Nurturing an Open Source community is like tending a garden

Julien Le Dem, Chief Architect at Astronomer
ASF member
Pig, Parquet, Arrow, Marquez, OpenLineage, ...
Is this the right analogy?

- You can’t force plants to grow
- You can only create the space and plant the seeds
- You aren’t in control of the environment, just your garden
- Gardens can get out of control really quickly if they aren’t tended
Agenda

- What is Open Source?
- Why do I need to tend to my community?
- How to nurture.
- And it’s all worth it!
What is Open Source?
Open Source comes in different shapes and sizes

- License
- Governance
- Foundations
What makes a community?

- All community members are important
- Contributing or Maintaining might be a job
- What are maintainer roles?
  - Committer vs PMC

[Image links and URLs]

https://www.flickr.com/photos/ugardener/37818309356
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Monet_house_and_garden_in_Giverny_%288742618284%29.jpg
What’s a contribution?

- Asking or answering questions
- Bug reports
- Documentation
- Bug fixes
- Code contributions

From Ross Turk
Why do I need to tend to my community?
Why does the community need caring for?

- Friction inherent in async global communication
- Lack of attention?
- Uncertainty: Is the energy I spend on the project worthwhile?
Contributor’s perspective

- Am I allowed to chime in?
  - Some people might show up with a PR
  - Some people need to be given permission
- How hard is it to get my first contribution in?
Maintainer’s perspective

- Overwhelming: The entire world can have input on this.
- Do I have the time to give attention to every contributor?

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boy_in_blue_t-shirt_watering_plants.jpg
https://www.flickr.com/photos/argonne/17265401886
How to nurture
Setting expectations

- Contributing:
  - What to do before submitting a PR?
  - How does a PR get merged?
  - What makes sense to contribute?

- Release cadence:
  - How often?
  - How does the decision of releasing happen?

- Governance:
  - How does one become or stop being a maintainer?
Reduce friction to contribution

- Tooling and processes:
  - Are weeds taking over?
  - Is your CI always green?
  - Is setting up a local environment easy?
  - Is your release process clear?
  - Do you have CODEOWNERS?
Recognizing contributions
Reduce friction to use

- Regular releases:
  - Monthly
  - Main always shippable
  - Allowing community to request releases

- Documentation
Contributors become stakeholders
What’s an open source project road map?
Community requires communication, building trust and connections

- **Async** communication is **necessary** in a distributed global community
- However async communication is **not the most natural** or efficient form of communication
- Synchronous communication excludes people in incompatible timezones
- In-person communication excludes people in different locations
- Spoken languages also get in the way
Augmenting async communication by adding synchronicity

- Video conferencing helps getting remote people together.
- In-person meetups help forming connection
- Regular sync meetings:
  - Define agenda async or on the spot
  - Be accessible to the community (vary time for video calls, vary location for in person meetups, English as most spoken language)
  - Open to anyone
  - Publish notes and recordings for people who couldn’t join
  - Follow up async
And it’s all worth it!

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Monet_house_and_garden_in_Giverny_%288741490771%29.jpg

https://www.flickr.com/photos/193316968@N06/51271949290