Advocating for community gardening

Advocating for Community Gardens

There is an increasing amount of research evidence that supports what community gardeners have long known – that community gardens are a great way to grow food, foster good health, green urban environments, support lifelong learning, and cultivate vibrant communities. The following information about the many benefits community gardens bring to individuals and communities is included not only to reinforce your enthusiasm about community gardening, but also to arm you with information to help explain and advocate for your garden project, and to address concerns and objections that you may encounter.

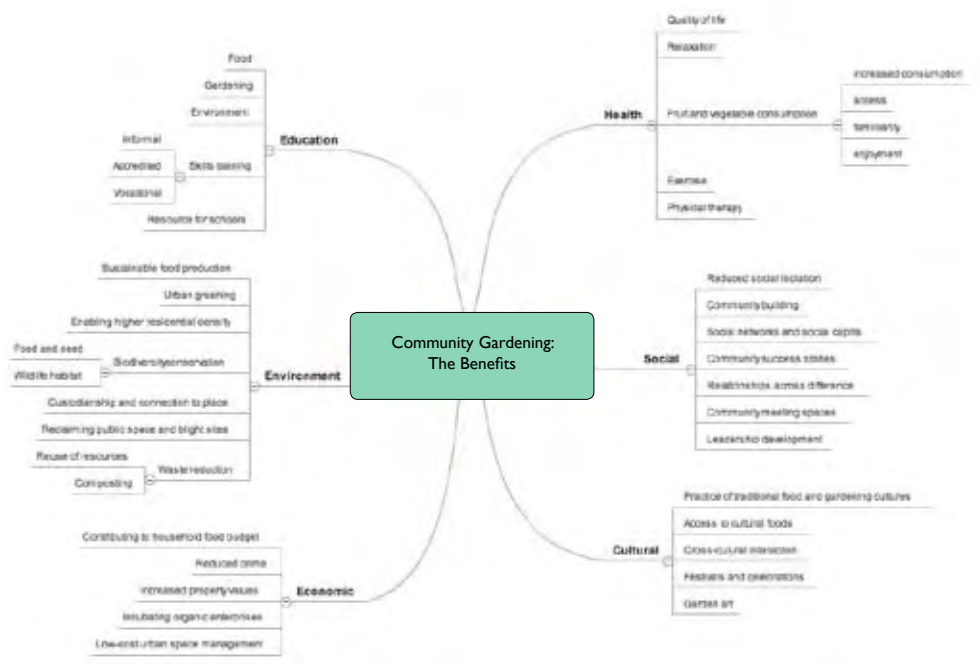
Throughout this section there are references (author's name and date in brackets) which refer to academic and other research publications that substantiate the benefits of community gardens. These are included for those occasions when you're asked to provide evidence for your claims – in grant applications, formal submissions, and presentations. Details of these publications are available in the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network publication, *Community Gardening: An Annotated Bibliography*, which can be downloaded from their website.

Health benefits

Community gardens promote the enjoyment of a wide variety of fresh, locally grown produce, enable gardeners to supplement their families' diets with organic herbs and vegetables, and provide opportunities for teaching gardeners and the broader community about healthy food. Community gardens contribute to food security by enabling people to grow some of their own food at a relatively low cost.

Community gardens provide many opportunities for recreation and exercise, from a simple stroll amongst the flowers, to the day to day work of maintaining the garden – exercise carried out in convivial company, with a real sense of satisfaction and purpose.

Access to a garden has numerous positive impacts on people's physical and emotional wellbeing (Ulrich 1981, Lewis 1996). Community gardens allow city-dwellers to reconnect with natural processes, alleviating stress and providing opportunity for reflection and relaxation. Horticultural therapy has been become an important part of several community gardens in Australia.



Community gardens also address key health promotion goals such as creating supportive environments, strengthening communities, and developing personal skills.

Researchers have found that community gardens:

- Improve participants' 'quality of life' (Blair, Giesecke, et al 1991)
- Provide opportunities for exercise and relaxation and increase participants' physical activity (Twiss, Dickinson, et al. 2003)
- Support fruit and vegetable consumption through increasing access to fresh produce (Alaimo, Packnett, et al 2008), increasing the amount of fruit and vegetables gardeners consume (Blair, Giesecke, et al 1991; Twiss, Dickinson, et al 2003; Alaimo, Packnett, et al 2008), helping people to become more familiar with fresh produce and adding to the enjoyment of fresh vegetables and fruits (Somerset and Markwell 2008).

Environmental benefits

Community gardens improve the quality of urban environments, rehabilitating degraded and land, contributing to urban greening, providing sanctuary to urban wildlife, and creating a setting for environmental education. They are also part of broader moves to ensure a secure and ecologically sensitive food supply.

Ecologically Sustainable Food Production

Community gardens demonstrate practical solutions to the negative environmental impacts of commercial food production. Bringing food production into cities reduces its ecological footprint by cutting down 'food miles' – the energy used to transport produce over many hundreds of kilometres from growers to processors to retailers to people's tables.

Care for soil and for biodiversity are at the heart of the organic practices used by most community gardens. These practices lower the economic and environmental costs of food production by minimising or eliminating chemical use, and returning nutrients to the soil.

The genetic diversity of our food is protected by community gardeners who grow and save the seeds of local plant varieties which are adapted to the particular conditions and cultures of the communities who grow them.

'Waste' minimisation and nutrient cycling

Community gardens promote waste minimisation and nutrient cycling strategies, demonstrating composting techniques that can be used by people in their home gardens, and sometimes providing community composting facilities. Community gardens demonstrate strategies for the creative reuse of discarded resources. In community gardens all over the world, bath tubs become aquaculture systems, scrap timber and metal are shaped into tool sheds, bed heads become trellises, old tyres are used as stabilisers for banks and earth berms, yesterday's news smothers weeds, and the kitchen sink is transformed into a thriving worm farm. Community gardeners have found ways to redeploy waste resources without sacrificing safety or aesthetics.

Researchers have found that community gardens:

- Contribute to urban greening (Patel 1991; Bartolomei, Corkery et al. 2003)
- Provide a setting for environmental education (Bartolomei, Corkery, et al. 2003; Howe and Wheeler 1999; Corkery 2004)
- Reclaim public space and blight sites (Bartolomei, Corkery, et al 2003)
- Provide habitat for urban wildlife (Matteson, Ascher, et al 2008)
- Mitigate the effects of increased urban density and urban decay (Hall 1996)
- Develop innovative urban agricultural practices and incubate organic enterprises (Fulton 2005).

Cultural benefits

Community gardens are often a space for community members of diverse cultural backgrounds to practise and share traditional and contemporary expressions of their culture. This provides a unique opportunity for learning and exchange. Urban gardens can provide a critical link to culture through seeds that have been passed down for generations, and through the cultivation and preparation of traditional foods that are not available in local stores. Community gardens may also become venues for elders to explore their cultural traditions and celebrate their lives.

Community gardens often integrate a range of community arts projects, from murals to sculptural installations, photo essays to poetry performance.
Many community gardens create community culture through festivals and celebrations. These may include fairs, produce sales, farmers' markets, music performances,

Bath tubs transformed into water gardens

Social benefits

Community gardens engage and involve people in their own communities. They give people the chance to physically shape the character and culture of their neighbourhoods, and to take responsibility for their common land. Community gardens are meeting places, bringing together diverse aspects of local communities. They allow neighbours to meet on neutral soil, and provide common ground for people of varying cultural backgrounds, experiences, ages, and interests.

