

Section Three:

Residents Dig in!

Resources for Gardeners:

- ⑤ *Designing your site*
- ⑤ *Getting supplies*
- ⑤ *Building your garden*
- ⑤ *Making partnerships*
 - *Maintaining the garden*

Step 5. Design Your Garden

How to involve your community in the garden design, and create a beautiful, environmentally friendly space

Once you know where your garden is going to go, it's time to think about a layout plan. If the housing provider is able to provide financial support for the project, they may be able to have a landscaper assist with the design and construction. This can be helpful, but it is important to engage your community in both the design and construction of the garden to make sure everyone feels like the garden belongs to them and reflects their desires. Whether or not you have support from professionals, you want to make sure the garden has the features and style that the community wants. Although it can be intimidating to design a garden for the first time, knowing a few basic principles can make it much easier.

The first step is to think about what features the community wants in the garden. There are no rules for how a community garden looks, it can be as simple as a few in-ground beds in a row or can expand into a site with space for seating, community cooking and naturalization. Remember, you can always expand your garden as you go, but it's best to start with something manageable.

In order to decide what features your garden will have, you should consult with your garden committee or with the entire community to see which components they find most important. If many of your gardeners have limited mobility, you may want to include tall raised beds that are wheelchair accessible and many places to sit. If you are going to garden the space communally, you can have larger, irregular sized beds, while an allotment garden would require everyone to have a similar-sized plot.

Communal Gardening

A recommended feature to include in any garden is a communal gardening space – an area that everyone works in together. Communal spaces should be larger than allotment plots; ideally an area the size of 3 allotment plots should be available for communal use. These areas can be subdivided for many purposes:

- ⑤ to grow herbs that all gardeners can use to save space in individual beds
- ⑤ a sharing bed which encourages people to pick from this bed, but leave the others alone
- ⑤ a space for children to plant and grow
- ⑤ to grow food for donation to a local food bank
- ⑤ a place where people on the waiting list for an allotment can volunteer and contribute
- ⑤ an area where people can volunteer in exchange for a share of the food grown
- ⑤ a place to grow food for the community to eat or sell

Make a plan for how you will use your communal space and include rules for its maintenance in the agreement that all gardeners sign before joining. It must be clear who is accountable for the communal spaces so they are well maintained. For example, your gardener agreement could say that all gardeners must devote one hour a week to maintaining communal sites and garden paths – this could be individual time or a scheduled, group work party. Or, you could make a rule that volunteers who work in the communal space for 4 hours a week receive a share of the produce harvested from that area. Consider offering alternative volunteer possibilities for residents who aren't able to do physical work but could benefit from a share of the food.

Communal gardening areas are a very important way to make sure that your garden welcomes and serves the community beyond the individual gardeners. They also create opportunities for gardeners to share knowledge and get to know each other. Communal gardens can provide residents who are not confident with gardening a place to learn and experiment before taking on a plot of their own. They can also help care for residents who have barriers to accessing healthy food, even if they don't garden. The produce from the communal garden could be sold once a week at a stand in your garden – at affordable prices that reinvest in the garden program. Or, you could cook the food and sell it as a part of a pay-what-you-can community dinner- like a barbeque but with healthy food. For more about community dinners visit <http://dufferinpark.ca/oven/wiki/wiki.php?n=FridayNightSuppers.FrontPage>

Design Basics

The questions in part A of APPENDIX D can help you decide on the basic features your garden will have. Designing your garden also involves thinking about how these features will fit together in a way that looks good and makes the garden easy to use. A good way to find inspiration is to look at pictures of other gardens and identify what you like and don't like. Throughout this guide you will find pictures of different gardens, some of which are symmetrical and organized while others are wild and natural-looking. Find pictures of gardens that reflect what your community wants to guide your design.

Make your design process fun! Discuss the features you could include in your garden, then have people break out into groups to draw their designs on flipcharts or even use plasticine, Popsicle sticks, leaves and other materials to create a 3D map. Have groups present their designs and identify the parts to be included in the final plan. Engaging people with different abilities, visual, verbal, hands-on, will help you create a successful design.

Sustainable Design

Sustainable design means having a garden that compliments and enhances the environment it grows in rather than causing it to go out of balance. Since you are using your garden space to grow food, it is important to make sure that you are keeping the soil, air, and water healthy, and not using fertilizers and chemicals that can make you sick. Take a look at the sidebar for basic sustainable design principles to consider.

One specific type of sustainable design is Permaculture: a landscaping system that emphasizes building your garden as a part of an existing ecosystem. Rather than trying to control nature, permaculture works with it to create gardens that are self-sustaining – relying on few external inputs (like fertilizers and pesticides) and trying to create required supplies on site (through composting and rainbarreling, for example). Permaculture design is based in three ethics: care for the earth, care for people and fair share. To learn more about permaculture, visit <http://permacultureprinciples.com/>

Part 6. Budgeting and Supplies

How to decide what supplies you need and use that information to create a garden budget. Tips for using community skills and finding low-cost supplies.

