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# COMMUNITY FOOD GROWING TOOLKIT

A guide to starting a  
community garden



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Thank you to Petworth Community Garden, Transition Chichester and Angmering Community Garden for the conversations and appearing on our Community Growing webinar: <https://youtu.be/8jObzDIWwKc>

We have found other guides and information online which have helped with the development of this toolkit, these are listed among the further information and inspiration on the back page.

**This toolkit was created by the Arun and Chichester Food Partnership in 2022.**

**To contact us please email [foodpartnership@arunchichestercab.org.uk](mailto:foodpartnership@arunchichestercab.org.uk) or call 07483 172353 to speak to a Development Officer. If you are hoping to start a community garden or already work on one in the area, we would love to hear from you. Thank you for reading.**

# INTRODUCTION

People have many reasons to be interested in community gardening for food production, and Arun & Chichester have outstanding land for growing food.

The benefits are many, including:

- Saving money on food bills.
- Increased freshness, variety, flavour of home-grown produce
- A place to socialise
- Gentle exercise suitable for most (if adapted to accommodate health issues)
- A step toward a horticultural qualification
- Experience and skills toward employment
- A sense of accomplishment and enjoyment
- Improved mental and physical health from outdoor exercise
- Low food miles / carbon footprint
- Better understanding of where food comes from (especially for children)
- Likely higher intake of fruit and vegetables and decreased food waste
- Increased community cohesion and integration
- Improved air quality

Community growing can take many forms, including:

- Community gardens – the focus for this toolkit, though some of the tools will be useful for other projects
- Community farms (includes livestock)
- Allotments
- Community orchards
- Community harvesting (sharing gluts from private land or allotments)
- “Meanwhile” or “guardian” gardening – temporarily looking after land
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Forest gardening
- Garden sharing
- Public planting in streets and communal areas
- Guerrilla gardening

**There are a lot of things to consider when planning, starting or running a community garden. As always, many hands make light work.**

**This toolkit will help you and your group to think about the decisions which need to be made, as well as provide examples of documents which may be useful.**

# WHY COMMUNITY GROWING?

In a recent survey in Littlehampton, allotment holders cited these as important benefits of having an allotment:

- I am able to eat healthy food
- My food is grown with low environmental impact
- It saves me money on my food bill
- I am more aware of nature and the environment
- I can meet and socialise with people of different ages and backgrounds
- To improve mental health or provide stress relief
- General exercise

A community garden has additional benefits – including reducing the amount of work required from each person, adaptability for people with health conditions, increased social connections and a place to learn from more experienced gardeners.

The Scottish Government produced a list of benefits to encourage councils to support community growing, published online by [Edible Estates](#).

The benefits they identified are:

- Food
- Health & Wellbeing
- Community
- Biodiversity
- Climate change
- Recycling and food waste
- Sustainable urban drainage systems
- Soil management
- Education and training
- Local economy
- Social return on investment



**"...to be able to eat fresh food the day it is picked keeps it at its optimum nutrition and flavour, something money can't always buy!"**

**Petworth Community Garden website**

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# STEP BY STEP TO YOUR COMMUNITY GARDEN

1. Imagine
2. Community involvement
3. Form an Organizing Team or responsible group
4. Identify probable users and their needs, time and abilities
5. Develop a communications plan
6. Explore membership of larger networks
7. Learn
8. Find and assess land
9. Identifying and contacting the landowner
10. Water
11. Get the soil tested
12. Planning
13. Signing the lease/ making arrangements with the landowner
14. Public Liability Insurance, Health & Safety and other policies
15. Planning the garden
16. Budgeting, financial records, plans and evaluation tools
17. Where to get materials and money
18. Garden infrastructure
19. Working with volunteers
20. Get growing!
21. Celebrate!



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## STEP 1: IMAGINE

What do you want to achieve? What will be the benefits and who will benefit? Where would you like to locate the community garden, who will it reach and who will be able to access it? Do you want to beautify or use local areas (even as small as a few square metres) or do you want something larger?

Being clear about the motivations and aims - whether it is food provision, healthy eating, biodiversity or social cohesion (or a mixture of the lot!) - will make it easier to get other people involved. This does not need to be comprehensive and the aims will likely increase over time, as more people become involved.

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## STEP 2: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

There is a lot of work involved in starting a new garden. It is necessary to have a person, or group of people, or organisation which will take responsibility for the garden. Make sure you have several people who will help you. The number of people required to start and maintain the garden varies according to the size of the garden, state of land, ambition and the number of hours available, but it is important to ensure that the responsibility is spread so that no-one is overwhelmed and the garden is able to continue.

Four is a good starting number to create and sustain a garden project. There are other groups in the area who may be interested in being involved, give advice, help you connect to like-minded people.

It is a good idea to initially survey the residents of your neighbourhood or community group, to find out who is interested. Regular, maybe monthly, meetings will help the group to develop and initiate plans, keep people posted on the garden's progress, and keep them involved.

## STEP 3: FORM AN ORGANIZING TEAM OR RESPONSIBLE GROUP

An organizing team or committee will help make decisions with collaboration, help to divide up the work effectively and meet any legal requirements for starting the garden. It is helpful to establish this early. The typical garden society or committee will have many functions, including:

- Establishing garden rules
- Acting as garden liaison with agencies
- Collecting donations
- Paying bills such as water and the lease
- Resolving problems

The typical independent community garden organization has at least two officers: a president and a treasurer, although you may need or want more than that. Elections are the common way to ensure that the process stays a representative one and doesn't leave everything up to just one or two people all the time.

