

Twin Cities COMMUNITY GARDEN START-UP GUIDE

Adapted for the Twin Cities metro area by GardenWorks, now Gardening Matters, September 2007, from the LA version found at http://celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/garden/articles/pdf/startup_guide.pdf, 8/15/2007, with permission.

This "Community Garden Start-Up Guide" is intended to help neighborhood groups and organizations along the path to starting and sustaining a community garden.

Why Start a Community Garden?

Many families living in the city would like to grow some of their own fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Some want to save money on their food bills. Others like the freshness, flavor and wholesomeness of homegrown produce. And for many, gardening is a relaxing way to exercise and enjoy being out-of-doors.

Community gardens beautify neighborhoods and help bring neighbors closer together. They have been proven as tools to reduce neighborhood crime--particularly when vacant, blighted lots are targeted for garden development. Community gardens provide safe, recreational green space in urban areas with little or no parkland, and can contribute to keeping urban air clean.

Those who are lucky enough to have sunny backyards or balconies can plant a garden whenever they have the time and energy. But what about those who do not have a place to garden? For these people, community gardens may be the answer.

Step by Step to your own Community Garden

1. Get Your Neighbors Involved

There is a lot of work involved in starting a new garden. Make sure you have several people who will help you. Over the years, our experience indicates that there should be at least ten interested families to create and sustain a garden project. Survey the residents of your neighborhood to see if they are interested and would participate. Create and distribute a community flyer (page 10) inviting people to become involved. Hold monthly meetings of the interested group to develop and initiate plans, keep people posted on the garden's progress, and keep them involved in the process from day one.

2. Form a Garden Group

A garden group is a way of formally organizing your new group. It helps you make decisions and divide up the work effectively. It also ensures that every one has a vested interest in the garden and can contribute to its design, development, and maintenance. It can be formed at any time during the process of starting a community garden; however, it's wise to do so early on. This way, group members can share in the many tasks of establishing the new garden.

- Each garden group will:
- Establish garden rules
 - Collect garden dues
 - Pay water bills
 - Resolve conflicts

The typical garden group has a shared email and phone list of members, and at least two officers: a president and a treasurer; although your garden group may have more positions.

Before the first meeting, each member should try to do some piece of homework, whether it is identifying possible properties, possible partners, or people or organizations interested in being part of the community garden. Before the end of the meeting, members should have held the elections, started the phone/email contact list, scheduled the second meeting, and identified a task for each member to accomplish before the second meeting.

Use the first meeting to draw out people's interest in the garden and what they would like to see from the garden. The worksheet, Developing a Vision for Your Garden (page 11), can guide the discussion, record the outcomes of the meeting, and be shared with people who join the garden project later. To insure that everyone feels like they were heard during this process, go round the group and ask for people's thoughts and input, and then write it down on a large pad of paper for everyone to see. Many problems and headaches can be avoided in the future by developing a vision of the garden at the very start, and can be reviewed when decisions are being made.

3. Find Land for the Garden

Look around your neighborhood for a vacant lot that gets plenty of sun--at least six to eight hours each day. A garden site should be relatively flat (although slight slopes can be terraced). It should be relatively free of large pieces of concrete left behind from demolition of structures. Any rubble or debris should be manageable --that is, volunteers clearing the lot with trash bags, wheelbarrows, and pick up trucks can remove it. Ideally, it should have a fence around it with a gate wide enough for a vehicle to enter. It is possible to work with a site that is paved with concrete or asphalt by building raised beds that sit on the surface or using containers. You can also remove the asphalt or concrete to create areas for gardens, but such a garden will be much more difficult, expensive, and time-consuming to start. A site without paving, and soil relatively free of trash and debris is best.

The potential garden site should be within walking, or no more than a short drive from you and the neighbors who have expressed interest in participating. If the lot is not already being used, make sure the community supports establishing a garden there.

It's best to select three potential sites in your neighborhood and write down their address and nearest cross streets. If you don't know the address of a vacant lot, get the addresses of the properties on both sides of the lot--this will give you the ability to make an educated guess on the address of the site. We suggest you identify at least three potential sites because one or more might not be available for you to use for various reasons, and you want to end up with at least one that works out.

Use the Garden Site Evaluation Checklist (page 13) to help assess potential sites.

4. Find out Who Owns the Land

It is illegal to use land without obtaining the owners permission. In order to obtain permission, you must first find out who owns the land.

Take the information you have written down about the location of the sites in step 3 to your county's tax assessor's office. The county or city tax assessor's office can tell you who owns the property, as this is public knowledge. Increasingly, counties and cities are making this information available online, but you may need a street address. For properties within Hennepin County, call the Public Records Division at 612-348-5139. For properties in Ramsey County, call Property Records at 651-266-2000.

5. Find out if Your Proposed Site has Water

Every garden site must have access to water. The easiest solution is to ask a neighbor resident or business to provide the garden with water. Propose a seasonal fee for the water use and discuss the need to secure hoses or locking the spigot. For information about small water meters for spigots, contact Gardening Matters. If a neighbor is not available, then contact the city's water department to get hooked up to a water hydrant. In some cases, they can connect to a hydrant through the sewer, but it depends upon the situation.

