

Handbook for Starting a Community Garden

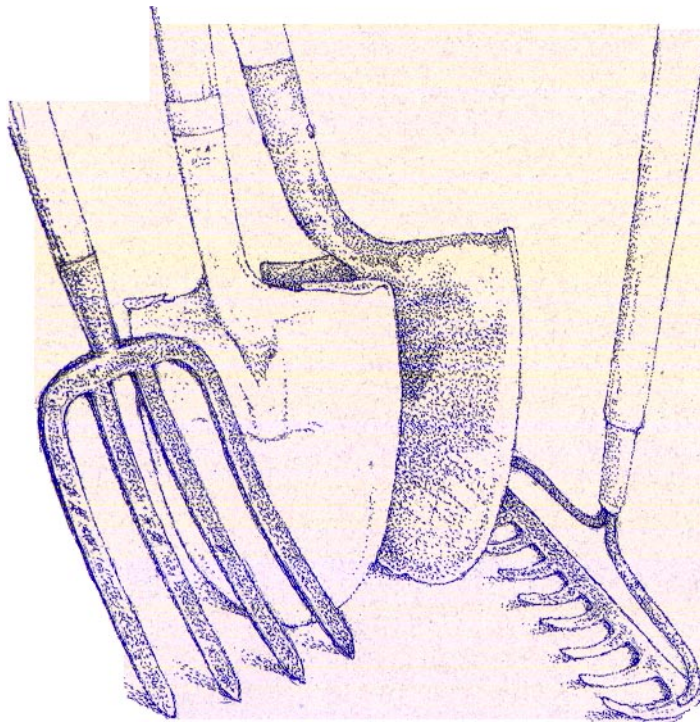


Illustration by Tom Benevento



Handbook for Starting a Community Garden

Madison, Wisconsin 2004 – 2005

Thanks for your interest in launching a community garden!

This handbook was prepared at Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc (CAC) by the Community Gardens Division. It was approved by the New Garden Fund Gardener Panel, comprised of 10 community gardeners in Madison. The work was done using special project funding provided by the City of Madison Community Development Block Grant Future Funds. Please contact Janet (at 246-4730 ext. 218 or janetp@cacscw.org) with questions, corrections or suggestions for future versions of the handbook.

Much of the material in this packet is borrowed with permission from the excellent community gardening programs of Philadelphia and Seattle. We thank them for their great ideas and generosity! Check out their excellent websites at:

Philadelphia Green of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society:

<http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/>

Seattle's P-Patch Program:

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/ppatch/>

For more web resources on community gardening, check the Web Resources at the end of this handbook.

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Funding Sources for Madison Community Gardens

Madison Department of Planning and Development's Neighborhood Grants Program, especially the Community Enhancement Program. This program funded five major improvement projects at community gardens between 2004 and 2007: a living fence at Quann Garden, a water system and murals at Atwood Garden, an orchard and prairie council ring at Quann, a Hmong thatch pavilion at Quann, and community-building sessions with a built project to-be-determined by the gardeners at Marlborough. The amounts were between \$3,000 - \$10,000. They require that you have matching money, and a New Garden Fund grant would qualify. Or you can match their grant with volunteer hours dedicated to the project.

More info: www.ci.madison.wi.us/neighborhoods/2004NeighGrants.html

For more information, call any of these people:

Katherine H. Rankin	266-6552	ext. 206	krankin@cityofmadison.com
Bill Fruhling	267-8736	ext. 214	bfruhling@cityofmadison.com
Jule Stroick	267-8744	ext. 218	jstroick@cityofmadison.com

And a current link, which includes some pretty photos from two of our garden projects - Atwood murals and Hmong thatch pavilion at Quann:

<http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/neighborhoods/2008%20Grant%20Guideline.pdf>

People for Parks Matching Fund. This program provides matching funds for benches, trees, and picnic tables that will be put in our city parks. Several community gardens are in city parks: Quann, Reindahl, and Marlborough. In 2003, this grant program contributed half of the cost of a picnic table for the Quann Community Garden; the Quann gardeners paid for the other half from their plot fees. For more information call Laura Whitmore, the Parks Community Relations Coordinator, at 266-5949.

Madison Area Master Gardeners Association (MAMGA). This program gives out grants for community gardening projects that meet many of the following criteria:

- Community: Increases beauty and sense of property ownership in the community
- Educational: Increases community knowledge base/innovative gardening methods
- Stewardship: Environmentally/Ecologically responsible
- Teamwork: Involves community members through volunteering, esp. youth
- Effectiveness: Begins exchange of garden related ideas and information

They consider individual and organization sponsored community gardening projects located within Dane County. Typically, grant awards range between \$200 and \$500, but grants up to \$1000 have been awarded. The 2008 grant proposals were due mid-November and awards will be announced in early February of 2008. Contact person is Connie Golden at mamga2005@yahoo.com.

