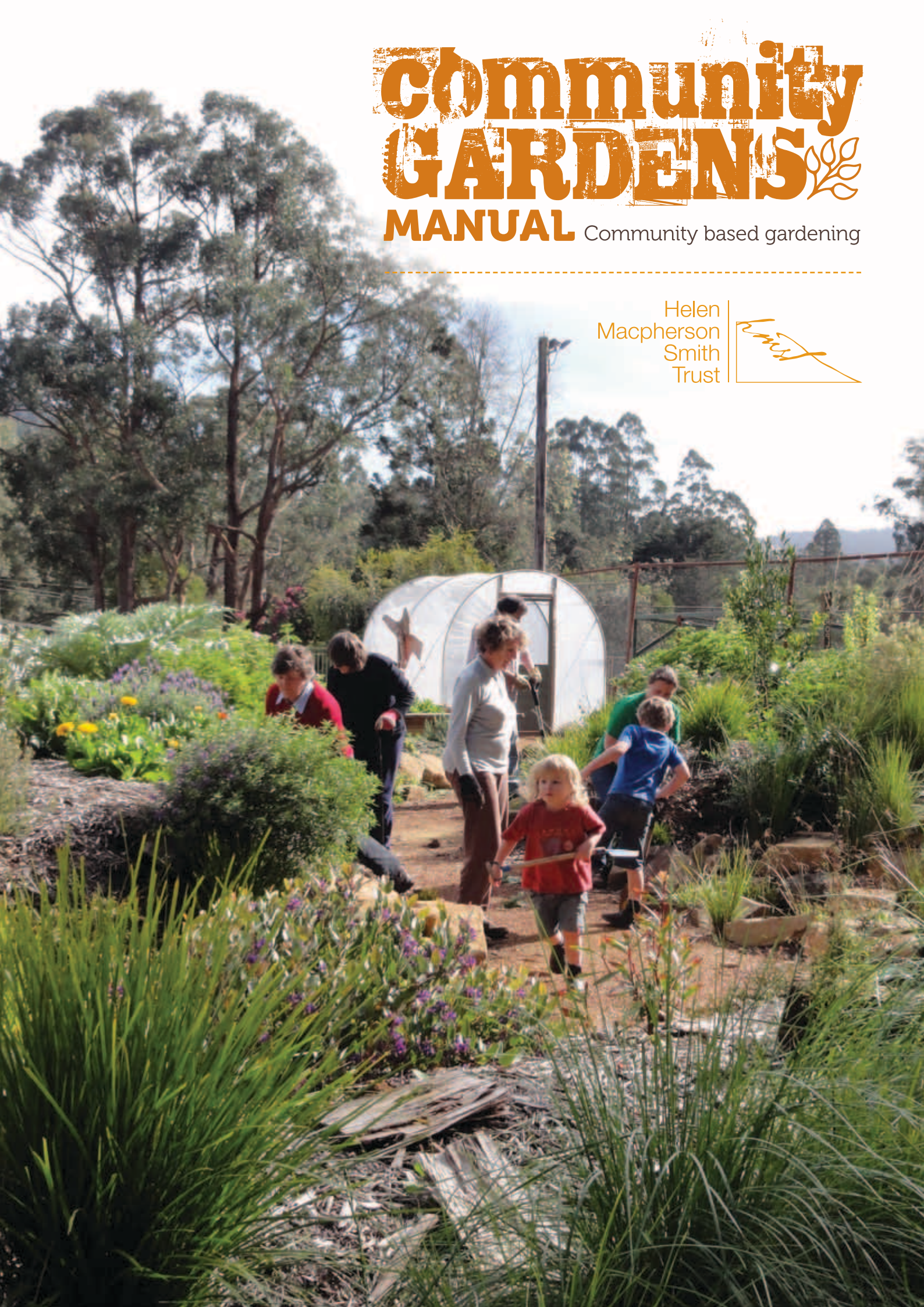


community GARDENS

MANUAL Community based gardening

Helen
Macpherson
Smith
Trust



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About this Manual

This manual has been written to assist individuals and groups planning to set up a community garden or POD food growing space. The material included and suggestions made are based upon the experiences of eleven regional Victorian communities who have each been involved in a Community Based Gardening Project between 2010 and 2013.

It is important to note when using this manual that no two communities are the same. Each is the sum of the values, experiences, ideals and commitment that each individual involved brings to the process. The success of each of the community gardens in this project, as well as the POD community food spaces, relied upon communities coming together to create something unique that would benefit the whole community. Each community worked collaboratively to design a garden or food space that best reflected their capacity to manage it into the future. This has meant a lengthy planning stage characterised by a willingness to engage with as many individuals and groups within the community as possible - not just the gardeners. These gardens have become much more than places in which to grow plants. They have become places for artists to display

artwork; for poets to read poetry; for children to explore and discover; for older residents to pass on skills; for tree-changers to connect to their new surroundings; for the weary to rest; and for the pleasure of the garden to be shared by all who visit.

The commitment of each community to build their garden or POD community growing space is also reflective of the challenges we face as global citizens living in the early part of the 21st century. Faced with turbulent global economics and the looming presence of climate change, these gardens offer a return to what is wholesome and sustains a community's spirit. By embracing local food gardens and other similar initiatives, communities are better placed to grow and flourish in this generation and in those that follow us.

Faced with turbulent global economics and the looming presence of climate change, these gardens offer a return to what is wholesome and sustains a community's spirit.



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Introduction

The bush was smouldering all around us and it was eerily quiet – like it had died.

Anne Plant, Jindivick

In February 2009, bushfires of unprecedented size and ferocity swept across large tracts of regional Victoria. During the worst days of the firestorms, 173 people lost their lives and over 2,000 homes were destroyed. In all, more than 50 townships in remote rural and regional areas of Victoria were affected. Businesses, schools and kindergartens were destroyed. Farmland, farm buildings and livestock were wiped out. National parks, dense bushland and native wildlife were also devastated by the intensity of the February fires.

Over the many days, weeks and months to follow, assistance of every kind came from across Australia as a nation sought to help those affected by the bushfires. The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRRA) was established to assist people through the complexities of the re-building processes. Local Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) were established and community leaders emerged who worked long and selflessly to assist in the rebuilding process. As the months turned to years, it was a tumultuous time for many who were still coming to terms with the enormity of their losses.

And yet even in the darkest of days, there was evidence of communities pulling together and helping one another. Individuals took the lead within their communities so that the greatest momentum for renewal was generated from within. Neighbour helped neighbour, friendships were forged, acquaintances became connected and together the community started to recover. Recognising the strength of this regeneration, communities looked for ways to augment these newly forged bonds. It was in this spirit of community renewal that the Community Based Gardening Project was conceived.

Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

The Helen Macpherson Smith Trust was established by the late Helen M Schutt (née Smith) in 1951. In accordance with the terms of her will, income from her estate was to be paid in perpetuity at the discretion of Trustees to charitable institutions situated in Victoria.

In 2013, the capital of the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust is valued at \$90 million. Since 1972 total grants made exceed \$99 million. Each year grants of between \$4 million and \$5 million are given to a wide spectrum of Victorian charities.

Helen Macpherson Smith Bushfire Grants Fund

In 2009, the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust established a \$2 million HMS Bushfires Grants Fund. The purpose of the fund was to assist in the restoration of community life in rural townships damaged or destroyed by the 2009 Victorian bushfires. A \$1 million grant allocation was made to Sustainable Gardening Australia for its proposal entitled, '*Community Based Gardening in Bushfire Affected Areas*'.

The Trust holds the view that philanthropy's role in the aftermath of the 2009 bushfires lay in the medium to long-term segments of the recovery efforts, and should be related to rebuilding community lifestyles and spirit. Grants from the HMS Bushfire Grants Fund have been made to local and state-wide charitable organisations specifically in support of capacity-rebuilding projects and programs to restore the community life of damaged Victorian townships

Sustainable Gardening Australia

Sustainable Gardening Australia is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation based in Victoria. SGA has worked with home and community gardeners, the horticultural industry and local governments across Victoria to achieve the following objectives:

- Protect & nurture the natural environment
- Encourage local healthy food production
- Build community connectedness.

Community Based Gardening Project

This project commenced in July 2010, 16 months after the tragic 2009 bushfires. It was designed to provide a lasting contribution by helping Victorian communities to rebuild and regenerate through sustainable gardening activities. The Community Based Gardening Project offered two options to bushfire affected communities.

OPTION 1: Five bushfire affected communities applied to create a community based garden that would be accessible to all community members. As part of the funding package Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA) employed local facilitators to assist in the set up and establishment phase of each community garden. SGA, as project manager, worked closely with the local facilitators and their respective communities to ensure the garden met the needs of each community and that they were set up using sustainable principles.

The five gardens that have been established under the Community Based Gardening Project are:

- **Beechworth Community Garden**, rear Quercus Bookshop, Ford Street, Beechworth
- **Jindivick Community Garden**, Kydd Parke Reserve, Jacksons Track, Jindivick
- **Toolangi & Castella Community Garden**, 1719 Healesville-Kinglake Road, Toolangi
- **Yackandandah Community Garden**, 3A William Street, Yackandandah
- **Yinnar & District Community Garden**, rear of ARC Yinnar, Main Street, Yinnar

The grant funding also enabled SGA to deliver a series of ten free community workshops at each location on a variety of sustainable gardening topics. In addition, three Community Garden Development Days focused on the development of long-term organisational and management structures for each of the gardens.

It is intended that these five gardens will become a perpetual community asset, owned and managed by their communities for the benefit of the entire community.

OPTION 2: Six bushfire affected communities applied to set up a smaller POD Community Food Space. POD is an acronym for productive, organic and diverse. Each POD installed six raised garden beds, built some composting bays and planted a mini-orchard at a local community area. Each POD ran a number of practical gardening workshops during the building phase. Volunteers were encouraged to connect with each other with a view to developing new friendships as well as sharing gardening skills and experiences. All community members interested in learning about gardening and sustainability were invited to attend.

The six Victorian POD Community Food Spaces that have been established are:

- **Callignee POD**
Callignee Community Hall, Callignee
- **Clonbinane POD**
Clonbinane Community Hall, Linton Street, Clonbinane
- **Dixons Creek POD**
no fixed location but is run from members' homes
- **St Andrews POD**
St Andrews Community Centre, 35 Caledonia Street, St Andrews
- **Yarra Glen POD**
Yarra Glen & District Living and Learning Centre, Anzac Ave, Yarra Glen
- **Yea POD**
Yea Community Service Group, 5 The Semicircle, Yea

Community Food Growing

We became so close in the aftermath of the fires. We learnt each others' names and we relied on each other. We needed to find some way that we could stay connected in the future and the community garden gave us this connection.

Liz Duell, Jindivick

For thousands of years, farmers have grown food seasonally for their local communities. But in the post war years of the 20th century, many of us have moved away from this local farming connection and have become reliant on the mass-produced, packaged foods that are easily accessible in our supermarkets. The food we want, irrespective of the season, can be imported from across the globe with very little thought as to where it comes from, who cultivates it or the methods used to grow and transport it.

In these early years of the 21st century, we appreciate more than ever the extreme fragility of the planet upon which we live. Degradation of arable land from overuse and the indiscriminate application of chemicals; loss of rain forests to palm oil plantations; acidification of the oceans and coral reefs from nutrient runoff; and climate change, are some of the enormous environmental challenges that lie ahead of us. We may not be able to immediately address these global challenges but we can control those things that affect us more locally, like the quality, health and sustainable production of the food we eat.

Across Australia community food spaces are popping up. They are on the roofs of apartment buildings, in derelict public spaces, adjoining community kitchens, in public parks and gardens, in hospital grounds – anywhere that is suitable, accessible and available. They are in densely built urban areas, in remote rural communities and in small regional towns. The common thread between all of them is that they bring people together in a spirit of sharing, an appreciation of food and a respect for how it is grown and prepared.

Whilst community food growing is about learning forgotten skills, sharing knowledge and experiences, exploring new techniques and celebrating the success of harvests, it is also about much more. It is about the pleasure of connecting with each other, of eating well and sharing abundance, of telling yarns and creating bonds.

Community food growing is about the joy of being a community in the truest sense.

Community food growing is about learning forgotten skills, sharing knowledge and experiences, exploring new techniques and celebrating the success of harvests but it is also about much more.



Individual Plot Community Gardens

Plot or allotment based community gardens are traditionally found in high density urban areas where people have limited access to a traditional backyard, or even a courtyard or balcony. Local government, a local church or some other community group may allocate a suitable area of land to establish a community garden. This land is then divided up into small plots with each plot allocated to an individual gardener. Usually there are long waiting lists of people hoping to acquire a garden plot. It is usual for an annual fee to be charged to cover expenses such as insurances and the maintenance of common areas i.e. fences and sheds.

Plot holders cultivate their own plots autonomously but may also be required to participate in communal activities that maintain common areas. Management of the garden is overseen by a committee drawn from plot holders.

More recently, these plot style gardens are being accessed by people who have backyards or gardens. Generally these newer plot holders are hoping to learn the skills of food growing from more experienced gardeners, perhaps enabling them to expand the growing opportunities in their own gardens.



Communally Run Community Gardens

It is not always necessary or even desirable for community gardens to be divided up into individual plots. If community members have ample sized gardens of their own they may simply want to spend time gardening with like-minded people, who share the same values and love of producing food. These gardens generally have large plots that are managed communally or are perhaps allocated to groups for short periods or certain objectives. Participants in communally run gardens could be:

- Local kindergartens or primary schools who want to run outdoor gardening activities for terms 2 and 3, without the responsibility of managing the plots over summer
- Local health services who want to run short courses on health and nutrition
- Local apiarists who want to place their hives in the garden for their bees to forage
- Local gardeners who want to meet and share skills and knowledge
- Local sustainability groups who perhaps want to set up a seed savers' network, food swap or farmers' market
- Local food banks who want to grow fresh food for their community kitchen and soup vans
- Experimental gardeners who want to trial new ideas and unusual plant varieties.

