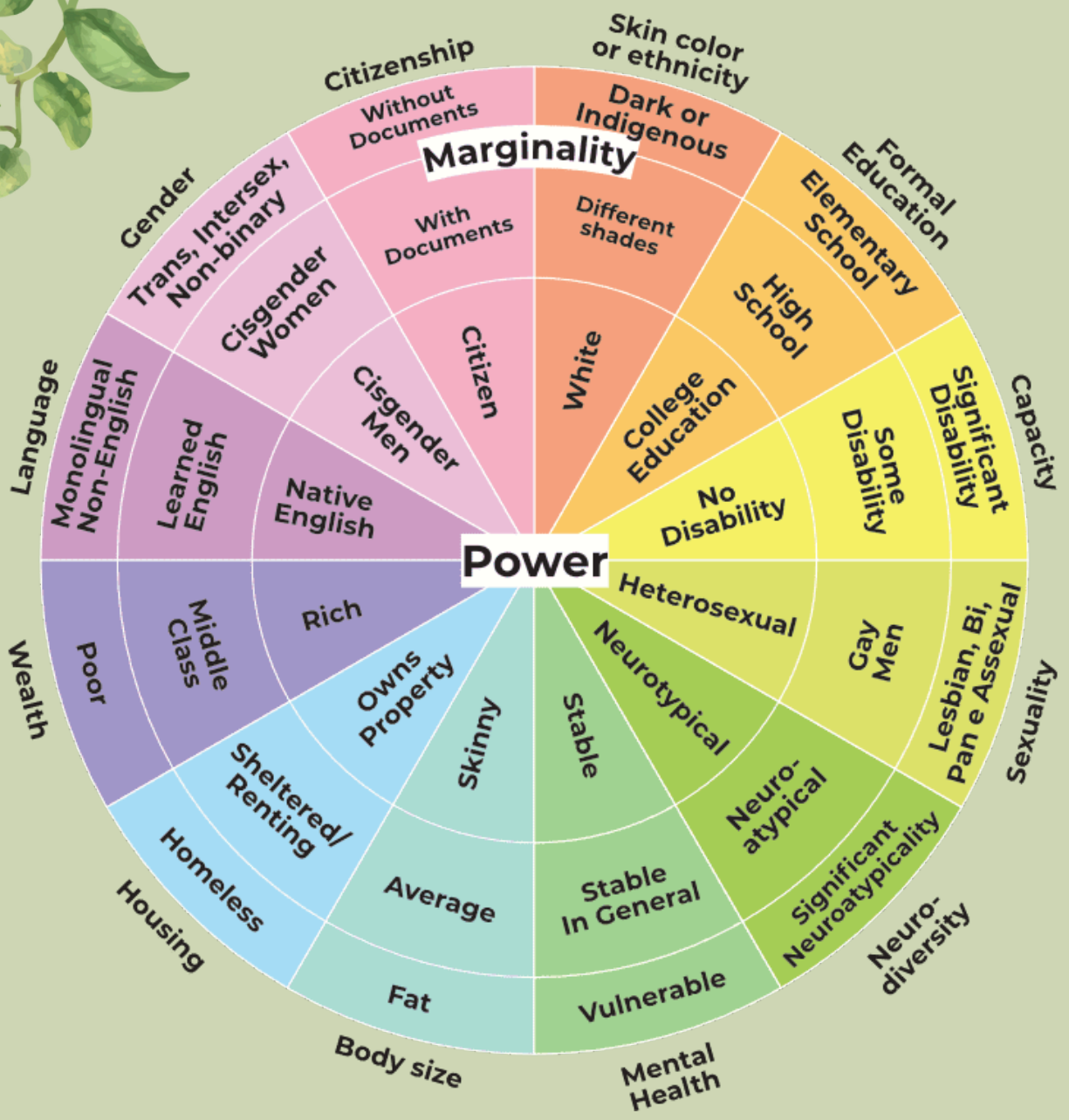


Building a **Just & Equitable Community Garden** in Greater Victoria





By adopting an anti-racist framework in the development and management of community gardens, you are not just cultivating food but also cultivating justice. The process involves centering the voices and needs of Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (IBPOC) communities, challenging systemic inequalities, and actively working to heal historical wounds. An anti-racist community garden is a space for growth, not only of plants but of relationships, empowerment, and racial justice.