Dane County Environmental Council Grant. The Council awards grants every year to a broad and diverse field of Dane County nonprofit community organizations, school districts, and municipalities for environmental initiatives. Grants ranging from \$250 to \$5,000 are available for conservation projects that enhance Dane County's natural resources and benefit Dane County residents. Contact person is Mindy Habecker at habecker@co.dane.wi.us or 224-3718. www.countyofdane.com/commissions/environmentalcouncil/grants.aspx

Madison Gardening Resources List

Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc is a non-profit based in Madison that works with 16 of Madison's community gardens and has helped to develop many new community gardens over the years. CAC's mission is to develop economic and social capacities of individuals, families and communities to reduce poverty in Dane, Jefferson and Waukesha counties. 246-4730 ext. 218 or 212 www.cacscw.org/gardens

Eagle Heights Garden on the UW campus is probably the largest community garden in the country, with well over 400 families! Their website has lots of great information for Madison community gardeners: <http://www.sit.wisc.edu/~ehgarden/>

Want to learn how to garden? The public libraries have a very good range of books on gardening. Olbrich Gardens, our city's botanical garden, also has a good library. www.olbrich.org

The Dane County Cooperative Extension teaches a course called **Master Gardener Training** that is a good introduction to gardening. The course is offered in spring and fall. 224-3721 www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/dane/hort/

Troy Community Gardens has regular workshops at their spectacular garden on topics of particular interest for community gardeners. 240-0409 www.troygardens.org

With plant questions, call the Coop **Extension's Home Horticulture Help Line** at 224-3721 between the hours of 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Your Neighborhood Association President _____

Your Alder _____

The office number for all Madison alders is (608) 266-4071. You can also contact your alder at the home number, usually listed in the phone book. To find out who is your alder, look here: www.cityofmadison.com/council/alders.html

Mayor's Office: Room 403, City-County Building 266-4611 www.cityofmadison.com

Quann Community Garden www.madison.com/communities/quanngarden

Dane Co Cooperative Extension: www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/dane/hort/index.html

UW Coop Ext gardening publications: commerce.uwex.edu/showcat.asp?id=2&parent=1

City Streets & Recycling Department (Trash, Brush Pickup, Wood Chip Mulch)
East Side 246-4532; West Side 266-4681
www.cityofmadison.com/streets/

Parks Department 266-4711 www.cityofmadison.com/parks

Urban Open Space Foundation 255-9877 www.uosf.org

Diggers Hotline 1-800-242-8511 www.diggershotline.com

Olbrich Gardens 246-4550 www.olbrich.org

Community Gardening in Madison with CAC

Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc – Community Gardens Division provides ongoing management and administrative support for gardens that qualify as lower-income (since our funders support only those efforts). Here are some of the services we provide:

- Free seeds and some plants in the spring
- Tools, hoses, bulletin boards, picnic tables
- Translation between Hmong, Spanish, and English-speakers
- Organizing and publicizing springtime registration meeting & workdays through the season
- Liaison to city departments who provide mulch, compost & water
- Fall gardeners potluck and skill sharing workshop
- Insurance coverage
- Facilitate outreach & refer gardeners citywide
- Help with special projects – fences, water systems, raised beds
- Dispute resolution
- Leadership development for volunteers who coordinate their gardens.

Most of the CAC gardens have a simple system of management that keeps the garden running smoothly and encourages the gardeners to grow community while they grow vegetables and flowers. This involves some key positions, and many more optional roles for volunteers:

- **Coordinator** – a volunteer who calls meetings and leads them, works to make sure all the gardeners are participating and important tasks are being accomplished. Some gardens have co-coordinators.
- **Registrar** – a volunteer who holds the garden waiting list and assigns plots in spring and when spaces open during the season.
- **Treasurer** – a volunteer who collects plot fees & pays bills.

Other positions include people who work on youth gardens, social committees, grounds committees, equipment, communications, water systems, and other special projects.



Advice for Getting Your Garden Started

The P-Patch Program, which manages community gardens for the City of Seattle and is part of Seattle city government, has great advice for starting new gardens. Find it on the web here: www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/ppatch/start.htm

Here are the basics that Seattle P-Patch gives to people who want to create gardening space in their neighborhood, adapted a bit for Madison:

Look for a garden site

Seek land that is vacant, or with run-down buildings or under-used parking lots. Sometimes institutions, such as churches or hospitals, have vacant property. Consider the following criteria:

Size - 2,000 square feet is the minimum size required to accommodate several gardeners and a common area with space for a tool shed and compost bins.

Terrain - The lot should be reasonably flat. If it slopes, the grade should not be so steep that level beds could not be created, for example by terracing. There should also be access for delivery of materials.

Sun - The site should get sun most of the day, and therefore should not have buildings or trees on the south, east or west. Adjacent property should not be zoned for high rise buildings.

Location - The site should be on a relatively quiet street to guard against interference from traffic, crowds, or noise. If near a busy street, there should be ways of shielding or screening the site.

Neighbors - Ideally, the site should be observable by nearby residents. The scrutiny of neighbors adds to security. Invite the neighbors to get involved from the start so they feel invested in the garden.

CAC Community Gardens staff might be able to help you evaluate and secure access to your proposed site. If the land is publicly owned, you will need to work with the relevant government agency. If privately owned, you should try to negotiate a lease of at least 5 years. Soil testing, especially for lead level, is a key step. Even if your project is not selected to get a New Garden Fund grant and become a CAC garden, your group can still create its own community garden. There are many individually-run gardens in Madison that are not part of CAC.

Next steps, organize, design and build your garden!

Gather together potential gardeners

While you're looking for land, organize a group of potential gardeners willing to help build your neighborhood garden. Methods include:

Word of mouth among those initially involved in finding prospective land. Calling people on waiting lists for existing gardens. CAC will make those names and phone numbers available. Meet with groups already functioning in the neighborhood (community councils, neighborhood clubs, church groups, etc)

Advertising in neighborhood newspapers, community council newsletters, bulletin boards, mailings, putting a sign on the lot telling people about the future garden, and flyer the neighborhood.

