

*Serving Bond, Clinton, Jefferson, Marion and Washington Counties*



**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

# COMMUNITY GARDEN

# Toolkit



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

# COMMUNITY GARDEN



# Toolkit

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## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY GARDEN?

A community garden is a tract of private or public land gardened by friends, neighbors or groups of people, utilizing either individual or shared plots. Community gardens can be located in neighborhoods, schools, and in public housing; incorporated with hospitals, nursing homes, and senior centers. It may be on the outskirts of a city or town, incorporated on vacant lots within city limits, or in a homeowner's backyard.

The American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) recognizes that community gardening improves people's quality of life by providing a catalyst for neighborhood and community development, stimulating positive social interaction and recreation, encouraging self-reliance, beautifying neighborhoods, producing nutritious food, reducing family food budgets, conserving resources and creating opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy and education.

## BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY GARDENS\*

- IMPROVES...** the quality of life for people in the garden
- PROVIDES...** a catalyst for neighborhood & community development
- STIMULATES...** social interaction
- ENCOURAGES...** self-reliance
- BEAUTIFIES...** neighborhoods
- PRODUCES...** nutritious food
- REDUCES...** family food budgets
- CONSERVES...** resources
- CREATES...** opportunity for recreation, exercise, therapy, & education
- REDUCES...** crime
- PRESERVES...** green space
- CREATES...** income opportunities and economic development
- REDUCES...** city heat from streets and parking lots
- PROVIDES...** opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural connections

*Community gardens can also teach youth about:*

- ♦ Job and life skills
- ♦ Basic business principles
- ♦ Where their food comes from
- ♦ Environmental stewardship and sustainability
- ♦ Practical math skills
- ♦ How to interact with each other in a physically productive and socially meaningful way

\*American Community Garden Association, 2009





## CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

- ♦ Finding land that will support the community garden – securing land for use
- ♦ Long-term viability
- ♦ Lack of community interest/involvement – need for volunteers
- ♦ Theft/vandalism
- ♦ Neighborhood/wild animals
- ♦ Finding resources for building/maintenance
- ♦ Water and electricity
- ♦ Organic versus Conventional gardening
- ♦ Disputes and conflicts concerning membership fees (if any), regulations, gardening practices, or layout of the garden site.

## TYPES OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

### *Youth/School Gardens*

Gardens developed in a formal or informal environment; incorporates hands-on gardening with classroom instructions.

### *Therapy Gardens*

Horticultural therapy gardens aimed at nursing homes, hospitals, senior centers, prisons, etc.

### *Community/G.I.F.T. Gardens*

#### *Can also be “Youth Led, Adult Supervised”*

Gardens created by community members who help develop and share in the work/harvest. Food harvested is for all members in the community garden, or donated to local food pantries

### *Food Pantry Gardens*

Food grown is donated to local food banks

## LOCAL COMMUNITY GARDENS

### Bond County



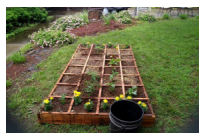
**THE SIMPLE ROOM**  
G.I.F.T./Educational  
Garden  
405 Franklin Avenue  
Greenville, IL 62246

### Clinton County



**TRENTON  
GARDEN**  
G.I.F.T. Garden  
Trenton, IL

### Jefferson County



**ANGEL'S COVE**  
Baptist Children's Home  
& Family Services  
4243 Lincolnshire Drive  
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864



**LIFEBOAT GARDEN**  
G.I.F.T. Garden  
Lifeboat Alliance  
1717 Jefferson  
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864



**MT. VERNON  
COMMUNITY GARDEN**  
G.I.F.T. Garden  
Veterans Memorial Park  
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864



**SPERO FAMILY  
SERVICES GARDEN**  
2023 E. Richview Rd.  
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864

### Marion County



**CENTRALIA  
COMMUNITY  
GARDEN**  
G.I.F.T. Garden  
Centralia, IL 62801



**MARION COUNTY  
HOUSING AUTHORITY  
STRAW BALE GARDEN**  
Lincoln Court  
Centralia, IL 62801



**MARION COUNTY  
HOUSING AUTHORITY  
STRAW BALE GARDEN**  
Odin Senior Living  
Odin, IL 62870



**SALEM CENTRAL  
COMMUNITY GARDEN**  
U of I G.I.F.T. Garden  
Elm and Pearl Streets  
Salem, IL 62881



**MARION COUNTY  
HOUSING AUTHORITY  
STRAW BALE GARDEN**  
Glenview 1  
Salem, IL 62881

### Washington County



**HOYLETON  
CHILDREN'S GARDEN**  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
680 W. Walnut St  
Nashville, IL 62263

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH GARDEN**  
15538 State Route 127  
New Minden, IL 62263

## ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS

Community organizers work with people to improve the conditions of a community and try to enhance their quality of life. Creating a community garden requires the organizer to define goals of the garden, help people identify strengths, assets, opportunities and challenges, organize resources, and to keep track of and evaluate the work.