As your community garden becomes more established, the group may want to install its own water system and meter. If so, contact the water service provider in your area to find out if your potential site(s) has/have an existing water meter to hook-in to. Call your water provider's customer service department, and ask them to conduct a "site investigation". They will need the same location information that you took with you to the Tax Assessor's office. If there has been water service to the site in the past, it is relatively inexpensive to get a new water meter installed (if one doesn't already exist).

6. Contact the Land Owner

Once you have determined that your potential site is feasible, call the landowner about the proposal and see if they are open to the idea. If so, then follow-up with a letter to the landowner (page 14), asking for permission to use the property for a community garden. Be sure to mention to the landowner the value of the garden to the community and the fact the gardeners will be responsible for keeping the site clean and weed-free (this saves landowners from maintaining the site or paying city weed abatement fees).

Establish a term for use of the site, and prepare and negotiate a lease. Typically, groups lease garden sites from land owners for \$1 per year. You should attempt to negotiate a lease for at least three years (or longer if the property owner is agreeable). Many landowners are worried about their liability for injuries that might occur at the garden. Therefore, you should include a simple "hold harmless" waiver in the lease and in gardener agreement forms. For more information on the lease, and the hold harmless waiver, see 8, "Signing a Lease".

Be prepared to purchase liability insurance to protect further the property owner (and yourself) should an accident occur at the garden. For more information on the hold harmless waiver, and liability insurance, see 8, "Signing a Lease", and 9, "Obtaining Liability Insurance" below.

Land Tenure

- Is the garden site secured with a lease? Does it need to be?
- Be sure to contact the landowner each year and ask about the landowner's plans for the land
- Are there development plans for the garden site and what is the schedule?

If the land is planned for development mid-season, talk with the landowner or developer about delaying the garden's removal until November to give gardeners the remainder of season to enjoy the "fruits" of their labor. Often land is cleared months prior to any actual digging, if only to ensure that the land is ready when development is planned. Delaying a garden's removal until after the season is good public relations for the developer/landowner and good for the gardeners' morale.

7. Get Your Soil Tested

It is advisable to have the soil at the site tested for fertility, pH and presence of heavy metals, such as lead or toxins, such as arsenic. Call your city or MN Pollution Control Agency to see if they can conduct a lead hazard test or arsenic for your community garden or recommend an agency/business. For tests for soil nutrients, contact UMN's soil testing lab at 612-625-3101, <http://soiltest.cfans.umn.edu/> (click on "how to submit"). A soil test costs between \$15 to \$80, depending upon what you request.

8. Signing a Lease

Landowners of potential garden sites might be concerned about their liability should someone be injured while working in the garden. Your group should be prepared to offer the landowner a lease with a "hold harmless" waiver (see Sample Lease, page 15). This "hold harmless" waiver can simply state that should one of the gardeners be injured as a result of negligence on the part of another gardener, the landowner is

"held harmless" and will not be sued. Each gardener should be made aware of this waiver and asked to sign the waiver included in the [Gardener Agreement Form](#) (see #13).

9. Obtaining Liability Insurance

Landowners may also require that your group purchase liability insurance. Community gardeners can contact their neighborhood organization (Neighborhood Association or District Council) to get an insurance rider. Another option is to contact a non-profit or business that already has property nearby to put a rider on their insurance. It is possible to purchase insurance independently, but this often is much more expensive than finding a community partner. Call Gardening Matters for more options.

Liability insurance essentially stands between the landowner and someone who wishes to sue them for a wrong experienced on the garden site. Does the landowner require insurance? New York City does not require liability insurance for community gardens on city property

Once you have a lease signed by the landowner and liability insurance, you're free to plan and plant your garden!

10. Planning the Garden

Community members should be involved in the planning, design, and set-up of the garden. Before the design process begins, you should measure your site and make a simple, to-scale site map. Hold two or three garden design meetings at times when interested participants can attend. Make sure that group decisions are recorded in official minutes, or that someone takes accurate notes. This ensures that decisions made can be communicated to others, and progress will not be slowed. A great way to generate ideas and visualize the design is to use simple drawings or photos cut from garden magazines representing the different garden components--flower beds, compost bins, pathways, arbors, etc.--that can be moved around on the map as the group discusses layout.

We strongly recommend that garden group members take the initiative early on to connect with gardeners from other community gardens in their area or have a similar vision. Not only will group members learn the lessons of other garden groups, but also take away new ideas and new relationships with nearby and similar community gardens.

Use the [Community Garden Planning Worksheet](#) (page 16) to guide discussion when designing the layout of the garden and how the garden will operate. This Planning Worksheet is a good document to review with gardeners at the annual spring meeting (see #13) and make changes as needed.

