



# Community Gardens & Plant A Row for the Hungry

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Benton & Franklin Counties

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# Community Gardens: Common Questions



# What is a community garden?

- A place where people gather to grow something together
  - Vegetables
  - Fruits
  - Herbs
  - Flowers (edible or pollination)
- It can be any place:
  - Public location (park or playfield)
  - Private location (open field, yard or church)
  - School (elementary, middle, high or afterschool)
  - Special need (retirement community, corrections facility, social service agency)
- It can be any form:
  - Flat land
  - Raised beds
  - Containers



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# What is the history of community gardens?

- Very popular with native Americans & during colonization
- John Adams planted first kitchen garden at White House in 1800
- Thomas Jefferson promoted food gardening throughout US
- Victory Gardens were widespread in World Wars I & II (produced 40-50% of America's fresh produce)
- Resurgence of food gardening with environmental movement of 1960's & 1970's
- Renewed interest due to economic recession, poverty in US & organic movement
- Puget Sound & Portland areas lead in Northwest
- Food gardening is fastest growing sector of gardening industry, now only second in expenditures to lawns
- Over 20,000 community gardens in US & increasing 5-10% annually
- 3% of food gardeners use community gardens



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# Why build one?

- Grow your own food (38% of households grow some food)
- Save money (food gardening household spends \$70 & produces \$600 of food)
- Better tasting, higher quality, safe, fresh & nutritious food
- Physical exercise & health benefits
- Fresh air & sunshine
- Mental relaxation & psychological benefits
- Build community, improve neighborhoods & increase property values
- Help others in need
- Teach youths & other inexperienced gardeners
- Learn more about gardening
- Have fun!



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# How do we start?

- *“A community garden is 90% community and 10% garden... Do not build it & they will come.”* Pat Munts, Spokane
- Organize core group of ~10 dedicated people (7% of people are extremely/very interested in community garden)
- Identify skills & resources, then recruit more help!
- Reach out to potential gardeners
- Hold meeting to agree upon need for & purpose of garden
- Find sponsors & expert help (Master Gardeners)
- Locate good site (described later)
- Meet with neighbors & address concerns
- Hold meetings to design garden, develop application process & rules, and decide on fees
- Address liability & need for insurance
- Raise funds, seek donations & recruit more volunteers to build it



# How do we select a site?

- Best if within walking distance of high density, low income housing with little gardening space
- Not being used by others (kids playing, trails)
- Safe, clean & accessible
- Long-term commitment for garden
- Flat, level land with at least 12 inches of good topsoil (test it)
- No potential contamination (industrial or orchard) & if in doubt test it
- Southern exposure with full sunlight
- Away from trees & large shrubs
- Water readily available
- Wind protection, if possible
- Shade for gardeners to rest
- Access to toilet



# How can Master Gardeners help?

- Mission of WSU Master Gardener Program includes:
  - Teach community members to manage their gardens
  - Increase healthy living through gardening
  - Help low-income citizens to grow their own food & become more self-sufficient
  - Donate produce to food banks
- Role of Master Gardeners in Community Gardens includes:
  - Lead community through garden development process
  - Help assess suitability of property
  - Help design garden
  - Provide assistance with funding, grants, donations & volunteers
  - Arrange for or lead workshops & seminars
  - Give 1-on-1 or small group gardening instructions
  - Develop ongoing mentor(s)



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# What about children in the garden?

Invite children into all community gardens:

- Include space in design for children to garden
- Provide seeds, seedlings & safe hand tools
- Encourage gardeners to bring children to garden
- Have teenagers help with garden construction, under adult supervision (no power tools)
- Address supervision of children in garden rules
- Conduct workshops, 1-on-1 & small group instructions for children
- Mentor children to develop interest in gardening & learn lifelong gardening skills
- Include entire household in harvests & celebrations
- Encourage children to taste the fruit of their labors!



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# What else do we need to get started?

- At least 10 dedicated gardeners
- Master Gardener mentor(s)
- Raised beds with mulched paths (preferred but not required)
- Fence, gate & lock (depends on location and animals)
- Sign & bulletin board
- Lots of compost & organic fertilizer
- Seeds & seedlings
- Hoses & nozzles
- Long-handled & short-handled tools with lockable toolbox
- Wheelbarrow
- Trash barrel



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# What should we plant?

