



Community Garden Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
<p>Who can start a community garden?</p>	<p>A successful community garden needs to be planned and carried out by a group. The group might be a school, club, worksite, church group, neighborhood, or just people who want to be part of the project.</p>
<p>What is the purpose of a community garden?</p>	<p>One of the primary purposes might be to grow nourishing food. Another might be to save money or as a way to increase physical activity, or learn about nutrition.</p> <p>Beyond those goals, the group might have a vision to promote a healthier community, for participants to have a greater sense of community, to work better as a team, or for youth to be able to work alongside “seniors”.</p>
<p>Where do you find people to work in the garden?</p>	<p>Ask some friends, put up a flyer or post an inquiry in your church, school or work newsletter... or place ad in the local penny saver-type newspaper.</p>
<p>How will the garden be organized and how produce be distributed?</p>	<p>The group needs to agree on this. Options might be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. for each person/family to be responsible for and benefit from their own small plot; 2. for the produce to be donated to a food pantry; 3. for the volunteers to share the produce; 4. for the produce to be sold at a farm stand or farmer’s market - proceeds could be used as “seed money” for the next year; 5. or a combination of the above.
<p>How are volunteers organized to get work done?</p>	<p>After you decide on how the garden will be organized, someone will need to be in charge of setting up a schedule of what days and/or times the garden will need to be tended. It will vary somewhat depending on what stage it’s at.</p> <p>Don’t assume that everyone will know how to plant, water, weed or when to determine if the produce is ready. You might pair an experienced gardener with a new person.</p> <p>If you’re working with youth their visits need to be short and fun, with not too many at one time and with adequate adult supervision.</p>
<p>Where can/should a community garden be located?</p> <p>How to find land, soil quality, sun/exposure, access to water.</p>	<p>Things to think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> access & security (possible two and four legged predators); liability issues; water source (watering cans, rain barrel, garden hose); sun exposure (6 – 8 hours per day); soil quality- you can have the soil checked by your local Cooperative Extension Master Gardener; have a list of potential sites and check them out.

How do you decide what to grow?

Contact your local Cooperative Extension Master Gardener for suggestions of what to plant, how many and how to lay out the beds. A well designed and fertile garden can produce many different vegetables.

What do the people who will be working in the garden want to grow and eat?

How big do you make the garden?

Start small, better to be successful with a small garden than be overwhelmed by a big one. If you are sure you have a lot of committed volunteers, with the time to devote, only then consider making it bigger.

We started with three 3' x12' beds and a round pumpkin patch. That was more than enough.

Do you use raised beds or not?

Raised beds filled with compost, i.e., old, chopped leaves, are easy to work on. No need to dig to turn the soil, less bending, etc., and requires less weeding. Because they are contained, raised beds tend to look neater.

Do you need to buy plants and compost?

You may be able to get seeds or seedlings from friends who garden or buy seeds and start your own plants in the early spring.

Check with city/county Department of Public Works about the availability of compost.

Watch for local Master Gardener or garden club plant sales.

How can gardeners learn more about how to harvest, handle, prepare or preserve their bounty?

Contact your local Cooperative Extension office for information, guidance and recipes. Arrange for an educator to present a hands-on workshop on using garden fresh produce.

How can you recruit new members to participate the community garden?

Plan an end of season harvest event/garden party. This is an excellent way to introduce people to the members and goals of your group. Don't forget to send invitations to your neighbors a week or so before the event, and make plenty of signs to publicize exactly what you are doing. Even the people who decide not to join will feel included, and that is a great way to build support for your project. At events, make sure you ask people to sign a sign-up sheet and provide their contact information so you can keep them updated on what's happening in the garden.