Please note that community gardens can be laid out as allotment gardens where folks sign up for a plot or they can be gardened collectively growing either flowers, food or both. A tomato icon (→) will be used for sections that refer specifically to allotment gardens. If the garden will be gardened collectively (i.e. no individual ownership in the garden), then please skip these sections.



a. Basic Elements of a Community Garden


Although there are exceptions to every rule, community gardens should almost always include:

- At least 15 plots 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). Inground plots can be from 10 x 10 up to 20 x 20 feet. Pathways between beds and plots should be least 3 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.



- Access to water. Develop a watering system for the community garden depending upon the resources available. Many gardens use a combination of hoses and water barrels (55 gallon food-grade barrels).
- An adjacent delivery site for large quantities of woodchips and compost. This area should be accessible by large trucks and set-up to contain the delivered materials, such as a short wood or stone retaining wall to eliminate runoff and discourage neighbors from parking on it.
- A fence around the perimeter with a hedge, and a drive-through gate if the delivery site for compost and woodchips is inside the fence. In our experience, this is a key element of success. Don't count on eliminating all acts of vandalism or theft, but fencing will help to keep these to tolerably low levels.
- A tool shed or other structure for storing tools, supplies, and materials.
- A bench or picnic table where gardeners can sit, relax, and take a break--preferably in shade. If there are no shade trees on the site, a simple arbor can be constructed from wood or pipe, and planted with vines.
- A sign with the garden's name, address (street location), sponsors, and a contact phone number for more information. If your community is bilingual, include information in both languages.
- A shared composting area for the community gardeners. Wood pallets are easy to come by and (when stood on-end, attached in an U-shape, and the inside covered with galvanized rabbit-wire) make excellent compost bins.

b. Nice Additions to Your Garden Plan

- A small fruit tree orchard, whose care and harvest can be shared by all the members. The orchard can also create shade for people as well as shade-loving plants.
- Perimeter landscaping, which can focus on native drought tolerant flowers and shrubs, plants which 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.
- A children's area, which can include special small plots for children and a covered sand box.
- A meeting area, which could range from a semi-circle of hay bales or tree stumps, to a simple amphitheater built of recycled, broken concrete. Building a shade structure above, would be beneficial as well.
- A community bulletin board where rules, meeting notices, and other important information can be posted.
-  A plot for the food shelf. Contact your local foodshelf to see what items they would like. Consider shelf-life. If not food, then consider donating a bouquet of flowers to an organization that serves the community.
- A simple irrigation system with one hose bib or faucet for every four plots. Hand watering with a hose is the most practical and affordable for individual plots (and 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 transplanted and established plants, but especially for deep-rooted fruit trees and ornamentals. If no one in your group is knowledgeable about irrigation, you might need some assistance in designing and maintaining your irrigation system. Seek out a landscape contractor or nursery or garden center professional to help you develop a basic layout and materials list.

11. Creating a Garden Budget

Use your design to develop a materials list and cost-out the project. You will need to call-around to get prices on fencing and other items. You might be surprised at the total cost once the individual items from the Basic Elements List (above) are added together. At this point, your group might decide to scale back

on initial plans and save some design ideas for a "Phase Two" of the garden. Use the [Sample Budget Worksheet](#) (page 20) to develop the garden's budget and determine a priority list. A budget will help identify annual expenses and determine how much to charge for a plot.

12. Where to Get Materials and Money

While some start-up funds will be needed, through determination and hard work, you can obtain donations of materials for your project. Community businesses might assist, and provide anything from fencing to lumber to plants. The important thing is to ask. Develop a [Donation Letter](#) (page 21) that tells merchants about your project and why it's important to the community. Attach your "wish list", but be reasonable. Try to personalize this letter for each business you approach. Drop it off personally with the store manager, preferably with a couple of cute kids who will be gardening in tow! Then, follow up by phone. Be patient, persistent, and polite. Your efforts will pay off, with at least some of the businesses you approach. Be sure to thank these key supporters and recognize them on your garden sign, at a garden grand opening, or other special event.

Money, which will be needed to purchase items not donated, can be obtained through community fundraisers such as car washes, craft and rummage sales, pancake breakfasts, and bake sales. They can also be obtained by writing grants. Contact the foundation to see if the community garden is a good fit and what is the process for applying for a grant. Be aware grant writing efforts can take six months or longer to yield results, and you will need a fiscal sponsor or agent with tax-exempt 501(c)3 status (such as a church or non-profit corporation) that agrees to administer the funds.

13. Make Sure Your Garden Infrastructure is in Place

If you have not yet formed a garden group, now's the time to do so. It's also time to establish garden rules, develop a garden application form (see sample gardener agreement, page 18) for those who wish to participate, set up a bank account, and determine what garden dues will be if these things have not already been done. This is also the time to begin having monthly meetings if you have not already done so. Also, if you haven't already contacted your city councilperson, he or she can be helpful in many ways including helping your group obtain city services such as trash pick-up. Their staff can also help you with community organizing and soliciting for material donations. Review [Preserving the Garden: Elements of Sustainability](#) (page 22) for additional suggestions for a solid garden infrastructure.