It is possible for all of these activities to be accommodated in a communally run garden as long as they fit in with the intent and purpose of the garden. The governance and management structures need to be in place from the onset so that the basis upon which the garden is being run is clear and consistent and does not cause acrimony and confusion.



All of the gardens set up under this project have been set up as communal gardens and are managed by the community for the benefit of the community.

POD* Community Food Spaces

For many communities, having a fully fledged community garden is the Holy Grail. However, many more communities recognise that they neither have the space, the resources nor the capacity to launch directly into a full scale community garden project.

Under the banner of this project, we worked with six communities to establish small POD community food spaces that encompassed:

- Composting areas
- Raised garden beds
- A mini orchard with fruit trees, vines and berries, if appropriate.

These communities will continue to base their community gardening activities and workshops around their POD community food space and perhaps sometime in the future, will be able to expand and increase their growing capacity.

The POD gardens are also a great way to set up community food spaces in a temporary location that can be moved later if needed.

*** POD** is an acronym for
Productive, Organic and Diverse.



Community food growing is about the joy of being a community in the truest sense.



Assuming that you are able to identify one or more local sites that could be made available for your community garden, you need to conduct an assessment at each site before you make any decisions.



Community Based Gardening

PART 1 - PLANNING

To create a community garden, you need to involve the whole community.

The first steps

Community Gardens should, by definition, belong to the community. So from the start it is important to establish a community driven process. Initially, your community garden is probably no more than a wish, or a cheerful discussion amongst like-minded friends. You need to find ways to progress this further. Contact your local council or shire to find out if anyone else has expressed an interest in starting a community garden in your local area. If there is another process under way then join forces; many hands make light work.

If no one else seems to be initiating the process, then it's up to you and your friends. Importantly, you need to gauge the interest for a community garden in the broader community i.e. outside of your friendship group. It's easy to assume that your community will be supportive but you need to substantiate this. By doing this research now you can establish your credibility when you begin to put together funding submissions, presentations or other applications for support.

Do some research on the internet, social media and local blog sites

but don't limit yourself to online sources. Visit local community centres, neighbourhood houses and other places where your community gathers. Contact gardening groups and sustainability groups but beware of limiting your reach to any one group, such as only canvassing the local biodynamic association. Remember, many of those who could be involved in the community garden may not belong to any community groupyet.

After doing your research and speaking to other community members and associations, your vision for a garden may be starting

to gain some momentum but you may also be faced with your first decision i.e. which comes first: the community or the garden (site)? In reality you will probably have to deal with both issues at the same time but that will need some assistance. The following pages deal firstly with finding your community and secondly with locating the garden site. However, if you have the manpower, in practical terms these can potentially be worked on together.

Inaugural Community Meeting

Once you have decided that you are getting a positive response to your community garden idea, plan to have a public meeting to gauge the true support that exists. It is easy to believe that everyone who nods is supportive, but getting the garden project off the ground will take a lot of work so you need to ensure that you have a committed team of community members working with you.

Decide on a venue for your meeting.

This could be a church or school hall; a community house or neighbourhood house; a scout hall or cricket club house – anywhere that is an identifiable community space. Avoid having the community meeting at a private house. Many people feel nervous about arriving unknown to someone's home but will feel more comfortable attending a neutral community space.

Advertise your meeting.

Be aware that you will need to use different communication methods for different age groups. Older people are more likely to find out about your meeting from posters at the local shops, the health centre, the bowls club etc. Younger people will probably find out via Facebook, Twitter or other social media. Young families may find out about it in the school newsletter or from a notice in the petrol station. You may even consider a letter drop or handing out flyers. Think laterally about how you can advertise your event. The more people that you get to this first meeting the more likely it is that you will get the project off the ground.

Prepare for your meeting.

Determine how long your meeting will take and create an agenda. Organise to have a couple of speakers, maybe someone from another community garden who can talk about their garden journey and the impact it has had on their community. Invite your local shire councillors along to talk about local government policies or by-laws regarding community gardens or other community food growing spaces.



Devise a sign-in sheet.

It will help you later on if you record the names, email addresses and postcodes of people attending your meeting. Don't ask for too much information at this stage as it can be off-putting for newcomers, as well as time consuming to fill in. However, collecting contact details is critical as to instigate an open community process you will need to communicate directly with everyone who expresses interest in the project. Information like this will also help you to validate any future project proposal you may present to (say) your council, a funding body or other third party.

Draw up an Agenda.

When planning your community meeting be clear about what you are trying to achieve. At this early stage you are probably trying to gauge the real community interest (and support) for a community garden, or other food growing space. You are NOT presenting a plan or a proposal, you are discussing an idea and you are hoping to be able to arrive at some conclusions from this meeting.

Some of the items you will need to discuss are:

- What do we mean by a community garden (or other food growing space)?
- What would be the benefits of the garden to this community?
- What would be the downside of the garden to this community?
- Where could the garden possibly be located?
- Who else should be involved in this discussion?
- Do we want to proceed with preparing a written proposal for the Community Garden project?
- Who here will help us do this?

Have plenty of butcher paper on hand and, if feasible, break people into smaller groups so that everyone can have some input. Record people's ideas and be open to all suggestions. Don't feel that you need have to have answers to all the questions that will be raised at this meeting. Commit to answering

them during the next phase. Be prepared to hear some negative opinions too. They may be valid and ultimately they will help you during the planning stage.

Assuming that you receive support from the meeting for progressing further, ask for volunteers to help you to create a project proposal. Commit to communicating regularly with those present via the email addresses provided on the sign-in sheet. Arrange for another meeting within a defined period of time e.g. 6 - 8 weeks, where you and the other volunteers can hopefully present a project proposal for further discussion.

Publish the outcome of your meeting through the same channels that you used to advertise it. Be welcoming of new people at any stage of the process; the more people you involve the better.



When planning your community meeting be clear about what you are trying to achieve. At this early stage you are probably trying to gauge the real community interest (and support) for a community garden, or other food growing space.

COMMUNITY MEETING CHECKLIST

PART 1 – PLANNING

PART 2 – BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE

PART 3 – MANAGING THE GARDEN

ACTION ITEM	RESPONSIBILITY	DONE
Choose a date and time		
Organise a venue		
Appoint a meeting facilitator		
Arrange speakers, if applicable		
Invite guests, if applicable		
Advertise the meeting		
Prepare an agenda		
Prepare a Sign-in Sheet		
Organise catering (tea, coffee, water, biscuits etc)		
Organise materials (Audio Visual equip, whiteboards, butcher paper, pens etc)		
Organise directions to the venue and signage at the venue		
Run the meeting - Gather and record information		
Organise a group of volunteers to prepare a Project Proposal*		
Publish the outcome of the meeting		

* Volunteers are asked only to prepare a Project Proposal. If the proposal is accepted by the next community meeting, then a more formal working group can be established

Community Garden Project Proposal

Up to now, your discussions about the community garden have probably had lots of feel-good emotions and ideas expressed. These ideas now need to be translated into a pragmatic project proposal where you will

- Identify goals
- Define objectives
- Consider resources
- Highlight outcomes
- Anticipate challenges.

This part of the planning process is critical if you want to engage with third parties e.g. your local government or funding agencies. Your community also needs the project proposal so that they can make an informed decision about proceeding with the project.

Goals: These should have been identified during the community meeting and may include:

- Growing food locally and promoting healthy living
- Creating an open place for shared community activities
- Educating community members in a variety of sustainable activities
- Invigorating a neglected or under-utilised public space
- Enhancing an existing community facility.

Objectives: These may have been raised during your community meeting and may include:

- Creating the garden from locally sourced, recycled or salvaged building materials
- Including sustainable infrastructure such as rainwater tanks, compost bays, solar power etc.
- Ensuring the garden does not threaten natural areas by the spread of weeds
- Ensuring disability access
- Establishing wide, even paths, raised garden beds, integrated playing spaces etc.
- Providing for public gatherings with outdoor shelters, outdoor ovens, seating, garden art etc.
- Ensuring the garden is accessible by foot, bike, public transport etc
- Being close to adequate and safe car parking.

Resources: In order to achieve your goals and objectives you will need to consider resources currently available within your community. These may include:

- Individual community members who can contribute time, skills and enthusiasm
- Community groups and organisations e.g. Sustainability Networks or Men's Sheds
- Government and employment agencies e.g. local government, Primary Care Partnerships
- Educational institutions e.g. local primary schools, secondary schools and TAFE
- Local traders and businesses e.g. the hardware store or community supermarkets
- Larger organisations e.g. Bendigo Bank for sponsorship and other financial support.

Outcomes: These may be directly associated with the garden itself as well as ancillary benefits that will arise from the establishment of the garden, e.g.:

- Increased community connections and reduced social isolation
- Opportunities for newcomers to engage with long time residents
- Multi-generational involvement in community garden events
- Potential for micro-economic activities e.g. Farmers' Markets or local food swaps.

Challenges: You have to be realistic about the community's ability, both to build a community garden and to manage it once it is built, e.g.:

- Securing suitable land and funding for the project
- Ensuring a high level of community participation to manage and maintain the garden once built
- Raising ongoing funds to cover insurances, maintenance of assets, utilities etc

- Developing a governance structure, membership charter, garden code of conduct, conflict resolution policy as well as other policies on garden management.

Just as no two communities are alike, no two project proposals will be alike, so don't be afraid to make this one uniquely yours. You will need to ensure that the work necessary to complete the project proposal is fairly (and efficiently) distributed between the volunteers. Break down tasks so that each member of the volunteer group is allocated an area to investigate. Then have someone confident in their data processing skills responsible for collating the information into one document. This document (and a summary) will be presented at your next community meeting.

COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT PROPOSAL CHECKLIST

PART 1 – PLANNING

PART 2 – BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE

PART 3 – MANAGING THE GARDEN

TASK	STRATEGIES	DONE
Identify Goals	- Discuss ideas that came from the first community meeting	
	- Utilise the information recorded at the meeting	
	- Identify Key Goals (4 to 6 approx)	
Define Objectives	- Discuss ideas from the community meeting	
	- Utilise the information recorded at the meeting	
	- Refer to the Goals (identified above)	
	- Define Key Objectives (6 to 10 approx)	
Consider Resources	- Refer back to Key Goals and Objectives	
	- Identify resources needed to achieve goals and objectives	
	- Identify resources readily available within your community	
	- Match resources needed to available resources and identify gaps	
	- Include an assessment of the time frame needed to achieve goals and objectives e.g. 6 months, 12 months, 18 months etc	
Highlight Outcomes	- Articulate physical and social benefits of the community garden project for the community	
	- Identify the opportunities that the community garden will gather from outside the community	
Future Challenges	- Anticipate challenges to be faced during and after the completion of the building phase	
	- Recognise any further work that will need to be done to secure the future of the community garden once it is built	
Project Proposal	- Prepare a detailed written project proposal	
	- Prepare a written summary of the project proposal	

Community Garden Location

Without secure access to suitable land you can't have a community garden. This is one of the biggest challenges that you will face if you haven't already done so. You have a number of options and there are pros and cons for all.

Private Land - You may be fortunate enough to have sufficient capital or donations to purchase an area of land outright for your community garden. Be sure to seek legal advice before you commit to any acquisition of land. Land ownership may make you subject to ongoing charges (rates, insurances etc) which could prove to be a burden to your community garden group.

You may be able to rent private land for the purpose of building your community garden e.g. by entering into a long term lease or licence agreement. When negotiating these agreements, be sure to ask about any exclusion clauses that may prevent you from developing or using the garden as you may wish. For example, a community garden built on school grounds may mean the garden is not accessible during school hours. Or a community garden at a local shopping centre may not be allowed to hold events at weekends when the centre is busy and car parking is at a premium.

Public Land - This is land under the management of your local council or shire. It may include crown land managed by local government under an agreement with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI), formerly the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). In general, most community gardens will be established on vacant public land under a licence or lease agreement with their local council or shire.

If you have identified a suitable area of public land that may suit your purpose, your first step will be to contact your local government to establish who the manager of that land is and whether it can be made available for a community garden. If it is crown land not currently under the management of your local government, it may be possible for them to apply to be managers of the land or for you to apply directly to the DEPI. This can be a lengthy process. For further information visit www.depi.vic.gov.au and search *DEPI Crown Land Leasing Policy in Victoria*.

Licence Agreements – A licence will allow your group to use a specified area of land for the community garden but it will not give you exclusive rights to that land. Other people may also have access to the area although this usage will usually fit in with the garden's purposes. For example, if the garden is to be situated in the grounds of the local hospital, persons working at the hospital may need to walk through the garden to access the car park. Or they may wish to sit and have their lunch on a seat in the garden. This would not necessarily conflict with your purposes.

Licence agreements should only be entered into after receiving legal advice. Be aware of ongoing costs (rent, rates, insurances etc) as well as exclusion clauses and security of tenure. You don't want to create a garden only to find that the licence lapses after a couple of years or due to circumstances beyond your control.

Note: There may also be costs associated with setting up the licence agreement.



Lease Agreements – A lease agreement will give you exclusive rights to a specified area of land. This may or may not suit your purpose, particularly if you intend the garden to be an open space that is easily accessible by others in the community.

Lease agreements should only be entered into only after receiving legal advice. Be aware of ongoing costs (rent, rates, insurances etc) as well as exclusion clauses and security of tenure.

Note: There may also be costs associated with setting up the lease agreement.

Insurances – These may be your biggest hurdle i.e. finding affordable insurances for the different stages of the project. Some insurances you will need to consider are:

- Public Liability Insurance
- Voluntary Workers Insurance
- Building Insurance
- Property and Equipment Insurance

Insurances are expensive and independent advice should be sought to make sure that any insurance cover entered into is appropriate for your needs. Useful information on insurance coverage may be found on the following websites:

rhsv.org.au/rhsv-members/for-clubs/club-insurance/
www.localcommunityinsurance.com.au/

Be aware that if you are under the auspice of an existing community association or Section 86 Committee of Management*, their insurance coverage can probably be extended to include the community garden. This may be cheaper than taking out a new policy.

