Ten Steps to Successful Community Gardening

1) **Organize first: organize early**
   a) Ideally minimum of six months before garden season
   b) Talk to local groups with existing community gardens
   c) Collect names of interested people
   d) Conduct a meeting(s) of any interested people
      i) Neighbors, tenants, community organizations
      ii) Aim for at least 10 committed people or families
   e) Discuss the vision
      i) Garden with individually “owned” plots
      ii) Shared garden for community use
      iii) Communal gardens for food pantries
      iv) School/children’s garden
      v) Agency garden
      vi) Demonstration/education garden

2) **Form a planning committee**
   a) Committed well-organized people
   b) Divide and conquer - possible sub-committees:
      i) Funding/acquisitions and partners
      ii) Work day organizers
      iii) Construction
      iv) Communication and publicity
      v) Education
      vi) Policy, rules and guidelines

3) **Identify the mission and goals**
   a) Put them in writing
   b) Mission statement
   c) Goals - short term and long term

4) **Identify all resources**
   a) People within group
      i) Evaluate gardening skills of committee members
      ii) Identify garden mentors within committee (if needed)
b) People within community
   i) Should be credible
   ii) Possible garden mentors outside your committee
       (1) University of Illinois Extension [web.extension.illinois.edu](http://web.extension.illinois.edu)
           (i) Master Gardener volunteers
       (2) Garden clubs

c) Gather information
   i) UI Extension
   ii) Public library
   iii) Internet resources

d) Identify resources – supplies and materials
   i) Identify availability of free or low cost supplies

e) Identify Income and Expenses
   i) Funding for supplies, tools, seeds and plants
   ii) Self-supporting with memberships, plot fees or sale of produce?
   iii) Rely on donations?

5) **Identify sponsor(s)**

   a) Possible sponsors
      i) Local churches
      ii) Landscape/garden businesses
      iii) Park districts
      iv) Municipalities/ villages
      v) Hospitals/health centers

   b) Approach a sponsor
      i) Monetary donations
         (1) Grants
         (2) Supplies
      ii) In kind donations
         (1) Land usage
         (2) Tilling
         (3) Expertise

   c) Give proper credit to sponsors

6) **Select a site**

   a) Make a list of potential sites
b) Match site to vision
   i) Vegetable gardens – need at least 6 hours sun
   ii) Water availability
   iii) Easy and safe access – near to community of gardeners, parking, handicap accessible, safety
       issues
   iv) Site history
   v) Soil quality – type and contaminants
   vi) Once site is selected – get it in writing!
       (1) Use agreements
       (2) Lease agreements
       (3) Address insurance & liability issues
       (4) Cost of site usage and any necessary improvements

7) Prepare site and create design
   a) Site preparation
      i) Soil testing – including lead and cadmium
      ii) UI Extension soil testing labs information http://urbanext.illinois.edu/soiltest
      iii) Litter cleanup
      iv) Till in fall if possible
   b) Create design
      i) Functional
      ii) Plot size and arrangement
         (1) Variety of sizes
      iii) Pathways - minimum of 3 feet wide
         (1) Type of path - grass (who mows?) or mulch
         (2) Planned method of tillage
      iv) Tool storage
      v) Compost area
      vi) Water - easy access for all areas

8) Develop rules & guidelines
   a) Put in writing
   b) Have gardeners involved in development
   c) Can be simple to specific
   d) Determine application/membership process
      i) Who is eligible?
      ii) Is it a membership?
iii) Are fees involved?
iv) Who collects and maintains fees?
v) How will fees be used?

e) Address garden issues
i) Weed tolerance
ii) Allowable structures
iii) Communal tools?
iv) Time frame – opening and closing date
v) Allow perennial crops such as asparagus, rhubarb, horseradish, herbs or overwintering crops
vi) Pesticide usage – organic or not
vii) Follow pesticide applicator license requirements

f) Address people issues
i) Pets and children
ii) Cigarette smoking
iii) Drugs and alcohol
iv) Theft and vandalism
v) Consequences of violating rules

9) Initiate regular communication
a) Possibilities
   i) Regular meetings/educational programs
   ii) Social media
   iii) Email
   iv) Telephone – phone trees
   v) Website
   vi) Newsletter
   vii) On-site community bulletin board
   viii) Suggestion box

10) Celebrate success
a) Share produce - share harvest baskets with sponsors and neighbors
b) Harvest parties - grilling in the garden party
c) Recipe exchange - tomato tasting
d) Media coverage – get the word out

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