Many gardens have an annual spring meeting in March for the garden group members. During this meeting,

- Review the [Community Gardening Planning Worksheet](#) (page 16) with the garden group – see if there are any questions.
- Reassess the garden rules (often listed as part of the [Community Gardener Agreement](#), page 18)
- Review Job Descriptions as a group to see what is working and what needs to be changed. Assign people to each job.
- Determine garden officers for following year, if applicable
- Review the [Community Garden Health and Safety Policy](#) (page 24) and go over safe practices within the garden.
- Schedule workdays and special events and assign people to committees for each workday or event.

Visit our website at www.gardeningmatters.org for additional ideas for garden rules and job descriptions compiled from local community gardens
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14. Get Growing!

Many new garden groups make the mistake of remaining in the planning, design and fundraising stage for an extended period of time. There is a fine line between planning well and over planning. After several months of the initial research, designing, planning, and outreach efforts, group members will very likely be feeling frustrated and will begin to wonder if all their efforts will ever result in a garden. That's why it's important to plant something on your site as soon as possible. People need to see visible results or they will begin to lose interest in the project. To keep the momentum going, initiate the following steps even if you are still seeking donations and funds for your project (but not until you have signed a lease and obtained insurance).

a. Clean up the Site

Schedule community workdays to clean up the site. How many work days you need will depend on the size of the site, and how much and what kind of debris are on site.

b. Set-up the Water System

Without water, you can't grow anything. So get this key element into place as soon as possible. There are plenty of opportunities for community involvement – from preparing water barrels to setting up spigots.

Major projects in the garden may require additional assistance (extra backs and arms!). Some businesses look for opportunities for their employees to volunteer together. Also many social service organizations have programs for youth or other populations and are also looking for outdoor opportunities for their clients to help the community. Gardening Matters can help you identify potential partners.

c. Plant Something

Once you have water, there are many options for in-garden action. Stake out beds and pathways by marking them with stakes and twine. Mulch pathways. You can also plant shade and fruit trees and begin to landscape the site. If you do not yet have a source of donated plants, plant annual flower seeds which will grow quickly and can be replaced later. Consult Gardening Matters for sources of free or discounted woodchips, compost, seeds and seedlings.

d. Continue to construct the garden as materials and funds become available.

15. Celebrate!

At this point, your ideas and hard work have finally become a community garden! Be sure to take time to celebrate. Have a grand opening, barbecue, or some other fun event to give everyone who helped to make this happen a special thank you. This is the time to give all those who donated materials or time a special certificate, bouquet, or other form of recognition.

16. Troubleshooting as the Garden Develops

All community gardens will experience problems somewhere along the way. Don't get discouraged—get organized. The key to success for community gardens is not only preventing problems from ever occurring, but also working together to solve them when they do inevitably occur. In our experience, these are some of the most common problems that "crop-up" in community gardens, and our suggestions for solving them

a. Vandalism

Most gardens experience occasional vandalism. The best action you can take is to replant immediately. Generally the vandals become bored after a while and stop. Good community outreach, especially to youth and the garden's immediate neighbors is also important. Most important--don't get too discouraged. It happens. Get over it and keep going. What about barbed wired or razor wire to make the garden more secure? Our advice-- don't. It's bad for community relations, looks awful, and is sometimes illegal to install without a permit. If you need more physical deterrents to keep vandals out, plant roses or barberry or other thorn-enhanced plants along your fence, their thorns will do the trick! (As with all thorny plants, maintenance tends to slack over time unless there is a concerted effort to maintain them.)

b. Security

Invite the community officer from your local precinct to a garden meeting to get their suggestions on making the garden more secure. Community officers can also be a great help in solving problems with garden vandalism, and dealing with drug dealers, and gang members in the area.

c. Communication

Clear and well-enforced garden rules and a strong garden coordinator/committee can go a long way towards minimizing misunderstandings in the garden. But communication problems do arise. It's the job of the garden group to resolve those issues. If it's something not clearly spelled out in the rules, the membership can take a vote to add new rules and make modifications to existing rules.

Language barriers are a very common source of misunderstandings. Garden club leadership should make every effort to have a translator at garden meetings where participants are bilingual--perhaps a family member of one of the garden members who speaks the language will offer to help.

d. Gardener Drop-Out

There has been, and probably always will be, some turnover in community gardens. Often, people sign up for plots and then don't follow through. Remember, gardening is hard work for some people, especially in the heat of summer. Be sure to have a clause in your gardener agreement which states gardeners 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 after several reminders, either by letter or phone, nothing changes, it is time for the group to reassign the plot or open to someone on the waiting list.

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.

e. Trash

It's important to get your compost system going right away and get some training for gardeners on how to use it. If gardeners don't compost, large quantities of waste will begin to build up, create an eyesore, and could hurt your relationships with neighbors and the property owner. Waste can also become a fire hazard. Make sure gardeners know how to sort trash properly, what to compost, and what to recycle. Trash cans placed in accessible areas are helpful to keep a neat and tidy garden.

f. Weeds

Early in the season, it becomes clear which gardeners are having difficulty tending to their plot. Be sure to address this concern with them early on and see if they want to share the plot or relinquish it to another gardener. Toward the end of summer, gardeners usually let the weeds go as their plants are typically established enough to contend with weeds. This is a good time to have a neighborhood event (such as the Parade of Community Gardens) at the garden, to encourage gardeners to tidy up the garden and their plots.