Be sure to obtain independent advice from a qualified insurance professional for all of your insurance needs.

* A Section 86 Committee of Management (special committee) is set up by a local government under the Local Government Act 1989. The S86 committee is given certain delegated powers e.g. to manage an area of public land (reserve, park, sports ground etc). The committee can only act according to the Deed of Delegation that defines its purpose and it must report back to local government. A S86 committee may be covered by council insurance as long as its activities are consistent with the terms of its Deed of Delegation. If the community garden is to be included under the banner of a S86 committee, please check with your local council/shire, that the garden activities are consistent with the powers delegated to it as a S86 Committee of Management.

Selecting a site

Assuming that you are able to identify one or more local sites that could be made available for your community garden, you need to conduct an assessment at each site before you make any decisions.



COMMUNITY GARDEN SITE ASSESSMENT PLANNER

CONSIDER	COMMENTS	DONE
Site Access	You need to ensure that both people and vehicles can access the site. Large vehicle access (trucks, utes etc) is important at the construction stage, but there will be an ongoing need for vehicular access e.g. for disability access or deliveries.	
Site Parking	Traffic management will be an important requirement for securing planning permission. If sufficient parking currently exists at or near the site, this will be a distinct advantage.	
Site Topography	The best site is a flat site. It is cheaper to build on and is easiest for moving people and equipment around the site. Gentle sloping sites may be feasible but building any ramps or terracing will add considerably to costs during the construction stage.	
Site Orientation	To maximise the amount of sun the garden will receive, particularly in winter, the site needs to have a north, north/west or westerly orientation	
Soil Type	Check out the soil to see if it's clay, sand or loam. Dig down at least 500mm in case you have a duplex soil e.g. sand over clay or another combination. Test a number of locations across the site.	
Offsite Considerations	Even if the site has a good orientation, other factors may reduce this advantage e.g. overshadowing from nearby buildings or shade from trees. And if the site is in an ecologically sensitive area you will need to consider whether the garden could potentially cause damage to the area e.g. water runoff to a wetland.	
Vegetation Assessment	<p>Conduct an assessment of the vegetation currently on site. You may need to get a professional horticulturalist or arborist to assist you. Make note of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different vegetation types (canopy trees, shrubs, grasses, groundcovers etc.) and their location on the site • Environmental and noxious weed species • Native and endemic (local) plant species • Habitat plants for mammals, birds, lizards and other wildlife • Significant trees (also refer to the shire tree register) • Overall plant health and any dangerous trees or tree limbs • Plants contributing to soil stabilisation on slopes or at the edge of waterways. 	
Site Drainage	The site topography, soil type and vegetation coverage will help you make an assessment of any potential drainage problems on the site. It may be worth testing the drainage by digging a number of small holes across the site approx 30cm deep. Fill with water and allow to drain. Re-fill and then measure the level of water in the hole after 1 hour. If the water in any hole has dropped by less than 10% (3cm) then that area of the site has poor drainage. Good drainage should be between 20 – 50% (6cm to 15cm) of water loss within an hour. More than 50% means the soil is probably sandy with poor water holding ability.	
Site History	Knowing the history of your site over the past half century is important if you are planning to grow food producing plants. Potentially harmful chemicals can persist in the soil for many decades and be taken up by plant roots. If the site was previously used as (say) a municipal waste area, an orchard area or an industrial site, it may be worth having the soil tested for contaminants BEFORE you commit to the site. Visit www.nata.asn.au to find an accredited testing laboratory.	

COMMUNITY GARDEN SITE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

CONSIDER	COMMENTS	DONE
Restrictions and Overlays	<p>Check if the site is subject to any restrictions or overlays e.g. heritage, native title, designated bushfire prone area, designated flood plain, public land acquisition, property services or easements etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit www.land.vic.gov.au and click Property Reports. This is a free report (August 2013) • You can also access a Property Report via Planning Vic: Planning Property Report mobile app (for iOS and Android) • To locate underground services on the site visit www.1100.com.au/ or call 1100 • For further information about local by-laws, contact your local shire or council planning department. <p>Note: Even if some restrictions or overlays are present, it may not mean the site is unsuitable for a community garden. It does mean that you will have to get additional permissions or may be limited in some building work or other activities that you hoped to undertake..</p>	
Land Size (area)	<p>You need to know how large the site is. Don't get carried away by the prospect of a huge piece of land. The best gardens often come out of cleverly designed ways to use small spaces. Larger areas can be more expensive to build on with extra costs for paths, borders, fencing etc. Larger areas will inevitably be more time consuming to manage, especially the not-such-fun jobs i.e. weeding! A communal garden can be built very effectively on an area of land 500 to 800 square metres in size (excluding onsite parking). Any larger and you should consider a staged approach to your development.</p>	
Power and Water	<p>Whilst you may intend to be completely self-sufficient in terms of power and water, having the infrastructure available onsite should you need a backup will be an advantage. Consider whether you might need power to run the irrigation pump if the garden generator breaks down? Will there be access to mains water for drinking if your council does not allow drinking water to be supplied from rainwater tanks?</p>	
Public Toilets	<p>The site needs to have access to public toilets as it will probably be prohibitively expensive for you to install a toilet on the site. Consider getting access to another nearby public building (sports pavilion, community hall etc) for this purpose. You may need to come to an arrangement about ongoing cleaning costs.</p>	
Site Map	<p>Draw a map of the site and put in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scale of the map e.g. 1:20 or 1:100 • The north direction • The boundary measurements • The location of large trees and shrubs • The location of any buildings on site • Access points to the site • Utility services (below and above ground) • Slopes and depressions • Other impediments or immovable features. 	

Second Community Meeting!

Invite back all those who attended the first meeting but don't stop there, advertise and promote this second meeting as much as the first. In our time-poor society, you will find some community members who couldn't attend the first meeting but are keen to attend this meeting.

Present your written project proposal to the community at this meeting and be open to discussing its contents. Don't gild the lily here; be as honest about the positive things you have found out as well as the not so favourable ones. You will have to face them at some stage so you may as well do it here.

Hopefully, by the end of this meeting your community will be able to make a decision to proceed with the proposal and you can form a Community Garden Working Group (CGWG). This group may include some or all of those who participated in putting the project proposal together, plus hopefully some more. You should try to get a minimum of 12 people volunteering to be part of the working group. Some potential volunteers may not be present at this second meeting, but hopefully will have indicated their willingness to be part of a working group before the meeting. Unfortunately if you can't form a working group, no matter how positive your project proposal was, you are unlikely to get a community garden off the ground. There will be a lot of work to be done and realistically it shouldn't fall to just a few. Anecdotally, community garden projects often fail because a key person in the project, who did most of the work, has had to leave, and there is no one to take over. It is essential to have a large group sharing the load from the beginning rather than relying on just a few individuals.

Make sure that you communicate the outcome of this second meeting to all those who have shown an interest, or have been involved so far – your stakeholders. And make sure that you welcome new people on board as you progress the project along.

Community Garden Working Group

Congratulations, you have achieved a lot to get this far so be proud of yourselves. You have some good foundations for the next part of the project i.e.

- You have involved your community from the beginning and have gotten their agreement to proceed with the project.
- You have put together a project proposal that will help legitimise the work that you have done and articulate what you are trying to achieve.
- You have identified one or more areas of land that may be suitable for the community garden site.
- You have formed a dynamic and cohesive working group that has the support of your community.

You now need to formalise your working group by creating a Terms of Reference.

Community Garden Working Group Terms of Reference

Note: If the community garden working group has been set up as a subcommittee of another association or group, then you must familiarise yourself with the rules of that association as they will also apply to your working group. Your working group will need to report back to the association's main committee as per their requirements.

Your Community Garden Working Group should operate under a Terms of Reference. This identifies your purpose as well as your authority to make decisions on behalf of the people you represent - your community. The Terms of Reference will be a public document and should be agreed upon at the first meeting of your working group.

Working group meetings should take place on a regular basis and at a regular time as best suits the majority of those participating. Each meeting should be publicised beforehand so that new community members feel welcome to come along. The Terms of Reference will assist newcomers to understand the role of the working group and its mandate.

Before each meeting an agenda should be prepared and sent out with the minutes of the previous meeting. An electronic copy of these agendas and minutes should be made available to all stakeholders. This will ensure that your broader community is kept informed of all garden developments.

It is important that the Terms of Reference sets out the processes or conditions by which the CGWG will be wound up. This may be on the completion of its purpose or after a defined period of time e.g.

'This community garden working group has been established for the following purposes:

- *To secure a suitable location for a community garden*
- *To develop a community garden design that can be agreed upon by the community*
- *To source funding for the establishment of a garden*
- *To work with the community to build a community garden as per the project proposal.*

This community garden working group will transition to a more formal governance structure on the completion of these objectives or after a period of 18 months from (insert date), whichever is the earlier.'

SAMPLE

COMMUNITY GARDEN WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Statement of Purpose

This Community Garden Working Group (Working Group) has been established for the following purposes:

- To secure a suitable location for a community garden
- To develop a community garden design that can be agreed upon by the community
- To source funding for the establishment of a community garden
- To work with the community to build a community garden as per the project proposal.

This Working Group will transition to a more formal governance structure on the completion of these objectives or after a period of 18 months from (insert date _____), whichever is the earlier.

Working Group Members

All community members are welcome to nominate themselves to be part of the Working Group.

A minimum of (insert number _____) members is required to be on the working group. There is no upper limit.

The Working Group will elect from amongst its number:

- A facilitator to lead the group (this can be a shared role between two people)
- A secretary to keep minutes, prepare agendas and to send and receive correspondence
- A treasurer to keep an account of monies received and expended by the working group, if applicable.

Working Group members agree to support the objectives of the community garden project as set out in the project proposal and agreed to by the community.

Protocols for Working Group meetings

Working Group meetings will be run under the following protocols:

- Working Group meetings are open to all community members.
- All members of the Working Group have a right to be listened to in a respectful manner.
- All members of the Working Group have a right to be spoken to in a respectful manner.
- All Working Group meetings are minuted and minutes are public documents.
- Agendas for Working Group meetings are issued 7 days before the meeting date together with the minutes of the previous meeting.
- Contributions to agenda items must be submitted to the Working Group secretary in a timely manner or be dealt with under 'Other Business'.
- Working Group meetings start and finish on time in accordance with the agenda.

- Meetings should have a Chairperson. This role can be associated with an existing position e.g. the Working Group Facilitator, or as otherwise decided by the Working Group.
- Decisions are made by group consensus. If consensus is not reached then a vote may be taken. A simple majority will determine the outcome.
- In the event of a tied vote, then the Chairperson will have the deciding vote.
- Unresolved matters that have not been voted upon may be deferred to a future meeting.
- Items requiring follow-on action after the Working Group meeting will be allocated to a specific person(s) and noted in the minutes.

Participation in this Working Group

- The Working Group is made up of individuals from the community who are committed to the project objectives.
- Working Group meetings are public. New members who wish to support the project can join the Working Group at any time.
- As key stakeholders in this project, it is desirable that the following groups have a representative on the Working Group (insert names _____).
- Members of the Working Group will be provided with all Working Group meeting agendas and minutes, even when they are unable to attend.

Communication

- Communication amongst the Working Group members will be primarily via email sent by the secretary.
- A printed copy of the agenda and minutes will also be available at (insert location _____).

Quorum

For a properly constituted meeting of the Working Group to take place there must be a minimum of 5 members of the Working Group present within 30 minutes of the meeting start time.

Meeting Dates

- Working Group meetings are held on the (insert days or dates _____).
- Date and time of next meeting are to be provided at the end of each Working Group meeting and included in the minutes.

It is important to start planning for the future governance and organisational structures for the garden by the mid-point of the Working Group's tenure.

Key stakeholders

Your new Working Group needs to identify key stakeholders who can assist you to get the community garden project off the ground. These are people or organisations that will be influential in the success of your project or may themselves benefit from your project. It has been the experience of this Community Based Gardening Project that success in setting up a community garden is greatly assisted by support received from:

- **Local Government** councillors and council officers, who may be able to assist you in locating a suitable piece of land, accessing community grants, providing advice on planning as well as championing your project through their extensive community networks.

- **Community Houses and Neighbourhood Houses.** These organisations are great partners to have when getting your project off the ground. They are experienced in writing funding applications for grants, they are closely networked into your community and they are (generally) incorporated associations. Once you get to the point where you are entering into agreements with government or other funding agencies you will need to be either an incorporated association or under the auspice of an incorporated association or other legal entity. Community and neighbourhood houses are perfect for partnering with, as many of their activities will be closely aligned to the objectives of the community garden.

Each of the five gardens built under this project had a close relationship with their local shire or council as well as other key community organisations.

