

1) Organize first: organize early

- a) Ideally minimum of six months before garden season
- b) Talk to local groups with existing community gardens
- c) Collect names of interested people
- d) Conduct a meeting(s) of any interested people
 - i) Neighbors, tenants, community organizations
 - ii) Aim for at least 10 committed people or families
- e) Discuss the vision
 - i) Garden with individually “owned” plots
 - ii) Shared garden for community use
 - iii) Communal gardens for food pantries
 - iv) School/children’s garden
 - v) Agency garden
 - vi) Demonstration/education garden

2) Form a planning committee

- a) Committed well-organized people
- b) Divide and conquer - possible sub-committees:
 - i) Funding/acquisitions and partners
 - ii) Work day organizers
 - iii) Construction
 - iv) Communication and publicity
 - v) Education
 - vi) Policy, rules and guidelines

3) Identify the mission and goals

- a) Put them in writing
- b) Mission statement
- c) Goals - short term and long term

4) Identify all resources

- a) People within group
 - i) Evaluate gardening skills of committee members
 - ii) Identify garden mentors within committee (if needed)

- b) People within community
 - i) Should be credible
 - ii) Possible garden mentors outside your committee
 - (1) University of Illinois Extension web.extension.illinois.edu
 - (i) Master Gardener volunteers
 - (2) Garden clubs
- c) Gather information
 - i) UI Extension
 - ii) Public library
 - iii) Internet resources
- d) Identify resources – supplies and materials
 - i) Identify availability of free or low cost supplies
- e) Identify Income and Expenses
 - i) Funding for supplies, tools, seeds and plants
 - ii) Self-supporting with memberships, plot fees or sale of produce?
 - iii) Rely on donations?

5) Identify sponsor(s)

- a) Possible sponsors
 - i) Local churches
 - ii) Landscape/garden businesses
 - iii) Park districts
 - iv) Municipalities/ villages
 - v) Hospitals/health centers
- b) Approach a sponsor
 - i) Monetary donations
 - (1) Grants
 - (2) Supplies
 - ii) In kind donations
 - (1) Land usage
 - (2) Tilling
 - (3) Expertise
- c) Give proper credit to sponsors

6) Select a site

- a) Make a list of potential sites

- b) Match site to vision
 - i) Vegetable gardens – need at least 6 hours sun
 - ii) Water availability
 - iii) Easy and safe access – near to community of gardeners, parking, handicap accessible, safety issues
 - iv) Site history
 - v) Soil quality – type and contaminants
 - vi) Once site is selected – get it in writing!
 - (1) Use agreements
 - (2) Lease agreements
 - (3) Address insurance & liability issues
 - (4) Cost of site usage and any necessary improvements

7) Prepare site and create design

- a) Site preparation
 - i) Soil testing – including lead and cadmium
 - ii) UI Extension soil testing labs information <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/soiltest>
 - iii) Litter cleanup
 - iv) Till in fall if possible
- b) Create design
 - i) Functional
 - ii) Plot size and arrangement
 - (1) Variety of sizes
 - iii) Pathways - minimum of 3 feet wide
 - (1) Type of path - grass (who mows?) or mulch
 - (2) Planned method of tillage
 - iv) Tool storage
 - v) Compost area
 - vi) Water - easy access for all areas

8) Develop rules & guidelines

- a) Put in writing
- b) Have gardeners involved in development
- c) Can be simple to specific
- d) Determine application/membership process
 - i) Who is eligible?
 - ii) Is it a membership?

- iii) Are fees involved?
- iv) Who collects and maintains fees?
- v) How will fees be used?
- e) Address garden issues
 - i) Weed tolerance
 - ii) Allowable structures
 - iii) Communal tools?
 - iv) Time frame – opening and closing date
 - v) Allow perennial crops such as asparagus, rhubarb, horseradish, herbs or overwintering crops
 - vi) Pesticide usage – organic or not
 - vii) Follow pesticide applicator license requirements
- f) Address people issues
 - i) Pets and children
 - ii) Cigarette smoking
 - iii) Drugs and alcohol
 - iv) Theft and vandalism
 - v) Consequences of violating rules

9) Initiate regular communication

- a) Possibilities
 - i) Regular meetings/educational programs
 - ii) Social media
 - iii) Email
 - iv) Telephone – phone trees
 - v) Website
 - vi) Newsletter
 - vii) On-site community bulletin board
 - viii) Suggestion box

10) Celebrate success

- a) Share produce - share harvest baskets with sponsors and neighbors
- b) Harvest parties - grilling in the garden party
- c) Recipe exchange - tomato tasting
- d) Media coverage – get the word out

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