Also, schedule garden workdays in advance since you know you'll need them at least once a month and at the end of the season to put the garden to bed for the winter. Encourage gardeners to apply a thick layer of mulch or hay to the beds and paths to reduce weed proliferation.

Good luck with your community garden project!

Gardening Matters
310 E. 38th St, #204B
Minneapolis, MN 55409
612-821-2358

info@gardeningmatters.org
www.gardeningmatters.org
Visit website to subscribe to monthly e-newsletter
and to join the community gardener listserv,
COMGAR, hosted by E-Democracy.

Attachments

Community Flyer – page 10 – An invitation to the community to get involved in starting a new community garden by Augsburg College’s Tim Dougherty.

Developing a Vision for Your Garden – page 11 - A worksheet designed to guide a discussion and record decisions about the garden’s purpose.

Garden Site Evaluation Checklist – page 13 - A worksheet to help folks assess potential garden sites.

Sample Letter to the Landowner – page 14 - This sample letter is provided as a template for constructing a letter asking the landowner for permission to create a community garden on their land.

Sample Lease Agreement – page 15 - Documentation of the agreement between the landowner and the community garden group for the terms of use

Community Garden Planning Worksheet – page 16 - Designed to guide group decision-making about how the community garden will operate.

Community Gardener Agreement – page 18 - This form is solely an example of a gardener agreement that could be adapted for your garden group. For more examples or other possible garden rules, visit the Gardening Matters website.



Sample Budget Worksheet – page 20 - An example of how to calculate cash flow for the garden. To be adapted for your situation.

Donation Letter – page 21 - A sample letter to be used by gardeners for asking local merchants and others for donations. Adapt to your situation.

Preserving the Garden: Elements of Sustainability – page 22 - Information that every community garden group should have readily on-hand.

Community Garden Health and Safety Policy – page 24 - From the Totem Town Community Garden in St. Paul, this form is distributed during annual spring meeting to remind gardeners to be safe and protocol for potential hazards in the garden.

Community Flyer

This is an example of a flyer inviting community and neighborhood people to learn more and become involved in the new community garden. Flyer by Tim Dougherty, Augsburg College.

Show Us Your Green Thumb!

Join us to create an Augsburg Community Garden
on the corner of 20th Ave & 6th St



What is a Community Garden?

A community garden is a piece of land shared by the community to grow vegetables and flowers.



What benefits would we gain from having a community garden?

- Garden plots would be offered to members of the Augsburg community and the surrounding neighborhood
- Opportunity for positive social interaction both on campus & in the neighborhood
- Creation of a supervised youth gardening and nutrition program through Campus Kitchens
- Integration of gardening into Augsburg's curriculum
- Opportunity to grow & donate food for the local food bank
- Establishment of an educational & beautiful landmark in our community



Want to get involved? Give input? Have questions?

Contact Tim Dougherty at (612)-330-1208 or doughert@augsborg.edu

Developing a Vision for Your Garden

Defining why you want to develop a community garden will help you create a vision for your garden project. Similarly, it will help you (your garden group) identify what you want to accomplish and how you will prioritize your garden's goals. This will help to recruit new garden members and gain community support.

Developing A Vision for Your Garden

A Community garden doesn't just happen, it takes hard work and commitment.

List three reasons why you (your group) want(s) to develop a garden.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Define what you want to accomplish and prioritize your goals.

Example: 1. Our primary goal is to produce fresh nutritious food for our families and our neighbors.

2. We want clean up our neighborhood block and create a beautiful garden where people can come together.
3. We want to educate youth about gardening and the importance of environmental stewardship.

List three goals your garden group wants to accomplish and then prioritize

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

(over)

Use your garden goals to create a brief mission statement

Example: “Our mission is to strengthen our neighborhood by maintaining a community garden that provides a common ground for neighborhood members to garden together and get to know each other.”

Create a mission statement that unites the group and the garden to a larger purpose.

Identify how your garden project will benefit your neighborhood and community.

