

# Starting a Community Garden In Hamilton

A 10-Step Guide to Get Your Garden Up and Running



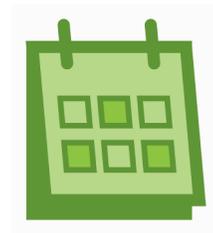
A resource created by the Hamilton Community Garden Network



This guide is designed to provide you with the tools you need to help make your Hamilton community garden a reality. Understanding that each garden project will develop in its own way, the resources it contains should be used as guidelines to help keep you informed as your garden group and project continues to grow.

**The Hamilton Community Garden Network (HCGN) collaboratively supports Hamiltonians in creating and sustaining community gardens.**

We do this by helping community members find community gardens through our online and interactive garden directory map, access tools and resources, and connect through events, workshops, meet-ups and social media.



**Learn more and access our resources at:**

**[www.hcgn.ca](http://www.hcgn.ca)**

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# Step 1: Determine and Collect Community Support

Start a discussion with your friends, neighbours and local organizations to build ideas for your community garden and gauge the interest level. Use the Worksheet 1: Developing a Vision for Your Garden to develop a vision and plan with a group of at least five interested individuals, families or groups.

## Sample Garden Types

**Plot-Based:** These gardens offer small plots of land for community members to grow and harvest their own vegetables, fruit, or flowers. There is often a small cost associated and there may be a wait list of Interested gardeners.

**Communal:** In these gardens, community members work together to grow and harvest the produce. All vegetables and fruit are then equally distributed to the garden members.

**Donation:** All produce grown and harvested in these gardens are donated to local food banks and charities. Like in communal gardens, there are typically no individual plots.

**Youth:** These gardens have a youth focus and are either only open to those that are under 18 years old or students who attend the neighbouring school.

**Restricted:** These gardens are only open to a selected group, such as residents in a building, or members of a group or club.

**Beautification:** Only flowers and ornamental plants are grown in these gardens.

**Combination:** These gardens are combinations of 2 or more of the above types. Many gardens within the HCGN are combinations of the above.

**Online Directory:** Visit [www.hcgn.ca](http://www.hcgn.ca) to identify the types and locations of gardens throughout Hamilton.



**Tip:** Unsure which type of garden to choose or what's involved with each? Let us connect you with other garden coordinators in the network to answer your questions and provide you with helpful feedback.

## Worksheet 1: Developing a Vision for Your Garden

List reasons why you (or your group) want to develop a community garden.

Define the goals for your community garden. For example: Grow fresh produce, clean up the neighbourhood, teach others about food

List examples of how your garden project will benefit your neighbourhood and community.

What types of plants do you want to grow at your garden? Edible? Ornamental? Butterfly-friendly?

What type of garden do you envision? Will there be separate plots? Will food be donated to the food bank? Will there be an area where people garden communally?

Who will garden at the site? Will it be for everyone in the community or a specific group?

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Gardening Matters. 2007. Twin Cities Community Garden Start-up Guide. <http://www.gardeningsmatters.org/sites/default/files/startupguide.pdf>

Once you have a vision and a core group of people involved in creating your community garden, the next stage is to determine the support of your general community.

### **Have a meeting to determine community support.**

Use this community meeting to briefly outline the garden project, what your goals are, and what has been accomplished so far. Have time before and after the meeting for the participants to ask questions, network, and have a sign-up sheet so interested individuals can get involved.

Have your meeting in an accessible location, where discussion can happen easily. Keep the meeting to an hour or less so people can fit it into their busy schedules. It is also good to have name tags, a meeting leader, and a person who will be taking notes. If possible, a dedicated space for child care will make the meeting more accessible for busy families.

Post the meeting agenda so participants know what will be discussed. Use *Worksheet 2: Creating an Agenda* to help develop the agenda for your meeting.

Follow up with all that showed interest at this first meeting and decide upon a future meeting schedule. At these future meetings your group will continue to develop the community garden.

## **Generating and Maintaining Community Support**

### **Tips to Getting the Word Out**

- Post flyers about the project and leave them in key locations (banks, businesses, schools, etc.)
- Make presentations to existing community groups
- Have sign-up sheets at different community gathering locations (churches, schools, etc.)
- Advertise in the community newspaper
- Knock on doors and talk to neighbours

### **Tips to Keeping People Interested in the Garden**

- Keep in touch with all members; communication is important
- Keep time demands reasonable and to a minimum
- Organize social activities and time to take a break from the work of planning and running the garden
- Welcome new members and get them involved



## Worksheet 2: Creating an Agenda

**Step 1:** List the topics your group wishes to discuss. Use a blackboard, a large piece of paper or the chart below to record the topics. Topic examples: Water bill, garden rules, or potluck dinner.

**Step 2:** Vote for which topics to discuss. Record the number of votes each topic receives and rank them accordingly in order of importance.

**Step 3:** Assign an amount of time to discuss the topics, giving the topics with the highest priority the most time. Stay within the time for discussing each topic.

Discussion Topic	Votes	Priority	Time

### Additional advice on running a successful meeting:

- Have one person taking notes to share with all community garden members shortly after the meeting.
- Before the end of the meeting schedule the next meeting and thank attendants for participating.
- Make sure to finish the meeting at the time advertised or even a little early so people have time to socialize and ask questions.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Lucas County Master Gardener Volunteers. 2011. Northwest Ohio Community Garden Resource Guide. <http://lucas.osu.edu/topics/horticulture/CGmanual.pdf>

## Step 2: Define Garden Leadership and Determine Your Resources

After your first community meeting you should now have many people interested in taking part in your community garden. If you don't, you could advertise more broadly and potentially have a second meeting.

