

Pacific Rim

Civic education and activity support for community design using greenery after the 1995 Awaji Hanshin Earthquake

Mayumi Hayashi

University of Hyogo Institute of Nature and Science/Awaji landscape Horticulture Academy

954-2 Nojima Tokiwa, Awaji City, Hyogo 656-1726 Japan

hayashi@awaji.ac.jp

TEL +81-799-82-3135

Abstract

In Japan, NPO law was got ready in 2001, and a little less than 30,000 NPO takes a juridical person now and carries out an active activity. On the other hand, citizen's groups of grass-root are working on environmental improvement in each place, too. Development in fields such as the landscape formation, tree planting and environmental conservation is remarkable. These waves are in the surge that we did not see in these years. I decided to write about activities which were held in Hanshin area located in west part of Japan in this report. In Hanshin area after Hanshin / Awaji great earthquake disaster, various actions such as personnel training, networking, support and a furtherance method, interchange or information dispatch have been performed as a policy to activate various activity. I want to show present status about these and the future prospects. For example, the educational institution which Hyogo prefecture established achieves a big role about personal training. Graduates of this course in Hyogo Prefecture of eight years are over 4,000 people. The educational program deserves special mention. They are spreading the civic activity as volunteer, NPO and width of personal activity, in each place. I am supporting NPO juridical person Alpha Green Net, and they take cooperation in each place and help mutually. Various activity after an earthquake disaster pushed each other's support and collaboration at the same time. Cooperation between things of administration, citizens and experts spreads, and environment improvements are made with good progresses. While each activity gave synergy to various support and furtherance methods having been filled up in that. Voluntary interchange and information dispatch thrived. It is understood that each activity gives synergy and pushes forward environmental improvement. The professional technical acquisition and the idea of management for future activity began to be recognized as new themes.

1. Social background

In Japan, there is now great interest in environmental problems. In Hyogo Prefecture, which experienced the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake Disaster in 1995, awareness of the value of greenery and nature has been reawakened. Civic activity and volunteerism have become active since the earthquake (Fig.1, Fig.2).ⁱ In addition, various efforts have been made to implement policies that stimulate various activities by both public and private organizations, including personnel training, networking, support and assistance, interchange and information sharing. In this report, I will show the status of these efforts and consider future prospects. The NPO Law was passed in 2001 and a little less than 30,000 NPOs are now active in Japan. Hyogo, which is located in the west, has about 1,000 active NPOs, but all the 47 prefectures in Japan have citizen groups working at the grassroots level to improve local living environments.ⁱⁱ Developments in fields such as scenic landscape formation, tree planting and environmental protection are remarkable. In Hyogo Prefecture, the Awaji Landscape Planning and Horticulture Academy, an education and research organization that trains landscape horticulture experts and citizen leaders, was established in 1999. In this report, I will describe the educational activities of this academy and its results, as well as the status of the development of civic activity (Fig.3, Fig.4). In addition, I will make suggestions to further activate NPOs and other citizen groups in the future.

Fig.1 Damage from the Great Hanshin Awaji earthquake (offered by Kobe City)



Fig. 2 Damage from the Great Hanshin Awaji earthquake (offered by Kobe City)



2. Overview of the Awaji Landscape Planning and Horticulture Academy and its foundation

The Awaji Landscape Planning and Horticulture Academy (ALPHA) (Fig.5, Fig.6), where the author teaches, advocates “landscape horticulture,” which is a new field of

study.ⁱⁱⁱ Landscape horticulture combines various fields, including lifestyle, gardening, horticulture, engineering, construction, and industry for the formation of living spaces. It is a new academic field that focuses not on things and the economic efficiency of city planning, but on nature and climate, and we seek to position it as a cultural activity that creates abundant lifestyles for people in a new society.

