

COMMUNITY GARDENING

growing food, growing community



The benefits

Community gardens are places where people come together to grow fresh food, to learn, relax and make new friends.

Community gardeners know that sharing land to grow food and other plants builds a sense of place and community.

The benefits of community gardening include:

- easy access to fresh, nutritious food
- a sense of achievement that comes through growing some of your own food needs
- making friends with people in the neighbourhood

- learning the skills of gardening, shared decision making and cooperation, all of which are necessary to successful community gardens
- healthy outdoor exercise
- participating in a constructive and productive recreational activity
- improving the local environment.

Research in 2005 by Dr Bruce Judd and Dr Rob Samuels of the AHURI UNSW-UWS Research Centre found that community food gardening, as part of a community development strategy, was effective in reducing the incidence of crime on housing estates.

The Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network is a national agency that links, supports, advises, educates and advocates for community gardeners and city farmers.

www.communitygarden.org.au



**Community gardens —
people & place,
food & friends...**



Safe places for families... productive places for people of all ages... community gardening offers fresh food, learning and enjoyment in the company of others

Types of community gardens...

Community gardens are found on land owned by local government, schools, churches and on state government housing estates.

There are two types of community gardens:

- shared gardens, in which gardeners work in the whole garden, doing whatever is needed at the time and

taking a share of what they grow

- allotment gardens, in which individuals or families have their own garden bed.

Many community gardens combine shared and allotment areas. Allotment holders are expected to help maintain the common areas of the community garden.

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What happens in community gardens?

GROWING FOOD

Growing vegetables, herbs and fruit is the main use of community gardens. Gardeners may grow a selection of the vegetables and herbs they usually eat or they might grow special crops, such as spices and flowers.

GROWING FLOWERS, ORNAMENTAL AND NATIVE PLANTS

Flowers are grown near vegetable gardens because they attract pollinating insects that help our vegetables to fruit and set seed. They also attract predatory insects that eat insect pests.

Ornamental and native plants such as shrubs and trees are grown to attract birds and to bring shade into the community garden. Rare native plants can be grown to produce seeds to harvest and plant elsewhere.

EATING

Community gardeners often share the cooking and eating of the plants they grow. Sharing food is a proven way to make new friends.

SOCIALISING

Community gardens are places to meet your neighbours. A shelter, such as a pergola, is a useful addition to community gardens. As well as offering shelter from sun and rain, a table and chairs can be set up in the shelter for sharing food, holding meetings, relaxing and socialising.

COOKING IN THE COMMUNITY GARDEN

If a community garden has a simple barbecue or gas cooker, those with cooking skills can pass them on to help others prepare simple, nutritionally balanced meals using herbs and vegetables grown in the garden.

ARTS IN THE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Some gardens have an 'arts in the community garden' team that uses the garden as a venue for performance such as music, singing and readings. They offer arts workshops like mosaic making and sculpture made from discarded items. The finished works can decorate the garden.

CELEBRATION

Some community gardens hold celebrations to recognise special times of year such as the solstice and equinox, to celebrate the fruiting of particular plants (such as a chilli festival featuring lessons on how to cook and use chillies and celebrating the diversity of chillies) or to celebrate the annual arrival of migratory bird species, such as the annual Kingfisher Festival at CERES, Melbourne.

SOLITUDE

Design a secluded 'quiet corner' into the community garden where gardeners and visitors can relax, read or be by themselves.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Gardens may offer courses and workshops to the public on skills such as cooking, gardening, conserving water, recycling, making compost and reducing energy use in the home. Some community gardens have found grants to install and demonstrate renewable technologies such as solar-electric lighting, greywater systems, composting toilets and solar cookers.

GARDENING SPACE AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

Local schools may make use of community gardens for educational purposes. A few gardens, such as Northey Street City Farm in Brisbane and CERES in Melbourne, offer educational services that link the community garden to the school curriculum.

FARMERS MARKETS

Both CERES and Northey Street City Farm have weekly farmers or organic markets where farmers from the region sell directly to the public. CERES Urban Orchard project makes it possible for home gardeners with excess fruit from their trees, and other produce, to swap with each other.

Benefits to local government

Local government may be able to arrange the use of community gardens to demonstrate and offer workshops in the practices they promote to the public, such as home composting, recycling and water conservation.



Local government can help

Councils can assist community gardeners by providing land, small grants to buy tools, equipment and a lockable shed for tool storage, erection of a shelter, providing insurance and by advising on site design and site safety.

A local food initiative

Community gardens are part of the move towards local foods. By providing some of their own food, community gardeners not only engage in practical self-help, they reduce the transportation of food over long distances and the consumption of fuels and production of pollution that is part of it.

Community gardeners are producers, not passive consumers. They are active citizens engaged in improving their neighbourhoods.



Australian City
Farms & Community
Gardens Network



PRODUCED BY...

AUSTRALIAN CITY FARMS & COMMUNITY GARDENS NETWORK (ACF&CGN)
www.communitygarden.org.au

Text and photo by Russ Grayson and Fiona Campbell

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