

The Garden Path - Implementation Steps



Having established the key success factors above, we now turn to recommended steps for organizing and operating a successful community garden. The implementation steps are in a checklist question format based on key questions that should be considered in the implementation phase. In reality, these steps won't always be followed in order, but they provide a possible path to follow and are laid out on the premise that gardens need to get organized first – both with respect of their own rules and their relationship with the landowner – before attention can be focused on building the garden itself.

1. Meet with Interested People and Develop a “Vision” for Garden

- Keep repeating the vision at all meetings
- Is a garden really needed and wanted?
- What kind should it be? Flower, vegetable, fruit?
- Who will be involved and who will benefit?

2. Identify Committed, Energetic Volunteers That Can Serve as Key Members

- Who is committed and has time for planning and implementation?
- Who is a good organizer and will be the garden coordinator?
- Who else can handle tasks like funding, partnerships, garden design, construction and communication?

3. Identify Resources Available and Accessible in your Community

- What skills and assets already exist in your team and network?
- What help will come from municipalities and other gardening groups?
- Which people already have experience in landscaping, soils, fencing, and finances?

4. Approach an Umbrella Organisation to Serve as the Sponsor for the Garden

- What about community associations, municipalities, churches, individuals, or private landholders?
- Who can help your group with garden design?
- Who can provide funding support, seeds, soil, insurance coverage, and fencing for the garden?
- Where can you find templates for vital functions i.e.: rules for members, constitution, applications for plots, volunteer applications, financial reports, garden layout, plot locations? (Hint: in our Appendix 1)
- Will the sponsoring ‘umbrella’ organisation’s credibility attract and encourage members, and help with funding?

5. Determine Rules and Put them in Writing

- Ground rules that help gardeners know what is expected of them and their organisation are vital to avoiding conflict and building co-operation in gardens. In many respects, these rules can be thought of as a Code of Behavior for typical situations like clean-up, compost, garden startup, and garden exit.
- What are member’s obligations regarding basic maintenance, watering, greenhouses, shared tools, access to the garden, or handling visitors?
- Do you have clear rules for breach of obligations and when a member is asked to leave?
- Do you have clear rules for waiting lists and when plots are re-assigned to newcomers?

6. Choose a Garden Site Wisely and Sign a Longer-term Agreement with the Landowner

- Does the site have sunshine (minimum of six hours of sunshine per day), water, and soil quality?
- What about transportation access – via cycling, walking, bus or vehicles?
- Do you have a fixed, long-term agreement with your institutional landowner partner?
- Will you sign a lease agreement or license of occupation with the landholder? (More information about this can be found in our [Street to Sky](#) Guides)
- What happens when the agreement expires? Are there options for renewal or exit upon dissolution?

7. Prepare and Develop a Site Plan

- Have you decided on whether to use soil planters or in ground garden beds?
- If planting in the ground, can you get your soil tested for contamination and develop a plan for improvement?
- Have you anticipated wildlife trespass difficulties? For example, are you planning appropriate fencing if you have deer or rabbits nearby?
- Have you addressed your water needs and rainwater management issues - cisterns, tap water, and ways to irrigate? Who is responsible for putting this infrastructure in place?

8. Design and Organize the Garden

- Have you decided how many plots are available and how they will be assigned?
- Is your garden going to be a mix of communal plots to share and individual plots to tend?
- Have you planned accessible pathways, garden plots, a tool shed, and entrances?
- On public land, have you considered how to keep your garden open to and welcoming of visitors while securing the garden?
- Have you planted flowers and shrubs around the garden edge? This promotes the good will of non-garden neighbors, pedestrians, and municipal officials

9. Plan for Children, Seniors, Gardeners of All Backgrounds, and Special-Needs Gardeners

- Remember that your garden grows “community”– so everyone should feel welcome.
- Have you thought about children’s plots – with easy to care berries or vegetables?
- Can wheelchairs or mobility walkers easily move to plots close to entrance?
- What about communal plots for newcomers? Will you be growing culturally relevant foods?
- Will there be education programs for those interested in learning?
- Is the site easily accessed by and welcoming to those facing food insecurity?
- Have you considered “giving tables” to share produce with neighbours or at local food markets?

10. Help Members Stay Connected with Each Other

- Have you considered ways to maintain “garden spirit and cooperation” such as newsletters, garden parties, and social media?
- Do your members want to share tools or storage facilities?
- Do you have a rain proof bulletin board in the garden?
- Do you have annual celebrations – i.e., for harvest season or at the spring opening?