



Victory Gardens  
San Diego

REGIONAL GARDEN  
EDUCATION CENTER



## GARDENING 201: How to Start and Manage Community Gardens

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO



**HHSA**  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

healthy  
**WORKS**  
Paths to Healthy Living<sup>SM</sup>



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## WELCOME TO YOUR REGIONAL GARDEN EDUCATION CENTER COURSE!

HEALTHY WORKS<sup>SM</sup>  
VICTORY GARDENS SAN DIEGO  
REGIONAL GARDEN EDUCATION CENTERS  
GARDENING 201: HOW TO START AND MANAGE COMMUNITY GARDENS

Victory Gardens San Diego (VGSD) is a project of San Diego Roots Sustainable Food Project. Our mission is to help people start growing their own food through collaborative garden builds, hands-on garden education and community outreach.

VGSD has helped start dozens of gardens throughout San Diego County, including several school and community gardens. VGSD offers ongoing garden education classes and has started many participants on their way toward homegrown food. VGSD garden education participants and teachers make up a growing network of gardeners that you can tap into or become a part of at anytime.

Healthy Works<sup>SM</sup> is helping support the next phase of garden education in San Diego County. Healthy Works<sup>SM</sup> is a program of the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSa), funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). In partnership with the University of California San Diego (UCSD); San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative, a project facilitated by Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP); and VGSD, Healthy Works<sup>SM</sup> is establishing community-based hubs for basic, school, and community garden education.

The Regional Garden Education Centers (RGEc) program is designed to create central establishments for the development of garden knowledge and expertise. The RGEc program is modeled after the Victory Gardens San Diego (VGSD) "University of Gardening" or "UGardening" education courses and includes garden courses on community garden management and school integration in addition to basic gardening.

VGSD is partnering with agencies countywide to train staff and volunteers at regional sites to deliver RGEc courses and establish gathering places for garden knowledge and expertise. After training, VGSD will monitor and certify each site to deliver the RGEc curriculum. It is our hope that these VGSD-certified RGEc sites spark dynamic conversations between local agencies and community residents on the role gardens can play in creating a healthy, more sustainable future. RGEc sites will connect residents interested in the local food movement and provide hands-on garden and project planning experience. Additionally, the RGEc sites selected, trained, and funded through Healthy Works will host regional tool lending libraries that allow residents to borrow tools for garden projects in the community or at home.

We invite you to attend one or several classes at your local RGEc site. Ask questions. Share garden stories and resources, and get to know neighbors with a similar interest in growing healthy communities. A formal avenue for feedback will be offered at the end of each course and ongoing feedback is also welcomed.

In good health,

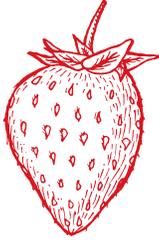
The Regional Garden Education Center Team



Made possible by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, through the County of San Diego in partnership with the University of California San Diego.

The implementation of the Healthy Works<sup>SM</sup> School and Community Gardens Program is made possible through partnerships with the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency; University of California San Diego; San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative, a project facilitated by Community Health Improvement Partners; and Victory Gardens San Diego, a program of San Diego Roots Sustainable Food Project.

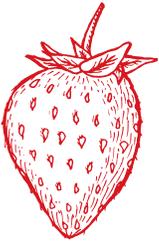
We thank all those who contributed to this manual. We especially want to thank Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP); the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative (Initiative), a program facilitated by CHIP; and the San Diego Community Garden Network for lending the support of their staff and consultants to the development of this manual; a sincere thank you to San Diego Community Garden Network's Judy Jacoby, Healthy Works<sup>SM</sup>/CHIP/Initiative staff JuliAnna Arnett and Erica Salcuni, and expert consultants Mindy Swanson and Parke Troutman. We would like to extend a special thank you to Lauren Shaw, Victory Gardens San Diego/ San Diego Roots Sustainable Food Project, who researched, compiled, and wrote the content for this manual.



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## GARDENING 201: **HOW TO START AND MANAGE COMMUNITY GARDENS**





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## Referenced and Adapted Resources

- "Community garden start-up guide" by Los Angeles Master Gardeners, UCCE, and Common Ground
- "From neglected parcels to community gardens: a handbook" by Wasatch Community Gardens
- "Ground Rules: a legal toolkit for community gardens" by National Policy and Legal Analysis Network
- "How to Start a Community Garden Handbook" from the Toronto Community Garden Network

# COURSE INTRODUCTION

This curriculum is designed to give you a framework for planning, building, and sustaining a community garden. It is intended to help a motivated group who wants a community garden in their neighborhood to build the coalition, processes, and physical space for a successful community garden. The course can also support experienced community garden organizers in improving their garden programs. Following the steps and suggestions provided will enhance the success of your garden now and in the future. This manual promotes community gardens as a tool for growing community, growing fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs, and interacting with nature. Community gardens require collaboration and inclusiveness in their development and maintenance, so strong community connections are created in the process. Much of the course teaches you how to build and nurture these relationships. The community connections that are built through a garden can influence the dynamics of an entire neighborhood and contribute to a thriving environment for local residents.

## Community Garden Benefits

Communities have started their gardens to achieve a wide variety of benefits to the community, and we will touch on all of these again at various points during the course. Community gardens can:

- Allow people without their own gardening space to grow healthy food. A community garden can produce more food than you might think. An 85-plot garden produces up to thousands of pounds of food in a good season. A family with a plot could save \$600 a year in food costs!
- Educate children about fruits and vegetables and create positive associations with healthy foods. Early positive exposure to healthy foods can support a lifetime of healthier food choices.
- Provide a form of exercise. Gardening is a form of moderate physical activity, and one that can be done by people of all ages and capabilities.
- Create friendships and camaraderie between neighbors. Neighbors have a new reason to meet and interact and work together.
- Beautify a neighborhood and provide safe, recreational green space. A New York University study found that property values of New York City homes surrounding a community garden increased property values by 9.4% over a five year period. Convenient community open space makes the neighborhood a more desirable place to live.
- Help reduce neighborhood crime by turning prior vacant spaces into bustling, community spaces. A University of Pennsylvania study, found the greening of lots in Philadelphia was associated with significant reductions in gun assaults across all four sections of the city and significant reductions in vandalism in one section of the city. In addition, greening was also tied to residents reporting less stress and more physical activity in some sections of the city. More activity and a purpose can turn a crime safe-haven into a place criminals would avoid.
- Community gardens are most successful when they are developed by and for the community that will use them. It is important to support diversity in the garden planning and operation in order to take advantage of the talents and skills of the group, promote personal development and education, and increase personal investment in the garden. We will go into more detail on how to involve the community and use local assets throughout this curriculum.





## ACTIVITY 1

**As a group or in small groups, go visit at least one community garden to note how it's organized and how it looks. Speak with gardeners to learn what they appreciate about the garden. This visit could be done during class time or as a homework assignment between sessions. Visit [victorygardenssandiego.com/comm\\_garden\\_list.html](http://victorygardenssandiego.com/comm_garden_list.html) for a list of community gardens in San Diego County. For a map of San Diego County Community Gardens go here: [www.mastergardenerssandiego.org/community/showmap.php](http://www.mastergardenerssandiego.org/community/showmap.php)**

### Course Overview

This course primarily covers the community building, organization, design, planning, and funds management necessary to create a successful community garden, but it also builds on basic home-scale gardening knowledge. This class will be participatory—we invite you to ask questions and share your previous gardening and organizing experiences that would be helpful to the group. The class will be more enjoyable and valuable if everyone is engaged. Feedback on the course is also welcomed.

### In this course you will learn about:

- building community
- organizing garden planning participants and tasks
- logistical details of finding and securing land
- budgeting and fundraising
- designing and structuring the garden and necessary supplies
- creating rules and policies for garden maintenance

Note: While there is chronological order to the lessons in this course, when you are creating your own community garden many of the steps will overlap and happen simultaneously, especially land acquisition, group organizing, and fundraising.



## ACTIVITY 2

**To begin introducing the idea of Asset-Based Community Development (discussed in Lesson 1), each participant takes a turn listing for the group his or her interests and goals for a community garden, and the leader transcribes these on the board. The result will be a diverse list of goals, which allows for the group to see the project from all possible perspectives.**

*"Gardens, scholars say, are the first sign of commitment to a community. When people plant corn they are saying, let's stay here. And by their connection to the land, they are connected to one another."*

— Anne Raver

## **A Brief History**

Community gardens have many rewards. They allow people to grow fresh organic produce that they may not otherwise be able to afford, give urban dwellers an opportunity to work the earth as exercise and recreation, and offer thriving social centers for local communities. They also increase property values, decrease crime (by encouraging more eyes on the street), add to the sense of community, and reduce urban warming and stormwater runoff. Given these benefits, it's not surprising that community-centered gardening has a long history in the United States.

With a little imagination, it can be said that community gardens or at least communal farming in the U.S. can be traced back to the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving celebration. This annual way of giving thanks for a successful harvest connected residents across racial and ethnic lines and laid the foundation for future efforts that would again tie residents together in planting and harvesting their own food. Intense interest in urban community gardens, however, did not appear until the rapid industrialization of the late nineteenth-century pulled many people off farms and into crowded tenements.

The first community garden program on record was established during the Panic of 1893. Such a traumatic economic depression idled factories and closed many businesses. The mayor of Detroit hit upon the idea of letting unemployed residents use vacant city plots for the production of food. This idea soon spread to other U.S. cities and became known as the Potato Patch Movement[1]. This movement set the pattern for three-quarters of a century: while community gardens remained active throughout the twentieth century they grew in number and became an essential food source during economic downturns and the two World Wars.

During World War I, the government first began encouraging residents to grow Victory Gardens. These gardens were an essential tool in relieving production demands on professional farmers trying to produce for troops abroad and residents at home.

By the end of World War I, the U.S. had over five million gardens. Relief Gardens during the Great Depression helped improve people's spirits and provided food to families when work was scarce. During World War II, the government promoted gardens similarly to the efforts of World War I. The Victory Gardens of World War II produced an estimated 40 percent of the country's fruits and vegetables and fruit and vegetable consumption was at its highest rate in U.S. history. Few of these Victory Gardens survived for long after World War II ended, as the country recovered and many Americans moved out to the new suburbs where they had their own yards to garden. Today's modern community garden movement began in the 1960s and 1970s. Community gardens still ebb and flow in popularity according to economic tides and social trends, but gardeners today have a wider range of motivations than sheer financial necessity. Many people have become increasingly aware of their impacts on the planet and uncomfortable with the rise of processed foods. The TV dinners and hamburger joints of the 1950s completely altered how America viewed and consumed food. These changes have since accelerated. Radical shifts in federal agriculture policy led to the disappearance of many small farms, severing the connection between people and their sources of food; fast food restaurants continued to expand; children increasingly became the targets of advertisements for junk food; and people's lifestyles became more sedentary — all of which have contributed to widespread health problems, including overweight and obesity which impacts approximately 1 in 4 children in San Diego County.





Locally, modern community gardens started appearing in the 1970s. The Front and Juniper Garden, which began in 1981, is the City of San Diego's oldest continually-operating community garden and is located on Port Authority (state) land. A school-based community garden (i.e., joint use garden) started at the Magnolia School Garden in El Cajon around the same time. Other gardens, which focused primarily on immigrant populations, were also started in the late 1970s and early 1980s as part of the CETA job training program with help from the 4H program. The Cambodian Garden, which closed in 2010, dates back to the same time period.

Modern community gardens face advantages and obstacles different from earlier gardens. The rise of environmentalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s not only led to a renewed interest in community gardens, but stricter development regulations and zoning. When they created their new rules, cities rarely considered the impacts of regulations on community gardens and gardeners also didn't realize they would be affected. As a result, the new zoning codes often didn't mention community gardens and there is no clear direction on where gardens should or should not be placed within the existing city zoning framework, which unintentionally created red tape and costs for gardeners. In a few cases, cities overestimated the potential impacts of community gardens and required expensive permits or banned them from places where they could naturally be situated.

Despite some cities' impediments, home gardening has become the number one hobby in the United States. Americans have a renewed interest in knowing where their food comes from and how it was grown. Nationwide, there's been a movement of citizens and governments to replace such regulations with more supportive policies that encourage and sometimes even fund new community gardens. The country now has approximately 18,000 community gardens [2]. The City of San Diego was initially slow to join the movement, but has recently revised its regulations to eliminate regulatory barriers in the establishment and operation of community gardens. It also adopted new land use languages to support urban agriculture production and retail, including small-scale animal husbandry. In addition, many of the eighteen city governments in the region are working with citizens to create rules that support instead of discourage new gardens. Currently, the County has relatively few community gardens compared to elsewhere but with the many new regulatory changes it is poised to contribute greatly in the near future to the country's community garden movement.

In Lesson 2 on finding land, we will speak more about rules in the various cities of San Diego County, and how you can promote better community gardening policy if it doesn't already exist in your city. Resources for information on policies, connections to other advocates, garden networks, and general information about gardens in San Diego County will also be discussed.

1. [www.davidjhess.org/DetroitCG.pdf](http://www.davidjhess.org/DetroitCG.pdf)
2. American Community Garden Network

# LESSON 1

## Asset-Based Community Development and Early Organization

In this lesson, you will learn how to recognize and use all of your available resources in the planning and development of your community garden. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a framework for organizing of any kind – not just for gardens – that emphasizes the strengths and assets of a community and its members and makes the most of these assets for the particular development project. In 1993 Jody Kretzmann and John McKnight created this model as an outgrowth of their research that found that groups and communities who had effectively mobilized and built capacity shared these key elements:

- citizen vs. client orientation
- focus on strengths
- power from relationships
- building on opportunities
- integration of community economic development principles

Using the ABCD approach fosters a positive environment for the creation of a community garden because it helps participants focus on the positive aspects of their community and their project, rather than the negatives. In this lesson you will learn how to identify your community assets, and learn the early steps for recruiting and organizing a core garden team. Early recruiting and organizing is included in this lesson on ABCD because the two go hand-in-hand: your core organizers are some of your assets, and they will help identify more assets.

### Learning Objectives

1. Understand the basics of Asset-Based Community Development and how to use this approach.
2. Practice mapping community assets.
3. Know strategies for initial group organizing and recruitment.

### Understanding Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

ABCD promotes a “glass-half-full” mindset for the community garden creation process. The guiding question of the ABCD approach is “What existing resources and skills are available to us in our local community?” This approach puts a positive spin on the “needs-based” approach to community development, in which a group would seek to identify solutions to a particular problem in their community. It can sometimes be challenging to use the “needs-based” approach and still maintain positivity in community brainstorming sessions, since the focus is on a problem. In any planning process, it is important to keep the conversation positive and promote pride in the local community, and ABCD can help you do that. ABCD helps your group focus on what resources you have available and what positive things you can accomplish with those resources.

The following description from the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University provides a vivid description of ABCD:



“How you perceive the neighborhood that you live or work in is going to profoundly influence the way that you act. Typically a neighborhood is seen from the perspective of its largest deficits. ‘That is a dangerous neighborhood,’ ‘That neighborhood looks trashy,’ ‘There is a lot of poverty in that community.’ How many times have you heard that as a first description of a neighborhood? We all know about the negative things that are a part of our community, but, at the other side of every deficit, is an asset begging for some attention. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is intentional about keeping our focus on those assets and celebrating what is right with our community. You will notice that as people begin to talk about the positive things in the community, when they are encouraged to talk about what is working, when they learn of all the great resources that are in their neighborhood (and in some cases have always been available in their neighborhood), the energy level will increase exponentially.”

— INRC Organizers Workbook



Below are three concise characteristics of ABCD and five types of assets that you might find in your community (both adapted from the Toronto Community Garden Network’s “Community Garden Handbook”) to help you visualize the ABCD approach.

### Three Primary Characteristics of ABCD

1. **Asset-based** – Garden planning is based around individual contributions, associations, local institutions and the local ecology and economy of a neighborhood.
2. **Internally focused** – Development strategies focus on the interests and problem-solving capabilities of local residents, local associations and local institutions.
3. **Relationship-driven** – This approach promotes the development of relationships between residents, local associations and local institutions by constantly asking whether actions will positively contribute to stronger relationships.

### Five Categories of Assets

The following are the types of assets you might find in your community. When you are brainstorming possible assets, make sure to think about all of these categories. Below you’ll find an example of an “assets map” that uses these categories of assets, contrasted with a needs map to reinforce the difference in visualizing your community. In the next section of this lesson, you’ll learn how to build a more specific type of assets map that is focused on your community in particular.

