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**THE COMMUNITY
GARDEN TOOLKIT:**
**Who it's for and
how to use it**

Welcome to the exciting world of community gardening!

Thinking about starting a garden in your community? You're in good company – all across Ontario hundreds of groups in co-ops, highrises and social housing neighbourhoods have started beautiful community gardens. Maybe you want to beautify the grounds of your building by creating a new garden. Or perhaps there's a resident group in your community that wants to turn an unused area into a viable, welcoming, community space. Or maybe you just want to increase access to healthy fruit and vegetables in your area. There are plenty of reasons to start a community garden, and this toolkit will help you to design, create and sustain your garden for years to come.

How does this toolkit work?

This guide can be used for a few different purposes:

- designing a new garden project
- expanding an existing project
- learning about organizations and resources to help build your garden project
- answering basic questions about gardening and community gardens
- providing resource guides that can be distributed in your community

The guidebook is broken into two different sections: Resources for Housing Providers and Resources for Residents. The first section provides information about how to engage residents and other stakeholders in creating a garden. Step by step instructions explain how to gather information, identify a site, and manage the garden. The second section focuses on the hands-on aspects of running a garden and using the harvest. These chapters describe how to get supplies, plan your garden season, and seek funding for your project. The resources full of great links for both housing staff and residents who want to learn more about gardening and building community capacity. Inside the back cover are garden tip sheets you can copy and share with your community.

Before we discuss *how* to garden, we'll look at *why* to garden. The next section will give you an overview of what community gardens are, how they fit into social housing, and reasons to start a garden in your community, from improved health to increased safety. It will also introduce you to Housing Services Corporation's SEED initiative, and tell you how SEED can help your garden project thrive.

What is a community garden?

A community garden is a space where people gather to grow food, other plants and/or flowers and create a welcoming communal space. They can be allotment gardens, where each gardener has their own growing plots; communal gardens, where everyone gardens together, or something in between. Many gardens have assigned beds as well as a communal bed that is often used for herbs, flowers, or growing food for the food bank. Including both allotment and communal beds makes for a great space where gardeners are able to grow their own food, but also have space to work together, share knowledge and build community.

Community gardens usually have a look and style that reflect their community. Some are highly manicured with bright banks of vegetables and flowers. Others use recycled materials and native plants to create an environmentally-friendly oasis. Still others have art-filled children's gardens or waist-high beds for seniors to use. Community gardens should be welcoming spaces that help people in the community get to know each other.



Why are community gardens valuable?

Community gardens have many benefits that go far beyond just growing food. A few of these are listed below, but an extensive list can be found in **Appendix A** at the end of this guide.

HEALTH GAINS: Increase physical activity and access to healthy, organically grown food

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES: Create a space for youth to learn and share their skills and knowledge

ECONOMIC BENEFITS: Reduce food costs and create small business opportunities

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS: Clean air and water; reduce waste and lower summer temperatures

CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES: Provide a space to share knowledge between people of different ages and cultures

COMMUNITY BUILDING: Strengthen community connections, engage leaders, reduce isolation and provide a gathering space

URBAN IMPROVEMENTS: Beautify neglected space and reduce crime by engaging more people to watch public spaces

Social Housing and Community Gardens

As discussed above, a community garden can be a wonderful addition to a social housing community. Although the majority of the work planting and maintaining the garden will be done by residents, housing providers can play an important role in the creation of gardens. Below are a few different ways in which housing providers can support the startup of a new garden.



► **Space:** Housing providers can work with residents to identify a suitable area for a garden. Together they can look for sites which are easily accessible, are not being used for another purpose, and which receive sufficient sunlight. If there is land available on the property, Housing Providers can work with Property Managers to secure permission to a garden site, find space to store tools, and secure a room for meetings and events. If the property has no appropriate sites, Housing Providers can connect with city staff to find suitable land in nearby parks, schoolyards or look for properties belonging to faith groups, local agencies or private business.

► **Water:** Sometimes you'll find a good garden space which does not have direct access to water for the plants. Housing Providers can allow access to nearby faucets, install a new water connection or help find rain barrels to collect rainwater for the garden.

► **Funding:** Housing staff may have access to discretionary funds that they can use to support community projects. In addition, they may have connections to local contractors or landscapers who can supply in-kind services. Housing Providers may also know about grants or donations that would be available to help the garden get started or expand.

► **Outreach:** Garden projects need help from the whole community, so it's important to get as many residents involved as possible. Staff can help by printing and posting flyers and sending letters to residents, which gives the initiative a sense of legitimacy. This will let residents know that the Housing Provider supports the project and that they should do so too. Housing Providers can also help to connect the initiative with other community groups and agencies that can provide support, like health centres, youth/environmental organizations, and faith groups.

How is SEED involved?

SEED is Social & Environmental Enterprise Development, an initiative of Housing Services Corporation that enables the housing sector to build resident capacity through urban agriculture. SEED initiatives all have 3 characteristics in common:

1. **RESIDENT LED:** residents collectively design what they will do, and what supports they need to make it happen.
2. **LOCALLY ADAPTED:** There is no one size fits all SEED project. The success of SEED comes from addressing local concerns with approaches that have local support.
3. **SUSTAINABLE:** SEED focuses on sustainable agriculture practices, but also on building sustainable projects which aim for financial sustainability through social enterprise.

SEED can offer a variety of supports to housing staff and residents interested in starting or expanding gardening projects:

► **Consultation:** Provides *on-site consultation* with residents, Housing Providers, Service Managers and community partners to design a suitable, resilient project plan. This can mean establishing a new community garden or building on existing food initiatives to develop a social enterprise.

► **Knowledge:** Creates and *distributes information and tools* housing providers need to support residents in community engagement, garden design & development and garden maintenance.

► **Networking:** *Connects housing staff to local experts* and organizations that can support and enhance their projects.

► **Connection:** *Links initiatives taking place in housing* across the province to build internal capacity and share knowledge, support and best practices.

► **Enterprise:** Provides *models for social enterprise* as a way of earning revenue and creating a self-sustaining initiative.

► **Evaluation:** Identifies community goals and uses innovative techniques to *measure impacts and successes*.

For more information about SEED and what we can offer your community, please contact Emily Martyn at emartyn@hscorp.ca or visit our website at www.hscorp.ca/our-programs-and-services/social-innovation-and-partnerships/seed





10 steps to starting a community garden

All community gardens start differently. Sometimes you realize you have a perfect space, and then move to community outreach. Other times you may have many interested community partners lined up before you even break ground. Just as your garden will be adapted to your specific community, the way you establish it will suit your specific circumstances. We have organized our steps into a linear process that we find most gardens follow, but please feel free to adapt them to your situation – just make sure planning comes before planting!

- 1. Outreach:** Personal invitations get people out to events! Invite everyone in your community to participate and make them all feel welcome.
- 2. Community Consultation:** Hold a community meeting to get people excited about a garden and find out how they can be involved.
- 3. Finding a Site:** Get a group together to find a place for the garden that everyone can agree on.
- 4. Create Your Committee:** Design your garden committee and plan out how your garden will work.
- 5. Design Your Garden:** Whether your committee designs it or you have a landscaper to help, create a good plan before you start.
- 6. Resources and Supplies:** Find out what you have and what you need by talking to residents to identify existing community resources and assets.
- 7. Build:** Dig In! Host a community wide event to get everyone involved in creating the garden.
- 8. Make Connections:** Connect with partners in your community who can support your project, with supplies, training, funding or connections.
- 9. Grow:** Plant your garden, learn to grow, and use your harvest.
- 10. Maintain:** Keep your project growing every year through funding and community engagement.



RESOURCES FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS:

**Outreach techniques • Community consultation
Finding a site • Starting a resident–led garden committee**

Step 1: Outreach

How to get people involved in your project: make contact, invite everyone, celebrate diversity and be persistent!

Outreach will be an important part of your community garden the whole way through, from your first meeting to your first harvest and beyond. Engaging many different people is the best way to make sure that the **community** stays front and centre in your community garden. People will have many different opinions, ideas, and concerns about community garden projects. It's important to connect with as many supporters as you can and have good information about why a garden will benefit your community. (See **Appendix A** for more info). The first event you should hold is a community meeting/consultation (**see step 2**). Planning for this event will be the focus of your initial outreach efforts.

Remember, the process of engaging people in your garden will be slow – often, community gardens don't reach their full capacity until their third year! Many people are hesitant to commit to a project until they can see how it works in practice. You don't have to win over everyone right at the beginning, focus on building a small, committed group while remaining open and welcoming to people who are slower to join.

Reaching out

Every community is different, and different methods will work to engage different people. When planning your outreach strategy, remember:

- 10% of people will always come out to all meetings and events.
- 10% of people will never come out to any meetings and events.
- 80% of people will come out if they are personally asked, generally because they have real interest and they have a relationship with one of the organizers.

From: "How Does Our Garden Grow? A Guide to Community Garden Success" by Laura Berman



The key to outreach success is building relationships with people and speaking with them face-to-face. Here are some basic ideas for community outreach:

MAKE CONTACT

Think about what brings people out in your community – do people read posters and emails, or do they need a phone call or visit? Use the method that has worked best for other groups.

INVITE EVERYONE

Reach out to many different people and invite them to participate. Make sure housing staff, residents and helpful community groups are all invited to participate so all voices can be heard.

CELEBRATE DIFFERENCES

A community garden can engage people with all different skills and interests, and will be stronger because of them. Make sure people understand that whatever they can offer, be it time, knowledge, advice or connections is valuable and valued by your group.

BE PERSISTENT

Explain why the garden is relevant to different people's interest. Ask them to be involved in an inviting way, honoring a "no," without accepting it as a final answer. Some people need to be asked a few times. Stop when it's clear they won't participate.

KEEPING PEOPLE ENGAGED

Starting a community garden involves a fair amount of planning. You will have to decide how your garden will look, who will be involved and how decisions will be made. All of this planning can be interesting and engaging, but sometimes action-focused community members can find the process too slow.

If your design process takes longer than expected, or participants start losing interest, host a hands-on event or training to rekindle the excitement. Get your group together to plant flowers or bulbs in an unused communal space or planter. This doesn't have to be part of your future community garden, but will show people something concrete is happening. Or, consider hosting a gardening workshop. Depending on the time of year, you could teach people how to start plants from seed, make pickles, or save seeds. Anything that gets people together to have fun and make an impact!



Engaging Property Managers and Staff

- ▶ Arrange a meeting with the property manager before you begin promoting the community garden. If possible, prepare for this meeting by researching examples of successful gardens in rental properties in other local communities.
- ▶ Have a discussion about some of their concerns about the community, for example poor maintenance of the site, frequent complaints from residents, crime, and lack of community cohesion.
- ▶ Provide some information about how gardening initiatives can address these issues (see **Appendix A** for resources). Emphasize that these initiatives build community capacity to address issues by establishing community networks, and build ownership and pride in the community which leads to better maintenance of yards and common areas.
- ▶ Have the Property Manager identify any lingering concerns and commit to integrating them into the planning for the project. For example, a concern about how the general areas of the garden will be maintained could be addressed by having all gardeners sign a contract saying they will devote one day a month to cleaning up the communal areas (See **Appendix I** for more sample garden rules).
- ▶ Ask for a formal endorsement of the garden plan, and a clarification of what support (if any) they can offer to the initiative.
- ▶ Invite Property Managers, on-site staff, agencies and all other identified stakeholders to attend the upcoming community meeting in order to show their support to residents and be part of the planning process.



Step 2. Community Meeting

How to prepare for and host an enjoyable meeting to kick off your garden plan.

One of the best ways to start planning a garden is to hold a community meeting or consultation. The resource in **Appendix B** will give you a clear idea of how to plan a community consultation and what questions to ask. If you've never hosted a meeting before, look at **Appendix G** for tips on how to be a good facilitator.