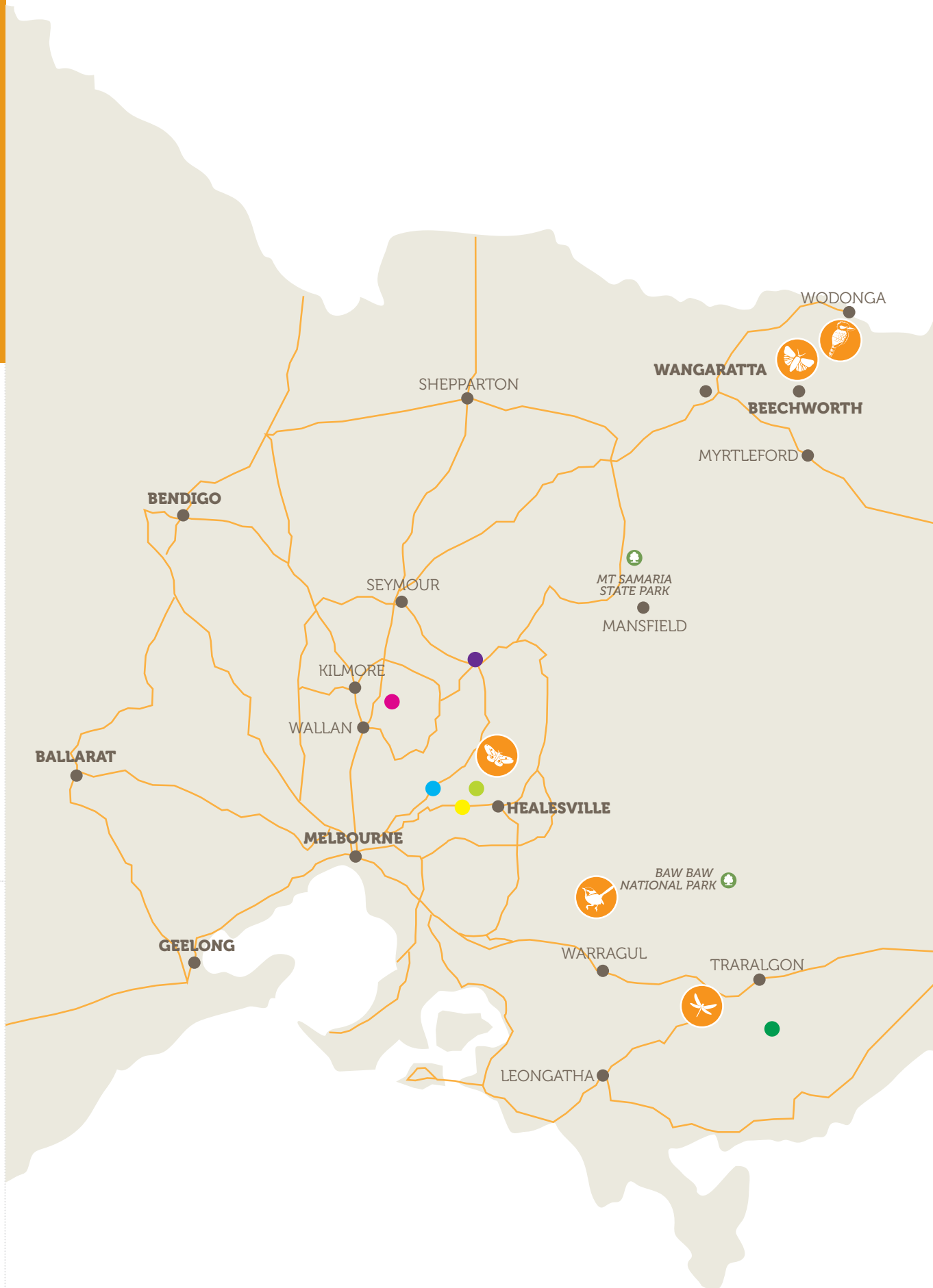
Consider also connecting with Landcare and Sustainability Networks, Primary Care Partnerships, Lions Clubs, Men's Sheds, local schools and TAFE.

Memorandum of Understanding

If the community garden project is to be run as a partnership with another group or association, ensure that you draw up a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between you and your partner organisation(s). People will come and go during the life of the project, so it is important to have written agreements in place from the beginning. Otherwise you may find your relationships lack clarity and are beset by misunderstandings. An MoU legitimises any relationships you enter into as well as setting down the expectations of all parties.



Location Map of Community Gardens





Yackandandah Community Garden was built under the auspice of the Yackandandah Community Education Network (YCEN). The garden site is at 3A William St on land licensed by YCEN from Indigo Shire. The community garden was built with the assistance of the Beechworth Correctional Centre.




Toolangi & Castella Community Garden was built under the auspice of the Toolangi Castella & District Community House. The garden site is at the CJ Dennis Reserve on land managed by a Section 86 Committee of Management.




Jindivick Community Garden was built under the auspice of the Jindivick Progress Association (JPA). The garden site is at Kydd Parke Reserve on land licensed by the Jindivick Cricket Club from Baw Baw Shire. A sub-licence for the garden site was provided to the JPA.




Beechworth Community Garden was built under the auspice of the Beechworth Neighbourhood Centre (BNC). The garden site is at the neighbourhood centre on land leased by the BNC from Indigo Shire. The community garden was built with the assistance of the Beechworth Correctional Centre.




Yinnar & District Community Garden was built under the auspice of the Yinnar & District Progress Assoc. (YDCA), in partnership with the Artists Resource Collective (ARC). The garden site is on crown land leased by ARC from Latrobe City Council.




POD Community Food Spaces

- Callignee POD Gardening Group
- Clonbinane POD Gardening Group
- Dixons Creek POD Gardening Group
- St Andrews POD Gardening Group
- Yarra Glen POD Gardening Group
- Yea POD Gardening Group

SAMPLE**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING****between the Neighbourhood House and the Community Garden Working Group - Community Garden Project****Purpose**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is to provide clear guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of each party to this agreement and to detail our commitment to working co-operatively to achieve the project outcomes (*or some other suitable words*).

Term

This MoU will guide the working relationship between the parties to achieve the purposes of the MoU from the date of its signing to (*insert date* _____).

At the end of this time, or earlier if the project outcomes have been achieved, this MoU will be reviewed.

Project Background

Insert a short paragraph giving the background to the project.

Overall Project Outcomes

This project aims to (*insert a short sentence here about what you are trying to achieve*).

The project objectives include a number of inter-related goals (*articulate these goals as per your accepted project proposal*), e.g. to create a communal garden where:

- Food can be grown organically and shared with others in the community
- Local families and children can experience the pleasure of growing and eating healthy food
- Workshops can be run and best practice in sustainable gardening can be demonstrated
- Gardeners and non-gardeners are equally welcome and community celebrations are accommodated
- Quiet places for rest and contemplation are set aside for all who want to enjoy the beauty of the garden.

Community Garden Working Group Contribution To The Project

During the building and establishment of the Community Garden the working group undertakes to provide the following (*insert the working groups intended contribution to the project*):

- Project management and supervision of the project including financial management
- Running community forums and meetings to promote and gather support for the project
- Developing a suitable Community Garden Design and project plan

- Preparing and submitting funding applications in partnership with the Neighbourhood House
- Obtaining plans and permits where required
- Providing horticultural advice and other specialist expertise needed to set up of the garden
- Running working bees and garden workshops
- Having a representative of the Neighbourhood House on the Community Garden Working Group
- Remaining positive and engaged even when the going gets tough!

Plus any other suggestions as are applicable to you and agreed to by your project partner.

Neighbourhood House Contribution To The Project

During the building and establishment of the Community Garden, the Neighbourhood House undertakes to provide the following (*insert the neighbourhood house's intended contribution to the project*) e.g.:

- Entering into a licence agreement with _____ to secure the proposed site at _____ for a Community Garden
- Providing appropriate insurance coverage for the garden site during construction and for all volunteers active on site
- Working collaboratively with the Community Garden Working Group to achieve the project outcomes and to ensure the long term success of the project
- Promoting the garden to the wider community and provide information on the garden to interested persons and groups
- Working collaboratively with the Community Garden Working Group to create the necessary governance, organisational and management structures to secure the long term future of the garden
- Having a representative of the Community Garden Working Group attend the Neighbourhood House committee meetings
- Remaining positive and engaged even when the going gets tough!

Plus any other suggestions as are applicable to you and agreed to by your project partner.

Future Commitments

The parties commit to *(insert any future commitments)*:

- Acknowledging the efforts of the Neighbourhood House and the Community Garden Working Group in creating the Community Garden.
- Erecting appropriate and permanent signage at the Community Garden that acknowledges the contribution of both parties to the establishment of the garden as a perpetual community asset and a lasting legacy for the benefit of the whole community

(Insert other commitments as are applicable to you and agreed to by both partners).



SIGNED

Neighbourhood House	Community Garden Working Group
By:	By:
Name:	Name:
Position:	Position:
Date:	Date:

Community and neighbourhood houses are perfect for partnering with, as many of their activities will be closely aligned to the objectives of the community garden.

Other Victorian Community Gardens

Many communities have gone down the path of taking a community garden from an embryonic idea to a fully fledged and well functioning garden. Seize the opportunity to learn from their experiences so that you can avoid pitfalls and get advice on how to best proceed. For more information on the community gardens involved in this project you can contact the gardens directly.

- **Beechworth Community Garden**
Tel: (03) 5728 2386.
- **Jindivick Community Garden**
Email: JindiGarden@telstra.com
- **Toolangi & Castella Community Garden**
Tel: (03) 5962 9060
Email: ToolangiCastellaCG@telstra.com
- **Yackandandah Community Garden**
Tel: (02) 6027 1743
Email: YackandandahCG@gmail.com
- **Yinnar & District Community Garden**
Email: YinnarCG@telstra.com

You should also try to visit other community gardens close to your community garden location. Visiting established gardens will inspire you as to what can be achieved by communities working together. It can also give you inspiration when it comes to the design phase for your garden.

Many Australian community gardens are listed with the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network www.communitygarden.org.au. You should also contact your local government or shire for information on other community gardens in your area.



...taking a
community
garden from
an embryonic
idea to a
fully fledged
and well
functioning
garden.

Community Garden Design

You have just been through a lengthy planning phase and have (hopefully) secured access to a suitable garden location. You may not have any money yet, but the temptation is to go out with picks and shovels and start constructing something to get the garden started. Our best advice at this point is – don't! You need to complete the second stage of the planning phase – the Community Garden Design.

Note: The following section will focus on designing a communally run community garden, as was the case for the five gardens involved in this project. However, many of the design tips can also be used when designing a community garden with individual plots.

You may wonder why the design phase comes before the money phase i.e. surely you need to first find the money so you know what you've got to work with? Well yes, you will need money but you can do an awful lot without much money. So during the design phase, try to

keep money constraints in the background. Encourage your community to 'dream large' but ultimately to be realistic. You may not be able to achieve everything on the community's wish list, but you may also exceed your own expectations. Avoid designing a garden that has no potential for further development. You may not manage to include an outdoor oven in your first round of funding but, if it's on the plan, at least you know that it may be possible in the future.

Importantly, a well thought out garden design will assist you when making a funding application. As they say in the classics, a picture is worth a thousand words!

Garden Designer

It is a good idea to engage a qualified professional to design your garden. Whilst you will undoubtedly have people on your working group who are talented and knowledgeable gardeners, an outside designer brings a fresh and impartial approach. A designer is trained to consider the practical as well as the improbable and they don't have to worry about personal relationships e.g. they can give you advice without causing offence.

Your designer will need to work from a project brief i.e. a clear set of instructions as to what you are trying to achieve. Don't assume that everyone has the same interpretation of the term 'community garden', so your designer needs to know what YOUR community wants. In effect, your project proposal (prepared earlier) will double up as the project brief. It has been endorsed by your community so gives the designer a sound basis from which to work.

Invite the designer to visit the site to conduct a site assessment. Provide any information about the site that you have gathered during your own site assessment process. Seasonally relevant information is critical. Perhaps an area of the site is flooded in winter but dry in summer, so the designer will need to accommodate this in the design. You may have plans to remove large, dangerous or weedy trees (with an appropriate permit), or there may be plans to build a double storey building adjacent to the garden site. This is all relevant information to the designer.

It is important that the designer gets to meet with your community (the client), to hear them articulate their collective vision for the garden. So arrange to have a Community Garden Design Forum and again, invite along all of the interested parties and stakeholders whom you have identified and worked with to date.

Community Garden Design Forum

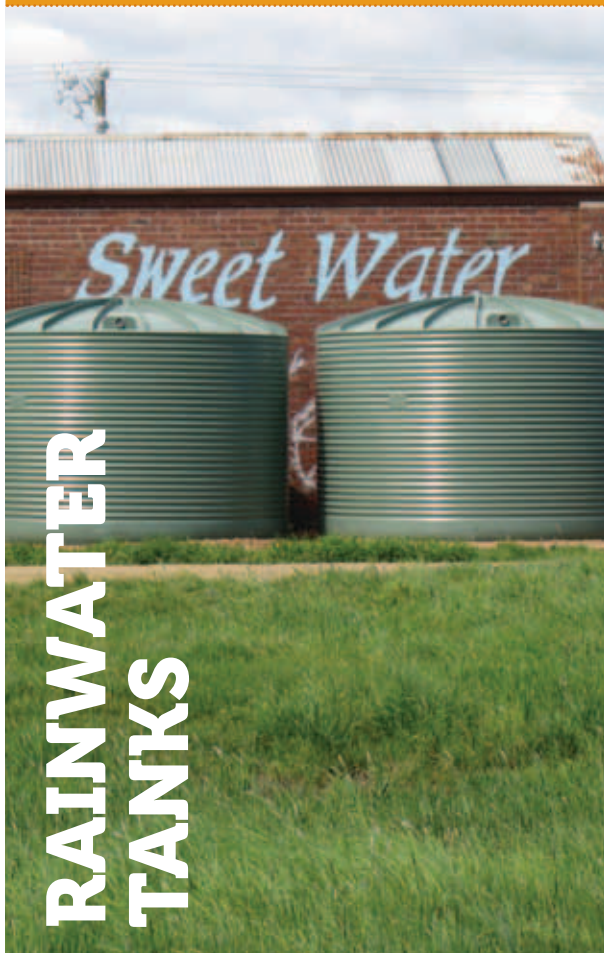
Allow about 2 hours for this forum and organise it as you have previous meetings. Be prepared for new people to turn up as many people who don't enjoy 'talk fests' will want to come along and be part of the fun of the design process. Make sure everyone is aware that the garden design is to be based on the project proposal so that you don't find yourself 'back tracking' at this stage. You want to make sure you are constantly building on the planning that has been done.

Put together a slide show with pictures of different garden elements to suggest what is possible. Encourage people to bring along some pictures of their own if they wish.

Be clear that there are some essential elements that need to be accommodated in the design and then everything else will fall in place accordingly.

GARDEN ELEMENT

COMMENTS



RAINWATER TANKS

Aim for a minimum of 20,000 litres of storage capacity but this may be limited by your total capture area (roof space). Perhaps you can gain access to additional water from a neighbour's roof.

