



GARDEN TOOLKIT

Glean | Grow | Harvest & Share

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY GARDENING

Besides providing fresh produce to food pantries, Community Gardens provide benefits across a wide spectrum - from enhancing the lives of individuals, to benefitting the cities where they are located and improving the environment.

Carbon Footprint

- Producing food locally greatly reduces the greenhouse gas emissions related to transportation of food: Food in the United States travels an average of 1300 miles from farm to fork, consuming 10 calories of fossil-fuel energy for each single calorie of modern supermarket food.
- Locally grown food greatly reduces waste: Fruits and vegetables sold in supermarkets spend as many as 7 to 14 days in transit, with almost half lost to spoilage.

Crime Prevention

- Gardens give youth a safe place to interact with peers.
- Community gardens increase "eyes on the street", often deterring crime.
- Studies show that crime decreases as green space increases.
- Gardening has been seen to alleviate mental fatigue - a precursor to violent behavior.

Cultural Opportunities

- Community gardens offer unique opportunities to establish relationships across social barriers.
- Community gardens are great places to host social and cultural events, strengthening local communities.

Exercise

- Gardening increases physical activity leading to reduced body fat, weight loss, and improved flexibility.
- Exercise through gardening has been linked to beneficial changes in total cholesterol, and systolic blood pressure.
- Gardening motivates people to stay active longer than other activities. On average, people spend 3.75 hours each week gardening, as compared to an average of 2.6 hours walking or 2.7 hours biking.

Food Production

- Community gardens allow people without land of their own to grow healthy nutritious food, saving money on produce.
- In 1999, just 15 gardens in New York grew close to 11,000 pounds of fresh vegetables and fruits, donating nearly half to nearby soup kitchens and food pantries.

Health Benefits

- Community gardens provide access to fresh produce in low-income neighborhoods where food deserts contribute to lower availability of nutritious food.
- Gardeners and their families tend to eat more fruits and vegetables on a daily basis, contributing to a healthier,

Municipal Benefits

- Community gardens increase property values in the vicinity where they are located, and have been shown to attract small businesses looking to relocate.
- Vacant lots can attract litter and criminal activity. Turning them into community gardens results in cleaner space and a more active local community.

The Urban Ecosystem

- Gardens improve the health of the city ecosystem.
- They add beauty to the community and heighten people's awareness and appreciation for living things.
- They reduce soil erosion, lessening flooding and saving the city money.
- They restore oxygen to the air and help reduce air pollution.

Youth Education

- Community gardens can serve as an outdoor classroom where youth can learn valuable skills such as practical math, communication, and cooperation.
- Gardens provide youth the opportunity to learn about the importance of community, stewardship and environmental responsibility.
- Students who participated in a science class that included a garden project showed dramatically improved science skills.

- GLEAN -

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the LORD your God. - Leviticus 23:22 (NRSV)

Do you want to provide fresh produce to the hungry but are not quite ready to start a Garden? You can do so by Gleaning local fields.

ARKANSAS HUNGER RELIEF ALLIANCE: This agency many gleaning opportunities throughout the year. Go to www.ARHungerAlliance.Org/Contacts to sign up for notifications, or call 501-399-9999.

SOCIETY OF ST. ANDREW: Their Gleaning Network brings thousands of volunteers together to pick the crops left behind to be given to those in need. Go to <http://EndHunger.Org> to find out how you can get involved today.

To receive notification of Gleaning Opportunities sign up for **200KREASONS TEXT MESSAGES**. Just text "200KReasons" to 888777.

- GROW -

Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. -
Genesis 1:11-12 (NRSV)

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR GARDEN SUCCESS

If you feel you are ready to start a garden at your church or in your community, you should first understand the 4 Essential Components for Success.

1. PEOPLE

- Lead Coordinator(s)
- Area of Responsibility Coordinators
- Gardeners
- Potential Gardeners on Wait List

2. RULES AND PROCEDURES

- Written Rules with Enforcement
- Detailed Task Assignments
- General Garden Maintenance and Care Responsibilities

3. MEETINGS

- Regular Monthly Cleanup Days
- Spring Sign-Up Meeting
- Fall Wrap-Up Meeting
- Garden Winterizing Plan

4. COMMUNITY

- Be a Part of the Neighborhood
- Make Your Garden Sign Attractive
- Plan Social Events
- Have Neighborhood Outreach Projects

Start thinking of the **PEOPLE** who might want to take on the needed responsibilities of a successful garden using the chart on the next page.