Build your garden!

Most sites require major improvements to clear debris, improve the soil, install water and build fences, compost bins and tool sheds. Once the site has been secured, your group can apply to the New Garden Fund or the Department of Planning and Development to provide funds to match your own labor. If your garden is eligible, the staff of the CAC can give advice, technical assistance and provide examples of successful applications from other gardens. Master Gardeners could help you design your garden. The Madison Community Food and Garden Network meets monthly and is a great place to get advice and meet other garden leaders.

If your site becomes a CAC garden, each gardener will pay a small fee on a sliding scale (\$7 - \$50 per year). This money goes into a bank account managed by your garden. Garden sites are managed and maintained by the gardeners. Assistance to build site leadership and coordination is available to eligible groups from CAC.

Enjoy the fruits of your labor

Give yourself a big pat on the back for helping to create a place where diverse people can plant, grow and harvest with family and new friends. Have fun out there!



Growing Your Group

Adapted from Philadelphia Green

Garden Guidelines

Guidelines Inspire

Guidelines are goals with behaviors associated to them. They are more than a list of “Do’s and Don’t’s.”

Begin with a brief mission statement that unites the group and the garden to a larger purpose. Example: “Our mission is to strengthen our neighborhood by maintaining a sitting garden where people can get to know each other.”

Identify the garden’s needs and name the responsibilities people will have to take on to meet the needs and support the mission. Know the group’s abilities and limitations before setting goals.

Start with a few guidelines that will help the group get going.

Write them out and provide each person a copy. Plan to review the guidelines each year as a group, growing them along with the group.

Rules versus Guidelines

“No leaving tools out;” vs. “We value our resources. Be sure to put all tools away.”

Set a few small goals for the garden per 3-month phases and the year. Review them, adjust them, set a few new ones.

Communication

The most important skill is LISTENING, hearing another person from their perspective.

“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” Win – win vs. lose – lose.

Give everyone a chance to voice their opinion, and be sure everyone feels heard.

Expect differences. From the beginning, set up how the group will resolve differences and conflicts.

CONFLICT IS AN OPPORTUNITY to create strength in the group by embracing it and navigating to resolution. Never give up, even in times when the group is struggling.

Celebrate! Frequent small celebrations; occasional big ones.

Juice and cookies, pot lucks, BBQ, musicians, plays, poetry readings, bake sale.

Share the joy of successes along the way. Show pride, joy, appreciation of each other, community.

Share Leadership

Everyone has some leadership qualities in them, so find ways that they can be expressed.

Share leadership via roles, responsibilities, committees, etc.

Support each other in filling the roles.

A common mistake is that one person assumes the role, the group lets them, and some form of dictatorship occurs, or a good-hearted person burns out from taking on too much.

Inventory the group's skills and resources, person by person. Match a person's skills to the roles and how that fits into the mission. This keeps people personally invested in the project.

Reaching Out

An Open Invitation

A group that doesn't seek new participants will gradually shrink and cease to exist.

Always reach out to people to participate. Ask in an inviting way, honoring a "no," without accepting it as a final answer. Some people need to be asked a few times. Stop when it's clear they won't participate.

Invite everyone: the neighborhood, store owners, local organizations, local officials to meetings, garden work days, celebrations, etc. Invite neighbors into the garden just to see it from the inside. Just being in it without feeling pressure to participate can inspire people to join.

Youth

Youth Is The Future In The Present

Many elder gardeners are now isolated for rejecting youth over the years as irresponsible and disrespectful.

If not from adults, from whom are youth supposed to learn responsibility and respect?

Reach out to youth again and again. Be patient and encouraging with them as they learn. Allow mistakes. Let their interest grow gradually.

They Just Want To Belong

Youth who vandalize gardens but were invited in to learn rather than be punished often become eager participants and protectors of the gardens.

Get past anger and feeling victimized; don't grow animosity; **GROW GARDENERS!**

Like with conflict, youthful indiscretion is an opportunity to learn and teach.

Some Areas of Gardening Where Groups Can Grow

- Planning the garden
- Providing for the garden
- Sharing the physical work
- Organizing people
- Growing through conflict
- Watering/providing water
- Securing the garden: open but with managed access
- Maintaining common areas
- Organizing events
- Reaching out to new gardeners
- Attending gardening workshops, bringing new knowledge to the group
- Growing community: turn an organized garden group into a community group that shapes its neighborhood and destiny

Invite the neighborhood so they catch the bug!

How to Manage Your Community Garden

Adapted from Philadelphia Green

Having written guideline (or rules) is very important with older groups as well as new gardens, since they spell out exactly what is expected of a gardener. They also make it much easier to eliminate dead wood should the need arise. It is always better to have people be mad at the rules, rather than mad at the garden coordinators. Build in a chance each year for the gardening group to amend the rules as needed.

Sample Guidelines and Rules -- Some may be more relevant to vegetable gardens than to community flower gardens or parks. Pick and choose what best fits your situation.