Fig.3 Civic activity after the Great Hanshin Awaji earthquake(Workshop for planning)



Fig.4 Civic activity after the Great Hanshin Awaji earthquake



The Awaji Landscape Planning and Horticulture Academy (ALPHA) is pursuing the theme of human symbiosis with nature based on a sense of reverence and love for living things. Landscape horticulture is practiced by focusing on the use of flowers and other plants as a medium for fostering close relations between people and nature. ALPHA seeks to restore original climates, cultures, environments, and other local features. At ALPHA, we consider the environment and nature in new ways, while learning from the wisdom and techniques that were devised by our forbearers. Fostering shared concepts for space formation in society is also important for the cultivation of talented people.

There are two types of courses at ALPHA—expert training courses that graduate university students and continuing education courses for citizens of the prefecture. In the continuing education courses, we provide training and lectures related to flowers and other vegetation for citizens and cultivate talented people that will actively participate in community improvement efforts. ALPHA fulfills a large role in training citizen leaders. In addition, we have research, information sharing, and industrial cultivation functions, as well as offering horticultural therapy courses. The academy has sixteen university teachers and six instructors who are also practitioners. Each full-time specialized course class has only twenty students per year, allowing focused education. The number of students to participating in the continuing education courses

from both in and outside of Hyogo has surpassed 4,000 people over eight years, promoting increased individual activity and organized citizen group efforts in numerous places.

Fig. 5 Awaji Landscape Planning and Horticulture Academy



Fig.6 Awaji Landscape Planning and Horticulture Academy



3. ALPHA continuing education courses

To meet local community needs for more flowers and greenery, we offer various continuing education courses to the public. These involve pragmatic lectures and practical experience in horticulture and are designed to motivate the students to participate in community work. We have four types of gardener training courses in community work with flowers and greenery.

The first is a “Community Gardener Certificate Course (Fig.8, Fig.9)” that trains people to serve as leaders for on-site community design, and cultivates talented people who can contribute to the welfare of society. The Community Gardener Certificate Course consists of two parts, “Community Work with Flowers and Greenery” in the first term and “Beautification of Local Communities” in the second. The purpose of this course is to allow people already involved in local flower and greenery groups to learn more about topics that include basic horticultural knowledge and skills, practical leadership methods for community work, and information outsourcing. Through this full-fledged curriculum of lectures and hands-on practical work, students are expected to become local community leaders in their effort to create new lifestyles full of flowers and plants. Each of the first and second programs are comprised of one three-day session each month for five months. Students who complete both programs receive a “Community Gardener Certification” recognized by the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture.

The second type is a three-day “experiential course” during which surveys are

conducted and design and construction of a greenspace are carried out in a short time period. These courses are intended as introductions to the contents of the Community Gardener Certificate Courses. Experiential courses are conducted throughout the prefecture, but one intention is to encourage as many people as possible to attend lectures in Awaji Island. They include practice with container gardens and contents about community design with flowers and vegetation. Moreover, social interaction among attending students is also planned. Since there are almost no other educational opportunities about the creation of green spaces, a large number of students who attend advance from this course to the Community Gardener Certificate Course. During summer vacations, youth seminars for schoolchildren are also held.

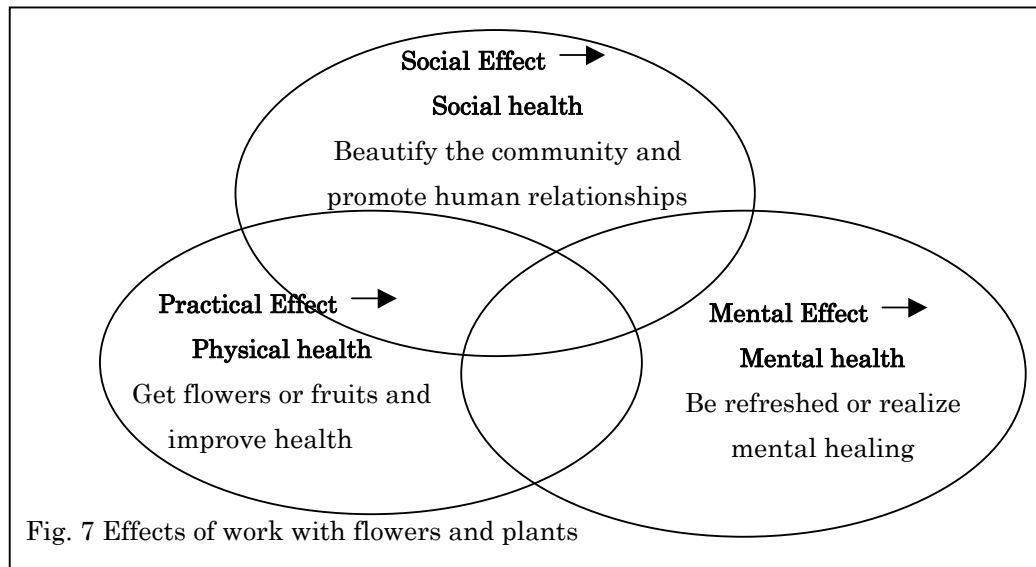
The third type are “Community Gardener Theme Courses.” These courses offer opportunities to people who already have some experience in community work with flowers and greenery to undertake practical, theme-based studies for finding solutions to ongoing challenges. For example, past themes have included horticultural therapy and welfare, biotopes and nature observation, foundations of plant cultivation, and open gardens and community planning.