Garden Coordinator: This person keeps the garden running smoothly and has overall responsibility for all aspects of the garden, seeing that all tasks are assigned and completed. The Coordinator may wish to have Co-coordinator(s) to assist. Responsibilities of the Garden Coordinator include:

- Garden Contact - The Coordinator is the main contact both inside the organization and to outside parties.
- Garden Information - Informs all gardeners of rules and special announcements. Calls regular or special gardener meetings.
- Oversees the area coordinators - Events, Maintenance, Plots & Membership, Public Relations, and Tools and Structures.

Events Coordinator - Develops and coordinates garden and community events. Duties are:

- Event Coordination - Decide on community or fund-raising events, organizing through the year.
- Setup - Prepare and procure any food/drink items, as well as other supplies needed. Set up tents, tables, etc.
- Event workers - Provide assistance before and during event to event volunteer workers. Help clean up.
- Work Day Leader - Send out reminders in advance for scheduled monthly workdays. Create and prioritize work day task list with the assistance of the Coordinators of Maintenance and Tools and Structures. On the Work Day, assign tasks and provide direction as needed.

Maintenance Coordinator - Duties for the care and maintenance of common areas, pathways, borders include:

- Pest Control – Monitor, report and treat for weed, insect or animal problems.
- Trash - Be sure trash is removed, manage the compost bins, and keep the garden free of litter.
- Mowing, Weeding, and Edging – The entire garden - including paths between plots, grass between sidewalk and street - must be mowed, weeded, and edged regularly. Before mowing, be sure to walk the area removing rocks and other hazards in your path.
- Flower Garden Care - If there is a flower section, maintain it throughout the growing season. Water, mulch, and deadhead.

Plots & Membership Coordinator: This person oversees garden members and plots, including:

- Plot and Path Surveying - Measure plots and mark with durable garden stakes.
- Plot Assignment - Maintain active and waiting gardener contact info/plot assignments. Plan plot sign-up day with Event Coordinator. Hold orientation day.
- Plot Monitoring - Check that they are planted and weeded by checking regularly in spring and summer, and cleaned up in the fall. Watch for untended plots. Take action to help or find a replacement gardener from the waiting list.
- Weed Monitor –Monitor for weeds in plots and paths, contact appropriate people with deadlines for cleaning up the area. Do follow-up monitoring.

Public Relations Coordinator – Duties for community outreach are varied and may include:

- Community Relations - Attend meetings of area development agencies to ensure the garden's interests are represented. Maintain communication with these groups. Send out press releases for events and news.
- Local Government Relations - Planning and zoning regulations as well as economic development initiatives can affect your garden. Meet with local officials before starting. Comply with all regulations. Attend City Council and planning/zoning meetings.
- Surplus Produce Distribution - Collect donated produce from the garden on a regular basis and deliver to area food pantries.
- Website - Manage website and/or social media.
- Garden Historian - Document the activities of the garden through photographs and newspaper articles, keeping them in a scrap book and/or electronically.

Tools and Structures Coordinator – Duties for the maintenance of structures, garden equipment and other fixtures include:

- Garden Supplies - Get compost and garden seeds.
- Property - Ensure structures, benches, fences, etc. are in good condition. Repair or purchase as needed.
- Tools - Oversee equipment such as hoes, rakes, and shovels. Keep tools repaired. Purchase new tools as needed. Keep tools in a safe and secure storage place.
- Water - Regulate water usage, but keep garden well-watered. Maintain water barrels, hoses, sprinkling systems, and other related hardware. Repair or purchase as needed. Arrange to have water turned on in spring, off in fall. Provide for gardeners to have access to water hoses.

HOW TO START A COMMUNITY GARDEN

"Dig In" and get your Garden **"Off the Ground"** with these simple steps on starting a community garden.

1. Read *Gardening Matters*'s step-by-step guides to get your garden started on a solid foundation.
 - [Gardening Matters Start-up Basics.pdf](#)
 - [Gardening Matters Start-up Guide.pdf](#)
2. There are special considerations for gardens on public land.
 - [Dig Eat and Be Healthy.pdf](#)
3. Learn about legal obstacles you may encounter.
 - [Garden Ground Rules.pdf](#)
4. Gather a group of interested people.
 - Starting a garden cannot be a one-person show. Work towards a group of about ten people who are committed to establishing the garden. In this way, no one person is being tapped out.
5. Plan. Take the time, ideally one year, before breaking ground.
 - The time spent planning is essential...the more planning, the more successful will be the garden.
6. Get the community on board.
 - Involve your garden's neighbors. Your garden cannot be successful without the support of the community around it.
7. Keep financial records from the very beginning. You will be surprised at how costs can mount up. An example of a Balance Sheet for Gardens is available for you to adapt.
 - [Garden Record Keeping.pdf](#)
8. Learn from other community gardeners. Visit their gardens.

