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Interview with Darrell Sanders, Cully Community Garden, 2010 (audio)

Darrell Sanders

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Interviewee: Darrell Sanders
Interviewer: Jeremy Cohen
Research Assistant: Stephanie Mackey
Date: February 20, 2010
Location: Hollywood Library

- 00.02 Introductions and Permission
- 00.29 Q1: How long have you lived in Portland?
Answer: 36 years.
- 00.38 Q2: What brought you to Portland?
Answer: Teaching. (Albany, Portland Elementary Schools, PSU – Art Department)
- 01.17 Q3: Where were you educated after high school?
Answer: BA – Western Mexico University. Graduate work at Monmouth.
- 01.44 Q4: How did you get involved in community gardens?
Answer: Gardened all life, but had small yard. Checked out Rigler community garden in 2005, long waitlist, advised that there were plots available at Cully community garden, which was also in the neighborhood.
- 02.41 After 1 year at Cully elected Garden Manager. Currently in 4th year in that role.
- 03.28 Changes noticed?
Answer: Not much. He tries to set a good example by being proactive in the upkeep of the garden by maintaining paths and such.
- 04.10 Increase in “Produce Program”. (Shows brochure.) Community gardens are an outreach program for people that don’t have access to gardens. Regularly collect produce to take to other agencies. (Shows list of agencies involved with.)
- 05.23 Access to refrigeration makes difference of what types of produce goes to what agency, may instead take canned goods.
- 05.43 Last year Portland community gardens donated 14,000 pounds of produce.
- 06.0 1,845 pounds donated from Cully. Up from past 2 years.
- 06.30 Reserving garden spot for a lady who was on tour in Kuwait. He worked plot for her so that she wouldn’t lose it to a person on waitlist.
- 06.44 Current Cully waitlist of about 30 people. Waitlist of 1,400 city wide.
- 07.01 About half of the gardeners donate produce.
- 07.38 There is a daycare next door to Cully, so the kids get interested in what is growing, and sometimes he donates food to them too – like cherry tomatoes.
- 08.01 Q11: What are some reasons people start their own plot?
Answer: Most people use food grown for personal use. One gardener mostly does flowers. Mostly people that don’t have space at home, or live in apartments.
- 08.57 Q11: What are some reasons that people stop? Garden fees – currently went up, when started they were \$40, then raised to \$50, now at \$75.

- Some tuition help is available. Also lack of time to spend in garden, gardening takes more time than most people realize.
- 10.16 About 10% (3 gardeners) a year turnover plots.
- 10.24 Dividing plots to allow more people to garden. (10x20 plot, not 20x20)
- 10.44 Any initiatives to increase the amount of land?
Answer: Yes – 2 new gardens. Problems are that it takes a lot of money, as well as long term land commitment. (Shows article on Rigler.)
- 13.14 Hard to get funding, low on list of budget priorities. Last year cut \$9,000. He works on strictly volunteer basis.
- 13.49 Q10: In terms of waitlist, is that a source of frustration to people?
Answer: Yes. Young couple waited for 2 years and finally got one last year. Also, you may get a plot halfway through the season, like in summer.
- 14.38 What is it like for someone who gets their garden plot in summer, or at an inopportune time?
Answer: He cleans up the garden plot a little bit usually. The garden plot owner will get 5 days notice before plot is turned over to new person. Can salvage some things, like tomatoes, then you plant fall crops. Some things you can garden all year round.
- 16.02 Do you have to reclaim beds often?
Answer: This year cleaned out 3, which is average.
- 17.34 Q9: In what ways have you noticed the neighborhood change?
Answer: It's really stable. Old neighborhood, and garden has been around since 1992.
- 18.25 Some people object to community gardens as an unsightly eyesore. Try to establish guidelines and make gardens look presentable to be good neighbors.
- 19.04 Most people enjoy having the gardens around. Some issues with homelessness, some issues with vandalism but not much, dogs walking through garden.
- 19.50 Issues with kids having tomato fights in garden.
- 20.54 What is your role in dealing with those issues?
Answer: Garden manager acts as first step in settling disagreements, Cully has had no disagreements. Garden manager acts as communication with garden office (office assigns plots). Some gardens have assistant managers. Manager also coordinates with "Produce for People".
- 23.59 Q6&7: Do you have contact with other community gardens or organizations?
Answer: Meeting with other garden manager's couple of times a year. He volunteers at other gardens, and does some fruit tree pruning. "Friends of Community Gardens" (national organization) who advocates and tries to raise money. He also works with a gardening group called "Gardening Friends".
- 26.43 Q12: How do you define sustainability?

- Answer: Using things not in a wasteful way, recycling, and composting, being self-sufficient. Planning ahead what you have to do for the day, so you don't drive all over town wasting gas. Reducing how much you use.
- 30.04 Q14: Can you describe a typical day at the garden?
Answer: Rarely see lots of other people, maybe a couple over 4 hours. Always weeding. Composting. Checking water for leaks. Distributing loads of mulch.
- 34.13 Involved with "Albertina Kerr" on Sandy, does watering and landscaping.
34.58 Goes through notebook log of hours he spends and at what gardens. 450 hours at his garden and Cully produce.
- 36.07 Goes through log of what the garden produces and grows, as well as donation slips.
- 37.11 Notebook also contains info and resources for gardeners, such as when to plant certain crops.
- 37.47 Q15: Atypical day/event?
Answer: Someone ran into chain link fence. Water leaks. Tomato fights, poking holes in pumpkins. Occasional food disappearances.
- 39.58 Q16: What are some of your achievements? Things proudest of?
Answer: Encouraging better garden practices, better upkeep, getting rid of rats in compost.
- 41.11 Q18: What are some persistent challenges?
Answer: Weeds.
- 42.20 Q17: How would you like to see the garden evolve?
Answer: Don't break up too many plots into half plots. Don't go to lottery system, need long term commitments to encourage quality gardening and perennial plants, need feeling of ownership. System now works well.
- 46.07 Anything to add?
Answer: Offers to show pictures, and give a tour of garden.
- 47.34 Shows list of work-parties.
- 48.13 Shows garden brochure, produce list, and photos of his garden.
- 53.43 End of recording.