Voluntary Action Arun & Chichester (VAAC) can provide help for many groups, including:

- Start-ups – finding the right organisational structure, writing a governing document, recruiting trustees, opening a bank account and more
- Policies (which ones you should have) and practice (how to deliver them)
- Strategy planning and how to measure impact of your work
- Advice on writing funding bids and providing feedback before submission
- Recruiting volunteers including Trustees
- Health Checks – advice on development and checking you have everything in place
- Guidance on websites and getting your message across

Membership is free. Contact them early to seek this help: [vaac.org.uk](http://vaac.org.uk)

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## STEP 4: IDENTIFY PROBABLE USERS AND THEIR NEEDS, TIME AND ABILITIES

The requirements of the garden will vary depending on who will be using it. If it is intended primarily for families with children, or people with disability, it will need tools and plants which they can use. If it is intended to be used for maximum food output by a number of people who have skills, it may require different plans to enable these crops. If it is intended for horticultural classes, or horticultural therapy, there may be specific requirements for these groups.

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## STEP 5: DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Be clear about who speaks on behalf of the group. Create a way to communicate with the organising committee, interested people, statutory and funding bodies and general enquiries. Consider social media, emails, newsletters, leaflets, posters, advertisements in local papers, local talks to interested groups, local radio interviews, local newspaper articles, involving community leaders and when it may be appropriate to start using these.





# STEP 6: EXPLORE MEMBERSHIPS OF LARGER NETWORKS

It is useful to see other community gardens in action – arrange trips to visit at least one community garden or growing site. You can find ones locally through the Arun & Chichester Food Partnership Community Growing Network.

## Arun & Chichester Food Partnership Community Growing Network

Arun & Chichester Food Partnership is developing a range of networks, including one for people who are currently engaged in community growing and people who would like to be. Please contact [foodpartnership@arunchichestercab.org.uk](mailto:foodpartnership@arunchichestercab.org.uk) to join this group.

There are other schemes nationally which help local groups to connect and learn, including:

## RHS IT'S YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Run by the RHS, It's Your Neighbourhood was created to help local residents "green up" their communities through gardening, environmental and community action in a non-competitive programme. Each year member groups receive feedback on how to grow and develop their work. Groups register to become part of one of 16 regional groups.



Social Farms and Gardens supports and represents the farmers, gardeners and growers who run life-changing projects in urban and rural communities in the UK. Membership is free, open to organisations delivering nature-based activities that improve lives. If you are an individual who is interested in SF&G's work but not currently part of an eligible organisation, you can join the mailing list and kept up to date.



Incredible Edible invites people to join their network and commit to food activism and community resilience. They have a range of useful resources for starting projects, including a Get Going Guide. See [www.incredibleedible.org.uk/get-involved/get-going](http://www.incredibleedible.org.uk/get-involved/get-going).

**If you would like further information about these schemes please call the Arun and Chichester Food Partnership on 07483 172353.**

## STEP 7: LEARN

There are courses relevant to community growing offered through:

- Social Farms and Gardens: [farmgarden.org.uk](http://farmgarden.org.uk)
- RHS: [rhs.org.uk/education-learning](http://rhs.org.uk/education-learning)
- Brinsbury College: [brinsbury.ac.uk](http://brinsbury.ac.uk)
- Tuppenny Barn: [tuppennybarn.co.uk](http://tuppennybarn.co.uk)



The team at Tuppenny Barn are passionate about sustainable living and organic growing, creating a better future for our children, inspiring communities to grow and cook their own food, and improving wellbeing through horticulture.

As well as their charitable mission, they also grow and sell their organic produce to the community through their farm shop and veg box scheme.

In addition to working with schools, Tuppenny Barn have a range of activities and education programmes for children and adults alike, including therapeutic horticulture, one-off workshops and accredited training courses.

Tuppenny Barn have exciting plans to build a new sustainable building on their site which will enable them to support local residents with a community kitchen and cafe.

[Visit tuppennybarn.co.uk for more information](http://tuppennybarn.co.uk)

## STEP 8: FIND AND ASSESS LAND

You may have unused or disused land available and may need to develop the project around what you have. Alternatively, you may have an idea and need to look for land which suits your needs.

If seeking land, look for unused land that gets plenty of sun- at least six to eight hours each day. Ideally, a garden site should be relatively flat (or you may need to consider terracing). It should be relatively free of rubble or debris so that volunteers can clear the lot with sacks, wheelbarrows, and private vehicles.

It may be possible to use a small part of a larger piece of land, such as a park or common land on housing estates, or to take over a derelict or under-tended site.

Creativity may pay off – it may be worth contacting landowners of properties that are currently not in use but may be brought back into use in the future (and adapting plans accordingly in terms of investment), charities, public bodies or other sites. Some may be happy to have the land tended and be willing to lend or give the land at a token/ peppercorn rent or at no financial cost.

If it is open to the public at all times, it should be free from open water. If it is fenced, access needs to be considered. If it is paved, it is possible to build raised beds sitting on the surface or containers.

Consider location. People are more likely to use a community garden if it is in a place they regularly visit, walk past or are very close to geographically. Any potential site should be within walking distance, or no more than a short drive from people who would like to use it.

Parking: if people will need to drive to the site, perhaps because of mobility issues, it is important to consider how people will be able to access it and safely leave cars or mobility devices.

Consider any other facilities, such as access to public toilets.

You can use the sample Garden Site Evaluation Checklist in the sample forms section below as a way to assess possible sites.

