Berkeley Community Garden Handbook

Created by the Berkeley Climate Action Coalition
Land Use Working Group
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I. Introduction: Why Start a Community Garden?

The city of Berkeley has shown overwhelming support for community gardens. There are many benefits to starting a community garden. Here are just a few of the reasons why you should get involved in a community garden or help start one:

- ✓ **Access to Healthy Food**
  Community gardens provide access to nutritionally rich foods that may otherwise be unavailable to low-income families and individuals.
- ✓ **Nutrition and Improvement of Individual Overall Health**
  Community gardeners tend to eat more fruits and vegetables improving their overall health. Probiotics found in the earth's soil are beneficial for one's digestive health.
- ✓ **Physical Activity and Exercise**
  Gardening provides opportunity for light stretching and exercise. This improves individual health and reduces stress.
- ✓ **Carbon Impact Reduction**
  Community gardens increases consumption of food from local sources, reducing carbon emissions needed to transport food. Gardens also sequester a small amount of carbon.
- ✓ **Adaptation and Food Security**
  Community gardens increase the resilience and adaptive capacity of cities to climate change by cooling areas, providing a source of fresh affordable food, and providing supplemental income when extra produce is sold.
- ✓ **Community Building and Crime Reduction**

Community gardens provide a place for people to meet their neighbors and for people of diverse backgrounds to interact and share traditions. This fosters a sense of pride and stewardship in the community which in-turn reduces crime.

✓ **Habitat Restoration**
Pollinators are provided with enough undisturbed habitat to maintain their life cycles.

✓ **Water Conservation and Purification**
Community gardens with a drip system use less water than a lawn of equal size. Gardens help contain storm water keeping contaminated run-off out of our watersheds.

✓ **Air Pollution Reduction**
Community gardens help sequester and trap air pollutants that cause or aggravate respiratory illnesses such as asthma.

✓ **Education**
Community gardens offer opportunities for individuals to engage in constructive activities, contribute to the community, learn about where food comes from, learn practical math skills, and raises awareness about environmental sustainability.

II. Choosing a Site

There are certain things every garden needs in order to be healthy and useful to the community. Spend some time prioritizing the criteria below.

- Size of land plot
- Six hours of direct sunlight (preferably south-facing)
- Accessibility to community (visible, flat, availability to transit)
- Soil contaminants and toxicity
- Water access
- Proximity to sources of pollution
- Public land v. private land

III. Getting Permission

In order to start gardening on your site, you'll need permission from the owners and some documents that outline the terms of agreement.

Public Land

There are currently 6 community gardens in Berkeley operating on public land coordinated by the City of Berkeley. The existing gardens are overseen by Berkeley's Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront (PRW) Department, in partnership with the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative.

The opportunity for establishing new community gardens on public land will vary depending on ownership (BART, City, State, etc…) and restrictions at the site. If the public land owner is able and willing to allow the land to be used for community gardening, it is possible that a licensing agreement or lease could be issued for that purpose. Here is the information to get in contact with the PRW department:

> *http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/PRW/*
> *2180 Milvia Street, Berkeley, CA 94704*
> *TEL: (510) 981-6700, TDD: (510) 981-6903, FAX: (510) 981-6710*
> *Office Hours: Mon-Fri 8am-5pm,*
> *Email: parks@cityofberkeley.info*

Roger Miller works for the PRW department, and is the Secretary of the Parks & Recreation Commission. He would also be a good general contact for licensing and/or leasing of city land for community gardening.

> *Roger Miller*
> *Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department*
> *City of Berkeley*
> *TEL: (510) 981-6715*
> *Email: rmiller@cityofberkeley.info*

Private Land

Private owners often hesitate to lease their valuable land out to a group who would want to use it for several years. Here are some steps to start the process of negotiating with a private land owner:

1. First, identify the owner. Here are some websites to find out who owns the lot:
   a. http://www.acgov.org/assessor/maps2.htm
   b. http://www.cityofberkeley.info/ppop
2. Contact the owner, describing to him/her your intentions, goals, structure, and community support. Request a time to meet.
3. If he/she is amenable to the idea, draft a Lease Agreement together. An example Lease Agreement can be found here, which you can modify to suit both parties: http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/ground-rules.
4. If you personally do not want to enter into a Lease Agreement, then consider partnering with a non-profit organization in the area to sign the lease. An example might be the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative or Berkeley Partners for Parks:

> *http://www.ecologycenter.org/bcgc/*
> *P.O. Box 2801*
> *Berkeley, CA 94702*
> *TEL: 510-883-9096*

