



# Community FRESH

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**N.C. A&T**  
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COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION



# Community FRESH

*A guide to growing community gardens*

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# Community FRESH

## FOSTERING RESILIENCE, EXCELLENCE AND SUCCESSFUL HARVESTS

### *A Community Garden Start-up Guide*

Community FRESH is a community garden guide that will help those interested in organizing or starting a neighborhood or community garden. It takes energy and many committed hands to grow a garden, and before the dirt is turned or the first seed is planted, organizers must consider not only what the garden will produce, but how it will be accomplished. This guide will focus on 'how-to', 'hands-on' garden practices, and will provide help in cultivating relationships around the common goal of creating a bountiful, nourishing community garden.

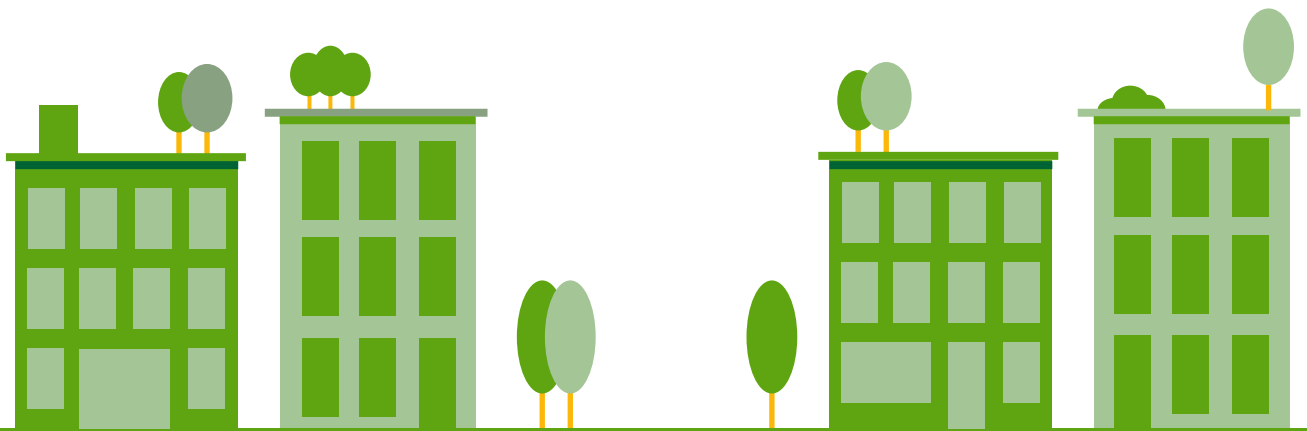
At the end of this guide is an appendix called the "Tool Kit." Sample budgets, checklists and more. Use these tools to help you start your own community garden.

## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY GARDEN?

A community garden is simply a space of land that is collectively tended to by a group of people to grow fruits, vegetables or herbs. It does not have to be fancy and can consist of a few rows or raised beds of vegetables, fruits, or herbs. The garden's produce can be used individually, shared among participants, or donated to other groups or organizations.



*The produce from a community garden can be used individually, shared among participants or donated to other groups or organizations.*



## WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT COMMUNITY GARDENS?

*People who garden together grow together by building a garden community. Community gardens benefit communities in many ways. They can:*

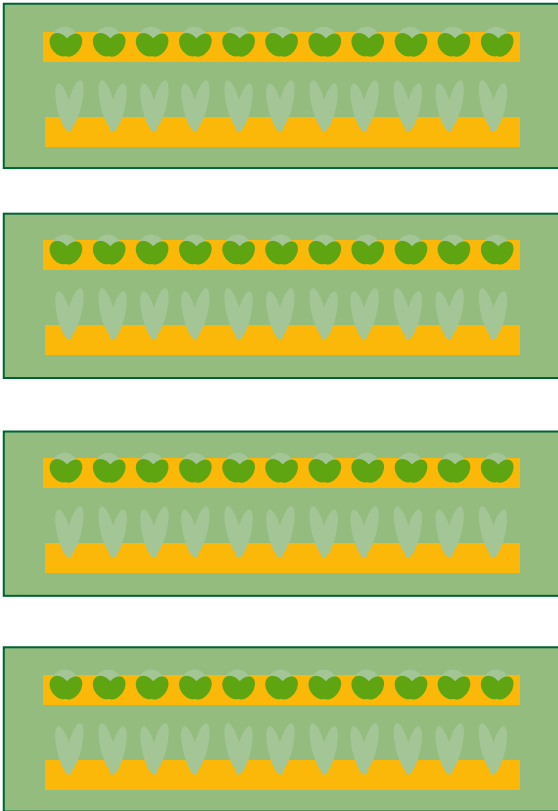
- Offer outdoor exercise.
- Improve a neighborhood's look by adding a garden to a former vacant or abandoned lot.
- Provide fresh and nutritious food for free or at a reduced cost.
- Help gardeners reduce stress and relax.
- Provide neighborhood green space.
- Develop or refine planning, organizing and conflict resolution skills.
- Give community members of all ages the chance to work together.

*Food, while needed and nutritious, is just one outcome of a successful harvest. Community gardens are as much about empowering communities as they are about growing tomatoes, beans, and corn.*

## TYPES OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

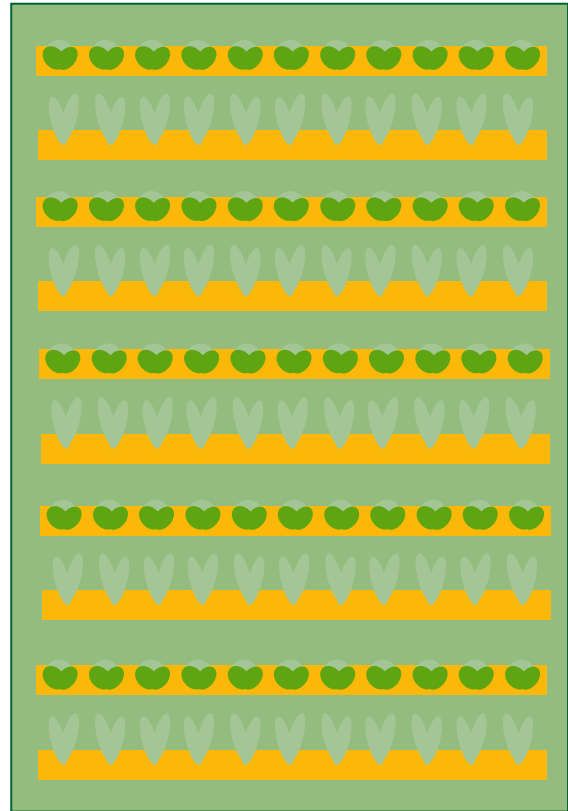
There are many types of community gardens, but the two most common are allotment and communal gardens. Your group will need to determine early on what kind of garden works best for the community.