### Form a Leadership Committee

It is important that your garden group have a leader (or group of leaders) to keep the project moving and to make decisions. Decide as a group what type of leadership your garden wants and nominate or elect the people that will be involved. A leadership committee can include members who act as garden leader, co-leader, and treasurer. It is also important to agree on how decisions will be made. Will the leadership committee have the power to make decisions without consulting the group as a whole? Will decisions be made by voting? How many people must be present at a meeting to make a decision?

**Tip:** Before brainstorming resources and partners for your garden, review the [Worksheet 1: Developing a Vision for Your Garden](#) (from Step 1) with the entire group and make any changes necessary. Refer back to this worksheet as you continue to develop the garden project.

### Determine Your Partners and Resources

Asset mapping is a process where you focus on the positive assets of your community, mapping them out as resources for future use and reference. Have your garden group consider all the assets in the community that may be beneficial, such as individual talents and skills, associations, businesses, government, local ecology, land and buildings. When you have meetings, consider asking everyone to share a skill or passion and keep track of what each individual brings to the table.

- **Potential Partners**—As a group, list potential partners, such as organizations, businesses and individuals, that could offer your garden support. Keep a written list and include any contacts you may already have with these future partners.
- **Current and Needed Resources**—Use [Worksheet 3](#) on the next page.



## Worksheet 3: Community Garden Resources

Mark an X under the header(s) that are appropriate for each item your community garden may need. Use this worksheet to help you plan your needed resources, your garden budget and fundraising goals.

	Already have	Purchase or rent	Don't need		Already have	Purchase or rent	Don't need
<b>Planning:</b>				<b>Materials:</b>			
Garden layout and design costs				Materials to build raised beds			
Garden rental fees				Slabs and paving			
<b>Plants /flowers:</b>				Soil			
Flowers				Compost			
Foliage plants				Fertilizer			
General plants				Compost bin			
Seeds				Fencing			
Shrubs				Hand tools			
Trees				Larger tools			
Hanging baskets				Concrete/sand			
Plant pots, tubs and containers				Patio paving materials			
<b>Ponds and pools:</b>				Wood chips			
Pond lining				Sod			
Water supply fittings and pipes				Bricks and path edging materials			
Fountain pump and system				Chipping, pebbles and stones			
Underwater lighting and bulbs				Cover crop seed			
Fish				Grass seed			
<b>Fittings and Furniture:</b>				<b>Structures:</b>			
Lights				Shed			
Electricity supply and cabling				Children's play equipment			
Water supply				Gazebo			
Irrigation supplies				Trellises			
Chairs/benches				Shade area/arbor			
Tables				Greenhouse			
Barbeque				<b>Other costs:</b>			
<b>Labor and Construction:</b>				Machinery Rental			
General labor				Other			
Professional labor							

Adapted from Rebel Tomato Garden Cost Checklist, [http://www.communitygarden.org/rebeltomato/pdf/figuring\\_costs\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.communitygarden.org/rebeltomato/pdf/figuring_costs_checklist.pdf)

## Step 3: Create a Budget

While resources provide valuable help, community gardens cost money to construct and maintain. Good financial planning is important because it helps to ensure that your garden has the financial stability and security it needs to start up and continue year after year.

The cost for each garden will depend on the size, scale, site, and the amount of in-kind resources you group will be able to secure. In-kind contributions include materials, volunteer time, and anything other donation (other than money) that is given to aid your garden. To determine your garden's current and anticipated costs, complete Worksheet 4: Creating a Budget on the next page.

### Financial Management Tips

- **Determine a financial administration system.** This could be anything from setting up a group bank account to record all incoming and outgoing monies, or appointing a treasurer and setting up a process where the group knows how and where the money is being handled.
- **Be realistic.** While budgets that only include the bare minimums look good on paper, they are often not practical when unforeseen costs arise. Being realistic with your anticipated costs will save you from falling short on funds and the added stress of having to cobble together additional monies.
- **Consider multiple revenue streams.** If self-sufficiency is a goal, consider creating a fundraising strategy that includes two or more revenue streams. This can include funds from plot rentals, ongoing or annual fundraising efforts, or targeted support from individual donors or community grants.



## Worksheet 4: Creating a Budget

Items	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Suggestions	Sample 1 <sup>st</sup> Year Costs
<b>Revenue/Income</b>					
Plot fees				Enough to cover cost of water, lease and insurance	\$30/plot with 25 plots = \$750
Fundraising				Set reasonable goals	\$400
Donations				Include donated materials from gardeners and community	\$500 (skids, tools, hoses)
Last Year's Balance					\$0
				<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1650</b>
<b>Expenses/Costs</b>					
Water				Up to \$100/month, more if need to establish connection	\$75/month, about \$500/year
Hoses/Plumbing				Large initial expense if need to make connection to water	\$200 (new & donated by community)
Shed				Find used sheds or donation of floor model from business	\$0, fundraise towards goal of \$600
Tools				Decide whether there will be communal tools and mark them	\$100 (donated tools)
Compost				See HCGN purchasing guide or create your own compost.	\$100 (approx \$50/yrd)
Compost bins				Use skids or snow fencing to create large compost bins	\$300 (value of free skids)
Mulch				See HCGN purchasing guide.	\$0 (free mushroom compost)
Soil				See HCGN purchasing guide.	For 4 6x4 raised beds \$120 (approx \$30/yrd)
Lease/land rental				Will vary garden-to-garden	\$1/year
Insurance				Will vary garden-to-garden	\$5/plot
Tilling				Garden tilled in spring	\$80/rental
Raised beds				See HCGN purchasing guide.	4 ground top 4x6 beds, \$80 lumber
Plants				Depends on garden	\$0 (no communal)
Seeds				Depends on garden	\$0 (no communal)
Fencing				Speak with construction companies for donations	\$0 first year, save towards goal of \$500
Sign				Check with City bylaws	\$0
Outreach/ PR and Printing				Create posters, garden info sheets, advertise, etc.	\$40 (posters for community BBQ)
				<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1646</b>
				<b>Net income (= Income - Expenses)</b>	<b>\$4</b>

