

Preface

Welcome to the exciting world of the Rice Community Garden! You're probably reading this because you have some responsibility for overseeing the garden. As you may or may not have realized, taking care of a community garden can be a challenging task, but it is also extremely rewarding. I hope you'll use this "manual" (more like a mish-mash of tips, information, and artifacts) to help you plan for the garden. You'll find that the better you plan and manage the garden, the less you'll have to do to correct mistakes, the more you and others will enjoy gardening, and the more productive the garden! Of course, there's always room for spontaneity or revision; this manual is simply a guide. Good luck!

About this manual

- (1) First and most important section (yellow tab): Here you'll find a handy list of tips for the most basic garden functions. There are then excerpts from a report I wrote in May 2006: "Improvement of the Rice Community Garden." Those will give some of my findings from my semester of independent study on the garden, and recommendations for future garden coordinators. I've also included some appendix pages that I think will be particularly useful to you. Then there are some printouts of my e-mail correspondences with community gardeners from other colleges and former coordinators of the Rice Community Garden. Finally, there are some articles about the garden from the *Rice News* and *Rice Thresher*.
- (2) Second section (red tab): Information on some of the physical aspects of the garden (worm composting, soil testing, pruning).
- (3) Third section (white tab): Some "historical documents," i.e. plans and plantings from the past. There is a lot here, so only a few pages are in sheet protectors and the rest are in the folder at the end of the section.
- (4) Fourth section (green tab): Lots and lots of old e-mails. Even more can be found in the Rice Community Garden file at the Woodson Research Library (1st floor of Fondren Library). A good rainy day activity, maybe. I'm being serious—there is a lot of juice in these e-mails!

More info

This document, along with all of my typed documents from my independent study project in Spring 2006 (Enst 400), are available on the garden website: <http://www.rice.edu/garden>. Please take a look at my full report when you have a chance. I've condensed some of the important information onto the next page, but the report will tell you a lot more!

Important Tips

- **Plan out plantings** for a few months, a semester, or the whole year. Then you can buy seeds all at once.
- **Mulching** is important! It helps the soil stay moist and fertilized. If you run out, call Ron Smith for a fresh delivery. You can also throw mulch in the compost bin.
- **Compost:** The worm population will adjust itself to the amount of fresh organic matter available. Therefore if you want lots of compost, give the worms lots of food (collect from campus kitchens), wait 2-3 months, and voila! This should be a continuous process though. I suggest collecting a bucket of kitchen scraps at least once a week.
- **Summers:** Be sure there is a daily watering/weeding schedule so that the garden doesn't get overrun and dilapidated! Plant a cover crop like sweet potato and mulch heavily (3 inches) to minimize weeding.
- **Keep a log** of what you do in the garden! This applies to both group sessions and individual watering/weeding. It's quick and easy to log: just follow the link on the garden website. Be sure to **check the log** to see what's been going on the garden, especially if you haven't stopped by in a while.
- **Purchases:** Pay for them yourself, then go to the Community Involvement Center office in the RMC Cloisters to get reimbursed through RSVP. Our budget is included in the RSVP Environmental Committee's budget of \$250/year. Check with the committee chairs to see how much they can allot you. For bigger, more long-term purchases, talk RSVP or Dr. Harcombe. We take monetary donations too, see the first section in the manual.
- **Seeds:** I like to mail order organic seeds through the following companies:
 - Seeds of Change (www.seedschange.com) – New Mexico
 - High Mowing Seeds (www.highmowingseeds.com) –Vermont
 - Johnny's Selected Seeds (www.johnnyseeds.com) –MaineOf course, mail-order implies shipping costs and the unsustainable act of shipping itself. Check the local gardening shops for organic seeds. Bob Randall reviews some stores in his book, *Year Round Vegetables, Fruits, and Flowers for Metro Houston* (aka "The Bible"), pp. 284-285.
- **Other resources:** In addition to The Bible and the contacts listed in the first section, you can also find a great deal of information online. Urban Harvest has an extensive library on gardening and is worth checking out.
- **Volunteer appreciation:** Volunteers are sometimes underappreciated. Ask local coffeeshops, restaurants, and organic food stores for coupons or gift certificates that can serve as nice gestures of appreciation for volunteers. I tried to do this and sent out a few letters, but I was not vigilant enough in following up. Alternatives are thank you cards and volunteer parties or picnics.