### ALLOTMENT GARDEN



Allotment gardens offer individuals or families their own garden space to grow food and are usually managed by a leadership team. The parcels may be rented out for a small fee to maintain the garden. Allotment gardens give individuals or families a lot of ownership in their space, but problems can occur as to who tends to the communal areas.

### COMMUNAL GARDEN



In a communal or collective garden, everyone works together. It's all for one and one for all. The group is responsible for planting, tending and harvesting the entire garden, not just one plot. Anyone who works in the garden can share in the harvest, or the group may decide to donate or sell the harvest. A communal garden encourages communal work, which can take extra time and patience to plan.

## HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

The following steps and tools in this guide will help create a garden that yields healthy produce/ food and strengthens and develops your community. Additionally, a tool kit with samples of documents and materials is located at the back of this guide. Let's get started!

### You can develop a successful community garden by following this 10-step process:

**STEP 1:** Plant the seed

**STEP 2:** Cultivate the community

**STEP 3:** Allow the idea to sprout

**STEP 4:** Build the team

**STEP 5:** Select the space

**STEP 6:** Create guidelines

**STEP 7:** Grow partnerships

**STEP 8:** Play in the dirt

**STEP 9:** Evaluate the harvest

**STEP 10:** Celebrate! Celebrate!  
Celebrate!



*The first step to creating a community garden is to “plant the seed,” or find out if there are other interested people.*

# 1

## Plant the seed

**The first step in creating a community garden is to find other interested people.**

A good rule of thumb is that it takes five to ten committed people to start and maintain a successful garden. But if you only have four and they are willing to work hard, go with it!

Don't be shy about finding help in your neighborhood. You need to survey your neighbors to gauge their interest. Don't just go to the people you know, but look throughout the community to find people with the talent and interest to develop a garden. Find out if other people want or need a garden in the area/neighborhood. Remember, you aren't just growing a garden, you are growing and developing the community.

You may need to connect with other neighborhood leaders. They know a lot about the people in the community, the community's history and what makes the community tick. Even if they aren't interested in working in the garden, they may be willing to help spread the word and promote your effort.

Late summer or early fall is a good time to begin this work. This way, you should have enough time to do all the planning and preparation before it's time to plant the garden in the spring. Use the "tool" on pages 21-22 to help you.

### **STEP 1 CHECKLIST**

***How will you interest more people in the garden project?*** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***How have you reached out to community members and organizations you don't know?*** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





# 2

## Cultivate the community

**Once you have identified a group of interested people, find a location to hold an initial interest meeting.** Look for a space in the community and consider transportation, childcare and other needs of the people invited.

Identify a time that works for the people you are trying to recruit. If most of your interested members are older, you might consider an early morning time. If families or younger people are involved, you may think about an early evening time. And if you want to attract both groups, you may need several meeting times to gauge interest.

Once you have identified a potential group, a time and place, make sure to share the information with the entire community, not just those who have expressed an initial interest. Create an announcement about your plans and include your contact information (name, telephone number, email) so people will have somebody to connect with if they need additional information. It's best if you share this information about two to three weeks before the initial meeting. Use the "tools" on pages 20-22 to help you.



*Cultivating the community involves finding a time and place that works for the people you are trying to recruit.*

## 2 • CULTIVATE THE COMMUNITY



**When it comes to sharing information, use all types of media, including:**



- **Social media** - like (Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, Instagram) to get the word out.
- **Flyers** - Post where people gather in the community, like churches, community centers and recreation centers. Make sure that the flyers are placed in high-traffic locations where they can be seen.
- **Word of Mouth** - Yes, this is still a great way to let people know about what is going on. Make the idea of creating a community garden part of every conversation with neighbors and others you talk to.
- **Postal/electronic mail** - Develop a mailing/email list of possible participants and community leaders to invite. Not everybody uses or checks social media every day, so remember the physical mailbox in addition to the electronic inbox.

### STEP 2 CHECKLIST

*Did you advertise the community garden meeting in more than one way? If so, how?*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Which way of advertising worked best?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# 3

## Allow the idea to sprout

**Now that you have generated interest and set a time and place to meet, let's prepare for the initial meeting.** Since this is the first time the group will be getting together, make sure that this meeting helps set the tone for the project. Greet all with a warm smile and a handshake, and allow each participant to introduce themselves and share why they are interested in this project. You may want to have each person sign in on a small index card. So that you can have their contact information.

This first meeting may be the only chance you get to share the idea of a garden. Being prepared and allowing the group to share their thoughts is critically important. By the end of the first meeting, you should have a list of people who have agreed to participate in the community garden. Use the agenda template “tool” on page 23 to plan the meeting.

***Here are some questions to ask during your first meeting:***

- Why is having a garden important?
- What need will be met if we have a garden?
- What benefits will the garden provide the community?
- What kind of garden does the group want? Communal/Allotment or Donation?
- What should we plant (vegetables, fruit, herbs, flowers)?
- Why is participation important/necessary?
- How much time do you have to give to this effort?



*The first community garden meeting should set a pleasant tone for the project.*

### 3 • ALLOW THE IDEA TO SPROUT

Agreeing on answers to these questions will help the group create a clear direction for the community garden. When you are finished, the group will have a reason for going forward (your mission); an understanding of what you want to accomplish (a vision); and an idea of how you will get the work done (goals and objectives).