Researchers have found that community gardens:

- Reduce social isolation (Urbis Keys Young 2004)
- Provide community development outcomes (Bartolomei, Corkery, et al 2003; Salvidar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004)
- Build social capital (Armstrong 2000)
- Create opportunities for communities to develop and tell success stories (Glover 2003)
- Foster relationships across difference (Shinew, Glover, et al 2004)
- Provide community meeting spaces (Salvidar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004)
- Foster leadership development (Salvidar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004)

Economic benefits

Community gardens can bring economic benefits both to their gardeners and to their local communities. Researchers have found that community gardens:

- Contribute to household food budgets (Patel 1991)
- Incubate small enterprises (Fulton 2005)
- Are a low-cost form of urban space management (Francis 1987)
- Lead to reduced crime and vandalism (Urbis Keys Young 2004; Maxwell 2002; Hatherley 2003)

see notes for landscape professionals on page 41

More information

Community Gardening: An Annotated Bibliography, claire nettle, Sydney: Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network 2008

An overview of academic and research-based publications about community gardening. Available from www.communitygarden.org.au

Objections to community gardens

Groups presenting a proposal for a community garden – whether to a public meeting, local council officers, or people neighbouring the garden site – can expect to encounter concerns about and objections to the project. It is important to provide opportunities for people to voice their concerns, to listen openly to what they say, and to seek solutions that address everyone's needs. Listening openly to questions people raise will help you develop stronger relationships with potential supporters, foster goodwill for the garden, and may even help you to improve your garden plan.

Consider developing a formal process for addressing complaints as part of your management plan for the garden. Once you have started work on your garden site, ensure that there is a contact person available for people to direct any concerns to and consider posting a name and phone number on the gate for issues arising after hours. This will help your neighbours to help you keep the garden safe, and may mean that complaints will be directed to your community garden organisation, where they can be addressed, rather than being allowed to brew or being directed to local council or the garden's landholder.

Provide informal opportunities for neighbours and other community members to visit and learn about the garden, and to discuss any concerns they have: invite people from neighbouring houses for a morning tea or a barbeque, offer a bunch of flowers or some of your surplus zucchini crop every now and then.

While any concerns or objections raised should be taken seriously, and changes to your garden plan may need to be considered, some common concerns and objections may be addressed by providing additional information. Anticipating and addressing potential concerns will help you to tailor effective submissions and presentations advocating for your project.

It will look ugly

Demonstrate that you have taken garden aesthetics into consideration in your plan. A garden that appears beautiful, inviting and well used is in everyone's best interests – it will make the garden easier to promote, attract involvement and support and keep the neighbours on side.

If concerns about aesthetics are raised by local council or businesses, ask them to provide funds for professional signage. In some cases, local council landscape designers have assisted with community garden design processes, their input may allay council's concerns.

It will get vandalised
Community gardens are no more likely to be vandalised than other community facilities.

Choose your site and design your garden to minimise vandalism. The presence of a community garden has been shown to decrease the amount of graffiti and vandalism in the surrounding neighbourhood (Maxwell 2002; Hatherley 2003; Urbis Keys Young 2004).

It will be taking space away from the wider community for only a few people
Community gardening is increasingly recognised as a valid use of public space. There are many accepted uses of public space that involve limits to public access – sporting clubs are an obvious example.

Plan for maximum community access. Not all community gardens have barrier fences; some have completely open access. Some fenced community gardens leave the garden gate unlocked during daylight hours, closing it at night to deter dogs and potential vandals. If your garden will be locked sometimes, publicise regular opening hours and events when the wider community can visit the garden.

Identify multiple uses for the site (workshops, displays, open days, venue for community groups). Show how different groups in the community will be able to access – and benefit from – the garden.

Any loss of public access to the garden site can be balanced by the benefits the garden provides to the community – including those who walk past the garden or see it from their window without directly participating.

The chickens and cows will be too loud
Northey Street City Farm in Brisbane was initially opposed by residents who were concerned about noise from cows – despite cows never being part of the plan. Find ways to communicate effectively about what your garden will include. Assure people that regular council restrictions on animals will apply to the garden. You may decide to delay the introduction of any animals until the garden has been established and all stakeholders have a better understanding of the garden and increased confidence in the project.

Compost will smell and attract vermin
Learn about effective composting so you can reassure people that efficiently managed compost smells great and can be kept free of rats and mice.

Host composting (and worm farming and bokashi) workshops at the garden.

Some community gardens have conditions in their lease or a memorandum of understanding with the land-holder about not producing excessive noise or odours – this may provide reassurance that these concerns will be addressed.

We're in a drought – a community garden will require too much water
Community gardens – unlike the water and fuel-intensive lawns they often replace – have the potential to be models of water-wise garden design and to demonstrate practical water-saving gardening strategies for use in home gardens.

Community gardens have successfully complied with the same government water restrictions that have applied to home gardeners. However, some have argued that there should be additional water allocations for urban food production. A significant amount of the water-use of suburban households – possibly up to half – doesn't come through a tap, but is embodied in the food we buy. Broadacre industrial agriculture alone uses 65% of Australia's controlled water resource, households and gardens only 8%. Informal studies[1] have suggested that food grown in home and community gardens can be significantly less water and energy intensive than commercial production, and can therefore represent substantial water savings, even when not complying with water restrictions. People have also advocated for water restriction exemptions for community gardens in recognition of their limited capacity for reusing greywater (no showers…) and for harvesting rainwater (limited roof space), and the involvement of people with mobility restrictions that make hauling buckets and watering cans inappropriate.

see page 21 for information about designing your garden to minimise vandalism

[1] David Holmgren (2005) *Garden Agriculture: A revolution in efficient water use Water:* Journal of the Australian Water Association 32 (8)

Adam Grub (2007) Grubb Grow your own – doing the maths Eat the Suburbs available at http://www.eatthesuburbs.org/2007/10/grow-your-own/

It will bring additional cars into our neighbourhood – where will they park?
Consider transport and parking requirements when assessing and choosing a site for your garden. Make a transport and parking plan, emphasising proximity to public transport and the number of gardeners living within walking distance of the garden. Include bicycle racks as part of your site design.

We're not confident that your group has the capacity to manage a community garden
This booklet suggests that people starting community garden projects invest time in developing a capable working group as a first step in your process. This may include mapping the skills of the people in your group to identify expertise you can promote and any training or research gaps to be addressed. You may decide to seek out people with particular qualifications or skills to become part of your working group or to make up an advisory board for the project.

If your group is confident that it does have the skills and knowledge necessary to bring the garden into fruition and to manage it in the long term, include information about your working group members' competencies in your proposal documents and submissions.

see page 12 for information on writing submissions

Not all community gardens are created independently by grassroots groups. Community gardens have benefited from professional advice and support in their initial stages and beyond. Your group may decide that it would be preferable to join with a community agency (such as a health centre, welfare group or community development organisation) to access the skills and resources necessary to manage the project; to enlist the support of a community gardening organisation (such as Growing Communities in Queensland or Cultivating Community in Victoria); or to obtain funding to hire a project officer.

see page 38 for information on agency supported community gardens

After a few months, your group will get tired of the project, and responsibility will fall back to council
In Australia, there are a number of community gardens that have been continually self-managed for more than 20 years. A few examples include Nunawading Community Garden (est. 1977) and Ringwood Community Garden (est. 1980), both in Melbourne, and Glovers Community Garden (est. 1985) in Sydney. One of the main reasons that established community gardens cease to operate is because of loss of tenure to their site, not because of loss of interest. The interest in and demand for community gardens continues to increase.