1. **Individual Contributions** – The specific talents, skills, and resources that community members possess that can be put to work in building the community. (Examples: gardening experience, people-organizing skills, computer skills, construction skills, musical talents, monetary donations, materials donations, etc.)
2. **Associations** – Small formal or informal groups of people that work together towards a common goal (including shared interests). An association helps to amplify or build upon the gifts, talents and skills of individual community members. (Examples: resident’s associations, book clubs, sports teams, faith groups)
3. **Institutions** – Local government, businesses and community organizations that have resources and knowledge that can be drawn upon to support community building.

4. **Land and Buildings** – Infrastructure and space resources in a neighborhood, such as a school or community center open to community groups after hours for meeting space, open space for the garden, parks for meetings and celebrations, etc.
5. **The Local Economy** – Local businesses and lending organizations that can donate money or materials, and/or publicize and support community work. (Examples: printing shops that can do free copies of posters, local newspapers that publish stories on community projects, garden centers that donate plants, etc.)

### **Mapping Community Assets**

In this activity you will practice identifying the potential partners and assets available to you when planning your community garden. All communities are different; therefore, it is recommended that you conduct this activity with your own community garden group early in the planning stages. The goal is to brainstorm all the assets available from the different groups, people, and organizations involved in the garden, using the five categories of assets as a guide, and the benefits those respective entities can gain from involvement in the garden. You should do this early on to help guide your recruitment (see below), and then once again after you have established a larger core garden management group, to expand your reach into the community and its available assets.



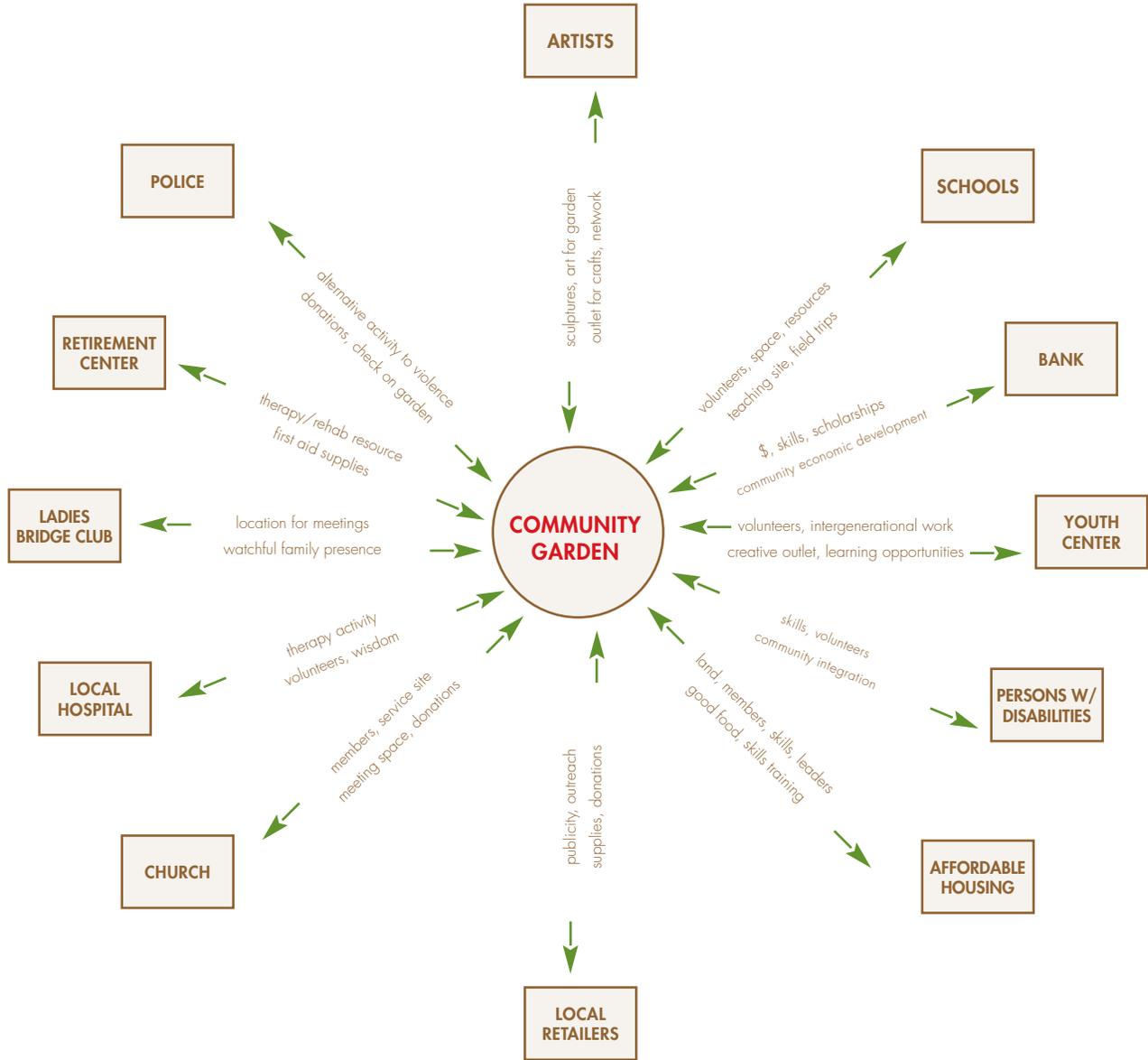
#### **ACTIVITY 1**

**Community Asset Mapping (The following steps and example maps—Figures 1 and 2— are adapted from the Toronto Community Garden Network’s “Community Garden Handbook.”)**

1. **On a large sheet, draw a circle in the middle and write “Community Garden Project,” or the appropriate name for your own project, inside.**
2. **On the outside edges of the paper write the names of partners or potential partners you can identify and draw a box around each of them. Think creatively about potential partners.**
3. **Brainstorm ways that each partner can help a community garden, again thinking creatively. For example, the police department could be a potential partner that might be willing to include the garden site on its neighborhood check route or to donate funds from the local police athletic league fund.**
4. **Draw an arrow from each partner to the garden circle and label each arrow with the ways that partner can contribute to the garden effort.**
5. **Brainstorm what the garden can offer each partner. For example, could act as a gang or violence prevention strategy by providing youth alternatives to boredom or illegal activities, which would benefit the local police department.**
6. **Draw an arrow from the garden to each potential partner, and label those arrows with the ways the garden can benefit the partners. The result is labeled arrows in both directions between each partner and the garden project.**



# Mapping Reciprocal Partnerships



## Mapping Reciprocal Partnerships

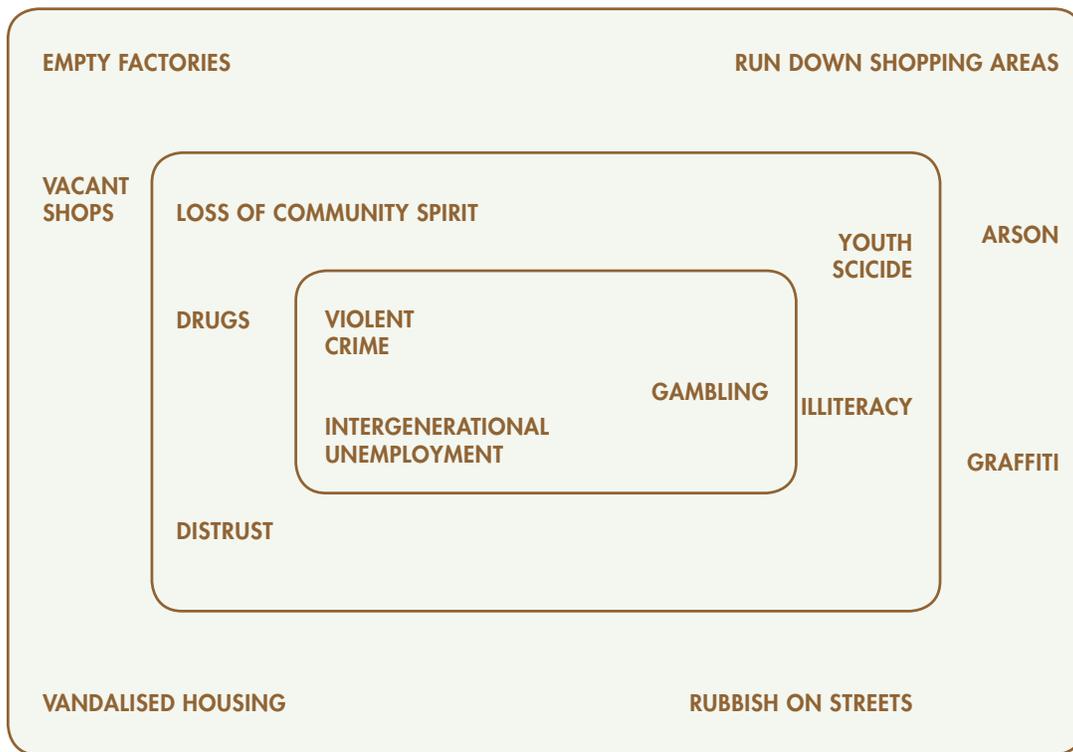


Figure 1: The "Needs Map" Adopted from Kretzmann & McKnight (1993, 3)

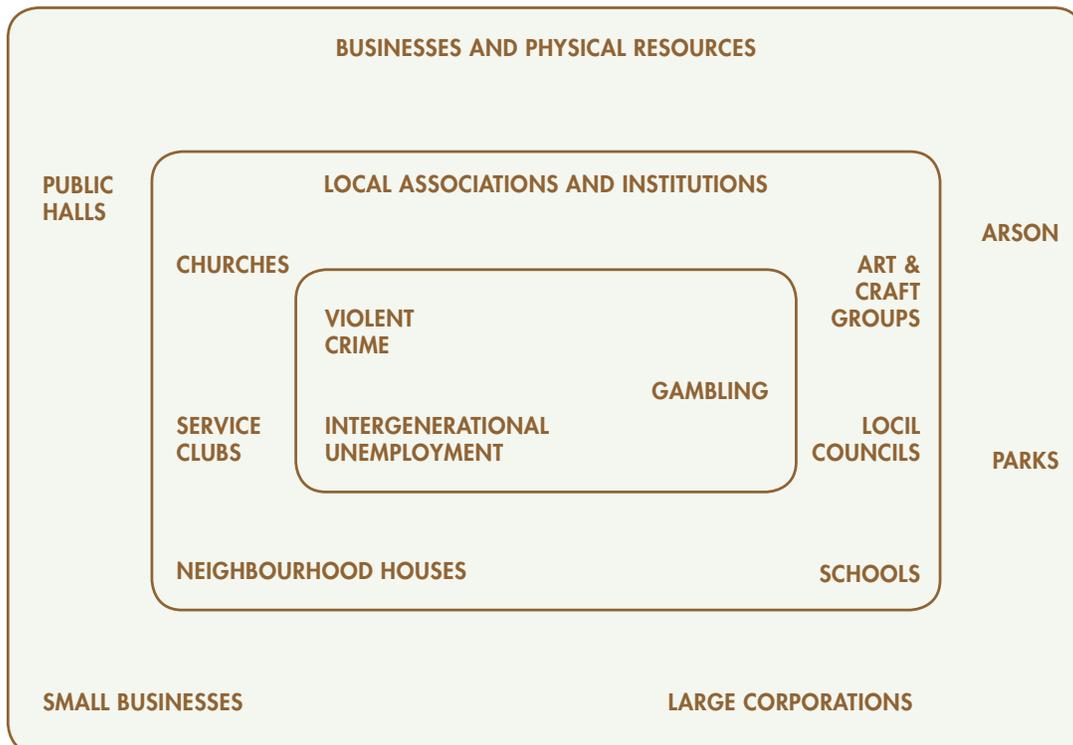


Figure 2: The "Assets Map" Adopted from Kretzmann & McKnight (1993, 7)





## Early Organizing

Most likely you'll be starting your project with just a few people who want a garden, but to take advantage of the assets available to you and distribute tasks, you'll need to expand your core group early on. One option is to reach out to an established community group that is already linked to one of your core garden team members. This group might be a church group, a garden club, a neighborhood association, a Home Owners Association, a book club, etc. This takes advantage of existing relationships in which people have worked or socialized together. However, another option is to start your own group based on recruiting specifically for the community garden.

## Members

If you're starting a new group or building on an existing one, think about trying to recruit people from the various spokes on your initial assets map. The benefits that you brainstormed can be used as talking points when you speak with potential recruits. Types of people and groups that you should recruit might include:

1. **Neighbors:** Most likely whoever is starting the garden will be a resident of the community; neighbors will be the people using the garden most.
2. **A city or county representative:** A stakeholder such as a representative from the parks and recreation department, development services or from a local planning group can help with leasing public land, explain building code regulations, etc.
3. **Gardening experts:** Master Gardeners, other nonprofit gardening groups, local farmers who might donate knowledge, materials, or labor.
4. **Local business owners/managers:** These people may have materials or funds to donate; look into local hardware stores, garden stores, restaurants, etc.
5. **Community group representatives:** People who belong to the local PTA, churches, housing association, etc.
6. **Teachers, school administrators, and/or school district representatives:** These people will be able to help with recruiting interested gardening families; in the next lesson we discuss the option of joint use gardens that link schools and communities, which will require close contact with a school.
7. **Land owner or representative of the land owner:** If it is city-owned land, this might be a parks representative who can help you deal with land use regulations and advocate for the garden.

## Steps to Take

The following is an example of the very first steps to take to get the community garden project under way.

1. **Each initial organizer** (this may just be you and a friend!) brainstorms all the people he or she knows in the community who may have interest in joining the effort.
2. **Make personal contact** (phone or in-person is best) with each of these potential collaborators to discuss the project and the mutual benefits if they join, assess their interest and availability, and draw on their contacts for other possible recruits. A personal contact and request can greatly increase the chance of someone choosing to participate. Questions to ask in this conversation:
  - a. What benefits do you see for yourself/your family/your business/the community from a community garden?
  - b. What kind of garden do you envision?
  - c. What skills might you be able to bring to the effort?
  - d. Would you be interested in joining the core group to manage the garden? If not, how would you like to be involved?
  - e. What is your availability for meetings?
  - f. Who else would you suggest we get in touch with?
3. **Schedule a kick-off meeting** at a time and place that will work for many people. Use your potential collaborators' stated availability and your sense of your expected attendees' availability to schedule the meeting.
4. **Create a clear agenda for the meeting.** It should at minimum include the following, and specify the allotted time for each scheduled item:
  - a. introductions of attendees
  - b. overview of the agenda and goals for the meeting
  - c. initial thoughts on the garden from the initial planners and any plans that have already been made
  - d. time for each attendee to state their goals for the garden
  - e. open discussion time
  - f. Next steps (spell out clear actions and goals for each interested participant that will be accomplished by a stated date; making expected actions clear and known to the whole group will increase action after the meeting)
  - g. schedule the next meeting
5. **Choose a meeting leader, note taker, and timekeeper** (doesn't have to be three different people if you are starting with a small group)
6. **Conduct the meeting as stated in the agenda,** and with open-mindedness toward new goals, assets, connections, and relationships.



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## COMMUNITY RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT



### **VICTORY GARDENS SAN DIEGO**

[www.victorygardenssandiego.com](http://www.victorygardenssandiego.com)

Victory Gardens San Diego (VGSD) is a program of San Diego Roots Sustainable Food Project, a 501c3 nonprofit organization. The mission of VGSD is **to help people start growing their own food**, through collaborative garden builds, hands-on garden education and community outreach. Launched publicly in Spring 2009, VGSD has become a recognized and active part of the local food community in San Diego County.



## VICTORY GARDENS SAN DIEGO

### Collaborative Garden Builds

Individuals, families, school groups, and community groups who are interested in having an edible garden but who need some help getting started can contact VGSD. VGSD contacts the individual or group, and visits the garden space to assess the most appropriate design, size, types of plants, etc.

Then VGSD draws on its large volunteer base to recruit 3-10 volunteers, depending on the size of the proposed garden build. They meet at the garden site with a VGSD Garden Guide and the site owner to build the garden. Builds typically take 3-5 hours – lots of hands make light work!