Additionally, once the meeting is over, make sure you have an action plan about what will happen next. Set a date, place, and time for the next meeting. Everybody should leave the meeting with a task, even if it's only to consider what they want to grow. The idea is to get everybody involved and excited about moving forward.

After the initial meeting, you or others who have agreed to help spread this idea should follow up with the other attendees. Send thank-you notes or emails to the folks that came to the meeting. Include the meeting notes and any other resources that you have available or were asked about in the meeting. Be mindful of how people like to stay in touch (email, text, social media, or even a good old-fashioned phone call). Use the “tools” on pages 23-25 to help you.

#### **STEP 3 CHECKLIST**

***Who was missing from the discussion?*** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***Do you have a group of people interested in gardening?*** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***When is the follow up meeting scheduled?***

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# 4

## Build the team

**After the kickoff meeting, everyone should be on the same page and working toward developing a community garden.** Now it's time to figure out how tasks will be accomplished. This is when you need to hold a second meeting. Use the “tool” on page 26 to help you.

*The most successful community garden groups include people with different ideas who practice shared leadership and decision-making.*



**Using the agenda template in the Tool Kit (appendix), incorporate these questions to prepare for the meeting:**

- What resources do we have and what do we need to start? These can include time, knowledge, money, tools, and skills.
- Who can help? Identify individuals, associations and organizations that have already committed to help. This could include your local Cooperative Extension center or people from other successful community gardens.
- What roles and responsibilities are needed to run the garden smoothly and effectively?
- Who will take on which roles and tasks?
- Do we have available space?

The most successful community garden groups include people with different ideas who practice shared leadership and decision making. Forget a top-down approach. Based on the skills and interests of the team members, everyone should have a role and the opportunity to be part of a subcommittee. In the beginning, it is helpful to break into smaller groups to tackle start-up tasks and priorities.

Once the group has agreed on its direction, you are ready to start. **Remember, keep it simple.** If a garden group is large (10 or more members), there will be a need to be more organization. If the garden group is smaller, a large leadership team is unnecessary. Decide together what roles are most important to fill. To keep people engaged, consider rotating roles and responsibilities. Use the “tool” on page 26 to help you.

## 4 • BUILD THE TEAM

These are some roles you want to consider:

### LARGE GARDENS: MORE THAN 10 GARDENERS



**Garden committee:** Director, treasurer, note taker, communications, garden manager, volunteer manager

**Subcommittees:** Volunteer/community outreach, fundraising, garden mentors\*

### SMALLER GARDENS: FEWER THAN 10 GARDENERS



**Garden committee:** Director, garden manager, treasurer

**Subcommittees:** Volunteer/community outreach, garden mentors

*\*A community garden mentor is someone who has experience growing food, may have grown up on a farm, or is a Master Gardener, and has agreed to help guide garden activities.*

### STEP 4 CHECKLIST

What is the vision for moving forward?

---

What were the agreed-upon leadership positions? \_\_\_\_\_

---

Did everyone sign up for a leadership position or supportive role? \_\_\_\_\_

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# 5 Select the space

**Gardens grow best when the group chooses its location.** A subcommittee of at least three people should be created to find the right location for the garden group. The Site Analysis “tool” on page 27 can help you.

***Some things to keep in mind:***

You need a space with at least six hours of sunlight, an available water source, good drainage and dirt that is loose and rich. This will ensure that the plants get what they need to grow. You’ll also need shed to hold your garden tools and supplies. Make sure the space isn’t shaded by a building or tree.

If the space you have lacks one or more of these items, determine if you can still use the space if you make a few changes. For example, you might need to bring in good quality dirt or haul in some water.

Also, check to see if the space you’ve picked is used by residents for another purpose, such as for play, as a path to the store or as a gathering place. If that is the case, you will want to incorporate those needs into your plans for the space. Use the “tools” on pages 27-29 to help you.

## **STEP 5 CHECKLIST**

***What garden elements does the proposed spot need?*** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***What garden elements are present?*** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***What are the next steps in securing the land?*** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# 6 Create guidelines

**Once you have your team together and you've decided on a location, it is time to create garden guidelines.** These are needed to cut down on conflict and confusion. Garden guidelines also let gardeners know what they are signing up for. These rules can be as complicated or as simple as the group wants, but should provide basic operating guidelines.

*As you look at developing rules, you will want to consider:*

- A land lease agreement, if that's necessary.
- Whether space in the garden will be rented to participants.
- Rules on pesticide use or allowing pets on the property.
- Hours of operation.
- Trash pickup.
- A budget.
- A funding plan.
- Recordkeeping to keep track of how much is grown, donated or sold.
- Signage.

Creating guidelines is a work in progress. You should expect to review and change them as the garden develops and the group learns more about organizing and managing a garden. It is helpful to keep a binder on-site with important garden information. This cuts down on having to rely on one person to answer all questions.

Just remember to keep it simple. Lots of informal gardens are done very successfully. Don't let rule-making stand in the way of community unity and the chance to grow fresh fruits and vegetables. Use the "tools" on pages 30-35 to help you.

## **STEP 6 CHECKLIST**

**Can you simplify the guidelines? Are they user-friendly?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What feedback did the leadership team give?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What payment options will be allowed?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



