



COMMUNITY GARDENS

What is a community garden?

“A community garden is any piece of land gardened by a group of people, utilizing either individual or shared plots on private or public land” – Marin Master Gardeners. The gardens contribute to a sense of community and connection to the environment and an opportunity for satisfying labour and neighbourhood improvement, as well as creating opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy and education. They’re an immensely valuable resource to neighbourhoods and can transform contested or underused space.



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Different types of community gardens

- School gardens
- Derelict/disused land
- Gardens on housing land
- Orchards
- Bee keeping gardens
- Container gardens
- Private land
- Communal gardens
- Therapy gardens
- Vocational gardens
- Allotment gardens
- City flats
- Farms and estates
- Conservation areas

10 Steps to Starting a Community Garden, adapted from American Community Gardens Association’s guidelines

1. Organize a meeting of interested people
 - a. Determine if there’s a need/desire for a garden
 - b. What type of garden? – food production, community building, environmental restoration, recreation...
 - c. Whom will it involve and who benefits
 - i. Young, old, families, those who want to improve local environment?
 - d. Research local community gardens – could be more beneficial to join forces instead

2. Form a planning committee
 - a. Group comprised of people who feel committed to the creation of the garden
 - b. Form committees for specific tasks: funding + partnership, youth activities, construction + communication, how to keep garden self-sustaining (income)
3. Identify all your resources
 - a. Community asset assessment
 - i. What skills + resources exist in the community that can aid the garden
 - ii. Look for people with experience
 - b. Who are the potential supporters of the garden – neighbours, local community groups, schools...
4. Approach a sponsor
 - a. Essential for donations of tools, seeds or money
 - b. Possible sponsors: churches, schools, private businesses...
5. Choose a site
 - a. Unexpected opportunities for growing spaces: disused land, gardens on school land, woodlands, unused land owned by councils or social house providers
 - b. Consider amount of sunshine, availability of water, soil testing for pollutants, who owns the land, electricity, access, length of lease
6. Prepare + develop the site
 - a. Most cases land will need preparation before planting
 - b. Organise volunteer work crews to clean, gather materials + decide on design and plot arrangement



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7. Organise the garden
 - a. How many plots + how they'll be assigned
 - b. Areas needed in garden: growing space, seating areas, pathways between plots, secure storage for tools, compost bin, wet weather space
8. Plan for children
 - a. Consider special garden for kids
 - b. Allows them to explore the garden at their own speed
9. Determine rules and put them in writing
 - a. Ground rules help gardeners to know what is expected of them and help deal with issues
10. Help members keep in touch with each other
 - a. Good communication ensures strong community garden with active participation
 - b. E.g. Form telephone tree, create email list, install rainproof bulletin board in garden, have regular celebrations



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Benefits of Community Gardens

- Brings cultures and generations together, improving individual and community confidence
- Intensive contact with nature is a considerable antidote against the stress of high-pressure jobs or unemployment
- Creates a social gathering place for the community and encourage the sharing of intergenerational knowledge
- Can be used as a “therapeutic space” where children reconnect with nature and learn things such as self-control and personal health
- Brings education into the urban/suburban setting regarding food production
- People learning how to grow food the organic way may feel encouraged to eat more fruit and vegetables – effective for kids as well
- Provides direct source of fresh, healthy, chemical free, low-cost food
- Organic waste can be composted at home and returned to garden – less work for rubbish collectors and better for the environment
- Become less dependent on non-renewable resources, such as oil which is used to fuel tractors, produce fertilizers and transport + store food
- Community gardens provide an area to grow greenery for people who lack the space at home or don’t have enough sunlight to grow food

Case study

Petworth Community Garden is a permaculture garden, and is now being registered as a LAND (Learning and Demonstration Network) project with the Permaculture Association.

Earth Care

- Garden organically, look after the soil, garden in raised beds, compost, mulch, grow green manure and harvest water
- Encourage wildlife into the garden, plant companion and wildlife friendly plants to create habitat in the form of ponds, wildflower areas, solitary bee and insect homes, and work with natural biological controls to help with the balance in the garden
- Teach their members what they are doing and why, and encourage them to use good practices in their own homes and gardens.
- Locals without gardens come and use our compost bins and bring their recycling for Petworth’s activities

Fair share

- Use local, recycled or ethical resources wherever possible, not taking more than their fair share of the Earth’s resources
- Always share out the harvest at the end as a thank you to the volunteers + as a way of getting free fresh organic food to people who are most in need

People Care

- Started the project in 2005 as an inspiration by Garden Organics ‘Organic Food for All’ scheme, which aimed to enable local people with limited means to free fresh food
- Petworth work in a mixed community group, with parents and children, older people, people with learning difficulties, and people with physical, mental health or social issues (Integrate rather than segregate)
- Petworth really see’s the benefit of working in a mixed community group where all are accepted and all abilities celebrated

READ MORE

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