-long gardener.
- Discovered that the community garden was 3 blocks away when I moved to Portland.
- Realized that it wasn't being managed vary well

2:00 Did you have to petition to become the manager?

- Every year the gardeners vote and if you're willing to do it your it. Since I was already doing some of the functions, I was voted in.

3:15 In your own words, can you define sustainability?

- Any practice that doesn't involve more consumption than can be replaced.
- Bank account example
- Garden example

4:00 How is the McCoy Gardens sustainable as a community garden?

- It's an organic garden, leaves the earth better off
- Local rabbit raisers provide fertilizer
- Adds organic materials as mulches to help fertilize.

5:00 How much funding does the city help you with, with any aid, or does Portland Parks and Rec help you with any aid?

- Not sure most funds come from 1 year rental fee.
- Friends of Community Gardens a, non-profit that helps cost to form a community garden.
- City water as irrigation

6:56 How has the McCoy Gardens brought the community together, in this neighborhood in particular?

- Half or less of the gardeners live locally
- Gardeners form own community in the garden
- Volunteer efforts by everybody
- As a part of the garden people get to know one another and share garden tips

- Volunteer to help sick gardeners.
- Interact a lot with the children in the community

10:30 Is the McCoy Garden part of the Portland Parks and Recreation Youth Education Program?

- No
- If a gardener wanted to they could rent a plot and designate it for a youth program
- There is a youth garden around the corner where someone has a garden with coordinator for youth gardening.

13:00 What is a typical day like at the McCoy Gardens?

- Always different
- Seasonally based, currently preparing for planting, maintaining abandoned plots
- Building new raised beds
- Personal references and connections to gardening

17:20 What is garden etiquette for the McCoy Gardens?

- Is an official etiquette and there is reality.
- Take care of your garden
- Weeding
- Not dumping weed seeds into garden
- Process of educating people on gardening
- Marinating pathways around their garden
- Basic rules of interaction
- No loud music that would disturb others
- Disruptive behavior
- Clean community tools

20:45 What do you see the future for the McCoy Gardens?

- One of the few gardens that does not have a long waiting list.
- Get more gardeners that are more excited to garden
- Create a beautiful spot for people passing by
- Influence people to want to garden in their front lawns

22:45 Are there any other programs that gardeners or the garden participates in?

- There is one. Food for the people
- A place where gardeners can donate food from harvests to programs in the city
- Does not have a coordinator
- There are some gardens in the city that try to participate in this
- Our garden has given away 100lbs of food, that is a guess

26:00 Do you compost at the McCoy gardens or have a composting program?

- The Parks have a composting program that is accessible for some of the gardens
- Each gardener is responsible for composting on their garden plot
- City Yard waste bins
- Hot compost to prevent diseases in garden
- Earth Machine bins at garden
- Some people make a pile that is designated for composting on their plot

30:00 That's all of my questions that I have for you, is there anything else that you would like to add or comment on that I didn't ask you or you wanted to expand on?

- Well I would just say that my own personal opinion is that what the community garden project does for the city of Portland, potentially any city that has a community garden project. It helps to reverse the totally unsustainable way that we live in cities. We have houses that are built too closely together, or have lawns, we don't use the land to grow any of our food and so there is no sustainability as part of our living. My own perspective is that the city garden is a start in reversing that. People are also learning to garden in their own yards, there is no reason we couldn't have gardens in parts of our lawns that receive adequate sun and put that into raised beds. Its about educating people that make decisions that don't see this as a good thing; they are all worried about property values going up and down and if they see something like they think that they will see property values diminish. I don't think that is really true in areas where people do garden, it can be done in sloppy ways, that can diminish property values, but it can be done very beautifully that can bring value to a property.