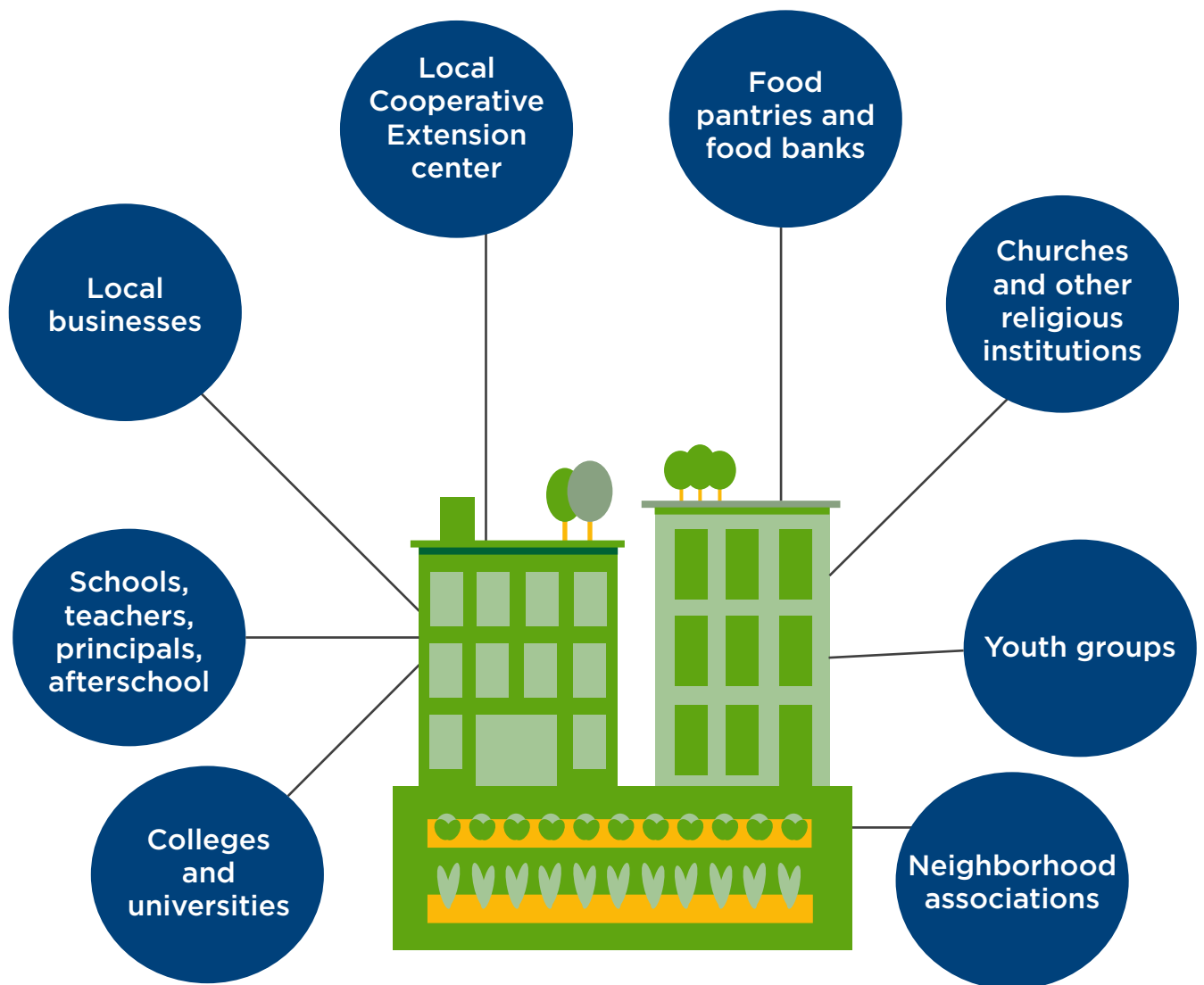


# 7 Grow partnerships

**For long-term success, it is helpful to set up partnerships with local organizations to help you get the resources you need to sustain the garden.**

Getting started will require tools, materials, and other resources you might not have. Rather than making major investments, you might find local groups or organizations that can help by making donations, or allowing you to use tools to get the land prepared for planting. All communities have organizations, public and private, that can help you grow your garden. They can provide grants, specific gardening knowledge or skills, share area land-use rules, and may even want to participate and volunteer in the garden to help you be successful. Most communities have organizations that are invested in the community's health and would welcome a partnership with a community garden.

## Potential partners:



## 7 • GROW PARTNERSHIPS

Additionally, most cities and towns have free or low-cost mulch and soil at their landfill sites. Some tree companies will drop off wood chips for mulch. Some local gardening shops might have tools or materials to donate or provide at low or reduced costs. You just have to ask.

Develop a plan for how you will proceed as a group. Once you get support, make sure to acknowledge your supporters. Establishing these relationships will cut costs and help develop successful future harvests.

While you may have partners, don't expect them to pay for all the expenses. That's where the community members will come in. As a group, you will need to decide how you will get the items you need to support your garden. These are the kinds of things that you will discuss in your community garden group. Use the "tool" on page 36 to thank potential partners.

### **STEP 7 CHECKLIST**

**Who can donate those objects?** \_\_\_\_\_

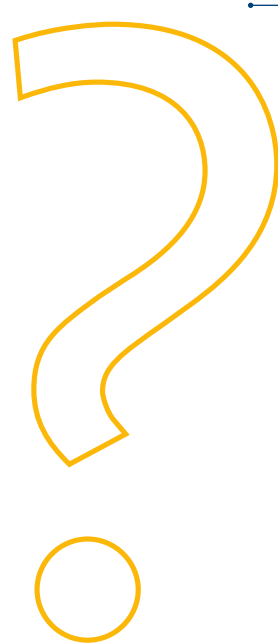
\_\_\_\_\_

**Which community organizations and businesses did you reach out to for support?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What type of support did you receive?**

\_\_\_\_\_



# 8 Play in the dirt

**Host fun events in or near the garden, such as seed swaps, fundraisers, garden tours and potlucks.** Engage volunteers in meaningful ways by creating experiences that benefit them as well as the garden. This will keep them coming back and bringing their friends, who may also want to get involved in this garden or start their own.

You can also show appreciation by providing the community members with training opportunities. Hands-on workshops teach people new skills while helping the garden to grow and thrive.

Some areas host annual potluck dinners, with members preparing dishes from the produce they've raised. This is an excellent way to build a community and to allow participants to share and taste foods they may not be accustomed to eating. This is also an excellent way to keep up with what's happening in the community and to begin to acknowledge or address any other issues or concerns community members might have. Just as the garden is growing, so is the community. Use the "tool" on page 37 to help you.



*Engage volunteers in meaningful ways by creating experiences that benefit them as well as the garden.*

## **STEP 8 CHECKLIST**

***Has the garden hosted educational workshops?***

---

***How are you managing and organizing volunteers?***

---

***How are you showing your volunteers appreciation?***

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# 9

## Evaluate the harvest

**It is important for the garden team to evaluate the garden and its programs at least once a year.** Like unattended weeds, small issues left unaddressed can grow and overwhelm a garden's progress.