Once you've answered the questions of how your garden will look, and the purpose it will have, it's time to look at your community and see what you need to make it happen and what you already have. Asset mapping is a way to find out the skills, resources and knowledge available in your area, and can be done with your working group or your whole community. This helps to reduce costs, as you make use of all resources in the community, and increase effectiveness as you involve more skilled people in the group. For a step by step guide of how to do asset mapping, see APPENDIX C. Once you identify community assets and resources, you may want to begin making connections with other groups in your community or you may get excited to start building and leave connections until later. Either technique is just fine – if you do want to make connections before you build, check out the information in SECTION 8.

Starting a new garden will require a variety of supplies: soil, tools, seeds and garden structures to name just a few. Making connections with other gardens and community groups in your area can help you find the best quality supplies at the best price. Learn from the people who have started gardens before in the area – they are the local experts and have learned from experience. Online marketplaces like craigslist, kijiji and others can be very useful for finding soil, plants, and tools at very low prices or even free!

To develop your garden budget, look at the information below with your group to decide what materials you need, which you can get free, and which you have to pay for. Include natural supplies (compost, soil, mulch, seeds and plants) tools, a shed, fencing, a water source, bed construction materials, professional assistance and any special features. See APPENDIX M for a budgeting form you can use to design your site. Remember that unless you can easily secure a large amount of money to start your garden, it's best to start small, and include new things in your garden in later years as your group grows. When your budget is complete, present it to your housing provider and property manager to see what costs they can cover or what items they might be able to loan or donate. For more information on costs and fund-raising to cover them, see STEP 10, Fund-raising.

Natural Supplies – compost, manure, soil, woodchips, plants

Compost/Manure

You will probably want to add compost or manure to any new garden site you start. Compost and manure add nutrients to the soil so your plants will be healthy. They can be dug into existing soil or added to new raised beds. Keep in mind that fresh manure and hot compost should never be added to your plants – they will actually take nitrogen out of the soil, which will weaken your plants. Always look for pre-composted manure and compost that has fully broken down and is crumbly like soil. Both compost and manure can be purchased at your local garden centre; however, many communities have free sources available.

Compost: Some municipalities (like Toronto) have free compost drop-off in neighbourhoods around the city in spring. Contact your housing provider or city councilor to find out whether the city provides free compost in your area. Come fall, you can also collect leaves and grass clippings from neighbours for free to add to your compost bins.

Manure: It doesn't have to be bought in bags. Check local stables, including the police, if you are in an urban area. In Toronto, ask at the zoo for "zoo poo".

Topsoil or Triple Mix

If you're gardening in-ground you can just add compost or manure and be ready to go. If you're building raised beds though, especially tall ones, it may be more cost-effective to get a combination of soil and compost rather than 100% compost. For large orders of topsoil, speak to your housing provider to see if they have a landscaping contact. Otherwise, look for bulk soil delivery companies in your area and ask if they can give you a discount on soil or delivery as you're a community group. Topsoil can mean different things to different people, so make sure to ask before you order if the soil is good for gardens – often this will be called triple mix, as it's a combination of topsoil, peat and compost.

Mulch

Mulch is any kind of shredded material used as a groundcover. Mulch helps to suppress weeds, prevent evaporation, and adds nutrients to the soil. Many different materials can be used as mulch, like straw, bark, pine needles or woodchips. Mulch is also an attractive and affordable way to make natural garden pathways. When establishing your garden you can lay down wet newspaper or cardboard and cover it with mulch to kill and suppress weeds. Woodchips are a simple type of mulch to find for free or at a low cost. Power companies, tree service companies and municipalities chip their trimmings, usually right on site. Contact local groups to see if they have a free pickup location for woodchips or if they can drop them off to you for free!

Plants and seeds

Getting plants for your garden doesn't have to be expensive! There are many places to get affordable or free seeds and plants in your community.

Seedy Saturday. This is a yearly event held in spring where gardeners get together to trade seeds. If you have seeds to share, you can exchange them for other crops, or buy saved seeds at very low prices. Most Seedy Saturday events are listed online at Seeds of Diversity, www.seeds.ca. If your community isn't listed, email the Seeds of Diversity staff to see if they know of one nearby.

Seed and Plant Companies. Contact seed companies or garden centres in your area early in the season and ask them to donate seeds or seedlings to your project. See Step 10 for more info.

Other gardeners. Many desirable garden plants can become invasive and need to be divided so they don't take over the whole garden. Gardeners with crops like strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, rhubarb, and currants are often willing to give plants away for free if you can come pick them up. This includes a number of herbs and medicinal plants as well, like mint, lemon balm, oregano, and many others. Contact community garden networks, horticultural societies and neighbourhood gardeners to see if they have plants to share. The RESOURCES section has links to more ideas for finding free plants.

Tools and a shed

Your community garden will need a few basic gardening tools. You may be able to get tools donated from local businesses (see sidebar below) or neighbours who don't need them anymore. If you cannot get tools donated, try to buy ones that are well made. They will cost more, but will last longer. This will save you money in the long run.

Basic gardening tools – adapted from Toronto Community Housing Community Gardening Manual
Here is a list of useful tools. You do not need all of them, choose which seem most useful for your space.