- **Circular tanks** are economical but take up a lot of space.
- **Slimline tanks** make better use of space but are generally smaller and will be more expensive per litre of water stored.
- **Underground tanks** are expensive to install and may be hard to maintain.
- **Header tanks** are used to increase water pressure where the main storage tanks are downhill from the distribution areas (garden beds). Water pressure can be improved by pumping water from the main storage tanks to an elevated header tank and then distributing it around the garden.

SHELTERS

You will need to provide shelter and shade in your garden for people working or visiting throughout the year. Whilst you can get shade from a tree in summer it won't protect you from rain and winds. Building outdoor shelters can be expensive but by sticking to standard building sizes, you will minimise your expenses.

When planning your shelters and sheds, be aware of two important classifications under the Building Code of Australia (BCA):

- **Class 9B** covers public buildings including assembly buildings
- **Class 10A** covers non-habitable buildings and structures such as sheds and carports.

The regulations covering each are very different as are the costs of construction. Become familiar with the requirements of each class and, if money is a limiting factor, aim to design a shelter that complies with Class 10A requirements.

For information visit www.buildingcommission.com.au. You can also download the **Fact Sheet Class 10A Building Fact Sheet 2010** from the same website.

GARDEN ELEMENT

COMMENTS

EQUIPMENT SHEDS

It may be possible to build a single combined shelter/shed which will help if space is an issue on site. There are also practical and financial benefits in constructing a single building.

Locate the equipment shed near the 'working' areas of your garden e.g. the composting area or poly tunnel. You may need a concrete slab under your equipment shed which can be a significant cost. Ensure that your shed is big enough to store large articles of garden equipment such as wheelbarrows, trestle tables and plastic chairs. A roller door is great for getting bigger items in and out of the shed.

Shipping containers make great sheds, are cost effective and can be disguised to look like a miner's cottage. They come in standard sizes so, if you like this option, be sure to have it included at the design phase.

COMPOST AND MATERIALS BAYS



Your community garden should be run on sustainable principals and so it needs to have compost and materials bays. Try to include at least 3 compost bays, each a minimum of 1.2m wide x 1.2m deep x 1.2m high. This will allow you to have compost at different stages (fresh, maturing, fully composted). It will also ensure that the heap sizes are large enough to 'hot' compost.

A materials bay for deliveries or to store excess materials e.g. mulch, straw bales etc is useful if you have room. It should be approximately 2.4m wide x 1.2m deep x 1.2m high.

If you intend to have a gate on any of the bays, you will need to allow room for it to swing out.

Make sure that there is clear access around the compost bays for people to work in the area as well as to easily move wheelbarrows about. Try to locate the compost bays close to the garden beds where the compost will eventually be distributed.

GARDEN ELEMENT

COMMENTS



RAISED GARDEN BEDS

This is where you have lots of choices. Aim to have beds of varying heights from 400mm to 800mm. This will allow for kids as well as adults with bad backs to participate in garden activities.

If space is an issue, it is possible to 'cap' beds so that the edges of the beds double up as seats. This is best done on beds that are around 600mm high.

Beds should be no more than 1200mm wide. A comfortable reach for an adult is about 600mm which will just allow you to reach into the middle of the bed.

Beds can be built in various shapes and sizes but avoid making them in odd shapes e.g. diamonds or stars, as the pointy bits will dry out very quickly and are not very practical.

If you decide to include circular or oblong beds, you will probably be looking at pre-fabricated galvanised (steel) beds that come in a variety of sizes and heights.

Make sure that you only include enough beds to be manageable by your garden community. However, not all beds need to have seasonal plants. Some of the beds can have perennial plants like rhubarb, asparagus, artichokes, rosemary etc. which need less care. You can also plant vegetables, herbs and flowers at ground level, perhaps around fruit trees or near seating areas.



PATHS AND EDGING

Paths should be level and easily traversed. A flat site should pose few problems but a sloping site will be more challenging. You and your designer need to work out an easy flow across the site so that people and barrows aren't constantly struggling uphill. Whilst steps will be possible in some areas, be careful to ensure that all areas of the garden are accessible to people with poor mobility or for wheelchair access.

In general, most councils require access paths to

- be between 1200mm to 1500mm wide
- have a gradient of no more than 1:10

If steps are required then they should be

- between 115mm to 190mm high (the rise) and
- between 240mm to 355mm on the level (the going)

Single steps should be no more than 180mm high (the rise).

To ensure you comply with all regulations, contact your shire's planning department.

In addition to your main access paths, you will need to have secondary paths that allow for access or shortcuts to different areas in the garden. Whilst winding paths take you on a journey, direct paths are more efficient when working in the garden. You need to anticipate the natural shortcuts that people will take so you don't have people tramping across garden beds and causing soil compaction.

GARDEN ELEMENT

COMMENTS



SEATING

Plan to have seating in your garden from the start. Not just under the shelter but perhaps dotted around the garden or some rocks set in a circle. Seats invite people into your garden and give them permission to stay.

Consider who will be using your garden. Perhaps the local primary school or kindergarten can utilise the garden as an outdoor classroom. If you have room, put in seating suitable for a large group of children. If you are hoping to have eco-tourists visit your garden, consider having seats and information leaflets that welcome them.

And of course, people working in the garden will need to stop and rest occasionally, so perhaps incorporate seating as capping on the garden beds which will provide a welcome respite for all gardeners.

HOT/SHADE HOUSES AND TUNNELS

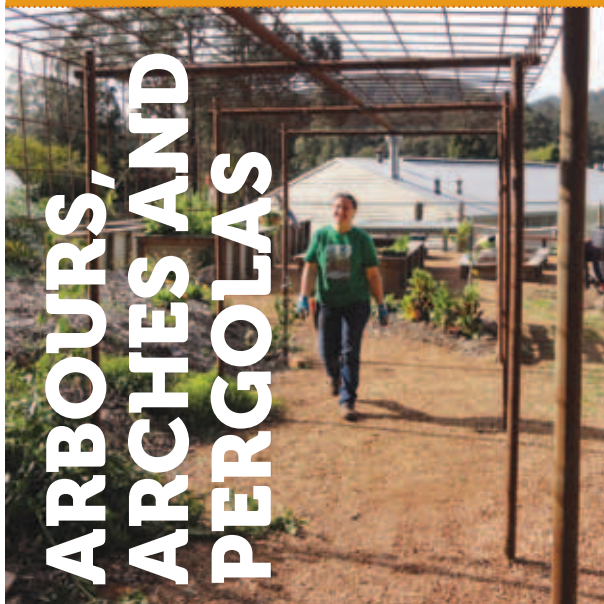
Having a propagation house in the community garden is a good idea if you think that you will use it. It can extend your growing season in frost prone areas and enable your community to get plants growing from seed earlier in spring. It can also protect frost sensitive potted plants over winter.

However, plants growing undercover will need to be tended more carefully than those growing outdoors. They require frequent watering by hand or by an automatic watering system, particularly in summer. Plants must be protected from the many pests and fungal diseases that will enjoy the warm moist environment of the hot house or tunnel. In summer the internal temperature may become so hot that the plants 'cook' so consider ventilation and shade covers.

If you don't have the room for a man-size house or tunnel, you may be able to turn some of your garden beds into temporary tunnels by using a garden cloche to get young plants started.

GARDEN ELEMENT

COMMENTS



ARBOURS, ARCHES AND PERGOLAS

Height in a garden is important but it may be a few years before trees give you this sense of proportion. Consider installing some structures for climbing plants, particularly over pathways. They will give you scope to grow vines and creepers as well as making a walk around your garden a more interesting journey.



FENCING AND GATES

The philosophy of this project has been to avoid the use of fences and gates unless they were necessary for safety or to protect the garden from marauding animals. If community gardens are to be truly community spaces, they must be welcoming places. Putting up physical barriers gives contradictory messages.

Whilst people often express concerns about vandalism and theft of produce from the garden, in reality this has not occurred in the project gardens. If you do need a fence, consider a low fence with an unlocked gate. Valuable equipment should of course be stored in a secure garden shed.



WATER FEATURES

Whilst water is essential in a garden, particularly for attracting pollinating insects, be careful about any water installation. Running water, unless provided by a natural creek, will need a pump and power. Safety can also be problematic when children are on site.

If you have any ephemeral water areas on the site i.e. seasonally wet or dry, you may be able to turn these areas into frog bogs by planting appropriate marginal plants and having strategically placed rocks.

Alternatively, you may consider having a dry creek bed in your garden that can fill during times when it rains. This very much depends on the topography of your site.

GARDEN ELEMENT

COMMENTS

BUFFER ZONES



Whilst the community garden will be a wonderful asset, it cannot be allowed to contaminate the natural environment surrounding the garden e.g. bushland or creeks. To protect offsite areas, consider installing a vegetation zone that creates a buffer between the garden and the areas you want to protect. This buffer zone will be inside the garden boundary and should include non-invasive plants or indigenous species from the local environment.

Be aware that garden plants can escape into natural areas in a number of ways. They can be spread by wind blown seed or by birds and other animals eating the fruit and dropping the seed. They can also be spread by illegal dumping of garden waste.

In addition to the spread of the plants themselves, diseases can also be transported by dirty footwear, vehicles or garden equipment. Myrtle rust, an introduced fungal disease that is spreading along the east coast of Australia, has the potential to destroy many of our native eucalypt forests. It can be spread from garden plants belonging to the Myrtaceae family such as strawberry guava (*Psidium cattleianum*) and feijoas (*Feijoa sellowiana*).

Once your garden is built, it will be necessary to have policies and procedures in place to manage garden plants that have weed potential. This may include avoiding them altogether or acting to harvest them before they set seed. Contact your local council or Landcare for a list of environmental weeds in your area.

PLANTS



It is not strictly necessary at the design phase to select the exact plant species that you wish to grow. But it is important to select the areas where you want certain plant types to grow. Plan to grow your fruit trees in the sunniest spot in the garden rather than building your equipment shed there. Vines and edible creepers can be grown up pergolas or along arbours. Hazelnuts and blueberries can be grown in a wet or poorly drained area of the garden. Citrus will do better in the cold of winter if they are planted on the north side of buildings where they will benefit from the warmer micro-climate.

Most flowering trees and fruiting plants need a minimum of 5 hours of sun a day to perform well. Leafy edibles will tolerate more shade. Plants from forests or tropical areas may need to be grown in the shade of larger trees to protect them from the harsh summer sun, winter frosts or strong winds.

GARDEN ELEMENT

COMMENTS



GARDEN SIGNAGE

There are a number of different types of signs that you will need in the garden. At the design stage consider signage that directs people to the garden as well as welcoming them in. Signs may be placed at the entrance to the garden or, if the garden is not easily seen, at the nearest public access point to the garden.

Note: Signs put up on the perimeter of the garden or in a public area will require planning permission from your shire or council.

Newstead Community Garden



OUTDOOR OVENS

In addition to the growing of food, it is wonderful to be able to share it communally. Many community gardens are now incorporating pizza ovens or other cooking areas in their designs. It is important to ensure that these are properly constructed and comply with building regulations (see your local shire planning department) and with food safety regulations www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/

A useful guide for wood fire pizza ovens in bushfire areas has been produced by the South Australian Country Fire Service. It can be found at www.light.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Code_of_Practice_-_Wood_Fired_Pizza_Ovens.pdf

You may not be able to achieve everything on the community's wish list, but you may also exceed your own expectations.



Finished Design

Once the garden designer has been given the project brief and has met the community at the design forum, he/she should be able to develop a community garden design for you. When this has been prepared, invite the designer and the community to come together to discuss the plan that has been produced. It may be that the design has had to be a compromise between what is wanted and what is possible. But hopefully all of the preparatory work that you have done means that the garden design is truly a visual representation of the garden dream.

When the design is accepted, perhaps with a little tweaking, it should be put out to community consultation for up to a month. Put copies of the design in public places, on Facebook pages, in local newsletters etc. Get a scanned copy and send it to your email listings, as well as your identified stakeholders.

