HOW TO DO A DIG-IN

Grow your own—share the joy!
Start a group to help others grow their own and share even more!!

The purpose of a dig-in:

• **To teach** a micro-community the basics of urban organic gardening

• **To show** how easy it is to start a garden

• **To start a garden** for the community’s benefit

• **To build community** by getting people to work together

• **To provide** fresh, wholesome food directly from garden to table

www.TheDirtOnOrganicGardening.com
Contents

How do I start? ................................................................. 3

Dig-in guidelines ............................................................. 4
dig-in coordinator ............................................................. 5
master gardener ............................................................... 9
how to find a master gardener ........................................... 10
location ........................................................................ 10
the recipient .................................................................. 11
evaluating a potential recipient ....................................... 13
participants ................................................................... 15
compost and mulch ......................................................... 17
donations ....................................................................... 17
basic tools ..................................................................... 18
other gardening stuff ....................................................... 19

Forms ............................................................................ 22
flyer .............................................................................. 22
site evaluation form ........................................................ 22
release of liability forms ................................................ 22

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How do I start?

1. Follow the Dig-in guidelines in this document.

2. Show your progress to the world by emailing photos and stories about your dig-in to The Dirt on Organic Gardening!
Dig-in guidelines

What you will need:

► A dig-in coordinator to organize the activity

► A master gardener who knows how to plan and plant a garden

► A location

► A date and time

► Some participants

► All of the other gardening stuff (soil, compost, seeds or seedlings, etc.)
dig-in coordinator

The coordinator is responsible for making sure everything is in place for the dig-in.

1. Working with the master gardener, selects and assesses a site for suitability using a site evaluation form.

2. If the site is a school or community (government-owned) location, the coordinator makes sure that whatever permits or permissions are needed for the site are in place before the dig-in.

3. Works with the recipient in pre-planning to ensure that he or she understands what will happen at the dig-in, and what his or her responsibilities are before, during and after the dig-in.

4. Provides the recipient with a flyer to distribute to neighbors that explains what’s happening at the dig-in.
5. On the day of the dig-in:

- Gets all participants to sign in.
- Gets all participants to fill out release of liability forms, including parental releases for under-age volunteers.
- Brings or arranges for necessary basic tools, seedlings or seeds, and any other gardening stuff the master gardener recommends.
- Arranges for photos to be taken at the dig-in.

6. Immediately after the dig-in, sends photos and thank-you letters to all volunteers and participants.
7. Sends photos to the Editor@TheDirtMag, along with names of participants and any fun stories from the dig-in.

8. Schedules at least two follow-up visits:

- The first is 3–4 weeks after the dig-in to ensure the garden is doing well, catch problems, suggest improvements, answer questions, and to provide any needed instruction to recipient, such as natural pest control methods.

- Second follow-up is 5–6 months, to cover when and how to harvest, how to use vegetables, trimming, staking, trellising, annuals versus perennials, when to remove spent plants, what to plant for the next season, etc.

A Green Grounds garden should be a demonstration garden for the neighborhood, one that makes others want to plant.
9. Stays in touch with all recipients / volunteers for future dig-ins.

The recipient should be able to contact the coordinator or master gardener at any time between visits for advice or answers as needed.

The coordinator is also a resource researcher. He or she should learn things like local sources of free compost and mulch, what nearby nurseries might be willing to give donations of seeds or seedlings for a dig-in project, and any local classes on gardening, organic gardening or horticulture—these can be a great source of volunteers for a dig-in.

It is very important that the garden be sustainable. A Green Grounds garden should be a demonstration garden for the neighborhood, one that makes others want to plant—and the food produced should be shared with the neighbors.
master gardener

A master gardener is someone who has been trained in urban gardening, who then turns around and shares that training and experience with others. It’s really important to have someone at a dig-in—even if you don’t have a master gardener—who knows how to plan, plant and care for a garden, and who’s eager to share what he or she knows with others.

The coordinator and the master gardener work together closely, and can even be the same person. But if you’re creating a group to do multiple gardens rather than a single garden, it’s good to have two separate people on these two jobs.

The master gardener:

1. In coordination with the coordinator, selects and assesses a site for suitability.

2. Draws up a planting “map” or plan.

3. Orients, teaches and directs all the dig-in participants.
HOW TO DO A DIG-IN

At the start of the dig-in, the master gardener orients the group with an overview of what they are going to accomplish, and the sequence of actions they will take.