***Some things you might consider when evaluating your garden are:***

- What needs did we address by having this garden?
- How did people feel when they came to the garden?
- Did the foods we grow change any eating habits?
- Was there more access to fresh fruits and vegetables?
- If we sold produce, did we make any money?
- If we donated food from the garden, how much did we donate?
- What challenges did we encounter?
- What factors may have affected the garden's outcome (weather, location, lack of help)?
- What skills do we need to be more successful with our garden?

Use this time of reflection to set more goals for the next year and consider how you will measure the garden's impact throughout the entire season. Use the "tool" on page 38 to help you.

### **STEP 9 CHECKLIST**

***What methods are available for weighing and documenting food harvested from the garden?***

\_\_\_\_\_

***What recordkeeping methods are you using?*** \_\_\_\_\_

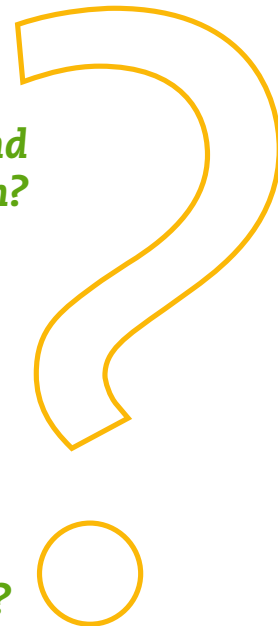
\_\_\_\_\_

***What did the garden group do well?*** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***Where are the areas that need improvement?***

\_\_\_\_\_



# 10

## Celebrate! Celebrate! Celebrate!

**The garden team has worked hard and now comes the most rewarding step in the process: Celebrating the garden's successes.**

Fall harvest parties are a fantastic way to celebrate the end of the growing season. Invite gardeners, community members and everyone involved to share in the bounty. This gives the whole community a chance to visit the garden and enjoy the results of their hard work.

While it's work, there is nothing more rewarding than eating that first tomato or sharing a melon or pepper from the garden. But just as important is knowing that the community came together to work on this project. The garden is only the beginning. There are so many other issues and concerns the community can collectively address. **You are well on your way to making sure that your COMMUNITY is FRESH!**



*While it's work, there is nothing more rewarding than eating that first tomato or sharing a melon or pepper from the garden.*

### **STEP 10 CHECKLIST**

**Did the garden committee have fun?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**How will the garden group celebrate its successes?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**List a few of the successes the garden group has experienced so far:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





# Community FRESH Tool kit

The Community Fresh Toolkit provides useful templates and proven methods to help make your garden a success. Each start- up step has a practical tool that goes along with it. Feel free to print out pages or write directly in the booklet. Keep what works for your garden and leave the rest! Happy planting!

## STEP 1: PLANT THE SEED

*Use the sample survey on page 21 to gauge community interest in growing a garden.*

## STEP 2: CULTIVATE THE COMMUNITY

### *Sample Meeting Announcements*

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA Announcement**

If you like getting your hands in the dirt and growing your fresh fruits and vegetables, then join us as we kick off the (name of community) Community FRESH community garden. We will meet at (location) on (date, time). Call me at (contact information) if you need more information. A community the grows together stays together.

#### **FLYER**

*Use the sample flyer on page 22 to help advertise your organizational meeting, or create your own using this information. Vibrant, eye-catching colors or images can help you draw interest.*



**SAMPLE INTEREST SURVEY**

We want to start a garden in our neighborhood and want to know what you think about the idea. A community garden needs the support and commitment to thrive.

**1.** Are you interested in having a garden in our neighborhood?

- a. Yes
- b. Maybe
- c. No

**2.** Would you be interested in having a garden bed?

- a. Yes
- b. Maybe
- c. No

**3.** If yes:

How much time are you willing and able to spend:

Working in your own garden plot? # Days/Week: \_\_\_\_\_ # Hours/Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Contributing to shared garden tasks? # Days/Month: \_\_\_\_\_ # Hours/Task: \_\_\_\_\_

What other ways would you be interested in helping? Please circle all that apply:

Spreading the word, being part of the leadership team, planting and harvesting, sharing a garden bed, teaching workshops, helping get funding

**4.** Would you need help growing food in your garden space?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please circle all that apply: deciding what to plant, planting, maintaining, harvesting

**5.** What ideas or concerns do you have about starting a garden in our neighborhood?

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**6.** If you want to be contacted about the garden’s progress, please provide your contact information. Your information will not be shared with anyone.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

# COMMUNITY NAME

## Community FRESH

*(Fostering Resilience, Excellence  
and Successful Harvests)*

## Community Garden Meeting

*(Date)*

*(Time)*

*(Location)*

*We're interested in starting a neighborhood community garden and want you to get in on the ground level. Let's meet, talk, and determine how we can grow together.*

*(Contact name and information)*

***(Community name)***



**STEP 3: ALLOW THE IDEA TO SPROUT**

*Potential meeting agenda*

**(Neighborhood Name)**

Community FRESH Meeting Agenda  
(Date, Time, and Location)

**Welcome**

- Logistics
  - Thank the host of the meeting
  - Location of bathroom, food
  - Silence cell phones
- Overview (State the purpose of the meeting.)
- Review the agenda with the group
- Introduction Activity (listed below)
- Community garden discussion
- Next steps
- Closing

# COMMUNITY FRESH TOOL KIT

## INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY AND SCRIPT

“Good evening (morning). Thank you for coming out. The first thing we want to do is to get to know each other. We also want to know why you are interested in a community garden and what skills or interests you have in gardening.

First, I’m asking each of you to share your name, why you are interested in the garden and why you think it will help the community.”

- IF: the group has 20+ attendees,
- THEN: Split into smaller groups for this activity.
- IF: The group is less than 20 people,
- THEN: Do the activity in one group.

Make sure you have somebody to take notes as the people talk. When everybody has spoken, summarize the discussion.