Garden builds are free of charge, but there is a suggested donation for garden recipients that can afford to donate. This helps “Grow it Forward”; donations go toward starting more edible gardens. New gardeners are also encouraged to volunteer at future garden builds. VGSD continues to be a resource for the new gardener over the next year or two, so if they get stuck with problems that arise they can ask for help. Many of the resources VGSD offers are available on its website.

### Hands-on Garden Education

VGSD offers multi-class courses on edible gardening. Courses range from 3 to 8 classes in length, meeting weekly. Courses are offered at various locations around the county, usually on weekends or weekday evenings in summer and each class is usually 3 hours.

Classes are hands-on, informal and usually take place in a garden—learning by doing. With guidance, participants build raised beds, keyhole beds, herb spirals, compost bins, assemble irrigation systems, set up worm composting systems, plant seeds and transplants, and many other garden features. Active learning and sharing of knowledge among participants is encouraged. We don't claim to know everything, so we rely on our participants to contribute their knowledge during the course. Outside speakers are often brought in to teach/demonstrate their areas of particular expertise.

To cover the cost of materials and instructor fees, there is a nominal fee for courses. This is set at the ability level of participants to pay, and anyone who cannot afford it can enroll for free.

In Winter-Spring 2011, VGSD offered an expanded course on growing food AND starting a community garden. The experience of that course helped guide this curriculum. There are an increasing number of ‘regulars,’ i.e. course graduates who volunteer at garden builds, community outreach events, and vice versa.

### Community Outreach

VGSD participates in many outreach activities such as the annual Balboa Park EarthFair and other community events. This increases awareness of VGSD activities, volunteer opportunities, and the fundamental idea that it is easy and fun to grow healthy food.



## LESSON 2

### Finding and Obtaining Land

Cities largely control how land can be used within their borders, and cities respond in a variety of ways to community gardens. Many large cities in the U.S. have community garden programs through their Parks and Recreation department or a nonprofit with a vested interest in creating and maintaining community gardens. Other cities establish regulations that make it easy to start and run a community garden, but rely more on the initiative of its residents to carry out the work. On the other hand, some cities may inadvertently discourage or effectively ban community gardens by not incorporating community gardens into their planning efforts or treating community gardens as development projects.

The cities of San Diego County take a variety of approaches and some, like San Diego and National City, have responded rapidly to interest in community gardens by creating new, supportive regulations. In June 2011, the City of San Diego approved new land use regulations that allow community gardens by right in all residential and commercial zones—eliminating a number of regulatory barriers that had essentially created a de facto ban of community gardens. In the same month, National City approved its General Plan Update, which included policy support for innovative community garden and urban agriculture activities. The City of Chula Vista passed an ordinance in early 2010 that allows community gardens on public lands. The City of Escondido operates Adopt-a-Lot and Community Garden Programs that support the development of resident-managed community gardens. Escondido provides water, waste removal, and nighttime lighting at several of its gardens. In other cities, including Encinitas, El Cajon and Santee, community gardens are treated like a development and may assess thousands of dollars in fees to get the right permits (though the fees might potentially be waived).

Land use regulations can sometimes be hard to find and difficult to understand. Therefore, one of the best first steps in creating a garden is to get in contact with other community gardeners in your area, through the San Diego Community Garden Network (SDCGN) and the city's planning department. See the Community Resource Spotlight in this curriculum for more on SDCGN. If the rules seem too cumbersome or expensive, contact the offices of your local elected city officials. Explain to them your interest and what you've been told. City officials may also have knowledge of and access to public funds that could be used toward a community garden. If the regulations themselves are a problem, then it's important to let elected representatives know that fact and that constituents want to see the rules changed.

Finding land is a very important step in planning a community garden, but timing of this step can vary. You may want to look for land after you've organized your garden management group/club (covered in Lesson 1). This way, you can more easily assign people to particular tasks in the process and lighten the load on each team member. However, having a suitable piece of land picked out will likely help you raise more supporters, helpers, and money, so this step should come early in your planning. You may also try to work on both land and organization at the same time. In this lesson, we cover how to go about choosing a suitable piece of land and then gaining the rights to garden it.

#### Learning Objectives

1. Understand what a joint use garden is and what some of its benefits and challenges are.
2. Know strategies for finding an available piece of land and assessing its suitability.
3. Know the process for obtaining land through a lease or other agreement and the desirable components of this agreement.





## Joint Use Gardens

The term joint use garden refers to a community garden located on school property. Typically, there will be some plots designated for community residents and others for the school. A joint use agreement between the school district and whomever is managing the garden (a local nonprofit organization or government agency, for example) is created to detail the roles and responsibilities of the members of the joint use partnership – that is, those who are involved with the garden. Often, joint use means sequential use, meaning community members and the school use the garden at different times of the day, but in some cases use of the garden can overlap in time if both parties agree to that arrangement.

Joint use gardens offer many benefits to schools, gardeners, and the community, especially when land and resources are scarce. Community gardeners get a safe place to garden, access to healthy, affordable food, and the opportunity to positively contribute to their neighborhood by supporting student activities in the garden and beautifying school property. For many gardeners, this increases their sense of purpose in the garden. The school benefits from additional help maintaining the garden, especially during summer and other vacation periods. Teachers and students benefit from the added knowledge and accessibility of local residents with gardening expertise. A joint use garden provides a wonderful option for building new, positive relationships that strengthen community and promote garden sustainability.

The city of Denver, for example, has a thriving network of joint use gardens, most of which are managed by the nonprofit organization Denver Urban Gardens ([www.dug.org](http://www.dug.org)). DUG gardens have plots for school use and for individual gardeners, and gardeners have access to the garden throughout the school day. This allows them to interact with students, often providing informal gardening instruction to them. While there are differences between Denver and San Diego schools, Denver's joint use gardens provide a positive example for efforts in San Diego County.

If a joint use garden seems like a possible option for your community garden, talk with school leadership at the onset of the planning stage. A joint use garden requires additional thought, planning, and responsibility to ensure both parties' interests are met and that it is a positive and safe environment for students and residents. Given the intricacies of working with the school districts and schools, the primary lessons on joint use gardens can be found in *Gardening 301: How to Start and Sustain a School Gardening Program*. Assuming there's interest at the school in on-site gardening, and it has been determined through discussions with school leadership that the garden will be allowed, you'll need to take the following into consideration (more on each of these in *Gardening 301*):

- 1. Location of the garden:** Is there a prominent, visible place near school building(s) that is easily accessible to both students and community gardeners? Note: A garden that's highly visible from the street will increase community interest and decrease vandalism.
- 2. Community gardener access:** Will community gardeners have access to the garden during school hours, while children are present? If the answer is yes, they'll need to abide by the school's volunteer and background check requirements. In Denver, the cost of gardeners' background checks are covered by the district; in return, gardeners agree to help out when classes visit the garden.
- 3. Variety of goals:** Community gardening requires tolerance and flexibility, especially in a joint use garden. When gardeners sign up for a plot in a joint use garden, they have to remember that they're gardening where children will be present; this means that sometimes, garden beds may be trampled and plants may be damaged. The trade-off is the opportunity to interact with students and have a positive influence on their gardening experiences.

4. **Maintenance:** Who will maintain the common areas of the garden and the school plots during school vacations? Will community gardeners be required to help with the school garden (such as planting a row for student nutrition education or the school meal program) or will this be optional?

## Finding Land

This section covers the types of property you might consider placing a garden and the characteristics that make it a good option for a garden.

## Types of Land

1. **School land:** As described in the previous section on joint use gardens, there can be many benefits, but also added challenges to creating a garden on school property. Community agencies or residents interested in creating a garden on school property will have to address concerns about liability, security, maintenance, and roles and responsibilities in order to share land. You should consider whether the local school is the best possible location for a community garden prior to pursuing this option. Please refer to the previous section and the school garden curriculum for more information on this process.
2. **Faith community and nonprofit organization land:** Faith communities and nonprofits (such as food banks) can offer gardeners a good place to grow food for several reasons. The landowner is already identifiable. Generally, the faith community or nonprofit presents an existing infrastructure and community base you can tap into for potential support and resources. Staff, members, and constituents might be interested in gardening, and they would be a natural place to start for organizational recruiting. The faith and nonprofit organization might also be able to act as a fiscal sponsor, insurance-holder, etc. to ease the process.
3. **Privately owned lots:** Vacant lots may be owned by a private owner, and that owner's willingness to allow the land to become a garden will vary. Private ownership can be a benefit to you, or it may make the land unavailable, depending on the attitude and desires of the owner. Obtaining an acceptable lease requires advocating for the garden and negotiating acceptable terms. A lease is a binding contract and both the garden entity and the landlord are obligated to follow the terms of the lease. It is important to review the terms and be sure they are acceptable to your fellow gardeners.
4. **Government (city or county) owned land:** Governments often have land that is unused or available for public use on the site of another government project, such as Parks and Recreation department property. The government agency may be willing to develop a land use agreement with residents for the establishment of community gardens. To pursue this option, identify the department managing the piece of land and make personal contact with a department representative to present your idea.

## Land Considerations

Search your desired neighborhood for possible pieces of land. **Try to choose several possible locations, because some will likely not work out; having multiple options will increase your chance of success!** The following is a list of things that should be taken into consideration when selecting community garden sites. Each item is followed by a statement explaining its importance and to assess for it. You'll need access to the site itself and to some city resources to assess all considerations.

1. **Property Owner:** It is illegal to use a piece of land without permission from the owner, therefore, you'll need to know who owns it and whether they are amenable to leasing the land or agreeing to let you use it for a garden. If the owner is not easily identifiable, as in the case of a school or church property, you have a few options for finding out who the owner is:





- a. Real estate agent. They can easily access a report through a service on the MLS (multiple listing service). The report will give you additional information such as last sales price, lot size and zoning- although all the information may not be accurate.
- b. Fee-based computer program: [www.intelius.com/property-check.html](http://www.intelius.com/property-check.html)
- c. Assessor's office (phone numbers and address below). A representative will give you information over the phone for up to 3 properties at a time. Usually the only contact information is a name and address. They do not collect email addresses or phone numbers. The phone number is below. You can also walk in to any of the 5 branch offices located around the county. The addresses and more information about the assessors office can be found online at [arcc.co.san-diego.ca.us/locations.aspx](http://arcc.co.san-diego.ca.us/locations.aspx)

The County Administration Center  
1600 Pacific Highway, Suite 103  
San Diego, CA 92101  
Mail Stop: A-4  
General Information and Ownership: (619) 236-3771  
Toll Free Numbers: Calling from East County - (619) 441-1427  
Calling from North County - (760) 631-7916 or (858) 538-9384

2. **Sun:** Ideally, you'll have full sun (6-8 hrs/day), but having some shade structures under which gardeners can rest and meet is also important. You can always add a shade structure if one does not already exist.
  - a. Shade/ Partial Shade/ Full Sun (6-8hrs): Most food crops require 6-8 hours of direct sun each day. Observe the site at 3 points in the day (8am, 12pm, and 4pm) to get a full assessment of shading issues. You can create a sketch (like the one attached) that approximates the shaded areas at different times during the day.
  - b. Shading Structure Description: Are there existing shade structures? Do the shade structures create full shade (buildings) or partial shade (trees)? Observe and note on your sketched parcel map.
  - c. Orientation: Our location in the Northern Hemisphere places most of our natural sunlight from the South, so direction of the growing area from shading structures can affect plant growth. Use a compass or map to determine which direction your parcel faces and what direction the sunny area(s) is from shading structures.
3. **Soil:** Most importantly, you'll need to test the soil for heavy metals and toxins to know if it's safe to garden there. This is especially true in vacant or unused lots where the prior use was auto-related or unknown, but it is important in all cases. Soil issues other than heavy metals can generally be corrected through soil amendments.
  - a. Texture (sand/silt/clay/organic matter): The size of your soil particles (sand, silt, clay are sized largest to smallest) and the presence or absence of organic matter will determine drainage of your soil and availability of nutrients for plants. Use a soil shake test and/or squeeze test to determine the makeup of your soil. A soil shake test puts soil in a jar with water and lets the different size particles separate. A squeeze test is conducted by putting a palm-full of soil in your hand and squeezing it to visually assess particle size makeup.

**For a shake test**, place a cup of your garden soil in a clean quart glass jar, then fill with water. Shake well, then let sit for several hours or ideally overnight. The particles will separate into layers. Observe proportions of sand (largest particles; bottom), silt (medium particles; middle), and clay (smallest particles; top).

**For a squeeze test**, take a small handful, wet it and rub a little between your fingers. Now squeeze the soil into a ball. Sandy soils feel gritty. Silty soils feel slippery. Clay soil feels slippery and sticky. A good mixed soil will form a ball, but not easily form a ribbon shape when squeezed between thumb and forefinger. A clay soil will easily form a ribbon about 2 inches long and hold the shape, but a very sandy soil will not form a ball. While most soils in their natural proportions will need amendment, these tests will give you a good sense of what type of soil lies beneath your garden and how well it will drain. Very sandy soil will drain most readily.

- b. Drainage: Ideally, your soil will retain enough water that plants have a chance to access it, but not hold so much water that the soil has no air. Plant roots need both air and water in the soil.

Do a soil drainage test to determine whether the soil is wet, moderate, or dry:

Dig holes a foot or more deep in different places in your garden site, fill each with water, and after it drains out fill the hole again. Time how long it takes the water to drain out a second time. Drainage in 1-4 hours is best, 4-8 hours is acceptable, 8-12 hours is marginal, and more than 12 hours is not good. If the soil takes more than 10 hours, you can try several techniques to increase drainage (adding compost/organic material; adding gypsum, which breaks up bonds between clay particles and sodium; and tilling deeply with a rototiller).

- c. Depth of Topsoil: Topsoil is the layer of earth where nutrients and water are most accessible to roots; this is usually the darker top layer of soil. With a yardstick, measure dirt to the point where the darker soil ends. If it is only a few inches deep you will most likely need to add lots of organic material such as compost and fine mulch to increase the nutrients available to plants.
- d. Compact/Loose: Soil compaction occurs when pressure from the impact of people walking, cars, tractors, etc., presses soil down and removes air pockets and pores between soil particles. This makes it harder for roots to grow and soil organisms to live. Stick a marking flag into soil at several points. Note: the farther the flag goes down into the soil the less compact it is.
- e. Nutrient levels: The primary nutrients plants need in order to grow are Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K), but several less abundant nutrients are also important. Send away a soil sample for a nutrient assessment or get a simple N-P-K testing kit at a local garden supply store. Two possible options for send-away soil testing are the University of Massachusetts ([www.umass.edu/soiltest](http://www.umass.edu/soiltest)) and Wallace Labs ([www.bettersoils.com](http://www.bettersoils.com)). While we don't endorse any particular service, these are two that VGSD has used and liked in the past.
- f. pH level: The previous uses of the land can move the soil's pH away from neutral (7 on the pH scale) toward basic (>7) or acidic (<7), which affects plant growth. Send away a soil sample to test pH or get a simple pH testing kit at a local garden supply store. See above soil lab suggestions.
- g. Lead or Other Toxins: Toxins in the soil can affect plant growth, but more importantly, they can end up in the vegetables you grow, making the vegetables unsafe to eat. Send away a sample for toxin assessment. See above soil lab suggestions.

4. **Topography**: Ideally the land you identify for a garden will be flat for ease of growing. However, if you think you may need to terrace, approximating your slope will help you determine how many terraces you would need – terraces can be about two feet high. NOTE: It's important to consult with an experienced engineer or landscape designer in designing the terrace. Otherwise, you may inadvertently cause soil erosion.

- a. Flat or sloped: Measure the degree of slope on the property slated for the development of the community garden, or make a general estimate from off the property. See supplement "Calculating Slope" for a description of how to measure on the property.

5. **Water Access**: You'll need access to water for your garden. Depending on its location, you may need to tap into the same supply source as a house or facility that would be located on the property (most often city water), at least in the short term, to water plants. Rainwater collection is a good long-term goal, but it is often a supplemental water source, particularly in San Diego due to our arid climate.

- a. On-site/Neighboring Apartment/Home/Business/Church Type and Proximity to Garden and Future Plots: Bring the plot address to the local water provider to determine whether a water hook-up and meter already exists on the site. Installing a new meter is not hard, but in most areas is extremely expensive. A water meter generally costs \$10,000 and up and takes time to get installed. It is best to find a site with an existing water source or a partner willing to supply the water on the garden's behalf. If someone



allows you to use their water, you can arrange to pay a flat fee. Preferably, install a submeter to keep track of the garden's water usage, then, you can pay for what you actually use.

