

COMMUNITY GARDEN TOOLKIT: STARTING A COMMUNITY GARDEN

SOME FACTS AND EXPERIENCE TO SHARE FROM FRESNO COUNTY



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Here in the Central Valley we are blessed with a year-round growing season, and people have many reasons to be interested in food production gardening. Some want to save money on their food bills. Others like the freshness, flavor and wholesomeness of home-grown produce. For many, gardening is a relaxing way to exercise and enjoy being outdoors. Many families living in the city would like to grow their own fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Many city children are unaware of how food gets to their table. And there are families from other cultures who would like a place to grow traditional foods not available in the supermarket.

With the advent of modern urban planning and land prices, many people have newer houses on smaller-size lots. Association rules, codes, and ordinances may prohibit visible vegetable gardening. Public green spaces are often scattered and used by many different parties. One way to provide space for gardens is to explore a community garden concept.

Community gardens beautify neighborhoods and help bring neighbors closer together. Gardens have proven to be useful in reducing neighborhood crime, particularly when vacant, blighted lots are targeted for garden development. Community gardens provide safe, recreational green space in urban areas with little or no park land and can contribute greatly to keeping urban air clean.



Step by Step to your own Community Garden

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1. Get Your Neighbors Involved

There is a lot of work involved in starting a new garden. Make sure you have several people who will help you. Over the years, experience indicates that about ten interested parties is a good starting number to create and sustain a garden project.

Survey the residents of your neighborhood or the surrounding proposed area to inform them of your idea and to see if anyone is interested in participating. Hold monthly meetings of the interested group to develop and initiate plans, keep people posted on the garden's progress, and keep them involved in the process from day one.

2. Form an Organizing Committee

An organizing committee will help you make decisions with collaboration and will help to divide up the work effectively. This will be crucial when navigating the city requirements for starting the garden. The committee can be formed at any time during the process of starting a community garden, but it is wise to do so early on. This way, committee members can share in the many tasks of establishing the new garden. Typical functions *include*:

- * *Establishing garden rules (see sample)*
- * *Acting as garden liaison to the city*
- * Accepting and reviewing garden applications
- * Making plot assignments
- * Collecting garden dues (if any)
- * Paying bills such as water and the lease
- * Resolving conflicts

The typical community garden organization has at least two officers: a president and a treasurer. 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.



3. Find Land

Look around your neighborhood for a vacant lot that gets plenty of sun--at least six to eight hours each day. A garden site should be relatively flat (although slight slopes can be terraced). It should be relatively free of large pieces of concrete left behind from demolition of structures. Any rubble or debris should be manageable--that is, it can be removed by volunteers clearing the lot with trash bags, wheelbarrows, and pickup trucks. Ideally, it should have a fence around it with a gate wide enough for a vehicle to enter. It is possible to work with a site that is paved with concrete or asphalt by building raised beds that sit on the surface or using containers. You can also remove the asphalt or concrete to create areas for gardens, but such a garden will be much more difficult, expensive, and time-consuming to start. A site without paving and soil relatively free of trash and debris is best. Once the trash is removed, till under the weeds in order to preserve the topsoil. Remember to get permission from the land owner before doing any renovation.

The potential garden site should be within walking distance or no more than a short drive from you and the neighbors who have expressed interest in participating. If the lot is not already being used, make sure the community supports establishing a garden there.

It's best to select three potential sites in your neighborhood and write down their address and nearest cross streets. If you don't know the address of a vacant lot, get the addresses of the surrounding properties.

This will give you the ability to make an educated guess on the address of your site. We suggest you identify at least three potential sites because one or more might not be available for you to use for various reasons, and you want to end up with at least one that works out.

4. Find out Who Owns the Land

It is illegal to use land without obtaining the owner's permission. In order to obtain permission, you must first find out who owns the land.