Community gardens do benefit from support from local councils. Community gardens are important community resources, often fulfilling council's own objectives. It is appropriate that community gardeners should look to local councils to provide support. Council support may include assistance in securing land, soil testing, start-up funding and resources (such as loan of council landscaping staff), promoting the garden in council publications, adding support for community gardens to the job descriptions of council officers (such as community development or sustainability officers), and consideration of community gardens in the development of council policy, open space planning, and environmental programs.

Demonstrate your succession planning and how the organisation will continue even if present leaders move on. What if someone hurts themselves?

see page 57 for information on succession planning

Include information about how you will manage risk in your submissions and presentations.

see page 66 for information on minimising risk

All community gardens should carry public liability insurance.

see page 65 for information on public liability insurance

In the beginning: Starting a new community garden

Starting a new community garden

Starting a community garden from scratch is a major undertaking that takes time, energy, and commitment. This booklet will help you to target your efforts to where they will be most effective. It suggests that you

- prioritise forming an effective, committed and sustainable working group to share the load
- work slowly, and allow time for planning and research
- look for opportunities to form relationships and build community
- develop a clear shared vision for your project early on
- use planning and design processes to bring your vision into being.

The 'community' aspect of community gardens is especially important at the initial stages. It's relatively easy to dig garden beds and build compost heaps, but forming a group of enthusiastic and committed participants who can sustain the project can take considerable effort and time – don't rush to get your hands in the soil before you've done the community-building groundwork. Planning and group building in the beginning will pay off in the longer run. As Russ Grayson and Fiona Campbell write in the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network's 'Getting Started' guide, "When the time comes to put your submission for land access to council or some other landholder, they will be more impressed and ready to co-operate with a group that has thought through how they would go about designing and managing a community garden."

There are many different kinds of community gardens, each with unique circumstances, visions, and people. What follows is not a prescription for establishing a community garden, but some ideas to help you develop your own process.

Who starts community gardens?

Community gardens have been initiated by individuals, small groups, community organisations, health agencies, environment groups, church groups, schools, and local councils.

Community participation is an important aspect of all community gardens. While a community health worker considering starting a community garden to promote food security and fruit and vegetable consumption will have somewhat different needs and resources to a group of residents wanting to rehabilitate derelict land between their houses, the basic steps to starting a community garden will be similar.

Should we start a community garden?

The first step in initiating a new community garden is deciding that it's the right project to be working on. Is there a group of people with enough interest and energy to get the garden going and to sustain it in the long term? Would a community garden be an effective way to address some of the needs that exist in your community: for open space, food security, social opportunities, health promotion, environmental improvement, or training?

Consider some of the other options:

- Could you join and support an existing community garden in your area?
- Could your particular area of interest (perhaps a horticultural therapy program or growing produce for a soup kitchen) be an independent project within an established garden?
- Would another form of 'gardening in community' be more appropriate to your situation – gleaning and redistributing produce from neighbourhood fruit trees, gardening collectively in people's backyards, joining or starting a native plant revegetation project, or creating sensory gardens on sidewalks?

Forming a working group

At this initial stage of the process, you may choose to organise and promote an open public meeting, inviting many people to get involved, or to use your networks to form a small start-up group and invite the involvement of more people later on.

The number of people needed in a start-up working group will depend on your particular situation and the resources you have access to. One or two local council workers, with the support and resources of their department may be able to get a sustainable community garden project up and running; five is probably a minimum number for a group of neighbours.

Finding working group members:

- Contact local environment groups, local gardening, organic and permaculture groups, residents' associations, and neighbourhood watch groups. Offer to write an article for their newsletter.
- Make flyers and put them up in community centres, shops, schools, etc
- Do a letterbox drop of the immediate area, particularly if you have a site in mind
- Use your personal networks and invite people directly
- If you're setting up the garden as part of your job, you might include other workers in your team, people from your client group or target group, and people from other local organisations.
- Consider using local media

See the promotion section page 44 for more ideas.

Case study: Permaculture Education Zone

The Permaculture Education Zone working group grew out of an exercise in a permaculture design course. During the course, a group of students explored ways to introduce food production to Adelaide's parklands. Once the course was over, they decided to make it happen. Others were invited to join and a group of ten people was formed, bringing together a range of skills and experiences.

The PEZ working group visited and evaluated a number of sites, eventually deciding to target their efforts towards establishing a city farm and sustainable living demonstration site at an inner-city location that fulfilled their criteria for sun, soil, accessibility, infrastructure and freedom from planning constraints.

Selecting a high-profile site managed by state government rather than local council necessitated a fairly formal planning process. The working group presented their initial concept to representatives from Planning SA, the Capital City Committee, and the SA Department of Environment and Heritage. After gaining positive feedback, they focused on developing a formal proposal and business plan to present their city farm idea to potential stakeholders. They sought mentoring to help them develop a comprehensive and professional proposal.

The process of creating a business plan helped the PEZ working group to develop their vision and objectives and to make detailed plans about how their city farm would function, including their organisational structure, marketing plan, income streams, and management systems.

Along with their business plan and proposal, the PEZ working group submitted a petition to the landholders, with more than 370 signatures demonstrating community support for the project.

While still waiting to secure a site (and attending numerous meetings…) PEZ began carrying out its aims, running permaculture courses and offering professional development workshops for teachers.

Your first get-together

The first formal meeting of people interested in being part of you working group can be an important milestone in your garden's development. Make your meeting fun, interesting, productive and participatory. Decide who will facilitate the meeting and who will introduce your project. Find an easily accessible venue – perhaps a meeting room at a community centre, a quiet café or a park. Plan an agenda, allocating time for an icebreaker, time for everyone to introduce themselves, an introduction to the group and your planning or ideas so far, and ways people can get involved. You may want to invite someone from an established community garden to talk about their experiences. Emphasise that the project will be what people make it, and that new ideas are welcome.

See page 10 for ideas for running successful meetings

see page 4 for suggestions about addressing concerns and objections about community gardens

Aim for everyone who comes to the first meeting to leave with a good understanding of the group's purpose, how they might be part of it, and with confidence that the group is going to be effective, convivial, action-oriented and a good use of their time. Start and end on time, welcome people warmly, listen attentively. Consider providing food and/ or drinks.

Think about how to encourage people to come back for a second meeting. Agree on a place and time for your next meeting before your first meeting closes. You may want to invite people to join a working group or to take on a small task. Work assignments not only make new people feel like vital and needed members of the group, but people are also more likely to return for future meetings when they feel that they have a responsibility to the group.

At the meeting, pass around a sheet to get everyone's name and contact details.

You might like to plan to adjourn to a nearby café or community garden together after the meeting to keep discussing ideas and building relationships.

Public meetings

Whether you chose to open up and promote your meetings from the beginning, or to start out with a small working group, sooner or later most community garden initiators will host a meeting (or perhaps many!) to tell the wider world about their plans. Public meetings are fantastic opportunities to share your vision and gain support for your project. The first section of this booklet will help you present the benefits of community gardens.

A well known speaker or interesting presentation topic may draw more people to your meeting. You may like to invite someone from an established community garden to share their story, or to show slides of established community gardens. The Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network has a number of PowerPoint presentations available for community garden groups to use.

Make sure you have an experienced facilitator to run the meeting. You might invite a respected local, or someone from the local council or a community organisation to facilitate for you. At the end of the meeting, collect the names and contact details of everyone who wants to be involved.