6. **Shed or Tool Box Site:** You'll need a lockable shed for tools and other supplies. Tool sheds are fairly inexpensive to build or purchase. However, you will need to check with your local jurisdiction to make sure the size of the shed doesn't exceed building requirements before making your final selection or determination. Examine the site for possible locations. Familiarize yourself with local building codes available at [www.sandiego.gov/development-services](http://www.sandiego.gov/development-services). Building codes may affect the size and placement of your shed and other structures.
7. **Composting Site:** A compost pile is a must for a community garden. Compost made from plant matter produced in the garden (weeds, nonedible fruit and vegetable parts, food waste, etc.) is a valuable resource that gardeners can add back into their soil to increase fertility. Composting also reduces the amount of green waste in landfills. The breakdown of food and green waste in landfills is the largest human-related contributor to methane gas emissions, a greenhouse gas. Composting creates a closed loop cycle for the garden, reusing garden waste to grow more and better quality produce. Compost piles do best in shaded areas, without too much brush around that could house critters. Examine the site for existing or possible locations. Sites should be shady, but ideally, not right next to any seating/resting areas. Plan your compost area well to prevent rodents and unpleasant odors. See Gardening 101 for more on composting.
8. **Estimated Number of Plots:** You'll need to have a general estimate of how many gardeners you expect to garden, both in the short and long term. A garden with fewer than 100 plots is generally easier to manage. Plots can be any size, from 4x8 to 20x30 feet, but often range from 10x10 to 20x20 feet. Measure the useable space and divide by your intended plot size. The number of plots will be smaller than the resulting number because you must leave room for paths between plots (at least 3 feet wide for a wheelbarrow). See if the estimated number of plots is similar to your intended number of gardeners. Plot size will also be an important discussion in your garden-planning group.
9. **Visibility (safety and publicity):** Vandalism and theft are much less likely to take place at a garden if neighbors can see the garden easily from their homes. Additionally, a prominent community garden can promote neighborhood beautification and increased community interest and participation. Walk around outside the space to assess whether it's easy to see into the space.
10. **Fencing:** Community gardens may be fenced or left open depending on the desires of its gardeners and city requirements. Fencing is sometimes used for beautification, or as a strategy to prevent theft, vandalism, or pests. City land use departments can provide information on whether community gardens must have a fence, lock, etc. Observe the space to determine whether it is already fenced or if there is space to build one. Talk to garden team members to determine whether a fence is wanted if the city does not require it.
11. **Parking:** Parking may not be a problem depending on the location. It is generally best to draw on people within walking distance in the operation of a community garden, but it's good to think about possible events that may draw more people to the garden and require parking accommodations. This is a key aspect of being a good and considerate neighbor, which is always important, but especially when the community garden concept is new. Walk around outside the space to assess parking availability and posted parking regulations.
12. **Power:** While drip irrigation emitters on timers often use batteries, electrical power may be necessary for lighting and the use of power tools. It's good to know the availability of power. Check the space carefully for outlets, and if it's private property, you can talk with the owner about access and possible costs.





- 13. Neighborhood:** Garden maintenance is the responsibility of those who use it; therefore, it is important that gardeners have interest in it, feel comfortable in the space, and are committed to its upkeep.
- a. **Interest/Involvement Level of Neighbors:** Having sufficient interest to keep the garden maintained is of the utmost importance, and is really a step in the organizing, rather than the land-selection process. The sustainability of a community garden hinges a lot on the maintenance and appearance of the garden. Neighborhoods want a project that helps beautify their community. Outreach can take many forms- see Lesson 1 for the steps to take in conducting outreach and assessing interest from the community.
  - b. **Demographic Profile:** Get to know the interested children, families, young adults, and older adults to determine what features they need in the garden (kids’ play area, wheelchair accessibility, etc.) and their particular interest in the project. For example, a neighborhood of apartment-dwellers might have more interest in growing produce in a community garden than people with large backyards.
  - c. **Crime:** A community garden can help alleviate some crime problems by promoting positive activity in the community, but the space needs to be safe enough that people feel comfortable getting it started. Talk with neighbors to assess whether they would feel comfortable traveling to and spending time in this public space.
  - d. **Animals:** Animals like rabbits, gophers, dogs, and deer can eat crops or damage property, so if you know the type of critters that exist in the area, you can help prevent them from eating your produce. Spend some time in the neighborhood to observe, watch for animal evidence on the property, and ask neighbors.
- 14. Site History:** History will tell you a lot about what type of soil or the pollutants that might be found on particular property. When you go to the city to determine ownership, also ask for history of ownership.
- 15. Vehicle Access:** You will likely need to bring a truck in to deliver compost, soil, mulch, or other garden resources. It is important to ensure there is a space wide enough to allow a vehicle to access the garden area. Observe for accessibility.

<b>OBSERVE FROM OUTSIDE</b>	<b>OBSERVE ON PROPERTY</b>	<b>OTHER RESOURCES</b>
SUN SHADE DIRECTION VISIBILITY PARKING NEIGHBORHOOD RESTROOM ACCESS	SOIL CHARACTERISTICS SLOPE TOOL SHED SITE COMPOSTING SITE APPROX # OF PLOTS FENCING ELECTRICITY	OWNERSHIP SOIL TEST (SEE ATTACHMENT FOR SUGGESTED LABS) WATER ACCESS (WATER SERVICE PROVIDER) HISTORY OF PREVIOUS SITE USE



## Obtaining Land

Follow these steps to obtain the rights to build a community garden on your chosen piece of land.

Contact the owner: Use the techniques mentioned earlier in this lesson to determine who owns the piece of land. Then, write a letter to the owner asking permission to use the site for a community garden. Follow up with a phone call about a week later.

1. Emphasize the benefits of the garden to the community and owner (keeping the site clean and weed-free) in your communication.
2. It's good to have clear goals for the garden at this point. If you're doing garden group organizing at the same time as finding land options, you'll be working on this already. You can present these goals to the land owner(s). You may also have several meetings with the site owner to share your vision and plan.
3. Prepare carefully—anticipate likely questions and concerns and be prepared with answers.

After you've gotten a positive or "maybe" response, draft a lease agreement. The Plan's "Ground Rules: A Legal Toolkit for Community Gardens" provides a great resource and sample documents for this type of work.

1. Aim for a minimum 3-year agreement, or preferably 5-10 year. A community garden will take lots of time, effort, and resources right at the beginning, and ideally the results of those initial inputs will last and build for many years. With a very short lease, you may end up wasting your initial effort if you lose use of the land a year later.
2. Offer a "hold harmless" clause, so the owner is not liable for any injuries that occur at the garden. Sometimes groups can lease a garden site for \$1 per year.

You may consider purchasing (as a group) liability insurance, or the landowner may require it.

1. It is often helpful if not required to have a fiscal sponsor such as a church or nonprofit, or a person in the garden group who's willing to act as the fiscal sponsor. This person or entity may be willing to extend insurance coverage to the garden group to provide liability coverage.
2. If you do not have a fiscal sponsor that will put you under their policy, contact the SDCGN. The SDCGN is currently working on developing a master policy that will provide a lower cost alternative to purchasing your own policy.
3. Your garden group may also become a nonprofit itself, but this takes significant time and effort.

After you've signed the lease, it's a good idea to maintain regular, positive contact with the owner and send updates and photos on the development of the garden's progress.

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## COMMUNITY RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT



### **SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK**

March 2011

“Whether praised by the president or an anonymous gardener, gardens have been lauded as symbols of hope for a better, more cooperative, and more beautiful, healthy world.”

— Laura J. Lawson,

“City Bountiful: A Century of Community Gardening in America”, 2005

The mission of the San Diego Community Garden Network (Network) is to create a healthy community garden movement in the County of San Diego and assist in the formation of community gardens through education, technical assistance and by linking gardeners.

The Network views community gardening as a method for building and empowering communities and for promoting social and economic justice, good health and nutrition, access to healthy, fresh local food, a sustainable urban environment and breaking down cultural, ethnic and generational barriers. The Network also envisions community gardens as partners with other groups working for similar goals.



## SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK

### The goals of the Network are to:

- I. Provide support services, technical expertise and educational programs to assist in the development of new community gardens that share the Network's values and are viewed as an asset by their surrounding communities.
- II. Foster the development of support links within the garden community and with community partners, including the business community, nonprofits, schools, health providers, community leaders, government and the general public.
- III. Promote the creation of a community identity for San Diego community gardens and increase public awareness of the contribution gardens make to their neighborhoods by developing a website and garden blog, organizing garden activities such as garden tours, potlucks, workshops, speaker events and by maintaining a list of community gardens.
- IV. Support environmentally and people friendly garden practices and the expansion of green spaces in our cities.



### Where we are today

Two years in the making, the Network became a nonprofit corporation in September 2010 and, with funding from the San Diego Master Gardener Association, has filed for nonprofit tax status. The Network is working to create a master liability insurance policy for community gardens, is currently providing technical assistance to community garden startups around the county and has a website at [www.SDCGN.org](http://www.SDCGN.org) and a Facebook page.

### Get involved

Whether you are currently a community gardener, would like to become one, or are a friend of community gardens it is your participation and support that will create a vibrant community garden movement in San Diego. Volunteer opportunities abound. The Network needs people with experience in all of the following: gardening, web site maintenance, fundraising, accounting/finance, writing skills, teaching, advocacy, carpentry, public speaking, irrigation, composting, cooking, event planning and research. Whether any of these sounds like you today, getting involved will help you build these skills through hands on experience.

## LESSON 3

### Budgeting and Fundraising

Community garden start-up typically costs around \$2500, but can be \$5000 and up depending on size of the garden, selected amenities, and price of water. After start-up, you can expect to spend a minimum of \$1000 per year to keep it going. Maintenance costs depend on rent and other operating fees, garden size, water use, insurance needs, program costs, and deferred building and garden expansion costs. This may sound like a lot, but many costs can be defrayed through donations (e.g., soil, lumber, trees, seeds) and in-kind services (e.g., volunteer time, garden expertise). The key to fundraising is: don't be afraid to ask. With careful budgeting and planning, a good presentation and persistent yet polite fundraising approach, a garden group can be very successful in building a strong foundation for a garden. A well-developed communications plan will also help create the legitimacy and buzz necessary to attract donors to the garden.

#### Learning Objectives

1. Know the basics of creating a garden budget.
2. Understand why and how to create a communications plan for the garden.
3. Know the basics of successful small-scale fundraising.

#### Budgeting

Budgeting should be a primary role of the core garden group. The group should create a detailed, easy-to-read budget that includes all expected costs both during and after the development of a garden plan. Using the garden plan and budget line items as a guide, research the potential cost of supplies by searching the internet and calling around to local vendors. Don't be afraid to search several sources for supplies to make sure you get the best available price.

Your expected expenditures will help you determine what your plot fee will be. This is the annual fee that each gardener will pay for his or her plot. When determining this fee, it's also important to take into account your knowledge of likely gardeners' ability to pay- the fee should not be more than is reasonable for the community members, even if the extra funds could be used in the garden.

A clear, well thought-out budget has many benefits. It allows gardeners to:

1. build a wish list to present to potential donors (you can publish this wishlist, and even make a gift registry at a supplies store for donors to buy things on their own)
2. minimize confusion and complaints about how money is used
3. allow for easier transitions if and when management of the garden changes
4. highlight their organization and professionalism in the operation of the garden with the surrounding community and potential donors
5. track actual costs and update regularly



#### ACTIVITY 1

**Brainstorm any additional benefits that can come from having a detailed garden budget. List other items that might be needed for the garden and require budget consideration. Budgeting can be tedious, so it's good to know why you're doing it!**





## Calculating Garden Costs

Some considerations on calculating supply costs include:

1. To calculate your budget for soil (if needed), measure the width, length, and depth of the space you need to fill, making sure all measurements are in the same units (feet; note that depth may be in partial feet, like 0.5 feet if it's 6 inches deep). Multiply these three measurements to determine cubic feet of soil. Since soil, compost, mulch, and other soil amendments are typically sold in cubic yards, divide this number by 27, the number of cubic feet in a cubic yard.
2. To calculate your budget for fencing, measure the perimeter of your garden so you know how much fence you need. You can bring this number to companies to get an estimate of price based on desired height. If the resulting price of the fence is too high for your budget, consider a lower fence or no fence at all (if zoning allows for that).

## Ongoing Garden Costs

The following are some things to know about your expected ongoing costs to run the garden. These will likely be large components of your garden budget.

1. **Water:** By far the biggest expense for most gardens is the water unless you are lucky enough to have someone else paying for it. If you have a meter on the property and no plumbed structures, in most jurisdictions you can apply for irrigation rates. This will save you the cost of sewer fees. If you don't have a water meter you will probably need access to water from a neighbor and in most cases it is a good idea to install a submeter to determine the actual cost. If you are connecting to a water source on a property that pays sewer fees you can anticipate paying sewer fees as well.

Calculating water costs requires some research. A 3-year review (2007-9) of the water use at a 20,000 square foot coastal community garden in San Diego, showed that usage was an average of 900 gallons or 1.25 HCF (hundred cubic feet) of water per day. Average monthly use for the garden was approximately 25,000 gallons or about 33 HCF per month. To determine your expected cost you will need to either review the water bills in the same area or contact the water department to learn the local water rates. Remember to ask for irrigation rates if you think the garden may be eligible. Remember, we live in a desert. Water is expensive and rates go up on a regular basis, so it is best to use the most efficient, water-wise gardening methods available and be sure the garden rules reflect these practices. Encourage hand watering and drip irrigation and watering only while present in the garden as well as rainwater harvesting. In general it is a good idea to discourage the use of timers in individual plots although they may be suitable for deep watering of common orchards within the garden.



WATER CONVERSIONS					
UNIT			UNIT	MEASURES	
1	CUBIC FOOT	=	7.48	GALLONS	VOLUME
1	HCF (HUNDRED CUBIC FEET)	=	7.48	GALLONS	VOLUME
1	ACRE	=	43,560	SQUARE FEET	AREA
1	ACRE FOOT*	=	43,560	CUBIC FEET	VOLUME
1	ACRE FOOT*	=	325,829	GALLONS	VOLUME

\*Standard measure of agricultural irrigation water; equals one acre covered by one foot of water

- Insurance:** Depending on the circumstances you may need liability insurance for the garden.
- Improvements and Repairs:** It is reasonable to assume you will need to budget for repairs, improvements or possible expansion.
- Administrative Costs:** These can vary from none to significant if the garden is organized as a 501c3 nonprofit. If you've partnered with an organization, such as a school, church, or nonprofit for your land and/or assistance, they will likely charge some overhead (often 10-15% of the lease cost) for their own administration and operating expenses. Be sure you understand whether they have this policy from the beginning and incorporate it into your budget.
- Lease:** Occasionally a garden may rent the land they are on for more than a nominal sum.
- Events:** Many community garden members enjoy sponsoring events. There is usually some cost associated with events although they are also an opportunity for fundraising.

### Communications Plan

A communications plan is a guide for presenting your garden and your goals as a community organization to the public; this is the organization's public relations and outreach plan. This topic is included in the lesson on budgeting and fundraising because a good communications plan can greatly improve your fundraising effort, by virtue of having a clear message and simply getting the word out about the garden. It can also help organize your garden group around common ideas and goals for the garden.

### Crafting Your Message

Your message to the public should be clear, consistent, and simple; common themes should be repeated several times to ensure the public remembers your key points. This message can be used in local articles about the garden, in short news segments, in cocktail party conversations, with neighbors when they stop by, etc. The purpose of having a message is to promote others to perceive the garden as you perceive it and its potential benefits, without confusion that can occur when people hear about the garden from multiple sources. The core garden group should determine the main ideas it would like to communicate with the public. The following can help you determine that message:



1. **Target audience:** Determining whom your message targets will help determine what kind of language to use. Your message should use language that is familiar and meaningful to your target audience. For example, if you're trying to appeal to neighbors of the garden, the message should highlight the gardens benefits to the local community and tie into common hopes that neighbors share for their area.
2. **Goal of the message:** The core garden group needs to decide on the purpose and goal of its communications. Consider whether you want your audience to:
  - a. join the garden
  - b. advocate for community gardens
  - c. visit the garden
  - d. donate money or supplies to the gardenEven if the goal of the message is not fundraising, it may result in donations because your communications are increasing opportunities for potential donors to hear about your project. Additionally, the venue of your message will likely vary (e.g., city council meeting, neighborhood association meeting, conversation with potential donor), but the overall goal of the message should remain the same every time.
3. **Branding package:** It's helpful to have several pre-crafted versions of your message: project summary, project synopsis in paragraph form, project slogan, you're your organization's logo. The packaged statements and logo can help your group communicate its message quickly and systematically. The items can also be used individually when appropriate.