TROWEL: You can use a trowel for many different things. A trowel can weed, dig, cultivate, divide plants, pry out small rocks and help you put plants into the ground.

FORK: Use a hand fork to cultivate in beds that are full of plants. A hand fork also lets you chop up clumps of soil. Use a large fork for bigger jobs.

HOE: A hoe helps you easily get weeds out of the garden.

SPADE: Garden spades have round, pointed blades. Use them to dig holes, move soil and plant larger perennials, shrubs and trees.

SHOVEL: Gardeners use shovels to move large amounts of dirt and plants, to dig borders and to get rid of plants with woody roots and stems.

WHEELBARROW: A wheelbarrow is useful for moving soil, compost, plants, mulch and tools. You could also use a garden cart for some of these jobs.

CONTAINERS: Another way to move things is with containers such as buckets, garbage cans, nursery flats or tubs. You can often get free 5 gallon plastic containers outside restaurants – just make sure they have been used for food, not toxic substances.

SECATEURS (HAND PRUNERS): A good set of pruners will let you do lots of trimming. Use them to cut back perennials and flowers, and to trim dead stalks and branches.

PRUNING SHEARS, LOPPERS AND SAWS: Use these tools to prune fruit trees.

RAIN BARREL: Use a rain barrel to collect water easily.

WATERING CAN, HOSE, SPRINKLERS: Watering cans and soaker hoses let you water the roots of plants instead of the soil where nothing is growing. Use a soaker hose to water a larger area. Your hoses must be able to reach all of the plots and beds in your garden.

GARDENING GLOVES: Use leather gloves if you want them to last a long time.

STAKES & STRING: Use string to outline garden beds, Put stakes in the soil to hold the strings. You can get these at most hardware stores.

Taking care of your tools

Clean the dirt off of tools each time you use them. If the soil has dried on the tool, use a wire brush or a knife to scrape it off. Keeping tools clean helps them last longer, work better, and prevents the spread of soil-borne diseases throughout your garden.

If the wooden handle on a tool is damp, put the tool in the sun to dry before you put it away. At the end of the gardening season, rub linseed oil or tung oil into the wood.

Keep your garden tools sharp. Remember to sharpen any tool you use to cut anything. Keep the blades of your shovels and spades sharp, too. Sharpen your tools all through the garden season. When you use tools a lot, they get dull quickly. Keep a sharpener with your tools.

Tools that are damp will rust. After you use a tool, wipe the metal parts with a rag. This is very important for pruners, shears and trowels. Drying the tools with a rag will help keep them from getting rusty.

Toolshed

It's also very important to have a toolshed at or near the garden site where you can store everything, keeping it safe and dry. Secure sheds with a combination lock, or a padlock for which all gardeners have a key. For a pre-made shed, contact local businesses to request a donation. Sheds can also be built from lumber or a sustainable building material like cob (see sidebar).

Finding or paying for a shed may be something your housing provider can help with, so speak to them first. Local gardening and non-profit groups may also be able to let you know if your municipality can offer one to your garden for free or low cost.

Protecting the garden

People worry a lot about vandalism in community gardens but some behaviours considered as "vandalism" can be prevented by good communication. People passing by the garden may think they are allowed to pick things if there are no signs explaining who the food is for. If a garden is vandalized, some people react by putting up a large fence. Sometimes this can work, but a fence can also lead to more damage. No matter what kind of fence you have, a person who wants to get in will find a way. Be prepared to lose some crops each year to animals or other people, and plant extra to compensate for this.

A fence with a gate is a key part of most community gardens. Fences help to keep dogs out of the garden. A fence can also show that the garden is separate from the space around it. When you want a fence to show where the garden begins, think about letting vines grow on the fence or using edible or native shrubs to build a "living fence".

Decide with your group if you require a lock on your gate, and if so, who gets a key. If you want to make the garden feel welcoming, consider putting up a sign that invites people to come in whenever the gate is unlocked. That way, other residents can enjoy the garden, but only when there are gardeners around to answer questions and monitor how they use the space.

Here are some other things you can do to discourage crime and keep the garden a safe place:

- Do not tell anyone they are not welcome. Ask everyone in the community to participate, even the people who are “vandals.”
- Fix the damage as soon as possible. If you are lucky, the vandals will get bored and move on to other things.
- Put the garden in a place where there are lots of people.
- Create a sign that tells the community whose garden it is. Say that the garden is a neighbourhood project. Translate the sign into many languages if your community is multicultural.
- Set up a place for people to meet in the garden. This will help people feel they can use the garden more.
- Harvest fruits and vegetables every day. If you leave ripe food on plants, people may think the garden has been forgotten.
- Create a designated “tasting bed” a communally tended area that anyone can harvest from. Use signs to communicate that while this area is open, the rest is off-limits
- Involve children in the garden. This will help protect the garden.
- Keep the garden neat and in good repair. This shows that people care about the space.

Step 7. Build!

How to host a community build day that everyone can get involved in

Now that your plan is ready and you've found your materials, it's time to build your garden! You may have external contractors come in to build the site, or you may have the community build it themselves. Whatever happens, make sure to have an event where residents can come and contribute to building the garden in some way. This is your chance to show people the positive change you are making and get them excited to be involved.

