

2009 Dowling Community Garden Survey Results

Rationale for Survey and explanation of methods

The 2009 Dowling Community Garden survey was an effort to provide the Dowling Garden Committee with a general understanding of gardener's preferences at Dowling. The Committee, as the governing body, is tasked with formulating rules, developing plans for the future of the Garden, and determining what, if any, events and/or programs to sponsor currently and in the future.

The Committee is composed of resident gardeners and it is natural that we would assume knowledge of the needs, wants and expectations of the general population at Dowling. However, there are currently over 170 ploholders here, and those assumptions are problematic at best. At worst, we may, innocently, base our decisions on personal bias and personal agendas that are not representative of our gardeners. Since we are not an elected body, it is our obligation to model our intentions on those of our gardeners, *as best we can in the framework of governance*.

Although the Garden is comprised of ploholders and plot partners this interest poll was only open to ploholders, or one vote per plot. There were a couple of reasons for this restriction. First, the number of plot partners per plot varies, some plots have none and some have two or three. Allowing plot partners participation would have given the entities or plots to which they are attached more influence than plots with only one occupant. Another reason is that in managing the Garden, although plot partners are certainly garden members, ploholders are considered ultimately responsible for plot stewardship, and therefore (theoretically) their interests should be the compass driving a plot's objectives. In any case, there was nothing preventing a plot partner and ploholder from completing a survey together.

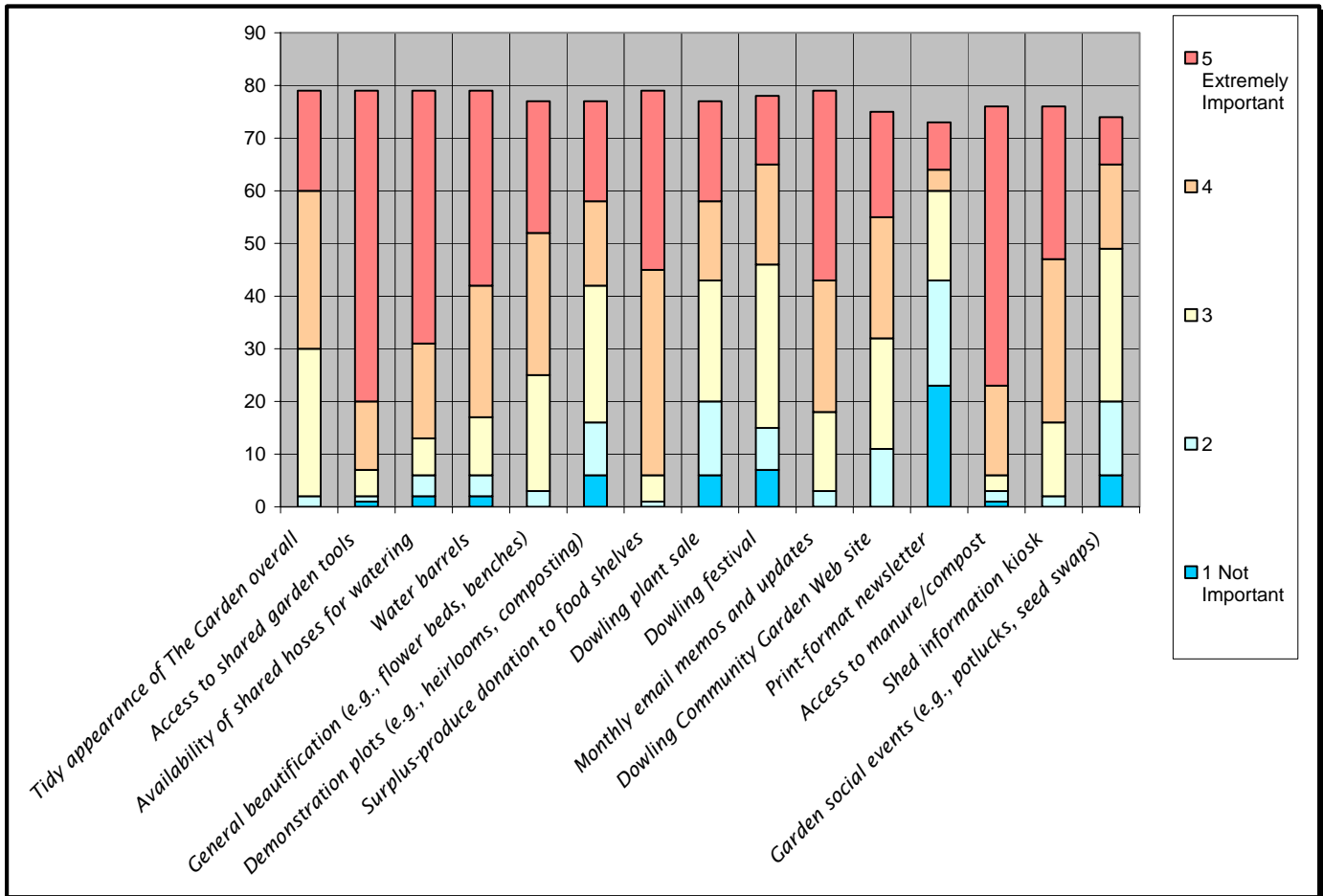
The priorities of this survey were simplicity and gardener involvement. Postcard format was considered ideal for easy access and brevity, because at this point too long a questionnaire might stymie our efforts at high participation. The questions in this survey comprise what we thought would be a good sample of gardener concerns. We don't believe this first effort to be truly scientific or objective, though we tried our best on both counts. As of 11/9/2009 there were over 45 percent of the gardeners responding to the survey.