Be prepared to hear and address concerns that people may raise.

Developing shared visions and aims

Early in your planning process, allow plenty of time to develop clear and inspiring shared visions for your garden. Visioning processes can bring your working group together at the initiating stages, and provide a strong basis for all of your planning and decision making. Your vision will continue to evolve as your garden grows and develops.

Your vision for the garden will develop informally as you discuss your ideas and learn more about other community gardens. It will probably happen in a combination of ways, sometimes involving the wider community, sometimes just the core working group. Many groups set aside time for more formal visioning processes to encourage everyone to share their ideas and hopes. This can be an opportunity to invite people to talk about what really matters to them – their hopes, values, commitments, needs and desires. This will not only generate ideas for the project, but also strengthen the connections between people involved in the process. There is often significant common ground among participants' hopes for the kind of community (environment, public spaces, etc) they would like to see. Start with these general visions before focusing on the more specific details of your particular garden project. Work towards developing a 'vision statement' and set of aims for your garden that reflect what people care most passionately about.

You will eventually need to make all sorts of decisions about your garden: whether it will be a communally gardened space and/or have individual plots, whether it will be organic, if it will target a particular group of people for involvement, what will be on site. All of these decisions can be informed and made easier by having shared aims and visions to base them on.

Learn from other community gardeners

Don't start your garden from scratch! There is no substitute for visiting established community gardens and learning from the people who have made them grow. Visit www.communitygarden.org.au and www.communityfoods.org.au to locate gardens in your local area. Call first to arrange a visit, perhaps during a workingbee or shared gardening session.

Garden visits or tours generate and sustain excitement about your project and spark lots of new ideas. An invitation to a community garden tour can be a great way to attract new people to your working group. Carpool, cycle or see if your local council has a community bus available.

Russ Grayson and Fiona Campbell from the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network suggest some questions to ask when visiting other gardens:

- how did the garden start?
- what type of organisational structure do you have?
- what do you do about public liability insurance?
- where do you obtain resources (mulch, compost, seeds etc)?
- what are your links to local government?
- how are you funded?
- how do you make decisions, solve problems and resolve conflict?
- how do you pass on skills to new gardeners and improve everyone's skills?

Take photos, keep notes, discuss what you have learned and use it to make decisions about how you want to organise and manage your community garden. Keep in touch with the people you meet so you can call on them for (and offer) advice and support as your garden progresses.

Finding a place to grow your garden

Some groups begin with a particular site in mind, perhaps a vacant block in their neighbourhood or the land surrounding the school or community centre where they work. Others develop a plan for a garden then look for land to work with.

Community gardens can be located on:

- Council owned land
- Existing parks and playgrounds
- Grounds of housing estates, government housing and other flats.
- New residential developments
- Grounds of community centres and neighbourhood houses
- Church grounds
- Hospital and health centre grounds
- School, kindergarten and childcare centre grounds
- Universities
- Unused private land, particularly when neglected
- Land owned by businesses
- Land near railway tracks and stations
- Rooftops
- Old bowling greens
- Roadsides

Keep your eyes and imagination open and talk to people in your area to come up with ideas for potential locations.

Approaching local council for advice and support is often the first step for start-up groups looking for land. You may find it useful to approach an environment or community development officer as a first point of contact. Find out if your council has a community gardening policy. Their policy documents may provide information about the kinds of support your council can provide, and how they would prefer to be approached.

See working with local government section on page 12

Information in the Site Design section, page 14 will help you decide if a particular piece of land is suitable for your project

Security of tenure

This is a big issue for many community gardens. It's hard to plan for the development of an orchard if you only have a year to use the land.

Many garden groups negotiate a formal lease with the landholder. If possible, two years to start with and the option for 5 or 10 year renewals. Others have found it effective not to have a periodic lease (which by definition has an end date) but to focus on making their project so central to their community and so well supported that it would be difficult to turf them out.

Try to increase your security by getting the garden incorporated into local council policy, or its master plan. You might also investigate zoning regulations and green space requirements to help secure your land.

While you are waiting to find the site...

It can take time to find the right place, and to negotiate use. There are lots of things you can do to develop your community garden before you get your hands in the soil at your site:

- Keep visiting and forming networks with other community gardens
- Use libraries and the internet to research community gardens in other states and countries
- Attend other gardens' working bees as a group

see page 62 for suggestions on establishing management systems

see page 93 for information on plant propagation

see page 4 for some common concerns raised about community gardens

- Build your skills by holding or attending workshops and by gardening in each other's homes
- Start a small garden bed in a community centre, aged care facility, kindergarten, or similar
- Keep getting to know each other and developing your vision. Eat together, garden together
- Work on developing management systems for the garden.
- Learn how to propagate plants and start a nursery so you have plants ready you begin on site.

Working with your local council[2]

[2]This section was adapted from Cultivating Community's *Good Practice Guide for Community Gardens*

Developing a constructive and supportive working relationship with your local council is of great benefit to community gardens. It is useful for your group to understand how the council works, what its priorities are, and what help it has provided to other community and voluntary organisations.
Local councils may help with land access, funding, promotion, access to materials (mulch, park benches), occasional loan of landscaping workers, advice and support.

Having a local councillor on side can help ensure ongoing support and advocacy for your garden – try to get community gardening into policy so you always have grounds for support.

The mechanics of council

Find out where power lies, who has influence and where decisions are made. There are two important groups that make up the council. First, the elected councillors including those who represent the area where the garden is/ will be located, and those who serve on the sub-committees relevant to your garden. Second, council officers – the council's paid staff. They advise councillors and carry out council decisions.

Local councils' activities are guided by their policy. Find out if your council has a community gardening policy, and what it says about how community garden groups should approach council.

Plan and present

Councils often require community groups to present a formal submission as the first step. Even if it's not mandatory, a well written and presented submission is a good way to present your proposal and address concerns council may raise. Present the garden as something that will reflect positively on the council. Put some thought into ways you can demonstrate that community gardens help meet the council's service agenda and improve the local natural and social environment. Think about what you can offer to the council, such as logos on signage. Try to anticipate questions or reservations council may have and address them in your submissions, meetings and presentations.

Your submission might contain:

- A description of your group
- The skills and competencies of your members and their commitment to the project
- Your aims and objectives
- Your actual or proposed legal structure (eg. incorporated association)
- Your project plan, including what you want on site, activities that will happen there, design sketches if you have a site in mind, how the garden will be managed, how community members will be engaged
- Evidence of community need and desire for a community garden
- The characteristics and size of the land needed and any sites you have in mind
- Case studies and photos of other community gardens
- A budget estimate and potential sources of funding
- Your links with other community organisations
- What you require from council
- How you will manage risk
- The benefits of community gardens to communities and councils
- Links to council policy or programs
- A clear request for what you require (depending on your group – it could include access to land, funding to cover start up costs, staff advice/ support, etc.)

Try to arrange an informal meeting with appropriate council staff to discuss your proposal, and to give you a chance to amend your submission before it progresses through council. Your proposal may then go through a more formal process of being considered by the elected councillors at their monthly public meeting. At this meeting a council officer (such as the planning officer) would speak to the proposal, outlining their recommendations. This is an opportune time for you to make a brief and convincing presentation to the councillors. It is helpful if at least some of the councillors are aware of your proposal prior to this meeting.