Your first community consultation should have 3 goals:

1. To share the benefits of a garden and get people excited
2. To identify possible concerns
3. To find a group of people who are interested in helping start a garden

Before the meeting, be prepared that there may be concerns about the project. Make sure there is room for these to be heard and that you have the background information to address them (Find some information on addressing concerns in **Appendix A**). If concerns persist, don't bulldoze ahead with the project. In the long-term you will need the support and goodwill of everyone in the community in order to get the best possible outcomes. It is best to take a little time working with the people concerned rather than assuming the problems will go away by themselves.

Hold your meeting at a time when most people will be able to attend, probably an evening or weekend. Think about possible barriers to attendance (need for childcare, mealtime, etc.) and see if the housing provider can address them by providing childcare or snacks.

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Disagreements can come up whether you're starting a new garden or managing one which has been going for years. Some people will go out of their way to avoid conflict while others will wade right in to have their voice heard. But conflict can be a good thing at any stage in your project if it is well managed.

Conflict is an indicator that there is a problem and figuring out how to resolve it can make your project stronger. Here are some important things to keep in mind when dealing with conflict.

Don't hide from the problem

Identify what the problem actually is and address it sooner rather than later.

Take your ego out of the situation

Particularly in those situations where there is a problem with processes – don't take things personally.

Seek help

If there are too many emotions involved, consider finding an external mediator.

Take time

A quick solution may not be the best solution and may worsen the problem. Conflict is uncomfortable but working with people to arrive at the best solution possible shows that everyone is being respected and that you, as a group, can learn from this situation and move forward.

Listen

Never underestimate the value of listening to all sides of the issue. People may have different understandings about what the problem actually is. Ask them why they hold such perspectives and share your perspectives with them in a respectful way.

Step 3. Finding a Site

How to find a suitable garden site: Looking for the right sunlight, soil, slope, shade and other considerations.



Once you've had the first meeting, the next step is to find possible sites for your garden. You may already have a site in mind, or be starting completely from scratch. Either way, take a careful look at any potential site to make sure it will be adequate for gardening and community access. The basic process for assessing whether or not a site is suitable for a garden is known as the 4 S's: **Sunlight, Soil, Slope and Shade** (see page 14). For sites that meet the requirements of the 4 S's, it's also important to consider water access and current use in order to avoid future issues.

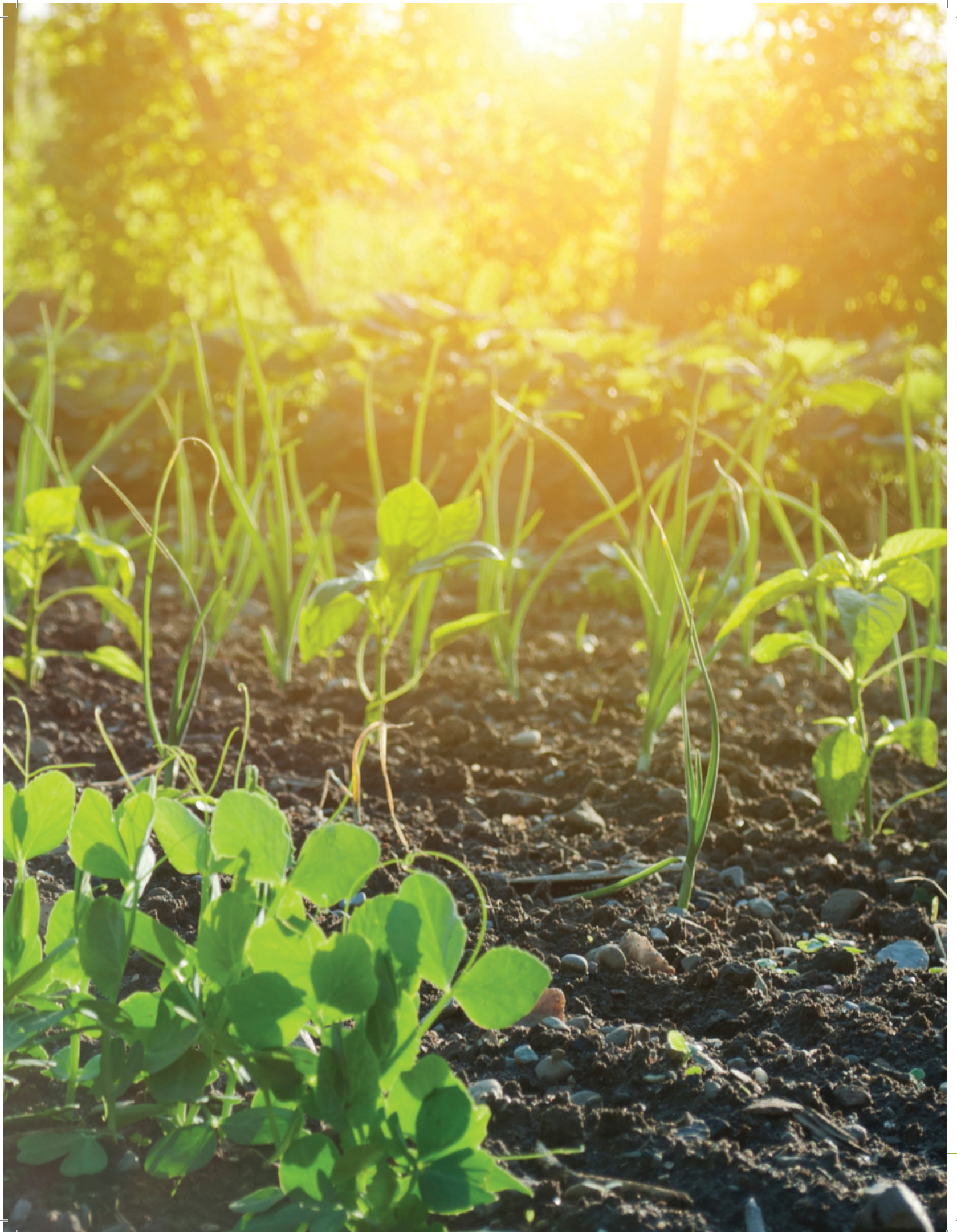
A good way to find a site is to gather a few members of your gardening group together for a site tour, keeping the 4 S's in mind. Once you've found all the possible sites, report back to the larger group to pick a site using the resources in **Appendix E** and **F**. If you realize that you don't have a site that meets all the criteria, that's ok. Focus on finding a place with good sun, as the rest of the factors can be addressed through smart design.

Soil Assessment

Some urban soils can have harmful chemicals in them. Soil tests can be used to find out if your soil is safe to grow in. If it's not, you can always use raised beds instead, building them up with healthy soil from off site.

Many laboratories and universities in Ontario offer soil testing for heavy metals as well as fertility and disease. If you dig and send a sample to them, they can analyze it for a fee of a few hundred dollars. For a full list of labs offering analysis, visit:

www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/resource/soillabs.htm



WHAT IF WE CAN'T FIND A GOOD SITE?

If your community just doesn't have any sites that seem suitable, don't give up! Here are a few suggestions for how to garden challenging areas.

Gardens on the Roof? Talk to your Housing Provider about whether rooftop gardening is a possibility. You can grow a great deal in containers on the roof without a lot of up-front costs.

Micro Gardens? If you don't have one large space appropriate for a community garden, maybe you can build a series of smaller garden beds around the community. Use signage and a similar design to show that they are part of a group project. Brainstorm with your committee how to store tools and access water.

Container Gardens? Container gardens are a great solution if you lack space. Containers on balconies or outside buildings can be very productive, and gardeners can still meet to help one another and share tips.

Backyards? Are there people in your community who don't use their backyards and might volunteer them to be gardened? Consider organizing a sharing model where the yard owner gets to keep 1/3 of the harvest for providing the space.

Go outside the community? Connect with local schools, churches, parks or other organizations to find a nearby site off the property. Work out a partnership and lease arrangement and get growing! You can find model legal documents here: www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/shapingnj/work/publications/CommunityGardenToolkit_Final.pdf

The 4 S's of site assessment

SUNLIGHT: Most garden vegetables require full sun (at least 6 hours of direct light). This usually means good southern exposure, so if there are tall trees or large buildings along the south end of the site you may want to look elsewhere. However, some crops can be grown in as little as 3 or 4 hours of sun. If you can, observe the site in the morning and afternoon to determine whether or not it receives adequate sunlight. Remember, trees viewed in the winter will create more shade in spring when their leaves emerge.

SOIL: Finding urban land with healthy soil can be a challenge. Often sites will be on disturbed land where the topsoil has been removed, leaving behind the layers of sand, gravel or clay.

You should also be aware of potential soil contamination problems when siting your garden. Depending on what the land was used for in the past, some urban soils might be polluted with heavy metals (such as mercury, arsenic and lead), pesticides, or other harmful chemicals. If you are unsure about the history of your site, consider having a soil test done to look for contamination (see "Soil Assessment").

SLOPE: While flat land is preferable for a garden site, it's also possible to create beautiful gardens on sloped land. Garden plots on hillsides can be terraced and held secure with wooden or stone frames, similar to raised beds. Sites on hills too steep for regular gardening may be put to better use as community orchards by planting fruit trees (see "**Next Steps**" for more).

SHADE: On a hot afternoon, tired gardeners will need somewhere shady to relax and enjoy the garden atmosphere. Look for trees near the site for shade. Placing benches or café style tables and chairs underneath them creates a place where gardeners and community members can enjoy the garden in comfort.

WATER ACCESS: Where will gardeners get water for the site? Is there a nearby backyard with a faucet you can use? Can your housing provider arrange to install piping for a water source? Is there a rooftop nearby from which you could collect rainwater? Figuring out a watering plan up front can make the difference between a successful garden project and one where watering becomes a constant source of argument and struggle.

CURRENT USE: This is an important factor to consider with the broader garden committee and community. When selecting a site, be sure to think about who currently uses it, and for what purpose. If it's an area where kids play, a major path or a space used for sports, you may receive backlash from the community for trying to build a garden there. However, spaces that are currently used for unwelcome behavior, such as loitering, drugs or crime can often be rehabilitated by the construction of a garden nearby as the continual presence of gardeners can discourage this behavior.



GOOD COMMUNICATION

A good community garden engages a wide variety of people. This means there will be opportunities for disagreement between different groups. Below are some key groups your garden will interact with and ideas for how to ensure positive working relationships.

NEW VOLUNTEERS

New volunteers are eager to know the rules and find out how they can contribute to the garden. Assign an experienced gardener to welcome and orient new volunteers, explaining where things are and how the garden works. Provide all new members with printouts of important documents: garden rules, maps, FAQs. Consider setting up a mentorship system where new gardeners are paired with experienced buddies to help them learn.

GARDENERS

Make sure any new rules or changes are communicated to ALL gardeners. Consider a telephone tree, email list, or bulletin board in the garden to ease communication. Invite feedback at regular intervals, either through garden-wide meetings or feedback forms in spring and fall. Plan ahead for conflict – have the committee agree on a policy for addressing problems before they arise.

YOUR COMMUNITY

Put up welcome/information signs at the garden right from the start. This lets passersby know who you are, what you're doing, and what's growing. Plan for community involvement – let others know how they can help in the garden and invite them to do so often. Be generous – donate surplus food to a local food bank or soup kitchen as an expression of goodwill.

Step 4. Create Your Committee

How to design your garden and build a strong coordinating group. Roles of different committee members and guidelines for creating garden rules and regulations.

Planning your garden

Before you start to design and build your garden, you should have some guidelines for how your garden will work, and how your committee will be organized. You may have answered some of these questions in your initial meeting, or you may already have a site picked out but be unsure how your garden will work. Answering the 6 questions in **Appendix D**, part 1 with your garden group will give you the answers you need to get your design rolling. Your group should hold regular meetings while the garden is starting up and throughout the season. The remaining questions in **Appendix D** can be answered in your initial meetings, either before or after the garden is built.