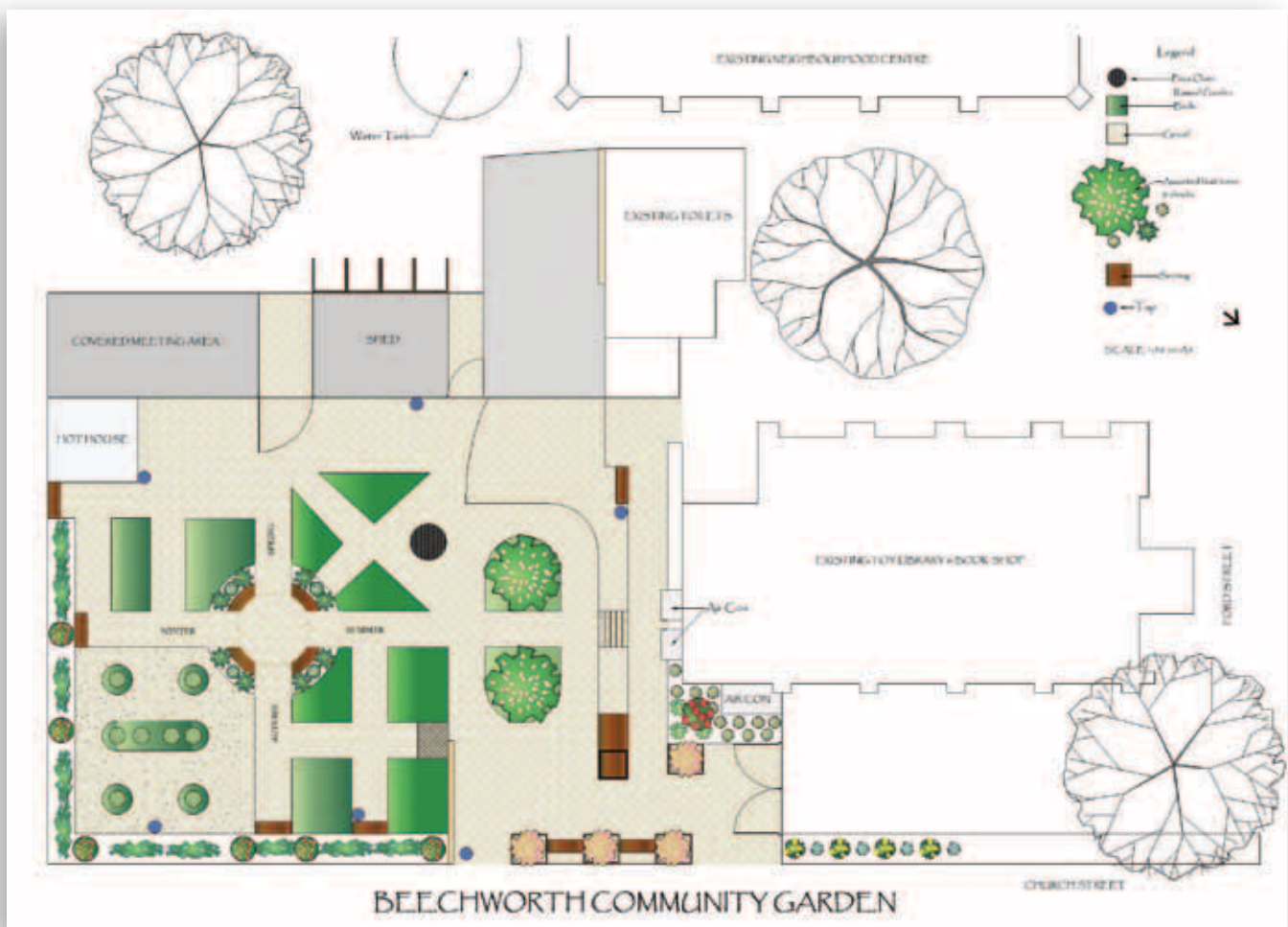
Invite comment and feedback within the community consultation period. Be clear as to whom that feedback should be sent to and hold a working group meeting to consider the feedback before affirming the design. Once you have gone through the consultation process,

and assuming you have not had feedback that might derail the project, your working group should formally accept the design and prepare to move to the next step ...looking for resources to build the garden.

Community Garden Resource Analysis

You have a Community Garden Working Group and a Community Garden Design, so now you need to turn your attention to sourcing what you need to build your garden, assuming that you will get the necessary permits to do so.

Break down your needs before you start looking for money. You'll be surprised what can be scavenged, salvaged, recycled or adapted to suit your purpose.



COMMUNITY GARDEN RESOURCE PLANNER

GARDEN ELEMENT	If money is limited...
Rainwater tanks	Perhaps you can get a donation of one or more tanks in good condition. This is not as improbable as it sounds as both the Toolangi and Yackandandah community gardens had virtually new tanks donated from local businesses.
Shelters	The local Men's Shed or Lions Club may be willing to construct a shelter for you as a community project. In Beechworth and Yackandandah, the Beechworth Correctional Centre inmates helped with much of the garden build. Building materials could perhaps be sourced from a local demolition yard at a fraction of their new cost.
Equipment Sheds	Individuals and businesses often 'up-size' their sheds. Put the word out in your community that the garden needs a shed and see what kind of response you get.
Compost and Materials Bays	Can be made simply and cheaply from some salvaged timber pallets and star pickets.
Raised Garden Beds	Building raised garden beds can be expensive but in-ground beds can be prepared for relatively little cost.
Soils and Mulches	Clean, locally sourced, weed-free top soil can possibly be acquired if some building work is being undertaken nearby. Mulches can often be acquired from arborists, tree pruners and local government undertaking large scale pruning activities.
Paths and Edging	Toppings for paths can be expensive but many landscape suppliers will do special discounts for community gardens – don't be afraid to ask. In Yinnar & District Community Garden, the garden edging was made from recycled conveyor belts sourced locally.
Seating	This can be made from locally sourced materials. In the Toolangi & Castella Community Garden, garden seats were carved from bushfire salvaged timber. They also created a rock amphitheatre with rocks excavated during building works on a local property. In the Beechworth Community Garden, seats were made from disused playground equipment.
Hot/Shade Houses and Tunnels	With a little creativity, hot houses and poly tunnels can be made simply and cheaply from strong plastic, lengths of poly pipe and some star pickets. Screen doors, which are good for pest control and ventilation, can often be found at salvage yards.
Arbours, Arches and Pergolas	These can be made from salvaged and donated materials. In the Toolangi & Castella Community Garden, arbours were made from the old fence posts dismantled from a tennis court. In Yackandandah old reinforcing mesh was used to create garden arbours.
Fencing and Gates	These can be expensive if they are needed to make a site secure from pest animals. You may be able to source materials second-hand and have the local Lions Club or Men's Shed assist you with construction.
Plants	The local garden club or seed savers' network may be willing to grow annuals and perennials to donate to the garden. Many wholesale fruit tree nurseries generously donated bare-rooted trees to the community gardens involved in this project.

Community and Government Grants

Whilst you will undoubtedly need to be resourceful in your quest to build your garden, there are going to be a lot of times when money really matters. As with everything that you have done to date, you will need to plan your garden budget carefully (see pages 57 to 59 *Community Garden Construction Budget*).

Small community and government grant streams (local, state and federal) are available throughout the year but you need to constantly track them to ensure that you don't miss out. Occasionally, the timeframe between the call for grant submissions to the grant closing date may be as short as a couple of weeks. The preparatory work that you have done so far will be of enormous benefit when you prepare your grant submissions.

Suggested Grant Streams

(current August 2013)

Government

- Federal Grants grants.myregion.gov.au/
- Dept of Planning and Community Development
www.dpdc.vic.gov.au/home/grants
- Vic Health
www.vichealth.vic.gov.au
- Regional Development Victoria
www.rdv.vic.gov.au/community-programs
- Grants Victoria
www.vic.gov.au/grants.html

For local government grants contact your council or shire.

Philanthropic

- Helen Macpherson Smith Trust www.hmstrust.org.au
- Australian Community Philanthropy
www.australiancommunityphilanthropy.com
- Telstra Foundation
www.telstrafoundation.com.au
- Perpetual Trustees Australia
www.perpetual.com.au/philanthropy-funding-opportunities.aspx
- ANZ Bank
www.anz.com.au/personal/private-bank-trustees/trustees/granting/granting-programs/small-grants/

Business

Many businesses support community projects with one-off small grants. Consider:

- Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Group
www.bendigobank.com.au/public/foundation/
- RACV Community Foundation or Community Programs
- IGA Community Benefits Program
- Australia Post
www.ourneighbourhood.com.au/grants/community-grants.html

Other

- Open Gardens Australia
www.opengarden.org.au/givingprogram.html
- The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
www.frrr.org.au/

Fund Raising

You can consider everything from the humble sausage sizzle and cake stall to a fun run or celebrity bike ride. You may even consider a Crowd Funding initiative to help you out.

The preparatory work that you have done so far will be of enormous benefit when you prepare your grant submissions



It is impossible to cover all of the imaginative ways that you can be resourceful when building your garden. Don't be afraid to borrow ideas from other community gardens

Community Based Gardening

PART 2 - BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE

Where to from here?

You and your community garden working group have worked very hard to get to this point and you may be a little overwhelmed by what lies ahead – the garden build. Pause, draw breath and spend some time reflecting on what you have already achieved.

- You have initiated a well structured community garden project.
- You have engaged with community members and other project stakeholders to secure their support and participation in the project.
- You have established a strong and cohesive community garden working group that operates under a clearly defined Terms of Reference.
- You have put together a realistic project proposal and have formed partnership(s) with another community association(s) to progress the community garden project.
- You have located and secured a suitable area of land.
- You have produced a well considered and holistic community garden design that meets your project brief and your community's vision.
- You have considered how you might resource the project and have started to apply for any grant funding that may be available.

So allow yourselves a self-congratulatory moment and celebrate this point in the project.

In our experience, the commencement of the building phase can get a little 'scary' for community garden working groups. The project becomes more visible as it moves outdoors and you may feel vulnerable to criticism. Doubts may creep in when the site clearing occurs and the area ends up looking as unappealing as any other building site. To minimise any loss of confidence at this stage, try to stay focused on the big picture and calmly return to the planning table. Only this time turn your focus to planning for the garden construction.

Plan to be resourceful

The five gardens involved in this project were all provided with sufficient funding from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to undertake a continuous build from the commencement to the completion of the garden. However, each of the communities appreciated that the money available could be stretched a lot further by being resourceful.

Each of the five garden working groups chose to think laterally as they began to build their gardens. Community members were asked to volunteer their time at working bees. Local contractors were engaged to build the larger elements of the garden only when it was considered unreasonable or unsafe for community members to do so. Materials were sourced locally which minimised delivery costs and again supported local businesses. In turn, many of these businesses offered substantial discounts on their products with some providing materials free of charge. Members of local community associations such as Lions Clubs and Men's Shed volunteered their time and skills. Residents from the Beechworth Correctional Centre were invaluable in providing assistance during the building stages at both Beechworth and Yackandandah Community Gardens.

The use of recycled and salvaged materials led to some innovative and creative outcomes and highlighted the uniqueness of each garden.



Note: If the garden site is subject to a heritage overlay or is in a designated bushfire prone area, you will need to check with your local council or shire planning department for any restrictions on the materials used.

COMMUNITY GARDEN CONSTRUCTION

Whilst you have developed a detailed garden plan with individual elements drawn to scale, you will now need to revisit each feature of the design to consider:

- How will it be constructed?
- What materials will we need?
- How can those materials be sourced?
- What alternatives are there?
- Can it be built at a garden workshop or working bee?
- Do we need to engage a professional?
- What funding will be required, if any?

Do not be afraid to tweak the design a little if the outcome is basically the same but the costs are more manageable. E.g. a shelter and shed erected by a professional company on a concrete slab may cost you around \$10,000 to \$15,000. A shipping container, with a man door and vent installed, can probably be delivered

to site for \$3000 to \$4000. You may then be able to add a verandah or other façade made from recycled materials. This may be more cost effective if it suits your site and design.

It is impossible to cover all of the imaginative ways that you can be resourceful when building your garden. Don't be afraid to borrow ideas from other community gardens, either by visiting them or perhaps by following them on Facebook. Community gardeners are mostly willing to share their best innovations and ideas. After all, sharing ideas is part of the fun of being a community gardener. Just ensure that anything you decide to build is safe, legal and doesn't pose any problems for the garden community or your neighbours.



GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Safety



It is critical that you observe safe building practices throughout the construction phase.

- Ensure that your public liability and volunteers' insurance is current and covers the site during the entire construction phase.
- Ensure that all of the contractors you engage are appropriately registered or licensed and have their own building insurances.
- Cordon off areas under construction with orange barrier mesh affixed to star pickets. The star pickets should be capped with yellow picket caps and secured with cable ties.
- Access to the garden site during the construction of buildings should be limited and appropriate warning signs put in place. It may be necessary to put up temporary chain mesh fencing for the duration of the build if the site cannot be secured.
- Ensure everyone visiting the garden during construction is wearing appropriate footwear, hats and suitable protective clothing.
- An appropriately stocked first aid kit should be available onsite during all activities in the garden. Low allergen sunscreen, a number of pairs of safety goggles, strong gloves and durable masks should also be kept with the first aid kit.

Rainwater Tanks

Tanks come in a range of shapes, sizes and colours with warranties of up to 25 years. Choose tanks certified to ASNZS 4766. Visit <http://proplastics.com.au/certification/> for information on this standard. Good quality tanks should be repairable. Adhere to the manufacturers' instructions for delivery, installation and plumbing. In bushfires steel tanks outperform plastic tanks during fire attack. For further information visit www.bushfirecrc.com.

- Plastic/Poly tanks – UV stabilised polyethylene tanks come in a wide range of sizes, shapes and colours. They can be used in-ground but check with the manufacturer
- Steel Tanks (zincalume) - Corrugated tanks that replace the old traditional galvanised tanks whilst looking very similar
- Steel Tanks (aquaplate) - Top end corrugated tanks with a food grade polymer lining
- Whilst it is possible to get very tall tanks, the height of your tank should be lower than the guttering of the building from which it is collecting. It may be possible to sink the tank below ground level and raise the position of the tank water outlet but any water stored below the outlet level will generally not be accessible
- Plumbing of tanks should be done by a qualified professional. Refer to www.buildingcommission.com.au and download the **Fact Sheet Class 10A Building Fact Sheet 2010** which contains information about connection of downpipes to water tanks
- All tanks should be placed on a stable and level base such as a concrete slab or packed sand.

Consider installing a CFA compliant tank outlet for bushfire emergencies when the local brigade can access your garden water to supplement fire fighting efforts.

GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Garden Shelters & Equipment Sheds



Garden Sheds – Stand alone

Assuming the shelter and shed (or shelter/ shed) design is compliant with Building Code of Australia (BCA) requirements, your best option may be to engage a shed company or builder to construct it.

For information on constructing Class 10 A Buildings, visit www.buildingcommission.com.au and download the **Fact Sheet Class 10A Building Fact Sheet 2010**.

- Registered Builder - You may need to engage a registered builder to construct the shelter and/or shed. A contract will need to be entered into if the total value of the work exceeds \$5000. The builder needs to provide domestic building warranty insurance if the total value of the work exceeds \$12,000.
- Owner-builders - You may have considered building the structure yourself but only the registered owner of the land can be an owner-builder. Owner-builders also take on all the risks and responsibilities of a registered building practitioner. Visit the Building Commission of Victoria website for further information www.buildingcommission.com.au
- Planning Permits - Check with your local council/shire to find out if you need a planning permit. You may not, but if you do you must have one before a Building Permit can be issued.
- Building Permits - This is the approval you need for your proposed building work. You or your builder will need to submit plans and pay an application fee. If the plans change after this point you may need to apply for an alteration to your permit and pay an additional fee. So make sure you have agreed on the building you want to construct (and that you can afford to build it) before applying for a building permit.

