

# COMMUNITY GARDENS



## **Guidelines for a Successful Garden**

*This community garden start-up guide is intended to provide direction on starting a community garden.  
At the end of the guide are some links to web sites that provide additional guidance on how to start a community garden.  
Happy Growing!*



## ***Topic: Land, Water and Permits***

Get these items in place first.

- Land
- Contract with landowner if using private property-usually three to five year lease
- Make sure of any easement issues
- What is the availability of water?
- Check with your local government agencies for any special requirements



## ***Topic: Neighborhood Recruitment and Committee Development***

This section offers some simple guidelines to establishing a garden committee if you do not have one in place.

- Identify and recruit interested parties. This could be accomplished by distributing an interest survey, distribute flyers, or hold an awareness meeting.
- Call a garden meeting to develop **Garden Committee**. By developing a committee you set the foundation to get the project started. It distributes the work load and contributes to the success of the garden.
- Decide on voting process (for example; show of hands, secret ballots etc.).
- Decide on committee members-(at least a head chairperson, vice chair, secretary, treasurer and one other board member-there needs to be an odd number to break tie votes)
- Nominate and vote in committee members
- Establish leadership responsibilities for each area
  - You can increase success and avoid disputes by taking the time to write out basic responsibilities and obtaining commitment signatures.
- Determine meeting protocol
  - Set a regular agenda for meetings
  - Establish a regular monthly meeting date
  - Determine location of meetings (Remember you could hold meetings on the garden lot)
  - Suggestions for meeting protocol.
    - Set time limit for discussions, for example, each person gets 3-5 minutes.
    - Length of meetings-One hour is usually sufficient for general meetings; the garden design will take longer.
    - Use the Parking Lot method to stay on track in meetings (Flip chart-add new items that do not pertain to the current meeting and use for future discussions)
    - Round robin at end of meeting to make sure everyone knows assignments or has felt heard. (Chairperson should go around the table and ask each person)
- Set up checking account to receive funds if the garden is not working under another organization
- If you want to become your own 501(c)3, contact the IRS to get an Employer Identification Number (EIN). You can go on line to the IRS web site. This will allow for you to seek out grants that often times require a 501(c)3 status.



## ***Topic: Adoption of forms/fees, discussion of garden design process***

Announce first official community garden meeting with interested participants and Board members to discuss the following issues:

- Vote on **garden fee**. The fees can range from \$10.00 a year to up to \$30.00 +. Some groups refund the deposit at the end of the year if a gardener does not want to participate in the next year. Some gardens keep the funds for general repairs, such as repairing a fence or to purchase a new tool for the garden. Board members and gardeners vote on what to purchase with funds. Take into consideration for fee:
  - Costs of water and general maintenance throughout the year
  - Use of a sliding scale based on income
  - Consider scholarships for those who can not afford to pay a garden fee
  - Look for future funding through fundraising, grants, and donations
- Discuss and adopt **Application for Garden Plot and Gardener Authorization and Responsibilities**.
  - Designing an Application for Garden Plot and Gardener Authorization and Responsibilities are highly recommended so everyone has an understanding of what is expected. This should be a group effort. These guidelines will help to keep the garden running smoothly. Keep them simple. There should also be a **Release of Liability** somewhere on the form that states all garden participants are engaging in the project at their own risk. There are examples on the various web sites listed at the end of the guide.
- Accept applications for garden participation. Keep in mind:
  - When the garden is designed, if you have individual plots, you will have to number the plots. Once that is done, you will be able to assign a specific plot to the gardener.
  - The Application for Garden Plot should show who has what plot and that they paid (if that is a requirement).
  - Included on the Application could be the Gardener Authorization and Responsibilities.
  - The Application for Garden Plot/ Gardener Authorization and Responsibilities form will be on file with their signature so should a difference of opinion or inappropriate behavior arise, you can remind the gardener of the form they signed. Make sure that the participant have a full understanding of the forms and sign and date it. There are examples on the various web sites listed at the end of the guide.
  - You will keep all copies. Provide copies as necessary.
- Schedule meeting to discuss what and **how to design a garden layout**. Make sure everyone has enough time to develop their ideas for the garden layout. (i.e. individual plots, one large garden area, walkways, benches etc.) Look to the local Extension office for guidance or ask for volunteer help from a landscape architect. Allowing for input from everyone increases buy-in to the project. Philadelphia Green has a great garden design process (see resource list).
- Schedule next meeting for the garden design process.
- Hold meeting, vote on garden design; *remember the design will determine how many individuals will be able to participate*.
  - *Example* of voting process for garden design.
    - Each gardener submits ideas
    - As a group “brainstorm”
    - Discuss all options
    - Compromise and pull ideas together
- Design garden from submitted ideas

- Layout the garden design on paper to scale.
- Determine a budget/cost of the entire garden project.
- Break it down into achievable goals based on funds/material available. Keep in mind that it can take a few years to get the community garden fully developed.
- Applications should be taken on a first come first serve basis-start a waiting list if you have more applications than plots.



### ***Topic: Time line for development of the garden***

Depending on time of year, *as a group*, develop work plan and schedule for beginning the garden process based on the approved garden design. These steps can be modified to suit any particular garden plan/schedule.

- Clean site of debris if necessary
- Ground breaking ceremony/ribbon cutting-invite all gardeners, community members, and local media. This can be done when ever the gardeners feel they are ready. It does provide great exposure for the project.
- Site Prep (includes but not limited to):
  - Install fence and gates if in plan
  - Stake the layout of your garden design for the area that you will be working on (i.e. pathways, garden beds, composting area and structures etc.)
  - Put up a garden sign with the name of the garden. Do not forget to recognize your donors somewhere in the garden.
- \*\*\*Container gardening or hay bale planting is fun to do while in the development stage.
- Garden Prep (includes but not limited to):
  - Rotor till garden bed area
  - Add soil amendments to garden area if needed.
  - Outline the pathways around beds or garden area.
  - Build raised beds if in the plans.
  - Install the irrigation system if that is in the plans for the first year or set up alternative watering system. ***Before you Excavate***, you need to identify where all the water, sewer, phone, cable etc. lines are located-call your local utility company.
  - Plant and tend to garden plots (*based on progress of garden development*).
  - Build or install other structures (tool shed, compost bin etc.).
  - Maintain garden plots and general area.
  - Fall clean up.
- Fundraising, donations and or grant applications for sustainability

**Resource Web Sites: Below are a few resources, there are many other communities implementing community gardens. Most of the projects are willing to share resources. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need assistance with forms. Thank you, Julie Kuhn**

American Community Garden Association  
<http://communitygarden.org/>

Denver Urban Gardens  
<http://www.dug.org/>

Garden Works Minneapolis  
<http://www.gardenworksmn.org/Resources/index.htm>

LA County Ext  
[http://celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/Common\\_Ground\\_Garden\\_Program/](http://celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/Common_Ground_Garden_Program/)

Philadelphia Green  
<http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/index.html>

Wisconsin Community Action Coalition  
<http://www.cacscw.org/gardens/handbook/index.htm>  
<http://www.mindspring.com/~communitygardens/start.html>

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