Think of examples:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Adapted from the Guide to Community Gardening (2002) by Urban Lands Program, Sustainable Resources Center. Resources used in developing the original worksheet are:

- ✧ Growing Power, Inc. Milwaukee, WI www.growingpower.org
- ✧ Philadelphia Green. Philadelphia, PA www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org
- ✧ Neighborhood Gardens Program. Cincinnati, OH www.civicgardencenter.org

Garden Site Evaluation Checklist

Sun:

- Shade/ Partial Shade/ Full Sun (6-8hrs):
- Shading Structure Description:
- Facing Southwest/South/Southeast/North/Northeast/Northwest:

Soil:

- Texture (sand/silt/clay/organic matter):
- Drainage (wet-moderate-dry):
- Depth of Topsoil (where darker soil ends):
- Compact/Loose:
- ph level (soil test):
- Nutrient levels (soil test): N-P-K
- Lead or Other Toxins (soil test):

Topography:

- Flat or sloped (degree)

Water Access:

- On-site/Neighboring Apt./Home/Business/Church
- Type and Proximity to Garden and Future Plots:

Site Amenities:

- Shed or Tool Box Site:
- Composting Site:
- Estimate of # of Plots:
- Visibility (safety and publicity):
- Parking:
- Restroom Access:
- Power:
- Site History (parking lot/gas station/residential):
- Vehicle Access:

Neighborhood:

- Interest/Involvement Level of Neighbors:
- Demographic Profile (Children/young adults/adults/senior citizens):
- Crime (drugs/vandalism/violent crime/theft):
- Animals (deer/raccoons from the hills/ dogs):

Quick Sketch of Property:

Sample Letter to Landowner

Property Owner
123 Grand Avenue
Our Fair City, MN 55000

Dear [name of landowner],

My name is [your name]. I am contacting you on behalf of the Sunshine Community Garden Committee, a group of Neighborhood residents working on starting a community garden in the Neighborhood. Our committee has met several times for planning meetings and has started building a strong and diversified coalition of supporters for the garden including a representative of the Community Hospital Employee Advisory Council (who offered volunteers), the Sweet Library Branch, the Neighborhood Community Council, and the Lutheran Baptist church. We've also had the ongoing support of an experienced community garden organizer from the local non-profit organization, Gardening Matters, who has attended most of our meetings.

We've been searching for potential sites for the Sunshine Community Garden (SCG) and have come across your property at 9th Street and Grand Avenue (926 Grand Avenue). As you might guess, the purpose of this letter is to inquire about the possibility of using your land as the site of the garden.

We'd love to speak with you in person or over the phone to discuss what hosting a community garden on your property would entail. We'd also like to present to you the beautiful and vibrant community gathering space we envision and discuss our proposal in detail.

In general, the garden would be a place where community members who don't have their own gardening space (those living in apartment buildings), or who have too much shade (like so many residents in the Neighborhood) could grow nutritious produce on plots that they would rent for the cost of maintaining the garden each year. In addition to making individual plots available to community members, the garden would serve as a gathering place facilitating positive social interactions. Other possible uses for community gardens include offering adult educational workshops, youth gardening programs, growing food for local food bank, and integration within senior centers.

The garden would be managed by the not-for-profit Sunshine Community Garden Committee and there would be an elected Garden Coordinator to oversee the project in its entirety, a Treasurer to handle the money generated by fundraising and the plot rental fee, and a Garden Steward who would be in charge of general maintenance of the garden and to make sure that all the gardeners are maintaining their individual plots (this means you would no longer need to take care of the site yourself).

Some of the technical issues that would need to be discussed include negotiating a lease, liability insurance, garden rules and regulations, and water access and billing. Of course, all costs for the community garden project would be covered by the SCG Committee and the gardeners.

I've included with this letter some general information about community gardens provided by Gardening Matters, including a list of some of the benefits community gardens can bring to a community. The SCG Committee is a well-organized group of interested Neighborhood residents committed to the creation and continued upkeep of a community garden in the Neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration of our proposal. Please feel free to contact me over the phone, email, or by letter to discuss the community garden project in more detail. My phone number, email address, and mailing address are included below. Thanks again.

Respectfully,

Sample Lease Agreement

For
Community Garden Site at
926 Grand Avenue

This lease is between Property Owner, the owner of the property at 926 Grand Avenue, and the lessees: the Sunshine Community Garden and the Neighborhood Council (their address).

The duration of the lease shall be from March 31, 2008 to November 30, 2008 and will be renewed a yearly basis after November 30, 2008 unless one of the three parties does not approve. There shall be no charge for use of the land for the purpose specified herein.

The lease is for use of land for the purpose of building and operating a community garden. The garden shall be located on the eastern portions of the lot owned by Property Owner. The Property owner shall provide access to and reasonable use of water.

The Sunshine Community Garden will prepare a plan for the garden in consultation with the church showing the location of the beds and submit the plan to the church for approval.

In the future, features may be added to the garden such as a decorative fence, compost bins, a pergola/gazebo type structure, a sign, etc. Plans for such improvements will be presented to the church for design and location approval.

Liability insurance will be provided The Neighborhood Council, and the Sunshine Community Garden and Property Owner will be listed as additional insured parties on the insurance policy.

Signing of this agreement constitutes acceptance of the above terms and conditions.

Property Owner

Date

Sunshine Community Garden

Date

The Neighborhood Council

Date

COMMUNITY GARDEN PLANNING WORKSHEET

Discuss these questions and work together to generate ideas and policies for your community garden. Add more questions as necessary and delete when appropriate.