Adapted from University of Missouri. Sample Community Garden Budget. 2009. <http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/miscpubs/mpo906budget.pdf>

# Step 4: Finding and Securing a Site For Your Garden

## Visit Potential Sites

Visit your potential garden sites and perform a 'Site Assessment' (use Worksheet 5: Site Selection Checklist) to decide if the site would work for your garden. Talk with the neighbours of potential sites to make sure a community garden would be welcome. Compare the completed site assessments and consider neighbour's opinions to determine the best sites.

## Different Soil Types

There are three main types of soil: Clayey, Sandy and Loamy. Although they all have their own pros and cons here are some basics:

- Clayey soil can be very hard and drain poorly but retains nutrients well
- Sandy soil drains quickly but doesn't retain moisture or nutrients well
- Loamy soil is a mix of sand and clay that tends to be the best all-around soil type of gardening.

**Tip:** Not sure what type of soil you're looking at? Try the simple squeeze test. Having made sure the soil is damp (but not soaking wet), take a small handful and rub it between your fingers. If the soil feels slick and slimy than it is mostly clay. If the soil feels gritty, its mostly sand. Still cant tell? There are many other simple testing methods that can be found by searching the internet.



## Gardening on City of Hamilton Land

The City of Hamilton has a policy regarding community gardening on City –owned land. If you are considering a public park site for your garden, you will need to:

- Have at least four people or an organization involved in the creation of the community garden
- Complete a basic garden design based on the site
- Complete the 'Application for Community Garden' form:  
<https://www.hamilton.ca/CityDepartments/PublicWorks/Parks/Horticulture/CommunityGardens.htm>

A detailed outline of the process can be found on [hcgnc.ca](http://hcgnc.ca). The Hamilton Community Garden Network is available to help your group work through the process with the City of Hamilton.

## Worksheet 5: Site Selection Checklist

### AREA SIZE

Area Measurements:		
Is the area large enough to suit your needs?	Y	N
Is there room for expansion?	Y	N
Approximate number of plots that the site could support		

### SOIL

Soil Texture:	Clay	Sand	Loam
Soil Depth:	Shallow	Moderate	Deep
Soil Drainage:	Wet	Moderate	Dry

### OTHER INFORMATION

The area is:	Flat	Sloped	
Sun Level:	No Shade	Partial Shade	Full Sun (6-8hrs)
There are existing:	Trees	Bushes	
Parking Available:	Y	N	
Close to Public Transit	Y	N	
Area is Accessible:	Y	N	

### AREA USE AND HISTORY

The space is currently being used for:	
The site has historically been used as/for:	

### WATER

There is water access:	Y	N
Alternative Ways to Access Water:		

### SITE SKETCH:

### NOTES:

## Securing the Site

Find the owner(s) of your preferred site(s) and arrange a meeting to speak with them about using their land for your community garden. Use the exact address of the site and either the internet or City to learn the name and contact information of the landowner. See the side panel for information on starting a community garden on City of Hamilton land.

In your letter or presentation to the site owner be sure to include the following information:

- Benefits of community gardening
- Personal incentives for property owner to allow a garden on their land, such as not needing to maintain the site because the garden group will do that, or receiving produce
- List the community members and organizations that are involved in the project to show the strength of the community garden group and that it is well organized
- Mention a lease would be negotiated between the garden group and landowner if they agree to have your garden on their site and that your group will purchase liability insurance
- Mention that a “hold harmless” waiver will be included in the lease stating the landowner is not responsible for any injuries that happen due to community gardening activities (re-word this)

Also be sure to ask for some information about the site such as:

- History of the property
- Water access (is there any? Is it metered? How would the water bill be communicated?)
- Restrictions to use (can it only be used at certain times of year or certain times of day?)

Use the template letter in the appendix (Appendix A) or create your own to educate the landowner about your garden plan and what role they would play in allowing your garden on their property. If possible, include a letter of endorsement from a local politician or neighbourhood association to show the community’s support for your project. When invited for a meeting be well organized, articulate and have examples of why your community garden will benefit the community.