Here are some tips for a successful build day:

- ⑤ Have everything ready in advance. Make sure that all your wood is cut, your tools are on site and your measurements are finished. Having things prepared in advance reduces stress and lets volunteers jump straight into work instead of waiting around.
- ⑤ Consider how people of different ages and skills can be involved in your build day. Depending on your plan, a build day can involve any of the following:
 - *Constructing beds from lumber*
 - *Digging out new planting areas*
 - *Moving soil, mulch or other supplies*
 - *Painting garden signs*
 - *Planting seeds, plants and flowers*
 - *Building a fence*
 - *A community meal/BBQ*
 - *Music*
 - *Facepainting*
 - *Tree planting*
 - *Presentations/talks*
 - *Seed/plant giveaways*
- ⑤ Identify a few **key people to be in charge** at your build day, and make sure all committee members know who they are. Have another person on hand who can make a run to the store in case any key items have been forgotten.
- ⑤ Write out a **rough schedule** for the day, estimating how long everything will take. It's important to make sure your goals are attainable so that people feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day. It's better to have a few days where people work on specific, small projects than one day where volunteers try to do many things and don't complete any.
- ⑤ **Food** is a great way to get people out to your event, but make sure not to serve it until most of the work is done. People usually get tired and drop off after they eat.
- ⑤ Have a **sign-up sheet** to take the names and contact information of everyone who comes out to volunteer so you can invite them to future events.
- ⑤ **Thank everyone for their participation** at the end of the day. Make sure they know how much their efforts have helped. Think about what your next event will be in advance so you can invite them to participate.
- ⑤ Make sure to **take lots of pictures** as this day is the beginning of an exciting process! Taking "before and after" pictures is a great way to visualize how much you've accomplished.

Step 8. Make Connections

How to bring diverse groups into the garden and make supportive connections with your community

It's easy to get caught up in the gardening part of your community garden and forget about your community. But having a wide and vibrant group of people involved in your project helps your garden become a valued part of the neighbourhood. The more diverse groups and individuals your garden serves, the easier it is to find support for funding and resist external threats to your garden. Everyone can contribute to and benefit from a community garden so make sure to always think about what groups are not included and what you can do to better include them. For more information on how to make your garden an inclusive space visit the links below, or read on for information about engaging seniors and youth.

Inclusive Communities: <http://www.ohcc-ccso.ca/en/inclusive-community-organizations-a-tool-kit>
Gardening for people with Disabilities: <http://www.christopherreeve.org/atf/cf/%7B3d83418f-b967-4c18-8ada-adc2e5355071%7D/GARDENING%20FOR%20PEOPLE%20WITH%20DISABILITIES%205-09.PDF>

Seniors

Seniors often love to garden and can have a great deal of knowledge and time to share with a community garden. Because some seniors are not comfortable with the internet/email, it is important to invite them to participate face-to-face. Often, older people with limited mobility can be concerned that they don't have the dexterity required to help out in a garden. This can be remedied in a few ways:

Accessible beds: Raised garden beds are often easier to use for people with sore joints or mobility devices like walkers and wheelchairs. Check out the info sheet on RAISED BEDS for more information about how to integrate accessible beds into your garden.

Ease of use: make sure your garden has a shaded seating area available where older gardeners can rest. Invest in some lightweight tools, and provide senior gardeners with beds closest to water sources and compost bins. Build on the community spirit and have other gardeners help out with heavier tasks like digging and moving compost.

Mentorship: Gardens offer great opportunities for teaching and building skills. One of the best ways to engage seniors with gardening experience is to give them a chance to share what they know. Outgoing seniors can lead workshops for other gardeners, talking about a specific area where they have experience. Seniors can also act as mentors – pair them up with new gardeners or youth to teach them the basics. This is a good way to build strong relationships and a sense of community in the garden.

Youth/Kids

Engaging young people in your garden is a great way to make it a family-friendly space and minimize damage. Children who have helped out in the garden and know the gardeners are much less likely to damage plants or vandalize the area. Gardening with children and young people requires a few extra considerations:

Supervision: kids need to be supervised to make sure they are safe and understand what to do. Any time kids are going to be in the garden there should be an adult present who can advise them about weeding, watering, and general garden care. Supervision is also very important when working with teenagers. Training young people on basic to complex garden tasks is great for self-esteem and helps minimize the workload of adult gardeners. Young people can also be given volunteer hours in exchange for garden work, giving you access to a strong group of committed workers!

Kids' Space: A great way to integrate children in the garden is by creating a kids' bed. This is an area where formal garden rules may not apply and kids can learn about growing plants without fear of damaging other gardeners' work. A kids' bed should be clearly separated from the rest of the garden to avoid confusion. Raised "square foot garden" beds or beds of no more than 3 feet square are good: they allow short arms to reach but avoid soil compaction by not allowing kids to walk on the beds.

