How to Start a Community Garden

2017

Kairsten Nitsch
Overview

PART I

• Welcome and introductions
• The GarenWorks Project – Tina Koral, Executive Director
• Community Gardening Basics
• Garden Vision and Mission Activity
• 10 Steps to Starting a Community Garden
• SMART Goal Setting

PART II

• Community Outreach
• Determining Assets
  • Site Planning
• Site Development
• Review & Keys to Success
  • Resources
  • Q & A
PART I
Opening Thoughts and Introductions

- Name
- Where do you hope to garden
- One thing you hope to learn today
The GardenWorks Project

• Mission: The GardenWorks Project empowers, educates, and promotes organic suburban agriculture to improve the wellbeing of our community, the environment, and families facing food insecurity. We support all gardeners in their efforts to grow and prepare food for themselves and their neighbors in need.

• Food-insecure families
• Home growers
• Community/school gardeners
Our clients and members of our Food Growers Network receive:

- **Free seeds**
- **Seedling discounts**
- **Free tool lending**
- **Gardening and cooking info:** books, magazines, videos, etc.
- **Other resources** as available
Community Garden Support Program

• Apply to receive 5 raised beds, seeds, seedlings ($500 value)
• Promote your needs to our volunteer base
• 5 community gardens/schools will be awarded
• Must have a component for donation to food pantries
• Application period closes March 15
Community Gardening Basics: Benefits

• Food Production
• Community organizing and spirit
• Crime prevention
• Cultural opportunities
• Health benefits
• Green Spaces
• Youth
Community Gardening Basics: Purposes & Types

- Demonstration Garden
- Intensive Food Production
- The Gathering Place
- Children’s Garden
Garden Vision

**Vision statement:** Expresses the long-term, optimal goal & reason for garden’s existence

**Mission statement:** Expresses the short-term version of the vision and the actions taken to accomplish the vision.
10 Steps to Starting a Community Garden

1. Reach out to community members, friends, and anyone interested
2. Hold a meeting for interested people
3. Form a planning committee – garden leadership
4. Identify all of your resources
5. Choose a site
6. Determine guidelines and put them in writing
7. Organize the garden – site plan
8. Prepare and develop the site
9. Celebrate your success
10. Help members keep in touch with each other
SMART Goal Setting

• **Specific**: The goal should identify a specific action or event that will take place.

• **Measureable**: The goal and its benefits should be quantifiable.

• **Achievable**: The goal should be attainable, given attainable resources.

• **Realistic**: The goal should be challenging, but also allow the likelihood of success.

• **Timely**: The goal should state the time period in which it will be accomplished.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample GOALS</th>
<th>Sample ACTION STEPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruit at least 8 community members to the help start the community garden</td>
<td>1) Create &amp; execute outreach plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Respond to interest &amp; talk to new people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Gather and discuss garden guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Draw up and execute a site plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Assign plots and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build 4 raised beds by June 2017</td>
<td>1) Identify layout &amp; size of raised beds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Figure out materials to use &amp; their source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Figure out how much to fill beds &amp; amount of fill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Plan and schedule workdays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Recruit gardeners/volunteers to help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6) Take Pictures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10 MINUTE BREAK
Community Outreach

• Direct Outreach
  • Word-of-mouth
  • Door-to-Door
  • Attending/Holding Meetings
  • Posting and handing out flyers

• Traditional Media
  • Press Releases
  • Television
  • Radio
  • Newspapers
  • Magazines

• Partnerships
  • Neighborhood Groups
  • Schools
  • Churches
  • Service Clubs

• New Media
  • E-mail/ Listserv
  • Website
  • Facebook
  • Twitter
Garden Outreach Plan

1. Identify your audience
2. Define your “product” and message.
3. Plan your methods
4. Develop your plan
5. Measure your actions
Resource Gathering

Identifying Required Resources

• Do you have access to tools and other gardening equipment?
• Will the garden need to be plowed or tilled?
• Is compost and mulch available?
• Who will provide seeds and transplants?
• Will there need to be a shed for storing equipment?