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## STEP 9: IDENTIFY AND CONTACT THE LANDOWNER

It is illegal to use land without the owner's permission. If you do not know who owns the land, you can check with the [Land Registry](#). If a potential site is feasible, and you or your organisation do not have the right to use it, write a letter to the landowner asking for permission to use the property for a community garden. In this letter, it is useful to highlight the value of the garden to the community and the fact the gardeners will be responsible for keeping the site clean and weed-free. Request use of the site for a fixed term, and prepare and negotiate a lease or arrangement. Ideally, a lease should be for at least three years. You will need a management team to sign a lease (see section 3 above for further information). Landowners may be concerned about liability for injuries that might occur at the garden, therefore it is important to include discussion of public liability insurance.

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## STEP 10: WATER

You will need to consider water source when evaluating a community site. If there is already a water source outside, it should be connected to a water meter – you will need to get consent from the water bill payer to use this water or arrange to pay the water bill. If there is not a water connection currently, you or the landowner will need to contact the local water supplier to find out how much difficulty, time and cost there will be in connecting a water source. You can also consider rainwater harvesting systems, particularly if you do not need drinking water. Information is available [from the National Allotment Society](#):

[nsalg.org.uk/growing-advice/gardening-advice/water-use-on-allotments/](https://nsalg.org.uk/growing-advice/gardening-advice/water-use-on-allotments/)

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## STEP 11: GET THE SOIL TESTED

It might be advisable to have the soil at the site tested for basic fertility, pH, and presence of heavy metals. If you detect these items in the soil, the land is not suitable for a community garden: heavy metals, PCB's, motor & heating oil, asbestos, sewage, coli form & E. coli. For reputable companies see the [Soil Association website](#).

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## STEP 12: PLANNING

If you are intending to build on the site, it is worth checking with the planning department to ensure that it is permitted in that location. This could include sheds, glasshouses, polytunnels, fencing and similar structures. Check with the district councils planning departments, either [Arun](#) or [Chichester](#).

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## STEP 13: SIGNING A LEASE AND MAKING ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE LANDOWNER

Ensure that you have a way to pay the lease, that this is secure for the period of the lease, and that you have appropriate public liability insurance to cover the site. Additionally, if there are any restrictions or terms and conditions which affect how the site may be used, ensure that these are noted and notified to anyone who may access the site.

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## STEP 14: PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE, HEALTH & SAFETY AND OTHER POLICIES

Ensure that you have taken Public Liability Insurance for the site and that you have considered health and safety requirements of what needs to be done to ensure safety on site. Community Gardening groups, including Britain in Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups, are eligible for insurance via the [Royal Horticultural Society](#). [Social Farms and Gardens](#) membership gives access to an insurance broker.

You will need to ensure that you have these policies and assessments. You may already have some of these through your larger organisation, if applicable.

- Vulnerable person / safeguarding policy
- GDPR policy and mechanism
- Lone working policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Risk assessment(s)
- Complaints process
- Equality and diversity

[Voluntary Action Arun & Chichester](#) can advise on these policies.

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## STEP 15: PLANNING THE GARDEN

The team, committee or a group of community members can be involved in the planning, design, and set-up of the garden. Before the design process begins, you should measure your site and make a simple, to-scale site map, as well as assess orientation, sunlight and drainage.

All plans should be costed and a timescale established to ensure that the plans are affordable and achievable with the number of hours and skills of the people involved.

A decision will need to be taken about whether the garden will be enclosed or open to the public at all times. If it is open to the public at all times, this allows people to access it during evenings and weekends, when they are available, but increases the risk of vandalism, plant theft and antisocial behaviour in isolated sites. If it is enclosed, this limits access to people who have keys or know a code to get in and may be a perceived barrier. If it is enclosed, it does not have to be enclosed by a fence; hedges, cacti and other barriers may be sufficient.

Ensure that design meetings are held at times when people can attend, or arrange for these to be held virtually.

Official minutes or notes help to record agreement and enables communication to the wider group of interested people.

It may be helpful to use pictures from the internet or garden magazines to help people visualise the plan, with raised beds, compost bins, pathways, arches etc shown.

## STEP 16: BUDGETING, FINANCIAL RECORDS, PLANS AND EVALUATION

The cost of the garden will vary according to materials used. It may be necessary to complete it in stages and plan for this, with fundraising as needed.

Planning for a one-year and longer-term budget will help to decide how to spend money well. Having a well-considered budget will help the garden to be appealing to funders, as well as enabling accurate reports to funders, members and supporters. Financial records not only enable you to meet your legal obligations and avoid risks of mismanagement, but also allow informed decisions when considering outlay, new projects or activities. Voluntary Action Arun & Chichester can help with creating the financial and business infrastructure.

Guidance about action plans, business planning and organisational health checks is available in the Social Farms and Gardens resource pack found on their [website](#).

## STEP 17: WHERE TO GET MATERIALS AND MONEY

While some start-up funds will be needed, you can obtain donations of materials for your project. Depending on the constitution of your group, you may be able to access grants. Contact Voluntary Action Arun & Chichester for advice. VAAC can also advise you on opening an appropriate bank account.

You may also be able to get donations in kind from merchants, local businesses or interested people. Develop a letter that tells people about your project and why it's important to the community. Attach your "wish list", but be reasonable. Think outside the box. Construction companies or people who are having building work done may have scrap or materials which you could save from landfill, like old fencing for raised beds, bricks or compost bins. Check out free or low-cost second-hand online spaces like Freecycle and Facebook.

Grants may be available to help you get started. The Food Partnership can help you to find these so do get in touch at [foodpartnership@arunchichestercab.org.uk](mailto:foodpartnership@arunchichestercab.org.uk).