During the course of the dig-in, the master gardener would also talk about composting, how to plant, how to properly water, and anything else a garden recipient will need to know to keep the garden growing strong.

how to find a master gardener

Master Gardener programs, often associated with universities, offer home gardening training for individuals who then volunteer in their communities to share their knowledge and experience. Visit [www.ahs.org/gardening-resources/master-gardeners](http://www.ahs.org/gardening-resources/master-gardeners) to find master gardeners in your area.

location

A location can be for an individual, a school, or a community property like a park or a vacant lot. Whoever receives the garden, and is responsible for its care and maintenance, is the recipient. If the garden is for a group, such as a school, you still need to name at least one person as the recipient. This is who will take full responsibility for keeping the garden going once it’s in.
the recipient

Whether the garden is going into someone’s front yard, your local elementary school, or alongside your church’s parking lot, the garden’s creation should build community around the activity.

The recipient should get commitments of help from family members, neighbors, friends and even co-workers. The coordinator will also bring in volunteers, but at least half of the participants of the dig-in should come from the recipient.

The recipient should also participate in his or her own dig-in. This is a chance to learn along with the rest of the participants.

At a dig-in, it really is “the more, the merrier”! And dig-ins are fun!

Prior to the dig-in, the recipient must prepare the proposed garden area:

► Clean out all trash, broken glass, large rocks

► Dig up all weeds
► Ensure there’s a water source with a hose long enough to reach the whole area

► Have any requested materials ready and on hand, based on first visit and recommendation by coordinator.

At the dig-in, the recipient will provide:

► Clean drinking water (and cups or bottles) for all participants

► Snacks or food would be good—volunteers work for several hours for free

► A clean bathroom facility

► A friend or family member to be the “house host,” to direct people, answer the phone, serve food, etc.
evaluating a potential recipient

It’s vital to pick recipients who are actually committed to maintaining their garden once it’s established. A Green Grounds group is organizing an amazing gift for the recipient in terms of donated services, labor and materials, and it’s a disappointment to create a garden for someone who does not then keep it up.

When the coordinator or master gardener (or both) visit potential recipients, there are points to look for, both positive and negative.

Positive:

► Is the potential recipient “into” gardening? Does he or she understand that a garden requires regular maintenance and alertness to potential problems, such as pest invasions, that require swift measures?

► Does the potential recipient have any experience growing plants?

► Is he or she enthusiastic about the idea of growing food?

► Is he or she confident about enlisting the help of family, friends and neighbors for the dig-in?

► Is he or she comfortable with the idea of sharing the harvest with neighbors?

► Does the person have enough free time available to take care of the garden?
HOW TO DO A DIG-IN

► Is the person dedicated to the idea of growing organic?

► Is the overall impression of the property that someone cares and is working to maintain it?

**Negative:**

► Is the person thinking his or her spouse will do the garden maintenance—without having the spouse present at the interview?

► Is the yard heavily overgrown, with no evidence of effort on the part of the potential recipient to deal with it?

► Is he or she thinking of a lifestyle change—changing job or relationship status, or moving—that could affect his or her ability to maintain the garden?

► Are dogs running loose in the neighborhood that could potentially dig up the garden?

► Is the overall impression of the property that of minimum or no maintenance?

It may take more than one meeting to ascertain that the person is suitable for receiving a garden from your group.

It’s important, when meeting with the potential recipient, that he or she feels comfortable, and is willing to honestly discuss possible issues and whether they can be resolved. It sometimes comes to light in these interviews that the person just doesn’t have a lifestyle that would provide enough time to water, weed, and harvest regularly.
participants

All participants should wear:

► Sunscreen
► A hat
► Suitable comfortable clothes
► Garden or utility gloves
► Suitable work shoes

The dig-in is an outdoor gardening activity. It is a physical activity that may be strenuous and require the use of certain tools. It also requires people working in close quarters, and on even or uneven ground, paved or unpaved, wet or dry.

Use reasonable caution in handling and moving around people with tools.

Follow directions of the coordinator and ask questions when unsure of what to do.

When you arrive at the dig-in, fill out the sign-in sheet and sign a Release of Liability form.
Photos may be taken at the dig-in. Your participation assumes your permission for use of the photos in publicity or media coverage, including internet posts.

Potluck contributions of snacks, prepared dishes and fruit are welcome. We work hard and enjoy the camaraderie of taking a break to share food.

If you have your own garden tools, bring them. Put your name on your tools so they don’t get mixed in with anyone else’s. See the list of basic tools to check what you should bring.
**compost and mulch**

Many towns and cities provide free compost and mulch to residents. Google your city's name along with “free compost,” and see what comes up. You might be surprised!

If that’s not an option in your area, some private companies will also provide free compost or mulch. These are usually companies that own or rent wood chippers, such as tree-trimming companies.

Some cities and counties also hold classes on making your own compost. If these are available, the recipient should attend one before the dig-in if possible.

**donations**

Local nurseries or hardware stores will sometimes be willing to donate seeds or plants to good causes.