Garden design

Garden design

Community is about planning your site so that it meets your needs in the most inspiring, ecologically sensitive, and efficient way your group can imagine. Community gardens can be models of sustainability and sociability, so work towards a design that shows how much is possible. Use recycled and local materials and create spaces for people to meet as well as to garden.

Effective, participatory design processes are essential for starting and developing community gardens. Actively involve as many people as possible in the garden design. This:

- Gives the garden the benefits of many people's thinking and experience
- Encourages genuine community ownership
- Enables the garden to reflect many needs and visions
- Is a way of sharing design skills, increasing community capacity.

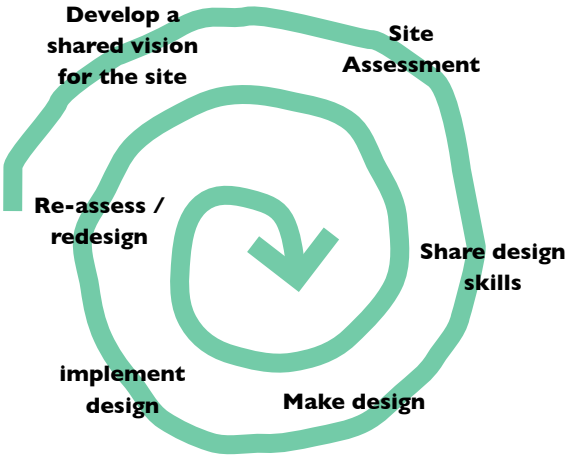
'Consultation' processes that do not include the people involved cannot achieve these things. Some gardens do, however, effectively utilise professional advisers such as landscape architects, permaculture consultants, garden designers, and urban planners.

Garden design is a continual process, not just something that happens in the planning stage of a new community garden. No design is perfect, and you will keep learning as you garden – expect and allow for your design to change as your needs and skills develop.

While some parts of the design process (such as sharing design skills) can happen before you find a place to create your garden, every site is unique and your garden design should only be made with the characteristics of a particular site in mind.

A community garden design process

- Develop a shared vision for the site
- Site assessment
- Share design skills
- Make design
- Implement design
- Re-design, reassessment



Refining your vision

Ideas for developing a shared vision for your community garden are discussed on page 10. Here are some things to consider when deciding what physical elements may help bring your group's vision into being:

Meeting and community building spaces:

- shady places
- sitting areas
- covered areas
- eating areas
- kitchen
- barbecue
- cob oven
- performance space (for festivals, parties, weddings, children's playgroups, etc)
- artworks

Garden infrastructure:
- tool shed
- drop off and storage areas for wood chips, straw, compost materials, etc
- composting areas
- composting toilets
- taps
- irrigation system
- water catchment system and rainwater tanks
- pathways
- fences
- bike racks

Educational facilities
- signage
- information boards
- displays
- solar panels, cookers, etc
- on site office
- teaching space

Garden spaces
- Individual plots
- shared gardens
- sensory garden
- predator and pollinating insect attracting garden
- bushfoods garden
- butterfly, bird habitat garden
- medicinal herb garden
- compost growing areas (for comfrey etc)
- demonstration gardens
- teaching gardens or plots for workshop participants
- fruit and nut trees or orchard
- raised beds (wheelchair accessible)
- smaller plots for children
- children's play space
- propagation area
- plant sales nursery

Small animals
- chickens
- other animals
- worm farm

What elements will be your initial priorities, and which will you work towards implementing in the future?

Site assessment

A site assessment is a way of gathering information about the site you're working with – it is the research and observation phase of garden design. The more time spent getting to know your land and local community, the better equipped you will be when it comes to drawing up and implementing a site plan.

A site assessment is essential for
- selecting a site for your garden
- planning for a chosen site
- ongoing planning and design at an established community garden site.

Gardeners implementing their design, Henley Community Garden, SA. Photo: Carolyn McArthur

A site assessment should include not only what is on your piece of land, but also information about the neighbourhood and community it is part of: people and community networks are your most important resources.

Keep an open mind and use your imagination when conducting a site assessment – don't immediately decide whether what you find is going to be good or bad for your garden, just observe what's there. Things that were not part of your initial plan may become valuable assets for the garden.

A comprehensive site assessment checklist is provided on page 97, and can also be downloaded from http://www.canh.asn.au/projects/community-gardens.aspx and adapted to meet your garden's needs

Ongoing site assessment

Once a garden is established, you can begin to compile ongoing records of your deepening knowledge of the site. Some ideas:

- Make a rain gauge and record rainfall patterns
- Map sun and shade patterns over the seasons
- Note plants that grow well, plants that have struggled
- Keep a record of community groups you've made contact with

All of these things will assist you in the ongoing development of the garden, and in developing a rich knowledge of the land and community you're working in – this can become a resource for the whole community.

Share design skills

Hold workshops, draw on the knowledge within your group, and consult with professionals.
You might decide to hold a series of gatherings and forums.

You will continue developing design skills as you garden – make sure to plan ways to formally and informally share them.

See the Garden Design Workshop outline in the training section page 80

Case study: Fern Avenue Community Garden

Fern Avenue Community Garden incorporates numerous site design features on its 2200 square metre site.

Glimpses of the site's previous incarnation as a 19th Century jam factory and orchard are visible around the garden, in old garden walls, paving and a few remaining trees, including a huge persimmon that arches over the front corner of the garden.

The garden includes communally and individually cultivated areas. There are 34 individual plots in various shapes, each around 10 square metres in size. Additional plots are reserved for organic gardening courses that are held on site. Raised beds provide access for people who find bending difficult.

Native plantings, local food species, and a frog pond provide habitat. A small orchard with many varieties of fruit demonstrates space-saving strategies for growing fruit trees in urban gardens.

A strawbale house was built in a series of community workshops in 1999. It provides space for workshops and courses, a small library, garden administration, and tea and coffee making facilities. It is also used as a meeting space by other community groups. Wide steps to the entrance provide informal seating. Rainwater tanks collect water from the roof, and solar panels provide power. A side porch holds a notice board and pigeon holes for garden members.

At the back of the garden there are bays for making compost and storing materials, and secure storage for garden tools. There is also a wood-fired cob oven, a composting toilet, chicken and rabbit enclosures, and a 'fairy garden' for children. Mosaic signage on the front gate was created with the help of a community artist and local community members.

The Fern Avenue Community Garden site has evolved gradually over 10 years, and gardeners continue to plan improvements.

Making the design

Decisions: which of the design elements on your wish list will you include now? Which will you introduce later? What features identified in your site assessment will remain on the land?

Make a map on paper – you may be able to obtain a survey map of the land from your local council. Include measurements, permanent features, and other information you've gleaned.

Implement your design

Take time into account. You may not have the funds, volunteers, or expertise to implement your whole design straight away. Go slow. Take on small sections that you know you can achieve – and celebrate – before taking on larger projects.

It makes sense for some things to happen before others. If you have a windy or degraded site, for example, you may want to improve your soil and create shelter before planting out expensive fruit trees, perhaps by planting hardy leguminous 'pioneer' species to assuage strong winds, fix nitrogen in the soil, and produce leaves and branches for mulch, creating an environment where your fruit trees are much more likely to flourish. Similarly, you may want to cultivate your volunteer workforce before taking on major projects.

You may choose to convert your design into an action plan – with specific objectives to be met by set dates. Give yourselves plenty of time and set realistic goals – some of your design elements may take years to establish, but plan to achieve small goals early on – like putting in vegie beds with quick growing plants like salad greens so you can share a meal from the garden soon after work on site begins.

