



# Alcorn®

EXTENSION PROGRAM

*Empowering People*

## Guide on Starting a vegetable Community Garden

Community gardens are places where neighbors can gather to cultivate plants, vegetables and fruits. Such gardens can improve nutrition, physical activity, community engagement, safety and economic vitality for a neighborhood and its residents. Hence, community gardens provide residents the opportunity to grow their own fruits and vegetables, increasing access and affordability. Community gardening also teaches young children that food is not a product of the supermarket, but the result of tilling and nurturing the soil.

### **Steps on starting a vegetable community garden**

#### **STEP 1 FORMING A PLANNING COMMITTEE**

- Determine if there really is a need and desire for a garden
- Who will the garden serve--kids, seniors, special populations,
- If the project is meant to benefit a particular group or neighborhood, it is essential that the group be involved in all phases
- Organize a meeting of interested people
- Choose a well-organized garden coordinator
- Form committees to accomplish tasks: Funding & Resource Development; Youth Activities; Construction; Communication.
- Approach a sponsor
- Make a list of what needs to be done
- If your community garden has a budget, keep administration in the hands of several people.
- Choose a name for the garden

#### **STEP 2 CHOOSE A SITE**

- Find a garden site
- Identify the owner of the land
- Make sure the site gets at least 6 full hours of sunlight daily(for vegetables)
- Obtain lease or agreement from owner
- Decide on a mailing address and central telephone number(s).
- Do a soil test in the fall for nutrients & heavy metals
- Consider availability of water
- Try and get a lease or agreement which allows the space to be used at least for 3 years
- Consider past uses of the land. Is there any contamination?
- Is insurance something you need to consider?

### **STEP 3      PREPARE AND DEVELOP THE SITE**

- Clean the site
- Develop your design
- Gather your resources--try to gather free materials
- Organize volunteer work crews
- Plan your work day
- Decide on plot sizes, mark plots clearly with gardeners names
- Include plans for a storage area for tools and other equipment, as well as a compost area
- Have a rainproof bulletin board for announcing garden events and messages
- Arrange for land preparation--plowing, etc--or let gardeners do their own prep
- Will the garden be organic?
- Lay out garden to place flower or shrub beds around the visible perimeter. This helps to promote good will with non-gardening neighbors, passersby, and municipal authorities.

### **STEP 4      ORGANIZE THE GARDEN**

- Conditions for membership (residence, dues, agreement with rules).
- Assignment of plots (by family size, by residency, by need, by group- i.e., youth, elderly, etc.).
- Size of plots (or should there be several sizes based on family size or other factors).
- Lay out of plots.
- If the group charges dues, how will the money be used? What services, if any, will be provided to gardeners in return?
- Will the group do certain things cooperatively (such as turning in soil in the spring, planting cover crops, or composting)?
- When someone leaves a plot, how will the next tenant be chosen?
- How will the group deal with possible vandalism?
- Will there be a children's plot?
- Will the gardeners meet regularly? If so, how often and for what purposes?
- Will gardeners share tools, hoses, and other such items?
- How will minimum maintenance (especially weeding) be handled both inside plots and in common areas (such as along fences, in flower beds, and in sitting areas)?
- Will there be a set of written rules which gardeners are expected to uphold? If so, how will they be enforced?
- Should your group incorporate and consider eventually owning your garden site?

**For more information: contact:**

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