You could try using a crowdfunding website to seek money or donations of goods, and it could be used to raise awareness of your garden too. Money can also be raised through community fundraising. Be sure to thank your supporters, publicly if possible, maybe at a special event?

# STEP 18: GARDEN INFRASTRUCTURE

If you have not yet formed a Garden Committee, now is the time to do so.

It is also time to:

- establish garden rules
- consider setting up an agreement form for those who wish to participate,
- ensure you have conducted health and safety and other legal requirements and risk assessments
- set up a bank account.

You will need to arrange for rubbish collection, recycling and composting. This may be the time to begin having regular meetings if you have not already started to.

**A local resident supported by the social prescribing service shares how growing his own food improved his mental wellbeing.**

**"It eases my stress, coming down to this space is invaluable...growing and watching stuff grow. It's a privilege... It's really rewarding as well as you are actually seeing things growing and eating things straight from the ground..."**

**Before I had this space I was in my house, I was in bits. I didn't have no-one to talk to, I was really, really struggling and now that I have got this space, coming down here has just alleviated my stress. It's like a little community. The people here, they help each other and they help you out and give you knowledge. I think its just a wonderful space and having these spaces, bringing people together that have mental health issues that can help each other out getting together for a couple of hours each day.. I think (community growing) is a great idea."**



# STEP 19: WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

It is good to consider how you will work with volunteers from an early stage.

It is important to consider:

- Induction
- Health and Safety
- Site plan and requirements
- What is expected of volunteers
- What volunteers receive (training, food, support, other)
- Refreshments
- Social opportunities
- References as needed
- Recognition
- Complaints and resolution of problems
- Individual requirements of each volunteer – special equipment, physical or other adaptations
- Buddying or mentoring system if appropriate

A complaints or suggestions box can help resolve issues early.

Remember, you may need volunteers for more than gardening, including:

- Administration
- Financial management
- Social media
- Signmaking
- Refreshments
- Photography
- Mowing
- Building/ construction
- Publicity and communications (ie, newsletter)
- Social events
- Fundraising
- Recruiting and supporting volunteers
- Building partnerships with other organisation or businesses

For advice on safeguarding, volunteering policies, supporting volunteers and equality and diversity policies, contact [Voluntary Action Arun & Chichester](#).



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## STEP 20: GET GROWING!

Many groups make the mistake of remaining in the planning, design and fundraising stage for too long. After several months of the initial research, designing, planning, and outreach efforts, group members may feel frustrated and will want to see the garden come to fruition. It is important to plant something on your site as soon as possible so people see visible results and stay engaged with the project.

To keep the momentum going, initiate the following steps even if you are still seeking donations and funds for your project (but not until you have signed a lease and obtained insurance).

- Clean up the site: schedule community workdays for this. How many days you need will depend on the size of the site, and what debris is on site.
- Install any water or irrigation systems: Without water, you can't grow anything. So get this key element into place as soon as possible. There are plenty of opportunities for community involvement--from digging trenches to laying out PVC pipes.
- Plant something: Once you have water, there are many options for action. Stake out beds and pathways by marking them with stakes and twine. Mulch pathways (the cheapest way to do this is to find a landscaping crew and have them drop off their lawn clippings at the end of every day. The grass will keep weeds from growing as a temporary solution.) If your fence isn't in yet, some people might still want to accept the risk of vandalism and get their plots started. You can also plant shade and fruit trees and begin to landscape the site. If you do not yet have a source of donated plants you can plant annual flower seeds which will grow quickly and can be replaced later. Some organisations or stores may be willing to give older seeds, which may well germinate past their date.
- Keep it going: As materials and funds become available, take a vote on what to add to the garden. Tools, art, structure upgrades, etc. are all things that can come as the garden grows.

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## STEP 21: CELEBRATE!

At this point, your ideas and hard work have finally become a community garden! Be sure to take time to celebrate. Have a grand opening, picnic, or some other fun event to give a special thank-you to everyone who helped to make this happen. This is the time to give all those who gave donated materials or time a special certificate, bouquet, plants, produce or other form of recognition. Celebrate your community garden!

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# TROUBLESHOOTING AS THE GARDEN DEVELOPS

All community gardens will experience problems somewhere along the way. Don't get discouraged--be prepared. The key to success for community gardens is not only preventing problems from ever occurring, but also working together to solve them when they do inevitably occur. These are some of the most common problems that "crop-up" in community gardens.

## 1. Vandalism

Most gardens experience occasional vandalism. The best action is to replant immediately and ensure that gardeners regularly visit the site. Vandals generally become bored after a while and stop. Good community outreach, including involvement, especially to youth and the garden's immediate neighbours, also helps. Make sure that the purpose of the garden is understood, through a sign or other communication. Finding ways to be part of the local community, including giving out some produce or having social events, helps to embed the garden in the community. Try not to get too discouraged, just keep going.

A decision will need to be taken about whether the garden is enclosed or open to the general public at all times. While fencing may be appropriate on some sites, sometimes other options may be considered, such as hedges, holly, roses or cacti to create a physical barrier.

## 2. Security and theft

If not secured, community gardens can be a site of anti-social behaviour like other places. Even secured sites may be prone to incidents. While developing strong community outreach can minimise this, other actions such as maximising the number of hours that someone is on site, siting the garden on the grounds of an agency or organisation which has people regularly present or creating a community watch-style group may be useful to prevent incidents.

It may be worth speaking with the local police and community officers to seek advice.