- I will pay a fee of \$_____ to help cover garden expenses. I understand that ____ of this will be refunded to me when I clean up my plot at the end of the season.
- I will have something planted in the garden by (date) and keep it planted all summer long.
- If I must abandon my plot for any reason, I will notify the coordinator.
- I will keep weeds down and maintain the areas immediately surrounding my plot if any.
- If my plot becomes unkempt, I understand I will be given 1 week's notice to clean it up. At that time, it will be reassigned or tilled in.
- I will keep trash and litter cleaned from the plot, as well as from adjacent pathways and fences.
- I will participate in the fall clean-up of the garden. I understand that the \$_____ deposit will be refunded only to those who do participate.
- I will plant tall crops where they will not shade neighboring plots.
- I will pick only my own crops unless given permission by the plot user.
- I will not use fertilizers, insecticides or weed killers.
- I agree to volunteer _____ hours toward community gardening efforts. (include a list of volunteer tasks which your garden needs).
- I will not bring pets to the garden.
- I understand that neither the garden group nor owners of the land are responsible for my actions. I THEREFORE AGREE TO HOLD HARMLESS THE GARDEN GROUP AND OWNERS OF THE LAND FOR ANY LIABILITY, DAMAGE, LOSS OR CLAIM THAT OCCURS IN CONNECTION WITH USE OF THE GARDEN BY ME OR ANY OF MY GUESTS. (If your garden is part of CAC, then CAC should be mentioned here too.)

I understand that any rules to be added or changed must be passed by the majority of the participating gardeners

Have the gardeners sign one copy for the file and keep another copy for their refrigerator, so they remember what they agreed to do.

Organizing Volunteers & Building an Organization

Adapted from Philadelphia Green

In looking to recruit volunteers for specific projects and build your organization to take on a variety of tasks, there are a number of strategies that you can use to be most effective:

1. Recognize Available Resources In Your Neighborhood

Find the....

People - who are the decision makers / power brokers in your neighborhood? Who knows everyone?

Organizations - community groups, churches, state legislators or councilpeople.

Supplies/ Materials - local bakeries, printshops, stationary stores, photocopying centers etc. These groups and individuals can support your projects through volunteering, providing donations, pushing appropriate legislation, building coalitions, etc.

2. Get Useful Publicity / Outreach

Use...

Flyers - Few words (who, what, where, when) with descriptive pictures. Use colorful paper where possible. Local print shops might donate services.

Media - Free! Public Service Announcements (PSAs), press releases. Find a catchy angle, something visual that they can use, include photos. They're always looking for good stories.

Events - High visibility. Make sure to include Fun, Music, Food. A good way to attract new volunteers. Be prepared to get names, phone #s, and addresses (a sign-in sheet can be useful) and follow up with these leads to attract new people to your organization.

Phone Chains - Have volunteers call other volunteers who in turn call other volunteers. Pre-existing groups can be plugged into activities this way.

Canvassing - Take a flyer, message or invitation door-to door. People are more likely to volunteer if they are asked, and are most likely to volunteer if asked face-to-face by someone they know.

3. Delegate Responsibilities

Sometimes it feels easier to do everything yourself. **FIGHT THAT URGE!!** It can lead to burn-out for you and possibly resentment from others who would like to share in the work.

Delegating...

Expands your reach - Provides new ideas and new connections.

Empowers - Gives other people a chance to use or develop new skills; intensifies their commitment to the organization.

Allows for organizational growth - One person can't take on new parts of a project or issue unless there are others who can help with existing tasks.

4. Find and Keep Volunteers

People volunteer for many different reasons including wanting to do something positive for their community, to keep busy, or to learn new job skills (or find a new job).

Make sure you...

Ask, Ask, Ask!! - The single most important reason a person becomes a volunteer is because someone asked them to. If that person can't do it, ask them if they know someone else who might be interested.

Create Volunteer Job Descriptions - Helps your group figure out what needs to be done and helps volunteers clearly understand tasks and opportunities. There usually are a lot of jobs that need to be done - match the person with their interests and skills - they'll be happier and you may have more long-term volunteers to draw from.

Reward Volunteers - Being a volunteer is hard work and often is not appreciated. Make sure your volunteers feel special and valued. Good ways to do this include:

Food - at meetings, events, etc.

Group t-shirts/hats - helps build group identity

Awards ceremonies - with publicity, if possible

Ongoing training to sharpen skills



Steps For Planning A Vegetable Crop

Adapted from Philadelphia Green by Chris Stuesser

Gardening knowledge can be subtle, and is gained over time from experience, asking people and reading books. The wealth of knowledge needed to grow food was traditionally carried orally by villages, or more recently “farming communities.” The erosion of the farming communities by technology and economics has left this knowledge in the hands of very few people. You, as gardeners, are in the role of keepers of this knowledge, a unique and rare joy that you can share with others and pass on to younger generations.

This worksheet offers one way to plan a gardening season. You can use the method for any vegetable. Be sure to use the time and temperature information that is specific to each crop.

Lettuce is a cool weather crop that transplants well. It is a small seed that is planted shallowly, does not germinate well in hot soil, and is hard to keep moist during germination and early growth before it's roots grow long enough to reach down to the moisture in the deeper soil. It can “bolt to seed”, or start to form a seed stalk and get bitter when it gets to a mature age and the weather warms. A planned indoor sowing schedule will provide the earliest harvest, and a nearly continuous supply of quality lettuce throughout the growing season. Not too many gardeners can consume a hundred plants or so before they bolt when a entire packet of seeds is planted outside in May, but those same plants spread out through the growing season can keep a family in salads for months. Lettuce plants can be tucked into an empty bit of space in the garden where a plant died or was harvested before others in its row. The wide variety of color, size, leaf texture available in lettuce varieties makes such a beautiful display it will even fit into the flower garden.

