



Get Energized and Organized

Bring people and different organizations together to learn which issues are important to your community. Discuss how a community garden – whether a communal space or individual plots – could serve the needs of the community. Holding regular meetings to collaborate on ideas and goals will help you to develop a plan of action. Get people energized and organized.

Enlist Help from Others

Form partnerships to leverage resources and gain access to: materials, tools, funding, volunteers and technical assistance. The USDA's national educational network offers Cooperative Extension Offices in communities around the country, where Extension Master Gardeners can help with gardening challenges and give advice on what grows best in your area.

Helpful hint: The USDA's People's Garden website has how-to videos and databases filled with garden-based learning guides, free seed and funding sources, and healthy gardening practices.

Finding the Right Space

What type of community garden do you want to plant? Depending on the type of garden, you can increase access to fresh, healthy food in rural towns or provide safe green spaces where youth can play in urban cities. If you're growing food in your garden, find a location that receives at least six hours of direct sunlight per day with easy access to water and proper drainage. Once you identify an ideal site, find out who owns the land. Contact the land owner and discuss next steps.

Healthy Garden, Healthy You

Before gardening on a site, research its history and past uses. Take samples of the soil and have them analyzed to find out soil type and quality. Consult your state environmental agency, local health department or county's Cooperative Extension Office to: determine what kinds of soil samples you should take, learn how to take them and where to send them. The quality of the soil can have an effect on the design of your garden.

Your local Cooperative Extension Office is a great resource for useful, practical and research-based guidelines specific to your region. It will also provide expert staff more than willing to help you through your soiling questions.

Make It Your Own

Every community garden is different – design your garden to fit the needs of the community. Consider factors such as: age-appropriate design, accessibility, protection from animals or vandalism, storage of tools and plenty of room for all your gardeners.

Use these tips to make your garden sustainable:

- using native plants
- composting
- mulching
- applying an integrated pest management approach
- creating a habitat for wildlife
- using water wisely
- installing a rain barrel

Helpful hint: The USDA's Plant Hardiness Zone Map helps to determine which plants will thrive in your part of the country.

Get Growing

Start gardening and implementing your community garden program. Once the project is up and running, let everyone know! Share pictures and video of your experiences with friends and family, to inspire other community gardens. Over time, revisit the plan and make any needed changes based on lessons learned or feedback from partners and neighbors.

Try growing these hardy, easy-going crops in your community garden:

Warm season crops

- beans
- melons
- cucumbers
- peanuts
- peppers
- tomatoes

Cool season crops

- peas
- lettuce
- broccoli
- collards
- radishes
- onions