5 Sources of Resources

• Individual Gifts
• Associations/Organizations
• Institutions – Government
• Land and Buildings
• Local businesses
Mapping Reciprocal Partnerships

- **Community Garden**
  - Alternative activity to violence
  - Donations, monitor garden
  - Publicity, outreach
  - Supplies, donations
  - Members, service site
  - Meeting space, donations

- **Police**
  - Volunteers, space, resources

- **Schools**
  - Teaching site, field trips

- **Local Retailers**
  - Donations, monitor garden

- **Church Group**
  - Members, service site
Choosing a Site

- Visible
- Safe
- Access by foot and truck
- Centrally Located
- Convenient
- In a beneficial area

- Plenty of sun
- Soil quality/history
- Access to water
- Size
- Terrain
- Drainage
Garden Guidelines

- Application/membership fees
- Plot maintenance
- Garden maintenance
- Planting restrictions
- End of the season
- Composting
- Materials and tools
- Pesticides
- Other people’s plots
- Water
- Pets and children
- Violation of guidelines
Creating a Site Plan

What do you already have on the lot?
• Boundary of the lot
• Location and size of garden beds
• Permanent vegetation – trees, shrubs, etc.
• Driveways, pathways, and open spaces

How do you want to use the lot?
• Storage for equipment
• Sitting area
• Play area for kids
• Meeting place or barbecue
• Storage
Site Plan EXAMPLE

N

S

STREET

STREET

TREES

Plot 1  Plot 2  Plot 3

Plot 4  Plot 5  Plot 6

Plot 7  Plot 8  Plot 9

Gathering Area

Tool Shed
Prepare and Develop Site

Organize regular workdays and volunteer work crews to clean it, gather materials, build plots, storage, and other aspects.
Review & Keys to Success

1. Establish good lines of communication among all participants.
2. Develop partnerships within the community.
3. Determine a garden coordinator/leadership structure.
4. Don’t rely on one person.
5. Start small.
6. Choose your site well.
7. Keep the garden well maintained year round.
8. Build a strong sense of community.
9. Provide educational opportunities for gardeners.
Q & A
Benefits & Rewards of Community Gardening

Despite the extra responsibilities, community gardening is immensely popular! If you’ve never gardened in a community garden before, you can look forward to more than fresh fruits and veggies.

Community Organizing:
- Community gardens increase a sense of community ownership and stewardship.
- Community gardens bring people together from a wide variety of backgrounds.
- Community gardens build community leaders.
- Community gardens offer a local point for community organizing and can lead to community-based efforts to deal with other social concerns.

Crime Prevention:
- Community gardens provide opportunities to meet neighbors.
- Community gardens increase eyes on the street.
- Community gardening is recognized by many police departments as an effective community crime prevention strategy.

Cultural Opportunities:
- Community gardens often set aside space for community get-togethers and facilitate meeting new people.
- Community gardens offer unique opportunities for many new immigrants to
  - Produce traditional crops otherwise unavailable locally.
  - Provide intergenerational exposure to cultural traditions.
- Community gardens allow people from diverse backgrounds to work side-by-side with common goals.

Food Production:
- Community gardens can provide a significant source of food and/or income.
- Community gardens allow families and individuals without land of their own the opportunity to produce food.
- Urban agriculture is 3-5 times more productive per acre than traditional large-scale farming!

Health:
- Community gardens are common ground for growing plants the at feed, heal, and give aesthetic pleasure.
- Studies have shown that community gardeners and their children eat healthier diets than do non-gardening families.
- Community gardening can keep you active as you maintain your plot and engage in the neighborhood.

Green Space
- Community gardens encourage interaction with nature and nurture green spaces.
- Community gardens add beauty to the community.

Youth
- Community gardens offer opportunities to teach youth about where food comes from, the importance of community and stewardship, and about issues of environmental sustainability.
Community Gardening Ideas and Types

Start new gardens with an idea that fits the surroundings, a neighborhood need, and the group’s purpose. There are numerous ways to structure your community garden. Here are a few ideas and their features:

Intensive Food Production
- Maximum yield from minimum space
- Narrow paths
- Vertical growing
- Composting area

Downtown/Urban Oasis
- Emphasis on trees, flowers, lawn
- Soothing elements (shade, water)
- Private sections

The Gathering Place
- Comfortable seating in shade and sun
- Sand box, bulletin board, swings
- Wide paths, encouraging walking
- Accommodate people with special needs

Horticultural Demonstration Center
- Variety of sites, unified by design
- Barrier free; specialized techniques
- Designed to interact with community
- Changing plantings for educational value
- Promoting food self-sufficiency
- Landscaping plants and techniques

