

Community Gardens

Introduction

Community gardens offer an opportunity for students and staff to come together in support of sustainable plant growth and food production. Most college-run gardens are smaller in scale, but are still in need of consistent nurturing and care in order to thrive. These gardens are becoming commonplace at higher education institutions across the country as campus communities realize the multitude of benefits that local agriculture can provide.

"If we are concerned about food production, small farms are more productive. If our concern is efficiency, they are more efficient. If our concern is poverty, land reform to create a small farm economy offers a clear solution. The small farm model is also the surest route to broad-based economic development."¹



Sustainability

- Sustainable community gardens on campus can help to enrich the environment while also providing a colorful aesthetic for your school.



Student Engagement

- Students can volunteer at the garden and gain valuable skills, perspectives, and relationships with others through service learning.



Community Engagement

- The garden can bring the community together for events such as volunteer days, gardening workshops, cooking classes, and visits from local schoolchildren.

Implementation

Some of the essential steps toward constructing and sustaining a successful community garden include:

- Establish a core group to create goals and divide up responsibilities
- Evaluate potential spaces for the garden (consider sunlight exposure, proximity to a water source, what kinds of plants you want), either on campus or a nearby area
- Test the soil at your garden site for pH, nutrient levels, and possible contamination
- Buy/Borrow garden tools (shovels, trowels, hoes, rakes, wheelbarrows, hoses, etc.)
- Practice sustainable gardening methods (crop rotation, composting, reduced till agriculture, etc.)

Best Practices:

- Assign students from relevant academic courses to help support the community garden (Biology, Plant Sciences, Health, etc.)
- Partner with your school cafeteria to provide them with fresh, healthy food to serve
- Create a gardening timeline including when to harvest, weed and water; be mindful of the seasonal preference and maturation time of your crops
- Be sure to publicize the garden as much as possible (Flyers, Social Media, School Paper/Newsletter, Contact w/Local Farmers)

Resources

- [Real Food Challenge's "Garden Guide"](#)
- [LSU AG Center School Gardening Best Practices](#)
- [The Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at UC Santa Cruz \(Garden Instructions\)](#)

TBR Resources:

- [Austin Peay State University's Victory Gardens](#)
- [Pellissippi State's Campus Garden](#)
- [Chattanooga State's Common Ground Garden](#)

¹ Rosset, Peter M. ["The Multiple Functions and Benefits of Small Farm Agriculture in the Context of Global Trade Negotiations"](#) Transnational Institute. Sept. 1999. Web. 2016.