Contact your local City Hall and find out what department keeps information pertaining to land and the land owners. In Fresno, visit the Hall of Records. The address is 2281 Tulare St. Room 201, Fresno, CA 93721. Speak to the person at the main counter, and give them the address of the parcel or parcels you are interested in. If you have only a few addresses, they will look it up for you. If you have a lot, there is a computer and map that you can use to find your information. The phone number is (559)488-3534 and office hours are 9AM – 4PM, Monday through Friday.

5. What About Water? Restrooms? Worker Safety Considerations?

While you are researching site ownership, contact the water service provider in your area to find out if your potential site(s) has an existing water meter. In Fresno, this is the City of Fresno Water Division, located at 1910 E. University Ave., Fresno, CA 93703. The phone number is (559)621-5300 and office hours are 8AM – 5PM, Monday through Friday. Call your water provider's customer service department, and ask them to conduct a "site investigation". They will need the same location information that you took with you to the Hall of Records.

Existing access to water will make a critical difference in the expense of getting your project started. Usually, if there is already water on site, with the land owner's permission you can just open an account with the Public Utilities Division and start watering your garden. You may need to have an upgraded water meter installed, but that will be information that the Water Division can either give you or they can direct you to the proper department to get one installed. If there has never been water service to that site, you will need to hire a contractor to connect a water line to the city main water line. This project will need permits.

It is important to check with the city planning department for restroom requirements at the outset of establishing the garden. The size and location of the garden will determine the requirements. Shade in the form of portable pop-up tents will be needed to provide a place to cool down when temperatures exceed 85°. Water should be provided for all workers in the garden to avoid heat illness.

6. Contact the Land Owner

Once you have determined that your potential site is feasible, write a letter to the landowner asking for permission to use the property for a community garden. Be sure to mention to the landowner the value of the garden to the community and the fact the gardeners will be responsible for keeping the site clean and weed-free (this saves landowners from maintaining the site or paying city weed abatement fees).

Establish a term for use of the site, and prepare and negotiate a lease. You should attempt to negotiate a lease for at least three years (or longer if the property owner is agreeable). Many landowners are worried about their liability for injuries that might occur at the garden. Therefore, you should include a simple "hold harmless" waiver in the lease and in gardener agreement forms, and begin looking for liability insurance.

7. Get Your Soil Tested

It might be advisable to have the soil at the site tested for basic fertility, pH, and for the presence of heavy metals. Depending on what you are testing for, a soil test can cost between \$30 and \$150 from private labs. Lists of labs are available by contacting the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for the Fresno area at (559)276-7494. Even if you are outside of the Fresno area, they can point you in the right direction. Here are a few things to look for that may send you to another parcel: Heavy metals, PCB's, motor & heating oil, asbestos, sewage, coli form & E. coli.

8. Visit the Planning Department

The information in this section is intended for gardens that are to be built in the future. Right now, the City of Fresno is undergoing zoning code changes. Community Gardens are not currently listed under any zoning, but this is being addressed in the upcoming changes. Now that you have found out who owns the land and received permission to use it, established that there is water on site, and tested the soil to find out it is safe, you need to go to the City and pick up an application for land use from the City Planning Department. This will help guide you on the next steps. In Fresno you will visit the Planning Division on the third floor of City Hall, located at 2600 Fresno St., Fresno, CA 93721. If you have questions, the phone number is (559) 621-8277. If you are outside of Fresno, contact your local City Hall for your local procedure.

9. Signing a Lease

Landowners of potential garden sites might be concerned about their liability should someone be injured while working in the garden. Your group should be prepared to offer the landowner a lease with a "hold harmless" waiver. This "hold harmless" waiver can simply state that, should one of the gardeners be injured as a result of negligence on the part of another gardener, the landowner is "held harmless" and will not be sued. Each gardener should be made aware of this waiver and should be required to sign an agreement in order to obtain a plot in the community garden. As well, the land owner may require proof of liability insurance prior to signing the lease.



10. Obtaining Liability Insurance

It is a good idea to look into obtaining some form of liability insurance for your garden. It is quite likely that the land owner will require it. There are several kinds of policies to consider. The most basic is called Commercial General Liability, which covers bodily injury and property damage to a third party caused when that third party is injured while on the premises.