Once the group comes back together, or in the small group sessions, discuss these questions:

- Why is having a garden important?
- What problem will we solve if we have a garden?
- What benefits will the garden provide the community?
- What kind of garden does the group want? Communal/allotment or donation?
- What should we plant (vegetables, fruit, herbs, flowers)?
- Why is their participation important/necessary?
- How much time do you have to give to this effort?

## DETERMINE COMMITMENT

Next, you should share the next steps with the group. Invite everyone interested in participating to leave their names, contact information and how they want to help at the sign-in table. Help people understand that during the growing season, they will need to set aside four to five hours each week to tend to the garden.

## CLOSE THE MEETING

- Before ending the meeting, set a time and date for the second meeting.
- Present an overview and purpose of the next meeting. The second meeting is usually a working meeting to include decisions about the type of garden everyone wants and the development of the garden’s mission/vision/purpose.
- Thank everyone for coming. If people are interested in talking more, stay 20 minutes longer.

## GROUP GUIDELINES

Group guidelines are a tool used to help create a space where people feel comfortable sharing their ideas and learning together. Begin most workshops and learning activities by establishing group guidelines, modeling behaviors to encourage in the process. Here is how do it:

- Start with a piece of flipchart paper that has a few “tried and true” guidelines already written on it. Pick a few from the list that follows:
- Go over the guidelines that are there and explain what each one means, calling on members of the group for brief opinions and examples.
- Ask the group if there is anything missing or anything they would change. Scribe and record as they suggest additional guidelines.
- Ask everyone if they can agree to the guidelines. Thumbing up or down is a straightforward way to gauge people’s acceptance of guidelines.

## GUIDELINE EXAMPLES

### Agree To Disagree (Agreeably...)

**Explanation:** Everyone has the right to their own opinion, even if they are the only one in the group who holds it. It is ok to disagree and still respect someone.

### “Both-And” Thinking

**Explanation:** This is used to replace “either/or” thinking. There is not only one “right” way of thinking, and often more than one thing can be right.

### Safe to Fail

**Explanation:** Everyone fails sometimes because no one is perfect or knows it all. Ensure that your meeting or workshop is a safe space to mess up and learn from mistakes, so we do not continue to make the same mistakes over and over.

### Calling In

**Explanation:** We “call in” someone (to the group) rather than “call them out” (of the group). If someone messes up, or says or does something offensive, bring it to their attention in a way that does not make them feel like an outsider or a horrible person.

### Step Up/Step Back

If you are outgoing and sometimes take over the conversation or miss social cues when you are excited, try to be self-aware and step back when you are being dominating. If you are shy and spend most of your time listening, try to step up and share your thoughts with the group.

***Remember, no one knows everything, but together we know a lot!***

## OTHER HELPFUL MEETING FACILITATION TOOLS:

### Keep Comments Focused (The Talking Stick)

**Explanation:** During group discussions, try to stay focused on the topic, and be careful not to use shared time for personal monologues or extended explanations. There is a place for this (storytelling, journaling) but not in a shared meeting with limited time. If we have trouble staying focused, we may use a talking stick.

### The Bike Rack

**Explanation:** Sometimes, in a safe place with a supportive community, you might get a great idea or become aware of a burning issue that’s completely off-topic. Share it briefly and park it in the “bike rack” for future discussions.

# COMMUNITY FRESH TOOL KIT

## STEP 4: BUILD THE TEAM

- This guide provides a list of typical roles and responsibilities of community garden leadership teams. The garden leadership team is responsible for ensuring that the garden rules are always being followed and assisting gardeners as needed.
- Leadership roles can change from year to year, which will keep people engaged in the process. The positions are filled through nomination and voting, which provides the gardeners with the opportunity to speak up and participate. This doesn't have to be a big fancy ordeal. At the beginning of the year, talk about which roles need to be filled, ask for volunteers and nominations for the position.
- The garden leadership positions will be voted on at your wrap-up meeting.
- Keep it simple. If a garden is large with 10 or more members, there will need to be more organization. If the garden is smaller, with less than 10 members, a larger leadership team is not necessary as a group decides what roles are important for your group.

<b>GARDEN COORDINATOR</b>	<p><i>Sets agendas for and conducts garden meetings.</i></p> <p><i>Recruits gardeners.</i></p> <p><i>Assists with all roles when needed.</i></p> <p><i>Serves as the primary point of contact.</i></p> <p><i>Represents the garden at community events.</i></p>
<b>GARDEN MANAGER</b>	<p><i>Organizes registration and assigns plots.</i></p> <p><i>Collects gardener agreement forms.</i></p> <p><i>Makes sure that gardeners maintain their plots.</i></p> <p><i>Secures technical help for gardeners.</i></p> <p><i>Provides a new garden orientation.</i></p> <p><i>Serves as a point of contact with gardeners and potential gardeners.</i></p> <p><i>Keeps areas mowed and fences clear of weeds or debris.</i></p>
<b>GARDEN MENTOR(S)</b>	<p><i>Serves as a seasoned gardener available as a resource for new gardeners regarding horticultural practices and questions.</i></p> <p><i>Assists with new gardener orientation.</i></p>
<b>NOTETAKER</b>	<p><i>Takes notes at all the meetings.</i></p> <p><i>Coordinates communications, newsletter, and online outreach.</i></p> <p><i>Keeps all garden documents organized.</i></p>
<b>TREASURER</b>	<p><i>Maintains the budget.</i></p> <p><i>Receives payments for garden beds.</i></p> <p><i>Gives the budget report at every meeting.</i></p>
<b>OPERATIONS COORDINATOR</b>	<p><i>Maintains common spaces.</i></p> <p><i>Organizes workdays.</i></p> <p><i>Coordinates any soil, mulch, or materials delivery.</i></p> <p><i>Organizes the tool shed.</i></p>
<b>FUNDRAISER</b>	<p><i>Identifies and applies for grant funding.</i></p> <p><i>Works closely with treasurer.</i></p> <p><i>Leads the coordination of any fundraising events.</i></p>

## STEP 5: SELECT THE GARDEN SPACE

### COMMUNITY GARDEN SITE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Use this as a guide when you visit a potential community garden site. Fill this assessment out as you walk the property to make sure you choose the best site for the community garden.