ANTI-RACISM AND EQUITY RESOURCES:

- [How to be Anti-Racist](#)
- [How unintentional but insidious bias can be the most harmful](#)
- [Glossary | BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner](#)
- [Anti-Racism Tools](#) Canadian Race Relations Foundation
- [Resources for Victims of Racism and Hate](#) Community Garden
- [Accessibility Toolkit Anti-Racism Data Act](#) Racist Incident
- [Helpline School Garden Network](#) Community Garden Example
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1. UNDERSTANDING ANTI-RACISM IN COMMUNITY GARDENS

WHAT IS ANTI-RACISM?

Anti-racism is a proactive stance and practice of identifying, challenging, and dismantling the systemic, institutional, and interpersonal racism that affects marginalized racial groups. In community gardens, this includes acknowledging the legacies of colonialism, land dispossession, and exclusionary policies that have historically impacted IBPOC communities' access to land, resources, and food sovereignty.

WHY AN ANTI-RACIST APPROACH IS CRITICAL

Historical context: IBPOC communities have been historically displaced from land ownership, denied access to natural resources, and excluded from decision-making spaces. This history needs to be acknowledged and addressed in modern community garden practices.

Food Sovereignty: Many Indigenous and Black communities have deep cultural and historical connections to land and farming, and reclaiming these practices is a crucial part of racial justice and healing.

Combating Food Deserts: Low-income communities, often disproportionately composed of IBPOC people, face limited access to affordable, nutritious food, which contributes to health disparities. Anti-racist community gardens can help combat these disparities by increasing access to healthy food and resources.

CENTERING RACIAL JUSTICE IN COMMUNITY GARDEN: GOALS

KEY ANTI-RACIST PRINCIPLES

EQUITY OVER EQUALITY

Equal access to resources isn't enough; equity means distributing resources and support based on need and historical context. This might mean providing more resources or support to communities that have been historically marginalized.

DECOLONIZATION

Acknowledge the history of land dispossession, colonization, and displacement. Work to decolonize garden spaces by prioritizing Indigenous knowledge, practices, and land stewardship.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Use community gardens as spaces for healing, reparation, and the restoration of relationships with the land and each other.

GOALS FOR AN ANTI-RACIST GARDEN

Accessibility: Ensure the garden is open and welcoming to IBPOC individuals and families, with structures in place to support marginalized groups in participating.

Cultural Relevance: Design gardens with an understanding of the cultural food traditions and agricultural knowledge of the community, particularly IBPOC cultures.

Community Empowerment: Build community leadership from marginalized racial and ethnic groups and offer pathways for their leadership in the garden.

Land Reparation: Recognize and work toward the redistribution of land or access to land in a way that addresses historical inequalities, such as land dispossession of Indigenous communities.





IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING RACIAL BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

COMMON RACIALIZED BARRIERS

Economic Injustice: Economic disparities result in IBPOC communities being less likely to afford fees or resources for gardening, such as soil, tools, or seeds.

Cultural and Linguistic Exclusion: Community gardens may not be welcoming to non-English speakers, or they may not reflect the cultural food practices or crops important to IBPOC communities.

Historical Distrust: Years of exclusion and mistreatment by government and institutions can create distrust in community garden projects.


ACTIONS TO ADDRESS BARRIERS

Free or Sliding-Scale Access

Offer free or sliding-scale fees for garden plots, tools, and resources to ensure economic accessibility, especially for IBPOC residents.

Culturally Inclusive Design

Design gardens that reflect the cultural heritage of the community. For example, grow crops that are significant to Black, Indigenous, or immigrant communities, such as traditional herbs, vegetables, or fruits. Incorporate culturally relevant gardening practices and knowledge.



Language Access

Provide multilingual materials, signage, and interpretation services to ensure non-English speakers feel welcome and can access resources.

Community Ownership & Leadership

Include IBPOC voices in every level of decision-making. Consider developing a leadership council or advisory board composed primarily of IBPOC members who help shape the direction of the garden.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH IBPOC COMMUNITIES

CULTURALLY HUMBLE OUTREACH

Listening and Trust-Building

Begin with listening and relationship-building, not with top-down directives. Hold listening sessions with IBPOC community members to understand their needs, concerns, and ideas for the garden.