The responses are arranged sequentially from 1(Not at all important) to 5 (Extremely important). There was some discussion about the number of choices and we felt that 4 or 5 would provide the best range, with 5 providing a comfortable middle ground. Although the responses are meant to be sequential we have to assume that some respondents used number 3 as a "can't decide".

The first worksheet represents the raw data and the percentage of respondents to the entire population of *plottolders*, 173 at this time. The following chart is the graphic representation of this worksheet. The vertical column of numbers to the left of this chart represents the quantity of respondents. The second worksheet shows the sum of responses 4 and 5, unequivocally important. The following chart shows this graphically. Although this last chart looks at first as if it represents overall importance, it is deceptive. What it shows is the proportion of people that found the objects in question important.

2009 Dowling Community Garden Survey results

Question text	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Percent Respondents
Tidy appearance of The Garden overall	0	2	28	30	19	79	45.66%
Access to shared garden tools	1	1	5	13	59	79	45.66%
Availability of shared hoses for watering	2	4	7	18	48	79	45.66%
Water barrels	2	4	11	25	37	79	45.66%
General beautification (e.g., flower beds, benches)	0	3	22	27	25	77	44.51%
Demonstration plots (e.g., heirlooms, composting)	6	10	26	16	19	77	44.51%
Surplus-produce donation to food shelves	0	1	5	39	34	79	45.66%
Dowling plant sale	6	14	23	15	19	77	44.51%
Dowling festival	7	8	31	19	13	78	45.09%
Monthly email memos and updates	0	3	15	25	36	79	45.66%
Dowling Community Garden Web site	0	11	21	23	20	75	43.35%
Print-format newsletter	23	20	17	4	9	73	42.20%
Access to manure/compost	1	2	3	17	53	76	43.93%
Shed information kiosk	0	2	14	31	29	76	43.93%
Garden social events (e.g., potlucks, seed swaps)	6	14	29	16	9	74	42.77%



Sum of 4 and 5 responses from 2009 Survey

Question text	
Tidy appearance of The Garden overall	49
Access to shared garden tools	72
Availability of shared hoses for watering	66
Water barrels	62
General beautification (e.g., flower beds, benches)	52
Demonstration plots (e.g., heirlooms, composting)	35
Surplus-produce donation to food shelves	73
Dowling plant sale	34
Dowling festival	32
Monthly email memos and updates	61
Dowling Community Garden Web site	43
Print-format newsletter	13
Access to manure/compost	70
Shed information kiosk	60
Garden social events (e.g., potlucks, seed swaps)	24