Reassessment re-design

Some things will inevitably work better than others and you will continue to learn more about your site and how it can be used. Your garden group may decide to start an ongoing site design working group, or to hold an annual design forum to assess and improve the design of your garden as is develops.

General site design resources

Introduction to Permaculture Bill Mollison, NSW: Tagari Publications 2000

A Pattern Language Christopher Alexander, et al, Oxford University Press 1977

Futures By Design: The Practice of Ecological Planning Doug Aberley (ed), NSW: Envirobook Publishing and New Society 1994

Attracting Butterflies to Your Garden Densey Clyne, Sydney: New Holland Publishers 2000

Pemaculture: A Designers' Manual *Bill Mollison*, NSW: Tagari Publications 1988

Landscape Architects in state government housing bodies (eg Housing SA) and local councils

Plus, look for garden design books at your local library.

Designing welcoming and accessible gardens

Good landscape design can help create a community garden which draws people in and makes them feel welcome. Considering people's diverse needs is an important way to express a desire to make everyone welcome. Basic considerations like these are essential:

- shade from sun
- shelter from rain
- a place to sit
- information about the garden and how people can use it
- a friendly welcome from other gardeners.

Street appeal

The way the garden appears to people walking by will have a big impact on how it is perceived: somewhere beautiful, welcoming and purposeful, or ramshackle, dangerous and exclusive. This doesn't mean avoiding the creative use of recycled materials, or sticking to formal garden design, but it does mean paying attention to aesthetics, ensuring composting systems are working properly, and storing mulch and other materials in an orderly way.

Clear, attractive signage is important to help people understand what the garden is about, who it's run by, how they can get involved, and what's permitted – can they can walk through? Can they pick produce? Incorporate visual clues for people with limited literacy or English language.

Seating and resting areas

Seating can make a huge contribution to community gardens – from enabling older people to visit comfortably to helping to build connections among gardeners. Seating can provide a place:

- to eat – together or alone
- to rest
- to stop and experience the garden: observe, listen, smell…
- to sit and chat
- to be quiet or to be social
- to invite people stay around rather than leave once their day's tasks are done
- a point of focus in the garden, a place to walk to – inviting people to explore different parts of the garden

Some aspects of community garden design deserve special attention. See sections on designing for inclusivity page 17, Designing for sustainability page 19, Designing to enhance community safety and deter theft and vandalism page 21, and Designing individual plots page 23.

- a place for performances or workshops
- an opportunity for creativity or a community arts project (painting, sculpting, mosaics).

Making seating accessible

Consider the needs of all the different people using the garden – and those you would like to feel welcome. Young children and their parents, people who use wheelchairs, walking sticks or walking frames, people feeling ill or visiting from a hospital, people wanting to exercise, homeless people, people who like sun and people who like shade, older people, teenagers, may each have unique preferences and needs.

Variety is a good general principle – try to integrate a range of different sitting options: high, low, wide, narrow, social and secluded, sunny and shaded.

Leave room for wheelchairs when designing sitting areas and picnic tables.

Place seats at regular intervals throughout the garden, so that people who need to rest after walking short distances can still explore different parts of the garden. Places for leaning can also assist.

High seats and seats with handrails or places to hold can be of assistance to people who find it difficult to get up when they sit down, as can seats with high armrests you can sit on.

Do you want to make some seating that's good to lie on?

If your garden is not accessible to the public at all times, consider putting a seat outside the fence, so people still can enjoy being near the garden.

Seating area under a mango tree at Northey Street City Farm, Brisbane

Seating materials

Seating can be made using a variety of materials:

- cement, cob or strawbales, covered with mosaics
- amphitheatres carved into the earth, covered with lawn or ground covers, or with wooden benches
- 'naturally' occurring seats such as logs and large stones, grassy inclines, tree trunks for leaning against
- stairs can make great sitting places – design any stairs so there is room for people to sit as well as move through
- park benches, perhaps donated by local councils or service agencies – some local councils have used community gardens to trial new seating designs.

Enhancing non-visual elements in the garden

People who are blind or have vision impairments require non-visual signals to find their way around: smells, sounds, textures, tastes. Paying attention to non-visual senses can enhance everyone's experience of the garden – reminding us to use and enjoy all our senses in the garden, and providing an extra memory-trigger, aiding learning.

Use plants with strong scents to define particular areas of the garden.

Wind chimes, bird feeders, and other gentle noise-makers can mark distinct areas.

Use different materials on major and sub-pathways – sawdust, gravel, woodchips and grass each have different textures, sounds and smells. If you come up with a 'pattern language' of pathways, try to keep using the same materials in the same places. Be aware that some surfaces, such as grass, are more difficult to navigate for people using wheelchairs or crutches.

Plant specific 'sensory' areas in your garden – encourage people to smell, touch and taste the plants in these places. Brainstorm plants that are juicy, rough, aromatic, colourful, prickly, have interesting shapes and seedpods. Notice the different sounds plants make as well – the swoosh of wind through bamboo, the scratching of tree branches, crunching autumn leaves. There are many books and resources about creating sensory gardens, some of which are listed below.

Create a music playground in the garden – metal pipes to hit, bells to ring…

Make a three dimensional site map on a board, with different textures and raised areas to represent features of the garden.

Create vantage points to draw attention to sensory experiences in the garden – sitting places, lookouts.

Raised beds

Many community gardens integrate raised beds into their design. These allow easy access to the soil for people who use wheelchairs or have trouble bending down to ground-level gardens, and make gardening more comfortable for all users.

Raised beds can be made using a range of materials – let your imagination run free! Bricks, wood (untreated), steel, even plastics. Used car tyres are not recommended for use with food plants because of their potential to leach toxins.

Some raised bed designs allow a person sitting in a wheelchair or on a chair to fit their knees under the garden bed like a table. The Horticultural Therapy Association of Victoria produces a useful booklet about building raised beds (see below).

Other options include hanging baskets, vertical garden beds, and window boxes. Tables which have room for wheelchairs are useful for propagation and other garden activities.

If your garden involves people with restricted mobility, consider the accessability of water sources, tool storage areas, and toilets, as well as garden beds.

Resources

Accessible Landscapes: Designing for Inclusion Phillip S Evans and Brian Donnelly, Department of Plant Operations, San Fransisco State University 1993
Many ideas about designing welcoming, accessible public spaces, particularly for innovative seating ideas to meet a range of different needs.

Accessible Gardening for People with Physical Disabilities: A Guide to Methods, Tools and Plants Janeen Adil, Woodbine House 1994

"Horticultural Therapy – Create an Enabled Garden"
Joyce Schillen
Available at www.gardenforever.com/pages/artenabled.htm Useful ideas for gardening with people with disabilities, including a section on coping with arthritis.

CSIRO
CSIRO publish several information sheets about Access for People with Disabilities in their Building Technology Files series. Includes pamphlets on buildings, kerbs, ramps, bathrooms and signs. $5 each. Can be ordered on line at www.publish.csiro.au or ph. (03) 9662 7555

Horticultural Therapy Association of Victoria
HTAV produce booklets on raised garden beds, sensory gardens, and starting a horticultural therapy program as well as online fact sheets. www.horticulturaltherapy.com.au ph.(03) 9848 9710

Disability Information & Resource Centre Inc.
www.dircsa.org.au Provides information, referral and advice 195 Gilles Street, Adelaide SA 5000. Ph: (08) 8236 0555 or 1300 305 558 (SA only), fax: (08) 8236 0566 TTY: (08) 8223 7579, email dirc@dircsa.org.au

Designing sustainable gardens

Make your design responsive to its particular place

Design to suit the particular environmental conditions of your unique location.

