

**Review: Creating a Transformational Community: The Fundamentals of  
Stewardship Activities**

By August John Hoffman (Ed.)

**Reviewed by Ryder W. Miller**

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In Hoffman, A. J. *Creating a Transformational Community: The Fundamentals of Stewardship Activities*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017. 146 pp. ISBN 978-1-4985-4008-7. US \$85.00. (cloth-alk-paper).

In these times of federal backtracking on environmental issues, climate change denial despite evident effects, budget cuts to state and national parks, it is difficult to sort out where stewardship has gone or should go in community planning and how the local goals of environmental stewardship have changed. *Creating a Transformational Community: The Fundamentals of Stewardship Activities* from editor August John Hoffman, a Professor of Psychology at Metropolitan State University, is not a book about the big global environmental scheme of things, but it will help one plan and organize locally. Here one will find advice, from Hoffman and a few qualified others, about creating healthy human communities for a diversity of people.

A number of components are presented as means of organizing healthy human communities. There are group projects, activities for religious organizations, and recommendations for educational involvement suggested as ways to lead to positive communities. Most strongly made in the book and relevant here is the argument for community gardens as a component of healthy human communities. There is an abundance of research that argues for the benefit of gardens for communities and for those with psychological and spiritual issues.

The book relates to urban ecology rather than wild land protection and is mostly about the stewardship of people. The goal of creating gardens is championed for those who are having psychological troubles and the mention of parks and urban flora should provide some comfort for those who live in urban settings. For some, local gardens and their denizens are also metaphorical. People can look over time at the products of their workmanship in gardens, learn about a connection with natural biological cycles, produce nutritious food, and share this association with nature with the young.

There might be significant and abundant research about the benefits of green spaces, bird watching, nature walks, and encounters with wildlife, but this is not the book's purview. The book trumpets the benefits for people of connecting with the floral world,

plants being more predictable than some of the animal habitants of urban settings. One also wonders if habitat restoration efforts should be included here and if native trees and plants could also be suggested as a way to further green the city.

The community organizing and planning in the book has some independence from political systems, but the stewards for human communities have some options in this, as local actors often have autonomy to tailor community plans to the needs, goals, and resources of specific places. Again, global environmental factors are not the focus here, but the human and spiritual part of stewardship and community psychology is explored well. The book can be a bit localized, but organizers can see how transformation starts.

This is a great slim book for those who wish to build a garden for their community group as part of a way to help the harried and sometimes the disturbed. One will find all sorts of arguments to support the undertaking of such a project and will gain an understanding of how other groups might partner in the effort. There are clear benefits to being in the green overlap of stewardship and communities.

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