

Urban Gardening Learning Corner Project Proposal

PROBLEM

The Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative (HPCLC) has received an rising amount of requests on information and resources regarding urban gardens and growing your own food in a city landscape. According to the most recent data pull from the HCPL website and front desk information data-capture system, our records have shown a 63% increase in request for this information from 2020 to now.

SOLUTION

The HCPLC reference librarians are proposing the creation of a “Florida Urban Gardening” corner of the library for patrons to be able to easily access books and resources regarding urban gardening, Florida-native flora and fauna, edible gardening, and a small seed lending library. As a digital counterpart, the library staff propose creating an “Urban Gardening” LibGuide that can be retrieved from the library’s website. Library users who are looking for this type of information can be easily directed to the section of the library or online, find all of the materials they would deem necessary for their research, and be able to take a small selection of seeds to help get their garden started. The LibGuide would house similar references to the print materials in the library, and also have other helpful links like “How to” videos, the Farmer’s Almanac, gardening vocabulary definitions, and more.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

Staffing: Reference librarians will reshelve and organize the books, refill the seed library from available stock, and create the LibGuide for the library’s website.

Equipment: bookshelves, filing cabinet or organizational shelf, designated containers, small table and chairs

Training: All reference and patron-facing staff will attend at least one training session regarding the organization and restocking of the Urban Gardening section, and how to create and use LibGuides. Should any professional associations that the library staff is subscribed offer webinars that related to the subject of this topic, they are encouraged to partake.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Library Reference Staff
Library Technical Staff/Assistants
University of South Florida Food Sovereignty Initiative
Coalition of Community Gardens, Inc.
Lowes

The project will be led by the reference librarian at the Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative at the John F. Germany Library, who will coordinate the retrieval, organization, and development of this Urban Gardening corner of the library. As one of more centralized libraries within the cooperative, it will serve as our test location for this project. The librarians will use books already housed in the library for this corner as well as source new books that focus on topics such as foods that can be grown in Florida, how to start an apartment garden, gardening 101, and the benefit of community gardens. The Library Technical staff and assistants will continue to monitor website and LibGuide functionality to ensure that patrons are able to access requested materials. Technical staff and assistants will also support the reference staff by helping with the creation of satisfaction surveys, QR codes, survey distribution, data analysis, and final report curation. All internal staff are expected to coordinate and cooperate based on pre-described due dates and calendars.

Connecting with local institutions, like the University of South Florida Food Sovereignty Initiative and the Coalition of Community Gardens, Inc. who can help structure our resources, provide educational materials and demonstrations, and overall show support for this initiative are crucial to this project's success. To build a foundational relationship with these two major actors within the Tampa Bay area, the library staff intend on working with these organizations a key stakeholders and educators for this project, and incorporating their decisions and dedication to this project through future programming, marketing, and acknowledgment in the library space. The staff also hopes to develop an agreement or sponsorship with Lowes to source our seed packets from, either at discount or as donation, for the seed lending library portion of the display. Should we be unable to come to an agreement, the library will budget accordingly to buy the seeds, work with our other two community partners on sourcing seeds, and place donation boxes at the circulation desk for community members to donate seed packets, books, and other urban gardening materials/resources.

ASSESSMENT

Success will be measured by the amount of print materials and seeds that are checked out from the library and by how often the Urban Gardening LibGuide is clicked on. The goal is to use up at least one packet of each available seed by the end of the Fall season, to increase print material use by 15%, and increase digital resource use/ "clicks" by 25%.

A usage report will be written by the head reference librarian and submitted to the director of the Hillsborough County Public Library, the Library Board, and the County Board of Commissioners before February 1st, 2027 that reflects the usage of the seed lending library and demand for the print and digital materials. It will also include survey reports regarding other resource, program, or material requests from using patrons, the project's successes, and future improvements.

