



10 STEPS TO STARTING A COMMUNITY GARDEN

Interested in starting a community garden? First, you should know that a community garden requires a significant investment of time, helping hands, and resources. Before you get started, here are some additional important steps and considerations:

1. ORGANIZE A MEETING OF INTERESTED PEOPLE

Determine whether a garden is *really* needed and wanted in your neighborhood. Invite neighbors, tenants, community organizations, gardening and horticultural societies, building superintendents (if it is at an apartment building) – in other words, anyone who is likely to be interested. Hold a couple of meetings before you apply to carefully consider who will be involved and who will benefit.

2. FORM A PLANNING COMMITTEE

This group can be comprised of people who are committed to the creation of the garden and have time to devote to it. Choose well-organized individuals to act as garden coordinators. Form committees to tackle specific tasks: funding and partnerships, youth activities, construction and communication. Decide what kind of garden it should be (vegetable, flower, both, organic).

3. IDENTIFY ALL YOUR RESOURCES

Do a community asset assessment. What skills and resources already exist in the community that can aid in the garden's creation? Contact municipal offices for additional information and assistance.

4. APPROACH A SPONSOR

Besides *Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo*, churches, schools and private businesses are all possible supporters. Consider use and maintenance agreements with prospective gardeners for plot-based community gardens.

5. CHOOSE A SITE

Consider the amount of daily sunshine (vegetables need at least six hours a day), availability of water and soil testing for possible pollutants. Find out who owns the land. Contact municipal offices about possible sites and to determine ownership. Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo supports community gardens on both city-owned and privately-owned vacant property. If the lot is privately owned, please contact the owner directly for permission.

6. PREPARE AND DEVELOP THE SITE

In most cases, the land will need considerable preparation for planting. Organize volunteer work crews to clean it, gather materials and decide on the design and plot arrangement.



7. ORGANIZE THE GARDEN

If you're planning a plot-based garden, members must decide how many plots are available and how they will be assigned. Allow space for storing tools, making compost and don't forget the pathways between plots! Plant flowers or shrubs around the garden's edges to promote good will with non-gardening neighbors and passers-by.

8. PLAN FOR CHILDREN

Consider creating a special garden just for kids – including them is essential. Children are not as interested in the size of the harvest but rather in the process of gardening. A separate area set aside for them allows them to explore the garden at their own speed.

9. DETERMINE RULES AND PUT THEM IN WRITING

Ground rules help gardeners to know what is expected of them, and the gardeners themselves devise the best ground rules. Some issues that are best dealt with by agreed upon rules are: What will be planted in the garden? How are plots assigned? Will gardeners share tools, meet regularly, handle basic maintenance? As you meet with your garden group, many other issues will arise and it's important they be dealt with efficiently and well to ensure the garden's success.

10. HELP MEMBERS KEEP IN TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER

Good communication ensures a strong community garden with active participation by all. Some ways to do this are: form a telephone tree, create an e-mail list, have regular celebrations. Community gardens are all about creating and strengthening communities!