Small Space Sites
- Areas unified by color, plant types, material use
- Slope treatment
- Seating areas
- Raised beds
- Walls, terraces
- Containers
- Window boxes
- Front yard gardens

Edible Landscape
- Food produced in addition to community enhancement
- Vegetables, fruit trees, shrubs
- Show variety of cultural methods
- Plant unusual varieties and combinations

Public Parkland
- Relaxation site and/or recreation
- Seating area in wooded areas
- Enhance natural setting
- Edible species to help support wildlife

Urban Permaculture
- Perennial plants of ground cover, flowers, herbs
- Learn plant hardiness factors
- Tolerant of poor soil conditions
- Low maintenance planting
- Include windbreaks
- Hedges to offer security
- Develop cool, shady microclimate

The Community Farm
- An acre or larger
- Built-in water, fencing, tool storage
- On public property
- Several composting areas
- Wide paths
- Road access
- Varied size for individual rental sites
- Shared equipment

The Children’s Garden
- Uniform planting plan works well
- Choose small vegetable plots
- Consider dwarf cultivars
- Plant diverse crops
- Recruit a flexible and patient instructor
- Stress as life-long activity

Horticulture Therapy Market Garden
- Balance between production, demonstration, training
- Participants capabilities discovered through project
- Recruit a dedicated instructor
- Use team approach to gain overall enthusiasm
- Raised beds for easy access
- Adaptive tools
- Barrier free

Community Welcome
- Floral greeting at town entry
- Surround city entrance signage with plants
- Include garden components for year-round interest
Community Outreach: Sample Gardening Survey

1. I would like to volunteer my time and talents to help with this project. Skills (e.g. landscaping, community organizing, gardening experience, art, etc.):

2. I might be able to help provide the following resources (e.g. tools, seeds, etc.):

3. I might need help obtaining the following gardening resources:

4. I would be interested in having a plot in the garden (circle one): YES NO

5. What size plot would you be interested in (e.g. 10’ by 10’)?:

6. I would like to be a part of the leadership team to help make this garden happen (circle one): YES NO

7. Other concerns/interests:

Please fill out the information below to be placed on our updated list for future information and opportunities to participate in this program:

Name:
Phone:
E-mail:
Creating a Garden Vision

Imagine yourself in the garden on a beautiful day.

What do you see & hear?

Who is in the garden and what are they doing?

What is being produced in the garden? Where is it going?

Draw it out….

Vision statement:

Mission Statement:
Garden Outreach Plan

1. **Identify your audience.**
   Who are you trying to reach?

2. **Name your product and state your message.**
   What are you promoting? Why?

3. **Plan your methods.**
   How will your reach people?

4. **Develop your plan.**
   List the steps you need to make each aspect of your plan happen.

5. **Measure your actions.**
   Determine how you’ll know if you’ve succeeded. Assess results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Method/Activity</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
<th>Person to lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goals & Action Steps

Once you have determined and prioritized your goals using the SMART method, break them down into action steps by specifying what needs to be done.

Assign a date of completion for each goal to provide a time framework for the action steps. Assign a responsible part to each action step.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>ACTION STEPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of each season, update your goal list. Acknowledge all that you accomplished & move unfinished goals to next season’s list.
Is Community Gardening for You?
The following information may be useful in helping you determine if you are ready to commit to or start a community garden.

A Typical Growing Season
A garden plot requires time and constant effort for a consistent 6 months out of the year in order to produce a healthy harvest.

Here are some basic tasks that will be required of you:
- **Preparing Your Plot:** You must clear your plot of weeds early in the growing season to reserve your plot. Healthy soil leads to healthy plants. Loosening soil and adding compost before you plant will make your plant healthier and more resistant to pests and disease.
- **Planting:** Take care in planning your garden placing plants in places where they will grow best, without overcrowding, and without shading your neighbors’ plants.
- **Providing Water:** Springtime is relatively wet, but your seedbeds may need to be hand-watered daily until sprouts appear above ground. Gardeners are responsible for watering their plot and using conservative and thoughtful water practices.
- **Weeding:** Time will be needed to keep weeds down in your plot and its surrounding pathways. By getting weeds early in the spring, you will save time and effort later in the season.
- **Harvesting:** As plants mature and begin to produce, you must be there to harvest the fruits of your labor. Keeping ripe produce picked reduces garden pests and vandalism.
- **Preparing for Winter:** At the end of the season, remove dead plant material and trellising from your plot. Your soil will require a boost after giving so much throughout the growing season.

