



10 Steps to Starting a Community Garden

The following steps are adapted from the American Community Garden Association's Guidelines for launching a successful community garden in your neighbourhood.

- 1. Organise a meeting of interested people** Determine whether a garden is really needed and wanted, what kind it should be (vegetable, flower, both, organic?), whom it will involve and benefit.
- 2. Form a planning committee** Choose a well-organised person as garden co-ordinator. Form additional committees to tackle specific tasks, e.g., funding and resource development, youth activities, construction and communication.
- 3. Identify all your resources** Contact local municipal planners about possible sites, as well as horticultural societies and other local sources of information and assistance. Look within your community for people with experience in landscaping and gardening. In Toronto contact the Toronto Community Garden Network.
- 4. Approach a sponsor** Some gardens "self-support" through membership dues, but for many, a sponsor is essential for donations of tools, seeds or money, for example. (One garden raised money by selling "square inches" at \$5 each to hundreds of sponsors.) Churches, schools, private businesses or parks and recreation departments are all possible supporters.
- 5. Choose a site** Consider the amount of daily sunshine (vegetables need at least six hours a day), availability of water, and soil testing for possible pollutants. Find out who owns the land. Can the gardeners get a lease agreement for at least three years? Will public liability insurance be necessary?
- 6. Prepare and develop the site** In most cases, the land will need considerable preparation for planting. Organise volunteer work crews to clean it, gather materials and decide on the design and plot arrangement.
- 7. Organise the garden** Members must decide how many plots are available and how they will be assigned. Allow space for storing tools, making compost and don't forget the pathways between plots! Plant flowers or shrubs around the garden's edges to promote good will with non-gardening neighbours, passers-by and municipal authorities.
- 8. Plan for children** Consider creating a special garden just for kids—including them is essential.
- 9. Determine rules and put them in writing** Will gardeners share tools, meet regularly, handle basic maintenance? Do you need a waiting list for more members? If your group charges dues, how will the money be used?
- 10. Keep members in touch with each other** Form a telephone tree and/or an email list; install a rainproof bulletin board in the garden; have regular celebrations.