If your garden has a board with a director and board members, another policy to consider is a professional liability called Director and Officers Liability. There are others that may fit your needs, so discuss your needs with your fellow gardeners and ask your agent lots of questions to determine what coverage you need.

For information on a variety of policies, contact Beth Allen at Nickerson Insurance Services. She is located in Lomita, CA and works with several community gardens on their insurance needs. Her phone number is (310) 326-6335 ext. 143 and her email is beth@nickersonins.com.

Once you have a lease signed by the landowner, obtained liability insurance, and have city approval, you are free to plan your garden!

11. Planning the Garden

Community members interested in the garden should 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. Hold two or three garden design meetings at times when interested participants can attend. Make sure that group decisions are recorded in official minutes, or that someone takes accurate notes. This ensures that decisions made can be communicated to others, and progress will not be slowed. A great way to generate ideas and visualize the design is to use simple drawings or photos cut from garden magazines representing the different garden components--flower beds, compost bins, pathways, arbors, etc. These can be repositioned on the drawing as the group discusses layout.

12. Creating a Garden Budget

Use your design to develop a materials list and cost out the project. You will need to comparison shop to get the lowest prices on fencing and other items. You might be surprised at the cost. A community garden with just the basic elements (listed above) typically costs between \$2,500 to \$7,000. At this point, your group might decide to scale back your initial plans and save some design ideas for a "Phase Two" of the garden. Keep in mind that improvements to the garden can be done over time. If you don't HAVE to have raised beds, don't spend the money on lumber.

13. Where to Get Materials and Money

While some start-up funds will be needed, through determination and hard work you can obtain donations of materials for your project. The Fresno Community Garden Coalition can help connect you with community businesses that might assist by providing anything from fencing to lumber to plants. The important thing is to ask. Develop a letter that tells merchants about your project and why it's important to the community. Attach a reasonable "wish list" to the letter. Try to personalize this letter for each business you approach. Drop it off personally with the store manager, preferably with a couple of cute kids who will be gardening assistants in tow. Then follow up your visit with a phone call. Be patient, persistent, and polite. Your efforts will pay-off with at least some of the businesses you approach. Be sure to thank these key supporters and recognize them on your garden sign, at a garden grand opening, or other special event. Don't forget to think outside the box on this one. Contractors and construction companies always have a ton of scrap and materials that just get thrown away. For instance, if you know of a friend or relative who is replacing an old shabby fence, ask them to give you the old fence wood if you haul it away. It makes great barriers for raised beds, work benches, compost bins, etc.

Money will be needed to purchase items not donated. Community fund-raisers such as car washes, craft and rummage sales, pancake breakfasts, and bake sales can be held. Funds may also be obtained by writing grants, but be aware that grant writing efforts can take six months or longer to yield results. You must also have a fiscal sponsor or agent with tax-exempt 501(c)3 status, such as a church or non-profit corporation, that agrees to administer the funds.



14. Garden Infrastructure

If you have not yet formed a Garden Committee, now is the time to do so. It's also time to establish garden rules, develop a garden application form for those who wish to participate, set up a bank account, and determine what garden dues will be if these things have not already been done. This is also the time to begin having monthly meetings (if you have not already done so). Also, if you haven't already contacted your city councilperson, he or she can be helpful in many ways including helping your group obtain city services such as trash pick-up. Their staff can also help you with community organizing and soliciting for material donations.

15. Get Growing!

Many new garden groups make the mistake of remaining in the planning, design and fundraising stage for an extended period of time. There is a fine line between planning well and too much planning. After several months of the initial research, designing, planning and outreach efforts, group members will very likely be feeling frustrated and will begin to wonder if all their efforts will ever result in a garden. That's why it's important to plant something on your site as soon as possible. People need to see visible results or they will begin to lose interest in the project. To keep the momentum going, as soon as you have signed a lease and obtained insurance, initiate the following steps even if you are still seeking donations and funds. Don't let the lack of a toilet or drip irrigation system keep you from planting.

a. Clean up the Site

Schedule community workdays to clean up the site. How many work days you need will depend on the size of the site, and how much and what kind of debris is on site.

b. Install the Irrigation System

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.

c. Plant Something

Once you have water, there are many options for in-garden 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 and will work just fine until a more permanent solution can be set up.) 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, or don't wish to risk having them vandalized, plant annual flower seeds which will grow quickly and can be replaced later. There are many organizations and stores that get rid of old seeds. The packages have a sell by date, but generally have fair germination rates.

d. 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.



