

Community Gardens

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INTRODUCTION

As we continue to construct buildings, infrastructure and other types of impervious surfaces, we need to consider green space for the health of the community and planet.

Impervious surfaces affect the natural environment by reducing water quality, causing excess nitrogen in runoff, decreasing air quality, and increasing the urban heat island effect.

Community gardens are one way to combat concrete or asphalt “deserts.” They are a great example of how to increase green space while revitalizing public spaces, providing healthy food options to those without easy access, and encouraging physical activity and education.

To start a community garden, there are several factors that should be considered for successful implementation:

First, a group of interested stakeholders should be identified. Groups may include neighbors, local

businesses, school teachers and students, watershed organizations, and other local clubs and organizations.

A planning committee may also be formed to have an established group in charge of organizing and delegating tasks to the community.

Next, a site must be chosen, keeping in mind the amount of daily sunshine, water availability, and ownership of the site.

Financial factors should also be considered in this process. Many times, finding a sponsor for the garden is helpful to cover costs. Some groups have raised funds by selling a small plot of the garden for a low cost. This tactic also can increase involvement in the garden because it creates a sense of ownership for the sponsor.

Once these technical aspects are completed, it is time to build the garden and start planting. Raised beds are often used as a way to keep the garden organized. They can be bought, however this is quite costly. A more cost-efficient and sustainable route is constructing them from raw materials such as recycled wooden pallets.



It is also a good idea to keep a small shed or storage area for gardening tools and supplies.

Finally, always make sure to continue communication to involved groups in order to ensure good upkeep and participation.

BENEFITS

- Provides fresh and healthy food in urban areas for people who may not have easy access;
- Creates more quality green space to increase air quality and reduce urban heat island effects;
- Provides education opportunities for children and adults who may not have exposure to farming;
- Inclusive to all residents regardless of income, race, ethnicity or age.

DRAWBACKS

- Can be difficult to find adequate space and proper resources for gardens;
- Can be challenging to find a willing property owner;
- Can be challenging to ensure proper maintenance.

RESOURCES

- [American Community Gardening Association](#)
- [Harrisburg Urban Growers](#)



- [PA Master Gardeners](#)
- [USDA Community Gardens](#)

RELATED FACT SHEETS ON PLANNINGTOOLKIT.ORG

- Green Building Standards
- Main Street Programs
- Stormwater Management



TIPS TO CONSIDER

- DISCUSS WITH NEIGHBORS AND LOCAL BUSINESS TO GAIN INTEREST, SUPPORT AND CONTINUED PARTICIPATION;
- CREATE A MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM;
- INCLUDE COMMUNITY GARDENS IN YOUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE.



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