The last type is the “Course on the Latest Landscape Technologies.” The latest landscape technologies are introduced to the personnel of local government organizations, post-graduate students and other citizens. Various opportunities are made for people to learn about greenification, safe town planning, and new technologies. Themes include park management skills with citizen participation, greenery and scenery, and a beginner course for GIS application to the natural environment.

The curriculums for these courses feature various kinds of programs including lectures, practical work, outings, graduation projects, presentations and annual symposiums. The students only have to pay for materials. All the staff and facility expenses are paid by the government, making ALPHA very reasonable compared to other public and private educational organizations.

The graduates are expected to become active as leaders of many kinds of civic activities in their communities. In questionnaires, we found that the graduates had three main purposes for involvement with flowers and greenery: 1. Psychological effects, such as refreshing or healing for the spirit. 2. Practical effects, such as getting flowers or fruits and increasing physical health. 3. Social effects, such as beautifying towns and

promoting human relationships. We can summarize these three goals as human mental, physical and social health (Fig.7).^{iv}



4. Themes of the Community Gardener Certificate Course

First term

- ① Teach the meaning of community design with flowers and greenery and civic activities.
- ② Let participants select issues for their communities and think about solutions through workshop methods.
- ③ Study the skills to cultivate plants.
- ④ Study practical planning and design for open spaces.
- ⑤ Practice construction on real land.
- ⑥ Study the value of voluntary activities and NPOs.
- ⑦ Study leading examples of civic activity.
- ⑧ Make and present graduation projects.

Second term

- ① Study the present conditions of Hyogo Prefecture from the viewpoints of agriculture, forestry, village and mountain area preservation, etc.
- ② Learn practically about agricultural support policies and related topics through agricultural experiences, advanced ground inspections and other activities.
- ③ Learn practically about forestry support policies and related topics through forestry experiences, advanced ground inspections and other activities.
- ④ Learn practically about village and mountain area preservation policies and related

topics through coppice forest management experience, advanced ground inspections and other activities

⑤ Prepare and present graduation projects

Title	Length	Contents	Certification
Community Gardener Certificate Courses	3 days per month for 10 months = 30 days	“Community Work with Flowers and Greenery” in the first term and “Beautification of Local Communities” in the second	Community Gardener certificate recognized by the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture
Community Gardener Experiential Courses	3 days	Introduction to a new active lifestyle of voluntary activity to encourage leadership in a new era of community work	Certificate of Graduation recognized by the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture
Community Gardener Theme Courses	Case by case	This course offers opportunities to people who already have some experience in community work with flowers and greenery to undertake practical, theme-based studies for finding solutions to ongoing challenges.	Certificate of Graduation recognized by the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture
Courses on the Latest Landscape Technologies	Case by case	The latest landscaping technologies are introduced for the benefit of government organization personnel, the public and post-graduate students. Various opportunities are made for people to address greenification	Certificate of Graduation recognized by the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture

As mentioned above, environmental improvement activities in cities, agriculture and forestry businesses in lower mountain regions, coppice forest (satoyama) management and other topics are studied hands-on in both terms. After developing awareness of these issues, the curriculum also includes working on or implementing measures that solve them.