### 3. Communication

Clear rules and a good organiser help minimize misunderstandings in the garden, but communication problems can arise. It's the job of the Community Garden to resolve those issues. If it's something not clearly spelled out in the rules, the committee or membership can make modifications to existing rules. Language barriers can be a source of misunderstandings, ensure that material is available in languages as required.

### 4. Rubbish, composting and waste disposal

It's important to get your compost system early and train gardeners on how to use it. If gardeners don't compost, large quantities of waste will begin to build up, create an eyesore, and could hurt your relationships with the community, neighbours and the property owner. Waste can also become a fire hazard. Make sure gardeners know how to sort rubbish properly, what to compost, and what to recycle. Accessible bins help keep a neat and tidy garden; it is important to organise how these will be emptied.

### 5. Gardener Drop-Out

There is sometimes a high rate of turnover in community gardens. People's lives change, their needs and health change or their interest drops. Gardening can be hard work, especially when the weather is poor. To reduce the risks of this, ensure that the site is accessible, plan work parties (ie, working mornings), include a social element (perhaps tea and cake after a session?) and ensure that there are at least a few people who will look after the garden through difficult times. Engaging a horticultural therapist to help people work at the site within their abilities helps to plan and use volunteer time well.



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# GARDEN RULES AND REGULATIONS

Garden rules should be established for every community garden. It is best to lay everything out and come to agreements with the organizing committee prior to signing up gardeners.

Consider any questions which may be needed to make the garden viable. How much involvement with the garden is expected by each gardener? Is it flexible, or are some people expected to give a regular commitment?

Be creative and open to different ideas. Remember, this is a garden of, by and for the gardeners, so it can be set up in many different ways. Rules are an excellent way to ensure everyone understands how the garden will operate and what is expected of each gardener. Each garden's rules will vary depending on the needs of each garden.

There is a sample Community Garden Contract in the Sample Forms section. These rules are intended as a guide only – they can be adapted according to your situation, service users, organisers or other requirements.



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# SAMPLE FORMS

1. Sample community garden contract: rules, terms, and conditions for participation (2 pages).
2. Membership form advice
3. Sample permission for land use form
4. Garden site evaluation checklist
5. Community garden planning worksheet
6. Essential garden information sheet
7. Sample volunteer enrolment form
8. Sample referral form
9. Sample plan month by month (3 pages).
10. Sample incident form
11. Sample ground rules
12. Sample feedback form
13. Sample risk assessment and sample mowing risk assessment available upon request

**For a full digital pack of sample forms, contact us at  
[foodpartnership@arunchichestercab.org.uk](mailto:foodpartnership@arunchichestercab.org.uk)**

The (organization/garden manager) is the highest governing authority at the (Garden Name) Community Garden. Breaking any rules, terms, and conditions is cause for exclusion from the garden.

Rules, Terms, and Conditions for Participation (draft agreement)

If accepted as a member, I will abide by the following rules, terms, and conditions:

1. I use this garden at the sole discretion of (Garden Name) Community Garden. I agree to abide by its policies and practices. The Garden Committee / Garden Manager and the members are responsible for ensuring that the rules are followed at all times.
2. I will keep the garden, paths, and surrounding areas clean and neat. I will not litter. I will put green waste and general waste into the correct places.
3. If I am given a key or code to garden and/or storage bin for access to tools, I will keep the key or code safe to ensure the safety of the garden. I will keep the garden gate and storage bin locked at all times and return all tools.
4. I will not plant any illegal, dangerous or invasive plant.
5. I will not smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, use illegal drugs, or gamble in the garden. I will not come to the garden while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
6. I will not bring weapons or pets or other animals to the garden. Any dogs (as agreed) will be well-behaved and under control, to not disturb other users of the garden. Dogs which are not well behaved will be required to leave.
7. I understand that children (ages 0-16?) are welcome in the garden but must be accompanied and supervised by a responsible adult at all times. I will supervise my children, or children in my care, at all times when they are in the garden to ensure everyone's safety and wellbeing.
8. If I bring guests or children, they will follow all rules, terms, and conditions.
9. I understand that the application of pesticides and herbicides (weed killers) is forbidden in the garden. I will not apply any pesticides or herbicides in the garden without the explicit approval of the garden manager (specify who decides this).

Sample Community Garden Contract: Rules, Terms, and Conditions for Participation (page 2)

10. I will not make duplicate keys of any locks at the garden or give my key or lock combination to another person.

11. I will not take anything from the garden that is not rightfully mine. I will respect the rules regarding picking and sharing (specify how members will know the rules).

12. I understand that tools will be made available for use during the regularly scheduled work time each week. Regularly scheduled work times will be posted on (insert location - physical, online?)

13. A limited number of tools and watering equipment will be available in the community garden storage bin for use during non-scheduled work times. If I use tools outside of scheduled work times, I will return them safely to the community garden storage bin in good condition.

14. I will respect other gardeners, and I will not use abusive or profane language or discriminate against others.

15. I will work to keep the garden a happy, secure, and enjoyable place where all participants can garden and socialize peacefully in a neighbourly manner. I have read and understand the application and accept these rules, terms, and conditions stated above for the participation in the ( ) Community Garden.

Gardener

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name in block capitals:

\_\_\_\_\_

Office

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If member is under age 18:

Signature of parent or

guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name in block

capitals: \_\_\_\_\_



## Membership form

It may be advisable to have a membership form, to enable organisers to know who is on site, contact someone in case of emergency and enable contact with the members. The reasons for requesting information must be made clear, including any use for publicity as images of people are protected data.

