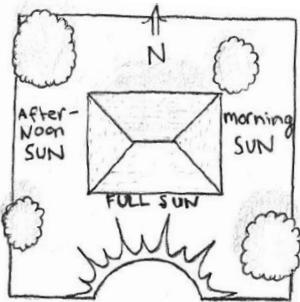

So You Want to Start a Community Garden?

What is a Community Garden or P-patch?

A community garden is a single piece of land gardened jointly by a group of people. The garden can be urban, suburban or even rural; located at a school, hospital or in a neighborhood on either public or private property. A community garden can provide fresh fruits, vegetables, flowers or plants as well as the sense of a community working together and a connection to the environment.

Getting Started: Site Selection



Sunlight:

- Find the sunniest portions of the property that are available for use as a garden.
- Consider various sides of buildings (even the north side), notice distance from large objects (building, hedge, trees).
- Also consider variations in summer and winter sun trajectory (sun lower in winter)

Utilities—Locate Any & All to avoid costly damage, this includes septic and stormwater facilities, as well as electric, gas, cable and the like. Call 811 to arrange a locate.

Access and Visibility:

Build the garden in a space where people will want to spend time or that they pass by every day during their regular routine. Should be available to people 7 days a week.

- **Out of sight = Out of mind:** If it is easy to see from a building or street, participants can manage the garden better, and vandalism is easier to deter.
- **Easy to get to and easy to work in;** is there ample parking? Level pathways?

Make a Dedicated Space

Annual garden beds should be separate from other landscape elements.

- Existing landscape plants will **out-compete your vegetables.**
 - Vegetable garden **soil** is managed intensively (yearly compost and fertilizer additions, higher water needs, cover cropping is desirable).
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Grade:	Avoid steeply sloped areas if possible, or it might be necessary to add terraces to prevent erosion and to create space that is workable and accessible with equipment when necessary.
Access to Water:	When possible, building the garden closer to a hose bib or spigot will make watering easier. Who will pay for water, which can be expensive in the dry summer months? Consider a lock for the water source with a combination for garden users.
Initial Soil Quality	Check soil conditions to find the best existing soil. Most new garden locations will not have soil that is nutrient rich enough to begin gardening in without addition of new soil and compost. Consider the potential of lead or other heavy metal contamination in urban locations especially.
Site Clearing:	If there are multiple spaces to work with, consider the work required to get the space ready for production. Will the initial clearing become a roadblock or are you ready to re-purpose an overgrown or unused space? Do weed control early & beware of areas colonized by noxious weeds—complete control may not be possible.
Fencing:	Consider possible animal issues and build fences accordingly. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Common wildlife damage: deer, rabbits, voles, moles, birds. o Vandalism can be a concern.

Getting Started: Garden Size & Configuration

Garden Size

- o How many plots will be built and of what size? Starting with a few plots first, and seeing how gardeners like their size and layout allows for adaptation when it's time to expand.
- o Will there be plots specifically dedicated to growing food for foodbanks? Who will tend and deliver produce?

Garden Size Suggestions

- o 30-100 square feet is a great beginner garden size
- o 100-300 square feet of space is adequate for most households
- o 300-600 for more serious gardeners wanting to cook frequently and preserve food for winter.
- o More than 600 square feet can be a serious "mini-farm" supplying large quantities of food during the main growing season and through the winter.
- o Size beds to be narrow to allow for access from sides without having to step into garden for ease of planting, maintenance, harvesting and to eliminate needing to step into garden which compacts soil.
- o If building raised beds: consider a size that corresponds to standard lumber sizes—this will avoid having to cut lumber and often reduces costs.

Bed Shape:

- o Rectangle: easy to manage, easy to build, easy to work in.
- o Comb-shaped/Keyhole Garden: to maximize growing space in tricky spaces.
- o Organic shapes: curved edges to match the landscape or sense of aesthetics.