### Communicating Your Message

Once you have a message that you want to get out into the public, your communications plan can also help you determine who will present the message and in what venues. Presentation of the message may not end up going exactly as you plan, but thinking about your goals for communication will ease the process.

1. **Brainstorm all possible media outlets** and opportunities to get the message out. These might be online social media sites (Facebook, Twitter) local TV and radio news stations, local newspapers, message boards, events, newsletters, brochures, promotional videos, emails, website, print ads, etc.
2. **Prioritize media outlets** based on available connections and available funds. Ask whether anyone in the group knows members of the media.
3. **Delegate pursuit of these different prioritized venues** to those in the group with the most interest and ideally experience with media. Set deadlines among the group for checking back in with updates on each outlet.

### Fundraising

This section is adapted from the LA Master Gardeners-Common Grounds "Community Gardens Start-up Guide" and Wasatch "From Neglected Parcels to Community Gardens" guide mentioned in previous lessons.

Gardeners are often charged plot fees for participation in a community garden. In addition to plot fees, it's likely that additional funds will need to be raised to cover costs, especially when getting started.

### Guiding Principles

There are always donations to be found, you just have to look in the right places and maintain a positive attitude. Use the following general guidelines to increase your success and prevent frustration.

1. **Don't be afraid to ask:** If you don't ask, you won't get the donation. As a core group, be creative and thorough in brainstorming a list of possible donors, including friends, gardeners, neighbors, faith communities, local businesses (both garden related and not), and nonprofits. Include companies that might donate a particular thing (like unused seeds from a seed company or lumber from a home improvement store), in addition to or instead of money.

2. **Be patient, persistent, and polite:** Funds may not pour in overnight, so it's important to have patience and keep trying. Follow up with potential donors about a week after your initial request if you haven't heard a response. It's ok to keep in touch with people and businesses who initially turned you down and make a second request a year or more later. Always be polite in all interactions, both formal and informal, with donors and potential donors. Always say 'thank you' regardless of the response to your request.
3. **Dress for success:** Present organization and care in yourself, the garden, and the donation needs. People generally wish to donate to organizations when they are confident that their donations will be used carefully and for a purpose they support. It therefore helps to communicate the garden goals, target audience, benefits, and needs in an attractive, appealing way. A sloppy presentation or brochure does not instill confidence in donors even if your goals are commendable.

### Nonprofit Status for Tax-deductible Donations

Donations are only tax-deductible if they are made to an organization with 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. You have two options to make this a possibility:

1. Apply for 501(c)3 status for the garden. Filing initially costs about \$700 and it can take up to a year to complete the process. The nonprofit will also have recurring administrative costs including insurance for the Board of Directors, maintaining a separate bank account, as well as accounting and tax-filing expenses.
2. Affiliate the garden with an existing nonprofit organization like a faith community that can accept donations on behalf of the garden and administer funds. This is much faster than gaining 501(c)3 status and the garden can benefit from the organization's existing structure and network. It also means the finances of the garden are not independent and nonprofits usually a charge a fee or percentage for acting as another organization's fiscal agent.

### Approaches to Asking

Using a variety of fundraising approaches rather than a single approach will increase your success in fundraising. Just like an organic garden relies on diversity of plants to have a strong, resilient system, diversity in fundraising approaches will create more chances to appeal to your potential donors. The following are the types of approaches you might use:

1. **Direct mail appeals:** Direct mail requires that you create an appealing, simple donation-request packet that is, ideally, delivered personally to individuals and businesses; however, it can be mailed. The packet should include a personalized request letter, a wish list, and a brochure on the project with goals and photos of the community garden members at the garden or desired site. It should also outline recognition packages available to sponsors for their donations, such as placement of their logo on the community garden sign or verbal acknowledgement at special events. Develop a schedule to call or email potential funders if you have not yet heard back from them after a week.
2. **Survey letter:** Another direct approach is to create a survey for local residents and businesses to gather their input on the garden. This can be delivered along with a donation request, or separately as an initial contact. It can start with non-donation questions such as the following:
  - a. "Do you support the creation of a community garden in your neighborhood?"
  - b. "What type of garden would you like to see in your neighborhood (Youth Garden/Food Bank Garden/Educational Garden/Neighborhood Garden/Flower Garden, etc.)?"
  - c. "What type of programs would you like to see the garden organization offer?"
 These questions can be followed by questions on their willingness to donate.





3. **Door-to-door solicitation:** It's generally disliked as a strategy, but it can be very effective. Door-to-door presenters should have plenty of information (brochures, wish lists) available to leave at homes. They should really listen to the concerns and suggestions of the people they visit, be polite, and always thank people for their time regardless of whether they donate.
4. **Fundraising events:** Possible ideas include car washes, craft or bake sales, benefit concerts or lectures, auctions and raffles of donated items, plant sales, garden tours, and harvest festivals. Additionally, garden members can create and sell garden cookbooks and hold workshops taught by volunteer experts. Be careful not to overspend on the events or wear out your core group with all of the logistics. Make it easy to donate at the event, with a donation can or box. The more your event is tied to your mission, the greater likelihood of success.
5. **Grant proposals:** Grant writing is generally a more feasible approach for relatively established nonprofits. Most grantors require that the grantee be a nonprofit or government agency, rather than an individual or for-profit company. Grant writing takes research to target likely grantors, careful writing, time, persistence, and repeated attempts. Nonetheless, it can yield high payoffs. Please refer to one of the resources in the reference section for more information on effective grant writing.



## ACTIVITY 2

**Brainstorm the types of fundraising activities that would be most comfortable to your garden group. Try to begin developing a fundraising strategy.**

### References

1. Los Angeles Master Gardeners, UCCE, and Common Ground. 2001.  
"Community garden start-up guide."
2. Wasatch Community Gardens.  
"From neglected parcels to community gardens: a handbook."

## COMMUNITY RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT



### **AMERICAN COMMUNITY GARDENING ASSOCIATION**

The American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) is a bi-national nonprofit membership organization with a mission to build community by increasing and enhancing community gardening and greening across the United States and Canada. To achieve this mission ACGA facilitates the formation and expansion of state and regional community gardening networks; develops resources in support of community gardening; and, encourages research and educational programs. At the ACGA website, [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org), you can find many resources for learning about community gardening, find out about trainings and conferences offered by ACGA, and connect with other community gardeners.

In its community development and gardening training course, offered periodically and in locations across the US and Canada, ACGA presents the following ten principles that it believes can help guide development of a successful community garden.



## AMERICAN COMMUNITY GARDENING ASSOCIATION

### Growing Community Principles

1. Engage and empower those affected by the garden at every stage of planning, building, and managing the garden project.
2. Build on community strengths and assets.
3. Embrace and value human differences and diversity. Promote equity.
4. Foster relationships among families, neighbors, and members of the large community.
5. Honor ecological systems and biodiversity.
6. Foster environmental, community and personal health and transformation.
7. Promote active citizenship and political empowerment.
8. Promote continuous community and personal learning by sharing experience and knowledge.
9. Integrate community gardens with other community development strategies.
10. Design for long-term success and the broadest possible impact.

Find more about ACGA and its various educational offerings at [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org).



# LESSON 4

## Garden Design and Supplies

Every community garden will have elements that make it unique due to the makeup of its gardeners, neighborhoods, and physical garden space, but they will also have commonalities. This lesson will give you a sense of these elements and how they might differ for your particular garden.

### Learning Objectives

1. Know common community garden design elements.
2. Know several optional elements that can create an enjoyable space.
3. Know the common supplies that you will need.



### ACTIVITY 1

**As a class or in small groups, visit a functioning community garden to observe the design and elements. You could visit the same garden as before or a different garden, but this time think about what elements and designs seem to work well. Try to visit the garden at a time when you can speak with gardeners about their views on the garden.**

### Common Garden Elements

This list and text is adapted with permission from the LA Master Gardeners-Common Grounds “Community Gardens Start-up Guide.”

1. **At least 15 garden plots** should be assigned to community members. These should be placed in the sunniest part of the garden. Without plots for individual participation, it is very difficult to achieve long-term community involvement. Raised bed plots, which are more expensive, should be no more than 4 feet wide (to facilitate access to plants from the sides without stepping into the bed), and between 8 and 12 feet long. (It is advisable to construct your raised beds in sizes that are found in readily available lumber, or that can be cut without too much waste.) In-ground plots can be any size from 4 x 8 to 20 x 30 feet, but are often in the range of 10 x 10 to 20 x 20 feet. Pathways between beds and plots should be least 3 to 4 feet wide to allow space for wheelbarrows. The soil in both raised bed and in-ground plots should be amended with aged compost or manure to improve its fertility and increase its organic matter content. Organic matter provides nutrients to plants and food and structure for soil organisms that also aid plant growth.
2. **Pathways** between plots and other garden infrastructure should accommodate a wheelbarrow and/or wheelchair and should be at least 3 feet wide. Depending on your municipality’s requirements and/or the desires of the landowner, you may need to make the pathways compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which may require paving or fine gravel. Speak with the landowner early on about accessibility requirements to be sure you’re in compliance with any mandatory regulations.
3. **A simple irrigation system** with one hose bib or faucet for every four or five plots. Hand watering with a hose is the most practical and affordable method for individual plots (it’s almost a necessity when you start plants from seed). Drip and soaker-hose irrigation can be used in all areas of the garden for both transplanted and established plants, but especially for deep-rooted fruit trees and ornamentals. Local Master Gardeners and/or garden center professionals can assist with irrigation system design. You can also consider designating specific times each day to turn on the main water source—meaning plots can only be watered during these times. This strategy can encourage community building by concentrating gardening times, and can also encourage efficient water use.





4. **Fence** around the perimeter with a drive-through gate. The purpose of the fence is not to create a sense of exclusivity, but rather to mark off the garden area for easy recognition and respect for the space. The height of the fence can vary and depends on a variety of factors including cost, location, decisions made by the membership, requirements of the land owner, local code, and need to exclude vertebrate pests. The fence does not have to be an eyesore if it is decorated with welcoming signs and either edible vines or ornamental perennial plants such as bougainvillea.
5. **Tool shed** or large tool chest for storing tools, supplies, and materials. You'll need a place to store shared supplies for the garden, that gardeners can take out easily, use while they're in the garden, and then return. You could also build a shed out of wood, chain-link fence, or other materials.
6. **Benches** or picnic table in a shady area where gardeners can sit, relax, and take a break. If there is no natural shade, a simple arbor can be constructed from wood or pipe, and planted with chayote squash, bougainvillea, grapes, kiwis, or some other vine. You could also build a palapa or other shade structure.
7. **Sign with the garden's name**, sponsors, and a contact person's phone number for more information. If your community is bilingual or multilingual, include information in all primary languages for the community.
8. **Shared composting area** for the community gardeners. Wood pallets are easy to come by and, when stood on-end, attached in a U-shape, and the inside covered with galvanized rabbit-wire, make excellent compost bins. See Gardening 101 for more on composting.

### Optional Elements

This list and text is adapted with permission from the LA Master Gardeners-Common Grounds "Community Gardens Start-up Guide." It identifies elements that are not essential but will create a more enjoyable community garden space.

1. **Small fruit tree orchard**, whose care and harvest can be shared by all the garden members. The orchard can also create shade for people and shade-loving plants.
2. A **water fountain** to increase comfort of gardeners and visitors. This can be a simple drinking fountain attachment to a hose bib (or faucet) you can purchase at a hardware store.
3. A **greenhouse or propagation table** for germinating seeds and propagating new plants from cuttings.
4. **Perimeter landscaping** for beneficial insects, aesthetics, and protection of the garden. This can focus on drought tolerant flowers and shrubs, plants that attract butterflies and hummingbirds, or roses and other flowers suitable for cutting bouquets. Herbs are also well-suited to perimeter landscaping and help to create barriers to unwanted pest insects who do not like the smell of their essential oils. Be sure to include guidelines for maintenance of these common plants in the gardener contract or garden guidelines.
5. A **children's area** for entertainment while guardians work or meet. This can include special small plots for children, a sandbox, and play equipment. Ideally this should be adjacent to a shaded seating area so parents can rest nearby while children play.

6. A **meeting area** to allow for garden management and community building. This can range from a semi-circle of hay bales or tree stumps, to a simple amphitheater built of recycled, broken concrete. The meeting area could be in the same space as the resting area and provide shade as well as meeting space.
7. A **community bulletin board** where rules, meeting notices, and other important information can be posted.

### Supplies

The core garden team can identify many of the supplies it'll need through the development of its garden plan. You can find more about calculating amounts of fencing and soil in particular in Lesson 3 on budgeting. The following is a sample supplies list adapted with permission from the Wasatch Community Gardens' "From Neglected Parcels to Community Gardens: A Handbook."

- **Tools:** Tools for the garden are separated into two categories below: essential and beneficial. See "Ten Tools Every Gardener and Garden Needs" from the American Community Gardening Association for drawings of the most common tools.

TOOLS	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION	USE
<b>ESSENTIAL TOOLS</b>		
LONG HANDLED, ROUND-NOSED SHOVEL	Standard Shovel Shape	General Turning Of Soil And Compost
SPADING (DIGGING) FORK	like a pitchfork with four tines	turning and aerating soil and compost and digging for root crops
STEEL, LEVEL-HEAD OR BOW RAKES	rectangular and stiff, with a long handle	smoothing and grading soil, incorporating compost into the soil surface, and covering seeds
TROWELS	like miniature, hand-held shovels	weeding, cultivating and planting seedlings in prepared beds
WHEEL-BARROWS	cart with one front wheel and two back legs under two long, straight handles	moving and dumping soil/compost, especially in narrow paths and between rows
<b>BENEFICIAL TOOLS</b>		
BROADFORK	larger version of a spading fork	loosening and aerating soil with minimal structural disturbance to soil and soil organisms (sometimes used instead of the double-digging method)
GARDEN HOES	long handles and perpendicular flat blades	weeding, cultivating soil, and making furrows to plant seeds into





TOOL	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION	USE
<b>BENEFICIAL TOOLS</b> CONTINUED		
LOPPERS	long-handled, short-blade pruners	pruning small-diameter tree and shrub branches
MATTOCK	medium handle and a heavy two-sided blade, one side like a wedge and the other like a spike	breaking up very hard soil
RECTANGULAR DIGGING SPADE	shovel with a square blade	digging straight-edged holes (for planting trees or larger shrubs)
SHORT/D-HANDLED, SQUARE-NOSED DIGGING SPADES	a flat, spade-shaped blade with a short, d-shaped handle	double-digging and sod removal
SMALL FRONT-TINE OR LARGER, MORE POWERFUL, REAR-TINE ROTARY TILLERS, (DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE AREA TO BE TILLED AND THE HARDNESS OF THE SOIL)	motorized push-implement (like a standing lawnmower) with large blades	initial preparation and aeration of beds, and working compost into soil
SOD CUTTER (MANUAL OR MOTORIZED)	motorized push-implement (like a standing lawnmower)	removing sod (if too large an area for easy removal with shovels)
SAW	Serrated blade, can be manual or motorized	pruning back shrubs and trees

- **Additional Materials and Equipment:** these are additional resources you'll need for the community garden. Some supplies, like garbage bins and benches should last a long time at the garden. Supplies, like drip lines and gloves will need to be replaced more frequently as they wear out.