SELECTING A GARDEN LOCATION

Selecting the site of your garden may be one of the most important decisions you make as you embark on this project. Here are some important things to consider when choosing a location.

- Get plenty of **SUN** - at least six to eight hours each day.
- Be relatively **FLAT** and mostly **CLEAR**. Slight slopes can be terraced. Any rubble or debris should be manageable by volunteers clearing the lot with trash bags, wheelbarrows, and pickup trucks.
- Be **CLOSE** - ideally within walking distance, or no more than a short drive from those who have expressed interest in participating.
- Have a reliable **WATER** source, either from a neighboring house, commercial building, fire hydrant or otherwise. Be sure permission is attained. If water is not available, water barrels will have to be used. Consider whether or not you will have volunteers who will reliably be sure barrels are full.
- Be **TOXIN-FREE**. Research the history for potentially hazardous toxins used on the site. Talk with the landowner, city or neighbors. If possible, have a soil sample tested before committing to the site.

HINT: Public agencies can be essential in identifying suitable sites and helping groups through the process of obtaining use. They can also give valuable guidance as groups prepare a plan for how they

CONSTRUCT A USER-FRIENDLY GARDEN

Your garden may be used by children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Creating a garden to serve a community requires a number of additional considerations.

Here are a few tips:

- Be sure you have ramps at your garden entrance as needed.
- Pathways should be at least 3 feet wide to allow for wheelchairs. A 5-foot width allows for turning radius.
- Consider raised beds with a height and depth appropriate for gardeners with physical restrictions.
- Path materials should be firm and smooth.
- Minimize changes in the slope and grade of paths.
- Provide benches or picnic tables for gardeners to rest - preferably in the shade!

Don't forget about the kids!

Pre-school children may like their own growing area in a safe location where they can be supervised. Let the children help design their spot.

CROPS YOU MAY GROW IN YOUR GARDEN

Be sure you plant vegetables that will grow well based on your environment. Is it hot or cold? Wet or dry? Contact your local [Cooperative Extension Office](#) for regional advice and/or read the toolkit planting guide.

- [UAEX Planting Guide.pdf](#)

Generally, the following crops will be right for a garden in Arkansas:

<u>Cool Season Crops</u>	<u>Warm Season Crops</u>
Plant these in the Spring and again in the Fall:	These crops like the hot Summer months:
Asparagus	Beans
Berries	Corn
Broccoli	Cucumbers
Collards/Greens	Melons
Lettuce	Okra
Peas	Peppers
Onions	Squash
Radishes	Tomatoes

HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE GARDEN

As you head to your garden, heed the following personal health and safety considerations:

<p>Avoid isolation.</p>	<p>Locate a phone.</p>	<p>Locate a restroom.</p>	<p>Drink adequate amounts of water.</p>	<p>Avoid the heat of the day.</p>
<p>Garden when others are there - do not work alone.</p>	<p>Know who has a cell phone or the locations of businesses with phone access. business locations.</p>	<p>Know where the nearest public restroom is located.</p>	<p>Hydrate before and while at the garden. This is especially important for youth and older individuals.</p>	<p>Avoid gardening during the heat of the day, usually the early to late afternoon hours.</p>
<p>Beware of air conditions.</p>	<p>Apply sunscreen.</p>	<p>Use insect repellent.</p>	<p>Avoid blisters and scrapes.</p>	<p>Use the proper tool for the job.</p>
<p>Avoid gardening in high humidity or on days with air quality alerts</p>	<p>Re-apply if outdoors for a long period, even on cloudy days, regardless of your skin pigment.</p>	<p>Check often for ticks. Add Bti to standing water to prevent mosquitoes.</p>	<p>Wear gloves and proper footwear. Treat scrapes promptly with soap and water.</p>	<p>Avoid injury - use the proper tool, avoid damaged tools, and use proper body mechanics.</p>

COMPOSTING

[Composting](#) not only gives you a great way to reduce the amount of yard and garden waste you throw away, but benefits your garden. Leaves, grass and plant trimmings, along with some types of food waste, can be combined in a [compost bin](#) to create a valuable soil additive for your plants. The links embedded in this paragraph go to [RethinkRecycling.com](#) where more information can be found.

