**Rotary Club Environmental Project Idea: Plant Swap Fundraiser!**

Many of us live busy, urban lives, yet we long for more connection with nature. One easy way to facilitate that is to surround ourselves with houseplants. Science tells us that there are numerous health and well-being benefits of living and working with indoor plants. They can reduce stress, sharpen attention, boost productivity, help us feel more calm, speed recovery from illness, and improve indoor air quality.

**WHAT IS A PLANT SWAP FUNDRAISER?**

It’s a fun event where plant lovers pay a small entry fee to come together to trade cuttings, propagations, and their own houseplants with other like-minded people. Plant swaps give people a connection to their plants that they may not have had before because someone else put all of their love and care into it before giving it to you. It’s sustainable, and it makes expanding one’s plant collection easier and more affordable. The funds raised can be used for Rotary Club Environmental causes.

The rules are simple: pay the entry fee and bring a pest-free, beautiful plant (or 2 or 3) for trade. Plants can be potted or bare root. Organizers should make sure everyone at the event has traded something, as it’s really about the spirit of the trade.

**TIME REQUIRED:**  pre-event meeting(s), day-of set up and break down, post-event report

Suggested event time frame: 2-3 hours if doing a Q&A panel before the swap

**# VOLUNTEERS:** depends on the size of the venue. Recruit volunteers to help during the planning phase as well as the day of the event: one or two volunteers at the check-in table, others for food and beverage. Could also have a floater to answer questions and direct people if they need to use the bathroom, etc.

**BUDGET:** <$35 if you secure a free venue and food sponsors (or provide no snacks)

**ITEMS NEEDED:**

* Name tags and Sharpies (lots)
* Basic instructions/etiquette sheets to hand out (see below)
* Scissors
* A roll of paper towels and rubber bands to transport plants with a damp paper towel wrapped around the bare roots
* Labels for plants or plant flats. Can use masking tape or popsicle sticks to label peoples’ names and the plants if they don’t bring them pre-labeled
* Cups, plates, snacks, drinks, ice/ice bucket or cooler
* If you do a giveaway, bring a jar for giveaway names to be placed in

**PLANNING:**

1. Gauge community interest to see how big your event could be
2. Find a venue for your expected attendance. This could be someone's home, a public park or community garden, a church or community center, or a local business. You’ll need about 2 square feet of table space per attendee plus open area to mingle.
3. Identify in-kind sponsors (*optional*): companies that would be willing to give products, like food or drink, to the event while people mingle and talk plants. If you don’t want to go this route, you can always host something simple like chips and salsa and have tap water on hand - or nothing at all. Could also ask if the in-kind sponsors would like to donate any door prizes.
4. Find partners/community experts (eg. a local plant shop or nursery) to have a Q&A session/panel before the swap (*optional*). This could be live-streamed on social media during the event.
5. Sell Tickets. Now that you have the initial interest from fellow plant lovers; and the location, date, time, sponsors and partners, and ticket pricing in place, you can have people RSVP and pay a small fee for the event, for which proceeds could go to support a local environmental cause (like a community garden or pollinator project). Entry fee suggestion: $10
6. Make an event page on Facebook to provide basic instructions. People will be nervous and have a lot of questions. These can preemptively be answered by giving lots of information up front in your promotion and social media.
7. Promote the event to friends, family, and across social media. This is where your partners can come into play, too. Create a hashtag so people can share in advance what they are thinking of bringing to the swap (eg. #FargoRotaryPlantSwap2024). Three to four weeks leading up to the event should be enough time for the majority of people to hear about it and RSVP.

**HOW TO RUN THE SWAP:**

Show up early to make sure everything is ready to go. Have name tags, sharpies, and tabletop place cards or popsicle sticks available at the check-in table. Welcome attendees as they arrive, have them sign in, get their name tag, and share how the evening will unfold and answer any questions they may have. Hand out a plant swap etiquette sheet (see below).

People will be nervous at first and feel awkward with the idea of walking up to each other asking to swap plants. Invite everyone to find an empty spot at the many tables throughout the space. Some people simply arrange cuttings neatly on the table, while others may bring elaborate presentations for their prized plants. As people set up, start the Q&A/panel if you’re having one. After that, it’s time to scope out everyone else’s goods — encourage people to grab a snack/drink and mingle to loosen the atmosphere – but it’s not time to swap yet!