Planning your committee

The final question in **Appendix D** looks at how your garden committee will be organized. Establishing a garden working group or committee that makes sure the garden runs well, looks good and supports its volunteers is a very important part of having a successful garden project. A committed working group can turn your garden into a unique community space where residents of different ages, backgrounds and cultures can learn, eat, and grow together.

It is best to decide upon roles and responsibilities in your committee from the very beginning. Remember, you can always change how your committee operates if you realize it isn't working, but it's easier to start with structure than to put it into place once there's a problem. Below are some recommended positions for your garden committee. You may find that they aren't all useful in your garden, and that's fine. Just remember that it's important to divide up responsibilities whenever possible. This makes everyone feel involved and committed, and avoids one or two people being overworked.

All of these positions, including the garden coordinator should have a fixed term, for example one year, after which other people are free to apply for them. This prevents newcomers from feeling like they don't have decision-making power. For more tips on how to make sure that your meetings and organizational structure are welcoming, take a look at **Appendix G**.

► GARDEN COORDINATOR:

The role of the garden coordinator depends upon what responsibilities are assigned to other members. The coordinator is not the "boss" of the garden; this is the person responsible for seeing that the agreed-upon rules are followed, and that any conflict is addressed as it arises. The garden coordinator also supports other members of the committee and makes sure they are able to fulfill their roles. As this can be a lot of work, the coordinator may sometimes be additionally compensated, either by receiving a small honorarium or a larger garden plot – this is something to discuss with your committee.

► COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER:

Shares information with gardeners, by phone or by email. They will take minutes at any garden meetings and ensure that all gardeners hear about any news. They will also be the contact person for outside groups who want information about the garden.

► TREASURER:

Accepts registration fees and provides receipts. They will be responsible for proposing a budget to the committee that will pay for all required supplies: tools, plants, soil, and any garden celebrations. This person can also work on fundraising if needed.

► YOUTH OUTREACH:

If your garden wants to involve young people, it is good to have a specific youth engagement person. Children require supervision and guidance in the garden, so the youth engagement person can offer a weekly kids' hour where children can come in and learn. This person can also sign off on volunteer hours for young people who need community service time.

► **GROUNDS OFFICER:**

Organizes group work days to make sure that paths, common areas, hoses, fences, compost, greenhouses and other common resources are in order.

► **TRAINING OFFICER:**

Coordinates training and workshops for gardeners and possibly the wider community. The training officer should speak to gardeners at the beginning of the year to find out what kind of workshops they'd like, and then find community partners to host them.

► **EVENTS OFFICER:**

A good way to engage the rest of your community in the garden and gain more support is to host fun garden events for the neighbourhood. This can include community meals, seed exchanges, movie nights or harvest festivals. If your garden will host lots of events, it is good to have an Events Officer who organizes materials, outreach and logistics. (See **step 9** for more detail about garden events)



Sample garden rules and agreements

The committee roles organize who is responsible for leading the garden. It is also important to organize how the gardeners will interact with the space, and with each other. When problems arise in community garden projects, it is often due to unclear expectations or lack of communication. Having clear rules set out from the beginning can be an effective way to avoid these issues. Have your committee agree upon a set of garden rules and expectations, and then share these with all new gardeners as they join. This list can then be referred to if any issues arise. See **Appendix I** for example garden rules and use these as a guideline to create your own. For templates for an entire gardener's welcome packet that you can hand out to new volunteers, see extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/miscpubs/mp0906welcome.pdf

You may also want to outline roles and responsibilities for the garden committee, the housing provider and the property manager. This is especially important if this is the first time these groups have collaborated on a project. This could be as simple as a Memorandum of Understanding, a letter that outlines what each group is responsible for and when permission must be requested from each group.

A collection of vintage garden tools hanging on a red wooden wall. The tools include two large shovels with flat heads, a smaller shovel with a curved head, a hoe with a flat head, a pitchfork, and a three-pronged garden fork. The tools have wooden handles and metal heads, some showing signs of rust and wear.

RESOURCES FOR GARDENERS:

Designing your site • Getting supplies
Building your garden • Making partnerships
Maintaining the garden

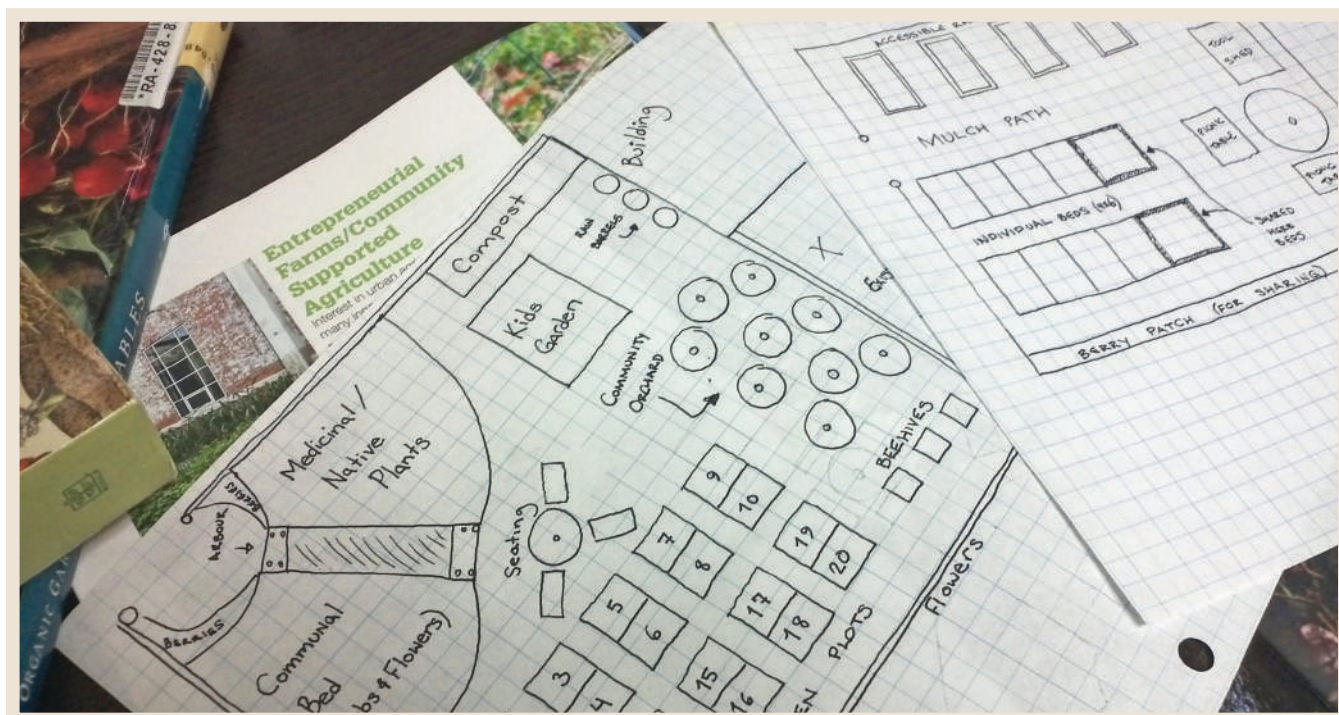
Step 5. Design Your Garden

How to involve your community in the garden design, and create a beautiful, environmentally friendly space.

Once you know where your garden is going to go, it's time to think about a layout plan. If the housing provider is able to provide financial support for the project, they may be able to have a landscaper assist with the design and construction. This can be helpful, but it is important to engage your community in both the design and construction of the garden to make sure everyone feels like the garden belongs to them and reflects their desires. Whether or not you have support from professionals, you want to make sure the garden has the features and style that the community wants. Although it can be intimidating to design a garden for the first time, knowing a few basic principles can make it much easier.

The first step is to think about what features the community wants in the garden. There are no rules for how a community garden looks, it can be as simple as a few in-ground beds in a row or can expand into a site with space for seating, community cooking and naturalization. Remember, you can always expand your garden as you go, but it's best to start with something manageable.

In order to decide what features your garden will have, you should consult with your garden committee or with the entire community to see which components they find most important. If many of your gardeners have limited mobility, you may want to include tall raised beds that are wheelchair accessible and many places to sit. If you are going to garden the space communally, you can have larger, irregular sized beds, while an allotment garden would require everyone to have a similar-sized plot.



COMMUNAL GARDENING

A recommended feature to include in any garden is a communal gardening space – an area that everyone works in together. Communal spaces should be larger than allotment plots; ideally an area the size of 3 allotment plots should be available for communal use. These areas can be subdivided for many purposes:

- to grow herbs that all gardeners can use to save space in individual beds
- a sharing bed which encourages people to pick from this bed, but leave the others alone
- a space for children to plant and grow
- to grow food for donation to a local food bank
- a place where people on the waiting list for an allotment can volunteer and contribute
- an area where people can volunteer in exchange for a share of the food grown
- a place to grow food for the community to eat or sell

Make a plan for how you will use your communal space and include rules for its maintenance in the agreement that all gardeners sign before joining. It must be clear who is accountable for the communal spaces so they are well maintained. For example, your gardener agreement could say that all gardeners must devote one hour a week to maintaining communal sites and garden paths – this could be individual time or a scheduled, group work party. Or, you could make a rule that volunteers who work in the communal space for 4 hours a week receive a share of the produce harvested from that area. Consider offering alternative volunteer possibilities for residents who aren't able to do physical work but could benefit from a share of the food.

Communal gardening areas are a very important way to make sure that your garden welcomes and serves the community beyond the individual gardeners. They also create opportunities for gardeners to share knowledge and get to know each other. Communal gardens can provide residents who are not confident with gardening a place to learn and experiment before taking on a plot of their own. They can also help care for residents who have barriers to accessing healthy food, even if they don't garden. The produce from the communal garden could be sold once a week at a stand in your garden – at affordable prices that reinvest in the garden program. Or, you could cook the food and sell it as a part of a pay-what-you-can community dinner- like a barbeque but with healthy food. For more about community dinners visit dufferinpark.ca/oven/wiki/wiki.php?n=FridayNightSuppers.FrontPage

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Consider offering alternative volunteer possibilities for residents who aren't able to do physical work but could benefit from a share of the food.

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Design Basics

The questions in part A of **Appendix D** can help you decide on the basic features your garden will have. Designing your garden also involves thinking about how these features will fit together in a way that looks good and makes the garden easy to use. A good way to find inspiration is to look at pictures of other gardens and identify what you like and don't like. Throughout this guide you will find pictures of different gardens, some of which are symmetrical and organized while others are wild and natural-looking. Find pictures of gardens that reflect what your community wants to guide your design.

Make your design process fun! Discuss the features you could include in your garden, then have people break out into groups to draw their designs on flipcharts or even use plasticine, Popsicle sticks, leaves and other materials to create a 3D map. Have groups present their designs and identify the parts to be included in the final plan. Engaging people with different abilities, visual, verbal, hands-on, will help you create a successful design.



Sustainable Design

Sustainable design means having a garden that compliments and enhances the environment it grows in rather than causing it to go out of balance. Since you are using your garden space to grow food, it is important to make sure that you are keeping the soil, air, and water healthy, and not using fertilizers and chemicals that can make you sick. Take a look at the sidebar for basic sustainable design principles to consider.

One specific type of sustainable design is Permaculture: a landscaping system that emphasizes building your garden as a part of an existing ecosystem. Rather than trying to control nature, permaculture works with it to create gardens that are self-sustaining – relying on few external inputs (like fertilizers and pesticides) and trying to create required supplies on site (through composting and rainbarreling, for example). Permaculture design is based in three ethics: care for the earth, care for people and fair share. To learn more about permaculture, visit permacultureprinciples.com

Design Principles for Community Gardens

Adapted from www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Environment/documents/GettingStartedincommunitygardening.pdf

Design for low-waste – create a garden that produces no waste by utilizing on site waste management, specifically compost and worm farming systems.

