Best Practices to Maintain a Little Free Library

Review these tips from experienced stewards on how to successfully build community support and maintain a Little Free Library.

- Communicate from the start that this is an effort for the common good. Giving offers as much satisfaction as taking.
- Even if one person bought the little library, recruit lots of stakeholders to share the pleasure and rewards. That's why a Grand Opening Ceremony can be so valuable. Like a potluck supper or block party, such events offer a chance for everyone to contribute something.
- Welcome participation in all ways. Thank people in writing and in person. Keep a notebook in the library so that anyone can offer suggestions, comments, recommendations, or requests.
- It's not just the content of books that matters, but also the memories and thoughts that books generate. Keep your little library clean and inviting; create positive interactions and people will keep coming back.
- Build a backup reserve of books by involving book lovers –book clubs and discussion groups, and people who have big home libraries as well as friends of public libraries and used bookstores.
- Don't burden visitors with lots of rules, do's and don'ts. Accept the fact that all people are not respectful. If you have enough good, caring people involved from the beginning, you will have established the norm of respectful library use. Your friends and neighbors will support you if you ask for help.
- Respect freedom of expression and diversity, but also feel free to keep a balance of books available. If a Little Free Library becomes source of religious proselytizing and political rants, you will probably lose a lot of interest.
- The steward is not supposed to do all the work. In some neighborhoods, the best insurance for success and sustainability is recruiting kids or adults to be neighborhood library champions. They can provide a valuable service and build self-esteem by visiting and checking the libraries regularly.