**A couple ways the actual swap could work:**

1. This is the time to take mental notes of which plants you’re eyeing and which of your plants you’re willing to offer. The host of the swap will announce when the official swap starts. Some people will bee-line it to a wishlist plant, some people choose to make second rounds to every table for a closer look, and some stay at their station waiting for others to come to them. Participants only swap if they want to. Most cuttings will likely be worth $5-20, so don’t bring expensive or rare plants unless you don’t mind swapping “down.”

This method can get a little chaotic if there are a lot of participants, so you could also run the swap this way:

1. Everyone gets popsicle sticks with their names on and they can stick the popsicle stick into the plant(s) that they want. Then one popsicle stick at random is chosen....this way is more up to chance, but it’s also more controlled.

Don’t forget to give away your door prizes if you collected any.

**PLANT SWAP ETIQUETTE:**

* Trades can either be a one-to-one swap, or multiple plants in exchange for one plant
* Do offer trades that are comparable in desirability and/or value
* Don’t take anything from anyone’s station without their consent
* Don’t feel pressured to accept a trade if you’re not really into it. But stay respectful and kind with your fellow swappers: “Thanks, but I’ll pass.”
* Don’t get offended or pushy when someone says “no”
* Do get away from your station every now and then to build relationships within your local plant community
* Don’t feel bad if someone you traded with re-swaps your plant with someone else

**EXAMPLE EVENT INFORMATION:**

“It’s plant swapping time! Come join us for a Plant Swap on Saturday, March 9 from 2-4:30pm. Bring your plants and cuttings to share with others, meet other plant nerds, make new planty friends, and eat some snacks!”

How does a plant swap work? Each attendee brings plants or plant cuttings to share with others. New to the plant world? Bring something simple like some succulent cuttings or babies. Plant enthusiasts — bring some of your special stuff to share with the rest of the collectors. Remember that everyone is in a different place in their plant journey so be prepared to chat, trade & learn. Learning is half the fun (ok, collecting is half the fun). Please, no plants for sale, just trades.

Space is limited, so sign-up soon! This is a fundraiser geared to support [your predetermined environmental project] so your $10 fee will secure your place and go toward a good-for-the-planet cause! Once you register, more details will be forthcoming.   
  
Street parking will be available; but please be prepared to possibly walk a block or two, as things can get a little busy on the weekends.

$10 per person payable upon registration with [contact name/or online source]. Registration is only complete once you receive a confirmation email. The $10 fee is non-refundable.

**SAMPLE EMAIL UPDATE (if you collect that information when people buy tickets):**

Hey Plant Swappers,

Greetings! Thank you so much for signing up for our plant swap this weekend. At ## people, it's sure to be lots of fun! We wanted to review a few things before the event; for additional information, see our Facebook page: LINK HERE.

**We recommend you come prepared to walk up to a few blocks.** We will have drinks and snacks, but please bring your own water bottle/water as we are staying away from plastic bottles for environmental reasons.

**When you arrive at the event, please find one of the event hosts to get your name tag and sign in.** We’ll also have more information for you to get situated and swapping. We'll also have a giveaway, so be sure to put your name in the jar for that.

**Say hi and get settled.** The first part of the event is a Q&A with NAME&COMPANY and lots of mingling--don't be nervous! It's a great time to connect with our plant community. We'll guide you through how to go about swapping, or feel free to dive in.

**Remember, no selling; just swaps or giveaways.** Please feel free to grab us if you have any questions. We're excited to host you!

**Some additional information that might be helpful for any new swappers.**

* To take a cutting, use a sharp knife or shears, taking care not to crush the stem.
* When taking cuttings of most leafy plants, cut low enough on the stem to leave 3-4 leaf nodes, or sets of leaves, intact. Other plants can be propagated from one leaf, sections of leaves, or simply dividing new plantlets off the mother plant, depending on the plant.
* Place cuttings in water immediately, or wrap in a wet paper towel and place in a plastic bag. This is not necessary for cuttings that need to callus over, like succulents, cacti, sansevierias, etc. “

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Okay, your club can do this! Have fun with it! This event is as much about meeting like-minded plant (and planet) lovers as it is about raising money for environmental causes.

Keep a tally of the number of participants and the number of plants that were swapped. Then report back to the event organizers, the venue, and the District Rotary Environmental Committee about how things went (and include photos). Celebrate!