> *http://www.bpfp.org/*
> *P.O. Box 13673*
> *Berkeley, CA 94712*
> *TEL: 510-849-1969*

5. Find out the Zoning District of your site: http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/Planning_and_Development/Home/Zoning_by_Address.aspx.
6. Depending on what you want to do and where, zoning and building permits may be needed from the City of Berkeley's Planning and Development (Planning) Department. The Planning Department can give you specific information based on your site and plans, but in general:

a. Community gardens are not defined within the Zoning Ordinance; however, many Zoning Districts, including all the residential districts and most commercial districts, allow for "parks" as an "as-of-right" use. As such, zoning permits could be issued for community gardening with a Zoning Certificate (ZC) in these locations. A ZC is currently $180.
b. In Zoning Districts where "parks" are not an "as-of-right" use, obtaining a zoning permit may be possible through an Administrative Use Permit (AUP) or a Use Permit (UP). This will be a lengthier and more expensive process. The specific details will be dependent on the site location.
c. Accessory buildings and structures that might be placed at a community garden, such as a fence, shed, or gazebo, can often be built without a zoning or building permit. Permits are always required when fences are over 6 feet high or when accessory buildings exceed 120 square feet and/or one-story.
d. Large tanks or cisterns used for water storage and irrigation may require zoning and building permits. For example, if a pump is included, an electrical permit is needed.

IV. Community Outreach

It might be obvious, but in order for any community garden to be successful, you first need the support of the community. Spend some time early on in your efforts to reach out to community members, gauge their interest, assess their needs, and get their contact information. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- Neighborhood door-to-door outreach
- Sign-up sheet at local plant nurseries
- Canvassing at local farmers markets
- Email or call members of community who have shown interest

V. Costs of Starting a Community Garden

The costs of starting a community garden can vary greatly depending on size, complexity, and materials, but should not be underestimated. Below is a table that gives an idea of materials that would be needed and a general cost per amount. Blank spaces are left for you to fill in any additional needed materials.

Item or service	# of units	Estimated cost/unit	Potential places to purchase/ask for donations
Water hookup		$10,000	
Lumber for beds	800	$4,000	Economy Lumber
Concrete Blocks for beds	$1.48 a block x 136 per bed x 5 beds 40x4ft	$1,006.40	Lowe's
88'x102' Wire and Wood Fence	1	$4,675	Just Fencing
Mulch	100	$397	Ponderosa Tree Service, Mountain Magic

Two options for same item!

Topsoil	46 yards	$1679	Crown Hill Materials
Fertilizer	10 * 4 lb bags	$72.8	Kellogg Organic
Seeds	20	$50	Baker Creek, USA Seed Store
Shovels	5	$75	Home Depot
Water bill	Per year	$500	EBMUD may offer discounts
8'x10' Storage Container	1	$2,300	Mobile Mini
Homemade shed	1	$500-$1,000	Reclaimed lumber and doors at Urban Ore and or lumber store

Free compost is available from the city on the last Saturday of each month, February through October. Go to the Berkeley Marina on Marina Blvd., across from the Double Tree Hotel. Get there before it starts at 7:30 am as supplies go fast. For more information, call the Berkeley Marina office at (510) 981-6740. This is sponsored by the PRW Department.

If no water service has ever been established, setting up new service is likely to cost thousands of dollars. However, if the site already has an existing meter or piping from the main, opening a new account is relatively low cost, about $36. If the account is established as "irrigation only", no sewer service fees are assessed, representing a significant savings over residential or commercial rates. New service can be established by contacting EBMUD's customer service number at 1-866-403-2683.

If establishing water service is infeasible, putting water tanks on site may be a good option. These tanks could be filled by a water trucking service. EBMUD does not require permits for tanks, but the City of Berkeley may require zoning, plumbing, and/or building permits depending on the size and location of the tanks. If they include pumps, electric permits are needed from the City of Berkeley.

If you are developing your garden independently, you may want to consider obtaining 501(c)3 tax-exempt status, or partnering with a tax-exempt organization such as Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative, to become eligible to receive tax deductible charitable donations. You can also request funding from foundations, such as:
• Walter Haas Foundation
• East Bay Community Foundation
• Berkeley Community Foundation

VI. Operating the Garden

Community Garden Guidelines

To help you run your garden, you will first need to designate who will make decisions and how responsibilities will be shared. Work with others to draft Community Garden Guidelines that present these roles clearly, and have all gardeners sign it in order to start gardening. Another

good resource is ChangeLab Solution's Legal Toolkit for Community Gardens (http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/ground-rules), and other guides are listed in the Resources section below. Below are the key elements of it which you will need to consider:

1. Decide on how decisions will be made. Will there be a democratic process with simple majority? How will votes be cast? Will a Steering Committee decide?
2. Establish a process for electing Steering Committee members. Some important roles include: Garden Coordinator, Secretary, Treasurer, Special Events Coordinator, and Community Relations. Not all of these roles are necessary, and some can even be collapsed into one person's responsibility, for example a Secretary-Treasurer.
3. Establish garden fees or membership dues. These will help with common area maintenance, tools, water bills, improvements, and repairs.
4. Clearly define the number of hours the garden will be open for the public, supervised by a plot owner. These open hours can be used for community education or special events.
5. Clearly define number of meetings plot holders must attend, and minimum number of hours per year towards common area maintenance and supervising open hours.
6. Clearly define what can be grown and how it should be harvested. If the garden is on public land, it cannot be sold, but can be donated. If it is on private land, the harvest may be sold.
7. Establish an open and equitable process for waitlisters.
8. Consider purchasing liability insurance in case someone is hurt in the garden.

Training the Gardeners

Individuals all come to the community garden with different levels of experience in gardening and different skills. The community garden should be an opportunity to share these skills and learn from each other. It is open to people new to gardening and with various levels of experience. Here are some ideas to help identify people's skill levels, aspects of gardening they would like to learn and how to foster an atmosphere of sharing and community:

- Introduction and open forum for individuals new to the garden including
- Booklet given to each new member includes the basic layout and operation of the community garden and basic planting and harvesting tips
- Handout a questionnaire new members can fill out detailing their skills, experience level and what kind of classes they would like and or ideas they have
- Hands-on classes and skills swap days given by different community garden members or guest speakers
- Lending Library with books on different aspects of gardening
- Members could partner with each other based on experience or skills they would like to swap
- Monthly potluck, open forum and check-in
- Community garden members email list serve for questions, concerns or ideas concerning the garden

VII. Resources

Guides for How to Start a Community Garden
- Rebel Tomato

http://www.communitygarden.org/rebeltomato/roots/figuring-costs.php#cost
- American Community Gardening Association
http://www.communitygarden.org/
- Start a Community Garden
http://www.urbanharvest.org/cgardens/startguide/budgeting.html#raisedbeds
- A Legal Toolkit for Community Gardens (ChangeLab Solutions)
http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/ground-rules

Garden Materials
- Berkeley Tool Library (Berkeley)
http://www.berkeleypubliclibrary.org/about_the_library/neighborhood_branches/tool_lending_library/
- Economy Lumber (Oakland)
https://www.economylumberco.com/
- Just Fencing (San Pablo)
http://www.justfencing.com/ContactUs.html
- Crown Hill Materials (Vallejo)
http://www.crownhillmaterials.com/
- USA Seed Store
http://www.usaseedstore.com/
- Green Waste Recycle Yard (Berkeley)
http://www.greenwasterecycleyard.com/contactus.htm
- Ponderosa Tree Service (Berkeley)
http://www.ponderosatreeservice.com/

Garden How-To's
- How to build a storage shed
http://www.diynetwork.com/how-to/how-to-create-a-storage-shed/index.html
- Soil testing
http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/gama/
- Companion Plants
http://www.belizeagreport.com/companionplants.pdf
- How to Build Compost Bins
http://www.treehugger.com/lawn-garden/4-diy-compost-bins-you-can-build-one-day-video.html
- How to start seeds indoors
http://www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/starting-seeds-indoors
- Natural ways to keep slugs out of your garden
http://green.thefuntimesguide.com/2009/08/natural_garden_slug_control.php
- Natural Pest Control For your Garden
http://green.thefuntimesguide.com/2009/08/natural_garden_slug_control.php
- Vegetable Garden Plan and Design
http://home.howstuffworks.com/designing-a-vegetable-garden.htm
- Getting your soil to the correct PH for growing vegetables
http://www.savvygardener.com/Features/soil_ph.html

City/County Resources
- City of Berkeley Organization Chart
http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/ContentDisplay.aspx?id=31570
- Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront (PRW) department

http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/PRW/ | TEL: (510) 981-6700
- Alameda County Assessor Parcel Maps: to identify owners of vacant lots
http://www.acgov.org/assessor/maps2.htm
- Berkeley Zoned Areas
http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/Planning_and_Development/Home/Zoning_by_Address.aspx

Funding Opportunities
- Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Foundation
http://www.haasjr.org/
- East Bay Community Foundation
http://www.ebcf.org/
- Berkeley Community Foundation
http://www.berkfund.org/