Process	Example
Pick a vegetable and know its growing season and needs.	Lettuce <u>Soil temp for germination:</u> 40-75` F <u>Days to germination:</u> 2-15 days <u>Plant spacing:</u> 9-15” apart <u>Days to maturity:</u> Leaf lettuce: 30 – 53 days Head lettuce: 35 - 70 days
Determine time needed for crop to mature. You can choose varieties based on maturity time.	“Days to maturity” is from the date of emergence (when you can see the sprout from the germinated seed) except for tomatoes and peppers which is from the transplant date.
Estimate when you want to harvest, or in the case of lettuce or other cool weather crops what is the earliest time you can safely transplant out.	The last frost date in spring can be estimated by past weather history. The last few days of April and the first few days in May have a 50/50 chance of frost. Lettuce can take light frosts so May first will be used as a target planting out date.
Count back from that date to find when you need to sow. Using a calendar makes it visually easy to do this. 3 to 4 week old lettuce plants are large enough to transplant.	We will use 4 week plants, so the emergence date will be about April 3. (May 1 minus 28 days)
Find “sow date” by counting backwards from “emergence date” the number of days the crop variety needs to germinate. In this case, 2-15 days. We’ll use 5 days for this example.	April 3 minus 5 days = March 29 for a planting date.
Determine how may plants you want to have for the first sowing and plant that many cells in six packs with two seeds in each cell. The plan is to plant new seeds every week or two into six packs to have a regular supply of hardy seedlings to transplant into the garden through the growing season. Estimate how much lettuce you can eat in a week or two. One head a day will be used for this example.	Plant the seeds in a seed starting mix, keep the mix damp and warm until the seedlings emerge. Them keep in a very sunny window or 2 or 3 inches under a fluorescent lamp. The bulb does not have to be a special bulb for plants, a regular 40 watt cool fluorescent lamp will work. Keep the plants watered and growing well for three weeks.

Start to watch the weather reports for a good 2 or 3 day stretch to "harden off" the plants (put the seedlings outside to get used to the sun and the wind before planting out). The plants are very fragile from their days inside and need build a sort of tougher coating on their leaves to withstand the drying effects of the wind and sun. They will VERY likely die if planted right into the full sun of the vegetable garden before being hardened off.	A few 50 – 60 degree days would be good. Place the seedlings out in a shaded location for the first day and bring them in at night if frost is predicted. The next day put them in a place they will get a few hours of sun and also some shade. The third day they can be mostly in the sun or planted out with a bit of loose straw or grass shading them a little. Be vigilant in watering them these first few days as they will dry out very quickly in the wind and sun.
Transplant with proper spacing into the garden. Water well and if the weather looks to be sunny and very warm give the plants a little light shade for a few days.	Plant out about 10" apart and water well.
HARVEST PLANNING Estimate when harvest will begin from the emergence/sprouting date, and how long the harvest period may be (per crop variety). This gives you an approximate time when the garden space will be cleared to plant something else there.	Start of harvest: Emergence at April 3 plus about 40 days to harvest = May 13 to start harvesting Harvest period: Lettuce harvest is appx. Three weeks
SUCCESSION PLANTING allows you to extend your harvest period and to provide you with an appropriate amount of produce per your need. To do this, start new crops at 1 to 2 week intervals after the first crop... (continued)	First crop: Sow March 29 Transplant May 1 Harvest beginning May 13 for 3 weeks
This way you can avoid having a large crop ripen all at once with more than you can use, and prolong the joys of harvesting good quality lettuce, especially if your growing space is limited... (continued)	Second crop: 1-2 weeks after the first. Sow April 5 Transplant May 7 Harvest beginning May 20 for 3 weeks
Instead of planting 100 lettuce plants, plant 6-12 every week or 2 inside through the entire growing season. This way your lettuce seed will germinate well when the weather turns hot and you may not be able to water an outside seed bed daily, (or more often!), to get seeds growing in summer's heat.	Successive crops every week or two throughout the growing season.

Books with vegetable garden planning chapters:

Square Foot Gardening
by Mel Bartholomew
1991, Rodale Press
Available from: Square Foot Gardening
1-877-828-1188
<http://www.squarefootgardening.com>

The Vegetable Gardener's Bible
by Edward C. Smith
2000, Storey Books
Available from: Your local bookstore

The Sustainable Vegetable Garden
by John Jeavons and Carol Cox
1999, Ten Speed Press.
Available from: Bountiful Gardens
(707) 459-6410
www.bountifulgardens.org

The New Organic Grower
by Eliot Coleman
1999, Chelsea Green Publishing.
Available from: Chelsea Green Publishing
(800) 639-4099
www.chelseagreen.com

Penn State University
College of Agricultural Sciences
<http://www.cas.psu.edu/>
and
Penn State Cooperative Extension
<http://www.extension.psu.edu/>

Cooperative Extension in Philadelphia County
4601 Market Street, 2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19139-4616
Phone: (215) 471-2200
Email: PhiladelphiaExt@psu.edu

Community Gardening Websites

CAC Community Gardens www.cacscw.org/gardens

American Community Gardening Association www.communitygarden.org

American Community Gardening Association listserv, where you can ask questions of many community gardening activists all over the U.S. and the world.

To post an e-mail to the list: community_garden@mallorn.com

To subscribe, unsubscribe or change your subscription:

https://secure.mallorn.com/mailman/listinfo/community_garden

Urban Agricultural Notes from City Farmer, Canada's Office of Urban Agriculture

<http://www.cityfarmer.org/> Michael Levenston's (Canada's unofficial minister of urban agriculture) very thorough site with worldwide links and information.