Begin with careful site analysis. Consider

- year round solar access and patterns of shade and light
- gradient
- rainfall
- frost
- wind intensity and direction
- water movement and retention
- soil type and condition, including any possible contamination
- heat retaining or reflecting surfaces
- any trees or other existing vegetation that will remain on site and the root zones of nearby trees
- Identify and create microclimates to suit different plants and purposes

Minimise energy inputs in the development of your garden, and design for minimal energy requirements

Work with what is already on site.

Use recycled and redeployed materials.

See http://www.canh.asn.au/projects/community-gardens.aspx for more links and resources on accessible garden design.

Raised bed at Wandana Community Garden, SA. Photo: Alan Shepard

Seek out local, sustainably-produced products and materials when you need to buy new. Refuse products that disrupt, destroy, pollute or damage natural systems or communities where they are sourced, such as native forest timbers and moss rocks.

Avoid or minimise lawns and areas that need mowing or power trimming.

Use human energy fuelled hand tools rather than fossil fuel powered tools wherever possible.

Avoid chemical inputs – design for organic pest control and soil fertility.

Use renewable energy sources where possible, such as solar powered lighting.

Design to recycle green waste and minimise use of imported compost. Reserve space for composting systems, including space to grow compost plants and store materials. Provide information and training about composting.

Design for water conservation

Harvest rainwater with tanks and infiltration ditches (swales).

Improve the water-holding capacity of soils by incorporating compost and organic material.

Mulch to reduce evaporation.

Install a dripper system to apply water under mulch, so water can soak deeply into the soil without runoff or evaporation.

If building raised beds, consider the water-retaining qualities of your edging materials.

Use and create microclimates to situate plants for maximum water efficiency.

Investigate options for greywater recycling. Contact SA Health or SA Water for information on greywater regulations.

Design for biodiversity

Identify, conserve and maintain existing biodiversity.
Help maintain the biodiversity of our food. Grow and share heritage, locally adapted, and non-hybrid seeds.
Become a Local Seed Network.

Allow some plants to go to seed, not only to replenish your seed supplies, but also to attract beneficial insects.

Provide habitat for native birds, lizards, insects and animals. Select plants that provide food and shelter for native fauna, including native grasses and nectar-producing shrubs. Allow space for fallen branches, logs and rocks.

Keep dogs and cats out of the garden, particularly at night.

Improve the biodiversity of garden soils with compost, mulch, and care for soil critters. Minimise digging.
Include perennial plantings and minimise paved areas.

Consider the weed potential of plants, and potential for escape into waterways, parks or natural areas.

Garden organically

Build living soil.

Foster a diverse garden ecology.

Eliminate harmful chemicals.

Make organic practices part of your garden guidelines or plot holder requirements.

Provide information and opportunities for gardeners to learn about organic practices.

Use Permaculture principles and strategies

Permaculture is a design approach drawing on observation of natural systems, that emphases relationships among design elements. David Holmgren's 12 Principles for Permaculture design (along with other permaculture tools and strategies) can provide practical guidance for community garden design:

- **Observe and interact** - take time to get to know your site and design solutions that suit your particular situation.
- **Catch and store energy** – harvest resources, including water, that enter your site
- **Obtain a yield** – ensure that you are getting truly useful rewards from work that you are doing.
- **Apply self-regulation and accept feedback** – continue to observe and monitor your garden as it grows, make changes where needed.
- **Use and value renewable resources and services** – reduce consumption of non-renewable resources. Design to make use of 'natural services', such as predatory insects to keep pest populations in check.
- **Produce no waste** – produce lots of compost! Consider the lifecycle of any materials you bring into the garden.
- **Design from patterns to details** – draw on patterns in nature and observe the ways people use the garden site.

- **Integrate rather than segregate** – look for potential symbiotic relationships between design elements in your garden, locate things so they can work together and support eachother.
- **Use small and slow solutions** – start small, work slowly, and celebrate your success. Make sure you can maintain and sustain what you have already established before embarking on new projects.
- **Use and value diversity** – both biological and cultural.
- **Use edges and value the marginal** – often the most productive areas are where one system meets another.
- **Creatively use and respond to change** – remain open to new possibilities, use your creativity to design appropriate responses to new information and situations.

Resources

Gardening Basics leaflets in the back of this booklet

'Making Community Gardens more Sustainable', Sustainable Landscapes
This brochure includes information on to minimising water use, selecting herbs, vegies and fruit trees, and growing bush tucker plants. Available for download from http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/botanicgardens/programs/landscapes.html or phone 08 8222 9311.

'Designing Landscapes for People and Place', Sustainable Landscapes
A general introduction to sustainable garden design. Available for download from http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/botanicgardens/programs/landscapes.html or phone 08 8222 9311.

Local Seed Network Manual, Jude Fanton and Michel Fanton, Byron Bay: Seed Savers Network 2004
All you need to know to set up a local seed network at your garden. Also see http://www.seedsavers.net/local-seed-networks

Permaculture Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability, David Holmgren, Victoria: Holmgren Design Services 2002
Holmgren explores the understandings which underpin permaculture practice, and questions many of the assumptions of the 'sustainability' debate.

Introduction to Permaculture, Bill Mollison, NSW: Tagari 2000
An introduction to the theory and practice of permaculture design.

'Permaculture: A Design System for sustainable human settlement', Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network/TerraCircle
A succinct two page introduction to permaculture available from www.communitygarden.org.au

Designing to enhance community safety and deter theft and vandalism

Most community gardens will experience minor theft or vandalism at some stage. It may be preferable to find ways to live with a low level of loss rather than investing substantially in deterring it. Many gardens, for example, find that hand tools such as trowels disappear fairly regularly – you may decide to include buying periodic replacements in your ongoing expenses budget rather than coming up with a complex way to chain them to the tool shed… Likewise, many gardens choose to plant extra veggies, rather than attempting to completely eliminate unauthorised food harvesting.

Be prepared: take the possibility of theft and vandalism into account in your planning and site design processes, talk about the possibility with your gardeners, and think about how you would respond if theft or vandalism did occur.

Cultivate many allies

Safety can be fostered more powerfully through building community and a sense of belonging and connection than through fences and security alarms. Foster community involvement and sense of ownership and appreciation towards the garden. The more people who support and feel ownership of the garden, the more eyes you will have watching over it. As gardeners and local residents come to recognise and know each other, looking out for potential unsafe activity becomes easy.

Involve as many people as possible from the beginning and as the garden grows. Particularly seek to involve or befriend residents of the immediate neighbourhood and people who may be potential vandals. Actively avoid any groups feeling excluded. Make sure people in neighbouring houses have phone numbers so they can contact one of the garden co-ordinators if necessary.

Some community gardens work with the local Neighbourhood Watch group to encourage people to be aware of what's happening at the garden. Others have found it useful to build co-operative relationships with local police and council rangers, and to encourage them to include the garden on their regular rounds.
In some circumstances it may be necessary or desirable to involve the police in unlawful or unsafe situations. Make sure relevant contact numbers are easily accessible.

Children and young people can be especially good allies to the garden. You may want to encourage their involvement by including special plots for children (perhaps

offer a free child's plot for children of parents with a plot in the garden) or inviting school groups to visit. Involve young people in art projects at the garden – particularly people with aerosol art skills. Some gardens hold special events to invite young people's participation, offering enticements like cob oven pizza. Make contact with local youth agencies to get assistance.

