

COMMUNITY GARDENS – SPEAKER’S NOTES

SLIDE 1: COMMUNITY GARDENS

Introduction

This presentation is based on the *Community Garden Best Practices Toolkit: A Guide for Community Organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador*. It is one in a series of best practices toolkits, which also cover community kitchens, farmers' markets, and bulk buying clubs, available through the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador



(www.foodsecuritynews.com/resources).

Your audience should come away from this presentation with a basic understanding of what a community garden is and how it works. Those who plan on actually starting a community garden should consult the toolkit for more in depth information and resources.

This presentation should take between 30 and 40 minutes, depending on how much interaction there is between the audience and the presenter.

Materials Needed

- Projector & screen
- Flipchart or whiteboard & marker
- FSN E-News sign-up forms (available at www.foodsecuritynews.com)
- A copy of *Community Garden Best Practices Toolkit: A Guide for Community Organizations* (optional)

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SLIDE 2: AGENDA

Introduce the topic and list the information that is going to be covered during the presentation. This slide can be on the screen while welcoming the group and doing introductions and icebreakers.

Let the audience know how long you expect the presentation to take, and whether they should ask questions as they arise or wait until the presentation is over.

Community Gardens

Agenda

1. What is a Community Garden?
2. Types of Community Gardens
3. Identifying a Group
4. Establishing Partnerships
5. Choosing a Site
6. Funding & Sponsorships
7. Garden Planning & Design
8. Garden Guidelines
9. Planting the Garden
10. Garden Maintenance
11. Communications

Ice-Breakers

Consider introducing your audience to each other and the concept of food security by holding an ice-breaker. Ice-breakers are short games that get people talking, introducing themselves, and sharing information. Icebreakers can range from simply asking the group to introduce themselves and share their favourite vegetable, to more interactive activities or games.

FoodShare Toronto has a great list of food security related icebreakers at http://www.foodshare.net/toolbox_roots-rooftops-Support.htm

SLIDE 3: WHAT IS A COMMUNITY GARDEN?

A community garden is a shared space where people gather together to grow fruits, vegetables, small livestock, and/or flowers collectively. Community gardens provide a number of benefits to their users and the community as a whole:

- A community garden can help improve **food security** for participants by increasing

What is a Community Garden?



- Shared space where people gather together to grow fruits, vegetables, small livestock, and/or flowers collectively
- Encourages physical activity
- Social gathering place
- Sharing of knowledge and skills
- Preserves local environment

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physical and economic access to adequate amounts of healthy food.

- Community gardens provide **health, economic, educational, social, and environmental benefits** to participants and the community at large.
- Community gardens provide **fresh, healthy, low-cost food** that can substitute for otherwise expensive food purchases.
- Participants can learn **basic gardening skills**, from sowing seeds to harvesting, and better understand where their food comes from.
- Community gardens also provide a welcoming space for participants to **build self-confidence, wellness, and personal skills, and encourage people to act as local stewards.**

Ask the group if they can think of any additional benefits of community gardens. Write the answers on a whiteboard or flip chart.

SLIDE 4: TYPES OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

Community gardens vary widely in their structure, purpose and format. They can consist of **collective plots, individual plots**, or a combination of the two. Food may be grown for the garden’s members, for a local organization such as a community kitchen or bulk buying club, or for the community at large.

Allotment

- The most common type of community garden is one in which garden plots are rented to individual community members on an annual basis to plant vegetables for their own consumption.

Collective

- Collective community gardens follow the “all for one harvest, one harvest for all” philosophy where the maintenance of the garden and its harvest are shared amongst the group.



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- Growing communally requires a significant degree of cooperation and works best with a small number of participants. This style is well suited for groups that already have a strong membership that meet regularly and may be able to garden at the same place where they currently gather, such as at a school, church, or club space.
- Beginner gardeners may excel in this environment as they are supported by a close-knit group from which they can learn new skills.

When developing a community garden model make sure that it is appropriately designed for the community that will be actively using the space.

Ask the audience what style of community garden they think would work in their community.

SLIDE 5: IDENTIFYING A GROUP AND FORMING A COMMITTEE

One of the first things you will want to do is identify a group and form a committee.

- Some community organizations may already have a group of people who are interested in participating in a community garden, such as a **youth group, community centre, school, senior`s complex, or church**. Other community gardens may not already have an identified participant group, and will need to recruit members.
- It is a good idea to hold **introductory community meetings** to discuss the potential of a community garden and to recruit participants if they are not already identified.
- Once the community is engaged, form a **garden committee** of volunteers to help establish and run the garden. This committee can be made up of people who feel committed to the development of a community garden and have time to devote to it.