*Tip:* Consider including the one page summary (or fact sheet) one the benefits of community gardening when approaching a landowner. This can be found in **Appendix C.**



## The Lease

Your community garden and landowner will need to sign a lease agreement together which should include the following information:

- General purpose of using the site and Property description and location
- Utilities (water, electricity, etc.) the garden will be allowed to access and the rules regarding their use
- Length of lease (preferably 3-5 years)
- Option to renew
- Lease termination and lease modification
- Fees (many landowners allow garden groups to rent the land for \$1/yr or for free)
- Maintenance (who will be responsible and for what areas)
- Insurance
- Hold harmless clause
- A copy of the garden rules as an attachment

*(For information on creating your garden rules please see Step 5)*

## Insurance

Your group will need to secure liability insurance which is important in case someone is injured while working at the garden. Many times the landowner will be able to add your group to their insurance plan or your group can work with a community organization to be included on their insurance.

Sites that are situated on public park land can purchase liability insurance through the City of Hamilton's Recreation Department. This type of insurance (City of Hamilton Game Day Insurance) is paid per plot. For more information, contact Stacey Currie at the City of Hamilton ([stacey.currie@hamilton.ca](mailto:stacey.currie@hamilton.ca)).



# Step 5: Develop Site Design and Garden Rules

## The Site Design

Determine what you'd like to see in your garden by completing Worksheet 6 on the next page. Once you have completed the worksheet, prioritize the different features and use it as a guide for designing your garden. When drafting your site plan it does not have to be professional but should be legible and contain dimensions for all features. Below are some features to include in your site plan:

- Entrances and exits
- Pathways
- Existing vegetation (trees and the spread of their roots)
- Other features from Garden Site Wish List

See Appendix B for a sample site design.

## Safety and Security

Your community garden will thrive if it is perceived as a safe place in the community. To keep your community garden safe refer to [hcn.ca](http://hcn.ca) for ideas and suggestions.

## Accessibility

Having your garden be accessible is one way to make it available to everyone in your community. To learn more about Accessibility and AODA Requirements, please visit the Tools and Resources section of the HCGN website.

**Tip:** If you group feels it needs a professional site plan, speak with students from a landscape architecture courses to see if your site's design could become a course project. Or barter with a landscape architect for a design in exchange for fresh food.

## Pros and Cons of Raised Beds

A few points to take into account if your garden group is considering raised beds:

### Pros:

- Do not need to be tilled
- Can be built to allow greater accessibility
- Allow a site to be gardened even if soil is not good quality
- Improve drainage
- Help distinguish between plots
- Make path maintenance easier (if well planned)
- Warm up faster for a longer growing season

### Cons:

- Cost more time and money for building and maintenance (can be lowered by obtaining donated materials)
- Require purchase and transport of soil,
- Require more frequent watering because of increased drainage
- Do not provide good conditions for all vegetables growth



## Worksheet 6: Garden Site Wish List

Refer back to this worksheet when creating your site design and incorporate as many elements as you can fit and can afford.

### What type of garden spaces would you like?

#### Communal Space...

- For all gardeners to share work and food
- For growing food and donation
- For community or school groups to share
- Other:

#### Plot Space...

- For individual gardeners
- For specific community school groups
- For a children's plot
- Other:

**Check off any items you would like to incorporate into your garden design.  
List any additional items at the bottom.**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tool Shed                | <input type="checkbox"/> Pond                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Scarecrow        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seating/Meeting Area     | <input type="checkbox"/> Orchard                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Bird Houses      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shade Area               | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Play Area        | <input type="checkbox"/> Bat Houses       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly Garden         | <input type="checkbox"/> Rainwater Collection System | <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning Station |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communal perennial Space | <input type="checkbox"/> Trees                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Shrubs           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education Area           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:                      |   |

### Garden Front or Perimeter

The perimeter of your garden is the first thing the community will see. Consider how you would like this area to look and check off what you would like to include

- |                                 |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fence  | <input type="checkbox"/> Vines Climbing Fence    | <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Flowers    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shrubs | <input type="checkbox"/> Perennial Fruits or Veg | <input type="checkbox"/> Perennial Flowers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trees  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:                  |  |

## Garden Rules

It is important to have a good set of garden rules so everyone that participants in the garden understands what is expected of them and what is not allowed.

### Common issues that rules address:

- **Fee:** Is there going to be a fee for gardening? How much will it be? Will it be different for different gardeners? Will you have a cost-assistance option? When is the fee due?
- **Maintenance:** Are gardeners expected to maintain their plots to a certain standard? What happens if a plot is not maintained? Who decides?
- **Will there be restrictions on the types of plants that can be grown?** Perennials, trees, shrubs, etc
- **What is the garden season?** When can gardeners begin planting and when must their plots be cleared, if at all?
- **Tools:** Will there be shared tools available for gardeners? How will they be used, maintained and stored?
- **Water:** Can a gardener leave their water on unattended? Are there rules about storing hoses?
- **Pets and children:** Are they allowed in the garden? Is there a specific space set aside for them?
- **How will theft, vandalism and other unwanted activities be handled and reported?** Whose responsibility will that be?
- **What happens if a garden rule is violated?** Who is responsible for making that decision?

## Garden Application

This will be the document you use to collect gardener information. Each year gardeners will complete this form, whether new or returning, to show their interest in participating in the community garden and keep their contact information up to date. The community garden application form should include important information such as the cost(s) for renting a plot and the date the application form must be returned. For returning gardeners there should be an application deadline to be able to receive the same plot again.

### Common information on a community garden application:

- Applicant name and full contact information (address, phone number and/or email address).
- Name and contact information for anyone else helping with garden plot (spouse, friend, etc.).
- Garden plot preference, especially important for returning gardeners so they can secure the same spot.
- Gardener's signature agreeing to the rules of the garden as well as the "hold harmless" waiver releasing the landowner from any responsibility if the gardener is injured on their property.