Garden name _____

Garden Opening Date _____ Closing Date _____



People & Plots

How many plots? _____ How many people? _____

Will there be plot fees? _____ If so, how much? _____

What do plot fees include? (water, tilling, tools, etc.) _____

What is the process for plot selection? _____

What about for last year's gardeners? _____

What are specific plot care requirements (weed control, etc.) _____

What if the plot is not planted or maintained? _____

Will a warning be given? _____ By whom? _____ After how long? _____

What should gardeners have accomplished by the closing date? _____

Will a portion of the fee be refunded if gardener leaves plot in good condition? _____

Policies

What are the rules on pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers? (Gardening Matters strongly recommends only organic pest controls and fertilizers, and no herbicide use).

If a garden OK's chemical use, what are application rules? (for example on windy days?) _____

What are the garden's policies on:

Compost Bin and its maintenance: _____

Water _____

Tools _____

Overripe/diseased vegetables _____

Structures/supports _____

**More
Possible
Policies**

What are the garden garden's policies on:

Trash _____

Parking _____

Locking of gate _____

Are gardeners responsible for a common garden task? _____

Are gardeners responsible for weeding the paths around their plots? _____

It is OK to grow tall or vining plants? _____

Are non-gardeners and children permitted in the garden? _____

What about pets? _____

Who should be notified if there is a problem in the garden? _____

Organization

What should a gardener do in case of an extended absence? _____

Will there be a treasurer? _____ A bank account? _____

Who will cut grass on borders and boulevards? _____

Will the garden have a bulletin board or information kiosk? _____

Do gardeners want to order seeds or plants as a group? _____

**Garden
Features**

Will the garden:

Set aside a plot for a food shelf? _____ Who will tend it? _____

Include plots accessible by wheelchair? _____

Have a picnic table, bench, trellis or sandbox? _____

Set aside space for perennial plants (raspberries, strawberries) or fruit trees? _____

Have a flower border? _____ Who will tend it? _____

What about a spring work day? _____

Parties!

Must gardeners attend group work day? _____ When? _____

What about a regular gardening time? _____

What about a harvest potluck? _____



Community Gardener Agreement

(Information in parentheses to be determined by individual garden)

(Watts Family) Community Garden Agreement Rules, Terms, and Conditions for Participation 2009

Introduction

The (organization/garden coordinator/committee) 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 coordinator/committee.
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 coordinator/committee.

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. My plot cannot be left fallow or unused for any period of three weeks or longer.
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. I will have no more than two plots in the (Watts Family) Community Garden. If I adopt an abandoned plot during the season, I will be happy to relinquish it the following year.
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.

Sample Budget Worksheet

Use this worksheet to list anticipated costs for items that your garden group have planned. Record actual expenditures and donations as they occur.

We've included some typical expenses for gardens here in this sample budget. *Please note the dollar amounts used in the worksheet are not estimates and are only illustrative.*

Line Items	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year
Revenue/Income			
Plot Fees (20plots x \$25/plot)	\$500	\$500	\$500
Neighborhood Start-up Grant	\$500		
Garage Sale Fundraiser			\$300
Balance from previous year	--	\$700	\$600
Total Income	\$1,000	\$1,200	\$1,400
Expenses/ Costs			
Basic Elements			
Water bill (meter and/or hydrant hook-up)	\$100	\$100	\$100
Water system (supplies, like hoses & barrels)	\$100		
Tool storage and combo lock		\$100	
Hand tools (shovels, rakes, trowels, pruners)		\$100	
Lease fee (if applicable)			
Liability insurance (if applicable)	\$100	\$100	\$100
Woodchips			
Compost or topsoil		\$100	
Plant materials (seeds & seedlings)			
Printing (agreements, flyers, etc)			
Garden sign –construction materials (stakes, board, paint, brushes)		\$100	
Nice Additions (Wishlist)			
Bulletin board – construction materials			\$100
Pavers			
Fence			\$100
Hedges			\$100
Picnic table			\$100
Arbor			
Tree(s)			\$100
Total Expenses	\$300	\$600	\$700
NET INCOME (income-expenses)	\$700	\$600	\$700

Donation Letter

Tailor to fit your situation

Urban Garden Nursery
123 Hip Hop Street
My Fair City, MN 554XX

Dear Store Manager or Owner,

There is a new community garden starting in your neighborhood, The Sunshine Community Garden! Our mission is to build community through gardening by creating a space for people to come together to grow food and flowers together, sharing gardening techniques and recipes. We have identified the land, developed the design for the garden, and built a strong contingent of gardeners in the process!

We are asking Urban Garden Nursery, to help the community garden get started by providing the hedges that will go around the perimeter of the garden. We will acknowledge your donation on our garden sign.

One of our gardeners will be in contact with you within the week to follow-up our letter. Thank you for your consideration!

See you in the garden!