Fig. 8 Program activity



Fig. 9 Program activity



5. Graduation projects

We encourage the creation of graduation projects at the end of each term, especially for the Community Gardener Certificate Courses.

Each attending student makes a plan according to the following process.

- ① Identify a regional problem.
- ② Consider solutions.
- ③ Consider the issues faced in the case.
- ④ Examine the solutions to these issues.
- ⑤ Describe the concrete results of successful implementation.

Students create reports following the above procedures and announce their plans at the time of graduation.

Excellent plans are given time for presentation during the graduation project exhibition of the professional courses.

As graduation subjects about the environmental improvement of areas, most students report on subjects and their solutions, or, especially in the first term, report on practical activities that they actually undertake.

Graduation projects vary greatly and have included the following types of topics.

- ① Tree planting activities in neighborhood communities
- ② Community education activities
- ③ Personnel training through lectures, etc.
- ④ Coppice forest preservation activities
- ⑤ Network formation

- ⑥ Implementation of open gardens
- ⑦ Welfare activities using greenery
- ⑧ Investigative research activities

Although this graduation project puts pressure on many students, it achieves great results by spurring the students to start taking actions on the actual conditions of their regions. Moreover, even if this does not result, they develop greater concern about the issues of their regions and their solutions.

Examples of individual activity

The extent of various civic activities outside of NPOs has also developed. For example, open gardens are carried out in 14 areas in Hyogo. Almost all the core members of these efforts are ALPHA graduates. Open gardens have a ripple effect on making communities beautiful, and they encourage interaction among people. They are also recognized as a useful means for regional improvement. In addition, park management, environmental education, horticultural education and awareness, health promotion using flowers and greenery and town revegetation projects are reported from various places.

7. Exchange and information dispatch

The “Community Design with Flowers and Greenery Forum (Fig.10, Fig.11)” is held every year at ALPHA. This symposium also serves as an opportunity for information exchange between current students and graduates, and the introduction of activity examples from various places also has the goal of human exchange. Moreover, a large symposium in which 90 prefectural citizen action groups interacted was held in 2004. At this symposium, panels were exhibited, a booklet that introduced the participating groups was issued, and a web site that introduced the participating groups and the contents of the symposium in real time was created. This web site has been accessed 23539 times as of April 18, 2007.

8. Backing support

ALPHA has also been offering local support in various places using a caravan since 2004. This has been aimed at the participants of groups active in their communities (who are not necessarily ALPHA graduates) and ALPHA graduates with the goal of promoting communication and information exchange with ALPHA. A large number of

people have participated. Moreover, the caravan goes to spots where actions are currently being implemented to provide practical instruction.

Fig.10 Opening ceremony in the Symposium
(<http://www.midori-npo.net>)



Fig. 11 Workshop in the Symposium
(<http://www.midori-npo.net>)



9. Future issues and prospects

The cultivation of human resources through education at ALPHA is still in progress, and the curriculum is reexamined every year. The graduation projects mentioned above were started in 2002, lessons on coppice forest preservation were begun in 2003, and the caravan was started in 2004, all increasing citizen support for agriculture and forestry. Since 2005, students of professional programs have also participated in graduation presentations. Thus, the curriculum and methods of backing support have been improved every year.