***Tip:*** When writing your garden rules try to use positive language. For example: Write 'Treat tools well, please keep them clean and put them away' instead of 'Don't leave tools out.'

**For sample Garden Rules and Garden Applications, see Appendix D.**

## Step 6: Finalize Goals, Rules and Design

Although they have been helping along the way it is now time to gather everyone interested in the project to finalize the different aspects of the garden.

### Finalize the Timeline

Finalize the garden's timeline including when gardeners are allowed to start gardening and when they should finish for the season. Create timelines for any project you will be starting this year. Have a work plan for when they will begin, how the work will progress and when they will be completed.

### Finalize the Site Design

You already have a site design planned out and now is the time to share it with the entire garden group, get any last minute feedback and finalize your design.

### Finalize Supply List

Use your site design and Worksheet 3: Community Garden Resources to update and finalize your supply list. Having this complete will help you when you begin approaching partners for resources such as gardening tools or monetary support.

### Finalize the Finances + Membership Fees

You now have a more concrete idea of your costs including land rental fees, insurance and water; use these to determine the amount of revenue your garden will need to cover its costs. Finalize the cost of membership fees (if applicable). Members can sign their garden agreement and pay their first membership fee at this meeting if they are able.

#### Assigning Garden Plots:

Have gardeners complete their application forms, pay their membership fee and sign the rules before assigning the garden plots. Come to an agreement as a group how the plots will be assigned (random, first come first served, etc)



## Step 7: Set Up a Communication Strategy

Communication between the garden committee and gardeners is very important and setting up a communication plan is a good way to keep the information flowing. It is important that the general public also has a way of contacting your garden group to find out how to get involved through a publicly displayed email or phone number.

### Basic Contact Information:

**Email.** It is the quickest way to send out information to a large group but keep in mind not everyone has email or internet access. You can obtain a free email address from sites such as gmail.com or hotmail.com.

**Phone.** Not everyone has access, or chooses, to have email but most people do have a telephone. If many members in your group need to be contacted by phone, set up a phone tree to share the phone calls.

**Address.** It is important that there is an address where people can send their garden applications. A person at the garden may be willing to use their personal address or the group can rent a P.O. Box from the post office. Although a P.O. Box is an extra expense, it also will remain the same as different garden members come and go.

### Website, Blog or Online Group

Free websites or blogs can be started easily using sites such as wordpress.com or blogspot.com. They can be used as a way to share information between gardeners and the community. Ask around to see if anyone knows how to create a unique website for your group. Another way your group can communicate is through an online group or forum. These can be created through sites like Google, Yahoo, or Facebook. They are a place for members to ask questions, post opinions and get the latest news about the garden. Normally these groups are open only to those who are invited so they would not be a good way for the public to learn about your garden.

## FAQ

A list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) is one way to answer questions before they get asked. Consider the common questions gardeners and community members have to ask about your garden, such as:

- “How do I become a member?”
- “When can I start planting?”

Answer these questions in a list and share with your garden members and community members.

## Communication in the Garden

Try installing a protected bulletin board, chalkboard or logbook in the garden so gardeners can leave messages notifying others about issues (pests); extra produce; the next garden meeting; or if they will be away on vacation and need help watering their plot.



## Step 8: Promote the Garden and Form Garden Committees

### Share your Project with the Community

Use the advice from Steps 2 and 3 to get the word out about your garden. Hopefully you already have your group of gardeners but you may have more space left or maybe you are looking for more community partners. Make sure everyone in the area knows about your community garden and what you want to achieve.

## Form Committees

There are many ways a garden group can decide to organize themselves but many will form committees or groups that are in charge of specific projects. Have a sign up and request that all garden members get involved in a committee. Below are a few examples of garden committees:

**Leadership Team:** This group was formed earlier but people may want to be more involved in the leadership of the garden. Have a process for people to be elected or sign-up to be part of the garden leadership team or committee.

**Maintenance Crew:** This group would be responsible for the general maintenance of the common areas in the garden and their duties could include cutting the grass, general clean-up and repairing tools.

**Compost Crew:** This team would be responsible for maintaining the garden compost areas by turning the compost, posting signs and teaching other gardeners about how to compost correctly.

**Event Planning Team:** Members of this group would be responsible for planning and running events at the community garden with duties such as advertising the event, inviting participants, and doing the event set-up and take down. This team would probably work closely with the Fundraising Committee.

**Fundraising Committee:** As the name suggests, this group would be responsible for raising funds for the community garden. Depending on your garden's fundraising goals this could include approaching businesses or individuals for donations and helping to plan fundraising events with the Event Planning Team.

**Translation Team:** This is a group of volunteers who would translate important garden materials, such as the rules and meeting updates, for garden members who are more comfortable communicating in a language other than English .



## Step 9: Gather Resources & Prepare the Site

You have a site and a site design, now is the time to prepare the site for gardening.

### Gather Resources

Gathering resources may seem daunting but it is easier than you think. Resources will include items such as tools and compost, support in the form of cash or services, and expert knowledge and advice. The best place to start is with your team. Ask garden members what resources they have available (or can easily get) before spending money on anything.

If you decide to fundraise to obtain these materials, use your project plan and project budget. Also, don't forget to stay positive. Fundraising can be challenging, so try to approach it with a patient and optimistic open-mind. For a detailed guide to fundraising for your garden see the Fundraising Guide on [hcg.ca](http://hcg.ca).