Important - Seek advice from your local council/shire planning department for their interpretation of the planning regulations BEFORE you commit to any contracts.

- Shed Kits – Typically shed companies will construct shelters and sheds from standard pre-fabricated kits that are assembled onsite. All quotes should include the cost of the kit, the labour to construct, any alterations (skylights, roller doors etc), any exclusions (safety fencing, engineering reports etc) and the cost of any building permits.
- Concrete Slab – The shelter and/or shed will need to be constructed on a concrete slab and bolted down. Alternatively the building can be erected and the concrete poured later. This will seal the base of any enclosed sections and make it vermin-proof. The cost of the concrete will be in addition to the cost of the shed but should be included in the total cost of the construction when calculating the builder's domestic building warranty insurance.

- Chose a strong, steel shed that can be bolted to a slab. Doors should have concealed hinges and strong locks/padlocks. Windows in a shed will reduce security, so consider a skylight instead.
- Shipping containers make great sheds. They are highly secure but for safety reasons install a ventilation outlet and a man door in case someone accidentally gets locked in.

GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Compost and Materials Bays

Compost bays are the engine rooms of your garden and can be made simply and easily from a variety of materials. They can be permanently located in one spot or designed to be portable. You may decide that you have room for compost bays as well some portable compost bins. Suitable materials for making compost and materials bays are recycled timbers, scrap metal, discarded wooden pallets, second hand bricks etc. The critical factor is that compost bays are built large enough to allow for hot (rapid) composting to take place i.e. greater than 1m³ in area. Materials bays should be double that size so you can store garden waste and other compost materials. Also consider rescuing an old bath or some large bins that can be used for worm farms in sheltered areas of the garden. Many people worry that, in a community garden setting, compost bays will attract vermin. This should not be an issue if food is kept out of the compost bays and put in the worm farm instead. Set up appropriate signage to indicate what materials are acceptable in each of your composting systems. Run ongoing composting workshops to assist garden members to better understand the operations of an efficient compost area.

Garden Beds



The simplest garden beds are those at soil level but they may also be more difficult to manage in the long term. Soil in these beds can be improved over time by adding suitable organic materials each season. However not many people relish bending down to garden and in community gardens it is now more usual to build raised garden beds. Building raised beds may be expensive and choosing the best construction materials can be confusing. Some considerations may be:

- **Treated timber sleepers** usually refers to pine sleepers that have been treated with CCA (copper chrome arsenic). CCA protects the timbers from insect and fungal attack. Whilst there is ongoing debate about the levels of chemicals that may leach from these sleepers, their use has been restricted in domestic situations and they are not acceptable in certified organic growing systems. An alternative is pine that has been treated with ACQ (alkaline copper quaternary) which is acceptable within some organic standards. ACQ treated pine is more expensive to buy than CCA treated pine and may be difficult to source.
- **Untreated plantation sleepers** are sustainable but may not have the same durability as treated timbers, particularly when used in below ground situations. Durability will also vary between tree species and the type of wood e.g. heartwood or sapwood. The Dept of Environment and Primary Industries in Victoria has an interesting factsheet on timber durability - AG1169: Alternatives to Treated Vineyard Posts - that compares the durability of various timber species. Visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au.
- **Termite resistant sleepers** are from tree species grown in areas where termites exist and have evolved to have a natural resistance. These timbers are probably more effective when locally sourced. If you are in a termite area, seek advice from a local timber merchant regarding suitable timbers for your area.

GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Garden Beds (continued)



- **Recycled timber sleepers**, particularly recycled railway sleepers, are an attractive option for raised garden beds. They come in different grades with the higher and more durable grades being very expensive. Some may contain creosote residue. Other recycled timbers may also have been treated in the past and their provenance may be difficult to track.
- **Hardwood timber sleepers** have more durability in landscaping situations but, as slower growing hardwoods, they are unlikely to have been sustainably sourced and pose an ethical dilemma. If you can ascertain that the timbers are legitimate salvage from an unavoidable clearing, perhaps due to a development at the site, these may be an option.
- **Waterproofing timbers** may be prudent where they are to be used in contact with soil. There is an organically certified timber treatment product that claims to prevent water penetration with a single coating. Contact www.cooeeproducts.com.au for information.
- **Recycled plastic sleepers** are available from a number of Australian manufacturers. They generally come in black and can be capped to provide seating. They are UV stable but will become hot to touch in summer and fade slightly over time.
- **Recycled concrete sleepers** are incredibly durable but are heavy and difficult to work with. New concrete has a large environmental footprint, but salvaged concrete can be a sustainable option. Concrete sleepers are resistant to water, insect, termite, borer and fungal damage.
- **Preformed galvanised rings** have become very popular in smaller community gardens. They come in a multitude of shapes, sizes and colours with galvanised, circular and oblong shapes the most usual. They are quick and easy to install and can be moved if their original location proves to be unsuitable. There are also 'flat pack' versions that can be self assembled.
- **Timber or steel posts** to secure the sleepers. Steel is more durable but far more expensive than timber. Timber uprights will have the same limitations as timber sleepers but will have an even shorter lifespan, when buried below ground.
 Posts should be put in every 1200mm to 1500mm as they will need to stop the horizontal sleepers from bulging once they are filled with soil. For garden beds less than 600mm in height and situated on a level site you can build free standing beds and simply set them on top of the soil. For garden beds 600mm and over, or built on an uneven site, it is more prudent to secure the beds with in-ground posts.
 Post holes should be dug between 400mm to 600mm deep depending on the depth of the beds. The posts can be secured with quick set cement.
- **Garden bed irrigation** should be installed BEFORE you fill your garden beds with soil. If you want to use drip irrigation in the beds, make sure that you run some 19mm poly pipe up the inside of the beds to the height of the bed. Secure the poly pipe to the frame with a couple of saddle clamps. Use some elbows and joiners to connect the base of this poly pipe with the irrigation lines that run on the outside of the bed. It is much easier to do this before you fill the beds with soil.
 Make sure that you seal off any open ends of the poly pipe with some duct tape to stop soil and insects getting into the pipe until you are ready to connect up the irrigation system at the end of the build.

GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Garden Beds (continued)

- Filling the beds may be expensive if you decide to buy in soil. Unless you are planting fruit trees in the beds, you are probably only going to grow annual plants in the top 30-40cm. Consider using the no-dig layering system to fill the beds. This means you build your bed up in alternating layers of green and brown organic materials i.e. autumn leaves, green garden waste, aged animal manures, spoiled bales of hay, newspaper etc. Finish the top layer with garden compost to approx 40cm in depth. The underlying organic layers will break down and produce heat whilst the young plants will grow happily in the nourishing top layer.

To calculate the total volume of all the materials that you will need to fill each bed, simply multiply the length of the bed by the width of the bed by the height of the bed. E.g. for a garden bed 2m long x 1.2m wide x 0.6m high, you will need $2 \times 1.2 \times 0.6 = 1.44$ cubic metres of fill materials.

Fruit Growing Areas

Whilst many of your annual and perennial plants will grow in the raised garden beds, you will probably want to have fruit trees, vines and perhaps berry plants too. These can be planted in one or more of the sunny spots around the garden. When constructing your garden you will need to consider these fruit growing areas:

- **Orchard area** for growing your pome fruits (apples, pears & quinces), your stone fruits (peaches, plums, nectarines, apricots etc) as well as your more exotic fruits (pomegranate, persimmon etc). If your soil is clay or a clay mix, spend time building a large mounded area to between 0.5m to 1m high to improve drainage for your fruit trees. The best time to plant your fruit trees is in the winter when they are available bare-rooted. If your young trees need staking, do this at planting time. You also need to put some irrigation tubing around each tree. This can be connected to the main irrigation system once it has been installed. Make sure that you weave some stepping stones across the orchard area to avoid compaction from foot traffic when the trees need to be pruned, monitored for insect activity or the fruit picked. Scatter seeds or plant seedlings of spring flowering plants at the base of your fruit trees to attract bees and other pollinators to your orchard area.
- **Citrus grove** for growing lemons, limes, grapefruit, oranges, cumquats etc. Generally citrus trees dislike poor drainage, cold temperatures and any root disturbance so plant in a sunny, well drained spot free from weeds and other competing plants. Citrus should be planted in spring once the cold of winter has passed.
- **Espalier fence** for growing fruit trees whilst saving space in smaller community gardens. Fruit trees are grown along tensioned steel wires (2mm) that are secured to strong frames, often at the edge of the garden. The same techniques can also be used to grow fruit trees alongside arbours or up pergolas. Many pome and stone fruits are suitable to espalier although you should research the different techniques involved. For information on various espalier techniques download www.flemings.com.au/documents/espalier.pdf.



GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Fruit Growing Areas (continued)

- **Berry patch** for growing cane fruit such as raspberries, loganberries, boysenberries etc. They need a sunny well drained spot and again, beds should be built up if you have heavy clay soil. Be careful to only plant canes in an area where they cannot sucker and spread out of control. If this is a risk, install a root barrier edging around the berry patch and monitor carefully.
- **Fruiting hedges and border plants** are a great way to define areas of the garden or enhance seating areas. Suitable plants include feijoas, Chilean guava, strawberries, blueberries etc.
- **Vines** such as grapes, passionfruit, and kiwi fruit are attractive, edible and can provide shade in summer. Choose varieties that suit your garden's soil and climate. They will need to grow up a strong support or trellis that won't collapse under their weight.

If your community garden is in a commercial fruit growing area, make sure that you abide by any quarantine restrictions regarding plant movement. These restrictions are legally enforceable and aim to prevent the introduction of unwanted plant pests or diseases that could decimate the local fruit industry.

Bush Tucker Area



Many community gardeners enjoy experimenting with food plants including learning about bush tucker plants. Some communities are fortunate to have knowledgeable locals who can oversee the bush tucker area. Be aware that you cannot collect seeds or any native plants from bushland areas unless you have a permit. Fortunately there are many native plant nurseries that can provide you with suitable plants. A listing of Victorian native plant nurseries can be found at www.greeningaustralia.org.au/index.php?nodeId=160

Garden Irrigation

An irrigation schematic (map) should be developed as soon as the design plans have been finalised. Retrofitting an irrigation system after you have constructed your major garden elements can be heartbreaking as you pull up newly laid paths, excavate recently filled beds and dig trenches around newly planted trees. So even if the garden budget doesn't allow you to install complex irrigation from the beginning, aim to put down some of the basic infrastructure now. Consider running short lengths of pipe under pathways or attaching poly pipe to raised garden beds as you go along.

If you have no experience in setting up a complex garden irrigation system, consider getting advice from an irrigation specialist when drawing up your schematic.

When mapping your garden irrigation, think about the following:

- **Watering zones** – Not all plants have similar watering needs and your garden irrigation system will need to take this into account. Mediterranean herbs e.g. rosemary, oregano and thyme all thrive in dry conditions. So grow them together in a low-watering zone. On the other hand, fruit trees may need daily watering as they are establishing or when they begin to flower and set fruit. So group them together in a high-watering zone.

GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Garden Irrigation (continued)



Vegie beds may be low-watering zones over winter when there is a lot of rainfall or high-watering zones in the summer when there is little rainfall and very high temperatures.

Identifying these watering zones throughout the garden will assist you if you intend to install an automatic watering system.

- **Garden taps** – The garden will need multiple tap points so that you can fill buckets and connect hoses for hand watering. Think carefully about where to put these taps so that you are not dragging hoses across garden beds or over long distances. If you have too many taps you can simply cap off the unused ones.

Don't forget to place tap points near your compost bays, worm farms, hot house or poly tunnel. If you have a food preparation area you will need a tap there too. To avoid wastage of your precious tank water, consider installing taps with lockable or removable tap heads.

If you can, run your garden taps off a separate irrigation line to your automatic watering system.

- **Automatic watering system** – If you decide that you need the security of an automatic watering system, consider what best suits your garden's needs. It is possible to purchase inexpensive irrigation controllers that will run multiple irrigation zones. They generally run off an electrical supply but battery operated ones are also available. Each irrigation zone can be pre-programmed for the watering needs of plants in that area. You can also install rain sensors or soil moisture sensors that will override the watering system when it is not needed. The downside of automatic watering systems is that the programming of the irrigation controller can be a bit like using the TV remote – no one can figure out how to do it and the instructions rapidly get lost or forgotten!

Consult an irrigation specialist if choosing to purchase an irrigation controller and have it professionally installed.

It may be simpler and easier to use a reliable battery operated tap timer. For busy times of the year e.g. over Christmas and Easter, a community hand watering roster can be very effective.

- **Water pump** – If you are planning to rely on tank water for your watering needs, you will need to purchase a pump as gravity feed will not be sufficient in a community garden situation. When choosing the appropriate size water pump, consider the maximum height to which water will need to be pumped as well as the aggregate distance of the distribution areas. This is important as you lose water pressure when you pump water uphill or as you send it over long distances through narrow poly pipes.

Water pressure is also lost when hand watering if you have multiple garden taps on the same line all open at once.

Consult a water pump specialist before deciding on the correct pump size to suit your needs.

When installing your pump, fix it to a concrete slab for stability and cover it with a special housing to protect it from the weather. You may choose to have it secured in a locked cage as pumps are expensive to replace if stolen.

Unless you have mains electricity at your garden site, you may need to purchase a small generator to run your pump.

GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Garden Irrigation (continued)

- **Poly pipe and drip lines** – Typically, poly pipe comes in three sizes - 13mm, 19mm and 25mm.
 - 19mm or 25mm poly pipe may be used to deliver the water from the tank to the garden beds before you start distributing it to plants.
 - 13mm or 19mm poly pipe is used when you are distributing the water within the beds, depending on the length of the line. If you are using basic black poly pipe, you will need to attach the appropriate irrigation nozzles and fittings to suit the plants needs.
 - 13mm or 19mm drip line is a popular choice for distributing water in garden beds or around fruit trees. Drip line irrigation is a more efficient watering method than spray irrigation. Spray water will simply evaporate on hot days. Sprays also create a humid environment around plant leaves allowing fungal diseases to take hold. Drip line irrigation is more effective when laid directly on top of the soil and under the mulch layer.
 - Pressure compensating drip line irrigation allows for water to be distributed evenly along the length of lines up to 75m without loss of pressure.

