



BUILDING A COMMUNITY GARDEN

When they are well-planned, community gardens not only help beautify neighborhoods, but also become community hubs that cultivate produce, flowers, and relationships. This guide has tips and considerations to help you get started.

Innovation

What's important about building a community garden, especially with few resources, is innovation. Taking ideas from what homesteaders do with their gardens is a really good idea to keep your own community garden smart and a lot of these ideas can save time, money, work, or all three. The most important word in Community Gardens is the first; community. It's all about including people. Let your creativity take over and have fun with it!

Raised Beds or Plots ?

When deciding what kind of bed to include in your community garden, the debate is often between raised beds and plots. What's important is knowing who will be using your garden. For people with back problems and other difficulties, a raised bed might be best for accessibility. Sometimes, having a combination of plots and raised beds can help resolve disputes, but getting input from the people who will be using the garden is always the best idea. You can make an online form or put up door hangers or fliers for people to get informed and give their input.

Water

Water is a super important part of starting your community garden. A lot of people look over irrigation systems while juggling all the things that go into a community garden, but those who look over it will surely regret it. A hoop house can be a good way to manage this, since piping that will sprinkle water onto the plants could be added to the roof.

Conflict

No matter how you split up your plots, set up your garden's guidelines, or deal with meddling kids, you will always have interpersonal and external conflicts. The most important thing is to approach these conflicts with empathy. The second most important thing would be to communicate. Communication is vital when setting up and running a community garden to avoid things like plant mix-ups or overwatering. The people in charge of the garden should get properly educated on what plants are weeds, and other similar topics so they can share that knowledge with gardeners who may not be experienced.

Hoop Houses and Pollinator Boxes

Hoop houses can be a good alternative to greenhouses, and can provide shortcuts for many things, such as helping to save space. Another space saver is a pollinator box. Pollinator boxes can help beginner gardeners to have a small space to try things without potential contamination, although they can be harder to water than a hoop house. Running pipes with holes in them through the ceiling of the hoop house can help with watering, making the process easier.

Maintenance

Make sure you know who's taking care of the upkeep of the garden and how to split the work involved. It's best to have a team of people and not just one person working. It's common to have communal supplies for the tools, but a lot of it comes from personal homes. Seeds and seeds may be included in a communal shed, but the best way to find tools is at thrift shops and other second-hand stores.

What to do with harvest?

Having a harvest, whether it's tomatoes or fresh flowers, can benefit your community in a lot of ways. Letting each gardener keep their own harvest is common, although some other ideas are food banks or food stands. In lower-income areas especially, setting up a harvest bank can help people with food insecurity, or even just having fresh flowers in their home can really brighten people's lives and be a good service to provide. A food or flower stand can help raise funds for community development projects, or back to the garden itself. Another guide can be found outlining ideas for neighborhoods.

Education

As mentioned above, it's important for garden masters and organizers to be educated in both leadership and gardening skills alike! Libraries and the internet are great ways to find information on how to organize, advertise and innovate your community garden. Purdue Fort Wayne Master gardeners offer many classes and events to help people get educated and excited about gardening. Check out their website for more information on upcoming events and classes.

The Allen County Public Library also has a SEED Library you can tap into