### Purchasing Materials:

Recognizing that all community gardens will have similar materials needs from year to year, the HCGN has established purchasing agreements with multiple local businesses. These were arranged to help your garden receive the materials it needs in the easiest and most cost-effective way possible.

To learn more about how you can take advantage of the member discounts, and how to determine the materials and quantities needed for your garden, please see the Purchasing Guide on [hcg.ca](http://hcg.ca).



## Engage Volunteers

Take advantage of the fact that high-school students need volunteer hours to graduate by having them volunteer in your garden. Work with established organizations to post volunteer opportunities to their volunteers, through their volunteer coordinator.

## Site Preparation

Your site design is now complete, you have secured the necessary resources and it is time to turn your garden dream into reality. Plan work days/evenings for garden members and community volunteers to come to the garden site and tackle large projects, such as building raised beds or turning the soil. Make sure to have all necessary resources (soil, lumber, tools) on site for the work day.

## Step 10: Get Gardening!

Finally, it's time to start gardening! All the hard work you have put into making this garden a reality can be utilized by planting, enjoying and harvesting your plants.

It's true, all the work may not be done. Maybe you didn't get around to building your shed or planting your community orchard but that shouldn't stop you from planting your flowers and vegetables and enjoying your community garden. Continue to build and grow the garden, spread the work out over several years and engage volunteers whenever possible.

For an idea of the work you will need to complete over the summer, including planting and harvesting tasty food, please refer to the Toronto Community Housing Garden Manual:

[http://www.torontohousing.ca/webfm\\_send/209/1?#](http://www.torontohousing.ca/webfm_send/209/1?#)



## Appendix A:

### **SAMPLE LETTER— To a Landowner Requesting a Meeting About Using the Site as a Community Garden.**

February 16, 2015

Berry Niceguy  
321 Beauty Street  
Hamilton, ON, L8B 2A4

Dear Mr. Niceguy,

My name is Wanda Watermelon. I am contacting you on behalf of the Beautiful Community Garden Committee, a group of neighbourhood residents working on starting a community garden in the Beauty Neighbourhood. Our committee has met several times for planning meetings and has started building a strong and diversified coalition of supporters for the garden including the Beauty Library Branch, the Beautiful Neighbourhood Community Association, and the Cathedral of the Madeline church. We've also had the ongoing support of the Hamilton Community Garden Network, who has been providing us with guidance on this project.

We've recently started searching for potential sites for the Beautiful Community Garden (BCG) and have come across your property at Average Avenue and Beauty Street (321 Beauty Street). As you might guess, the purpose of this letter is to inquire about the possibility of using your land as the site of the garden.

We'd love to speak with you in person or over the phone to discuss what hosting a community garden on your property would entail. We'd also like to present to you the beautiful and vibrant community gathering space we envision and discuss our proposal in detail.

In general, the garden would be a place where community members who don't have their own gardening space (those living in apartment buildings), or who have too much shade (like many residents in the Beauty Neighbourhood) could grow nutritious produce on plots they would rent for the cost of maintaining the garden each year. In addition to making individual plots available to community members, the garden would serve as a gathering place facilitating positive social interactions.

*Continued on next page...*

Other possible uses for community gardens include offering adult educational workshops, youth gardening programs, growing food for local food bank, and integration within senior centers.

The garden would be managed by the not-for-profit Beautiful Community Garden Committee which has an elected Garden Coordinator to oversee the project (myself), a Treasurer to handle the money generated by fundraising and plot rental, and several committees with a focus on composting, fundraising and maintenance (this means you would no longer need to take care of the site yourself).

Some of the technical issues that would need to be discussed include negotiating a lease, liability insurance, garden rules and regulations, and water access and billing. Of course, all costs for the community garden project would be covered by the BCG Committee and the gardeners.

I've included with this letter some general information about community gardens provided by the Hamilton Community Garden Network including a list of some of the benefits community gardens can bring to a community. The BCG Committee is a well-organized group of interested Beauty neighbourhood residents committed to the creation and continued upkeep of a community garden in the Beauty area. We hope this will help you trust that the garden will be a success if you granted us permission to use your land.