Identifying a Group and Forming a Committee

- Can be formed from an existing group or community organization
- Promote and hold a community meeting
- Organize, host garden celebrations, and plan the garden
- Garden Coordinator

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- The committee may choose to select a **community garden coordinator** to lead the development process and to advise and update the committee. The coordinator can be a volunteer or paid staff depending on the group's available finances and seasonal changes in required time commitments. The responsibilities of a coordinator could also be divided among several organizers focused on managing different areas.

SLIDE 6: ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS

It will be important to establish partnerships with people or organizations that can help bring together the resources needed to successfully start the garden.

Working with a partner organization can offer the benefits of accessing a site, staff, participants, experience, and resources that already exist within the organization.

Establishing Partnerships

- Horticultural organizations
- Local farms and other community gardens
- Regional Nutritionists (with Regional Health Authorities)
- Hardware and gardening stores
- Seniors Centres
- Colleges
- Churches and service clubs



- **Horticultural organizations and local businesses** such as hardware stores and gardening stores may be able to donate items to the garden such as tools, materials, and seeds, as well as expertise. Consider asking local trades people to donate some of their time to offer advice and work on building, landscaping, and other projects.
- **Regional Nutritionists** (Dietitians) with your Regional Health Authority can help select the most nutritious vegetables for the garden and can provide information on the benefits of healthy eating.
- **Seniors centres, churches, and service clubs** can offer resources, guidance, donations, and may also be interested in having a plot.
- **Universities and colleges** may be able to offer educational workshops for garden participants on a range of related topics.

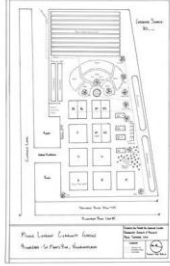
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SLIDE 7: CHOOSING A SITE

There are many factors to keep in mind when selecting a site, such as good conditions for growing plants, gardener comfort, ease of access, proximity to resources, and garden visibility from pathways and streets. It is important to make sure the garden site is appropriate and accessible for the garden participants.

- When visiting potential sites, be prepared to draw simple **site maps** to help in the selection process. The more information that is gathered about potential sites, the easier it will be to select the garden and to design the garden layout.
- The soil should be **tested** for contaminants, such as lead, as well as for nutrients and pH. If the site is contaminated, it will require raised beds and fresh soil.
- **Insurance** is important to protect the community garden organization as well as the landowner against liability for injuries or damages that may occur in the garden. It may also be required to receive support from local governments.

Choosing a Site



- At least six hours of direct sunlight
- Access to water
- Relatively flat
- Large enough and near enough to the participants
- Visibility (for safety and security)
- Vehicle access (for supplies)
- Soil free of contaminants
- Land ownership and insurance
- Wind breaks

Ask the group which potential sites they see in their own community as a garden site.

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SLIDE 8: FUNDING AND SPONSORSHIPS

There are a number of different ways community garden groups can get the resources they need. Some operate without external funding and depend on membership fees alone, while others actively pursue corporate sponsorship or government funding. External funding can be helpful, but is not required depending on the scale of the garden's activities.

Funding & Sponsorships

- Annual gardener membership fees
- In-kind support from local businesses
- Fundraising events
- Site donation
- Municipal, provincial, and federal governments



- **Membership or rental fees** for garden plots can help cover the operating costs of the garden and can range from \$0 - \$75 per plot per season. It is important that membership fees reflect the purpose of the garden, needs of its members, and resources it will offer.
- **Community businesses**, such as hardware stores or garden centres, can provide in-kind support (support in forms other than money), donations, expertise and labour.
- **Municipal, provincial, and federal governments** offer a variety of grants that could support a community garden. These opportunities generally require an organization to submit an application for funding, maintain financial and activity records, and provide a final report at the end of the funding period.

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SLIDE 9: GARDEN PLANNING AND DESIGN

Community gardens should be developed as lasting places for a community to gather and grow nutritious food together.

- Having a **garden model** selected will help in designing the garden. The group will know whether the garden requires raised beds, separate plots, and/or one or more large common plots.
- **Garden pathways** should be designed to be smooth and wide enough for strollers, wheelchairs, and wheelbarrows to navigate. Sheds, greenhouses, and other buildings should also be accessible to everyone.
- Many community gardens in Newfoundland and Labrador benefit from active participation of **families and children**. Families will be attracted to a garden when the experience is one that all members will enjoy. When designing the garden, be sure to include tailored resources for children to make the garden a welcoming and educational environment.

Garden Planning & Design



- Convenient water access
- Ensure physical accessibility
- Structures (storage, rain barrels, greenhouses, etc.)
- Position plots for direct sunlight, wind breaks
- Composting area
- Consider fencing needs
- Signage
- Rest and play areas, and washrooms

SLIDE 10: GARDEN GUIDELINES

Garden guidelines should be established through consultation with gardeners, committees, and other key stakeholders such as the landowner and funding groups.