Design for integrated soil fertility management – Grow the supplies you need for mulch and composting on-site, incorporate legume species that fix nitrogen (an essential plant nutrient) in the soil, and design in crop rotation (moving plants to maintain nutrients and avoid pests).

Design for sustainability - Use recycled and local materials in construction, avoid importing soils and other inputs.

Design for water management – collect and conserve water. On sloped sites, use swales, terraces or beds that run along the contour of the slope to catch water.

Design for solar access – planting and positioning of buildings and infrastructure should not block southern and western sun.

Design for integrated pest management – include a range of plants that provide habitat for small birds, frogs, and predatory insects; include sources of water such as ponds and bird baths.

Design for biodiversity – when carefully designed, community gardens can be part of a city-wide network of local native bird and animal habitat, as well as a demonstration of rare and local food species.

Design for the senses – A garden designed to engage the senses will enable your garden to 'speak' to a wider cross-section of the community including children and the disabled. Try to include scented plants, colour, public art and auditory elements such as wind-chimes.

Design for accessibility – Consider raised beds, pathways made wide enough for wheelchairs and beds made narrow enough to reach the centre without strain. These accommodations will make the garden more comfortable for all to use.

Design for cultural diversity – include the plants and cultural traditions of the various cultural groups who make up your neighbourhood. Invite these communities to participate in the design process.

Design for sociability – Ensure you incorporate seating and informal sheltered spaces for eating, talking and planning as a group.

Design for safety – maintain clear lines of sight; incorporate seating to encourage people to spend time in the garden and keep safety in mind to avoid enclosed spaces while maintaining a sense of discovery.

Step 6. Budgeting and Supplies

How to decide what supplies you need and use that information to create a garden budget. Tips for using community skills and finding low-cost supplies.

Once you've answered the questions of how your garden will look, and the purpose it will have, it's time to look at your community and see what you need and what you already have. Asset mapping is a way to find out the skills, resources and knowledge available in your area, and can be done with your working group or your whole community. This helps to reduce costs, as you make use of all resources in the community, and increase effectiveness as you involve more skilled people in the group. For a step by step guide of how to do asset mapping, see **Appendix C**.

Once you identify community assets and resources, you may want to begin making connections with other groups in your community or you may get excited to start building and leave connections until later. Either technique is just fine – if you do want to make connections before you build, check out the information in **Step 8**.

Starting a new garden will require a variety of supplies: soil, tools, seeds and garden structures to name just a few. Making connections with other gardens and community groups in your area can help you find the best quality supplies at the best price. Learn from the people who have started gardens before in the area – they are the local experts and have learned from experience. Online marketplaces like craigslist, kijiji and others can be very useful for finding soil, plants, and tools at very low prices or even free!

"Remember that unless you can easily secure a large amount of money to start your garden, it's best to start small."

MAKING A BUDGET

To develop your garden budget, look at the information below with your group to decide what materials you need, which you can get free, and which you have to pay for. Remember that unless you can easily secure a large amount of money to start your garden, it's best to start small, and include new things in your garden as your group grows.

An initial garden budget should include:

- natural supplies
- compost
- soil
- mulch
- seeds and plants
- tools
- a shed
- fencing
- a water source
- bed construction materials
- professional assistance and any special features.

See **Appendix M** for a budgeting form you can use to design your site.

When your budget is complete, present it to your housing provider and property manager to see what costs they can cover or what items they might be able to loan or donate. For more information on costs and fundraising to cover them, see **Step 10**, Fundraising.



NATURAL SUPPLIES – COMPOST, MANURE, SOIL, WOODCHIPS, PLANTS

► COMPOST/MANURE

You will probably want to add compost or manure to any new garden site you start. Compost and manure add nutrients to the soil so your plants will be healthy. They can be dug into existing soil or added to new raised beds. Fresh manure and hot compost should never be added to your plants – they will actually take nitrogen out of the soil, which will weaken your plants. Always look for pre-composted manure and compost that has fully broken down and is crumbly like soil.

Both compost and manure can be purchased at your local garden centre; however, many communities have free sources available.

Compost: Some municipalities have free compost drop-off in neighbourhoods around the city in spring. Contact your housing provider or city councilor to find out whether the city provides free compost in your area. Come fall, you can also collect leaves and grass clippings from neighbours for free to add to your compost bins.

Manure: It doesn't have to be bought in bags. Check local stables, including the police, if you are in an urban area. In Toronto, ask at the zoo for "zoo poo".

► TOPSOIL OR TRIPLE MIX

If you're gardening in-ground you can just add compost or manure and be ready to go. If you're building raised beds, it may be more cost-effective to get a combination of soil and compost rather than 100% compost. For large orders of topsoil, speak to your housing provider to see if they have a landscaping contact. Otherwise, look for bulk soil delivery companies in your area and ask if they can give you a discount on soil or delivery as you're a community group. Topsoil can mean different things to different people, so make sure to ask before you order if the soil is good for gardens – often this will be called triple mix, as it's a combination of topsoil, peat and compost.

► MULCH

Mulch is any kind of shredded material used as a groundcover. Mulch helps to suppress weeds, prevent evaporation, and adds nutrients to the soil. Many different materials can be used as mulch, like straw, bark, pine needles or woodchips. Mulch is also an attractive and affordable way to make natural garden pathways. When establishing your garden you can lay down wet newspaper or cardboard and cover it with mulch to kill and suppress weeds. Woodchips are a simple type of mulch to find for free or at a low cost. Power companies, tree service companies and municipalities chip their trimmings, usually right on site. Contact local groups to see if they have a free pickup location for woodchips or if they can drop them off to you for free!



► PLANTS AND SEEDS

Getting plants for your garden doesn't have to be expensive! There are many places to get affordable or free seeds and plants in your community.



Seedy Saturday. This is a yearly event held in spring where gardeners get together to trade seeds. If you have seeds to share, you can exchange them for other crops, or buy saved seeds at very low prices. Most Seedy Saturday events are listed online at Seeds of Diversity, www.seeds.ca. If your community isn't listed, email the Seeds of Diversity staff to see if they know of one nearby.

Seed and Plant Companies. Contact seed companies or garden centres in your area early in the season and ask them to donate seeds or seedlings to your project. See **Step 10** for more info.

Other gardeners. Many desirable garden plants can become invasive and need to be divided so they don't take over the whole garden. Gardeners with crops like strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, rhubarb, and currants are often willing to give plants away for free if you can come pick them up. This includes a number of herbs and medicinal plants as well, like mint, lemon balm, oregano, and many others. Contact community garden networks, horticultural societies and neighbourhood gardeners to see if anyone has plants to share. Check out the **Additional Resources** section for links to more ideas for finding free plants.



A collection of vintage garden tools is displayed against a white wooden wall. From left to right, there is a wooden-handled shovel with a curved blade, a metal shovel with a flat blade, a wooden-handled pitchfork with three tines, and a wooden-handled shovel with a curved blade. In the foreground, there are several galvanized metal watering cans. The wall is made of vertical wooden planks, and the ground is covered with green grass and small plants.

Natural Building

If you want to get really creative, consider building an environmentally-friendly garden shed from cob. Cob is a building material made of clay, sand, straw, water, and earth, similar to adobe. Cob is fireproof, earthquake resistant and inexpensive. It can be used to create artistic, sculptural forms and has a very low carbon footprint. To learn more about cob and natural building, visit:

www.naturalbuildinginstitute.com

TOOLS AND A SHED

Your community garden will need a few basic gardening tools. You may be able to get tools donated from local businesses or neighbours who don't need them anymore. If you cannot get tools donated, try to buy ones that are well made. They will cost more, but will last longer. This will save you money in the long run.

Basic gardening tools – adapted from Toronto Community Housing Community Gardening Manual.

Here is a list of useful tools. You do not need all of them, choose which seem most useful for your space.

TROWEL: You can use a trowel for many different things. A trowel can weed, dig, cultivate, divide plants, pry out small rocks and help you put plants into the ground.

FORK: Use a hand fork to cultivate in beds that are full of plants. A hand fork also lets you chop up clumps of soil. Use a large fork for bigger jobs.

HOE: A hoe helps you easily get weeds out of the garden.

SPADE: Garden spades have round, pointed blades. Use them to dig holes, move soil and plant larger perennials, shrubs and trees.

SHOVEL: Gardeners use shovels to move large amounts of dirt and plants, to dig borders and to get rid of plants with woody roots and stems.

WHEELBARROW: A wheelbarrow is useful for moving soil, compost, plants, mulch and tools. You could also use a garden cart for some of these jobs.

CONTAINERS: Another way to move things is with containers such as buckets, garbage cans, nursery flats or tubs. You can often get free 5 gallon plastic containers outside restaurants – just make sure they have been used for food, not toxic substances.

SECATEURS (HAND PRUNERS): A good set of pruners will let you do lots of trimming. Use them to cut back perennials and flowers, and to trim dead stalks and branches.

PRUNING SHEARS, LOPPERS AND SAWS: Use these tools to prune fruit trees.

RAIN BARREL: Use a rain barrel to collect water easily.

WATERING CAN, HOSE, SPRINKLERS: Watering cans and soaker hoses let you water the roots of plants instead of the soil where nothing is growing. Use a soaker hose to water a larger area. Your hoses must be able to reach all of the plots and beds in your garden.

GARDENING GLOVES: Use leather gloves if you want them to last a long time.

STRING: Use string to outline garden beds.

STAKES: Put stakes in the soil to hold the strings. You can get these at most hardware stores.

► TAKING CARE OF YOUR TOOLS

- Clean the dirt off of tools each time you use them. If the soil has dried on the tool, use a wire brush or a knife to scrape it off. Keeping tools clean helps them last longer, work better, and prevents the spread of soil-borne diseases throughout your garden.
- If the wooden handle on a tool is damp, put the tool in the sun to dry before you put it away. At the end of the gardening season, rub linseed oil or tung oil into the wood.
- Keep your garden tools sharp. Remember to sharpen any tool you use to cut anything. Keep the blades of your shovels and spades sharp, too. Sharpen your tools all through the garden season. When you use tools a lot, they get dull quickly. Keep a sharpener with your tools.
- Tools that are damp will rust. After you use a tool, wipe the metal parts with a rag. This is very important for pruners, shears and trowels. Drying the tools with a rag will help keep them from getting rusty.

► TOOLSHED

It's important to have a toolshed at or near the garden site where you can store everything, keeping it safe and dry. Secure sheds with a combination lock, or a padlock for which all gardeners have a key. For a pre-made shed, contact local businesses to request a donation. Sheds can also be built from lumber or a sustainable building material like cob (see sidebar).

Finding or paying for a shed may be something your housing provider can help with, so speak to them first. Local gardening and non-profit groups may also be able to let you know if your municipality can offer one to your garden for free or low cost.



Damage from Animals

Putting up a low fence can be an effective way to deter dogs from running through your garden, but other animals like squirrels, groundhogs and raccoons can be more difficult to keep out. A few natural and structural options are listed below:

- Plant repellent crops around and within your garden. Strongly scented crops like garlic and marigold can repel pests and mask the scent of the other crops you are growing.
- If you have dogs and cats nearby, they can help to keep rodents out of the garden. But make sure these pets are well trained and don't dig in the garden themselves!
- If rodents are a real problem, you may want to screen off your beds with a wire mesh cover (see below). $\frac{1}{2}$ " – 1" mesh can look very clean and professional compared to chicken wire which can give a messy look. Wire protection can also be covered with plastic in late fall to create a greenhouse effect and extend your season. Just make sure the covers are easy to remove, or they will become a barrier to gardening.