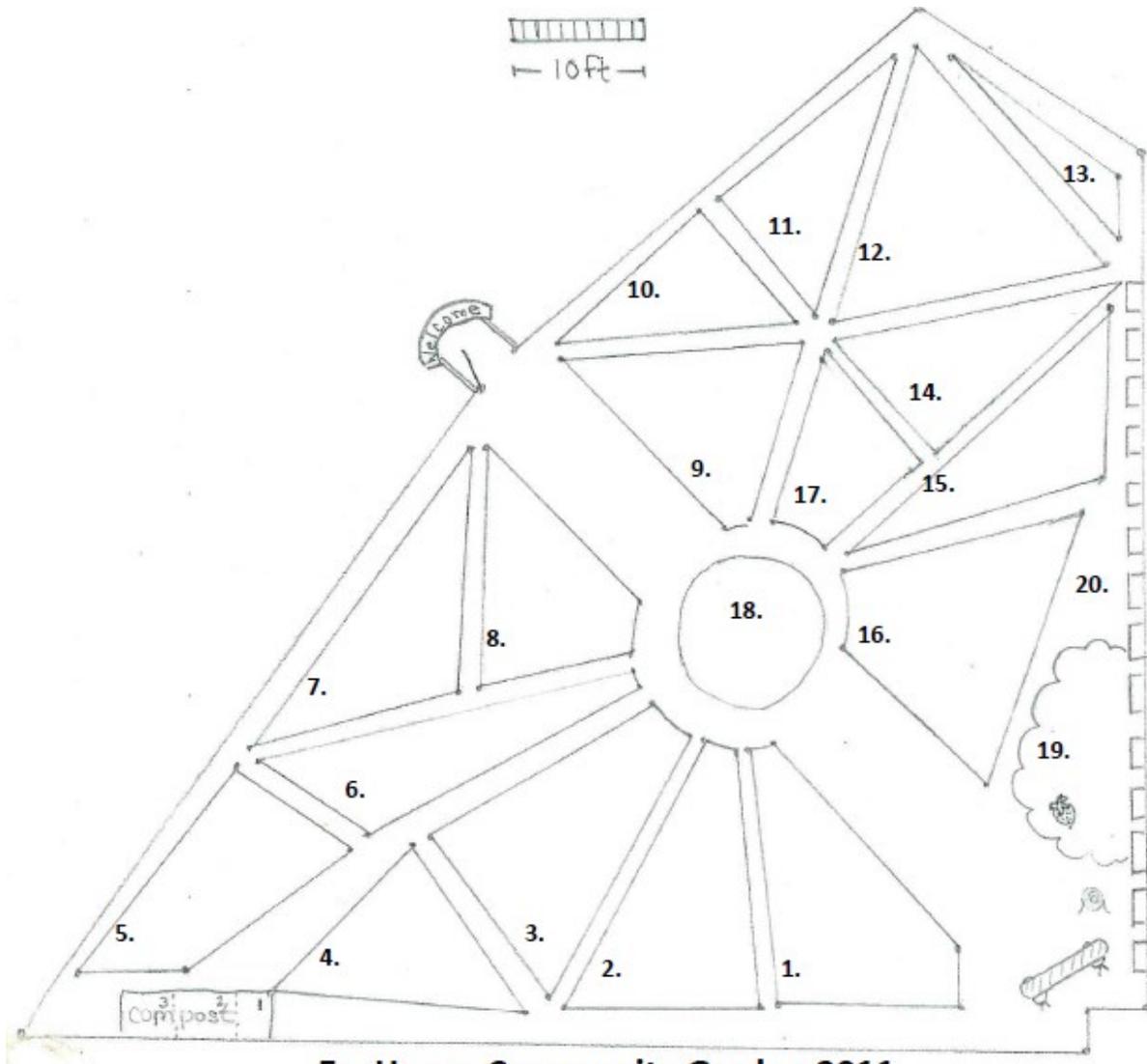
On behalf of the BCG Committee, I thank you for your consideration of our proposal. Please feel free to contact me over the phone, email, or by letter to discuss the community garden project in more detail. My phone number, email address, and mailing address are included below. Thanks again.

Respectfully,

Wanda Watermelon  
789 Wonderful Way  
Hamilton, ON, L4L 2B2  
(905) 123-4567  
wanda.watermelon@gmail.ca

# Appendix B:

## SAMPLE GARDEN DESIGN



EcoHouse Community Garden 2011

# Appendix C:

## **One page fact sheet to educate businesses and individuals on the benefits of community gardening.**

### **COMMUNITY GARDEN BENEFITS**

Community gardens can deliver a number of benefits to local communities for gardeners, their friends and families, and others in neighbourhoods with gardens.

#### **Build Community** ([http://youtu.be/o\\_opL2Zeskw](http://youtu.be/o_opL2Zeskw))

- People develop and leverage relationships out of gardens leading to other projects and partnerships such as donating food and starting community organizations
- People find jobs or employment out of participating in gardens. This is demonstrated by the fact that five local farms are run by past community garden coordinators

#### **Enhance Environment** ([http://youtu.be/kU\\_fmqx6N9Q](http://youtu.be/kU_fmqx6N9Q))

- Gardens leverage community assets to create green spaces where water and waste are managed creatively and sustainably while food is grown
- Communities use garden spaces for events and gatherings

#### **Promote Wellness** (<http://youtu.be/gWaeu6Pn7Xc>, <http://youtu.be/mC4porCWWfk>)

- People learn new skills while gaining access to new spaces to grow food
- People get active and are shown to eat more fresh produce when they grow it themselves
- People from all backgrounds can get engaged and share their skills and traditions in a safe gathering space

# Appendix D:

## SAMPLE GARDEN APPLICATION AND RULES (EXAMPLE 1)

### *Applicant details*

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

### *Volunteering application*

I would like to volunteer to work in the garden as follows (check all that apply):

General Gardening \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ Organizing group \_\_\_\_\_

Other skills or help offered \_\_\_\_\_

### **Plot rental application (to be completed if a rental is requested)**

I wish to rent a plot. YES NO (Circle one)

Enclosed is my rental fee of [insert rental fee] for the [insert year] season. Only one bed per person is available.

