



1. Participants

Approximately 50 people joined in this teleconference presentation and discussion session. Participants included representatives of various organizations, including local non-profits, College of the North Atlantic, Memorial University, Regional Economic Development Boards, Provincial Government Departments, as well as several individual citizens with personal interest.

Participants were from both rural and more urban communities throughout the province, including:

Grand-Falls Windsor	Stephenville	Labrador City
Corner Brook	Glenburnie-Birchy Head-	St. John's
Hopedale	Shoal Brook	St. Anthony

2. Introduction

After a round of introductions of all participants on the line, Kristie Jameson of the Food Security Network provided some introductory comments and information on the theme of 'Community Gardening: Building Communities & Growing Together'. Key points included:

- **A summary of the Food Security Network NL (FSN)** as a membership based not-for-profit organization with the mission to actively promote comprehensive, community based solutions to ensure physical and economic access to adequate and healthy food for all.
- **Our Current Situation**, as identified in a 2007 report by Agri-Foods, we only produce approximately 10% of fresh vegetables available in major wholesalers, meaning that approximately 90% is imported.
- **Benefits of Community Gardening** including environmental, health, social, economic and education and sharing of knowledge.
- **What's Happening in the Province** such as Brighter Futures, Family Resource Centres, Community Garden Alliance and the Burin Peninsula Environmental Reform Committee. There are Community Gardens in St. John's, Glenburnie-Birchy Head-Shoal Brook, St. Anthony, Norris Point, Burin, Stephenville, Fogo and more.

3. Keynote Presentation

Dr Angela Loucks-Atkinson from the Community Garden Alliance provided an overview of the Basics of Starting Up a Successful Community Garden. Key points from the presentation included:

- **Selecting Land:** Some things to consider when selecting land are light/shade in the garden, room for expansion, room for storage, foot and car traffic, access to water, soil quality and accessibility.
- **Getting Buy-in and Support:** The first step is to get permission to use the land. Find out who owns and uses the land. Hold meetings, contact politicians, and talk with people in the community to build support.

- **Develop a Site Plan:** Before starting the garden plan out the location and size of the garden plots, which plants to use, compost bins, garden name, and all the details of the garden.
- **Establish Guidelines and Policies:** Will the garden have a membership fee? How will plot maintenance be divided? Are there restrictions on which type of plants can be grown? Are there rules for using shared materials and tools? Are pesticides and fertilizers allowed?

For more information or to get involved with the Community Garden Alliance email cga.stjohns@gmail.com.

4. Key Themes/Information from Discussion

Following Dr. Angela Loucks-Atkinson's presentation on Community Gardening, participants had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues important to them. Some key themes that emerged from this dialogue include the following:

Concerns about Liability Insurance

- Many groups who are considering starting a community garden are concerned about legal Risk. It is important for a community garden to be covered under liability insurance to avoid personal liability of volunteer board members and organizers.
- Existing gardens such as the ones at Rabbittown Community Centre and McMorran Community Centre are covered by liability insurance. In some cases, where the land is owned by a municipality or another organization, the garden could be covered under that organization's existing liability insurance.
- Waivers signed by participants are not a substitute for insurance.
- An organization must be provincially incorporated in order to purchase insurance. A great resource for information about non-profit incorporation, liability insurance, and best practices is the Community Services Council NL (www.envision.ca).

Accessing Public Land

- Some community gardens on municipal land have been asked to provide a plan for remediation – returning the land to its original state – in case the garden closes.
- Most existing community gardens have not encountered this issue.

Extending the Growing Season

- **In St. Anthony the community garden has constructed a Greenhouse** to deal with the very short growing season. They partnered with a local college campus to build the greenhouse. The greenhouse is made from glass, wood and poly-carbonate. It does not need to be heated.
- **Seedlings** can be started indoors as early as March. Volunteers can start seedlings in their own homes using fluorescent lights or small hydroponic growing kits. Nurseries and farms can also be a source of seedlings.
- **Tunnel Gardening** can be used in at the beginning and end of the season to extend it by a few weeks. It consists of PVC pipe or wire hooped around the bed and extended across the garden. A cloth that is permeable to both sunlight and water goes over the tunnel. **The tunnel retains heat and soil moisture, keeps pests out, and provides a micro-climate.** It is not costly and the cloth can be reused for 4 years or more.

Community Engagement Best Practices

- **Intergenerational Groups** – Most of the gardening skills are with the older people in the community. By connecting older participants with young ones, these skills can be passed down. One community garden plans to have a partnership with a seniors' home. Group sessions build a sense of camaraderie and encourage people to participate.
- **Community Garden participants need to have a realistic idea of what they can expect.** This includes weeding, feeding and watering. Participants may think their involvement will just be to plant some seeds one day and return for the harvest. Some participants may never have gardened before and will need help or training.
- **Families** with children, parents and grandparents will be involved – each with different needs and expectations. Think about how parents and families will participate. Is there a bathroom or facilities for babies?
- At Rabbittown Community Garden sunscreen and hats are available for people who come unprepared. Snacks and water are also provided. You can't assume that participants will bring these things. Each garden day someone is in charge of children's activities to make sure they're entertained and looked after.

College of the North Atlantic Partnerships and Guide Project

- CNA campuses have carpentry shops and other resources they are willing to share with community gardens. Some College campuses may be interested in having gardens.
- The College of the North Atlantic is partnering with the Rural Secretariat to produce a guide for community gardening in Newfoundland & Labrador, as well as other supportive materials. [Email](#) FSN and share what you're doing, who's involved, and names of contact people for consultation about the guide.