Activities: Children love to water and can do it all day long. However, with a little planning you can engage kids in all of gardening from planting to harvesting. Take a look at APPENDIX J for more information on kids and gardening

Community Groups

Always try to connect your garden to the broader community as much as possible. Partnering with other groups and agencies can connect you with knowledge, funding, resources and support that you otherwise may not know about.

Other Gardens: Look into other community gardens in your area. Look in the RESOURCES section to find out if there is a community garden network in your area. Organize garden tours and share best practices with each other: Where is the best place to get supplies/donations? What kind of bulk purchases can you make as a group (soil, seeds, plants)? What kind of training can different gardens offer each other?

Community Centres/Health Centres: Invite them to your garden celebrations and look at possible training partnerships. Do they have a dietician who can talk to your group about healthy eating? Can your garden provide a field trip site for their summer camp? Do they have a kitchen you can use for a canning workshop?

Faith/Cultural Groups: Many religious groups do a great deal of work related to food. A local group may have a food bank you can donate to, or extra supplies they can donate to an event. Faith Groups often have kitchen space that you may be able to use as well.

Non-profit groups: Connect with your local environmental or food-based non-profit to see if they offer training or workshops that can be useful for your gardeners. Let them know about your projects and look into possible funding partnerships. Take a look at RESOURCES to find a starter list of possible groups to connect with in your area.

Step 9. Grow

A month-by-month garden calendar to help you plan your garden season and suggested events for every season

Now for the actual gardening! Between your community and the connections you have made in your neighbourhood, you will probably have lots of great gardening knowledge available to your group. For newer gardeners, the section below describes a basic schedule for planting your garden and some tips for education and events you can offer in your garden. For more resources and how-to specifics, check out the RESOURCES section and the how to guides in the back of the book.

Sample Garden Calendar

Planning ahead will ensure you are ready for every step of the gardening season and help the winter fly by! Spend January and February meeting with your garden committee to plan out your planting and any expansions to the garden. Below is a garden calendar that you can refer to for step by step instructions of what to do from March to October. This calendar is based on the climate in plant hardiness Zone 6, Southern Ontario, so if you are located in another zone, follow the same steps, but move the timeline back accordingly. To find out what zone you live in, visit

<http://www.northerngardenersalmanac.com/2010/01/canadian-plant-hardiness-zones.html>

March

PREPARE THE SITE

1. Get people involved in the garden. Hold a meeting with new gardeners to discuss rules and plan for the year. Give new gardeners an orientation packet with rules and a registration form like in APPENDIX I and L.
2. Make sure you have water for the garden. Set up rain barrels, hoses, buckets and watering cans.
3. Get all the tools you need. Make sure they are clean and in good shape. For a list of tools you should have, see STEP 6.
4. Set up compost bins. If you already have bins, start turning your compost again. For more information on composting, READ INFO SHEET 3 at the back of this guide or visit www.compost.org/qna.html or www.compostguide.com.
5. Mulch the garden. You should add mulch after the soil has warmed up in the spring. For more information about mulch, look at SECTION 6.
6. Begin to plant seeds indoors and under lights. This is a great way to save money and make sure your plants grow without pesticides or chemical fertilizers. This is the time to plant tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and any other plants that need a long growing season to mature. SEE INFO SHEET 1 for more information.

April

THE GARDENING BEGINS

1. If the ground is no longer frozen, start to prepare your site. Dig compost or manure into the soil and mark out where your beds will be.
2. Repair old garden structures and build new ones. This includes paths, arbours, walls, fences, and raised beds. If the soil is still frozen or very wet, do not start to dig. Wait until the ground is thawed and dry.
3. Plant crops that like cool weather such as peas, lettuce, onions, spinach and root vegetables (beets, radishes, carrots, potatoes).
4. Water often so that seeds can start growing. Once the seedlings are strong, let the soil dry a little before you water again.
5. Pull out weeds to keep them from taking over the other plants.
6. Prune raspberry or blackberry canes down to 6 inches to encourage new growth.
7. Continue to care for indoor seedlings, moving them to 4" pots and adding nutrients once they have their first true leaves.

May

1. Finish all the things you are building in the garden.
2. When the soil can easily be dug, usually mid-May, you can plant beans.
3. Host a seed starting or planting workshop for new gardeners
4. Mid-month, start hardening off your transplants (see box at RIGHT). This will prepare them to be planted outside at the end of the month.
5. After the last frost (usually around May long weekend, but check online) your indoor seedlings can all be planted outside. This includes tomatoes, melons, peppers, eggplant, squash and cucumbers.
6. Learn which garden "weeds" are edible or have medicinal properties. Start harvesting them rather than throwing them into the compost. For more about weeds, SEE INFO SHEET 2 at the back of this guide.