PROTECTING THE GARDEN

People worry a lot about vandalism in community gardens but some behaviours considered as “vandalism” can be prevented by good communication. People passing by the garden may think they are allowed to pick things if there are no signs explaining who the food is for. If a garden is vandalized, some people react by putting up a large fence. Sometimes this can work, but no matter what kind of fence you have, a person who wants to get in will find a way. Be prepared to lose some crops each year to animals or other people, and plant extra to compensate for this.

A fence with a gate is a key part of most community gardens. Fences help to keep dogs out of the garden. A fence can also show that the garden is separate from the space around it. When you want a fence to show where the garden begins, think about letting vines grow on the fence or using edible or native shrubs to build a “living fence”.

Decide with your group if you require a lock on your gate, and if so, who gets a key. If you want to make the garden feel welcoming, consider putting up a sign that invites people to come in whenever the gate is unlocked. That way, other residents can enjoy the garden, but only when there are gardeners around to answer questions and monitor how they use the space.

► **HERE ARE SOME OTHER THINGS YOU CAN DO TO DISCOURAGE CRIME AND KEEP THE GARDEN A SAFE PLACE:**

- Do not tell anyone they are not welcome. Ask everyone in the community to participate, even the people who are “vandals.”
- Fix the damage as soon as possible. If you are lucky, the vandals will get bored and move on to other things.
- Put the garden in a place where there are lots of people.
- Create a sign that tells the community whose garden it is. Say that the garden is neighbourhood project. Translate the sign into many languages if your community is multicultural.
- Set up a place for people to meet in the garden. This will help people feel they can use the garden more.
- Harvest fruits and vegetables every day. If you leave ripe food on plants, people may think the garden has been forgotten.
- Create a designated “tasting bed” a communally tended area that anyone can harvest from. Use signs to communicate that while this area is open, the rest is off-limits.
- Involve children in the garden. This will help protect the garden.
- Keep the garden neat and in good repair. This shows that people care about the space.



Step 7. Build!

How to host a community build day that everyone can get involved in

Now that your plan is ready and you've found your materials, it's time to build your garden! You may have external contractors come in to build the site, or you may have the community build it themselves. Whatever happens, make sure to have an event where residents can come and contribute to building the garden in some way. This is your chance to show people the positive change you are making and get them excited to be involved.



Here are some tips for a successful build day:

- **Have everything ready in advance.** Make sure that all your wood is cut, your tools are on site and your measurements are finished. Having things prepared in advance reduces stress and lets volunteers jump straight into work instead of waiting around.
- Consider how people of different ages and skills can be involved in your build day. Depending on your plan, a build day can involve any of the following:
 - **Constructing beds from lumber**
 - **Digging out new planting areas**
 - **Moving soil, mulch or other supplies**
 - **Painting garden signs**
 - **Planting seeds, plants and flowers**
 - **Building a fence**
 - **A community meal/BBQ**
 - **Music**
 - **Facepainting**
 - **Tree planting**
 - **Presentations/talks**
 - **Seed/plant giveaways**
- Identify a few **key people to be in charge** at your build day, and make sure all committee members know who they are. Have another person on hand who can make a run to the store in case any key items have been forgotten.
- Write out a **rough schedule** for the day, estimating how long everything will take. It's important to make sure your goals are attainable so that people feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day. It's better to have a few days where people work on specific, small projects than one day where volunteers try to do many things and don't complete any.
- **Food** is a great way to get people out to your event, but make sure not to serve it until most of the work is done. People usually get tired and drop off after they eat.
- Have a **sign-up sheet** to take the names and contact information of everyone who comes out to volunteer so you can invite them to future events.
- **Thank everyone for their participation** at the end of the day. Make sure they know how much their efforts have helped. Think about what your next event will be in advance so you can invite them to participate.
- Make sure to **take lots of pictures** as this day is the beginning of an exciting process! Taking "before and after" pictures is a great way to visualize how much you've accomplished.



Step 8. Make Connections

How to bring diverse groups into the garden and make supportive connections with your community.

It's easy to get caught up in the gardening part of your community garden and forget about your community. But having a wide and vibrant group of people involved in your project helps your garden become a valued part of the neighbourhood. The more diverse groups and individuals your garden serves, the easier it is to find support for funding and resist external threats to your garden. Everyone can contribute to and benefit from a community garden so make sure to always think about what groups are not included and what you can do to better include them. For more information on how to make your garden an inclusive space visit the links below, or read on for information about engaging seniors and youth.

Inclusive Communities: www.ohcc-ccso.ca/en/inclusive-community-organizations-a-tool-kit

Gardening for people with Disabilities: www.christopherreeve.org/atf/cf/%7B3d83418f-b967-4c18-8ada-adc2e5355071%7D/GARDENING%20FOR%20PEOPLE%20WITH%20DISABILITIES%205-09.PDF

Mental Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity: <http://www.mindingourbodies.ca/>

Mental Health and Gardening: <http://www.thrive.org.uk/>

A photograph of an elderly woman with short, wavy grey hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a red, white, and blue plaid button-down shirt. She is leaning forward, looking down at something in a garden bed. The background is a wooden fence and lush green foliage. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Seniors

Seniors often love to garden and can have a great deal of knowledge and time to share with a community garden. Because some seniors are not comfortable with the internet/email, it is important to invite them to participate face-to-face. Often, older people with limited mobility can be concerned that they don't have the dexterity required to help out in a garden. This can be remedied in a few ways:

Accessible beds: Raised garden beds are often easier to use for people with sore joints or mobility devices like walkers and wheelchairs. Check out the info sheet on raised beds for more information about how to integrate accessible beds into your garden.

Ease of use: make sure your garden has a shaded seating area available where older gardeners can rest. Invest in some lightweight tools, and provide senior gardeners with beds closest to water sources and compost bins. Build on the community spirit and have other gardeners help out with heavier tasks like digging and moving compost.

Mentorship: Gardens offer great opportunities for teaching and building skills. One of the best ways to engage seniors with gardening experience is to give them a chance to share what they know. Outgoing seniors can lead workshops for other gardeners, talking about a specific area where they have experience. Seniors can also act as mentors – pair them up with new gardeners or youth to teach them the basics. This is a good way to build strong relationships and a sense of community in the garden.

A photograph of a woman and a young child gardening. The woman, in the foreground, is wearing a white t-shirt and has her hair in a bun. She is looking down at something in her hands. The child, in the background, is wearing a yellow and white striped shirt and is smiling. They are in a garden with a wooden fence behind them.

Young People

Engaging young people in your garden is a great way to make it a family-friendly space and minimize damage. Children who have helped out in the garden and know the gardeners are much less likely to damage plants or vandalize the area. Gardening with children and young people requires a few extra considerations:

Supervision: Kids need to be supervised to make sure they are safe and understand what to do. Any time kids are going to be in the garden there should be an adult present who can advise them about weeding, watering, and general garden care. Supervision is also very important when working with teenagers. Training young people on basic to complex garden tasks is great for self-esteem and helps minimize the workload of adult gardeners. Young people can also be given volunteer hours in exchange for garden work, giving you access to a strong group of committed workers!

Kids' Space: A great way to integrate children in the garden is by creating a kids' bed. This is an area where formal garden rules may not apply and kids can learn about growing plants without damaging other gardeners' work. A kids' bed should be clearly separated from the rest of the garden to avoid confusion. Raised "square foot garden" beds or beds of no more than 3 feet square are good: they allow short arms to reach but avoid soil compaction by not allowing kids to walk on the beds.

Activities: Children love to water and can do it all day long. However, with a little planning you can engage kids in all of gardening from planting to harvesting. Take a look at **Appendix J** for more ideas for gardening with kids.



Community Groups

Connect your garden to the broader community as much as possible. Partnering with other groups and agencies can connect you with knowledge, funding, resources and support that you otherwise may not know about.

Other Gardens: Find other community gardens in your area. Look in the **Additional Resources** section to find out if there is a community garden network in your area. Organize garden tours and share best practices with each other: Where is the best place to get supplies/donations? What kind of bulk purchases can you make as a group (soil, seeds, plants)? What kind of training can different gardens offer each other?

Community Centres/Health

Centres: Invite them to your garden celebrations and look at possible training partnerships. Do they have a dietician who can talk to your group about healthy eating? Can your garden provide a field trip site for their summer camp? Do they have a kitchen you can use for a canning workshop?

Faith/Cultural Groups: Many religious groups do a great deal of work related to food. A local group may have a food bank you can donate to, or extra supplies they can donate to an event. Faith Groups often have kitchen space that you may be able to use as well.

Non-profit groups: Connect with your local environmental or food-based non-profit to see if they offer training or workshops that can be useful for your gardeners. Let them know about your projects and look into possible funding partnerships. Take a look at **Additional Resources** to find a starter list of possible groups to connect with in your area.

Step 9. Grow

A month-by-month garden calendar to help you plan your garden season and suggested events for every season

Now for the actual gardening! Between your community and the connections you have made in your neighbourhood, you will probably have lots of great gardening knowledge available to your group. For newer gardeners, the following pages describe a basic schedule for planting your garden and some tips for education and events you can offer in your garden. For more resources and how-to specifics, check out the **Additional Resources** section and the how to guides included with this book.

SAMPLE GARDEN CALENDAR

Planning ahead will ensure you are ready for every step of the gardening season and help the winter fly by! Spend January and February meeting with your garden committee to plan out your planting and any expansions to the garden. Over the next few pages is a garden calendar that you can refer to for step by step instructions of what to do from March to October. This calendar is based on the climate in plant hardiness Zone 6, Southern Ontario, so if you are located in another zone, follow the same steps, but move the timeline back accordingly. To find out what zone you live in, visit www.northerngardenersalmanac.com/2010/01/canadian-plant-hardiness-zones.html



MARCH

PREPARE THE SITE

1. Get people involved in the garden. Hold a meeting with new gardeners to discuss rules and plan for the year. Give new gardeners an orientation packet with rules and a registration form like in **Appendix I** and **L**.
2. Make sure you have water for the garden. Set up rain barrels, hoses, buckets and watering cans.
3. Get all the tools you need. Make sure they are clean and in good shape. For a list of tools you should have, see **Step 6**.
4. Set up compost bins. If you already have bins, start turning your compost again. For more information on composting, read **Info Sheet 3** included with this guide or visit www.compost.org/qna.html or www.compostguide.com
5. Mulch the garden. You should add mulch after the soil has warmed up in the spring. For more information about mulch, look at **Section 6**.
6. Begin to plant seeds indoors and under lights. This is a great way to save money and make sure your plants grow without pesticides or chemical fertilizers. This is the time to plant tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and any other plants that need a long growing season to mature. See **Info Sheet 1** for more information.



APRIL

THE GARDENING BEGINS

1. If the ground is no longer frozen, start to prepare your site. Dig compost or manure into the soil and mark out where your beds will be.
2. Repair old garden structures and build new ones. This includes paths, arbours, walls, fences, and raised beds. If the soil is still frozen or very wet, do not start to dig. Wait until the ground is thawed and dry.
3. Plant crops that like cool weather such as peas, lettuce, onions, spinach and root vegetables (beets, radishes, carrots, potatoes).
4. Water often so that seeds can start growing. Once the seedlings are strong, let the soil dry a little before you water again.
5. Pull out weeds to keep them from taking over the other plants.
6. Prune raspberry or blackberry canes down to 6 inches to encourage new growth.
7. Continue to care for indoor seedlings, moving them to 4" pots and adding nutrients once they have their first true leaves.