Sunshine Community Gardeners

Sally Sunrise
155 Hip Hop Street

Abel Artichoke
234 BeeBop Street

Horace Hortiman
521 Jazz Avenue

Mimi Mananas
111 Ska Avenue

Pepe Pepperino
243 Greengrass Street

Telly Tomato, community organizer
Sunshine Neighborhood Council
411 Salsa Street

Word of Advice:
Include a **list of plants** and the garden design (a rough sketch is ok) with this letter. Even if plant names are included in the sketch, it is easier of the potential donor to read if the plants are also listed separately in an easy to read format. It's also helpful if plants are listed by both the common and the latin name. Communicate which plants are first priority, such as any hedges, thorny vines or other anchor plantings.

Have all the gardeners sign the letter above their respective name, but one person should do the follow-up. Addresses let the business know that the garden is serving the local community – their clientele.

Preserving the Garden: Elements of Sustainability

Anything can happen suddenly to the garden coordinator, and with them the information they hold that makes the garden go each year. By being proactive, an accident or suddenly moving away won't leave the garden group in the lurch and necessitate "reinventing the wheel".

Be sure that at least three people know the logistics of the community garden and where information is located, such as...

1. Bank Account

Bank Name:

Bank Address:

Name on Bank Account:

Account-holders' name(s) (if different):

Bank Account number:

2. Landowner contact information and lease agreement

Address of Community Garden Site:

Parcel Number of garden site:

Name of landowner:

Name of contact person:

Mailing address:

Phone:

Annual Fee (if any):

Email:

End of Lease Date:

Comments:

3. Liability Insurance renewal

Name of Insurance Holder:

Contact person:

Mailing address:

Phone:

Fee (if any):

Email:

Expiration Date:

4. Water system (how is water handled for the garden?)

Water source: _____
(neighbor, water hydrant, on-site water system, etc.)

Fee:

Contact name, phone and email:

Payment Schedule:

Briefly describe the arrangement and how the water system works:

5. Garbage pick-up (if applicable)

Name of Garbage Service:

Account Number:

Fee:

Name of Account holder:

Payment Schedule:

6. Information about the organizations associated with the community garden.

Name of organization/ agency	Relationship to the garden	Contact person and title (if applicable)	Contact info: mailing address, phone, email
<i>Sample spreadsheet</i>			

7. For the Garden

a) Ward: _____ City Councilmember & ph: _____

b) Neighborhood Association/District Council: _____

8. Contact information for all gardeners

Name of Garden member	Phone number	Email address (if have one)	Mailing address	Plot number (if applicable)
<i>Sample spreadsheet</i>				

7. Garden Contact information

Mailing Address if not the coordinator:

Phone number:

Billing address for phone bill (if applicable):

Garden Email address:

Who is in charge of checking the email address:

Website Address:

Website host, name of company:

Contact info for website host:

Community Garden Health and Safety Policy

March 21, 2006

This safety policy is intended to demonstrate that the Totem Town Community Garden (TTCG) recognizes our responsibility to conduct our gardening activities in a reasonable manner and to maintain reasonably healthy and safe conditions in the TTCG.

For the purposes of this policy, any reference to the TTCG, “the garden” or “the garden site” means the general boundaries of the garden.

1. Adult gardeners are responsible for their own safety. Children of gardeners are expected to be under the control of their parent(s) or guardians(s) when at the garden site. Do not allow children to run in the garden or play on the roadway to the compost site. Young children should be escorted across the roadway if they are going to the nearby playground or to the portable toilet on the compost site.
2. If you see a hazard, unsafe condition, or situation that could result in injury or ill health, take the appropriate action. Eliminate the hazard or unsafe condition only if you are able to do it safely and are comfortable taking the action to correct the hazard or unsafe condition. Otherwise, notify the garden organizer as soon as possible.
3. Rototillers, lawn mowers, power weed trimmers, wood chippers, chain saws, or other power equipment will be operated in the garden only by individuals over the age of 16 who own the equipment or have themselves leased the equipment for use. These individuals use this equipment at their own risk.
4. The use of chemical herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizer is allowable only with the consent of the garden group and with strict adherence to all safety precautions pertaining to the product. These products may not be stored or mixed on garden site.
5. Be aware of your surroundings. Avoid being in the garden alone. Avoid secluded areas with high vegetation. If individuals or groups of people taunt, bother, or seem threatening, leave the situation immediately.
 - ✓ For life threatening or other significant incidents, call 911 immediately. Also, call the garden coordinator.
 - ✓ For minor, non-emergency, incidents gardeners can notify Saint Paul Police dispatch at 291-1111. Also, contact the garden coordinator as soon as possible.
6. Do not leave garden tools at the garden site. They should be taken away from the garden when a gardener leaves the TTCG.
7. No fires or fireworks will be used on the TTCG site.
8. Drugs or alcohol shall not be consumed on the garden site.
9. Urination and defecation on the open ground is not allowed. Gardeners have permission to use the portable toilet located on the Ramsey County Compost Site.
10. Gardeners agree to hold harmless the TTCG volunteer organizers and work leaders, their partnering organizations and their employees, Board Members, Officers, Volunteers and other persons and land owner(s) garden(s) from any liability, damages, loss, injury or claim that occurs in connection with association with the TTCG.

Checklist provided by Totem Town Community Gardeners, April 2007, St. Paul, MN