

Community Garden Toolkit Outline

1. Getting Started

- 👉 Form a Planning Committee
 - Who to involve: UW-Extension, Master Gardeners, local health-related coalition(s), Health Department, interested community members and volunteers.
 - Creating a timeline – Determine what you need to accomplish and when do you want tasks completed.
 - Point of contact – determine who will be the main contact or advisor for the project.
- 👉 Community Awareness
 - Gauge Community Interest
 - Conduct a survey of area residents, addressing the perceived need for a community garden. Be sure to leave space for comments and contact information. (Include example)
 - Put articles in local newspaper and use other media sources such as television and radio to spread the word and gain interest from community members.
 - Keep the community informed throughout the development process and growing season by publishing articles periodically in local newspapers, bulletins, and by engaging local news channels.
- 👉 Determining Garden Location
 - Research possible locations and discuss with planning committee.
 - Weigh “pros and cons” of each location.
 - It is important to have an interested organization or “sponsor” at the garden location. This way, there is a group of people invested in the project.
- 👉 Funding
 - Determine potential funders, such as local service organizations, community members, businesses, etc. Funders can potentially be identified in the community survey as well by asking how people would like to help. (See survey example)
 - Encourage a donation or minimal fee for each garden plot.
 - Grants are also an option. There are many grants out there, large and small, dedicated to assisting with community service projects and community gardens.
- 👉 Determine Gardening Style
 - It is important to determine early on what type of garden you are going to have. You may choose to do traditional gardening and till up the land for multiple lots, or you may choose to do square-foot gardening in which each individual has his or her own plot.
 - No matter which type you choose, it is important to research benefits and make gardeners aware of the gardening technique.

TIPS:

- Begin planning early
- Gauge community interest in the project
- Expect road blocks
- Educate gardeners on items such as planting, harvesting and preparing produce
- Involve the community
- Have a good communication system between organizers and gardeners

2. Preparing the Garden Site

👉 Site plan

- Start planning layout of garden site early. It may be helpful to involve professionals in this area (i.e. landscape architects, Master Gardeners, UW-Extension staff, etc.).
- Determine the space you will need and all materials needed to complete the project.
- If you are leasing or renting the land from another entity, be sure to clear all site plans with the lessor/renter.

👉 Process

- Determine what needs to be done to complete your garden site.
- Schedule work days to complete the tasks. It may help to break down the tasks into several days. For example: build raised beds on day one, construct fencing on day two, etc.
- Be sure to acquire needed materials before each work day. Allow extra time for delivery of items such as wood, compost and other delivered materials.

Materials Needed:

- Wood, drills and screws for building raised beds
- Saws and saw horses
- Fence posts, material, hammers, fencing staples and nails for constructing fence
- Compost or soil for beds
- Mulch or other substance to lay over grass as a weed barrier
 - Tip: lay down cardboard first to prevent weed growth
- Wheelbarrows, shovels, pitchforks for hauling and spreading
- Twine or lath for dividing beds into square-foot sections

👉 Involving Donors/Volunteers

- When work days are scheduled, contact youth groups, service organizations, local schools and others to help.
- Contact local businesses to ask for donations of items. Many businesses may be willing to donate or give a discount on items such as wood, mulch, compost, various landscaping items and other materials useful to the garden site.
- You may want to have volunteers complete a “hold harmless” document when working on-site. This will protect your organization as well as the owner of the land. (See example)

👉 Water

- However you choose to get water is up to you; however it is recommended to have some source of water at the site so gardeners do not have to bring their own.
- Consider installing rain barrels. Rain barrels capture rainwater from under a rooftop. The recycled water can be used to water the gardens.
- *Tip:* Gardeners should have a watering can to fill for their plot. It is not recommended to have hoses on the garden site as they can be a safety hazard.
- If you use rain barrels as opposed to some other form of watering system, you should have a backup plan. During periods of drought, the rain barrels will obviously be drained. It is recommended to have some way to re-fill the barrels when they become empty. Having the City water truck fill the barrels or running a hose from a nearby building (cost required) can be potential options.

3. Gardening

- 👉 Engaging gardeners
 - Use various methods to engage gardeners in the process. Conduct a survey or use the media and word of mouth to get people interested and determine number of potentially interested gardeners prior to beginning construction of the garden site.
 - Engage gardeners in the process. Involve them in work days, plan get-togethers, educate them on gardening techniques and allow their input.
- 👉 Orientation
 - It is recommended to hold a gardener orientation to provide gardeners with information such as garden site details, fees and to answer questions.
 - Set ground rules for your garden site and be sure all gardeners are aware of policies and procedures. Have gardeners fill out all necessary paperwork at the time of the orientation (see examples of gardener agreement and hold harmless).
 - Assign gardeners their plots and be sure to post the information somewhere at the garden site.
 - *Tip:* It is helpful to number the plots for ease of distinction.
- 👉 Education
 - Many community gardeners may have little or no experience gardening. You may want to consider holding education sessions for the gardeners. For example, at the orientation, gardeners should be educated on when to plant and harvest produce, how to plant/water, and what plants can be easily grown in the same plot.
 - Master gardeners and local UW-Extension staff typically can provide educational sessions such as harvesting and preparing fresh produce.
 - *Tip:* Make Master Gardeners and horticulturists available for gardeners to ask questions throughout the planting season. Hang bulletin boards near the garden site for gardeners to post questions or to post upcoming educational sessions or other events.
- 👉 Gardening Items
 - The best thing about square-foot gardening is that you don't need any tools. ☺
 - Gardeners will need their own watering can (or provide them at the garden site) and any seeds they wish to plant.
 - Local gardening stores may be willing to donate seeds as well.
 - *Tip:* You may want to consider providing some seeds for gardeners and having a "community seed bucket" for gardeners to put extra packets of seeds for others to use.

For more information, contact:
Marshfield Clinic Center for Community Outreach at 221-8400 or
Sue Meyer, Master Gardener at 715-384-3653

Or visit www.marshfieldhealthylifestyles.com

RESOURCES

State Web site – Got Dirt? Toolkit.

http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/pdf_files/GotDirt_09.pdf

Taylor County Gardens

UW-Extension: <http://www.uwex.edu>

Produced by: Healthy Lifestyles – Marshfield Area Coalition Community Garden sub-committee