



## BUILDING A COMMUNITY GARDEN

*When they are well-planned, community gardens not only help beautify neighborhoods, but can also become community hubs that cultivate produce, flowers, and relationships. This guide has tips and considerations to help you get started.*

### Innovation & Collaboration

The first word in Community Gardens is “Community.” Both gardening and preparing to create a garden are great ways to build relationships and a spirit of unity and sharing in your neighborhood. It's all about including people. When you plan your neighborhood's garden remember to reach out to your fellow gardeners, and neighbors for inspiration and to brainstorm solutions together! Working together can generate ideas and solutions that save time & money, and - at the end of the day- make your garden stronger. Let your creativity take over and have fun with it!

### Raised Beds or Plots?

When deciding how to create a community garden, one of the biggest debates is often whether to use raised beds or in-the-ground plots. What's important is knowing what your garden's purpose is and who will use it!

For example, if you're growing food for people to eat, raised beds may be a safer option especially if you haven't had a soil test to determine if there is any lead, heavy metals or other toxic substances in the soil. But, if you're planting flowers or other decorative plants, this may not be a concern.

For people with back problems and other difficulties, a raised bed might also be best for accessibility. Sometimes, having a combination of plots and raised beds can help resolve disputes, but getting input from the people who will be using the garden is always a great idea. You can make an online form, put up door hangers or fliers, or host a meetings or conversations to keep people informed and get their input!

### Water

Water is a super important- and often overlooked- part of starting your community garden! Most plants need water in order to get them properly established. Make sure your garden is either close to a source of water or consider using other sources like a rain barrel or irrigation system.

Many people overlook irrigation systems as a way to water their gardens, but they can be a good long-term solution. Irrigation is the artificial application of water to the soil through systems of tubes, pumps, or sprays. They can be integrated into anything from a hoop house, to raised beds to in-the-ground plots.

### Call Before You Build & Dig

No matter what kind of garden you plant, it's important to make sure you know 1) what kinds of permissions and permits you'll need to get started and 2) the locations of any utility lines on your site. Be sure to obtain permission to use the land from the property-owner, contact the Department of Planning Services (at 311) to ask about zoning, and Indiana811 to locate utility lines.

## Hoop Houses and Mini-Hoop Houses

Hoop houses are cheaper to build than greenhouses and can be a good alternative to uncovered beds. By using hoop houses, gardeners can extend their growing season and reduce the need to use pesticides because hoop houses help protect plants from extreme weather, pests, and infections. Sometimes the pipes can be integrated into hoop houses to make watering plants easier. Smaller (or mini) hoop houses that cover one raised bed are a great option for beginner gardeners have that have limited space but want to protect their plants.

## Tips & Considerations for a Great Garden!

### What To Do With Harvest?

There are many ways that having a harvest- whether it be tomatoes or new flowers- can help your community. It's common to let each gardener keep their own crop. However, hosting food stands, donating to food banks, and sharing with neighbors and community members are all great alternative ways to distribute the harvest from your garden and help others. Having fresh flowers or produce in someone's home can really brighten their day, encourage them to try new foods, or even improve community nutrition levels. Funds raised by selling food, flowers, or other produce could be invested into your neighborhood association or used to improve or fund the garden itself. Check out our "Neighborhood Activities" for additional fundraising ideas.

### Maintenance & Upkeep

When you're making plans for your garden, be sure to consider who will take care of maintenance and upkeep. We recommend involving a team of people to help with everything from planting and weeding to watering and harvest to make sure that all the tasks don't fall on a single person. Having a plan for the Fall and Winter months is also very important. Remember to think about whether tools used for upkeep will be communal- purchased and stored by your gardening community- or come from each individual's home.

Pro tip: Remember to make sure your garden is straightened up after Harvest so it doesn't look messy throughout the Fall and Winter months.

### Continued Education & Resources

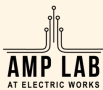
It's great for people who organize community gardens to have a great understanding of both leadership and gardening skills. Libraries and various websites can be great resources for information about organizing people, advertising, and sources of innovative ideas for your community garden. The Allen County Public Library ([www.acpl.lib.in.us](http://www.acpl.lib.in.us)) even has a seed library you can utilize to get your garden started!

Purdue Extension's Master Gardener Program offers classes and events to help people get educated and excited about gardening. You can check out their website ([www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/](http://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/)) for more information.

### Managing Conflict

Communication is vital when setting up and running a community garden to avoid things like plot mix-ups and over-watering. No matter how well you prepare, mistakes can happen, and unexpected concerns may arise.

Please remember to approach these conflicts with empathy. Consider contacting local gardening experts for advice about addressing concerns and getting your garden back on course!



This guide was created by the City's Department of Neighborhoods and AMP Lab students in partnership with Purdue University Fort Wayne. For more information visit our website or scan the QR Code.