Do You Have the Time?
As with any other part of life, the more time you invest in gardening, the better your garden plot will be. Additionally, when starting a community garden there will be a substantial amount of time put into meeting, planning, and organizing.

Here is a general estimate of what having a garden plot will require:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GARDEN TASK</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
<th>SUMMER</th>
<th>FALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weeding/ Bed Prep</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>0.5 hours</td>
<td>0 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watering</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>0 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>0.5 hours</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Hours PER WEEK:** 5 Hours 5.5 Hours 3 Hours

**Involvement Outside Your Plot:**
Overall garden care and maintenance is the collective responsibility of all gardeners and requires your volunteer commitment. In addition to tending your own plot, there may be workdays where you are required to help maintain paths, weed common areas, plant donation plots, fix tools, etc.
Mapping Reciprocal Partnerships

1. Below, draw a circle in the middle and write “Community Garden Project” inside.

2. On the outside edges of the paper write the names of partners or potential partners your group identifies and draw a box around each of them.

3. Brainstorm ways that each partner can help a community garden. For example, the police department might be a potential partner willing to keep an eye on the garden.

4. Draw an arrow connecting each partner to the community garden box – the way you envision their involvement.

5. Brainstorm what the garden can offer each partner. For example, the garden could be an alternative to violence for young people in the neighborhood.
Site Development – Work Days

Here are some tips on how to prepare and have a successful workday!

Preparation
- Determine a group leader(s) for the day.
- Visit the site specifically to assess needs.
- Set task list and record tools needed.
- Make copies of project list for other leaders (if needed).
- E-mail gardeners and volunteers to remind beforehand.

Helpful items to bring:
- Gloves
- Trash bags
- Water & tote for recycling
- First aid kit
- Scissors & exact-o knife

Arrive 15-20 minutes early! Often people come early and have questions and will want to talk.

Intro:
- Welcome gardeners and additional volunteers.
- Share background and history on your garden. This will help your volunteers feel like they are a part of the large picture and be more invested.
- Give a timeline for the day and describe projects.
- Provide some rules on safety for the day.
- Be specific about where waste goes.

During:
- Regularly cycle through and check-in with project leaders and participants.
  - Do they have what they need tool wise?
  - How much longer to complete the task? Need more/fewer people?
- Give regular breaks and lend a hand if needed.

Cleanup/ End of the day:
- Avoid announcing the workday is “done” when it is time to clean up. Volunteers should be willing to help you clean up.
- Leave plenty of time for cleanup (at least 15 minutes)
- Provide very specific cleanup tasks for individuals.

Reminders:
- Try to always stay positive and encouraging.
- Gauge your time and the number of projects you begin carefully.

After event:
- Send a thank you note to the group or any additional volunteers.
SMART Goal Setting
The SMART acronym can help us remember the components of an effective goal:

**Specific:** The goal should identify a specific action or event that will take place.

**Measureable:** The goal and its benefits should be quantifiable.

**Achievable:** The goal should be attainable, given available resources.

**Realistic:** The goal should be challenging, but also allow the likelihood of success.

**Timely:** The goal should state the time period in which it will be accomplished.

Here are some additional tips that can help you set effective goals:

1. **Develop several goals, but not too many.**
   A list of five to seven items gives you several things to work on over a period of time.

2. **State goals as declarations of intention, not items on a wish list.**
   “I want to start a community garden” lacks power.
   “I will start a community garden” is intentional and powerful.

3. **Attach a date to each goal. State what you intend to accomplish and by when.**
   A good list should include some short-term and some long-term goals.
   You may want a few goals for the year, and some for two or three month intervals.

4. **Be specific.**
   “Outreach to the neighborhood” is too general; “tell five neighbors about the project before the end of the month” is better.

5. **Share your goals with someone who cares if you reach them.**
   Sharing your intentions with your family members, your friend, or a mentor will help ensure success.

6. **Write down your goals and put them where you will see them.**
   The more often you read your list, the more results you get.

7. **Review and revise your list**
   Experiment with different ways of stating your goals.
   Goal setting improves with practice, so play around with it.