### **Acknowledgement**

**I have read the garden rules and agree to abide by them.**

I know that the garden group and the owners of the land are not responsible for things that I do. I therefore agree that I will not blame the garden group and the owners of the land if anything happens when my guests or I use the garden. The garden group and the owners of the land are not liable, and I will not claim that they owe me for any damage, loss or claim.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Official use only

Amount received for plot rental \_\_\_\_\_ Bed numbers assigned \_\_\_\_\_

Received by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Rules / advice for everyone***

1. You must keep weeds out of your plot and the paths around your plot.
2. Put all weeds and plant stems, leaves and roots in the compost. Plants are not garbage.
3. You must keep garbage and litter out of your plot and the paths around your plot.
4. Do not plant tall crops in places that will shade plots beside yours.
5. You must pick produce when it is ripe.
6. You can only pick produce from your own plot.
7. Nobody but you will water your plot.
8. Use of artificial pesticides and weed killers is prohibited. Organic gardening saves our soil, water and air.
9. You must clean tools and put them back into the storage shed. Always lock the shed before you leave.
10. Clean up after yourself. Please be neat. Put away hoses and tools. Recycle rubbish or take it home.
11. Conserve water! Use mulch so you do not need to water as much. Use hoses that do not leak. When you are watering, watch the hose.
12. Please do not water for more than 15 minutes if other people are waiting.
13. Children are welcome to garden, but you must watch them. Do not let children run or play on other lots.
14. Do not pick or destroy plants or flowers.
15. Please keep pets out of the garden.
16. Do not smoke in the garden.
17. No loud music in the garden.
18. No alcohol in the garden.

### ***Additional rules for those renting plots***

1. Your plot is reserved for one season. If you have a garden one year, you have the first chance to get the same plot for the next year.
2. Each year, people re-register for plots. The first people who can register are those who had a plot last year. After April 22nd, other people can sign up for plots. We will give plots to people who sign up first.
3. You cannot give your plot away. Only the garden committee can say who can use a plot. If you decide you cannot garden, please tell the garden committee. We will find another person for the plot.
4. Any crops you leave in your plot after October 31st may be given to a local food bank or tilled into the ground.
5. You must help with the fall cleanup of the garden.
6. You must take everything that cannot be composted out of your plot by October 31st. Anything you leave in the garden after then will be thrown away.

## SAMPLE GARDEN APPLICATION AND RULES (EXAMPLE 2)

PAID: \_\_\_\_\_

Between: *Insert Garden Name and Address*

And: \_\_\_\_\_ (lead gardener's full name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (address)

\_\_\_\_\_ (city)

\_\_\_\_\_ (postal code)

\_\_\_\_\_ (telephone number)

\_\_\_\_\_ (email address)

\_\_\_\_\_ (languages spoken)

\_\_\_\_\_ (# of people who live in your home)

**The undersigned recognizes the following responsibilities related to participating in the Community Garden and commits to sharing this information with other participating members of their household and guests:**

- Keep your plot and the pathways around your plot clear of weeds on a weekly basis.
- Maintain a fully organic garden plot, free from chemical fertilizers and pesticides. (You may NOT use: Miracle Gro, Super Phosphate, Roundup, Killex, Insect Dust, Bug Killer, etc).
- In the fall, either commit to registering for the next year, or clear your plot.
- Sign-up for a garden task and perform them as needed and/or when asked.
- Show respect for all community gardeners, visitors, volunteers and participants from other programs at the garden.
- Do not smoke in the garden.
- Leave pets at home.
- Harvest vegetables from your own plot and community plots only.

**FAILURE TO FULFILL THESE RESPONSIBILITIES WILL RESULT IN REMOVAL FROM THE COMMUNITY GARDEN. ANY PHYSICAL, VERBAL OR AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR DIRECTED AT ANOTHER GARDEN, WILL RESULT IN YOUR IMMEDIATE REMOVAL FROM THE GARDEN AND FORFITTING OF ANY CROPS FOR THAT SEASON.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Lead Gardener

**The undersigned recognizes and acknowledges the following risks associated with community gardening and has shared this information with other participating members of their household and guests:**

The undersigned recognizes and acknowledges that to participate in the garden plot program requires vigorous physical activity that involves risks of bodily injuries, both known and unknown. Further, the undersigned recognizes that there is a risk of bodily injuries caused by the willful or negligent acts of other participants in the garden plot program or by other persons lawfully or unlawfully upon the garden plot property. While the garden plot soil at *(insert garden location)* has been obtained from reputable soil supply companies, it has not been tested for contaminants. Therefore, *(insert garden group name)* does not guarantee that there are no contaminants present in or on the soil. Other participants could bring contaminants onto the garden plot lands. The undersigned therefore acknowledges that there may be a health risk caused by consuming crops grown on the garden plot.

The undersigned, for good and valuable consideration, the sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, hereby assumed each of the risks described above, and releases and discharges the *(insert group name)* its officers, directors, servants, employees, and volunteers from any and all actions, causes of action, claims, demands, damages, costs, expenses, legal fees, compensation and all consequential or other damages no accrued or hereafter to accrue to or for the benefit of the undersigned on account of or in any way arising out of the participation by the undersigned in the garden plot program specifically including, without limitation, any personal injury or property damage incurred while at the garden plot or while participating in the garden plot program or activities.

**Please select at least one of the following below and perform the task as needed and when asked by a garden committee member.**

- Turning the compost pile (requires physical strength)
- Garbage & recycling
- Keeping the shed tidy
- Lawn mowing
- Grass trimming with the whipper snipper
- Tending the herb garden
- Tending community plots
- Weeding around the fence line (inside & out)
- Caring for the perennial beds
- Help organize garden events

I am comfortable with *(insert garden name)* sharing my contact information with other gardeners.

YES            NO

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Date

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Signature of Lead Gardener