YOU CAN COMPOST THESE:

- PLANT TRIMMINGS
- Grass and leaves
- Vegetable and fruit scraps, rinds, and peels
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Tea leaves and tea bags
- Egg shells
- Nut shells



DO NOT COMPOST THESE:

- Butter, cheese, or dairy products
- Meats or bones
- Gravies or sauces
- Pet feces

MULCHING

Once you have your compost going, use it as Mulch around the base of your plants. Besides your compost material, you can also use wood chips (avoid the dyed chips), straw or sawdust for mulch. Some of the benefits Mulch provides include:

- ✓ Added nutrients to the soil
- ✓ Increased moisture with less watering
- ✓ Fewer weeds

Read the Garden Compost & Mulch Guide found in the toolkit for more information:

- [Garden Compost Mulch.pdf](#)

- HARVEST & SHARE -

As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. - Genesis 8:22 (NRSV)

HARVESTING FOR FRESHNESS

To keep produce at peak quality, it is important to keep it as cool as possible and removed of excess dirt. This is easiest to do at the same time as picking the produce. Harvest your heartiest and most sturdy vegetables first, saving items that may wilt quickly, such as greens, for last.

Keep the following in cooling rules in mind:

1. Use only potable (drinkable) water to cool produce.
2. To keep greens from wilting, submerge in cold water for just a few minutes.
3. Heavier veggies like squash and carrots need up to 15 minutes in cold water.
4. Store produce in a cooler or refrigerator until packed for delivery.
5. Tomatoes, eggplant, strawberries, etc. should **not** get wet or be hydro-cooled.

To remove excess dirt:

1. Use only potable (drinkable) water to rinse off soil.
2. Do not wash root vegetables, such as potatoes. Just brush off the soil.

PACKING THE HARVEST

Some general rules for packing your produce include:

- Place heavier/bulkier items at the bottom and lighter, more perishable items on top.
- Store fruits and vegetables separately! Fruits give off gas causing veggies to ripen faster.
- Take extra care of items with delicate skin such as tomatoes, eggplant, and squash.
- Root crops (potatoes, carrots, turnips, rutabagas, onions and sweet potatoes) as well as apples or citrus fruits should be stored in vented boxes or crates.
- If using produce bags for greens, be sure they are perforated or well-ventilated so as not to retain unwanted moisture.

- Use specialized containers for small items like berries and cherry tomatoes.
- Tomatoes should not be stored below 50 °F or their color and flavor will deteriorate.

DELIVERING PRODUCE TO A FOOD PANTRY

- When possible, deliver ripe produce immediately after harvesting.
- If you cannot deliver produce after picking, keep it cool. This means keeping it in the shade or in a refrigerator (except for tomatoes, which should not be refrigerated).
- Do not store produce in your car with all windows and doors closed, or you will "cook" your fresh produce.
- If you transport produce with a pet in the vehicle, keep the produce in a separate area of your car.

- GARDEN MONTHLY TASK ORGANIZER -

A successful community garden takes year-round planning and activities. Use this handy calendar organizer to keep your garden on-track to success.

- [200KReasons Monthly Garden Calendar.pdf](#)

- INTERNET RESOURCES -

*There is a wealth of information available pertaining to a
GARDEN
such as the following.*

American Community Gardening Association (ACGA): CommunityGarden.Org

The **ACGA** offers a **Resources** section which includes some of the following topics:

- **Community Garden Management:** How-To on Gardening with Seniors and others as well as sample Garden Contract, Rules and Land Use Agreements.
- **Food Gardens & Urban Farms:** Get the answers to questions you may have about the plants, soil, and other horticulture aspects of gardens.
- **Gardens & Culture:** Information on Sustainability Resources, Three Key Hints for Starting Your Own Seeds
- **Youth & School Programs** includes Resources for Gardening with Children

The **ACGA Programs** section includes:

- **Environmental Education in the Community Garden**, containing ten separate lesson plans available for download in PDF format.
- **Garden Mosaics** is a science, environmental, and garden education program combining intergenerational mentoring and community action for youth. Program includes a manual, videos, and science pages for classroom activities, all available for download on the ACGA site.
- **YardMap** is a free, interactive, citizen science mapping project designed to cultivate a richer

understanding of bird habitat and low-impact land use. See <http://Content.YardMap.Org>.

Arkansas River Valley Area Council: www.ARVACInc.Org

This agency distributes free garden seed to people whose family income is at or below 125% of the poverty level.