Designing to deter theft and vandalism

Safety and crime prevention strategies should be incorporated into all community garden designs. Designs should not restrict visibility, and should encourage informal surveillance with sitting and meeting places to encourage community use and clear lines of site from public spaces and local residences. If possible, don't locate the garden in an isolated area. Avoid creating hidden spaces in the garden.

"Vibrant neighbourhoods, where the streets are alive with people... are places which are inherently safer than deserted streets where curtains are drawn" [3]

David Engwicht

[3] *Towards an Eco-city.* Envirobook p.57

People may assume that food growing in a park is available for them to pick. Have clear signs and other information letting people know who is allowed to pick produce, that the garden is for community benefit, and how to get involved. It may be useful to state that food is grown by volunteers, or used to for community projects.

A perimeter fence can help to define the garden. A low, unlocked fence can be sufficient to indicate the boundary of the garden and to deter unauthorised harvesting, as well as dogs and balls. The cost of high, anti-vandalism fencing could be much higher than losses you may experience from unauthorised harvesting or graffiti. Make sure that fences do not restrict the visibility of the garden.

Make occasional friendly requests for gardeners to check their tool sheds at home to make sure no community garden tools have found their way there.

Keep the garden looking neat and well maintained to communicate that it is actively used and valued. Harvest regularly so you don't create the impression food is going to waste. Fix any damage or remove any graffiti as soon as it occurs.

Spiky plants and vines covering walls and fences may help deter graffiti. Plants with thorns will also deter people from climbing fences.

Murals and mosaics may make walls less inviting for graffiti writers. Invite local artists, school groups, or graffiti artists to decorate your walls.

Easily recognisable foods like ripe red tomatoes and butternut pumpkins are the most likely to be taken. Grow them out of site of passers by, hide them amongst taller, less attractive plants, or experiment with varieties which look different to what you see in the supermarket – like heritage varieties of tomatoes and eggplants that are white or yellow when ripe. 'Unusual' plants or varieties are much less likely to be taken, as are root crops.

Some community gardens have sprinkled flour on ripening veggies to give the impression of pesticide dust.

Plant extra food so there's enough for everyone. Some gardens have planted a free garden at the entrance, marked with a sign: "If you need vegetables, please join our community garden. If you need food today, then please pick from this plot only." Others have installed a 'free box' in a shady place near the garden gate, where people can leave surplus produce for other gardeners and passers by to take. Others in the neighbourhood could be invited to use this box to swap and share their excess fruit and garden produce.

Resources

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Community garden design can benefit from CPTED strategies, such as maximising natural surveillance; using strong visual clues to differentiate between 'public' and 'private' spaces; selective placement of entrances, lighting, signage and other physical elements; and ensuring spaces are – and appear to be – well maintained. A web search will reveal a number of resources for applying CPTED principles. The Queensland Government's CPTED guidelines can be downloaded from http://www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/crimePrevention/cpted.htm.

Signage at Northey Street City Farm, Brisbane

Nonviolent Community Safety and Peacebuilding Handbook Pt'chang Victoria: Pt'chang Nonviolent Community Safety Group Inc. Outlines an approach to community initiated and controlled peace and safety initiatives which brings together strategies from the peace movement with ideas from community development. Nonviolent community safety ideas can help build a community where people take shared responsibility for a safe environment and where everyone's safety is valued. This booklet contains many useful ideas for creating peaceful environments and dealing with situations that feel unsafe. It can be downloaded from http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ptchang/download.htm.

Designing individual plots

Individual plots are a feature of many – but certainly not all – community gardens. They can be an effective way to facilitate people's initial involvement in a community garden, and can be as successful as communally gardened spaces for building community. If you do include individual plots in your garden, there are some particular design considerations.

People – who will be using the plots?

What are their needs? For example, wheelchair accessible raised beds, shady resting places, children's spaces.

How often will they be visiting their plot? Will they be maintained daily, weekly, less often?

What is their gardening experience? Are they ready to take on a big plot?

What do they want to use the plot for? Do they intend to grow a substantial proportion of their food or are they more interested in learning or recreation?

How many people do you estimate will want a plot?

The land

How much land do you want to devote to individual plots? Take into account all of the other things you want to use your land for. Even community gardens that are predominantly used for individual plots should allocate land for shared facilities such as tool storage, seating and social space. Some community gardens have plots as small as one square metre. Some of the biggest in Australia are up to 30 square metres, however these have proven to be too large for most plot holders to manage.

How much of the land is appropriate for plots? Can you rule out areas that do not have sufficient access to sunlight, water taps, soil?

Plot design

Use good design to facilitate intensive gardening techniques so people can grow as much as possible on whatever size plot they have.

Make plot shapes narrow enough so that gardeners can reach the centre without stepping on the beds.

Design for equity – ensure plots all have good solar access, and that they are the same size (or sizes).

Ensure clear and permanent definition between individual plots.

Each plot needs to have direct access from a shared pathway.

Make pathways wide enough for wheelbarrows to pass through, and allow places for barrows to park.

Avoid locating individual plots against perimeter fences to deter passers-by reaching through and picking produce.

Ensure adequate access to water sources.

Use stakes at corners of garden beds to guide hoses, stopping them dragging across beds.

Consider including some very small plots (one square metre or even less) for new gardeners or for children to have their own garden plot. Some gardens have a system where new gardeners start with a smaller plot, and can apply for a larger plot after managing it well for a year.

Set aside a plot for participants in courses and workshops at the garden to use.

Use shared garden areas to grow plants that attract pollinating and predator insects, so people can use their plot space for productive plants.

Plot holder agreements

It is important to have clear information for plot holders about what they are entitled to and what is required of them. Having a plot holder agreement for people to sign can be an effective way to communicate about plot holders' obligations and the conditions of participation. Agreements should cover plot fees, acceptable use of the plots, and plot-holder requirements.

There are examples of plot holder agreements on page 63 of this booklet and a sample plot application form on page 101. There are examples of plot holder agreements at http://www.canh.asn.au/projects/community-gardens.aspx

Rent for plots can be a reliable source of core funding for community gardens. Some things to consider:

- Will different sized plots have different fees?
- Will you have concessional fees to reflect people's differing abilities to pay plot rental?
- What costs will plot fees have to cover? Will you be providing mulch or other materials? Do you need to pay for water usage?
- How will you organise renewals? Will you have a rent renewal day once a year or quarter when everyone pays?

Are there any things people are not allowed to do with their plots? Things to consider:

- Is the garden organic? Is the use of pesticides, herbicides and artificial fertilisers permitted?
- Do the plots have to be food producing or is it acceptable to grow only ornamental plants?
- Are there plants that you don't want people to grow, for example things over a certain height (which may shade nearby plots) or invasive species?

Plot holders' requirements

- Will plot holders be required to garden organically?
- Will you ask plot holders to participate in other aspects of the garden, such as meetings, working bees, maintaining communally gardened areas?
- Are there things you want to ask of plot holders – such as cleaning and replacing tools and hoses?
- Do you have other garden rules that people nee agree to? Are dogs allowed? Parties?

See Cultivating Community's Garden Rules at http://www.canh.asn.au/projects/community-gardens.aspx **for one example of how these issues have been approached**

Other considerations

- Will there be conditions for plot leases being renewed?
- What will the process be for reclaiming plots if r used for a specified period of time?