June

1. Finish setting out transplants and store-bought seedlings.
2. Begin to harvest crops. When you can harvest depends on the weather each year. Pick things when they are ripe and before they get too ripe. You should be able to gather peas, radishes, lettuce and spinach.
3. Stake up tomato plants. Build supports for beans and other plants that grow on vines.
4. Plant a second crop of the things you planted in the spring. This is called "succession planting". It is a way to make the gardening season longer. To learn more, read INFO SHEET 6 at the back of this guide or visit "Succession Planting" at www.cog.ca/documents/RS11.pdf or look at the information in FoodShare's Toolkit at www.foodshare.net/toolbox_month_succession.htm.
5. Keep the site neat. Weed and mow the borders and paths. Look for standing water or areas of thick plant coverage and remove them to prevent rodents.
6. Add weeds (but not weed seeds) and other plant thinnings to your compost. Turn compost weekly.
7. Ask local garden centres for extra seedlings and host a plant giveaway.
8. Invite a class from a local school to visit the garden.

July and August

1. Make sure all beds have been planted by the deadline and reassign them as needed.
2. Give the garden enough water. July and August are the hottest months. Water as often as needed. A good rule of thumb: stick your finger into the soil to the first knuckle. If it's dry and warm, it's time to water. Make sure to water early in the morning or in the evening, rather than midday. It will protect your leaves and reduce water loss from the heat.
3. Harvest crops regularly. Pick beans, peas, okra and other crops often to encourage plants to keep producing and to make sure produce tastes its best.
4. Keep weeding and mowing.
5. Top dress fruiting crops with compost or an organic fertilizer to encourage fruiting. Avoid nitrogen rich fertilizer as it promotes leaf growth. Look for a balanced fertilizer like chicken manure or one rich in phosphorus/potassium if your soils are deficient. SEE INFO SHEET 2 for more info.
6. Keep looking for insects and signs of disease.
7. Thin suckers and lower leaves from tomato plants to make the plants put their energy into fruit.
8. If you are going to save seeds, start now. To learn how to save your own seeds, read INFO SHEET 5 at the back of this guide or "Seed saving" and "Basic Seed Saving" at www.seedsave.org/issi/issi_904.html.
9. Enjoy the food! Plan an event to celebrate your harvest.

September

1. Order bulbs (flowers and garlic) that you can plant at the end of September or early in October.
2. Order seeds for a cover crop. These plants help keep the soil healthy and free of weeds.
3. Keep harvesting the food from your garden.

October and November

CLEANING UP

1. After the harvest is finished, plan a day to clean up the site. Put all plant parts (except seedheads) into the compost. Seeds should not go into the compost because they will sprout when you add compost to your beds next spring.
2. Plant a cover crop. This will help to build the soil, hold moisture and keep away weeds.
3. Invite local children to help clean up the garden. FOR MORE ABOUT COVER CROPS SEE INFO SHEET 6.
4. Clean and repair the tools and gardening equipment. Put them in storage for the winter.
5. Repair any damaged fences, walls or buildings.
6. Rake leaves. Add them to the compost.
7. Prune trees, shrubs and vines.
8. If you have a watering system, flush it and get it ready for the winter.
9. Remember to thank your volunteers, supporters and funders.
10. Hold a debriefing event with your gardeners to discuss how the season went and recommendations for next year. Look at APPENDIX L for a sample feedback form to give your gardeners.
11. Consider organizing monthly events to keep the group connected through the winter. Cooking can be a great way for gardeners to stay in touch over the winter – take a look at NEXT STEPS for more ideas.

Suggested Yearly Events

Holding garden events can raise awareness about your garden in the community and give gardeners a chance to spend time together socially. Below is a list of basic and creative events you can host in your community garden throughout the season. Hand out feedback forms at each event to find out how it went and get ideas for new activities. For sample feedback forms SEE APPENDIX L.

Great Foundation events – these can add structure to your garden season:

Seed Exchange – if there isn't a Seedy Saturday event in your community, or even if there is, why not host a seed exchange at your garden? Invite everyone to bring seeds they've saved, packaged up with a basic description of the plant, and exchange them with other gardeners. This may require a seed packing event to prepare.

Plant Giveaway – After Victoria Day is a great time to host a plant giveaway. Any extra seedlings you or your community don't have space to use can be distributed to gardeners in the community who still have space. You can also contact local garden centres to ask for donations as they generally reduce plants by up to 50% after May 24.

Harvest Festival – Celebrate the end of the season with a harvest festival! Clean up the garden, offer seed saving workshops and celebrate local food with a community dinner or a potluck. Harvest Festivals are a great way to give closure to the season and give thanks to your gardening team

Additional Event Ideas:

Work Parties – Invite volunteers from the wider community or local businesses and organizations to pitch in at the garden for big projects like spring/fall cleanup, tree planting or building new garden beds.

Garden Tours – Host a midsummer interpretive tour when your garden is looking its best. Use this opportunity to highlight the creative spirit of your garden and the benefits it provides to the community.

Movie Nights – Consider screening a movie in the garden on a warm summer evening. Make popcorn, bring blankets, and invite the community out for a film on food, gardening or any topic! Borrow a projector and hang up a large white bed sheet for a screen.

Garden workshops – Pick a resident gardener or invite an expert from beyond the community to host a workshop on an interesting garden topic for the whole neighbourhood. Some great ideas used in other gardens include: container gardening, small-scale composting, seed saving/growing from seed, using medicinal plants, or creating a pollinator garden.