Philadelphia Green

<http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/>

Seattle P-Patch

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/ppatch/>

The Food Project in Boston <http://www.thefoodproject.org/>

Growing Power, Inc. in Milwaukee www.growingpower.org

San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners

<http://www.slug-sf.org/>

Denver Urban Gardens

<http://www.dug.org/>

Maricopa County Cooperative Extension

<http://ag.arizona.edu/maricopa/garden/html/comunity/comunity.htm>

Clinton Community Garden in NYC

<http://www.clintoncommunitygarden.org/>

Sustainable Communities Network Agriculture and Food Systems links

<http://www.sustainable.org/economy/agriculture.html>

Seattle Tilth

<http://www.seattletilth.org/>

Common Ground Garden Program

<http://celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/garden/index.html>

Community Food Security Coalition

<http://www.foodsecurity.org/> (They have a listserv too.)

Food Circles Networking Project

<http://foodcircles.missouri.edu/pub.htm>



Community Food and Garden Network

Accessible Raised Beds



Raised beds at Troy Gardens in Madison, WI

“The greatest advantage of raised bed gardening is that it requires much less bending for planting and weeding... I think it is a wonderful way to have a small garden.”

- Mirna Cummings, gardener at Truax Community Garden

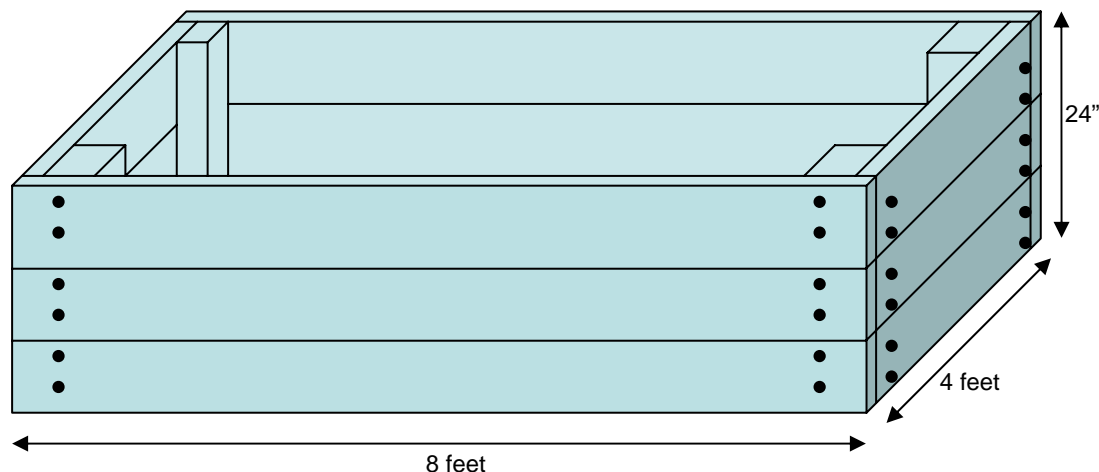
Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc. • Community Gardens Division
1717 N. Stoughton Road • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 246-4730 x238 • <http://www.cacscw.org/gardens/cfgn>

It is very important to have support from the community garden and the gardeners using the bed for every step of the process! Before building make sure to set up a meeting with gardeners and CAC (if appropriate) to decide: maintenance issues, land use issues (such as permanent structure stipulations), wheelchair access, construction and design, finances, and filling.

Here are some basic steps to follow:

1) Figure out Dimensions and Design

Always consult potential bed users to determine design and dimensions appropriate to their specific needs! This includes considerations of access, grade, proximity to water and shade, pathway surface, and seating/resting areas. Be creative with the design process! Beds can be made in a T shape or with varying heights and lengths. Find out what is comfortable for the gardener using the bed. The bed should not be wider than 4ft across (if accessible from all sides) because it can be difficult for a gardener to comfortably reach more than 2 feet into the center. To determine the appropriate width, measure the gardeners reach from whatever position they plan to use (seated on bench, seated in a wheelchair, standing, etc.). Then double that number if the bed is accessible from both sides. Remember to consider logistical issues when designing beds, such as time, \$, tools, labor, skill, and space. For example, right angles are the easiest to work with, especially within a rectangular space. The standard raised bed is usually about 16-24 inches high, 4ft wide by 8ft long. Again, use a tape measure to determine the appropriate height for each gardener. This guide will walk through constructing a bed that is 24" high (pictured below), which is a standard height for those using a wheelchair or needing a bench to sit on while gardening.



2) Tools Needed

Cordless power drills, circular or chop saw, ratchet, hammer, shovels, rakes, wheelbarrows, saw horses, safety goggles, level.