A committed organizer is crucial to the success of a community garden. This person should:

### *Establish leadership roles*

Development of **PLANNING COMMITTEE** consisting of 6-8 individuals that are committed to developing the garden, such as designing, developing an operational plan, obtaining resources, preparation of garden budget, management of volunteers, etc. Designation of one person as a general garden coordinator can serve as the contact person between the planning committees and the community organizations.

### *Develop rules and regulations (by-laws) for the community garden*

- ◆ Develop organizational plan (designation of garden manager/assistant manager, fees, hours of operation, volunteer work schedule, etc.)
- ◆ Who will use the garden? What criteria will be used to choose?
- ◆ Who will maintain the garden? Will it have employees or member volunteers?
- ◆ Legal ramifications on private/public property
- ◆ Handling disputes between gardeners
- ◆ Insurance coverage

### *Planning Committee responsibilities*

**RESEARCH/LOCATE** land. Maps of publicly owned lands can be obtained from local city government. Other land options can be on church land, privately owned vacant land, or under-used lots throughout your county. Items to keep in mind when researching land:

- ◆ What was the land used for in the past? Is there a possibility of soil contamination?
- ◆ Will the land be leased or donated? Will there be fees associated with this?
- ◆ If the land will be leased, check with an attorney to determine a need for rights of access to the use/access of the land, as well as liability issues and insurance.
- ◆ Will the garden be on public land or private land? Will there be fees associated with this?
- ◆ Public land not always best option. If contract(s) are not renewed, then the garden has no choice but to move. If on private land, try to obtain a contract that is at least three years.

**FORM** subcommittees to address specific topics

- ◆ Funding acquisitions and partners
- ◆ Garden construction
- ◆ Communication and media publicity
- ◆ Educational subcommittee
- ◆ Policy/rules/regulations for the garden

**INITIATE** a garden budget for site clearing, purchasing materials, soil testing and improvement, buildings, etc.

**NAME** the garden.

## PLANNING THE GARDEN

### *What is the purpose and goal of the community garden?*

Many of today's social issues, such as poor nutrition, declining levels of physical and psychological health, or unsafe/polluted environments can give reasons to develop a community garden. Many gardens help to beautify the area, promote neighborhood cooperation by working together for the greater good, or assist the community with donations of fresh fruits and vegetables to the local food pantry.

### *Is there a demand?*

Organizers will need to assess whether there is sufficient interest for a community garden. Interest should come from families and individuals who are committed to using a neighborhood garden, not just well-meaning supporters. Draw up a list of at least ten families within the area to determine an interest.

### *Does the community garden fit into the neighborhood, and will neighbors be agreeable to have a community garden within their neighborhood?*

Schedule community meetings and create a neighborhood survey to obtain comments and concerns from the public. Address issues before committing resources to the project.

### *List ideas from the survey's and public meetings, then sort out priorities and alternatives.*





## CHOOSING AND EVALUATING THE SITE

- ◆ Is it accessible?
- ◆ What are the hours of sunlight – most fruit and vegetables require at least 6 hours of full sunlight. Trees overhanging or along the side of a garden can reduce the amount of sunlight into the growing area.
- ◆ Soil quality – getting a soil test should be a priority once the site is determined. Testing for contaminants and heavy metals in city or urban areas may be required, based on the history of the land.
- ◆ Water accessibility – is it available either through city access or surface/ground water. Testing of surface and ground water should be a priority once the site is determined.
- ◆ Electricity – this can be optional
- ◆ Zoning concerns – check with local city, county, and township regulations to see whether there are issues with developing a community garden at the chosen site.

## DEVELOPING THE GARDEN

- ◆ Will the garden be organic/non-organic? If both, how will the garden be divided, and what pesticides will be used?
- ◆ Will the garden plots be tilled or no-tilled?
- ◆ Will plots for local food banks be established? Who will manage these plots?
- ◆ Will the garden incorporate handicapped facilities?
- ◆ Will there be an area designated for children?
- ◆ Will the garden have year-round gardening or only during summer months?
- ◆ Will the garden plots be individually managed or will there be common growing areas?
- ◆ Planting responsibilities/pesticide spraying
- ◆ Harvesting responsibilities





## **SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR THE GARDEN**

- ◆ Where will funding come from for the initiation and sustainability of the garden (plant sales, grants, local businesses, etc.)
- ◆ How will the garden acquire materials for buildings, fencing, raised beds, bulletin board, tools, soil/seeds, etc.
- ◆ How will it be built and who will build