For example, seeds actually have expiration dates. While a pack of seeds that was packaged to sell by December 2014 might still have growing power in 2015, the potency of the seed starts to diminish after the date on the pack. You can ask for seeds that are up to or beyond their expiration dates.
HOW TO DO A DIG-IN

basic tools

For putting in and maintaining the garden, the recipient should have at least the following:

► A garden hose long enough to reach any area of the garden that will need to be watered
► At least one 2-gallon watering can
► A trowel (hand shovel)
► Garden gloves
► Pruner
► Digging fork
► Shovel
► Garden rake
The recipient, working with the coordinator and master gardener, should have or get all of the supplies needed to build the garden designed by the master gardener. This could include:

► Wood, stones or bricks to build raised beds

► Compost

► Soil

► Mulch

► Soil amendments, such as organic fertilizers

► Plants, seedlings and/or seeds
There’s always something to learn at a dig-in, whether you’re young or old, experienced or a novice gardener. A dig-in builds community, and people make new friends quickly and easily in the process.
The end result of a dig-in can add beauty to the community, increasing the appeal of the neighborhood. Master gardeners follow up to ensure that recipients know what they need to do for a bountiful yield.
**Forms**

The forms that follow on the next few pages are standard forms that can be used for your dig-in. Feel free to reprint and use from this document.

The forms here include:

**flyer**

This flyer can be distributed to all the neighbors around a dig-in location so they know what's going on when the volunteers start showing up. Print a master page and handwrite the site-specific info, then photocopy.

**site evaluation form**

This two-page form is used for evaluating a potential recipient's site for suitability.

**release of liability forms**

There are two forms for release of liability. The first is for adult volunteers, and the second is for under-age volunteers and should be signed by a parent or guardian.
WE'RE HAVING A GARDEN PARTY! Please join us!

We are turning a yard near you into an edible garden that can be shared with the community, and would love to have you be a part of this fun activity!

Date: ___________
Time: ____ to ____
At the home of: ____________________________________
Address: _________________________________________
_________________________________________________

For more information, please contact:

Name:
Email:
Phone:
Site Evaluation Form
Scheduled dig-in date:

Site coordinator
Recipient
Address
Phone cell home
Email

Talk them through...

Goals and benefits:
- health and good food
- neighbor stuff (building community)
- sustainability (committed to sustain at least a full year?)
- who'll be working in the garden
- willingness to share harvest, show people their garden.

Their wants:
- How many servings of vegetables & fruits do they eat daily?
- How's their knowledge of cooking vegetables?
- Do they enjoy cooking?
- What are favorite vegetables, fruits?
- Willing to try something new?
- See benefit of being able to grow unusual, expensive, hard to find vegetables as well as favorites?

Coordinator will provide a planting list by months and discuss seasonal planting.

The process... Hand them *How to Do a Dig-In* and discuss each point to understanding.

Have a look around...

What does the site look like in general? (Take a photo from direction of most sun.)

- Front yard directional exposure?
- Amount of sunlight, any tall, shading trees, lawn, fences, walls, buildings nearby.
- Neighbor trees, high fences?

- Sunlight is critical – how many hours available in fall/winter as well as summer?
- Bermuda or St. Augustine grass needed to be removed?
- Dead or ugly shrubs to be removed?
- Trees to be pruned or cut down? Recipient willing to take care of beforehand?
- Can vegetables, herbs, or fruit trees be planted in the parkway?
- On the back of this sheet or on separate sheet, make a sketch showing impediments to sunlight, shady areas.
- Measure space for beds/growing areas. What are the dimensions of the plot/site for planting? Is there at least 100 sq. ft. available?)
- Is there a compost bin, or space for one?


What kind of watering set-up? Existing irrigation system? Active/Defunct

Needs a new hose of _________ length

What is access for delivering and piling compost for the new garden area? Flat driveway?

Soil may need testing for possible contamination? What indications? Near freeway? Prior industrial use?

Preparations: What has to be done to get it ready?

Remove lawn (Bermuda or St. Augustine especially) Them Us
Get compost for planting beds
Clear trash, junk out
Remove weeds, dead bush, dead tree, etc.
Prune or cut down shading tree(s)
Get plants/seeds
Fruit tree(s)
Need to put up fencing? (dogs)
Get a composting bin
Get friendly w/ the neighbors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Them</th>
<th>Us</th>
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<td>Remove lawn</td>
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<td>Get friendly w/ the neighbors</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
List garden tools on hand:

__________________________________________________
__________________________________________________
__________________________________________________
__________________________________________________
__________________________________________________
__________________________________________________
__________________________________________________
__________________________________________________
__________________________________________________

What’s the rough timeline? Do they need time to get rid of the lawn? Save money for materials?