1. 100+ ft. measuring tape for measuring plots, building, etc.
2. Benches and tables for resting, eating
3. Building tools and supplies (wood, saw, nails, screws, etc.) if building a fence, tool box/shed, raised beds, trellises, signs or a bulletin board
4. Garbage bags and bins for litter
5. Gardening gloves
6. Irrigation system supplies: timer, hoses, drip line, filter, sprinklers, etc. depending on which type of irrigation system has been chosen
7. String and stakes and small signs for delineating and labeling plots
8. Tomato cages and/or bamboo with string for supporting plants and building trellises
9. Untreated wood for raised beds, lining the paths, etc. (untreated is key, because treated wood leaches treatment chemicals into soil, and eventually into plants)

- **Soil Amendments and Plants for Common Areas:** These are resources you'll likely need on an ongoing basis.
  1. Compost (you'll make your own, but you may want to buy some early on for amending the soil)
  2. Extra topsoil (calculate the cubic yards of soil needed by multiplying feet of length by feet of width by feet or partial feet of depth, then dividing by 27 to convert to cubic yards; see Lesson 3 for more on this)
  3. Mulching materials (for paths and mulching beds for evaporation control it's a good idea to contact a local tree-trimming company to see if you can get wood chips from them for free)
  4. Plants and trees that will occupy the communal spaces (for shade and aesthetics)



## References

1. Los Angeles Master Gardeners, UCCE, and Common Ground. 2001.  
"Community garden start-up guide."
2. Toronto FoodShare.  
"Ten Tools Every Community Gardener & Garden Needs."  
American Community Gardening Association.
3. Wasatch Community Gardens.  
"From neglected parcels to community gardens: a handbook."



## LESSON 5

### Managing the Garden

In Lesson 1 on ABCD, you learned about building a core garden group who can do the ongoing management of the garden. The core group you establish for the garden will share the responsibility for:

- finding and acquiring a piece of land
- setting the rules and guidelines of the garden
- fundraising and budgeting
- recruiting gardeners
- building the garden structure
- dealing with any problems that arise.

In this lesson you will learn how to organize this core group and the types of roles they will have. The organizational techniques in this lesson could easily be applied to other projects, not just to community garden development.

Inclusive and careful organizing will increase sustainability of the garden by building a structure that does not rely on the manpower of a few people who may eventually leave. A garden that is built around the skills and abilities of its community and is organized to be inclusive will foster a positive environment that more people will want to join. In addition, a well-organized garden group and garden will be more attractive to funders and able to best deal with challenges as they arise.

#### Learning Objectives

1. Understand the roles that a core group or garden club will play.
2. Know the types of rules and policies that will create garden success.
3. Know how to plan and run an effective meeting.
4. Understand the basics of conflict management.
5. General management guidelines for success.

#### The Core Group

A solid core garden management group will offer you multiple benefits. Having a core group makes it easier to divide tasks, minimize the effort required by any single person, encourage interest and involvement in the garden over time, show potential funders that the garden is well-organized, and create an entity that can act impartially to resolve disputes.

It is important to have a good organizational team, rather than rely on a single person. If the garden management rests on one person, no matter how enthusiastic or dedicated, they may eventually move on, and management of the garden will struggle at that point. An organizational team that is involved in decision making from the beginning will feel ownership of the garden and will be less likely to leave when challenges arise. If they've committed time and energy to the garden, they'll want to keep it going.

If you can find the right person, an assigned garden coordinator within the organizational team can be a good idea. He or she should be dedicated, enthusiastic, inspiring, diplomatic, and knowledgeable in gardening. All potential candidates for this role should be made fully aware of the responsibilities and expectations, and as many garden members as possible should help choose this person. If you can't find a person to fill this position at first, that's okay; you can share those roles among the group.





## Core Group Self-organization

Once you have a group of people who are willing to commit the time and effort to create a community garden together, you'll need to decide amongst yourselves how that group will operate. You should consider the following:

1. **Core group leadership:** A garden club most often has at minimum an elected president and treasurer.
2. **Delegation of roles:** Assign different team members to be in charge of fundraising, gardener recruitment, gardener agreements and fee collection, on-site management, etc.
3. **Decision-making procedures:** Establish a process for decision-making; it could be a "majority rules" or unanimity voting procedure, or a consensus method (no voting, just consensus of members).

## Roles of the Core Group

The following is a list of the responsibilities of the core group. This list can help you plan and delegate.

1. **Working with the landowner and managing the lease:** (see "Lesson 2: Finding and Obtaining Land").
2. **Scheduling and running planning meetings:** This will be of particular importance when the garden is being designed and procedures are being developed. You'll want to include interested community members in the process. The core group should schedule regular meetings at accessible times and advertise the meetings well. A public agenda should be used to run the meetings efficiently.
3. **Establishing garden rules:** It is important that garden rules and procedures be made clear to anyone signing up for a garden plot, to minimize problems and disputes in the future. Rules should be laid out in a "Gardener Agreement" and also be posted prominently in a common space in the garden, such as a community bulletin board. See the following for sample contracts and rules: LA Master Gardeners-Common Grounds "Community Gardens Start-up Guide" pages 8-9, Wasatch Community Gardens "From Neglected Parcels to Community Gardens" pages 28-29, and "Ground Rules: A Legal Toolkit for Community Gardens" pages 22-33.
4. **Accepting and reviewing garden applications:** The core group will decide what the process will be for accepting gardeners, and then carry out that process. Most likely, interested gardeners will download an application online (see Appendix 7 for example: "Sample Form: Garden Plot Registration"), fill it out and submit it to the core group or a subset of the core group, who will review and inform applicants of their acceptance. This same subcommittee of the core group will need to maintain a waiting list, if there are more applications than garden plots.
5. **Making plot assignments:** The core group will determine plots sizes in collaboration with other planning meeting attendees, and thereafter assign particular gardeners to plots. Plot size determination is an important step in the garden planning process. For manageability, a garden with fewer than 100 plots is recommended. Not all plots need to be assigned at once. The garden can develop in phases with 15 plots or more to start and then adding more plots as interest and capacity increase.
6. **Collecting garden dues:** As part of the planning meetings, the group should decide whether gardeners will be charged a fee for using a plot, what the fee will be, and who will collect and manage the fees. This should be part of the budget discussion (see "Lesson 3: Budgeting and Fundraising"). Plot fees can help cover the lease, the group insurance plan, purchasing of supplies, paying for utilities and putting on garden events for fundraising, recruitment, celebration, etc.

7. **Managing budget and finances:** One important role of the core group is establishing a system for accepting payments/donations and spending. This will likely mean opening a garden bank account. If the garden has an established sponsor, such as a nonprofit or a church, this can be done through the sponsor. If not, there will need to be a member of the core group who can act as the fiscal sponsor and have the account in his or her name. See Lesson 3 for more on budgeting and money management.
8. **Resolving conflicts:** The core group will also need to manage any conflicts that arise. This is a reason to have at least one member of the core group who is NOT a plot-holder as well. Ideally this will be a person who visits the garden regularly and can impartially deal with any disputes between plot-holders as they occur. It will be important that gardeners have someone they can turn to in disputes who they trust to make decisions unimpeded by favoritism. See below for more conflict resolution tips.

### Rules and Policies for Success

Clear garden rules and policies will help ensure that gardeners know what is expected of them in creating a wonderful community space. It will also make it easier to solve problems when they arise because the moderator can point to agreed-upon policies. Below you'll find some common topics addressed by community garden guidelines. The core garden group should discuss each topic and determine the rules and policies that will work best for the garden's success. Rules and policies should cover the following:

1. **Fees:** How much is owed, how often, and at what time of the year? Is there a sliding scale for the fee?
2. **Plot maintenance:** Rules for maintenance might include limited fallow periods, maintaining the plot free of pests/weeds/disease, keeping gardening contained to one's assigned space, efficient water use, approved chemical use.
3. **Separating and disposal/placement of trash and waste:** Where should gardeners put organic waste (weeds, trimmings, etc.)? Where should they put other waste?
4. **Compost pile:** Is there one communal compost pile or do plot owners have their own compost piles? If communal, who is in charge of managing the pile and how is the work delegated?
5. **Use, care, and storage of common tools:** How should tools be used and stored so they last as long as possible?
6. **Drugs and alcohol (using at the garden and/or growing):** Is any use of alcohol allowed at the garden? What are consequences if a gardener decides to grow an illicit plant?
7. **Guest and children:** Are gardeners free to bring guests at any time or at specific times? What are the expectations for watching children in the garden?
8. **Pets:** Are pets allowed? If yes, in what areas of the garden are they allowed?
9. **Respect:** Should gardeners only touch another plot in the presence of that plot's owner? How should gardeners treat common spaces in the garden?
10. **Common-space maintenance:** How often and how should gardeners tend to the paths, the resting space, etc.?
11. **Volunteer hour requirements:** Most gardens have some sort of annual requirement for donating time to the running and upkeep of the garden.





12. **Attendance:** Are gardeners required to attend meetings? If yes, how often?

13. **Consequences of breaking rules and procedures:** Will plot-holders have a probationary period if they break the rules, including plot neglect, or will their plot be immediately reassigned? How long will they have to fix a problem before their plot is reassigned?

### Effective Meetings

A responsibility of the core garden group is to run meetings. In the early stages, you will run meetings to organize yourselves, assess community needs, recruit active members, assign roles and duties, create communications and fundraising plans, and plan the garden. After the garden gets started, you will likely still have regular meetings to deal with ongoing maintenance and fundraising issues and recruit new members.

1. **Participants:** During the early recruitment phase, you'll want to encourage participation at meetings from people with a variety of assets. You want people with knowledge of various fields, people with influence in the community, people with wealth and connections to wealth for donations, people who can do the daily work to keep the garden functioning, and people who represent all stakeholder groups in the community.
2. **Timing/Place:** Plan meetings for times and places that are most accessible to the people whose help and input you want. Choose a time that works for the majority of the invited attendees, and ideally keep that same time each week or month to avoid having to renegotiate the time. Amenities like bathrooms, kitchen, and childcare should also be considered when selecting a location to ensure the meeting is easily accessible to a wide range of people. A comfortable space will go a long way in maintaining attendance and participation.
3. **Agenda:** Set a clear agenda beforehand, make it available, and do your best to follow it closely during the meeting. It should state goals of the meeting, items to discuss, whether each item will require a vote, start and end time, and time allowed for each agenda item.
4. **Running the meeting:** Respect your participants' time. People are busy and it is important that they feel their time is being used effectively. Good meeting practices include identifying and selecting a designated leader, timekeeper, and note taker.
  - a. The designated meeting leader should be someone who is comfortable guiding discussion. The leader will need to summarize discussion points and differences of opinion, ask for input from group members, and table the conversation when appropriate. You will undoubtedly run into difficulties such as discussion-domination by one or two people, arguments, or departure from the topic at hand. Therefore, it is important to select someone who is confident and can guide the meeting back by interrupting politely. It takes some practice to do these things well, so don't worry if you don't already have someone with a lot of meeting experience. Choose someone with confidence that can build these skills over time.
  - b. A timekeeper helps keep the group on track. He or she should feel comfortable politely interrupting to remind the group of time left for each agenda item, especially when the discussion may be running long.
  - c. A note taker will document all key points, ideas, and action items in a meeting. Additionally, he or she will keep record of the members in attendance and any official votes that take place during the meeting.

### Conflict Resolution

Hopefully, you will not have to do much conflict resolution, but as a leader of a community garden, you will undoubtedly run into some conflicts that need attention. It's good to know some conflict resolution strategies so you can be calm and effective when conflicts arise. Here are a few basic tips:

1. **Seek first to understand the other party, then to be understood.** It can be easy to jump to quick conclusions, but the people involved in the conflict will only feel good about a resolution if they feel their perspective was heard and respected. As a moderator between people in a conflict, seek to hear both perspectives fully before acting.
2. **Try to summarize each others' interests in the conflict.** Each side of the conflict should understand the others' perspective enough to repeat it back, as should the moderator.
3. **Brainstorm solutions together.** As much as possible, encourage the parties in conflict to share ideas for solving the problem. This way, they feel they are part of the solution, rather than having a solution imposed upon them.
4. **Aim for a win-win solution, which will likely be more lasting.** Avoid solutions that have no benefit for one of the parties. Solutions that have some benefit for all parties will be more likely to last.

For more conflict resolution ideas, see the *Master Urban Gardener Manual* page 132-134.

### Keys to Community Garden Success

This section is adapted with permission from The Toronto Community Food Animators' publication entitled: "How to Start a Community Garden Handbook."

Every community garden is as different as the gardeners that belong to them. But there are some common traits that the most successful gardens share, despite their differences. The following are suggestions to achieve those traits.

1. **Start small:** In the first year it is always better to have a small success than a big failure. Taking on too much at the start of any project can result in frustration or burn-out after only a short time. You can always expand in the years to come. Most people are very enthusiastic gardeners in the spring, when they're getting started. By mid-summer enthusiasm can wane considerably, as the less glamorous garden chores, like weeding and removing old flowers, are necessary. Don't get too discouraged if and when this happens. Instead, create some kind of special event or activity that will draw the gardeners back to the garden and help them to recall the excitement they felt in May.
2. **Establish good lines of communication among all participants:** Everyone likes to feel that their voice matters, that what they say and think is acknowledged on an equal basis with everyone else. Good communication is the key to ensuring this. There are often many major decisions to be made in the development of a community garden, especially at the outset. It may sometimes seem easier for one or two people to make decisions for the group. This strategy usually backfires, especially in the beginning before everyone has had time to get to know each other's strengths and weaknesses. A good garden coordinator will recognize this and give people the opportunity to express their opinions before decisions are made. It is better to welcome opinions and discussion than to preempt discussion for the sake of expediency. In addition to regular group meetings, a notice board in the garden is a good way to keep everyone informed about important issues, as is a regular newsletter, an email listserv, and possibly a telephone tree system.
3. **Provide educational opportunities for the gardeners:** Not all, or even most, of the participants will be knowledgeable gardeners when they join the garden. A first time gardener's enthusiasm is often linked to a successful harvest. That doesn't mean that the first year has to yield a record bumper crop, but it can be very demoralizing if nothing does well. Many novice gardeners will benefit from a bit of guidance from a more experienced gardener, either formally in a workshop, or informally, from a life-long gardener in a nearby plot. Actively encourage these opportunities, if necessary. You could bring in knowledgeable speakers on a regular basis to teach the garden plot owners about particular gardening topics.





4. **Keep the garden well maintained year round:** Vegetable gardens often have the reputation of being less than attractive. This is usually the result of haphazard maintenance by the people rather than an aesthetic shortcoming on the part of the plants. Don't give any would-be detractors ammunition against the garden. Let the gardeners know what is expected of them with a clearly defined, written set of garden by-laws. Keep the grass trimmed, common areas neat, the beds weeded (or better yet, mulched), pick up trash daily, locate the compost area out of sight as much as possible, plant flowers around the edges of the site as well as within the plots, and try to design the site with imagination; there's no rule that says a garden has to be laid out in perfect 10'x20' rectangular plots.
5. **Build a strong sense of community:** Most community garden projects don't start out with a strong sense of community already intact, unless the group has come together before for other projects. Quite often most of the gardeners have never met before, or perhaps are neighbors who say hello to each other but never really get beyond that. A community garden provides an excellent setting in which to get to know other people without many of the typical communication barriers that are easily created in other settings. When people are working together for a common cause, enjoying the fresh air, with their hands in the soil and the beauty of nature all around, things like how much money they make and where their grandmother was born don't seem to matter as much as they did before.

When we can come together to create something with other people, especially something that adds beauty to our lives and helps us to feel that we are contributing something positive, a very special bond can begin to grow. With careful nurturing, it can blossom into that essential ingredient to human happiness: connection, a sense of belonging, a feeling of community.

### References

1. Boston Natural Areas Network. 2010.  
"Master urban gardener manual."
2. Los Angeles Master Gardeners, UCCE, and Common Ground. 2001.  
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3. National Policy and Legal Analysis Network. 2011.  
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4. Wasatch Community Gardens.  
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5. Toronto Community Food Animators. 2008.  
"How to Start a Community Garden Handbook."  
Toronto Community Garden Network.  
Available [www.tcgn.ca/wiki/wiki.php?n=DonationsTradesSharing.CommunityGardensHandbook](http://www.tcgn.ca/wiki/wiki.php?n=DonationsTradesSharing.CommunityGardensHandbook)

## LESSON 6

### How to be a Good Neighbor

Part of building a garden for long-term success is making sure that the garden's neighbors and community are happy with the garden. It is important to actively build a relationship with the community. The more the community values the garden, the more it will support and protect the garden, and help prevent problems from arising. Community gardens shine when they improve the quality of life for the larger local community, not just the garden members.