- Garden guidelines will include information about **health and safety guidelines** for the garden to ensure safe practices by participants and volunteers while working at

Garden Guidelines

- Volunteer and participant responsibilities and expected conduct
- Agreements, fees, waivers, and other forms
- Safe handling of tools, materials, and chemicals
- Gardening practices allowed
- Important contacts



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the garden.


- These will also include guidelines for **working with others, sharing space, and treating fellow gardeners with respect.**
- The guidelines should also let users know what kinds of **gardening practices** are allowed. For example: is the garden organic? What kinds of fertilizers are allowed?

SLIDE 11: PLANTING THE GARDEN

Garden installation will happen in the late spring, once the soil has thawed, the air has warmed, and the threat of frost has passed.

- It is a good idea to wait until after the **first week of June** to begin planting outdoors in most parts of Newfoundland and Labrador (depends on the plant – ask your local garden centre).
- When deciding what to plant in the garden, **consider what the community likes to eat**, growing conditions, which crops are easiest to grow, and which plants offer the highest nutritional value.
- Work with local gardeners and farmers to select the crops that will grow well in the region, and select plants that are likely to succeed. **Regional nutritionists** can provide help selecting the most nutritious plants.
- Local garden centres and some farms will carry **seedlings** that can be purchased and planted in place of starting from seed. These may be helpful if starting late in the growing season.
- Gardeners can also start **transplants** indoors using growing lights or a greenhouse ahead of time in order to grow plants that require a longer growing season, such as tomatoes.

Planting the Garden



- Use hardy local seed varieties
- Follow instructions on seed packets
- Confirm soil is warm enough for germination before planting
- Water seeds after planting them, and again every 24 hours
- For long season plants buy transplants or start seeds indoors
- Try non-traditional plants such as Asian greens and herbs

Ask the group to list some of the vegetables and herbs they would like to grow. Write these down on a flip chart or whiteboard.

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SLIDE 12: GARDEN MAINTENANCE:

Successful community gardens require considerable communal and individual plot maintenance throughout the season. Collectively, gardeners and volunteers will be expected to work together to maintain shared spaces including communal plots, composting bins, garden sheds, and greenhouses.

Many community gardens organize a **harvest party** during the fall to bring together gardeners and volunteers to harvest the bounty from their gardens. Harvest parties can be organized as educational events where gardeners participate in a workshop on harvesting techniques for crops that were planted in the garden.

Garden Maintenance

- Add lime every year
- Water plants in the morning or evening to reduce evaporation
- Weed regularly
- Use mulches to conserve soil moisture and stunt weeds
- Apply fertilizer regularly (such as compost, kelp, and manure)
- Prune plants as needed
- Tie back or stake tall plants that need support



SLIDE 13: COMMUNICATIONS

Good communication with participants and outreach into the community is important for a successful community garden.

- All participants should be included and kept up-to-date on the garden activities, and given the opportunity to provide input. Some successful approaches garden committees use to communicate with participants include:
 - on-site garden bulletin boards,
 - group email updates,
 - newsletters, and
 - websites.

Communications

- Garden bulletin boards, group email updates, newsletters, or websites
- Regular garden meet-ups or events
- Spring registration
- Harvest celebrations
- Community outreach



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- These communication tools can also be used to help participants arrange tool sharing and carpooling.
- Regular meetings with all garden participants are recommended as an effective way to engage participants in planning garden activities.

Hosting **garden events** can help participants get to know each other, build support networks, and learn more about gardening.

- Events can be as simple as a potluck at the garden or someone's house, or as elaborate as education events such as full days of themed workshops.
- Garden events offer the opportunity for education, relationship building and celebration of the successes of the garden and its volunteers.
- Garden events are a great way to reach out to the community and gain new participants.

SLIDE 14: THANK YOU!

Thank the audience for participating and take this opportunity to encourage discussions and questions about community gardens in your community.

It is a good idea to know about any existing community gardens in the area before starting your presentation. You can use FSN's Food Security Initiative Inventory to help you find community gardens in your area (see www.foodsecuritynews.com/resources). Find out if those gardens are accepting new gardeners so that you can direct your audience if they would like to join an existing garden.

If members of the audience are interested in starting a community garden, direct them to FSN's Best Practices Toolkits (www.foodsecuritynews.com/resources).



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Try to continue the momentum from the presentation by starting an email list or a working group to work on improving your community's food security.

Collect any FSN E-News sign-up sheets and return them to FSN, along with any feedback about the presentation.