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION OF COMMUNITY AND GARDEN MEMBERS**

- ◆ Incorporate hands-on educational programs for gardeners or local community
- ◆ Newsletters for community gardeners to know what needs to be done monthly in the garden area

## **ROLE OF EXTENSION**

University of Illinois Extension has the knowledge and resources to assist your group or organization in the development of a community garden. Extension volunteers are available to make site visits through the planning, development, and implementation stages, as well as follow-up visits during the growing seasons. Training workshops can be developed on a wide range of horticultural and marketing topics, based on the needs of each individual community garden. University of Illinois Extension has numerous Horticulture and Small Farm/Local Food publications that are available at all Extension Offices as well as on the internet (refer to “Resources” section of this publication). It will be the responsibility of community garden organizers to perform their own fundraising, site preparation, purchasing of hardscape material, planting, maintenance, and harvesting. Please stop in at your local Extension Office to see what we can do for you!



## GRANT RESOURCES

<http://scottsmiraclegro.com/corporate-responsibility/gro1000/>

\$1500 to local communities to help bring edible gardens, flower gardens and public green spaces to neighborhoods across the United States

<https://kidsgardening.org/grants-and-programs/>

The National Gardening Association Kids Gardening Resources – A number of grant opportunities to schools and other educational programs that help build youth gardens and sponsor conservation efforts

<http://www.hhs.gov/partnerships/grants/index.html>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Grant Information – provides resources to connect faith-based and community organizations to grant information

<http://www.greeneducationfoundation.org/greenthumbchallengesub/green-thumb-challenge-winners.html>

Green Education Foundation and Gardeners Supply Company – Green Thumb Challenge Grant – schools and youth groups; \$250.00 prize for submitting chronicles of their garden projects

<http://foundation.walmart.com/apply-for-grants/>

Wal-Mart. Awarded to organizations of all sizes in communities around the globe. Awards grants of \$250.00 and up, depending on type of program being funded

<https://walmart.org/how-we-give/local-community-grants>

Wal-Mart local community grants are awarded through an open application process and provide funding directly from Walmart and Sam's Club facilities to local organizations in the U.S.

<http://www.nrpa.org/garden/>

National Recreation and Park Association Grow Your Garden Grants; developed to benefit low-income families through the donation of locally grown fruits and vegetables.

<http://kgi.org/grants>

Sow it Forward Garden Grants. – the grant is for nonprofit causes or organizations (schools, 501(c)(3), food banks, community gardens, colleges, libraries, prisons, etc.); up to \$500 (cash, seeds + more)

<http://www2.fiskars.com/Community/Project-Orange-Thumb>

Fiskars Grant and Garden Makeover; for cash and tools – up to \$3,500

<http://www.bcbsil.com/company-info/community-involvement/grant-sponsorship>

Blue Cross Blue Shield Illinois Grant and Sponsorship Programs: Supporting Community Efforts; Healthy Kids, Healthy Families and Community Partners Grant

<http://clifbarfamilyfoundation.org/Grants-Programs>

Clif Bar Family Foundation Grant Programs; made to nonprofit organizations

<https://corporate.homedepot.com/community/home-depot-foundation-grants>

Home Depot. Through our Community Impact Grants, we award up to \$5,000 to registered nonprofit organizations to help fund community projects.

## GRANT RESOURCES (cont.)

<https://captainplanetfoundation.org/grants/>

Grants issued to educators who are interested in receiving support to design and implement hands-on environmental solutions.

<http://web.eenorthcarolina.org/core/item/topic.aspx?tid=85010>

Large listing of grants available, by application due date or ongoing

<https://www.plt.org/resources/greenworks-grants/>

Project Learning Tree has offered GreenWorks! grants to schools and youth organizations for environmental service-learning projects

<https://corporate.homedepot.com/foundation/communityimpactgrants#qualify-grant-program>

Home Depot grants – up to \$5000 – are available to IRS-registered 501(c) designated organizations and tax-exempt public service agencies in the U.S.; planting trees or community gardens and/or landscaping community facilities that serve veterans

<https://corporate.bestbuy.com/community-grants-page/>

Best Buy Community Grants

<https://wildones.org/seeds-for-education/>

Wild Ones – native plants, natural landscapes; enhancement of schoolyards; cash grants under \$500 available for plants and seeds

<https://www.epa.gov/education/grants>

EPA Environmental Education (EE) Grants – supports environmental education projects that promote environmental awareness and stewardship

<https://www.epa.gov/grants>

EPA grants and other funding opportunities

<https://www.statefarm.com/about-us/corporate-responsibility/community-grants/good-neighbor-citizenship-grants>

State Farm. Good Neighbor Citizenship Company Grants – focus on safety, education, and community development intended to advance access, equity, and inclusiveness while discouraging harmful discrimination; available to educational institutions, municipal/government programs, nonprofits, volunteer fire, and chambers of commerce

<https://corporate.kohls.com/corporate-responsibility/associates-in-action>

Kohl's Volunteer Program – associates donate personal time to volunteer with eligible nonprofit organizations.

