



Community Garden

A resource for local Corps mission

Overview

A community garden is an initiative that provides space for community members to join together to grow vegetables and other plants. While community gardens can provide food for meals and doorways programs, at their best they also provide people the opportunity to build community, learn new skills, and share food together. Community gardens also allow people to explore concepts such as sustainability and environmental awareness.

It is important to note that it is relatively easy to establish some garden plots and invite people to use them, but this approach often leads to a short-lived community garden that quickly becomes neglected or that falls into the hands of one or two people to maintain. To operate a community garden that truly meets the goals of developing community requires planning and a committed group of volunteers. A 'build it and they will come' approach to community gardens rarely provides good outcomes.

"These gardens have become much more than places in which to grow plants. They have become places for artists to display artwork; for poets to read poetry; for children to explore and discover; for older residents to pass on skills; for the weary to rest; and for the pleasure of the garden to be shared by all who visit." Elaine Shallue



Process

Community gardens that truly develop community and that survive for the long-term are built using a community development model that engages many stakeholders in planning and develops a community management group to ensure ongoing sustainability.

Planning

- Gauge local interest in a community garden – use social media, visit local community centres and other places where your community gathers to find people who could partner with you.
- Organise and advertise a community planning meeting – Invite someone from another community garden who can talk about their garden journey. Create an agenda. Collect the contact details of those who attend. [Attachments: Agenda and Sign on Sheet]
- Consider the following questions: What do we mean by a community garden? What do we want to achieve through our community garden? Who else should be involved?
- If there is community interest, form a small working party to plan the new community garden.

Identify Goals	Define Objectives	Consider Resources	Highlight Outcomes	Anticipate Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing food • Promoting healthy living • Creating an open place for shared community activities • Educating community members in a variety of sustainable activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating the garden from recycled or salvaged building materials • Including sustainable infrastructure such as rainwater tanks and compost bays. • Ensuring disability access • Providing for public gatherings with outdoor shelters, outdoor ovens, seating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual community members who can contribute time and skills • Partnerships such as Employment agencies, Service Clubs, Men's Sheds, local schools and TAFE. • Local traders and businesses e.g. the hardware store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased community connections and reduced social isolation • Multi-generational involvement • Supplementing Doorways food provision or supplying your community meal with food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring community participation to manage and maintain the garden once built • Raising ongoing funds to cover maintenance of assets and utilities • Developing a management group, garden code of conduct. etc

When these matters have been investigated, agreed to and acted upon, building can begin.

Building

Map out the space on paper before turning the soil. This will help you to ensure that all the elements considered in the planning stage can be incorporated. Remember that while you may not be able to afford all the elements initially, a well-designed garden can leave space for additions should future funding become available.

Raised Garden Beds	Shelters	Rainwater tanks	Compost and Material Bays	Equipment Sheds	Outdoor ovens playgrounds
Paths & Edges	Seating	Arbours, Arches & Pergolas	Fences & Gates	Plants	Soils and mulches

Approach local businesses regarding donations of these items or look for second hand items. Service clubs or local men's sheds may help with construction projects. Think beyond the plants to items that will generate a space where people want to spend time together and build community

Consider running public events for the first 'turning of the sod' and to officially open the garden. These will increase awareness of the community garden in your community and can be used to invite more people to be involved.

Ongoing Maintenance

A risk with community gardens is that they lose momentum after they have been built or they fail to engage with the local community.

Regular working bees	Community garden workshops	Community Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan tasks beforehand so that everyone has a job to do • Keep them short - 2 hours at most • Share food together afterwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide hands-on experiences for people to learn new skills eg. pruning fruit trees, establishing wicking beds or building an outdoor pizza oven • Invite a speaker to teach about sustainability or nutrition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the garden for other community events. • Invite school groups to use the garden for a term • Hold your playgroup in the garden • Have a meal together in the garden.

Ongoing Management

Many community gardens also falter without agreed processes about who does what regarding choice of plants, ongoing maintenance, expansion, harvesting, community involvement, projects etc. It is helpful to operate the garden with a management group. [Attachment: Terms of Reference]

Some gardens also operate a membership group, where people pay a nominal amount per year for access to the garden and agree to the Code of Conduct on joining. [Attachment: Code of Conduct]

Physical Resources	Human Resources	Finance Resources
<p>Plot of land – preferably flat, that can be cultivated into a garden.</p> <p>Storage space/Shed</p> <p>Building materials/water tanks/soil/plants (These may be sourced throughout the project)</p>	<p>Mission Volunteers play a significant role in this initiative. Position Profiles for this initiative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Team Leader • Maintenance Assistant <p>For essential resources, tools and information to help Managers of Volunteers safely and effectively engage volunteers in your mission, visit the Volunteer Resources website.</p>	<p>The main costs involved in this initiative are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the garden • Ongoing plants • Ongoing utilities – particularly water <p>To establish a community garden could cost between \$5,000 to \$50,000 depending on complexity and elements sourced below cost.</p>

Partnerships

- Food Supply to your Doorways centre or community meal program
- Local hardware or other small businesses
- Men's sheds or Service Groups
- Schools, local council etc.
- Employment Plus or other employment agencies

Promotion and Advertising

Ensure a thorough planning process so as the community is engaged from the start of the community garden process. Initial promotion can occur through social media, local community groups, community notice boards. [Attachment: Social Media Graphics ([Open in Canva](#))]