MAY

1. Finish all the things you are building in the garden.
2. When the soil can easily be dug, usually mid-May, you can plant beans.
3. Host a seed starting or planting workshop for new gardeners
4. Mid-month, start hardening off your transplants (see box at right). This will prepare them to be planted outside at the end of the month.
5. After the last frost (usually around May long weekend, but check online) your indoor seedlings can all be planted outside. This includes tomatoes, melons, peppers, eggplant, squash and cucumbers.
6. Learn which garden “weeds” are edible or have medicinal properties. Start harvesting them rather than throwing them into the compost. For more about weeds, See **Info Sheet 2** included with this guide.

Hardening off seedlings

If you move seedlings from a sheltered indoor location into the ground immediately, some will likely die of shock.

Hardening off is a gradual process that lets your seedlings adjust to being outside. About one week before you plan to plant your seedlings outside, set them out in a sheltered, shady spot for about 3 hours. Bring them inside at the end of the day. The next day, set them in a sunnier spot, and leave them a bit longer.

Gradually expose them to more sun and longer hours, until you can leave them overnight. After a week of this process, your plants will be ready to go in the ground.



JUNE

1. Finish setting out transplants and store-bought seedlings.
2. Begin to harvest crops. When you can harvest depends on the weather each year. Pick things when they are ripe and before they get too ripe. You should be able to gather peas, radishes, lettuce and spinach.
3. Stake up tomato plants. Build supports for beans and other plants that grow on vines.
4. Plant a second crop of the things you planted in the spring. This is called "succession planting". It is a way to make the gardening season longer. To learn more, read **Info Sheet 6** included with this guide or visit "Succession Planting" at www.cog.ca/documents/RS11.pdf or look at the information in FoodShare's Toolkit at www.foodshare.net/toolbox_month_succession.htm
5. Keep the site neat. Weed and mow the borders and paths. Look for standing water or areas of thick plant coverage and remove them to prevent rodents.
6. Add weeds (but not weed seeds) and other plant thinnings to your compost. Turn compost weekly.
7. Ask local garden centres for extra seedlings and host a plant giveaway.
8. Invite a class from a local school to visit the garden.



JULY & AUGUST

1. Make sure all beds have been planted by the deadline and reassign them as needed.
2. Give the garden enough water. July and August are the hottest months. Water as often as needed. A good rule of thumb: stick your finger into the soil to the first knuckle. If it's dry and warm, it's time to water. Make sure to water early in the morning or in the evening, rather than midday. It will protect your leaves and reduce water loss from the heat.
3. Harvest crops regularly. Pick beans, peas, okra and other crops often to encourage plants to keep producing and to make sure produce tastes its best.
4. Keep weeding and mowing.
5. Top dress fruiting crops with compost or an organic fertilizer to encourage fruiting. Avoid nitrogen rich fertilizer as it promotes leaf growth. Look for a balanced fertilizer like chicken manure or one rich in phosphorus/potassium if your soils are deficient. See **Info Sheet 2** for more info.
6. Keep looking for insects and signs of disease.
7. Thin suckers and lower leaves from tomato plants to make the plants put their energy into fruit.
8. If you are going to save seeds, start now. To learn how to save your own seeds, read **Info Sheet 5** included with this guide or "Seed saving" and "Basic Seed Saving" at www.seedsave.org/lissilissi_904.html.
9. Enjoy the food! Plan an event to celebrate your harvest.



SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

1. Order bulbs (flowers and garlic) that you can plant at the end of September or early in October.
2. Order seeds for a cover crop. These plants help keep the soil healthy and free of weeds.
3. Keep harvesting the food from your garden.
4. After the harvest is finished, plan a day to clean up the site. Put all plant parts (except seedheads) into the compost. Seeds should not go into the compost because they will sprout when you add compost to your beds next spring.
5. Invite local children to help clean up the garden. For more about cover crops see **Info Sheet 6**.
6. Clean and repair the tools and gardening equipment. Put them in storage for the winter.



7. Repair any damaged fences, walls or buildings.
8. Rake leaves. Add them to the compost.
9. Prune trees, shrubs and vines.
10. If you have a watering system, flush it and get it ready for the winter.
11. Remember to thank your volunteers, supporters and funders.
12. Hold a debriefing event with your gardeners to discuss how the season went and recommendations for next year. Look at **Appendix L** for a sample feedback form to give your gardeners.
13. Consider organizing monthly events to keep the group connected through the winter. Cooking can be a great way for gardeners to stay in touch over the winter – take a look at **Next Steps** for more ideas.

Suggested Yearly Events

Holding garden events can raise awareness about your garden in the community and give gardeners a chance to spend time together socially. Below is a list of basic and creative events you can host in your community garden throughout the season. Hand out feedback forms at each event to find out how it went and get ideas for new activities. For sample feedback forms see **Appendix L**.

► GREAT FOUNDATION EVENTS – THESE CAN ADD STRUCTURE TO YOUR GARDEN SEASON:

Seed Exchange – if there isn't a Seedy Saturday event in your community, or even if there is, why not host a seed exchange at your garden? Invite everyone to bring seeds they've saved, packaged up with a basic description of the plant, and exchange them with other gardeners. This may require a seed packing event to prepare.

Plant Giveaway – After Victoria Day is a great time to host a plant giveaway. Any extra seedlings you or your community don't have space to use can be distributed to gardeners in the community who still have space. You can also contact local garden centres to ask for donations as they generally reduce plants by up to 50% after May 24.

Harvest Festival – Celebrate the end of the season with a harvest festival! Clean up the garden, offer seed saving workshops and celebrate local food with a community dinner or a potluck. Harvest Festivals are a great way to give closure to the season and give thanks to your gardening team.

► ADDITIONAL EVENT IDEAS:

Work Parties – Invite volunteers from the wider community or local businesses and organizations to pitch in at the garden for big projects like spring/fall cleanup, tree planting or building new garden beds.

Garden Tours – Host a midsummer interpretive tour when your garden is looking its best. Use this opportunity to highlight the creative spirit of your garden and the benefits it provides to the community.

Movie Nights – Consider screening a movie in the garden on a warm summer evening. Make popcorn, bring blankets, and invite the community out for a film on food, gardening or any topic! Borrow a projector and hang up a large white bed sheet for a screen.

Garden workshops – Pick a resident gardener or invite an expert from beyond the community to host a workshop on an interesting garden topic for the whole neighbourhood. Some great ideas used in other gardens include: container gardening, small-scale composting, seed saving/growing from seed, using medicinal plants, or creating a pollinator garden.

Native plant and tree walk – Invite adults and kids into the garden for a walk to learn how to identify local plants and trees. Community members will be surprised to learn how many diverse plants grow right in their community, and the many different uses they have.



Step 10. Maintain

How to avoid conflict and keep gardeners involved. Tips for fundraising and 10 steps to writing a grant proposal.

Keeping your garden going means reflecting on successes and challenges and using both as a way to grow and improve your project. Some gardens run into issues after a few years when they start to lose initial volunteers or funding sources. Having a long-lasting garden program is all about resilience and adaptation. Find resilience by supporting existing volunteers and reaching out to new partners. Use this resilience to adapt to challenges your garden may face due to conflict, changing goals or external pressure.

KEEPING GARDENERS INVOLVED

People who work in your garden are giving something to the project: their time, their knowledge or their resources. In the same way, the garden should give back to them. People volunteer for many reasons, so this can mean many things. For example, gardens can provide volunteers with training, leadership opportunities, community connections, or a sense of accomplishment, to name just a few reasons people get involved. Below are some basic techniques to ensure that your gardeners value the garden project and feel valued for their contributions. For more information, take a look at **Appendix G** as well.

"Keeping your garden going means reflecting on successes and challenges and using both as a way to grow and improve your project."

► CLEAR RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Being clear with everyone about the rules and responsibilities of gardeners is critical to success. As new gardeners join, have them all read and sign a copy of the garden rules. A few years in, consider creating a values statement to ensure everyone understands the spirit behind the project. Having these beliefs and expectations laid out from the beginning can avoid a great deal of miscommunication in the future.

► OPEN COMMUNICATION

Make sure all gardeners have a way to share their recommendations and comments about the garden. Giving out feedback forms at the beginning and end of the season is a good way to learn what people think. Many people won't talk about problems unless they are asked. Have your Garden Coordinator or Communications Officer speak to gardeners often and ask how things are going (at least once a month if possible, especially in the beginning years). Check in regularly with new volunteers to ensure that they are integrating well and understand their role. Have time at regular meetings to address any issues that come up. Keep things positive – instead of listening to complaints, ask people to provide constructive suggestions.

► ACCOUNTABILITY

Who is responsible for enforcing the rules of the garden? There is no point in creating and discussing rules if they are not enforced. Rules must be enforced consistently and fairly upon all gardeners. Any issues that arise beyond the rules should be addressed by the committee, not by one individual. Having a system in place for dealing with problems means that all gardeners will know their opinion is valued, but no one gardener will be able to take over the project.



► CULTIVATE LEADERS

Give people the chance to develop and show their leadership skills. Rather than having a few people managing everything, offer others the chance to take responsibility or teach others. Youth can especially benefit from opportunities to take charge and show initiative. Setting up a mentorship model in your garden can be a great way for experienced growers to empower newcomers.

► SHARE SUCCESSES

Try to monitor what happens over the season and share these results with all gardeners. Great harvests from the communal bed, popular events, or all-time high volunteer engagement are all successes to be celebrated. Emphasizing the good you are doing and the impact you make working together keeps people engaged in the project. When people can see that the time they give makes a difference, they feel good about being a part of the garden. Documenting your process allows you to reflect and celebrate milestones and anniversaries with the rest of the team. Some garden volunteers may also be interested in taking photographs to support this.

► FLEXIBILITY

While it's very important that everyone be clear on the goals and rules of your garden, it's also vital that there be room for flexibility and experimentation. A garden that doesn't welcome creativity and new ideas will lose vibrancy and fail to attract new members. Realize that your garden is never "complete"; it is a work in progress.

FUNDING

Maintaining your project also means making it financially sustainable. This means figuring out both how to keep your costs low AND how to bring money into your garden. Funds should be something that your garden committee discusses from the very beginning. Funding commitments from the housing provider, the gardeners and community partners should be clearly laid out so that you can develop a long term plan.

When initially planning your project, you'll realize there are many things you can get for little or no money (see **Step 6** for more information). Connect with as many groups as possible to look for in-kind support possibilities.

► COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Connect with groups in your community to ask them to donate materials to help out your project! Local businesses can donate gardening supplies like tools, soil and plants. But also think of other things you'll need, like food for meetings and events, hardware supplies like locks or a produce scale, or gift certificates as prizes for events and contests.

Before contacting anyone, make sure you've had a meeting and you're clear on what supplies you're looking for - *it's easier to get what you want when you ask for something specific.*

Connect with members of your community to see what skills and materials they can provide, then start asking local businesses and community groups for help! If you need help drafting a letter to give to businesses, see **Appendix K.**

Talk to your local **city councillor or MP.** Politicians often have funds available to support community projects, especially for groups that are leading the process themselves. If you don't already have a relationship with your local politicians, pick a confident speaker from your group to call or write them, let them know about your project, and ask if there is any funding available to support your work. Offer them a chance to visit your garden or community so they can meet you and see your work firsthand.

GARDEN FUNDRAISING IDEAS

A good community garden engages a wide variety of people. This means there will be opportunities for disagreement between different groups. Below are some key groups your garden will interact with and ideas for how to ensure positive working relationships.

GARDENING WORKSHOPS

Use the expertise of your gardeners to hold workshops for the general public and charge admission

PLANT SALES

Connect with local plant stores for surplus plants and sell them to your community

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Host a harvest festival with food, games and prizes

SELLING CROPS

Sell what you grow at a community market or local farmers market

COOKING CLASSES

If you have access to a kitchen, local residents can teach workshops on cooking, baking or preserving

SELLING TEAS

Dry herbs and flowers from the garden to sell as teas

KIDS CAMP

Host a kids' camp for residents or the broader community and charge a daily fee

GARDEN MEAL FUNDRAISER

Cook up some delicious food and serve it in the garden. This could be a picnic, community meal, or a fancy meal with tablecloths, servers, and entertainment.