Partnering with Existing Organizations

Collaborate with local IBPOC-led organizations, churches, community groups, or cultural institutions that already have trust within the community.



Be Aware of Historical Trauma

Recognize that IBPOC communities may have experienced historical trauma related to land dispossession, racism, or exclusion. Approach your engagement with sensitivity, and avoid any practices that may appear to re-exploit or further harm these communities.

COMMUNITY-CENTERED DECISION-MAKING

Co-Creation of Garden Space

Ensure that IBPOC community members are co-creators of the garden vision, layout, rules, and management. This could be through participatory decision-making processes such as consensus or restorative justice circles.

Ensure Local Leadership

Train and empower IBPOC community members to lead garden projects. Leadership development programs can build skills in garden management, public speaking, grant writing, and more.

Reparative Actions: Consider providing reparative measures such as land access, economic support, or partnership opportunities with IBPOC communities to address historical inequities.



ANTI-RACIST GARDEN DESIGN & PRACTICES

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND STEWARDSHIP

Indigenous Land Acknowledgment

Start by acknowledging the land you're gardening on, honoring its Indigenous stewards, and recognizing the long history of land dispossession. If possible, collaborate with Indigenous groups to learn about sustainable land practices that reflect Indigenous ways of knowing.

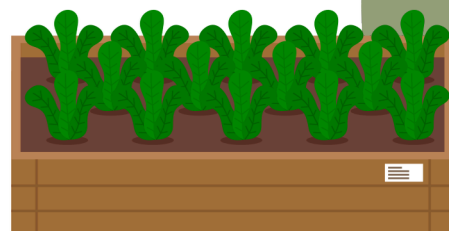
Decolonize Garden Practices

Incorporate Indigenous farming techniques (e.g., the Three Sisters method of planting corn, beans, and squash together) and engage with local Indigenous gardeners to learn about traditional food systems and land stewardship.

GARDEN STRUCTURE:

Accessible and Welcoming Design

Create spaces that are accessible to people with disabilities and people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Consider raised beds, wheelchair-accessible pathways, & seating.



Diverse and Culturally Relevant Crops

Grow a diverse range of crops that reflect the cultural and culinary needs of the community. For example, growing traditional foods for Black, Indigenous, and immigrant communities ensures cultural connection to the land.

Community-Centered Education

Host workshops that not only teach gardening techniques but also explore the history of agriculture, food sovereignty, and racial justice. Focus on the contributions of Black, Indigenous, and other communities to agriculture and food systems.



TRAINING AND EDUCATION FOR ANTI-RACIST GARDEN LEADERS

TRAINING TOPICS

RACIAL JUSTICE & ANTI-RACISM

Provide training for garden leaders and volunteers on understanding and addressing racism. This should include an analysis of how structural racism operates in the food system, land access, and urban planning.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Offer workshops on cultural competency, which will help garden members better understand the cultural traditions and agricultural knowledge of different communities.

LAND REPARATION

Educate the community about the history of land dispossession, and explore ways the garden can be part of a broader reparative framework.

IBPOC GARDEN LEADERS:

Mentorship and Skill-Building: Provide mentorship programs that connect emerging IBPOC leaders with experienced gardeners, urban farmers, or community organizers to build leadership skills.

Leadership in Governance: Ensure IBPOC gardeners are involved in decision-making, whether in garden management, education, or outreach efforts.

MEASURING ANTI-RACIST OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

KEY METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Demographics of Participants: Track who is participating in the garden by race, income, and other demographic indicators to assess whether you are successfully reaching IBPOC communities.

Cultural Engagement: Measure the extent to which the garden reflects and serves the cultural practices and needs of the community.

Community Leadership: Monitor the number and diversity of garden leadership positions held by IBPOC individuals and the extent to which they shape the garden's direction.

Impact on Food Insecurity: Evaluate how much access to healthy food has increased for marginalized communities, particularly IBPOC families.

Regular Feedback and Accountability:

Create regular feedback loops that include surveys, community meetings, or focus groups, especially with IBPOC participants, to assess whether the garden is meeting their needs.

Hold regular evaluations of garden practices, policies, and outcomes to ensure alignment with anti-racist principles and to make necessary adjustments.