3) Supplies

You will need wood, lag screws, washers, and nails. We recommend using the 3"x5/16" Hex Lag Screws (you will need 48 screws to build one 24" raised bed) and 1/4" washers. Choosing the type of lumber can be tricky and there is no perfect choice. We recommend ACQ (Alkaline Copper Quat) Ground Contact treated lumber that the FDA approves for food contact and growing. This lasts for at least 10 yrs. Untreated Black Locust would be our top choice for longevity and sustainability, however, it is nearly impossible to find. Cedar and

wood/plastic composite are good options, but among other concerns, more expensive. You'll need the following lumber:

- 9- 2"x8"x8'
- 1- 4"x4"x8'
- 2- 2"x6"x8' (optional for bench)
- 1- 2"x6"x10' (optional for bench)

4) Purchase Supplies

For a standard (4'Wx8'Lx24"H) bed the cost for materials is approximately:

Untreated wood	\$90	(\$105 with bench)
ACQ treated wood	\$105	(\$130 with bench)
Cedar or composite	\$155	(\$195 with bench)

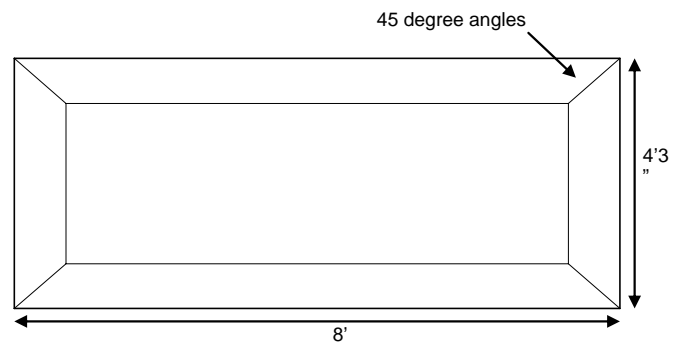
5) Cut Lumber

You need to prepare the lumber before building the bed. This involves cutting the lumber to size and pre-drilling holes for the screws (this step is not necessary, but will make ratcheting much easier and prevent gaps from forming.)

You have 9- 2"x8"x8' pieces of lumber. 6 of those will be for the 8' long sides of the bed and do not require any cuts. However, 3 of them will need to be cut in half so that you end up with 6- 2"x8"x4' lengths (short ends of the bed). Now we have 8' long sides (6) and 4' short ends (6).

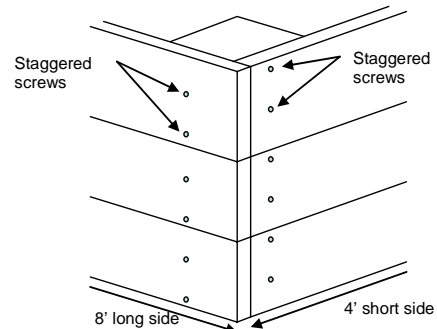
Next, cut the 4"x4"x8' lumber into 22.5" sections [IMPORTANT: 2"x8" lumber is actually slightly smaller than these measurements. When we stack 3 boards high, we expect it to measure 24". However, each board is actually 7.5" high. So when we stack 3 boards high, we actually have a bed height of 22.5".] You will end up with 4 posts each 22.5" high and a little bit of scrap wood.

(Optional Bench) First cut the 2"x6"x10' board into 4'3" sections, you will end up with 2 short end bench pieces. [IMPORTANT: the 8' long side boards will overlap the 4' short end boards, making the short end slightly wider than 4'. So bench pieces will need to be slightly wider (4'3") to fit the shape of the bed. See the corner diagram below.] The 2"x6"x8' lumber will remain this length. Now cut 45 degree angles in the 8' and 4'3" bench pieces so that they fit together as shown above.



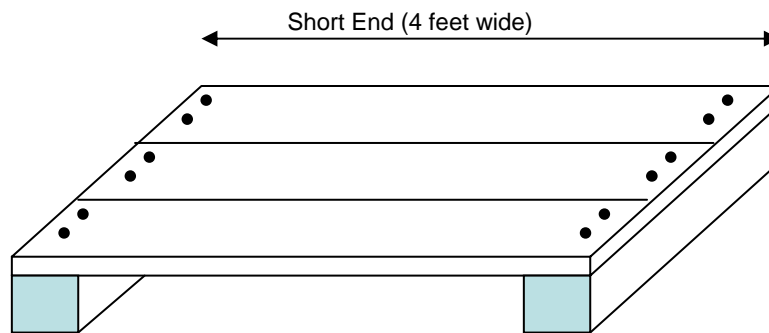
6) Drill holes

The screws will be ratcheted through the 2"x8" sides into the 4"x4" post. To make this easier, pre-drill the holes in the 2"x8" sides slightly bigger than the screw. But do not pre-drill the 4"x4". This will prevent gaps from forming between the 2 wood surfaces. [NOTE: the posts will have screws coming in from 2 sides, and it is important that they don't hit each other. To avoid this, holes on the 8' long sides should be slightly lower than holes on the 4' short sides. See diagram on page 3.]



7) Pre- fab

If the raised bed is being built on uneven ground, we have found that it works best to assemble the short sides (4' ends) of the bed before you get to the garden. Lay the 4"x4" posts on the ground and place the 4' long 2"x8" over posts. Align edges and ratchet in hex lag screws as shown in the diagram below.



8) Deliver compost and materials to site

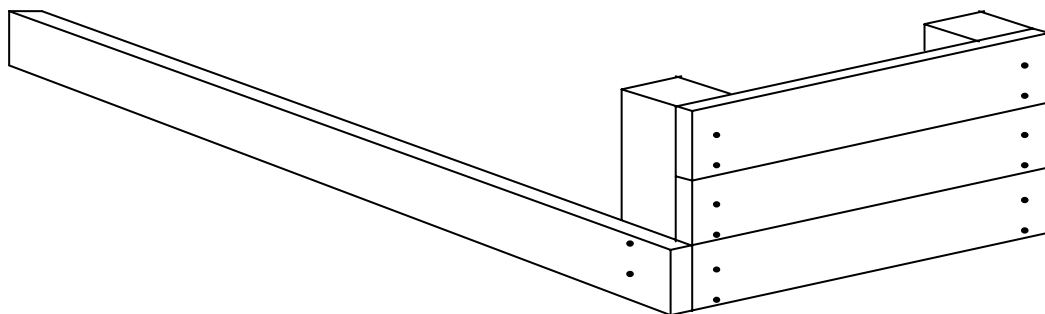
It is best to have fill material available at the time of the building. You will want to fill the beds with a mix of 50% compost and 50% top soil if possible. However, a cheaper alternative is to use 100% compost made on site or picked up from one of the free City of Madison sites. Call the Compost Information Hotline at 267-1502. NOTE: Some clean fill dirt and/or small to medium field stones or straw can be added to the bottom of the bed to reduce the amount of fill material necessary.