Dimensions:

- **Bed Width:** no more than 4 feet wide, 2 or 2.5 feet if access is only from one side.
- **Bed Length:** variable, 8'-12' is most common (consider standard lumber lengths).
- **Bed Depth:** 12" at least, 18" or more is ideal especially if there is no access to subsoil.
- **Paths:** 2 feet wide, add a 3 or 4 foot main pathway when possible (need room for equipment access?)
- **Other Features:** sitting area, arbors, trellis or other plant supports, potting tables, tool sheds.

Garden Structure:

- **Wood-framed Beds:** dimensional lumber, or large timbers: cedar, fir, juniper
- **Mounded Beds:** add stones or other border to control soil, improve drainage
- **Terraced Beds:** timbers, stone, blocks
- **Container Gardens:** clay, wood, plastic, self-watering

Soil:

- **Start with a Soil Test:** identify pH and soil nutrient levels, any contamination. Determines starting point for what soil amendments to add in what quantities. Local lab tests at <http://www.twisslabs.com/>
- **Build Healthy soil:** goal is to improve soil quality over time. Add compost each season to replenish soil. (New garden: start with good, quality topsoil and mulch with organic compost.). Older gardens—use soil test results to determine if and when fertilizers are needed & in what quantity. Consider cover cropping.

Irrigation is necessary in our dry summers:

- Drip irrigation is recommended: 1/4" tubing, 1/2" tubing, t-tape or soaker hoses
- Timers at spigot can help manage irrigation, saving time and water

Other Tips & Considerations for Community Garden Success

- Do you have a high enough population density to support a community garden—are there condos, apartments or small urban lots in your area? Start small and found out what your community needs and wants.
- Gather supporters from all parts of the community to publicize, finance, create and sustain the garden—you'll need all of these groups to have continued success.
- Do you want to use organic or conventional methods at the garden?
- Who owns the property and what does the insurance there cover for liability of people using the garden other than the land owner?
- Carefully craft an agreement for plot rental users with a waiver of liability that has been reviewed by a legal authority on such matters
- Access to restrooms during daylight hours is a necessity.

- o Tool storage—security and easy access to a variety of tools in sufficient quantity.
- o Good area lighting is important for parking, shed and garden areas for safety and reduction of vandalism.

How WSU Kitsap Master Gardener Program Can Help You

- o Come see what a demonstration garden or p-patch looks like! Visit our Master Gardener Learning Gardens in Kitsap for ideas on layout, types of plants grown, exposure, etc on a day when MGs will be there so that you can ask questions related to what you'd like to try yourself. Our Master Gardeners coordinate two community gardens in Kitsap—one at Raab Park in Poulsbo and one at Blueberry Park in Bremerton. See our website for locations and times MGs are at the gardens.
<http://county.wsu.edu/kitsap/gardening/Pages/LearningGardens.aspx>
- o Master Gardener volunteers are available to provide basic advice on setting up gardens, what to consider and where to find helpful resources. Contact the Horticulture Educator to make arrangements.
- o Each year our Master Gardeners offer a series of classes called: "Organic Vegetable Gardening: Gardens you can eat!" Usually held in late winter, classes are full days on 4 Saturdays and teach all the basics of where to start, what to grow and tips for success. Scholarships are available. Email kitsapvegclass@gmail.com , call our office contact below or see our website calendar more information.

Web & Print Resources to Learn more:

American Community Garden Association:

<http://www.communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php>

Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades: the Complete Guide to Organic Gardening, 6th Edition, Steve Solomon, 2007. Sasquatch Books, 356 pages, 10" x 7", \$21.95 (paper).

The Maritime Northwest Garden Guide: Planning Calendar for Year-Round Organic Gardening, Carl Elliot and Rob Peterson, 2000. Seattle Tilth, 8.5 x 11", 77 pages, (paper).

The Timber Press Guide to Vegetable Gardening in the Pacific Northwest. Lorene Edwards Forkner, 2013. Timber Press, 256 pages, 7.5 x 9", \$19.95 (paper).

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