16. 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, barbecue, 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, or other form of recognition. Pat yourselves on the back while you are at it!

Troubleshooting as the Garden Develops

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

1. Vandalism

Most gardens experience occasional vandalism. The best action you can take is to replant immediately. Generally the vandals become bored after a while and stop. Good community outreach, especially to youth and the garden's immediate neighbors is also important. Give out some extra produce to the neighbors to show your willingness to be a part of the community. Most important, don't get too discouraged. Keep a positive attitude and move forward. What about barbed wired or razor wire to make the garden more secure? Our advice--don't. It's bad for community relations, looks awful, and is sometimes illegal to install without a permit. Consider using plant material as an alternative physical deterrent to vandals. Plant bougainvillea, holly, cactus or pyracantha along your fence; their thorns will do the trick! Another idea is to plant a vandal's garden along the outside fence line for those who are just too tempted to resist your bounty.

2. Police

Invite the community officer from your local precinct to a garden meeting to get their suggestions on making the garden more secure. Community officers can also be a great help in solving problems with garden vandalism, dealing with drug dealers, and gang members in the area. The officers in your neighborhood will welcome the cultivation of any empty lot and they appreciate positive community activity just like you do. It makes their job easier and they may increase their passes by the garden.

3. Communication

Clear and well-enforced garden rules and a strong garden president can go a long way towards minimizing misunderstandings in the garden. But communication problems do 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 membership can take a vote to add new rules and make modifications to existing rules.

Language barriers are a very common source of misunderstandings. Community Garden leadership should make every effort to have a translator at garden meetings where participants are bilingual--perhaps a family member of one of the garden members who speaks the language will offer to help. Fresno Metro Ministry can also connect gardens with local translators for meetings or to resolve disputes between gardeners.

4. Trash

It's important to get your compost system going right away and to get some training for 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 neighbors and the property owner. Waste can also become a fire hazard. Make sure gardeners know how to sort trash properly, what to compost, and what to recycle. Trash cans placed in accessible areas are helpful to keep a neat and tidy garden.

5. Gardener Drop-Out

Typically there is a high rate of turnover in community gardens. Often, people sign up for plots and then don't follow through. Remember that gardening is hard work for some people, especially in the heat of summer. Be sure to have a clause in your gardener agreement which states gardeners forfeit their right to their plot if they don't plant it within one month, or if they don't maintain it. While gardeners should be given every opportunity to follow through, but if nothing changes after several reminders either by letter or phone, it is time for the club to reassign the plot. It is also advisable that the leadership conduct an annual community outreach campaign by contacting churches and other groups in the neighborhood to let them know about the garden and the availability of plots.

6. Weeds

Gardeners tend to visit their plots less during the wintertime. Lower participation, combined with rain, tends to create a huge weed problem in January, February, and March. Remember, part of your agreement with the landowner is that you will maintain the lot and keep weeds from taking over. In the late summer/early fall, provide gardeners with a workshop or printed material about what can be grown in a fall and winter garden. Also, schedule garden workdays for the spring in advance since you know you'll need them at the end of winter to clear weeds. If you anticipate that plots will be untended during the winter, apply a thick layer of mulch or hay to the beds and paths to reduce weed proliferation.

Good luck with your community garden project!