<u>FRANKLIN COUNTY</u> 320 N. Second St., Ozark, AR 72949	Phone: (479) 667-2791 Hours: 8:00am-4:30pm, Monday-Friday
<u>JOHNSON COUNTY</u> 516 W. Main St., Clarksville, AR 72830	Phone: (479) 705-1108 Hours: 8:00am-2:30pm Monday-Friday
<u>PERRY COUNTY</u> 206 W. Main St., Perryville, AR 72126	Phone: (501) 889-2407 Hours: 8:00am-4:30pm Monday-Friday
<u>POPE COUNTY</u> 103 S. Rochester, Russellville, AR 72801	Hours: 8:00am-2:30pm Monday-Friday
<u>SCOTT COUNTY</u> Waldron, AR 72958	Phone: (479) 637-2871 Hours: 8:00am-3:00pm Monday-Friday

Denver Urban Gardens: www.DUG.Org

"*Growing Community Gardens: A Denver Urban Gardens' Best Practices Handbook for Creating and Sustaining Community Gardens*" is available on their website for download or from the 200KReasons website.

- [DUG Best Practices.pdf](#)

This detailed manual for starting a garden answers all of the **W** questions of **What**, **When**, **Where**, **Who**, and **Why**.

- **What** is a garden: what will we plant; what will it look like?
- **When** should we start a garden: what is our timeline?
- **Where** should the garden be: what should be considered when selecting a site?
- **Who** should be involved: both from within the group and in the community?
- **Why** should we even have a garden: what do we hope to achieve?

Gardening Matters: www.GardeningMatters.Org

Gardening Matters website has an online "**Tool Shed**" containing a library of resource to help you achieve a successful and sustainable garden. See www.gardeningmatters.org/garden-resources. There is also a **Quick Resource Guide** with many options at www.gardeningmatters.org/quick-resource-guide.

Kids Gardening: www.KidsGardening.Org

Projects designed just for kids, family garden activities, **plus** school curricula and lesson plans are all available on this companion site of the National Gardening Association (NGA.)

Let's Move: www.LetsMove.Gov

Let's Move was started by First Lady Michelle Obama to improve the health of our children. The site contains a **Community Garden Checklist** which is also available in the toolkit on the 200KReasons website.

- [Lets Move Garden Checklist.pdf](#)

National Gardening Association (NGA): www.Garden.Org

Q. Is it a weed? How do I stop it from spreading?

A. Look it up in the **WEED LIBRARY**.

Q. How do I get rid of Zucchini or Squash Vine Borers?

A. The **PEST CONTROL LIBRARY** can help.

Q. How do I grow a tomato?

A. The **VEGETABLE, FRUIT OR HERB GARDENING GUIDES** will walk you through growing all of your favorites.

Learn about each plant, how to prepare the garden site, the best way to plant it, how to care for it, and when to harvest on this easy to use site.

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Research and Cooperative Extension Service: www.UAEX.Edu

The **Yard and Garden** section, especially, contains a lot of great information. Check out the "**A-Z Vegetable Gardening**" section as well as information on "**Composting**" and building Composters.

To learn about the **Master Gardener** program, contact Janet Carson, the Extension Horticulturist for Arkansas. She can be reached at:

Univ. of Arkansas, P.O. Box 391
2301 S. University
Little Rock, AR 72203

Phone: (501) 671-2174
Fax: (501) 671-2303
E-mail: jcarson@uaex.edu

Your local extension office is also a great place for gardening resources. Check your local office website for events and trainings (www.uaex.edu/counties).

References

Benefits of Community Gardening	www.GardeningMatters.Org
Community Garden Job Descriptions	www.GardeningMatters.Org
Composting	www.RethinkRecycling.com
Constructing a User-Friendly Garden	www.EPA.Gov
Essential Components for a Successful Garden	www.BostonNatural.Org
Garden Crops	www.LetsMove.Gov
Harvesting, Packing and Delivering Produce	https://GardenGleaning.Org
Health and Safety in the Garden	www.BostonNatural.Org
How to Start a Community Garden	www.GardeningMatters.Org http:// ChangeLabSolutions.Org
Mulching	www.GardeningMatters.Org
Selecting Your Garden Location	www.GardeningMatters.Org

These are just a few of the many excellent websites with ideas, information, and resources.

See the [200KReasons Recommended Websites.pdf](#) for more.

For more information, email 200KReasons@arumc.org
or visit our website www.200KReasons.arumc.org.