<https://www.annies.com/grants-for-gardens/>

Annie's Grants for Gardens – For schools and educational programs that help build school gardens

<https://katiekrops.com/apply-for-a-grant/>

Katie's Krops – empowers kids across the United States to grow a healthy end to hunger in their community – provides grower boxes.



## GRANT RESOURCES (cont.)

<https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/community-food-projects-cfp-competitive-grants-program>

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – Community Food Projects and Planning Projects. Support the development of projects with a one-time infusion of federal dollars to make such projects self-sustaining.

<https://seedmoney.org/apply/>

Crowdfunding for gardens – Grants are on a sliding scale.

<https://www.ameren.com/illinois/company/community/grants>

Ameren Illinois Charitable Grant Program – monetary grants for tax-exempt organizations within Ameren Illinois service area to support environment, youth and education, civic/community, health and human services, and arts/culture programs

<https://www.frs.org/programs/grant-program/community-grant>

Foundation for Rural Service. Offers aid for communities served by NTCA members through its annual Community Grants Program.

<https://www.americaspromise.org/news/funding-opportunities-205>

Americas Promise Alliance. Funding opportunities from a list of programs focusing on teachers, communities, and organizations.

<https://corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility/philanthropy/grants-faqs>  
Target Grants.

[Lowes Foundation Grants](#)

The Lowe's Foundation has recently changed how it identifies organizations for support. Although applications for its Community Partners Grants are now accepted by invitation only, interested organizations can introduce themselves via email at [community@lowes.com](mailto:community@lowes.com).

<https://www.costco.com/charitable-giving.html>

Costco Charitable Contributions. Focuses on programs supporting children, education, and health and human services in the communities where we do business.

<https://www.biglots.com/corporate/community/support>

Big Lots! Support is provided in the form of monetary gifts, gift cards, and merchandise in-kind.

[https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/ao\\_survey.form?x\\_gm\\_id=5622&x\\_section\\_id=1371942&x\\_quiz\\_survey\\_id=40510](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/ao_survey.form?x_gm_id=5622&x_section_id=1371942&x_quiz_survey_id=40510)

Nordstrom Cares. Donates to worthy nonprofits in the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico. Focus on programs and organizations that care for kids and empower youth, and also support other programs and organizations that have a significant impact on communities.

<https://www.tjx.com/responsibility/communities>

TJ Maxx. Helping vulnerable families and children access the resources and opportunities they need to build a better future.

# COMMUNITY GARDEN



## REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Garden name and location: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this: ☐ an existing garden ☐ a garden being developed?

Are you or your organization the land owner? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, do you or your organization have a contract with the land owner? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is there insurance on the garden property? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is there an established planning committee in place for the garden? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Does your group have basic gardening experience? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Who will the garden serve? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Does your garden have a particular philosophy or mission statement?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there established rules/regulations for the garden? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the best and worst features of your existing or proposed garden site?

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Have you talked with the neighbors about your gardening project?   ☐ Yes            ☐ No

If yes, what were their reactions? \_\_\_\_\_

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Is there funding/materials available to create/maintain the garden? (please explain)

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If the garden is not built yet, who will build it?

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What particular questions do you have?

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- I/we would like U of I Extension to:   ☐ Schedule a site visit
- ☐ Assist in the design/development/implementation of the garden
- ☐ Provide educational information

Please send completed form to:

University of Illinois Extension  
ATTN: ANR Extension Educator  
Jefferson County Extension Office  
4618 Broadway  
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864

Or answer the questions in an e-mail and send to [ljgeorge@illinois.edu](mailto:ljgeorge@illinois.edu).





## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**University of Illinois Extension - Bond, Clinton, Jefferson, Marion & Washington Counties**

<https://extension.illinois.edu/bcjmww/>

**Local Food Systems & Small Farms website**

<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/local-foods-small-farms>

**University of Illinois Extension Horticulture website**

<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/horticulture>

**University of Missouri Extension Community Gardening Toolkit**

<http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/miscpubs/mp0906.pdf>

**American Community Gardening Association**

<https://communitygarden.org/>

**University of Illinois “Watch Your Garden Grow”**

<http://extension.illinois.edu/veggies/>

**Food Market Maker**

<http://foodmarketmaker.com/>



[extension.illinois.edu/bcjmw/](http://extension.illinois.edu/bcjmw/)



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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.  
If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this program, please contact your local Extension office.

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