Helpful Contacts

UCCE Master Gardeners of Fresno County

<http://groups.ucanr.org/mgfresno/>

Helpline: (559)456-7563

Fresno Community Garden Coalition

www.fresnocgc.org

Fresno Metro Ministry

1055 N. Van Ness Ave., Suite H

Fresno, CA 93728

(559)485-1416

<http://fresnometmin.org>

City of Fresno Planning Department

Planning Department

City Hall

2600 Fresno St.

Fresno, CA 93721

(559)621-8277

www.fresno.gov

City of Fresno Water Division

1910 E. University Ave.

Fresno 93703

(559)621-5300

www.fresno.gov

Hall of Records

2281 Tulare Street, Room 302

Fresno, CA 93721

(559)488-3471

<http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/Departments.aspx?id=186>

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Fresno Service Center

4625 W. Jennifer Ave., Suite C

Fresno, CA 93722

(559)276-7494

www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov

American Community Garden Association

<http://communitygarden.org>

Sample Form

Community Garden Contract Rules, Terms, and Conditions for Participation

Introduction

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 and loss of your plot.

1. You will receive one verbal warning from the garden manager.
2. If no response or correction has been made, you will receive written notice two weeks later.
3. In another two weeks, if no response or correction has been made, you will receive written final notification that you have forfeited your gardening privileges and plot.
4. You will be allowed to reapply for another garden plot only after one year, and only at the discretion of the garden manager.

Rules, Terms, and Conditions for Participation

If accepted as a gardener, 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.
2. The fee for the use of the garden is <\$> per plot, per year (January 1 – December 31), due on or before (January 1). Fee for half a year after (beginning July 1 or later) is < \$ >. There are no refunds.
3. Once I have been assigned a plot, I will cultivate and plant it within two weeks. I will garden year round. My plot cannot be left fallow or unused for any period of three weeks or longer, more than one time a year.
4. My plot is (20 x 20) feet. I will not expand my plot beyond this measurement or into paths or other plots. I will keep all my plants within the limits of my garden plot and will not allow any plants to grow more than six feet high. I must keep my plot free of weeds, pests and diseases.
5. I will keep my plot, paths, and surrounding areas clean and neat. I will completely separate my trash into three groups: 1) dead plants, leaves, and other green waste plant parts; 2) rocks, stones, and asphalt; and 3) paper, plastic, cardboard, wood, metal, etc. I will put each type of trash only in the areas designated specifically for each. Anything I bring from my home I will take back home. I will not bring household trash and leave it at the <Garden Name> Community Garden.
6. If I now have more than one plot, I will give up my additional plots by the end of this gardening year (December 31).
7. I will not plant any illegal plant. 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. I will not bring weapons or pets or other animals to the garden.
8. Guests and visitors, including children, may enter the garden only if I accompany them. They must follow all rules, terms, and conditions stated here. I will supervise my children at all times when they are in the garden. I am solely responsible for the behavior of my guests.
9. The garden manager will assign me general garden maintenance tasks each month, and I must complete them by the end of the month that I am assigned them.
10. I will water my plot according to water-wise guidelines. (If I use more than the recommended amount of water, I will pay a fee each month to cover the cost of this additional water.

Sample Form: Garden Plot Registration

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone (home) _____ (work) _____

Did you have a garden plot with <garden name> Community Garden last year?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, do you want the same garden plot this year?

_____ Yes _____ No

If no, what area of the garden would you like to be in?

A plot fee of _____ is required before the plot can be assigned. This fee will go toward expenses of the community garden (water bills, plant/seed purchases, community tools, etc.).

A clean-up deposit of _____ is required before the plot can be assigned. The clean-up deposit will be returned in the fall after you have removed all of your plants and cleaned your plot.

Please mark three areas where you would be interested in volunteering during the season. Each gardener is expected to help during the season with general chores.

- ___ Site maintenance
- ___ Phone calls
- ___ Mailings
- ___ Assigning plots
- ___ Path maintenance
- ___ Construction projects
- ___ Watering
- ___ Annual planting
- ___ Fall cleanup
- ___ Composting
- ___ Social events

I have read the <garden name> Community Garden rules, terms and conditions for participation and understand that failure to meet the guidelines will result in loss of cleanup deposit fees and gardening privileges.