Remember to consider GDPR – who will hold this information, how will it be held securely, and how will this be ensured? Remember to consider how to access this information in case of emergency – it might be useful to have a secured emergency contact list accessible at site or through a secure website for leaders.

Additionally, as part of an application form, it may be useful to ask people what they are interested in doing, thereby asking for help.

You could include sections like these:

Gardeners are asked to help during the season with general chores.

Please tick at which tasks you would be willing to help with:

- \_\_\_ Site maintenance
- \_\_\_ Phone calls
- \_\_\_ Mailings
- \_\_\_ Assigning plots
- \_\_\_ Path maintenance
- \_\_\_ Construction projects
- \_\_\_ Watering
- \_\_\_ Annual planting
- \_\_\_ Autumn / winter cleanup
- \_\_\_ Composting
- \_\_\_ Social events
- \_\_\_ Beekeeping
- \_\_\_ Other activities (please specify)

I have read the Community Garden Rules and understand that failure to meet the guidelines will result in loss of gardening privileges.

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

GDPR data protection: Please indicate below your consent for storage and use of your data and how we can contact you.

I give consent for my personal data to be kept as stated in the (name of organisation) GDPR policy and used by (name of organisation). YES / NO

I give consent for (name of organisation) to take, keep and use photos that may include me in organisation newsletters and social media pages. YES / NO

I give consent for (name of organisation) to contact me directly regarding the opening / closing of sessions, training opportunities and other relevant information relating to (name of organisation). YES/ NO

## Sample Form: Permission for Land Use

The following form is intended as a guide only; be sure that the final agreement you use meets the needs and details of your group and the property owner. You may need to take legal advice to ensure this.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (property owner) give permission to (person or organisation's name) \_\_\_\_\_ to use the property located at (community garden project) \_\_\_\_\_ as a community gardening project, for the (site's street address) term of \_\_\_\_ years beginning \_\_\_\_\_ and ending \_\_\_\_\_. (start date) (ending date)

This agreement may be renewed with the approval of both the property owner and the community garden organisation at the end of the agreement period. All questions about the community garden, its nature, risks or hazards, have been discussed with the garden coordinator to my satisfaction.

The community garden agrees to indemnify and save harmless the property owner from all damages and claims arising out of any act, omission or neglect by the community garden, and from any and all actions or causes of action arising from the community garden's occupation or use of the property.

As the property owner, I agree to notify the community gardening organisation of any change in land ownership, development, or use at least 60 days prior to the change in status.

Property owner's signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of property owner in block capitals:

\_\_\_\_\_

Witness

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Garden Site Evaluation Checklist

- Sun: Shade/ Partial Shade/ Full Sun (6-8hrs)
- Shading Structure Description: Facing  
Southwest/South/Southeast/North/Northeast/Northwest
- Soil: Texture (sand/silt/clay/organic matter)
- Drainage (wet-moderate-dry)
- Depth of Topsoil (where darker soil ends)
- Compact/Loose: ph level (soil test):
- Nutrient levels (soil test): N-P-K Lead or Other Toxins (soil test)
- Topography: Flat or sloped (degree)
- Water Access: On-site/Neighbouring Building/Home/Business/Church  
Type and Proximity to Garden
- Site Amenities: Shed or Tool Box Site, kitchenette
- Condition: any work required to clear or improve the site to make it safe and usable. Are there any invasive plants or weeds?
- Composting Site: Estimated number of and type of composting sites
- Visibility (safety and publicity)
- Parking
- Vehicle access
- Toilet Access
- Power
- Security (fences, locks, other)
- Site History (parking lot/ petrol station/ commercial building/ residential)
- Neighbourhood: Interest/Involvement level of neighbours
- Demographic Profile (children/young adults/adults/senior citizens)
- Crime (drugs/vandalism/violent crime/theft)
- Animals (deer/rabbits/ dogs/ other animals which may impact the site)
- Quick Sketch of Property
- Any other issues or concerns

Discuss these questions and work together to generate ideas and policies for your community garden. Add more questions as necessary and delete when appropriate.

- Garden name
- Garden Opening Date
- Closing Date (if any)
- How many people are allowed on site at one time?
- Are there any restrictions (ie, maximum number of children, young people, wheelchairs?)
- What are specific plot care requirements (weed control, etc.)
- In case of violation of rules:
  1. Will a warning be given?
  2. By whom?
  3. After how long?
  4. What is the process for banning someone?
- Who is responsible for maintaining compost bins and water butts?
- Are fertilisers allowed, and if so, what type and who applies this, and under what conditions (weather, season or other)?
- How will diseased produce be disposed of? (for example, those stricken by blight)
- Who is responsible to maintain any sheds, fences, structures, supports and lockups?
- What are the policies on waste management, parking, locking of gates, maintaining pathways?
- Who decides what will be planted and where?
- Are pets permitted on site, and if so, what are the conditions?
- Who should be notified if there is a problem in the garden?
- If there is a bank account, who has signatory power of this?
- Who will cut grass on borders?
- Will the garden have a bulletin board or information kiosk, and if so who is responsible for maintaining this?
- What type of seeds and other products are acceptable? (Organic, heritage, unknown sources, UK native only, approved by a specific group?)