► GRANTS

For those things that you can't find in-kind, or for projects that require larger amounts of money, you may want to consider applying for grants. Grant writing doesn't have to be scary! In fact it can be a great way to include new members of your community in your project – people who may not be interested in gardening, but who have good writing skills or excellent connections. Below are some initial things to consider when applying for grants as well as 10 steps to writing a successful grant application.



When thinking about applying for grants, a good first step is to **connect with other groups in your community** doing community garden projects and see how they paid for them. They can either give you some advice, or perhaps you can apply for grants together!

Often you'll need a **non-profit agency to act as a sponsor** for any grant you want to apply for. Many agencies will be willing to help you apply for a grant but will want to be clear on certain details, for example:

- Are there any funds available to them as sponsors?
- Are they expected to provide grant writing support?
- What other support do you want from them?

Non-profit agencies will be worried about committing to support a grant if they don't know you and can't be sure that your project will be a success – if things aren't managed well, they might be on the hook for repaying the funding. The best way to convince them that you have a solid plan is to **clearly develop your project outline**, identifying lead participants, and a rough budget and workplan for the year.

STEPS TO APPLYING FOR GRANTS

If your group does decide to apply for a grant, here are the basic steps to go through to prepare, write, and submit. If you're curious what grants might be available to you, speak to your Housing Provider and take a look at the list below. Don't apply for a grant until you are ready to go with your project – as in, you have a clear picture of what, specifically, you want to do, and have given thought to how much it will cost. Grantmakers will want to know your budget and your goals, so a grant written when those things aren't clear won't have a great chance of success.

1. **Read the grant instructions carefully** and make sure you are eligible, and that it funds the type of work you want to do. Take note of all deadlines and supporting materials that need to be submitted so you have lots of time to prepare.
2. Try to **connect with groups who've received grant funding before** (especially if they've applied for the grant you're looking at!) and ask for advice.
3. Find out **if your community group is eligible** as an applicant, and if not, connect with a local registered non-profit agency if needed (some funders will support you to access a trustee organization, but this depends on the funder).
4. Figure out **who the grant money will go to**. Can your housing provider receive the grant, or does your community garden have a bank account? Granters will not write a personal check to an individual.
5. You may want to **call the granting agency** for support. Let them know about your project, and ask any questions you need clarified. Granters can often provide good advice and support. Calling also means they will remember you when they receive the grant, which can always be helpful.
6. If the grant requires a lot of writing, **consider dividing the sections** between a few different people. Just make sure to go over it afterward to make sure it's clear and coherent.
7. When writing, **talk about what the grantmaker is interested in**. In the grant guidelines, granters tell you exactly what they are looking for – emphasize those points, rather than just talking about what you think is important. Often granters are interested in funding 'new' and 'innovative' things. Have a brainstorm with your group to see how your community garden project can be different while still covering the major things that you want to accomplish.
8. Have lots of people look at your grant drafts and **get feedback** on them. This will make sure everything is clear and nothing has been forgotten.
9. **Plan how you will report back** on the grant if you receive it. Are there statistics you need to gather about number or demographics of people involved? Do you need to complete a program evaluation? Plan to take lots of pictures and keep good financial records for when you report back at the end of the grant term.
10. Complete and **review your grant application and submit**. Good Luck!



IF IT'S YOUR FIRST TIME WRITING A GRANT AND YOU AND YOUR TEAM DON'T HAVE A LOT OF CONFIDENCE, TRY LOOKING FOR HELP FROM PROFESSIONALS!

There are volunteer consulting groups which provide advice on grant writing and other administrative activities for not-for-profit groups. A great idea is to connect with a few groups in your community who need grant writing help, and find someone who can present to you as a larger group! Here are two Toronto-based groups, but look online for who's available in your community.

Management Advisory Services: www.masadvise.ca

U of T Consulting: utconsulting.ca/volunteer_consulting_group/about_us

Food Action Community Engagement (FACE) is a Toronto Community Housing group that works to help residents start community and container gardening programs. They are able to give advice and grant writing feedback for your projects. Contact them at food.action@yahoo.ca for more information.

Grants can be a great way to start or expand your garden. However, your garden should not be looking for grants every year, there should be a plan for how you will pay for ongoing costs. Most gardens do this through a combination of yearly allotment fees, events (see **Step 9**), and keeping costs low through activities like seed saving and on-site composting. Some gardens decide to go even further, and look at projects that can earn money for their gardens, like selling vegetables to restaurants or processing fruits and veggies into jam or pickles to sell. For more information on ways your garden can earn money, take a look at the section about social enterprise on page 56. If you're interested in getting support to take an idea further, contact SEED at emartyn@hscorp.ca.

TO GET YOU STARTED, BELOW ARE A FEW GRANTERS THAT HAVE FUNDED COMMUNITY GARDEN WORK IN THE PAST. VISIT THEIR WEBSITES TO CHECK FOR UPDATED INFORMATION AND DEADLINES.

ECOACTION COMMUNITY FUNDING PROGRAM

Funding: Maximum \$100,000 per project, project may be up to 3 years.

Application dates: Deadline November 1, of each year

www.ec.gc.ca/ecoaction

HELEN MCCREA PEACOCK FOUNDATION

Funding: Maximum \$10,000

Application dates: Deadlines November 1 and May 1 of every year

www.tcf.ca/communityorganizations/helenmccreapeacockfoundation.html

THE HOME DEPOT FOUNDATION

Funding: varies on project

Application dates: Four review periods throughout the year.

Deadlines – January 15, April 15, July 15, October 15

www.homedepotfoundation.org

TD FRIENDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOUNDATION

Funding: Up to \$5,000

Application dates: Deadlines occasionally change – visit website for details

www.fef.td.com

WALMART EVERGREEN GREEN GRANTS

Funding: up to \$10,000

Application Dates: January of every year

www.evergreen.ca/en/funding/grants



RESOURCES FOR EXPANDING YOUR PROJECT:

- Connecting with Social Enterprise •**
- How to start Community Kitchens,
Farmers Markets or Community Canneries & Bakeries •**
- Plans for thinking outside the box**

Next Steps: Expanding your project

Want to do more? Information about social enterprise in community gardens and tips on starting a community kitchen, farmer's market, cannery or other creative food project.

If your garden project is thriving, your community may start thinking about how to expand beyond growing and into other aspects of food production. This can take many forms. Your group may be interested in selling some of your harvest or looking at other techniques for earning money for your project and gardeners. Or, you may be wondering how you could establish a program to engage other residents in your community. Below are some introductory resources for starting a social enterprise based around your garden, as well as a few different types of projects you can consider: Community Kitchens, Farmer's Markets and Community Canneries/Bakeries. The end of the section highlights a few more creative ways to expand the work your garden is doing, such as beekeeping or community composting.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Social Enterprises or social ventures are income-generating initiatives that have a positive social impact. Just like other types of businesses, social enterprises come in many different sizes and forms, from small catering companies run by a few people to large-scale businesses like Mountain Equipment Co-op. The difference is that social enterprises always provide a social impact as a part of the work they do. This could mean supporting the work of an associated non-profit organization, providing employment to a vulnerable group, or by a number of approaches.

Expanding your garden program to include a social enterprise component can be an excellent way to earn revenue to help make your project self-sustaining or to build a source of income for residents. There are many food-based social enterprise models you can consider developing with your community. Many of them will require an industrial kitchen which has been inspected and certified. You could try catering, selling food to restaurants, starting a community food co-op, or selling seedlings or cut flowers.

Building a successful social enterprise requires good planning and some specific skills – knowing how to properly produce, market and price the goods or service you are selling. However, you don't need to learn to do all these things on your own! If you are interested in social enterprise, there are many organizations across the province that can support your group in designing and developing a model that suits your community.

If you think social enterprise is something that your group might want to consider, take a look at **Appendix O** for information on how to figure out if you are ready to start this kind of project. Also, take a look at the **Additional Resources** section for groups that work on Social Enterprise development and support. If you would like more information about what social enterprises look like, what this kind of initiative might look like in your community or where to gain additional support, contact the SEED team at emartyn@hscorp.ca. SEED can connect you to local resources and provide support for different marketing options, such as selling to restaurants, farmers markets or other alternative markets.

This section provides a few examples of projects that could be used to expand your garden initiative. These could either take the form of social enterprises or could operate as non-profit projects, depending on the interests of your community.

COMMUNITY KITCHENS

A community kitchen is a place where people get together to cook affordable, nutritious food. Each person who comes must take part in the work. Members all help to choose the menu, go shopping, and to prepare and cook the food.

Community kitchens are a place for people to meet neighbours, practice English, learn new cooking skills, and cook nutritious food. They can break down barriers and help people feel they belong to a community. Community kitchens can help people save money by teaching people how to cook on a budget and buy food in bulk.

Community kitchens often use fresh fruits and vegetables and teach people about choosing good quality food and using it before it spoils. They also teach people about where food comes from: how it is planted, nurtured and harvested and how it gets to the table. Most importantly, community kitchens help feed people who are isolated and lack access to healthy food.



► HOW TO START A COMMUNITY KITCHEN

To start a community kitchen, first think about where the group will cook. Many housing buildings have a kitchen attached to the recreation room. You could also meet at a local community centre or place of worship. Many community centres have the kind of space you will need. A community kitchen needs a large kitchen, a program coordinator and may need funding to help pay for the food. You will also have to choose what kind of recipes the group will cook, decide how you will buy groceries, who is in charge of the money, how you will divide the work and what rules will guide the group. The resources below can be very helpful in figuring out these details.

- **Community Kitchens Toolkit:** www.communitykitchens.ca/main/?en&CKToolkit
- **Community Kitchen Toolbox:** www.foodshare.net/toolbox_kitchens01.htm
- **Community Kitchen Best Practices Toolkit: Newfoundland and Labrador:** www.foodsecuritynews.com/Publications/Community_Kitchen_Best_Practices_Toolkit.pdf
- **Winnipeg Cooks Together:** www.wrha.mb.ca/healthinfo/prohealth/nutrition/files/nutrition_3.pdf



FARMERS' MARKETS

At Farmers' markets, farmers sell the food they grow directly to the consumer. Customers are able to talk to the farmer and learn how the food is grown. Farmer's Markets are a good way to bring people from different cultures and backgrounds together to learn about food and they offer a wide variety of foods that may not be available in the grocery store. Setting up a Farmers' market in your community is a good way to connect with neighbours and other groups in your area, and to let them get to know your community.

► HOW TO START A FARMERS' MARKET

Starting a farmers' market takes a lot of time, money and knowledge. If your group is thinking about starting a farmer's market, think about asking a local organization to help develop the market. Or, consider the model of the "good food market" below, where you operate a single food stand with a wide range of fruit and vegetables.

- **Foodshare's Good Food Markets.** Information about how a Good Food Market operates. www.foodshare.net/animators02.htm
- **Farmers' Markets Ontario.** Information about existing markets and how to start a new one. www.farmersmarketsontario.com
- **"Establishing and Operating a Community Farmers' Market."** A very useful and practical guide to creating a farmers' market. www.ca.uky.edu/agcl/pubs/aecl/aec77/aec77.pdf
- **"Making Links: A Toolkit for Local Food Projects."** This kit includes information on how to set up a community food project to help people in cities get good, affordable food: www.sustainweb.org/pdf/pov_making.pdf
- **"Public Markets"** page of the Project for Public Spaces site. This site has useful information about starting a market, good examples and workshops on "How to Create Successful Markets." www.pps.org/markets



COMMUNITY CANNERIES/BAKERIES

Community Canneries or Bakeries are places where community members gather to preserve foods or bake bread on a large scale. Community Bakeries/Canneries are not businesses or cooking schools, their aim is to develop their local community in one of many ways. They seek to enhance people's skills, or to strengthen their relationship to local farmers, to combat social isolation or to encourage people to take control of their food system. Their focus is on involving a range of people from the local community and on creating a project that will make that community stronger and more vibrant.