Signature _____ Date _____

Applicant

Sample Form: Garden Rules and Regulations

Garden rules should be established for every community garden. Rules are an excellent way to ensure everyone understands how the garden will operate and what is expected of each gardener. These rules are intended as a guide only. Each garden's rules will vary depending on the needs of each garden.

Garden Rules

1. Gardeners are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of their garden plot. Watering, weeding, harvesting and any other garden related maintenance are all the responsibility of the gardener. Gardeners may arrange for other gardeners to water their plots.
2. Tools will be made available for use during the regularly scheduled work time each week. A limited number of tools, hoses and watering equipment will be available in the community garden storage bin for use during non-scheduled work times. Regularly scheduled work times will be posted on the garden bulletin board.
3. Each gardener will be given one key to the garden and the storage bin for access to tools and watering equipment. Gardeners are responsible for bringing that key each time they work in the garden. Keep garden gate and storage bin locked at all times and return all tools.
4. Children are welcome in the garden but must be accompanied by an adult and must be supervised at all times.
5. Each gardener must complete a Release of all Claims form before any work in the garden can begin.
6. Garden plots should be cared for at least once a week. It is the gardener's responsibility to notify the coordinator if he or she is not able to care for their plot in any given week. If any plot remains unattended for more than three weeks that plot is subject to reassignment.
7. The application of herbicides (weed killers) to the garden plots is prohibited.
8. Assignment of garden plots will be awarded by a lottery system. Preference for next year's plots will be given to this year's participants first.
9. Plot fees are due in full before the garden season begins.
10. Gardeners may harvest vegetables and flowers from their garden only.
11. At the end of the growing season, gardeners are responsible for clearing their plot of all plant material and leaving the plot as they found it in the spring.
12. The Garden Committee is responsible for ensuring that the rules are followed at all times. The committee is made up of gardeners elected each year at the spring meeting.

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.

I, _____ give permission to
(property owner'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) (end date)

This agreement may be renewed with the approval of both the property owner and the community garden organization 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 hold 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 organization of any change in land ownership, development, or use 60 days prior to the change in status.

Property owner's signature

Date

Sample Form: Release of All Claims

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.

Release of All Claims

I, _____, am a participant in the <garden name> Community Garden. As a condition of being allowed to participate, I agree to the following:

1. I am duly aware of the risks and hazards that may arise through participation in the <garden name> Community Garden, and assume any expenses and liabilities I incur in the event of an accident, illness or other incapacity. If I have had any questions about the <garden name> Community Garden, its nature, risks or hazards, I have contacted the garden coordinator and discussed those questions with him or her to my satisfaction.

2. In consideration of being granted the opportunity to participate in the <garden name> Community Garden, I, for myself, my executors, administrators, agents and assigns do hereby release and forever discharge the Garden Committee, Garden Coordinator, volunteers, other gardeners, and the cooperating landowner from all claims of damages, demands, and any actions whatsoever, including those based on negligence, in any manner arising out of my participation in this activity. I understand that this Release means that, among other things, I am giving up my right to sue for any such losses, damages, injury or costs that I may incur.

I represent and certify that my true age is either 18 years old or, if I am under 18 years old on this date, my parent or legal guardian has read and signed this form. I have read this entire Release, fully understand it, and I agree to be legally bound by it.

Participant's Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Printed Name _____

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/Neighboring Apt./Home/Business/Church

Type and Proximity to Garden and Future Plots

Site Amenities:

Shed or Tool Box Site

Composting Site

Estimate of # of Plots

Visibility (safety and publicity)

Parking

Restroom Access

Power

Site History (parking lot/gas station/residential)

Vehicle Access

Shade Shelter

Neighborhood:

Interest/Involvement Level of Neighbors

Demographic Profile (Children/young adults/adults/senior citizens)

Crime (drugs/vandalism/violent crime/theft)

Animals (deer/raccoons from the hills/ dogs)

Quick Sketch of Property:

COMMUNITY GARDEN PLANNING WORKSHEET

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 _____
How many plots? _____ How many people? _____
Will there be plot fees? _____ If so, how much? _____
What do plot fees include? (water, tilling, tools, etc.) _____
What is the process for plot selection? _____
What about for last year's gardeners? _____
What are specific plot care requirements (weed control, etc.) _____
What if the plot is not planted or maintained? _____
Will a warning be given? _____ By whom? _____ After how long? _____
What should gardeners have accomplished by the closing date? _____
Will a portion of the fee be refunded if gardener leaves plot in good condition? _____
What are the rules on pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers? _____

If a garden OK's chemical use, what are application rules? (for example on windy days?) _____

What are the garden's policies?
Compost Bin and its maintenance _____
Water _____
Tools _____
Overripe/diseased vegetables _____
Structures/supports _____
Trash _____
Parking _____
Locking of gate _____
Are gardeners responsible for a common garden task? _____
Are gardeners responsible for weeding the paths around their plots? _____
Is it OK to grow tall or vining plants? _____
Are non-gardeners and children permitted in the garden? _____
What about pets? _____
Who should be notified if there is a problem in the garden? _____
What should a gardener do in case of an extended absence? _____
Will there be a treasurer? _____ A bank account? _____
Who will cut the grass on borders and boulevards? _____
Will the garden have a bulletin board or information kiosk? _____
Do gardeners want to order seeds or plants as a group? _____

Will the garden:
Set aside a plot for a food pantry? _____ Who will tend it? _____
Include plots accessible by wheelchair? _____
Have a picnic table, bench, trellis, shade area, or sandbox? _____
Set aside space for perennial plants (raspberries, strawberries) or fruit trees? _____
Have a flower border? _____ Who will tend it? _____
What about a spring work day? _____
Must gardeners attend group work day? _____ When? _____
What about a regular gardening time? _____
What about a harvest potluck? _____

Preserving the Garden: Elements of Sustainability

The circumstances of garden personnel can change suddenly, and important information that makes the garden function can disappear overnight. Being proactive by keeping detailed records and frequently updating them will eliminate the challenge of reconstructing this information and/or having to “reinvent the wheel”.

Be sure that at least three people know the logistics of the community garden and where information is located.

1. Bank Accounts

Bank Name:

Bank Address:

Bank Account number:

Name(s) on Bank Account:

Bank Statements mailed to:

2. Site/Landowner Contact information and lease agreement

Site Address:

Site Parcel Number:

Name of landowner/contact person:

Mailing address:

Phone:

Email:

Annual Fee (if any):

Term of Lease:

Comments:

3. Liability Insurance renewal

Name of Insurance Holder:

Contact person:

Mailing address:

Phone:

Email:

Policy Fee:

Policy Expiration Date:

4. Water system (What is the source of water for the garden?)

Water source: _____
(neighbor, water hydrant, on-site water system, etc.)

Billing Entity:

Name on Account:

Account Number:

Monthly Fee:

Approximate monthly bill due date:

5. Garbage pick-up (if applicable)

Name of Garbage Service:

Name on Account:

Account Number:

Monthly Fee:

Approximate monthly bill due date:

ID numbers on refuse containers assigned to garden:

6. Utility (PG&E) Service (if applicable)

Name of Utility:

Name of Account holder:

Account Number:

Approximate monthly bill due date:

7. Utility (phone) Service (if applicable)

Name of Utility:

Name of Account holder:

Account Number:

Approximate monthly bill due date:

8. Information about the organizations associated with the community garden

Name of organization/agency:

Relationship to the garden:

Contact person and title (if applicable):

Mailing address:

Phone:

Email:

9. Advocates for the Garden

City Council member:

County Supervisor:

Phone:

Email:

Neighborhood Watch Association:

10. Contact information for each garden member (holding a plot or otherwise) should be on file

Name:

Phone number:

Email address:

Mailing address:

Plot number (if applicable):

11. Garden Contact Information

Mailing Address (if not the coordinator):

Phone number:

Garden Email address:

Who is in charge of checking the email address:

Website Address:

Company Name of website host:

Contact info for website host:

Name of webmaster: