



Urban Harvest

The Basics on Starting a Community Garden

The People Any group of at least 3 to 5 committed people can build a community garden. They can be part of an organized group or can just be an informal group of friends, neighbors, or relatives. Organized groups that have started gardens include: civic associations, congregations, neighborhood centers, senior groups, youth groups, women's clubs, men's clubs, occupational groups, businesses, schools and home-schools, food pantries, homeless shelters, apartments, treatment centers

The Location Community gardens can be built on public or private land. An agreement to use the land for at least five years provides the garden with some security. Generally, public land provides a greater long-term use assurance. Parks, service centers, schools, utility easements, apartments, churches, or synagogues can make ideal locations. The garden location should be close to the gardeners who will maintain it. Sometimes, gardeners propose turning their own private land into a community garden with themselves as resident coordinator. Such gardens can also be excellent, although the garden is a challenge to sustain if the land is sold to another owner. Also, volunteers may be more timid to step in and work on a garden on private property.

The Know-how Gardening is not complicated, but to be done effectively, a person needs a little training before beginning. Urban Harvest provides a number of ways for gardeners to learn. We provide classes, volunteer opportunities, written instructions, meetings, and access to a network of experienced community gardeners.

The Materials Once your group has a plan, a site, some knowledge of gardening, and some funds, you will need to order materials, choose tools, fertilizer, seeds and/or transplants.

The Plants Once a garden is in place, production is fast. From August to November and January to March, the first vegetable crops should take about 45 days. At other times it may take 90 days. Some fruit trees and shrubs will take five years, and others ten to produce fruit, while other smaller fruit plants planted in winter will bear crops in the spring. Most garden beds need about an hour of maintenance per week. Plan to spend about 6 hours for planting crops each season, four times a year. When it is time to harvest, anticipate spending 1 hour per week reaping the fruits of your labor.

The Money Cost varies greatly depending on size and design, so plan your garden accordingly. Most community gardens will cost between \$1500 and \$4000 initially. There will also be a few hundred dollars a year in maintenance costs. If these numbers sound daunting to you, keep in mind it is possible to build a small community garden for much less if you are a bit creative with found materials for bed edges and composting techniques to build your own soil. Community orchards are very cost efficient.

If you have any questions, call Program Coordinator Emily Foxman at 713.880.5540 or email at emily@urbanharvest.org