

URBAN FARMER

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How to: Start a Community Garden

Community gardens have a plethora of benefits. Not only do green thumbs have the opportunity to grow in a shared space where everyone puts in work and everyone also reaps the benefits, but when it comes to urban gardening, community gardens can be an excellent avenue to utilizing shared space within the community if individual homes don't have a yard or a well-placed spot for growing vegetables. In addition to growing vegetables, a community garden is an excellent pathway to meet neighbors and make new friends in the neighborhood.

First steps to starting a community garden:

According to the American Community Gardens Association, there are 10 steps to starting a community garden. The first few steps don't involve gardening at all, rather a group of interested people and a planning committee must each be formed to plan the garden's success before any planting is done. With a planning committee, the community garden can benefit more than just a neighborhood. The planning committee can form ideas on how to involve local youth, what to plant, how to plant it, construction of the garden and more. The third step to starting a community garden is identifying all your resources in the community.

Seek out local master gardeners or horticulture groups which can help bring your garden to its full potential. A fourth step is finding a sponsor, if possible. Although funds may be collected from the garden's



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participating members, sometimes churches and other organizations will provide start-up funds if asked.

Creating the community garden:

Once those four steps are complete, the steps to create the actual garden begin. The fifth step in creating a community garden is choosing the correct site. Make sure the site receives plenty of sunshine and that it's in an area easily accessible by different members of the community. Before picking a site, test the soil to discover the pH and learn of any issues. Next, prepare the site by cleaning the area, building raised beds or any other necessary actions to ensure success. The seventh step is to organize the garden. Decide which community members will be caring for which plots within the garden. Find a space to store all the tools needed to care for the garden, and create pathways between each



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garden plot if there's multiple to allow for residents and community members to walk through the garden. The eighth step is to plan for children involvement. This means starting a plot specific for kids to use to learn how to garden. Before planting the vegetables, the ninth step to forming your own community garden is to determine all the rules the community must follow when it comes to the garden such as growth and harvesting, and put them into writing. The last step is to create an email list or bulletin board for residents to stay in touch with each other about the garden. Once all those steps are complete, you are ready to plant!

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