BUDGET

Salaries	Expenses	Comments
Reference Staff .05 FTE	\$ 1,936	70 project hours; \$25 an hour
Reference Staff .05 FTE	1,936	70 project hours; \$25 an hour
Technical Staff .03 FTE	1,346	70 project hours; \$19 an hour
Benefits		
Reference Staff .05 FTE	580	30% benefits
Reference Staff .05 FTE	580	30% benefits
Technical Staff .03 FTE	403	30% benefits
Contractual Services		
Library Materials		
LibGuides	899	Annual subscription with SpringShare
Books	600	
Supplies		
Bookshelves	138	IKEA BILLY bookshelf
Filing Cabinet	0	In library storage (unused)
Drawer Organizers	60	
Labels	30	
Table	0	In library storage (unused)
Chairs	0	In library storage (unused)

Posters	50	
Seeds	200	
Computer/laptop/tablet	0	Spare electronic for user satisfaction survey(s) (for those who cannot use QR code)
Travel		
None		
Equipment		
None		
Total	\$8,760	

TIMELINE

Due Date	Activity
July 1 st 2025 – July 20 th , 2025	Secure project partners/sponsorships
July 21 st , 2025 – July 31 st , 2025	Draft and submit project proposal
August 16 th , 2025	Library Director approves project proposal
September 3 rd , 2025	Director secures Library Board and County Board of Commissioners approval for project
September 20 th , 2025	(1) Full library staff, leadership, and project partner(s) meeting to announce and garner input regarding the project and approved budget; (2) Assign tasks and roles for project
September 27 th , 2025	Scouting and clearing space in library for the project
October 1 st , 2025	Source books in the library already related to project topic, compile list of materials to order
October 1 st , 2025	Assigned staff begin compiling research for LibGuide
October 2 nd , 2025 – October 15 th , 2025	Online research for materials, resources, and supplies
October 18 th , 2025	Submit online finds for budget and purchase approval
October 24 th , 2025	Acquire and clean any “in storage” supplies
October 28 nd , 2025	Partnership/sponsorship meeting to discuss progress, more ideas, marketing
November 1 st , 2025	Begin project assembly (building of bookshelves, hanging posters, book organization)
November 1 st , 2025	Begin drafting marketing messages (posters, emails, newsletter announcement, social media posts) that all collaborators will use to announce the project
November 15 th , 2025	Submit marketing drafts to Director for review
November 15 th , 2025	Upload LibGuide to library website with test run of links and resources by Library Technical Staff
November 15 th , 2025	Begin drafting user satisfaction survey
December 1 st , 2025	Submit marketing materials to Director for approval and distribution
December 1 st , 2025	Submit user satisfaction survey to Director for review and approval; generate QR code for survey
December 3 rd , 2025	Test run of QR code and survey by Library Technical Staff, start scheduling survey and marketing distribution timelines
December 15 th , 2026	Begin distribution of marketing materials

January 6 th , 2026	Third partnership/sponsorship meeting to discuss updates, marketing, ideas, and events
January 7 th , 2026	Second distribution of marketing materials
January 15 th , 2026	Unveil new Urban Gardening Learning Corner
March 1 st , 2026	First round of Urban Gardening Learning Center user satisfaction survey to patron emails
March 1 st , 2026	Post QR code on table/side of bookshelf for users to scan and use
March 15 th , 2026	Begin organizing collected survey data in a master Excel sheet
March 20 th , 2026	Fourth partnership/sponsorship meeting to discuss Earth Day and potential events/extra marketing
April 2 nd , 2026	Director approves Earth Day Event
April 8 th , 2026	Director reviews and approves Earth Day Marketing
April 10 th , 2026	First round of Earth Day marketing distributed
April 18 th , 2026	Second Round of Earth Day marketing distributed
April 22 nd , 2026	Earth Day Event!
May 1 st , 2026	Second round of Urban Gardening Learning Center user satisfaction email to patron emails
May 15 th , 2026	Continue organizing collected survey data in a master Excel sheet
July 1 st , 2026	Third round of Urban Gardening Learning Center user satisfaction email to patron emails
July 15 th , 2026	Continue organizing collected survey data in a master Excel sheet
September 1 st , 2026	Fourth round of Urban Gardening Learning Center user satisfaction email to patron emails
September 15 th , 2026	Continue organizing collected survey data in a master Excel sheet
October 15 th , 2026	Analyze all captured survey data, LibGuide use data, and reference data regarding the Urban Gardening Learning Center
November 15 st , 2026	Add any last pulled data
December 1 st , 2026	Analyze all captured survey data, LibGuide use data, and reference data regarding the Urban Gardening Learning Center
December 5 th , 2026	Write project report
January 7 th , 2027	Submit report to Director, Library Board, and County Board of Commissioners
February 1 st , 2027	All library staff, leadership, and project partnership meeting to present project findings, discuss the successes and areas of improvements, Q&A