9) Build the beds

Once on site make sure you have all of the materials and tools needed.

Find a relatively flat area near the garden location where you can assemble the entire bed (2 short ends are already assembled- ratchet the 8' boards onto the posts). Level the ground where the bed is going so that all sides are flat and even. Proper leveling can greatly reduce stress on the corner joints and deterioration in the long run. Put constructed finished box on intended area. Level the bed in between each corner post by lifting up or carefully pounding down where necessary. Fill with compost and/or soil. (Optional bench) Add bench pieces by nailing through the 2"x6" boards into the 4"x4" posts. Use 6 nails per post (24 total).

BELOW: Begin to assemble the raised bed by first ratcheting the 4' short ends to the posts. Then stand the short ends up and begin to attach the 8' side boards individually. After you have attached all 8' sides and nailed on the optional bench pieces- you are done!



**Enjoy working together as a team
and gardening at a comfortable height!**

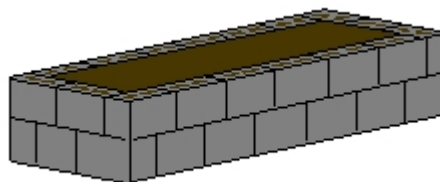
Other options for materials and design:

- A) Purchase a raised bed kit from Lee Valley and assemble using wood and concrete pavers. The kit includes the metal brackets that hold it together and detailed instructions- you provide the lumber and pavers. In Madison, you can check out this design at Troy Gardens on the north side. Or visit the Lee Valley website: <http://www.leevalley.com/garden/page.aspx?c=2&p=47455&cat=2>
- B) Make beds out of concrete blocks and rebar, as described in the book "Cinder Block Gardens" by Lynn Gillespie. In Madison, Quann Community Gardeners are building this type of bed in spring of 2005 on the south side.
- C) Use a children's wading pool raised off the ground by an old table. Be sure to drill holes in the pool before planting. Kids like to swim- but vegetables don't!
- D) Create a table top garden for wheel chair accessible gardens. For a diagram and instructions on how to build this type of bed, look at UW Extension publication (A3384) "Specialized gardening techniques: wide-row plantings, square-foot gardening, and raised beds." You can print the publication for free on-line at: <http://cecommerce.uwex.edu/pdfs/A3384.PDF>
- E) Dowling Community Garden in Minneapolis created a wonderful document detailing their process for building 12'x5' raised beds. They used recycled composite decking and Geoblock porous pavement for wheelchair access. See their website at <http://www.dowlingcommunitygarden.org/PDF%20files/AccessibleRaisedBeds.pdf>

A. Lee Valley kit



B. Concrete blocks



C. Wading pool



D. Table top



A Tour of Madison-area Raised Beds:

To determine which type of raised bed is right for you, visit any of the gardens listed below to see different styles and heights. If you would like to register for a raised bed garden at any of the following community garden sites, please call (608) 246-4730 x218.

Institutions

Focuscorps
(3201 Latham Drive)
277-9140

Oakwood Village
(6201 Mineral Point)
230-4383

CDA West Romnes Housing - Southside
Coalition for Aging
(540 W Olin Ave)

Braeburn Ct.
(2797 Fish Hatchery Rd)
270-7218

St. Marys Care Center
(3401 Maple Grove Road)
233-7466

Community Gardens

Atwood Community Garden
(north of Atwood Avenue, along the Isthmus bike path) has 1 raised bed that is wheelchair accessible. The bed is 12' long, 5.5' wide, and 30" high.

Sheboygan Community Garden
(2800 block of Sheboygan Avenue) has about 10 raised bed gardens in a range of sizes and heights.



Volunteers built raised beds that are 16" tall at the Gammon Community Garden in Madison, WI.

Gammon Community Garden
(110 North Gammon Road) has 4 raised beds that are 4' wide, 8' long, and 16" high.

St. Paul Community Garden
(north of intersection of St. Paul street and Milwaukee Avenue) has one raised bed that is T shaped and has varying heights and widths.

Truax Community Garden
(located in park behind apartments at intersection of Anderson and Wright) has 2 raised beds that are 4' wide and 8' long.

Reynolds Homestead Community Garden
(635 E. Mifflin Street) has one raised bed made from 4'x4' lumber. The bed is wheelchair accessible and U shaped.

Quann Community Garden
(intersection of Bram and Koster streets, behind Alliant Energy Center) has 4 raised beds that are 4' wide, 8' long, and 18" high. Each is made from a different material- untreated wood, ACQ treated wood, and composite lumber.

Troy Community Garden
(north of 500 block of Troy Drive) has 5 beds that are 4' wide, 8' long, and varying heights. They are constructed from wood, and there is also an assembled Lee Valley Kit (page 5).