- Plant whatever gardeners & their families like to eat
- Avoid spreading plants unless you have lots of space (vining squash, melons & cucumbers)
- Avoid plants that require lots of water & fertilizer, are disease & insect prone, and are low value (corn & potatoes)
- Plant three successive crops to maximize production:
  - Cool season crops in early spring (March & April)
  - Warm season crops in late spring & early summer (May & June)
  - Cool season crops in late summer (July & August)
- Rotate crops every year
- For raised beds, plant densely and practice interplanting (early & late varieties, short & tall crops)
- Try something new each year!



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# How should we care for the garden?

- Make sure you have enough dedicated gardeners before you start
- Establish garden committee with coordinator to run the garden
- Develop & follow garden rules
- Share communal work
- Share harvest with other gardeners, neighbors & those in need
- Celebrate your successes
- Learn from your failures
- Recruit gardeners for next year
- Have fun!



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# How do we ensure garden sustainability?

- Remember that it's 90% community & 10% garden
- Plan & work together
- Prepare the soil annually
- Rotate crops
- Keep weeds from seeding
- Harvest produce when ripe & share with those in need
- Constantly recruit new gardeners & volunteers
- Continue to seek donations
- Teach next generation to enjoy food gardening

If you just till up soil, throw out some seeds, turn on the irrigation, & neglect weeding; your garden may not last beyond one season!



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# American Community Gardening Association

## Core Beliefs:

- There are many ways to start a community garden
- For a garden to be sustainable, it must grow from the local community and reflect its strengths, needs and desires
- Diverse participation and leadership enrich and strengthen a community garden
- Each community member has something to contribute
- Gardens are communities within themselves, as well as part of a larger community

[www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)



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# Community Gardens & Plant A Row for the Hungry in Benton & Franklin Counties



# Community Garden Summary for 2014

- 35 community & school gardens
  - 8 school gardens
  - 8 social service agency gardens
  - 7 church gardens
  - 6 public gardens
  - 6 private gardens
- Locations
  - Kennewick: 14
  - Richland: 13
  - Pasco: 5
  - Benton City, Connell, Prosser: 1 each

# Plant A Row For The Hungry



Plant a Row  
For The Hungry  SM

Garden Writers Association Foundation  
[www.gardenwriters.org](http://www.gardenwriters.org)  
Call Toll Free (877) 492-2727

- Started by Garden Writers Association in 1995
- People-helping-people to donate extra garden produce to hungry
- Over 200 local volunteer committees in US
- Over 1 million pounds donated annually
- Master Gardeners run program in Benton & Franklin Counties
  - 16 donation locations
  - Free seeds and seedlings
  - Technical advice

# Key Accomplishments in 2013

- 42 Master Gardeners volunteered over 1,100 hours
- Helped develop three new community gardens & relocated another
  - Jay Perry Community Garden, City of Kennewick
  - Boys & Girls Club, Prosser
  - Hawthorne Court Retirement Community, Kennewick
  - Ki-Be After School Program, Benton City
- Mentored 15 community & school gardens
- Provided ~5,000 seed packets & 4,000 seedlings to ~400 gardeners to support food bank donations
- Received ~16,000 pounds of fresh produce donations to food banks



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# Key Goals for 2014

- 55 Master Gardeners will volunteer about 1,500 hours
- Help develop & start up 5 new garden with focus on low-income & youth populations:
  - Lawrence Scott Park, City of Kennewick
  - Stevens Triangle, City of Richland
  - Juvenile Justice Center, Benton County
  - My Friends' Place (Safe Harbor homeless teen shelter)
  - Benton-Franklin Head Start (families of children)
- Help develop backyard gardens in low-income neighborhoods with Habitat for Humanity
- Help Pasco Boys & Girls Club deliver “Positive Sprouts” food gardening education
- Mentor at least 8 more gardens
- Increase food donations to over 20,000 pounds



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**Any more questions or  
comments?  
Thanks!**

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