Before you do a site assessment you need to answer the following three questions:

- What is the site's history? (Parking lot/ gas station farm/residential)
- What is the garden group's mission statement and/or goals? Write them here so that it will be fresh in your mind as you walk the property.
- Who owns the land? Name/ affiliation/ contact information:

***Use this space to sketch out a garden map or any other ideas that come up when you are assessing the property.***



A large grid of dotted lines for sketching a garden map. In the top right corner of the grid, there is a compass rose with the cardinal directions labeled: N (North), S (South), E (East), and W (West).

# COMMUNITY FRESH TOOL KIT

**Use this checklist to determine whether this location is ideal for your garden. Check answers where appropriate.**



## NEIGHBORHOOD:

- Good level of interest/involvement from neighbors
- Consideration given to the demographic
- Knowledge of crime rate
- Potential animal issues (deer, rabbits, raccoons, etc.)



## SUN:

- Appropriate levels of sun and shade
- Structure or vegetation that shades the garden area.
- Which way is the garden facing? North, South, East, or West.



## SOIL:

- Knowledge of drainage conditions
- Are there areas that hold water/where water pools and doesn't drain?  
If so, where:
- Compact/loose
- Has the soil been tested?



## TOPOGRAPHY:

- Flat or sloped
- If sloped which direction is the hill/s?
- Are there any hills that slope towards the garden?



## WATER ACCESS:

- Where is the water access? Onsite/home/business/church/city/well
- Type and proximity to garden and future plots
- Who will pay for the water:
- Is there potential to catch water on the site? If so where?



## ACCESS TO GARDEN:

- Near public transport
- Place to park, bike racks
- Accessible to people with all abilities (wheelchair, elderly, site impaired)

## COMMUNITY GARDEN SITE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Answer each question below, then rate its level of importance, with 1 being the least important to have and 5 being something that the garden needs to have.

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Is there a storage shed or onsite? If not is there a space for one? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Composting site:  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Visibility (safety & publicity)                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Access to a restroom?   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Electricity:  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Truck or heavy machinery access:                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Existing fencing:   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## NEXT STEPS:

**Contact the local municipal planning department to make sure that the garden site is zoned properly so that the garden can expand in the future if needed.**

**Test the soil. That information will determine if the soil is contaminated. Healthy soil is necessary when you are growing food. If your soil is unhealthy or contaminated your plants won't grow, the toxins will leach into the food that does grow and you will spend more money trying to fix the soil.**

**Contact the landowner, who may be private or public entity. Sign an agreed upon binding lease. A long-term lease is necessary for a sustainable community garden, a five-year lease is highly recommended.**



# COMMUNITY FRESH TOOL KIT

## STEP 6: CREATE GARDEN GUIDELINES

*Below is a sample of rules you might want to consider as you develop your group's operating guidelines.*

The (community name) Community Garden is open to individuals and community organizations from (community name). Garden plots are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Each gardener must complete an application package and pay the required membership fee before any garden work can begin. The group will determine how the money is spent.

### **HOURS OF OPERATION: (Consider what works best for your area)**

- 1.** Access to the garden is restricted to community garden members only. They may be accompanied by family members and guests upon communication with the Community Garden Manager. An adult must always supervise children.
- 2.** Each gardener is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of their garden plot. Watering, weeding, harvesting and any other garden-related maintenance are all the responsibility of the gardener.
- 3.** The garden must be well-maintained throughout the year. Garden plots should not be left unattended for more than two weeks. Owners of neglected gardens will be contacted for corrective actions. Failure to act and address the issue(s) may lead to forfeiting their rights to garden in the community garden.
- 4.** Gardeners should not harvest from others' plots unless the community garden manager has granted permission.
- 5.** Gardeners are expected to maintain weed-free walkways and paths adjacent to their garden plots.
- 6.** No illegal, permanent or invasive plant material will be allowed in the community garden. Gardeners should also be considerate of their neighbors and avoid plant material that may be excessively tall and cast shade on others' plots.
- 7.** Promote sustainable farming methods. The application of pesticides is prohibited without prior written approval of the Community Garden Manager.
- 8.** Personal tools may be brought in with clearance by the community garden manager. They should be labeled and clean and be free of pests and diseases. We are not responsible for any gardener's tools.
- 9.** Water will be provided. All irrigation equipment must be put back in place and water turned off at the end of use.
- 10.** Gardeners should communicate with the community garden manager if they have any concerns.
- 11.** Trash cans and a compost area will be provided for gardeners' use. Instructions will be given for handling pests and diseases, but as a rule, contaminated plant material should not be composted. It is everyone's responsibility to use trash cans and composted areas as instructed and keep the area tidy.
- 12.** At the end of the growing season or when leaving the community garden, gardeners are responsible for clearing their plot of all plant material.
- 13.** Pets, alcohol, smoking or chewing tobacco, drugs and weapons are not allowed on the property. The community garden is an environment where all gardeners can farm in peace. No loud music should be played. Violence, suspicious or disrespectful behavior, vandalism and theft should be reported immediately to the community garden manager. Any destruction or theft of property or any other part of the garden will be reported to the police and subject to prosecution. Such behavior will be a reason for dismissal from the community garden.



**14.** We are not liable for the loss of personal material or equipment, the loss of crops/produce, or injury while working in the garden. The gardening outcomes are also subject to many variables, including weather, and cannot be guaranteed.

**15.** Any activity other than working on the gardening plots must be approved in advance by the community garden manager.