A great example of this larger community impact comes from the New Roots Community Farm in City Heights. This nearly-90-plot community garden started by the International Rescue Committee provides gardening space for a very diverse group of City Heights community members, but it has also attracted positive attention from First Lady Michelle Obama. To help promote her "Let's Move" campaign for healthier Americans, Ms. Obama visited New Roots in Spring 2010 and spoke with gardeners. Community members with and without garden plots were excited and proud of this attention from such a respected and influential person. The visit had a lasting, positive community-building effect.

Problems will undoubtedly arise in your community garden, but there is a lot you can do to prevent them and maintain a positive space for community members. Having spent time carefully pre-planning and organizing your community garden is the key to eliminating common problems. When an unexpected issue does occur, think of it as an opportunity to improve or refine your policies and organization and, as a result, make your garden even more successful.

#### Learning Objectives

1. Know several common considerations and strategies for being a good neighbor both in the garden and with the broader community.

The following list of strategies and solutions is adapted with permission from the LA Master Gardeners-Common Grounds "Community Gardens Start-up Guide." Also see "Keys to Community Garden Success" from the Toronto Community Garden Network for similar suggestions from another perspective.

#### Developing Partnerships

Involve as many like-minded groups and individuals in your project as possible. At the very beginning of the project, do a community resources inventory or mapping (practice this in Lesson 1). That's a way of listing all of the resources that already reside in your community. It's also a positive way of approaching the project—rather than thinking, "What's wrong with this neighborhood that can be fixed by a community garden?" you are looking at the positive resources that can contribute to the garden and that the garden can enhance.

Actively seek out local politicians and other community leaders, members of the media, health professionals, the landscape industry, anti-poverty activists, teachers, faith organizations, and anyone else that could help. It is not necessary to be a gardener in order to enjoy and participate in a community garden. Create a "Friends of the Garden" membership category for those people who want to help the project but aren't able, for whatever reason, to take a garden plot. The more people who feel a personal attachment to the project, the better.

You can also consider providing plots to local groups, schools, etc. For more on developing a joint use garden see Healthy Works-VGSD Gardening 301: How to Start and Sustain a School Gardening Program. For more on advocacy for the garden in your community see "Ten Tips on Local Advocacy" from the American Community Gardening Association.





### Facilitating Communication

Clear and well-enforced garden rules and a competent and personable garden president can go a long way toward minimizing misunderstandings within the garden. Always print your garden rules and make sure every gardener has a copy, and post them in a common area of the garden. Nevertheless, communication problems may arise. It's the job of the core garden group, or a subset of the group, to resolve those issues. If it concerns something not clearly spelled out in the rules, the group can take a vote to add new rules and make modifications to existing rules. Language barriers are a very common source of misunderstandings. Garden leadership should make every effort to have an interpreter at garden meetings where participants speak different languages. Perhaps a family member of one of the garden members who speaks the language will offer to help.

Also maintain an open dialogue with community groups, even if they are not actively participating in the garden. Respond promptly and respectfully to any concerns that are brought to the garden leadership group. It's beneficial to identify a single person who can be easily contacted to act as the first responder to inquiries and complaints. This person's contact information should be clearly displayed at the garden.

### Managing Gardener Dropout

There has been, and probably always will be, turnover in community gardens. People may sign up for plots and not follow through. Remember, gardening is hard work, especially in the heat of summer. Be sure to have a clause in your gardener agreement which states gardeners will forfeit their right to their plot if they don't plant it within one month, or if they don't maintain it.

While gardeners should be given every opportunity to follow through, if several reminders either by letter or phone yield no response, it is time for the organizers to reassign the plot. It will be necessary to have at least one member of the core group who is willing and able to remove neglectful gardeners from their plots despite possible dissent from the gardener. The purpose of a policy like this is not to be restrictive, but rather to ensure a well-maintained garden.

You might also consider having a clause in the rules that allows for plot-holders to keep their plot even when they cannot manage it for an extended period, for example due to illness or surgery. This might be especially wise if you expect to have many elderly gardeners. Perhaps waitlisted gardeners could have a chance to manage a plot in the plot-holder's stead.

It is also advisable that every year, the leadership conduct a renewed community outreach campaign by contacting churches and other groups in the neighborhood to let them know about the garden and that plots are available.

### Facilitating Parking

Making sure parking at the garden doesn't inconvenience garden neighbors is important for maintaining a positive view of the garden. Always obey parking rules and be sensitive to neighborhood concerns. Give neighbors advance notice of special events that may impact parking. Designate special parking areas ahead of time to have minimal impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

### Ensuring Security

Invite the community law enforcement officer from your local precinct to a garden meeting to get his or her suggestions on making the garden more secure. It's beneficial to build a relationship with your local police department to get their support for the garden. As discussed in Lesson 1 on Asset-Based Community Development, the local precinct can help promote safety at the garden, and maybe even donations, but the garden can also offer him or her benefits such as greater presence of community members outdoors, which can deter criminal activity.



## Dealing with Vandalism

From time to time, you might notice that produce is taken from plots without permission. It's important to realize that this may happen, and not to let it deter you too much. In some ways this is a good thing, as it shows community interest and appetite for fresh and healthy food. There are several strategies for deterring this type of activity:

1. Garden groups can plant a bed specifically for public consumption outside the main garden area or the garden gate, if it has one, and label it with signage that lets people know they may help themselves to vegetables. Plot-holders can collectively manage this bed.
2. A sign could also be posted requesting that people do not take produce without permission.
3. Another good preventive measure is simply promoting a positive perception of the garden through continuous open communication and inclusivity.

If you experience more serious vandalism, it's important to repair/replant quickly and continue gardening, to show that the strong community group cannot easily be discouraged.

## Dealing with Trash

It's important to get your compost system going right away and get some training for gardeners on how to maintain and use it. Uncomposted waste can build up, create an eyesore, and could hurt your relationships with neighbors and the property owner if it gets out of hand. Waste can also become a fire hazard. Make sure gardeners know how to sort trash properly; what to compost, and what to recycle. Teach them about what they can get from this process, (fertile compost to add to their beds!), in addition to maintaining a pleasant space. Trashcans placed in accessible areas are helpful to keep a neat and tidy garden.

## Dealing with Weeds

Gardeners tend to visit their plots less during the wintertime, and lower participation, combined with rain, tends to create a weed problem in January, February, and March. Remember, part of your agreement with the landowner is that he or she will maintain the lot and keep weeds from taking over. In the late summer/early fall, provide gardeners with a workshop or printed material about what can be grown in a fall and winter garden. Also, schedule garden workdays for the spring in advance since you know you'll need them at the end of winter to clear weeds. If you anticipate that plots will be untended during the winter, apply a thick layer of mulch or hay to the beds and paths to reduce weed proliferation.

## References

1. American Community Gardening Association.  
"Ten Tips on Local Advocacy."
2. Los Angeles Master Gardeners, UCCE, and Common Ground. 2001.  
"Community garden start-up guide."
3. Toronto Community Food Animators.  
"How to Start a Community Garden Handbook." 2008. Toronto  
Community Garden Network.  
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# APPENDIX

## 1. Calculating Slope

The slope of property is used when applying code requirements. It will also help you determine foundation wall heights, fill and grade quantities and other information for your property. Slope is defined in several ways (degrees, rise/run, and percent). Accurately determining the slope of your property is key to getting the proper information on any requirements that may or may not apply to your project.

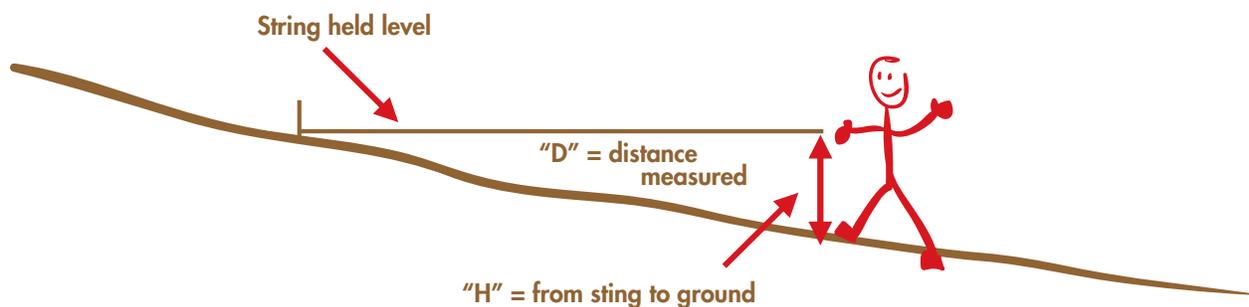
### How to Calculate the Slope on Your Property

First gather the items you will need:

- A tape measure: at least 50' if possible
- Some string, stakes and a hammer
- A string level
- A helper

### Measuring Slope

- Find the uphill spot where any development will occur on the property.
- Drive a stake in the ground to mark this spot, and measure downhill, across the slope 50' to 100'.
- Place a second stake at that location
- Tie the string to the first stake and stretch it to the second stake
- Have your helper place the string level on the string somewhere near the center.
- You will need to tighten and raise the string until the string is level.
- While holding the string in that position, have your helper measure the distance between the string and the ground at the location of your second stake.





### Calculating Slope

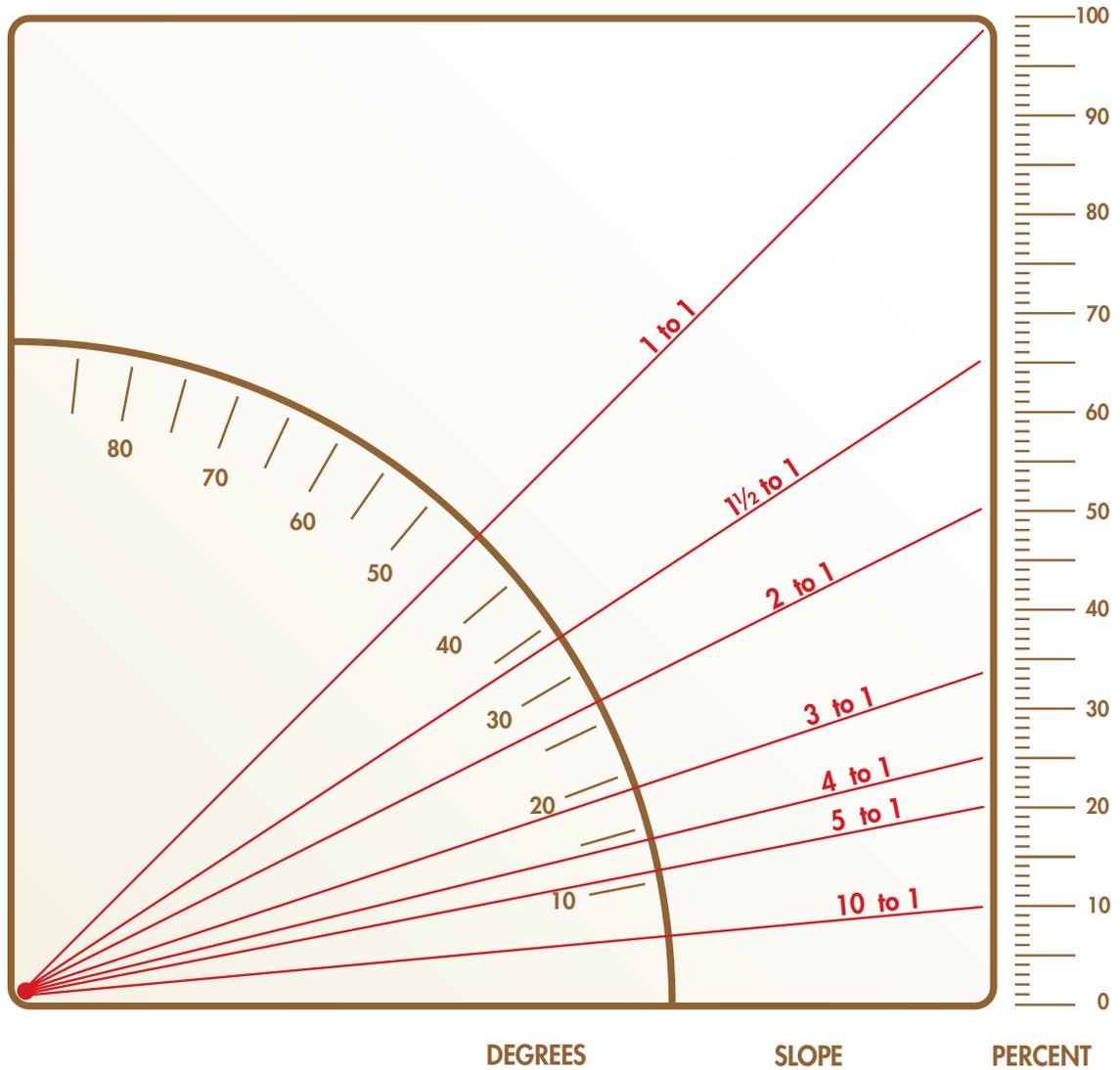
Convert your dimensions (H and D) to the same dimension (inches or feet).

Calculate the slope using the following formula: "H"/"D" X 100 = slope in percent.

Use the chart on the back of this form to convert your calculated slope into degrees or rise/run.

### Grade Comparison Chart

Adapted from Department of Building and Planning, Cowlitz County, WA



## 2. Ten Tools Every Community Gardener & Garden Needs

American Community Gardening Association  
Courtesy of Toronto FoodShare

Gardeners may not agree on the best mulch or the perfect fertilizer, but there's one thing that every gardener agrees on; when it comes time to purchase tools, buy the best. Quality garden tools are an investment that yield dividends over time. Here are the top 10 gardening tools every community garden should own.



1. **Trowel:** A well-made trowel is your most important tool. From container gardening to large beds, a trowel will help you get your plants into the soil. Essential for everyone.



2. **Hand Fork or Claw or Cultivator:** A hand fork helps cultivate soil, chop up clumps, and work amendments into the soil. A hand fork is necessary for cultivating in closely planted beds.



3. **Hoe:** A long-handled hoe is a gardener's best friend. Keeping weeds at bay is the purpose of this useful tool. Hoe heads come in all different shapes and sizes and every gardener swears by a different one.



4. **Secateurs (aka hand pruners):** Invest in a pair of quality pruners, such as Felco, which is clearly a cut above. There are different types and sizes depending upon the type and size of the job. Secateurs are for cutting small diameters, up to the thickness of your little finger ;-). Anything larger and you need loppers.



5. **Watering can:** A watering can creates a fine even stream of water that delivers with a gentleness that won't wash seedlings or sprouting seeds out of their soil.





6. **Fork:** You can't dig and divide perennials without a heavy-duty fork (and some dividing methods even suggest you own two!)



7. **Shovels and Spades:** There are several different types and shapes of shovels and spades, each with their own purpose. There are also different types of hand holds for either—a "D" shape, a "T" shape, or none at all. They are a requisite tool for planting large perennials, shrubs, and trees, breaking ground, moving soil, leaves, just about anything. The sharper the blade, the better.



8. **Wheelbarrow:** Wheelbarrows come in all different sizes (and prices). They are indispensable for hauling soil, compost, plants, mulch, hoses, tools... everything you'll need to garden.



9. **Gloves:** Unless you want to wear your favorite hobby under your nails, use gloves. Leather gloves hold up best. If you have roses, get a pair that resist thorn pricks.



10. **Hose:** This is the fastest way to transport lots of water. Consider using drip irrigation hoses or tape.

*Adapted from the American Community Gardening Association*

### 3. Sample Community Garden Contract

(Information in parentheses is to be determined by individual garden)  
(Watts Family) Community Garden Contract Rules, Terms, and Conditions for Participation

#### Introduction

The (organization/garden manager) is the highest governing authority at the (Watts Family) Community Garden. Breaking any rules, terms, and conditions is cause for exclusion from the garden and loss of your plot.

1. You will receive one verbal warning from the garden manager.
2. If no response or correction has been made, you will receive written notice two weeks later.
3. In another two weeks, if no response or correction has been made, you will receive written final notification that you have forfeited your gardening privileges and plot.
4. You will be allowed to reapply for another garden plot only after one year, and only at the discretion of the garden manager.