Their support – who are they going to invite (neighbors, family, friends)? Male help? Will this help be available over the year?

Any other factors to keep in mind—number of children, dogs (own or neighborhood), water/gas lines, existing sprinkler system, future landscape features (patio, fences) to be considered, etc?

Will there be someone home who won’t participate in the Dig-in?

Will there be someone at the house acting as house host/monitor?

Gut feeling—does it seem like a good fit overall? Will it be sustainable? Who’ll weed and water? What’s their work/life schedule? How inviting of strangers, neighbors to their property? How friendly, willing to share harvest? Will he/she be an active group member, help with outreach?
Release of Liability, Waiver of Claims, Indemnity Agreement

(Please read this carefully before signing.)

Date: 
Address: 

I acknowledge that I have voluntarily agreed to participate in the “Dig-In”, a garden creation workshop presented on _________________, by a volunteer group of people interested in furthering the development of home vegetable gardening, and who are unaffiliated with any institution or organization for this present activity at _____________________________________________.

1. I fully recognize the inherent hazards and risks associated with gardening, an outdoor activity, and I voluntarily assume all risks associated with my participation, including injury, personal property damage or loss, including death. The dangers that I may encounter include, by way of example only and without limitation: e.g., cutting, scratching, bumping, scraping parts of my body, tripping, falling, mis-stepping, spraining an ankle, being hit, cut, or in any way injured by a tool lying on the ground or leaning on an object, or held by myself or another participant, being exposed to sudden weather changes, being exposed to sunlight, contacting material which may produce an allergic reaction, being stung by bees or wasps, or pricked or poked by plants, getting things in my eyes, ears, nose, mouth.

2. I have been instructed in and understand the use of any equipment I am to use in the activity. I have been told to wear appropriate clothing, including shoes, gloves, and sun screen, and assume all risks if I do not wear them. I am in good health, and am not aware of any physical or medical condition that might endanger me or other participants in the activity.

3. I unconditionally release the members of the group and the resident-host, ____________________________________________________ of the Dig-In (gardening workshop) and all other volunteers participating in this day’s activity from all claims for loss, injury, illness or death occurring and/or related to participation in this activity, including during traveling for the purpose of collecting necessary garden materials, e.g. compost, mulch, fertilizer.

______________________________  ______________________________
PRINT NAME      SIGNATURE

Date: __________________________     ____________________________

E-MAIL ADDRESS

Address: ___________________________________________________________________________
Release of Liability, Waiver of Claims, Indemnity Agreement
(with parental consent)

(Please read this carefully before signing.)

I, ___________________________________, acknowledge that I have voluntarily agreed to participate in the “Dig-In”, a garden creation workshop (garden class) presented on __________________ by a volunteer group of people interested in furthering the development of home vegetable gardening, who are unaffiliated with any institution or organization for this present activity, at ______________________________________________________________

1. I fully recognize the inherent hazards and risks associated with gardening, an outdoor activity, and I voluntarily assume all risks associated with my participation, including injury, personal property damage or loss, including death. The dangers that I may encounter include, by way of example only and without limitation: e.g., cutting, scratching, bumping, scraping parts of my body, tripping, falling, mis-stepping, spraining an ankle, being hit, cut, or in any way injured by a tool lying on the ground or leaning on an object, or held by myself or another participant, being exposed to sudden weather changes, being exposed to sunlight, contacting material which may produce an allergic reaction, being stung by bees or wasps, or pricked or poked by plants, getting things in my eyes, ears, nose, mouth.

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3. I unconditionally release the members of the group and the resident-host, ___________________________________ of the Dig-In (gardening workshop) and all other volunteers participating in this day’s activity from all claims for loss, injury, illness or death occurring and/or related to participation in this activity, including during traveling for the purpose of collecting necessary garden materials, e.g. compost, mulch, fertilizer.

Parental Consent (To be completed if participant is under 18 years of age)

I give my consent for my son/daughter __________________________________ to participate in the above activity, and I execute the above liability release on his/her behalf.

_____________________________________ ___________________________________________
PRINT NAME      SIGNATURE

Date: __________________________     ___________________________________________
E-MAIL ADDRESS

Address: ___________________________________________________________________________
The Dirt on Organic Gardening

is an American digital magazine that follows the growing movement toward urban, organic and sustainable gardening, both in the U.S. and around the world.

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Celebrate Earth Day every day!

The purpose:
- Teach organic gardening to a micro-community
- Show how easy it is
- Establish a garden for community benefit
- Build community with people working together
- Grow fresh, wholesome food that goes from garden to table!

Help feed the world, one garden at a time. Start organizing a dig-in in your neighborhood today!