## Community Garden Planning Worksheet (page 2)

- Will there be a sharing location (ie, for surplus produce from home gardens or food picked from the community garden, or other food rescue ideas)? If so, who will maintain this so that food does not attract pests?
- Will there be a donation box for gardeners? One for people who collect food with an honesty box system? If so, who will collect and bank this money, and how often will it be collected?
- How much / what parts of the garden are accessible for people with limited mobility or using a wheelchair? Are adapted tools available for people who need them?
- Will there be a picnic table, chairs or other seating area, bench, trellis, sandbox or other amenities?
- Will there be a pond? If so, how will this be kept clean and secure?
- How much space will be allocated for perennial plants (raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, asparagus etc) or fruit trees?
- Will there be a flower border or section?
- Will there be specific steps to encourage bees, such as homes, bee-friendly planting and bee-friendly water spots?
- How will we ensure the garden is sustainable, in terms of personal commitment, impact on the environment, financially?
- Will there be potluck meals, perhaps at harvest times? If so, who joins, who organises, how can we make sure that the food is all safe for people who attend? (See Food Standards Agency for advice: <https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/food-safety-for-community-cooking-and-food-banks>).

## Essential Garden Information Sheet

Anything can happen suddenly to the garden manager, and with them the information they hold that makes the garden work. By being proactive, an accident or suddenly moving away won't leave the garden group in a difficult situation and necessitate "reinventing the wheel". Be sure that at least three people know the logistics of the community garden and where information is located, such as:

1. Bank Account Bank Name: Bank Address: Name on Bank Account: Account-holders' name(s) (if different): Bank Account number:
2. Landowner name, contact information and lease agreement
3. Address of Community Garden Site:
4. Postal address:
5. Phone:
6. Social media and logins
7. Email and logins
8. End of Lease Date:
9. Liability Insurance provider and renewal date, location of copy of policy
10. Details and agreements of water system/ provider / source
11. Arrangements for collection of site waste (rubbish, recycling, composting)
12. Information about the organizations associated with the community garden.
13. How to access contact information for all gardeners
14. Website address: website host, name of company. Contact information for website host.

Sample volunteer enrolment form

Name

Preferred name (if different)

Address

Date of birth (not compulsory)

Telephone: Home

Mobile:

Email address:

Doctor's name and address:

Doctor's telephone:

Any known medical (physical and mental health) conditions (eg asthma, arthritis, anxiety, hearing or visual impairments):

Any known allergies (eg bee stings, peanuts, food, plaster, plant):

If you have allergies, do you carry an epipen? Yes/ No

Is your tetanus vaccination up to date? Yes / No

Diet, mobility or other needs:

Name of next of kin:

Next of kin contact details (phone number and address):

-

Sample volunteer enrolment form (page 2).

GDPR: Please take the time to read it and give indicate your consent for your information and contact preferences.

I give consent for my personal date to be kept as stated in the (name of organisation holding data) GDPR policy and used by (name of organisation):

YES / NO

I give consent for (name of organisation) to take, keep and use photos that may include me in newsletter and on our social media pages.

YES / NO

I give consent for (name of organisation) to contact me directly regarding the opening/closures of sessions, training opportunities and other relevant information relating to (name of organisation)

YES / NO

Signed:.....

Date:.....



Referral form (to be completed with the member enrolment form for GDPR).

For those making a referral on behalf of someone else:

Referrer's name:.....Organisation.....

Email:.....

Mobile:..... Date of referral: .....

Person being referred: .....

Risk Assessment/History: is there anything we particularly need to be aware of? For example, what behaviour would indicate that your client is becoming unwell?

Client Needs: are there any specific needs which we should try to accommodate (where possible)?

Client needs: are there any tips or advice on helping them achieve their potential?

I confirm that my client (x) knows about this referral and agrees to the sharing of his/her/their contact information.

Signature/ date

## Sample plan month by month

### November

Tool maintenance  
 Cut down blackberry fruited canes  
 Cut down raspberry fruited canes – summer variety only  
 Sow garlic and onion sets  
 Cut back verbena bonariensis/geraniums  
 Dig over beds/add manure  
 Tidy strawberries – thin, cut back old foliage  
 Prune roses to prevent wind rock  
 Take blackberry cuttings  
 Pot wash and tidy

### December

Sort old seeds  
 Dig over beds  
 Christmas lunch  
 Prune currants  
 Clean shed gutters  
 Edging of grass edges  
 Prune sedums

### January

Restoration prune established espaliers  
 Order seeds & potatoes  
 Cover rhubarb with forcers?  
 Mend netting/cages/soft fruit trainers  
 Plant new raspberries and currants if required  
 Weave Cobnut hedge

### February

Cut back autumn raspberries  
 Prune buddleia  
 Clean out greenhouse/poly tunnel, pot wash and sort  
 Chit potatoes  
 Top up beds as necessary  
 Mulch artichokes with compost  
 Prune roses

Sample plan month by month page 2March

Pinch out sweet pea tips  
 Propagate mint  
 Dig over any green manure  
 Sow tomatoes, basil and parsley under cover  
 Sow rudbeckia, Brussel sprouts and chard under cover  
 Plant out onions  
 Start mowing  
 Weeding  
 Feed roses  
 Mow and edge if required

Late March

Sow leeks, dwarf beans, and french beans under cover  
 plant early potatoes

April

Sow marigolds  
 Sow cosmos, ammi majus under cover.  
 Plant out sweet peas  
 Prune lavender  
 Sow runner beans, butternut squash, pumpkin and courgettes under cover  
 Sow beetroot, carrots, radishes and spinach direct  
 Sow cabbage (summer) under cover  
 Sow sweetcorn, kale, lettuce, cucumber and peas under cover  
 Divide chives  
 Plant main potatoes  
 Pot on tomatoes  
 Mulch soft fruit

May

Tie in sweet peas  
 Earth up potatoes  
 Sow direct: salad, chard, carrots, kale, lettuce, parsnip, radish, peas and spinach  
 Sow under cover: chives and sunflowers  
 Cut back comfrey  
 Start feeding  
 Weeding  
 Mow and edge