► HOW TO START A COMMUNITY CANNERY/BAKERY

- **West End Food Co-op Community Cannery Guide.** This free guidebook gives an overview to a range of community cannery models and provides information on how to start up and maintain a cannery, as well as possible recipe ideas. web.uvic.ca/~ccgarden/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/Community-Cannery.pdf
- **Knead to know: The Real Bread Starter.** This is a UK based guidebook which describes how to start up a community supported bakery or a community baking operation. www.sustainweb.org/realbread/knead_to_know



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

The best part of community food projects is how they can constantly grow and allow for more creativity. Below is a taste of some of the more creative ways you can expand your project – possible ways to turn your community into a complete food system! For more inspiration on dynamic community food projects, take a look at this incredible project in the UK, Incredible Edible Todmorden: www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/home



Beekeeping

Keeping bees lets you improve pollination in your garden and create a healthy, edible product you can sell – honey! There are costs and concerns to think about when starting to keep bees, but many groups have done this successfully in urban areas. Generally, bees will be kept on a roof, away from people and other buildings to avoid stings. For more information on beekeeping in Ontario, connect with the groups below.

Toronto Beekeepers Coop: www.torontobees.ca

Ontario Beekeepers Association: www.ontariobee.com



Orchards

If your site has lots of extra space, or areas with too much of a slope to put garden beds, consider starting a community orchard. Community orchards are spaces where residents collectively care for trees and share the fruit they harvest. Fruit trees can be an excellent addition to your community, providing shade, attracting pollinators, and producing abundant fruit with little effort after the first years of establishment. For more information, take a look at the resources below.

Ben Nobleman Community Orchard:
communityorchard.ca/orchards-101-2

Community Orchards Handbook:
www.england-in-particular.info/orchards/o-corch.html



Roof Gardening

One way to garden as much of your community as possible is to get growing up on the rooftops! Roof gardening can take two forms: green roofs and roof container gardens. Green roofs are generally very expensive and involve construction work and technical expertise – which can be appropriate if your building is undergoing renovation. Roof container gardens are just like balcony gardens, but on roofs where the plants can receive lots of sun and water – these are the more likely option for most communities. Some buildings will have accessible rooftops with proper guardrails that are appropriate for gardening. Roofs in older buildings may not be safe, for people or for the added weight of soil and planters. If you're interested in roof gardening, this is something to discuss with your property manager and or housing provider. Do some research at the sites below before you approach them so you can feel confident presenting your idea.

Green Roofs for Healthy Cities: www.greenroofs.org

Edible Rooftop Garden Guide: rooftopgardens.ca/files/howto_EN_FINAL_lowres.pdf



Maple Syrup

Got maple trees? Try making maple syrup! This is one of the more unconventional ideas, there aren't many groups doing it because maple syrup can be quite labour intensive. It takes at least 40L of sap to make 1L of syrup, and in some cases it can be as much as 80:1. Still, maple syrup making can be a fun, creative project and a great way to make use of an existing resource on your site. Your group may decide it's a good way to make money or just a worthwhile project to supply community residents with syrup. Some regions can have strict bylaws protecting trees from injury, so do your research, and find out more information with the resources below.

Tap my trees: www.tapmytrees.com

Not Far from the Tree - Syrup in the City:
www.notfarfromthetree.org/archives/1184



Livestock

Depending where you live, adding livestock to your gardening project may be a real possibility. Check your regional bylaws for details, but even big cities like Toronto allow keeping of some rabbits and pigeons. One of the most popular and simplest animals to keep are chickens for eggs. Not keeping roosters, which are loud and prohibited, but hens which generally lay one egg a day, can be a great community project. More and more resources are now available to address issues like coop design, feed, vet care and protecting your flock from predators.

Urban Chickens: www.urbanchickens.org

Backyard Chickens: www.backyardchickens.com



Community Composting

Community composting can be a great way to reduce waste in your neighbourhood and provide the large volume of compost needed for your gardening project. Community composters are central places where all residents can bring their food scraps and volunteers oversee turning them into rich compost. Community compost projects require strong public education about what can and cannot go into composters and how to compost without attracting pests, so there needs to be a community member or external group who can provide this training. Community composting can be done with traditional wood or plastic bins, or through vermicomposting, composting with worms. This technique uses special worms called red wigglers, which can eat their body weight in food scraps in 2 days, easily creating a nutritious compost source.

Community Compost Network: www.communitycompost.org/

Compost Council of Canada: www.compost.org/English/ENGLISH_INDEX.htm



Gleaning

Gleaning is visiting farm fields and harvesting the produce that remains once the farmers have finished with the fields. Late season produce may be smaller or yield per plant may be lower, meaning it isn't worth the farmer's time to pick them clean. Gleaners can come in and clean out these crops free of charge and take them home. This is a great way to get residents out of the area and collect free food that can be used for a community meal or a canning project. Look for a farm in your area, especially one which already offers U-Pick, and speak to them about organizing a gleaning trip. The only cost will be transporting residents to the site, and your housing provider may be able to help with this cost.

Community Harvest Ontario: oafb.convio.net/site/PageServer?pagename=oafb10_home

Fresh Food Partners: yrfn.ca/programs/fresh-food-partners-gleaning-program/



Medicinals

Expanding your garden project to include medicinal plants in addition to edibles is a great way to improve health and environmental awareness in your community. In fact, once you start looking into medicinal properties of plants, you'll realize that many of the "weeds" you've removed from your garden are valuable healing plants. Growing medicinal plants in your garden can lead to workshops on making healing teas, salves, ointments and tinctures and build on existing community knowledge of natural medicine

Annie's Remedies: www.anniesremedy.com/herb_detail155.php

Evergreen First Nations Medicinal Garden: nativeplants.evergreen.ca/lists/view-list.php?list_ID=00200



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Community garden resources

Starting a Garden

Rebel Tomato:

www.communitygarden.org/rebeltomato

American Community Garden Association:

www.communitygarden.org/docs/startup_guide.pdf

Foodshare:

www.tcgn.ca/wiki/uploads/DonationsTradesSharing/CommunityGardenHandbook-2008.pdf

Toronto Community Housing:

www.torontohousing.ca/webfm_send/183

Grow Pittsburgh:

www.growpittsburgh.org/start-a-garden/community-garden-guide

Greenest City

greenestcity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/GC_Best-Practices-Guide_lowresolution_single-pages.pdf

Evergreen (for organizations)

info.evergreen.ca/docs/res/Growing-Opportunities.pdf

General Garden Websites

American Community Garden Association:

www.communitygarden.org

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs – Community Gardening:

www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/urbanagbib/communitygardening.htm

City Farmer:

cityfarmer.info

Gardening Tip Sheets:

lucas.osu.edu/topics/master-gardener-volunteer-program/from-plant-to-plate-1/from-plant-to-plate-1

Can You Dig It?

cydi.ca/how-to-begin

Local Garden Networks

Toronto:

www.tcgn.ca

Hamilton:

hcg.ca

Peterborough:

ptbocommgardennetwork.blogspot.ca

Waterloo:

together4health.ca/workgroups/waterloo-region-community-garden-council

London:

www.lcrc.on.ca/community_gardens.html
www.communitygardenslondon.ca/index.html

Ottawa:

www.justfood.ca/community-gardening-network

Windsor:

fedupwindsor.blogspot.ca

Kingston:

kingstoncommunitygardens.ca

Guelph:

www.gwfrrt.com/working-groups/community-gardens

Sudbury:

sudburyfoodconnections.blogspot.ca/pl-gardens.html

Thunder Bay:

www.tbdhu.com/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/FoodSecurity/CommunityGardens.htm

Brant:

www.facebook.com/CommunityGarden?ref=ts

Durham:

www.durhamdigs.ca/welcome-to-dig

Social Housing Garden Groups:

Food Action and Community Engagement (FACE) Toronto:

food.action@yahoo.ca

Gardening How to's

Master Gardeners of Ontario:

www.mgoi.ca

You Grow Girl:

www.yougrowgirl.com

Canadian Organic Growers:

www.cog.ca/our-services/publications/cog-reference-series
www.cog.ca/uploads/OrganicBackyard2ndEd.pdf

Organic Gardening.com: www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow

Garden Guides: www.gardenguides.com

Waterloo Region Gardens:

www.together4health.ca/workgroups/community-gardens-waterloo-region/planting-and-caring-basic-vegetable-garden

Biodynamic Farming: www.biodynamics.com

Permaculture: permacultureprinciples.com

Soil Assessment:

www.toronto.ca/health/hphei/pdf/urban_gardening_assessment.pdf

Accessibility:

cydi.ca/wp-content/uploads/Community-Gardens-Accessibility-Guidelines-2011.pdf

Mental Health:

lettucegrowblog.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/lets-grow_2013-02-21.pdf

Farm programs for field trips and training

FarmStart - aims to encourage and support a new generation of entrepreneurial, ecological farmers:

www.farmstart.ca

Ecological Farmers of Ontario-training and information about ecological farming:

www.efao.ca

C.R.A.F.T Ontario – For internships on organic farms:

www.craftontario.ca

Community Harvest Ontario – Find farms that offer gleaning opportunities:

oafb.convio.net/site/PageServer?pagename=oafb10_home

WOOFing – volunteer and internship opportunities on farms across Canada:

www.woof.ca

Cooking/Nutrition Training & Resources

Peer Nutrition (Toronto):

www.toronto.ca/health/peernutrition/index.htm

Community Food Advisor (Ontario):

www.communityfoodadvisor.ca/

Eat Right Ontario:

www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Cooking-Food-Preparation/Home-Canning.aspx

Social Enterprise and Community Economic Development

School for Social Entrepreneurs- Ontario:

www.sseontario.org

Toronto Enterprise Fund:

www.torontoenterprisefund.ca

MaRS Entrepreneurs' Toolkit:

www.marsdd.com/entrepreneurs-toolkit

Enterprising Non-Profits:

www.enterprisingnonprofits.ca

Tip Sheets:

attra.ncat.org/publication.html

Marketing:

www.growingformarket.com

Videos

Asphalt Gardening Video:

cccfoodpolicy.org/asphalt-gardening-and-urban-agriculture-cleveland

Veggie Growing (20 Videos):

www.youtube.com/user/expertvillage/videos?query=jarrett

Community Garden How-to videos:

www.kansasgreenyards.org/p.aspx?tabid=37

Gardenfork.tv:

www.gardenfork.tv

Sheet Mulching:

bit.ly/hxjceS

Types of Gardens:

bit.ly/Xt0uB1

LiveGreen How to Start a Garden:

bit.ly/WmZyLg

Books

Vegetable Gardening

Rodale's Vegetable Garden Problem Solver

The Complete Guide to Saving Seeds – Gough and Moore Gough

The Essential Urban Farmer – Novella Carpenter and Willow Rosenthal

Square Foot Gardening – Mel Bartholomew

4 season harvest - Eliot Coleman

How to grow more vegetables and fruits than you ever thought possible – John Jevins

Container Gardening

Illustrated Guide to Balcony Gardening – Lara Mrosovsky

Grow Great Grub – Gayla Trail

Medicinal Plants

Backyard Medicine – Julie Bruton-Seal and Matthew Seal

Herbal Tea Gardens – Marietta Marshall Marcin

➡ View updated and additional resources online:

www.hscorp.ca/our-programs-and-services/social-innovation-and-partnerships/seed