**IMPORTANT:** Failure to abide by the rules may result in loss of garden rights.

### **OTHER TOPICS TO CONSIDER WHEN CREATING GARDEN RULES/GUIDELINES:**

- If gardeners will pay a fee, how much and when will the fee be due?
- When will gardeners' plant if you are using an allotment model? If you are using the communal model, how will the work be distributed?
- What's the process if a gardener must abandon their plot during the planting season?
- Who is responsible for weeds in individual plots and common areas?
- What process will you follow if a plot is unkempt, empty, or abandoned?
- Who is responsible for litter?
- How will we clean up the garden in the fall and prepare it for the winter?
- Helping people understand how what they plant in their plot might affect a neighbors' plot. For example, if you have tall corn and it shades somebody's tomatoes or beans, how will this situation be handled?
- How will the harvest be done?
- Will we allow the use of fertilizers, insecticides or weed repellents that might affect other plots?
- Will we allow pets in the garden?
- Helping gardeners understand the planting and tending a garden may not guarantee a bumper harvest. There are many other variables.
- Developing a legal statement, such as "I THEREFORE AGREE TO HOLD HARMLESS THE GARDEN GROUP AND OWNERS OF THE LAND FOR ANY LIABILITY, DAMAGE, LOSS OR CLAIM THAT OCCURS IN CONNECTION WITH USE OF THE GARDEN BY ME OR ANY OF MY GUESTS."



# COMMUNITY FRESH TOOL KIT

Community FRESH Sample Garden Application. Space at the top is blank for community name, address.

This document can be photocopied for convenient use by your community garden.

## Community Garden Contract Rules, Terms, and Conditions for Participation

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Partner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Telephone number(s): (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

*I am a new gardener*

*I am a returning gardener*

*If you are a new gardener, please answer the following questions:*

• *Do you have any prior gardening experience? If so, please elaborate:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• *What are your gardening goals and what do you want to grow?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Are you interested in volunteering as part of the leadership team?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*The fee for my plot is \$\_\_\_\_\_.*

*Please check which jobs/interests/skills you have:*

- Garden leader*
- Planting coordinator*
- Ground crew*
- Maintenance crew*
- Supply crew*
- Events crew*
- Treasurer*
- Communications/Outreach/Community relations*
- Master gardener*
- Security*
- Childcare*
- Cook*
- Art*

*Signed:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Gardener*

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Approved:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Community Garden Manager*

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

## BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Starting a garden can range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. You will need to go back to your earlier discussions about reasons for starting the garden and problems you are trying to solve to determine how to get the money needed to operate your garden. In some areas, charging a garden fee is appropriate, while in other areas, a fee may stop those who need the food from being able to plant a garden. Your garden group will have to decide how to proceed.

## COMMUNITY FRESH BUDGET TEMPLATE

LINE ITEMS	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF ITEMS NEEDED	COST PER ITEM	TOTAL COST
<b>INCOME</b>				
<b>PLOT FEES</b>				
<b>GRANTS</b>				
<b>FUNDRAISERS</b>				
<b>DONATIONS</b>				
<b>BALANCE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR</b>				
<b>IN-KIND DONATIONS (NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER HOURS, COMPOST, PLANTS)</b>				
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>				
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT</b>				

# COMMUNITY FRESH TOOL KIT

LINE ITEMS	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL NEEDED	COST PER ITEM	TOTAL COST	NOTES (CAN ADD VENDOR)
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
<b>OPERATIONAL</b>					
WATER BILL					
LAND LEASE COST					
LIABILITY INSURANCE (IF APPLICABLE)					
PRINTED MATERIALS					
WEBSITE					
<b>STRUCTURAL</b>					
RAISED BED MATERIALS					
GARDEN PREPARATION					
FENCING					
SIGNAGE					
BULLETIN BOARD					

## COMMUNITY FRESH TOOL KIT

SHED					
HAND-WASHING STATION					
<b>GROWING SUPPLIES</b>					
TRANSPLANTS					
SEEDS					
COMPOST/SOIL					
MULCH					
GLOVES					
SEEDS					
HAND TOOLS					
HOSES					
HAND TOOLS					
<b>REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE</b>					
MOWING					
TILLING					
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>					
<b>NET INCOME</b> (income expenses)					

# COMMUNITY FRESH TOOL KIT

## STEP 7: GROW PARTNERSHIPS

*Below are sample ask and thank letters you can send to a business/potential partner asking and thanking them for supporting your community garden.*

### **SAMPLE LETTER:**

(Your name or name of community garden group)  
(Your address)  
(Your phone number)  
(Date)

Dear (their name):

I am writing as a member of (name of garden community group) to ask for your support for the development of our neighborhood community garden.

We have been meeting for the past couple of months developing plans for a community garden. This garden will not only provide fresh vegetables, herbs, and fruit for our community, but will also be a source of exercise, a green space for the community, allow the community to work together on a project, serve as a way for us to reduce stress and potentially provide learning opportunities for the neighborhood's young people.

While we are all making contributions toward the garden, we need your help. We are asking that you (donate, provide tools, provide supplies, whatever the request is). You can be assured that your contribution will be appreciated, shared with all members of the community, and acknowledged publicly.

We would be happy to discuss our needs with you further. You can reach me at (add contact information). Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,  
(Your name)

### **SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER:**

(Your name or name of Community Garden Group)  
(Your address)  
(Your phone number)  
(Date)

Dear (their name):

Thank you so much for your support of the (name of community) Community Garden. These (funds, tools, supplies, etc.) will be used as we continue to make plans for our garden. We will be planting (vegetables, herbs, fruits) and this will provide need fresh food to our community. Without your help, our project would not be possible.

We would love to invite you out to our garden once our planting is underway to see how much of a difference you helped make in our community.

Again, thank you.

Sincerely yours,  
(Your Name)

**STEP 8: PLAY IN THE DIRT**

**Sample Community Garden Volunteer log**

\_\_\_\_\_ (Insert Garden Name) Volunteer Log    Month of \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name or group</b>	<b># of Vol.</b>	<b>Hours worked</b>	<b>Task(s) completed</b>	<b>New or returning</b>	
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							
9.							
10.							
11.							
12.							
13.							
14.							
15.							

(Document created by Diana McCall garden manager for Dr. John Wilson Community Garden)

# COMMUNITY FRESH TOOL KIT

## STEP 9: EVALUATE THE HARVEST

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Community Garden: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

As you harvest produce, record the date at the top of the sheet, and the harvest amount (pounds, ounces, or number of units) for each crop in the column below. When you fill this sheet, add up the total amount harvested for each crop and put this number in the 'total' column. Start a new sheet and continue recording your harvest.

Crop Name	Date harvested	Date harvested	Date harvested	Date harvested	Date harvested	Date harvested	Date harvested



**NOTES:**

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