



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMUNITY GARDENING

What is a community garden?

It is any group of people that come together to garden. Community gardens come in many different shapes and sizes. They can be large or small, on the ground or on rooftops, in plots or in planters. And they can be a mix of all of these things. They don't have to be "communal" either, where everyone shares the work and the harvest. Gardeners can have their own individual plot within the community garden and can also join with others to grow some crops communally. Like zucchini, for example. Squash, zucchini and other plants in the squash family can often be such vigorous growers that they can take over an entire plot and often neighbouring plots as well. Community gardens will often designate a communal squash plot where people can share the work and the harvest. Another good crop to plant communally is corn. If every gardener had 5 or 6 corn plants in their plot, the tall corn from one plot would shade neighbouring plots. By planting corn communally in one large plot this problem is solved and the corn will actually grow better because it needs to be planted in a "block" for better pollination. So every community garden is different and is determined by what the gardeners themselves want.

How many community gardens are there in Toronto?

Toronto now boasts over 242 community gardens, 124 of them in Toronto Community Housing, plus 12 municipal allotment gardens. The total number of individual plots probably totals well over 5000. There are new gardens starting up all of the time and we don't know all of them.

What is the difference between a community garden and an allotment ?

Allotment plots are administered by the various (former) municipalities of Toronto. They are usually larger than community plots and there is a fee to rent a plot. As well, they aren't usually located within neighbourhoods, so they might not be within an easy walk of the gardeners. There are plots at Leslie Street Spit, High Park, and a few other places. There is usually a long waiting list to get an allotment plot. Community gardens plots, while smaller, are close to home and all decisions concerning the running of the garden are made by the gardeners themselves.

What can you grow in a community garden?

Community gardeners grow many things, not just vegetables. You can grow fruit, herbs, flowers, you can grow a butterfly garden, a bird garden or a woodland garden. Most community gardens start out as vegetable gardens but will often have a communal area where flowers, both annual and perennial, are grown. Often this flower garden will have a particular focus, like a rose garden or garden that attracts butterflies and provides habitat for them.

How much time do I need to spend in the garden every week?

Most gardens require that every gardener must spend enough time in his or her garden so that each plot is kept properly maintained and as weed free as possible. Most gardens hold a couple of group work days every year, usually for spring and fall clean up. Often there will be an improvement project that the garden committee organizes, like building a seating area or a children's garden area. Every community garden sets their own rules about required participation for these group work days.

How much does it cost to join a community garden?

Every garden is different. If they charge anything at all, it is usually between \$15 and \$50 depending upon the size of the plots. Some gardens don't charge anything at all.

How can I find a community garden that is near me?

Call the **FoodLink Hotline** at 416. 392-6655. We have a complete list of all of the community gardens in Toronto, as well as community kitchens, foodbanks, baby food making classes, and lots more things all to do with food.

How can I start a community garden?

First, talk to your friends and neighbours about it. If you can get at least 5 people who will commit to the project, then look for some land close by. The next step is to call FoodShare's Urban Agriculture Program at 416 363- 6441 ext 227 to help you get started. Every year, usually in mid winter, we hold a course on community garden start up.

What is the Toronto Community Garden Network?

The Toronto Community Garden Network works to encourage a healthy community gardening movement in the City of Toronto, supporting and linking community gardeners. We do this by holding fun events throughout the year so that gardeners from all over Toronto can come together. Events include a mid-winter mini conference, Seedy Saturday in early spring, and potluck get togethers during the summer.