Native plant and tree walk – Invite adults and kids into the garden for a walk to learn how to identify local plants and trees. Community members will be surprised to learn how many diverse plants grow right in there community, and the many different uses they have.

Step 10. Maintain

How to avoid conflict and keep gardeners involved. Tips for fundraising and 10 steps to writing a grant proposal.

Keeping your garden going means reflecting on successes and challenges and using both as a way to grow and improve your project. Some gardens run into issues after a few years when they start to lose initial volunteers or funding sources. Having a long-lasting garden program is all about resilience and adaptation. Find resilience by supporting existing volunteers and reaching out to new partners. Use this resilience to adapt to challenges your garden may face due to conflict, changing goals or external pressure.

Keeping gardeners involved

People who work in your garden are giving something to the project: their time, their knowledge or their resources. In the same way, the garden should give back to them. People volunteer for many reasons, so this can mean many things. For example, gardens can provide volunteers with training, leadership opportunities, community connections, or a sense of accomplishment, to name just a few reasons people get involved. Below are some basic techniques to ensure that your gardeners value the garden project and feel valued for their contributions. For more information, take a look at APPENDIX G as well.

Clear Rules and Responsibilities

Being clear with everyone about the rules and responsibilities of gardeners is critical to success. As new gardeners join, have them all read and sign a copy of the garden rules. A few years in, consider creating a values statement to ensure everyone understands the spirit behind the project. Having these beliefs and expectations laid out from the beginning can avoid a great deal of miscommunication in the future.

Open Communication

Make sure all gardeners have a way to share their recommendations and comments about the garden. Giving out feedback forms at the beginning and end of the season is a good way to learn what people think. Many people won't talk about problems unless they are asked. Have your Garden Coordinator or Communications Officer speak to gardeners often and ask how things are going (at least once a month if possible, especially in the beginning years). Check in regularly with new volunteers to ensure that they are integrating well and understand their role. Have time at regular meetings to address any issues that come up. Keep things positive – instead of listening to complaints, ask people to provide constructive suggestions.

Accountability

Who is responsible for enforcing the rules of the garden? There is no point in creating and discussing rules if they are not enforced. Rules must be enforced consistently and fairly upon all gardeners. Any issues that arise beyond the rules should be addressed by the committee, not by one individual. Having a system in place for dealing with problems means that all gardeners will know their opinion is valued, but no one gardener will be able to take over the project.

Cultivate Leaders

Give people the chance to develop and show their leadership skills. Rather than having a few people managing everything, offer others the chance to take responsibility or teach others. Youth can especially benefit from opportunities to take charge and show initiative. Setting up a mentorship model in your garden can be a great way for experienced growers to empower newcomers.

Share Successes

Try to monitor what happens over the season and share these results with all gardeners. Great harvests from the communal bed, popular events, or all-time high volunteer engagement are all successes to be celebrated. Emphasizing the good you are doing and the impact you make working together keeps people engaged in the project. When people can see that the time they give makes a difference, they feel good about being a part of the garden. Documenting your process allows you to reflect and celebrate milestones and anniversaries with the rest of the team. Some garden volunteers may also be interested in taking photographs to support this.

Flexibility

While it's very important that everyone be clear on the goals and rules of your garden, it's also vital that there be room for flexibility and experimentation. A garden that doesn't welcome creativity and new ideas will lose vibrancy and fail to attract new members. Realize that your garden is never "complete"; it is a work in progress.

Funding

Maintaining your project also means making it financially sustainable. This means figuring out both how to keep your costs low AND how to bring money into your garden. Funds should be something that your garden committee discusses from the very beginning. Funding commitments from the housing provider, the gardeners and community partners should be clearly laid out so that you can develop a long term plan.

When initially planning your project, you'll realize there are many things you can get for little or no money (see STEP 6 for more information). Connect with as many groups as possible to look for in-kind support possibilities.

Community Support

Connect with groups in your community to ask them to donate materials to help out your project! Local businesses can donate gardening supplies like tools, soil and plants. But also think of other things you'll need, like food for meetings and events, hardware supplies like locks or a produce scale, or gift certificates as prizes for events and contests.

Before contacting anyone, make sure you've had a meeting and you're clear on what supplies you're looking for - ***it's easier to get what you want when you ask for something specific.***

Connect with members of your community to see what skills and materials they can provide, then start asking local businesses and community groups for help! **If you need help drafting a letter to give to businesses, see Appendix K**

Talk to your **local city councillor or MP**. Politicians often have funds available to support community projects, especially for groups that are leading the process themselves. If you don't already have a relationship with your local politicians, pick a confident speaker from your group to call or write them, let them know about your project, and ask if there is any funding available to support your work. Offer them a chance to visit your garden or community so they can meet you and see your work firsthand

Grants

For those things that you can't find in-kind, or for projects that require larger amounts of money, you may want to consider applying for grants. Grant writing doesn't have to be scary! In fact it can be a great way to include new members of your community in your project – people who may not be interested in gardening, but who have good writing skills or excellent connections. Below are some initial things to consider when applying for grants as well as 10 steps to writing a successful grant application.