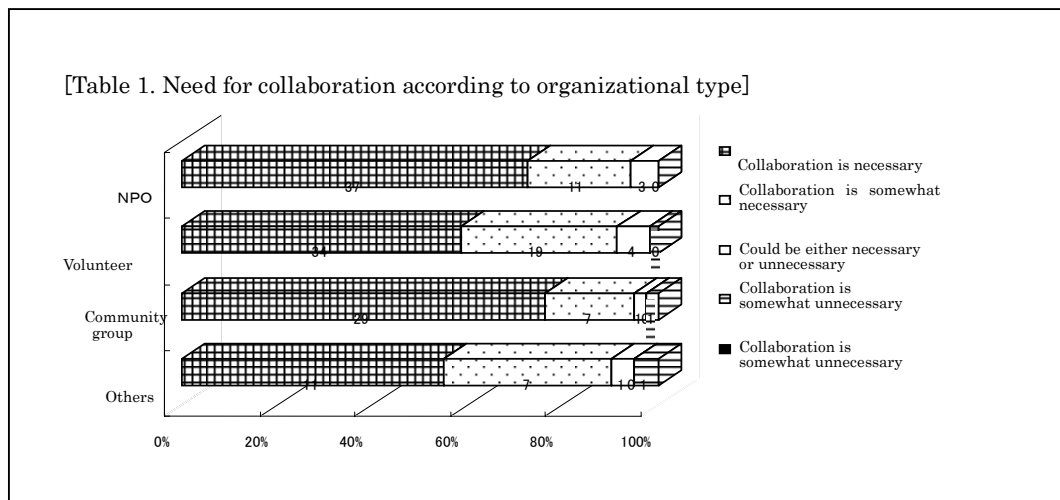
A current issue is how to continuously draw the attendance of students to Awaji Island, which is one hour from Kobe City in the center in Hyogo Prefecture. The baby boom generation will be retiring in large numbers in the three years from 2007, so another issue is how to make use of their talents. Moreover, improving the contents of the lessons is also a big subject because creating more attractive courses helps achieve the continuous participation of a large number of people. The “Park Meister Training Lectures” and other lessons related to the management of parks are also being examined.

Furthermore, another major issue is how to follow-up with graduates. Students have three main motives. The first is extending social action through civic activities. The

second is to expand the domain of individual hobbies. The third motive is the desire to work in the field. The first motive matches the purpose of ALPHA. However, if we can also respond to the other student motivations who want to deepen their knowledge and improve their techniques, even more people with even greater skills can be trained.

Another major issue is whether we can continue to cultivate more talented people who have the high levels of skills that are needed to match various purposes and participate in community design with flowers and greenery. Furthermore, systems that can support the activities currently performed in different areas more efficiently are also required. How such systems can be developed is another issue that we face in the future.

Finally, I will introduce the results of an investigation about how to make participation and collaboration as effective as possible with NPOs and government agencies in all of Hyogo Prefecture that we conducted in 2004. The questionnaire was issued to 173 civic groups in Hyogo, and replies were obtained from 40% of them.



The results of the investigation show that the consciousness about collaboration changes according to the type of organization. The regional organizations have collaborated with government agencies and other organizations for some time and have more positive evaluations of collaboration, while NPOs and volunteer groups have lower evaluations (table 1).

This can be said to reflect that volunteer groups conduct many activities in areas that are distinct from government efforts. However, no matter the type of activity group,

collaboration with the government is important. A major theme is how volunteer groups and NPOs share roles with government organizations in solving regional issues. The following elements were mentioned as being necessary for future participation and collaboration: relationships between people, follow-through on proposals, and keeping one's pace. Moreover, government agencies were asked to correct their own stances, including the following recommendations: eliminate vertical divisions, seek unification of purpose, work together, listen to resident voices, take follow through measures, have confidence, play coordinator roles, seek to understand intentions, and reform awareness. For residents, the following proposals were made: seek to improve consciousness, align directions, and clarify possibilities for collaboration.

Participation and collaboration by not only residents, but also by people from government, industry and various specialties are necessary for environmental improvement activities. I want to aid the promotion of civic activities by verifying the states of education and research and local support in Hyogo Prefecture.

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 - ⁱⁱ Ikuo Kobayashi, Isao Nakase, Mayumi Hayashi (2001) Future aspects of community design after the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake, Gakugei publication Co., Ltd.
 - ⁱⁱⁱ Explanation from the brochure of Awaji Landscape Planning and Horticulture Academy (2007) Awaji Landscape Planning and Horticulture Academy
 - ^{iv} A Guide to Landscape Horticulture (2004) Awaji Landscape Planning Horticulture Academy, Bio City publication Co., Ltd.
 - ^v Mayumi Hayashi, Yoshihide Honda, Yoshio Hisago (2004) Methods for partnerships between environmental NPOs and administration systems, Hyogo Prefecture Institute of Human Care