June

Take lavender cuttings  
 Sow brassicas  
 2nd sow undercover courgettes  
 Sow carrots, radish and salad direct  
 Thin gooseberries  
 Feeding  
 Harvest early potatoes once flowered  
 Weeding  
 White wash green house  
 Plant out Cosmos  
 Plant out sprouts  
 Plant out ammi majus  
 Plant out leeks and brassicas  
 Mow and edge

Sample plan month by month page 3July

Pinch off the growing tips of squash and courgette and then plant out  
 Sow more kale and chard undercover  
 Sow more carrots, beetroot, radish direct  
 Tie in raspberry canes  
 Feeding  
 Sow radish direct  
 Weeding  
 Mow and edge

August

Feeding  
 Trim lavender after flowering & dry  
 Sow last beetroot  
 Divide clumps of chives to transplant or pot up  
 Take rosemary cuttings and propagate  
 Sow onions  
 Sow last radish  
 Harvest potatoes  
 Weeding  
 Sow cabbage April  
 Mow and edge

September

Harvest pears and apples  
 Prune established espaliers  
 Divide perennials and move/pot up to sell  
 Save seed  
 Remove beans and supports  
 Sow green manure in gaps  
 Sow chard  
 Weeding  
 Mow and edge

October

Sow sweet peas  
 Sow broad beans  
 Clean green house  
 Sow green manure in gaps  
 Earth up leeks around stems  
 Firm in Brussel sprouts  
 Weeding

## Sample Incident Form

Please complete this form with details of any accident or incident taking place in the garden.

Date of incident

Name of person affected

Nature of incident:

Action taken:

Person taking action:

Follow-up (if any):

Place this form in the Risk Assessment folder and make a note in the garden diary.

If the incident is serious enough to warrant medical attention, the trustees should be informed by sending an email to (insert name)

## Sample Ground Rules

### 1. Session Times:

Dates/ times

Please arrive and leave promptly.

### 2. A Community Garden:

We are a community garden run on (organic, agroecological, other) principles by the (organisation/s) and Session Leaders, who lead the sessions.

No structural changes or alterations are to be made without prior discussion and approval of (Trustee, Garden Coordinator, Management Committee or other)

Produce is available for the volunteers to share, take home and enjoy and benefit the wider community.

### 3. Tools/equipment:

All tools and equipment are to be cleaned and returned to their proper place after use. No tools or equipment should be removed from the premises without specific permission.

### 4. Health & Safety: Be safe

Everyone must take reasonable care of their own and others Health & Safety. Any breaches of Health & Safety guidelines or near misses must be reported to a session leader immediately.

Please look after your own welfare; this includes not physically exerting yourself beyond your personal limit, wearing hats, sun screen and taking rest and drinks breaks when required.

### 5. Respect

Please respect each other and the garden.

Please respect each other's abilities, skills and the opportunity for learning and treat each other as you would wish to be treated.

### 6. Complaints

In the first instance please talk to your session leader who will follow the (organisation's) complaints procedure.

The garden should be a safe place for volunteers, visitors and children. Please help us support this.

Date

How long have you been coming to this garden?

What have you particularly enjoyed?

What have you found difficult or not enjoyed?

As a result of coming to the gardening sessions do you feel you have:

Yes, a lot    Yes, a little    No    Don't know

Improved physical health?

Improved mental health?

Felt happier as a result of attending?

Learned new or improved your gardening skills?

Become less isolated and socialise more?

Spent more time outdoors in general?

Is there anything (we/ name of group) could do to support you gardening or add to the garden to make it more enjoyable?

Any other comments?

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION

- Incredible Edible: ([incredibleedible.org.uk](http://incredibleedible.org.uk)) Nearest local groups (at time of publishing) are in Portsmouth and Brighton.
- Good to Grow: ([goodtogrowuk.org](http://goodtogrowuk.org))
- Boston Community Gardens: ([thetrustees.org/content/list-of-boston-community-gardens/](http://thetrustees.org/content/list-of-boston-community-gardens/)). Boston, Massachusetts has 56 community gardens.
- Fresno Community Garden Toolkit: ([fresnometmin.org/sites/fresnometmin/images/pdfs/community-gardens-toolkit.pdf](http://fresnometmin.org/sites/fresnometmin/images/pdfs/community-gardens-toolkit.pdf))
- Edible Estates: ([edibleestates.co.uk](http://edibleestates.co.uk)) including Benefits of Community Growing
- Petworth Community Garden: ([growingforall.org.uk](http://growingforall.org.uk))
- RHS Greening Great Britain: ([www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/greening-great-britain](http://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/greening-great-britain))
- RHS Front Garden Research: ([shorturl.at/kpKM3](http://shorturl.at/kpKM3))
- National Garden Scheme Community Garden Grants: [ngs.org.uk/who-we-are/community-garden-grants](http://ngs.org.uk/who-we-are/community-garden-grants) for potential funding
- Sustain - Growing for Change: ([sustainweb.org/publications/sep22-growing-for-change](http://sustainweb.org/publications/sep22-growing-for-change))
- Transition Chichester ([transitionchichester.org](http://transitionchichester.org))
- Capital Growth - London based food growing network but useful guides for all areas ([capitalgrowth.org/toolkits\\_and\\_guides](http://capitalgrowth.org/toolkits_and_guides))

## CONTACT

- web. [www.arunchichestercab.org.uk/acfp](http://www.arunchichestercab.org.uk/acfp)
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