#### Rules, Terms, and Conditions for Participation

If accepted as a gardener, I will abide by the following rules, terms, and conditions:

1. I use this garden at the sole discretion of (Watts Family) Community Garden. I agree to abide by its policies and practices.
2. The fee for the use of the garden is (\$32.00) per plot, per year (January 1 – December 31), due on or before (January 1). Fee for half a year after (beginning July 1 or later) is (\$16.00). There are no refunds.
3. Once I have been assigned a plot, I will cultivate and plant it within two weeks. I will garden year round. My plot cannot be left fallow or unused for any period of three weeks or longer, more than one time a year.
4. My plot is (20 x 20) feet. I will not expand my plot beyond this measurement or into paths or other plots. I will keep all my plants within the limits of my garden plot and will not allow any plants to grow more than six feet high. I must keep my plot free of weeds, pests and diseases.
5. I will keep my plot, paths, and surrounding areas clean and neat. I will completely separate my trash into three groups: 1) dead plants, leaves, and other green waste plant parts; 2) rocks, stones, and asphalt; and 3) paper, plastic, cardboard, wood, metal, etc. I will put each type of trash only in the areas designated specifically for each. Anything I bring from my home I will take back home. I will not bring household trash and leave it at the (Watts Family) Community Garden.
6. If I now have more than one plot, I will give up my additional plots by the end of this gardening year (December 31).
7. I will not plant any illegal plant. I will not smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, use illegal drugs, or gamble in the garden. I will not come to the garden while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. I will not bring weapons or pets or other animals to the garden.





8. Guests and visitors, including children, may enter the garden only if I accompany them. They must follow all rules, terms, and conditions stated here. I will supervise my children at all times when they are in the garden. I am solely responsible for the behavior of my guests.
9. The garden manager will assign me general garden maintenance tasks each month, and I must complete them by the end of the month that I am assigned them.
10. I will water my plot according to water-wise guidelines. (If I use more than the recommended amount of water, I will pay a fee each month to cover the cost of this additional water.
11. I will attend the regular (bi-monthly) garden club meetings. If workshops are offered, I will attend at least one on each of the following topics: soil preparation and maintenance, watering the vegetable garden, and pest and disease control.
12. I will not apply any pesticides in the garden without the approval of the garden manager.
13. I will not make duplicate keys of any locks at the garden or give my key or lock combination to another person.
14. I will not take food or plants from other gardeners' plots. I will not take anything from the garden that is not rightfully mine.
15. I will respect other gardeners, and I will not use abusive or profane language or discriminate against others.
16. I will work to keep the garden a happy, secure, and enjoyable place where all participants can garden and socialize peacefully in a neighborly manner.
17. I forfeit my right to sue the owner of the property.

### COMMITMENT

**I have read and understand the application and accept these rules, terms, and conditions stated above for the participation in the (Watts Family) Community Garden.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Gardener

**Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Garden Manager

*Adapted from "Community garden start-up guide"  
by Los Angeles Master Gardeners, UCCE, and Common Ground, p. 8-9*

## 4. Sample: Wasatch Community Gardens

### Community Garden Information & Policies

Welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_(date) gardening season! Wasatch Community Gardens is a local non-profit organization. We cultivate individual growth and neighborhood unity through community gardening and youth gardening education. Our community gardening policies and procedures are important for all community gardeners to understand. If you have any questions about this information, please call: \_\_\_\_\_ (contact name) at: \_\_\_\_\_(phone #).

### Reserving your plot

Each gardener is entitled to one plot (approximately 4 by 35 feet) if space is available. If there is space remaining by \_\_\_\_\_(date) gardeners will have the opportunity to rent additional plots for the remainder of the season. A \$30 garden plot rental fee is required of all gardeners. Garden plots must be cleared of weeds by \_\_\_\_\_(date). If a gardener has not used his/her plot by \_\_\_\_\_(date), the plot will be given to another gardener or to the Wasatch Community Gardens' Youth Gardening Program. The \$30 fee will not be returned.

### Land

With the exception of the Tomato Garden, we do not own the land used for gardens. We have lease agreements with the owners but there is always a possibility that we will lose the use of the land. For this reason, there are some planting restrictions (ie trees and some perennials).

### No herbicides, pesticides or chemical fertilizers allowed

Our goal is to create and nurture healthy soil and a healthy plant environment in the garden. Because plant and soil health deteriorates with the use of chemicals, they are not allowed in any of our community gardens. Gardeners using chemical weed killers, fertilizers and/or pesticides will lose their gardening privileges!

### Weeds and trash

The city requires that we keep all weeds below six inches in height. It is the gardeners' responsibility to control the weeds and trash in their own plots and adjacent pathways, and to clear their plot of trellis materials and debris at the end of the season. Gardeners are also required to assist with weeding common areas.

### Water use, drip irrigation and mulch

Automatic drip irrigation systems operate at each site. WCG will maintain this system. Please do not alter the system in any way. Please report any problems or leaks to WCG. The drip system is a water-efficient method of garden irrigation. Each gardener will learn how the drip irrigation system works at the gardener orientation meetings. You can also help make sure that water is not wasted, and greatly reduce your garden's water needs by using mulch (this also helps keep out weeds).

### No Rebar

For safety reasons, rebar is not allowed for staking or trellising.

### Cooperation and community

This project will be more successful if all of our gardeners work together. We ask that in addition to your \$30 annual fee, you also make a contribution of your time by participating in clean-up projects in the spring and fall and general maintenance throughout the season. Each gardener is expected to contribute 12 hours of labor to the garden during the year.





### Please remember

Wasatch Community Gardens is a small non-profit organization supported by donated funds that must be raised annually. Staff size is small and varies according to funding. The purpose of our community gardening program is to provide access to land, water and general garden administration. The care and maintenance of the garden is the collective responsibility of the community gardeners.

### Garden Addresses

Grateful Tomato Garden: 800 South 600 East Fairpark Garden: 300 North 1037 West Marmalade Garden: 222 West 600 North 4th East Garden: 555 South 400 East

### Sample: Community Garden Rules & Gardener's Responsibilities

Each gardener must understand and agree to the following rules and responsibilities before gardening with Wasatch Community Gardens:

- Chemical weed killers, fertilizers and pesticides are not allowed in any garden.
- Garden fees are \$30.00 per plot, payable when gardener registers for plot.
- Plots are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Gardeners are limited to one plot (approximately 4' x 35'). Gardeners may have more plots and may be put on a waiting list for extra plots, if extra plots are available by \_\_\_\_\_(date) of the gardening season.
- Disrespectful or abusive language, or destructive behavior can result in the immediate loss of all gardening privileges, and forfeiture of any crops remaining in the garden.
- New gardeners must attend a Garden Orientation in the Spring. Returning gardeners are strongly encouraged to attend Spring Orientations as well.
- Gardeners are responsible for weeding their plots by \_\_\_\_\_(date), and clearing their plots at the end of each growing season (usually by \_\_\_\_\_).
- Gardeners are responsible for planting, cultivating and maintaining their own garden plots.
- Gardeners are responsible for assisting with maintenance of common areas at each garden.
- Gardeners must contribute 4 hours in the spring, 4 hours in the summer and 4 hours in the fall in the maintenance of common garden space.
- Gardeners are responsible for keeping the weeds in their gardens and adjoining pathways below six inches in height.
- Gardeners are responsible for clearing all plant and trellis materials out of their own garden by the end of each gardening season. Dead material should be placed in compost piles.
- Wasatch Community Gardens' Responsibilities
- Wasatch Community Gardens is responsible for administering the Community Gardening Program.

- Wasatch Community Gardens is responsible for registering gardeners and assigning available plots to each gardener.
- Wasatch Community Gardens will provide tools, technical assistance and skills training when possible.
- Wasatch Community Gardens is responsible for maintenance of water and drip irrigation systems and overall administration of each garden site.
- Wasatch Community Gardens reserves the right to make changes or exceptions to policies where and when appropriate.

*Adapted from "From neglected parcels to community gardens: a handbook"  
by Wasatch Community Gardens, p. 28-29*





## 5. Steps in Resolving Conflict

### Listen for understanding.

Listen to the others' feelings as well as how they perceive the issue. Establish eye contact, ask open-ended questions, clarify, and summarize to let the person(s) know that they are being understood.

### Be quiet if the angry person needs to vent.

Refuse to take whatever is said personally. Understand that the other person is angry at the situation, not the person.

### State the problem clearly.

To negotiate, everyone must first understand the conflict.

### State feelings and perspectives of the issue clearly.

Ask what is needed and explain what you would like to have happen so that the negotiation can continue.

### List the solutions to the problem.

Prioritize options and look at advantages and disadvantages.

### Decide on standards or rules for resolving the dispute.

These may include focusing on the problem, not the person; looking to the future, not the past; attempting to satisfy both parties; and attempting to be generous.

### Come to a decision.

This may be avoiding the issue, imposing a solution, compromising, or collaborating.

### Conflict Resolution

Conflict is expected and unavoidable in community building. Though most people usually think of it as negative, community workers should regard conflict as an opportunity for increased communication, intimacy, and understanding. This is why conflict can be positive in community building:

- People who work through their conflicts can develop a stronger and more intimate relationship.
- When conflict is solved constructively, both parties are able to air their feelings and leave the situation free of anger and hostility.
- Resolving personal conflict can make people feel stronger and motivate them to tackle other struggles.
- It is important to express concerns and conflicting ideas to build a foundation for stronger, more creative decisions.

Conflict is a normal part of all group activity. It is the natural result of diversity within a group that has different values, self-interests, and points of view. A group that does not experience conflict is probably not very creative, active, or strong. It is important for community workers to learn how to help resolve conflict. Unresolved conflict can tear a group apart. To resolve conflict, a community worker must understand the three parts to a conflict situation: self, other, and the issue. If the conflict is to be solved, all of these elements must be dealt with effectively.



## Roadblocks to Conflict Resolution

Because most people are uneasy with conflict, they tend to communicate ineffectively during a conflict. This prevents satisfactory conflict resolution. Community workers should learn to recognize these personality traits, which sometimes block complete resolution of a conflict:

**Placaters conceal their own feelings** and remove the “self” from the conflict, leaving the issue and the other person’s feelings. They often play the victim, ignoring their own feelings and needs to give others what they want. They try to please and find it very hard to disagree.

**Blamers ignore the other’s feelings**, leaving the self and the issue. They are faultfinders and dictators, and feel better if they can get somebody to obey them.

**Distracters think that issues and feelings are unimportant**, so they bring up unrelated points to confuse the situation. They are uncomfortable dealing with others’ feelings and believe that nobody cares.

**Ultrareasonable/computers behave like a computer with no feelings, and only deal with the issue.** They are very correct, very reasonable, calm, cool, and collected. They don’t show or acknowledge any feelings. They use big words and speak in a monotone voice.

## Basic Methods of Resolving Conflict

To successfully resolve a conflict, people must deal with all elements of a conflict, resolving the emotions and feelings as well as the content of the issues. **These types of people, who are necessary to community building, are called Levelers.** Levelers express their feelings, listen to and honor the feelings of the other, and consider the issue. Relationships are honest and there is no need to blame, retreat, or be in perpetual motion. It is sometimes difficult to separate **feelings** from **issues**, because they frequently interact. But when feelings run high, the first step to rational problem solving is a structured exchange of the emotional aspects of the controversy. **Using a leveling communication along with a win/win approach to conflict resolution will satisfy both parties.**

There is only one method that truly achieves a win/win situation. It is called the **collaboration method.** **In collaboration or negotiation, both parties focus on common goals and mutual needs.** The discussion focuses on the problems and possible solutions. The conflicting parties present their views and opinions to each other and work through their differences in attitudes and perceptions. The win/win outcome achieved through negotiation/collaboration is the best because

**win/win negotiation**

- encourages people to work together for mutually beneficial solutions,
- takes into account self-interests and gives everyone a chance to get part of what they want,
- shares problem solving rather than resolving conflict through competition.

The other methods of conflict resolution listed below are useful at times, but achieving a win/win solution through negotiation/collaboration is the most lasting. People should understand all conflict resolution methods, as well as their shortcomings.

- With avoidance, the goal is peace. This is an “I lose/you win” strategy to maintain harmony and avoid discomfort. Avoidance sometimes works if the problem needs only to be recognized to be solved. However, ignoring a conflict usually makes it worse.
- With competition or power intervention, the use of power ends the conflict. The “I win/you lose” strategy means someone must give in. This does not address the source of the conflict, so it is likely to recur.
- With compromise or bargaining, each party gives up something. It creates an “I lose some/you lose some” bargain, but no one is fully satisfied. One method of bargaining is to smooth over differences while accentuating similarities and common interests. This does not get to the source of the conflict, which may arise again. Compromise may buy time until the conflict becomes less emotional and there is a better time to confront it.

It is important to use all methods of conflict resolution for various reasons. But achieving a win/win solution is the most lasting and thorough.

*Adapted from “Master urban gardener manual”  
by the Boston Natural Areas Network, p. 132-134.*



## 6. Ten Tips on Local Advocacy (especially to get gardens preserved)

1. **Develop a plan (or don't wait for crisis).** If your garden is not protected, understand exactly who owns the land. Know exactly what you are asking for and who you are asking. Is there a public process or is it "who knows whom"? Your plan should include the other tips listed below. Meanwhile keep the garden looking great!
2. **Develop allies.** Community gardens, low income housing organizations, churches, schools, community development organizations all serve the same constituencies. Introduce potential allies, including government officials and business leaders, to the garden. Determine areas of commonality and find ways to have gardeners help your allies. Be sure to ask your allies to take specific actions to help your cause.
3. **Be prepared for opposition.** Acknowledge, in advance, that there will be objections to your efforts. Know both who is likely to be in opposition and what objections they will raise. Read opposition material, study the newspapers, watch or listen to talk shows, and check websites. Determine if there are any points of commonality. Learn, if possible, if you have contacts with those to whom the opposition listens.
4. **Become known.** Invite decision-makers and the media to your garden. Host activities for neighbors. Share your produce. Do other community service – a children's program; horticulture therapy, conduct neighborhood clean-ups and plant tree-pits. Make presentations at nearby neighborhood and tenant association meetings.
5. **Use the media.** Develop a compelling message which includes what you are asking for and a convincing reason why you should get it. Determine spokespersons and have them practice giving your message. Make a list of the human interest stories of your garden. Write up the stories (with photos!) for neighborhood weeklies. Invite newspaper and TV garden reporters to the garden. Don't forget public access cable TV.
6. **Meetings, meetings, meetings.** Be prepared to attend public meetings of the city council, planning department, parks commission, city planning and zoning hearings, and health department. Whenever possible sign up to speak at these meetings and present your message. Host meetings of your own to inform and motivate gardeners.
7. **Resolutions, plans, and ordinances.** Take the offense. Get friendly local legislators to sponsor and champion resolutions and ordinances supporting community gardening. Be alert for opportunities to have community gardening promoted and sanctioned within neighborhood and citywide planning and re-zoning efforts.
8. **Celebrate successes.** Preservation efforts can take many years. However, there can always be something to celebrate (alliances with new organizations, a successful harvest, a resolution sponsored). To keep up spirits, demonstrate progress, become known, use the media, and involve allies – have press conference, parties, and congratulatory award events.
9. **Be persistent.** The opposition is hoping that you will just go away. Don't let them wear you down. This is why having parties (tip #8) is so important. It is really important that gardeners really do go to ALL the meetings!
10. **Be flexible.** Be open to changing your campaign to reflect the needs of allies or what you realize is more realistic long-term success. For example, you may lose a garden, but gain a commitment to the building of a permanently protected and larger garden across the street.

*Adapted from the American Community Gardening Association*



## 7. Sample Form: Garden Plot Registration

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

Did you have a garden plot with this community garden last year?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, do you want the same garden plot this year?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If no, what area of the garden would you like to be in? \_\_\_\_\_

A plot fee of \_\_\_\_\_ is required before the plot can be assigned. This fee will go toward expenses of the community garden (water bills, plant/seed purchases, community tools, etc.).

A clean-up deposit of \_\_\_\_\_ is required before the plot can be assigned. The clean-up deposit will be returned in the fall after you have removed all of your plants and cleaned your plot.

Please mark three areas that you would be interested in volunteering with during the season. Each gardener is expected to help during the season with general chores.

- \_\_\_ Site maintenance
- \_\_\_ Phone calls
- \_\_\_ Mailings
- \_\_\_ Assigning plots
- \_\_\_ Path maintenance
- \_\_\_ Construction projects
- \_\_\_ Watering
- \_\_\_ Annual planting
- \_\_\_ Fall cleanup
- \_\_\_ Composting
- \_\_\_ Social events

**I have read the Community Garden Rules and understand that failure to meet the guidelines will result in loss of cleanup deposit fees and gardening privileges.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

