



BEYOND BELIEF NETWORK

Beyond Belief Network Guides: Community Gardens

Community gardens can be restful and decorative green spaces, fulfil an educational or conservational role by cultivating local species, or perform a practical role by growing food and herbs. Produce can even be donated to local food banks or soup kitchens.

Tips to Get Started

- **Organize.** Invite anyone likely to be interested and have the time to organize a community garden to planning meetings. There will be many points to consider during the meetings such as: whether a garden is really needed and wanted, what kind it should be, whom it will involve and who benefits. Also plan to perform a community asset assessment. This will help your group see what skills and resources already exist in the community that help the garden. Contact local municipal planners about possible sites, as well as horticultural societies and other local sources of information and assistance.
- **Money doesn't grow on trees.** While some community gardens support themselves through membership dues, for many, a sponsor is key for donations such as tools, seeds and/or money. Potential sponsors include churches, schools, private businesses or parks and recreation departments. Don't forget about BBN grants (for Level 2 and 3 teams) as a potential funding source.
- **Where to sow?** You can't plant in any empty vacant lot. Your group will want to look for an ideal location, taking into account factors such as the amount of daily sunshine, availability of water, and soil testing for possible pollutants. More importantly, find out who owns the land. Check if your group can get a lease agreement and determine if you'll need public liability insurance. Once you have full approval and any necessary paperwork completed, gather volunteer work crews to clean it, gather materials, and decide on design and plot arrangement.

- **Peas to the right. Carrots to the left.** When planning the garden's layout, decide the number of plots available. Remember to allow space for storing tools, making compost and pathways between plots. Consider planting flowers or shrubs around the garden's edges to mark the borders and add an extra touch of beauty. If you have the space, think about creating a special garden for children.
- **Follow the rules.** Have a set list of rules agreed upon by all members of the group. The rules should cover important areas such as dues, budget allotment, plot assignment, tool sharing, and basic garden maintenance.
- **Join a bigger movement.** If your group is unable to organize its own community garden, consider volunteering at one that's already operating in your area. Check out the [American Community Gardening Association](#) for help locating a garden near you. Your group is sure to have a great time and gain valuable gardening experience.

Questions or Concerns?

If you need help with planning your event or have additional questions, the best way to contact Beyond Belief Network is to use the contact webform, which enables us to track the resolution of your question: foundationbeyondbelief.org/contact-bbn. You can also email us at bbn@foundationbeyondbelief.org.