When thinking about applying for grants, a good first step is to **connect with other groups in your community** doing community garden projects and see how they paid for them. They can either give you some advice, or perhaps you can apply for grants together!

Often you'll need a **non-profit agency to act as a sponsor** for any grant you want to apply for. Many agencies will be willing to help you apply for a grant but will want to be clear on certain details, for example:

- ⑤ Are there any funds available to them as sponsors?
- ⑤ Are they expected to provide grant writing support?
- ⑤ What other support do you want from them?

Non-profit agencies will be worried about committing to support a grant if they don't know you and can't be sure that your project will be a success – if things aren't managed well, they might be on the hook for repaying the funding. The best way to convince them that you have a solid plan is to **clearly develop your project outline**, identifying lead participants, and a rough budget and workplan for the year.

Steps to applying for grants

If your group does decide to apply for a grant, here are the basic steps to go through to prepare, write, and submit. If you're curious what grants might be available to you, speak to your Housing Provider and take a look at the list below. Don't apply for a grant until you are ready to go with your project – as in, you have a clear picture of what, specifically, you want to do, and have given thought to how much it will cost. Grantmakers will want to know your budget and your goals, so a grant written when those things aren't clear won't have a great chance of success.

1. **Read the grant instructions carefully** and make sure you are eligible, and that it funds the type of work you want to do. Take note of all deadlines and supporting materials that need to be submitted so you have lots of time to prepare.
2. Try to **connect with groups who've received grant funding before** (especially if they've applied for the grant you're looking at!) and ask for advice.
3. Find out **if your community group is eligible** as an applicant, and if not, connect with a local registered non-profit agency if needed (some funders will support you to access a trustee organization, but this depends on the funder).
4. Figure out **who the grant money will go to**. Can your housing provider receive the grant, or does your community garden have a bank account? Granters will not write a personal check to an individual.
5. You may want to **call the granting agency** for support. Let them know about your project, and ask any questions you need clarified. Granters can often provide good advice and support. Calling also means they will remember you when they receive the grant, which can always be helpful.
6. If the grant requires a lot of writing, **consider dividing the sections** between a few different people. Just make sure to go over it afterward to make sure it's clear and coherent.
7. When writing, **talk about what the grantmaker is interested in**. In the grant guidelines, granters tell you exactly what they are looking for – emphasize those points, rather than just talking about what you think is important. Often granters are interested in funding 'new' and 'innovative' things. Have a brainstorm with your group to see how your community garden project can be different while still covering the major things that you want to accomplish.
8. Have lots of people look at your grant drafts and **get feedback** on them. This will make sure everything is clear and nothing has been forgotten.
9. **Plan how you will report back** on the grant if you receive it. Are there statistics you need to gather about number or demographics of people involved? Do you need to complete a program evaluation? Plan to take lots of pictures and keep good financial records for when you report back at the end of the grant term.
10. Complete and **review your grant application and submit**. Good Luck!

If it's your first time writing a grant and you and your team don't have a lot of confidence, **try looking for help from professionals!** There are volunteer consulting groups which provide advice on grant writing and other administrative activities for not-for-profit groups. A great idea is to connect with a few groups in your community who need grant writing help, and find someone who can present to you as a larger group! Here are two Toronto-based groups, but look online for who's available in your community.

Management Advisory Services: www.masadvise.ca/

U of T Consulting: http://utconsulting.ca/volunteer_consulting_group/about_us/

- ⑤ Food Action Community Engagement (FACE) is a Toronto Community Housing group that works to help residents start community and container gardening programs. They are able to give advice and grant writing feedback for your projects. Contact them at food.action@yahoo.ca for more information.

Grants can be a great way to start or expand your garden. However, your garden should not be looking for grants every year, there should be a plan for how you will pay for ongoing costs. Most gardens do this through a combination of yearly allotment fees, events (see STEP 9), and keeping costs low through activities like seed saving and on-site composting. Some gardens decide to go even further, and look at projects that can earn money for their gardens, like selling vegetables to restaurants or processing fruits and veggies into jam or pickles to sell. For more information on ways your garden can earn money, take a look at the section below. If you're interested in getting support to take an idea further, contact SEED at emartyn@hscorp.ca.

To get you started, below are a few granters that have funded community garden work in the past. Visit their websites to check for updated information and deadlines.

EcoAction Community Funding Program

Funding: Maximum \$100,000 per project, project may be up to 3 years.

Application dates: deadline November 1, of each year

<http://www.ec.gc.ca/ecoaction/>

Helen McCrea Peacock Foundation

Funding: Maximum \$10 000

Application dates: deadlines November 1 and May 1 of every year

<http://www.tcf.ca/communityorganizations/helenmccreapeacockfoundation.html>

The Home Depot Foundation

Funding: varies on project

Application dates: Four review periods throughout the year. Deadlines – January 15, April 15, July 15, October 15

<http://www.homedepotfoundation.org>

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

Funding: Up to \$5,000

Application dates: Deadlines occasionally change – visit website for details

<http://www.fef.td.com>

Walmart Evergreen Green Grants

Funding: up to \$10 000

Application Dates: January of every year

<http://www.evergreen.ca/en/funding/grants/>