Once you have prepared your irrigation schematic, be sure to refer to it as you undertake any building work so that you don't miss laying down important irrigation lines.

Paths and Edging



The paths in your garden design may be straight, meandering or a mixture of both. Before excavating any paths, double check that the widths and gradients meet your council's regulations for public use (*see path dimensions recommended on pages 34 of this manual*). Paths can be easily damaged by heavy machinery crossing the site so do not lay any paths until the larger building works have been completed.

- **Path surfaces** should be permeable where possible to allow rainwater to quickly percolate into the water table below. Impervious path surfaces may cause water run-off across the site leading to erosion on slopes and the pooling of water on the path surface.

Be aware of your underlying soil type as even permeable paths laid on heavy clay soil will have drainage problems when water pools on the path surface. If this is your situation, you may consider creating a camber where the path is slightly higher in the centre and gently slopes off to the side. This will allow water to flow from the path surface into adjoining garden beds or, alternatively, into drainage channels created at the edge of the path.

If you think you may need to design your paths with a camber, consider consulting a landscape professional.

- **Path edging** should be considered although it can be expensive, time consuming to put down and prevent changes to the garden layout in the future. Generally speaking, edging is only necessary if paths have to be protected from soil spilling from garden beds.

Where possible, mound your beds rather than creating steep sides to avoid the need for edging. Use ground covers or low growing hedging plants around the edges of garden beds to stabilise the soil as the plant roots hold it in place. Plants also soften the appearance of path edges as they spill over.

GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Paths and Edging (continued)

- **Path toppings** should be sourced locally from your landscape supplier or quarry. Toppings come in different grades but they will generally be a combination of crusher dust or granitic sand mixed with fine gravel (<10mm). Path toppings need to be laid to a depth of 50-75mm and compacted so that you can walk along the paths or push barrows with ease. Consider hiring a vibrating plate (wacker) to firm them in. To calculate the volume of toppings that you will need to cover the path, simply multiply the length of the path by the width of the path by the required depth of the toppings.

E.g. for a path 20m long x 1.4m wide x 75mm (0.075m) in depth, you will need $20 \times 1.4 \times 0.075 = 2.1$ cubic metres of toppings.

To maintain your garden paths you will need to rake them over annually and remove any wind blown weeds that may have taken root. Top up any bare patches with new toppings if necessary.

Seating



In the design phase you will have considered the placement of seating around the garden. At this stage you can have fun with seating ideas. If you have allowed for a conversation pit or small amphitheatre you may choose to use large rocks or even rendered straw bales to provide seating. A detailed factsheet on making these seats can be found at www.abc.net.au/gardening/stories/s1054937.htm

People like to sit in groups and most conversations start with eye contact so your seating should provide 'face-to-face' opportunities. If you have garden beds at 600mm high, cap them with suitable splinter-free timber to provide an alternative conversation area or resting spot.

If seating hasn't been included in the original design but through usage, you notice people are drawn to a particular spot in the garden, put a seat there. It may be appealing because of a particularly attractive view of the garden; or the sweet smell of a plant in the sun; or the sound of birds nesting. Whatever it is, be prepared to accommodate these sensory opportunities as they arise.

It is important that seating draws visitors into the garden so that they are part of the picture rather than standing on the perimeter looking inwards. People should feel welcome to come and spend a little time in the garden enjoying the beauty of their surroundings whilst appreciating the efforts of the gardeners.

Hot/Shade Houses and Tunnels

A hot house or tunnel in a community garden is the icing on the cake although it may be unachievable due to a lack of space in the garden. If you do have the room, consider erecting a small hot house or tunnel.

- **Hot houses** are available in a range of sizes and are usually purchased as self assembly flat pack kits. They have an aluminium frame and the 'glass' is firm sheets of UV tested polycarbonate. They generally have a sliding door attached to the main frame. Cheaper ones can be a little flimsy and need to be well secured to the site.
- **Tunnels** or poly tunnels also come in kit form in a range of sizes. They have a metal frame and timber struts. The opaque cover is strong UV stabilised plastic sheeting. It is also possible to get a shade cover to put over the tunnel during the excessive heat of summer.

GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Hot/Shade Houses and Tunnels (continued)



- **A low cost poly tunnel** can be made by purchasing the necessary materials and making it to your own specifications. Greenhouse plastic can be bought in widths from 3.5m to 11.5m. Poly pipe, poly elbows, plastic clips, rigid stakes (timber, plastic or metal) and miscellaneous timber pieces can all be purchased in a variety of lengths and sizes. Backyard Farmer Vol 5 (publisher Earth Garden) has an article on Hot Houses that may be helpful. Visit www.thebackyardfarmer.com.au/
- **A garden tap** should be located near the hot house so that you can hand water plants and young seedlings as they need it.
- **Flooring** in your hot house or tunnel needs to be free draining. Poor drainage may cause the floor surface to become slippery. Pooled water may allow pests such as mosquitoes, greenhouse whitefly and fungus gnats to proliferate. Consider installing a layer of gravel on the prepared soil surface rather than setting the hot house on a concrete slab.
- **Tiered shelving** in the green house is important as you will rapidly run out of space if only using flat benches. Metal shelving is best as timber will not last long in the moist atmosphere and the rotting wood will harbour pests and diseases. Second-hand nursery benches are sometimes available from garden centres.
- **A wash down area** outside the hot house is important for cleaning and sterilising plastic pots and other garden equipment. You should also allow space to air-dry them in the sun. To avoid water pooling in this area, consider creating a gravel pit to absorb any runoff water. You may even be able to create reed filtration beds to clean the runoff water and prevent nutrients from seeping into the water table below.

Arbours, Arches and Pergolas

These are un-roofed structures built to provide, shade, a support for climbing plants and to give vertical interest in the garden. If they are less than 10m³ in area, they do not require a building permit. However they should still appear on your garden design when submitting for a planning permit. If these structures are a late addition to your garden plans, check with your local council or shire to ensure that you still comply with their planning regulations.

Arbours, arches and pergolas should be built so that they are strong enough to support the plants that will grow over them. Kiwi fruit make a lovely climbing feature but need a very strong support to hold the heavy vines. Less vigorous plants such as annual climbing beans or cucumbers will not need the same strong support and may be happy on a temporary trellis or arch.

Make sure you build your garden structures high enough and wide enough so that anyone walking underneath will not be hit by hanging fruit or scratched by wayward branches.

Suitable materials for building arbours, arches and pergolas include timber, lattice, steel reinforcing mesh, old metal bed bases as well as a range of recycled building materials.

GARDEN ELEMENT

Consider

Fencing and Gates

If you must have a gate, try to make it welcoming so that potential garden visitors are not put off by an intimidating entrance. If you anticipate delivery trucks or other large vehicles entering the garden, perhaps an old farm gate can be used. If you mainly need pedestrian access, perhaps you can find a second-hand gate that gives character to the area. You could even commission a gate as a work of art if you have the opportunity – and money.

If you are putting up fencing, chose a waist high fence rather than a tall fence. Fencing can be a big expense but do consider employing a professional to install it so that it is stable and secure.

Plants

This is the FUN bit, when you get to plant out your garden. In reality you will be progressively putting plants in the garden as beds are built and as the season allows. But when the garden construction is finally finished, it's time to let your hair down and get everyone sowing and growing!

You will probably get kind offers of plants from lots of people who enjoy propagating plants in their own back yards. Be very careful about what you accept. Many of these 'easy to grow plants' may in fact be weeds and, if your garden is close to bushlands or waterways, you may simply be helping to spread them. For information about weedy plants in your area, contact your local government environment department or your local Landcare group.

Another risk with donated plants is that pests and diseases can be transmitted into your garden hidden in soil and plant materials. Unless you can be sure that the donated plants are healthy and disease free, try to avoid plants that have been 'dug up' from some kind person's back yard. This is particularly true of deciduous plants as you won't see evidence of the problem until the following spring when it may be too late. Many plant diseases are insidious and, once introduced to your garden, may prove impossible to eradicate.

Of course you don't want to hurt anyone's feelings by rejecting their plant offerings so rather than having an eclectic bunch of plant donations, why not create a detailed list of the plants that you would like to have in the garden and ask people to refer to that if they want to contribute? Your original garden design will have identified the plant types that are to go in specific areas, so now you can tailor that list to the species you would like. Also consider your soil, climate and whether you need to provide cross - pollinators etc. Many of the community gardens in this project found that people liked to donate plants in commemoration of a special person or event in their lives. A small plaque to acknowledge this was put near the donated plant.

Before you plant anything make sure that your soil has been properly prepared. Check the drainage (see page 21) and if you have used fresh manures, let the beds settle for a couple of weeks so that you don't burn plant roots.

Keep a register of all of your permanent plantings i.e. botanical name, common name, variety, date planted, location, soil preparation etc. Allow room to make future notes on the plants e.g. dates plant flowered, bore fruit, yield etc. Also note the maintenance schedule you need to follow e.g. putting out pheromone traps, winter spraying, pruning etc.

A community planting day is a fun way to get assistance in planting out your garden. Just make sure it is carefully organised and planting is supervised so that plants have the best chance of succeeding.



Community Garden Construction Budget

You need to develop a project budget based on your accepted garden design. This will give you an idea of the costs you will encounter to achieve some of the essential elements in your community garden. This budget should be fairly detailed as unexpected costs can wreak havoc with any budget.

Break the budget down into different elements and work towards funding these elements as part of the garden construction. Having a well thought out budget will allow you to apply for funding for the various elements as opportunities arise and give your potential funder the confidence to invest in your project.

funding
...to invest in your project.



Community Garden Construction Budget

SAMPLE			
Community Garden Construction Budget		ESTIMATE	COMMENTS/NOTES
Design & Planning	Garden Designer	\$800	* Some local governments will waive planning permit fees if building on council land.
	Planning and/or Building Permit fees	\$400*	
	Sub-total	\$1200	
Site Excavation	Levelling, mounding, pathways drainage etc	\$ 3000	* If a local site is being excavated for development, see if you can access that topsoil to save money. But ask about its provenance to ensure it is not contaminated with toxins or laden with weed seed.
	20mm crushed aggregate for paths to 100mm	\$ 1300	
	Garden edging and metal pegs	\$ 1200	
	Soils, composts, mulches etc	\$ 1000*	
	Delivery to site	\$ 600	
	Sub-total	\$ 7100	
Sheds/Shelters	Prefabricated Shed with Verandah (9m x 6m)	\$ 6200*	* This is the optimum shed. You may be able to construct something simpler and cheaper or use a shipping container.
	Labour to construct	\$ 1700	
	Concrete Slab 9m x 6m - for Shed	\$ 3500	
	Delivery to site	\$ 250	
	Sub-total	\$ 11,650	
Hot House or Poly Tunnel House	Polycarbonate Greenhouse 4.27m x 2.75m	\$ 1000	A hot house or poly tunnel is nice addition to the garden but is not essential. If you haven't got the room (or the money) for a hot house, consider turning some of your raised garden beds into mini poly tunnels by using cloches.
	20mm crushed aggregate for flooring (100mm)	\$ 100	
	Delivery to site	\$ 50	
	Sub-total	\$ 1150	
Pergola in Centre of Garden	Timber structure with pitched roof 6m x 3.5m	\$ 5500	Having a place to gather and enjoy the garden is well worth the money. It is also an item that you could potentially get corporate sponsorship for e.g. the local community bank.
	Concrete Slab 6m x 3.5m	\$ 1500	
	Sub-total	\$ 7000	



Community Garden Construction Budget (continued)

SAMPLE		ESTIMATE	COMMENTS/NOTES
Community Garden Budget			
Raised Garden Beds	Timber for garden beds	\$ 2500	* Spoilt (wet or damaged) bales of hay or straw are often available in rural areas and make great fillers at the base of raised garden beds.
	Metal Posts (1100mm high)	\$ 1200	
	Galvanised bolts, concrete for securing posts etc	\$ 300	
	Soils, composts, mulches etc	\$ 600*	
	Delivery to site	\$ 150	
	Sub-total	\$ 4750	
Tanks & Irrigation	1 x 22,500 litre poly tank	\$ 1950	If you decide to source second hand tanks, make sure they are only a couple of years old, in good condition and meet Australian standard ASNZS 4766.
	Delivery to site	\$ 150	
	Sand Base including levelling and framing	\$ 300	
	Pump, garden taps, poly pipe, drip line, etc	\$ 1500	
	Plumbing professional	\$ 1800	
	Sub-total	\$ 5700	
Conversation Pit	Rocks and timbers for seating	\$ 1800*	* Making seating for your conversation pit by rendering straw bales may be a cheaper alternative.
	Delivery to site	\$ 350	
	Sub-total	\$ 2150	
Compost and Delivery Bays	Timber	\$ 250*	* Compost bays can be made simply and cheaply with star pickets and recycled timber pallets. They should last for a couple of years until a more permanent system can be afforded.
	Steel uprights	\$ 100	
	Cement , bolts etc	\$ 150	
	Sub-total	\$ 500	
OTHER	Welcome Signage	\$ 400	* It is critical to have a variation of about 10-15% in your project budget to cover unexpected expenses.
	Tools and Equipment	\$ 800	
	Plants	\$ 1500	
	Variations	\$ 6100*	
	Sub-total	\$ 8800	
ESTIMATED GARDEN COST		\$50,000	



Community Garden Construction Plan

Planning for your garden construction is something to be carefully worked out by your community garden working group. Whilst the temptation is to get on site and start building, the order in which you build is important. You want to make sure that by building one asset, you don't prevent yourself from building another. If you start off by building a shed at the front of the site, you may inadvertently block off vehicular access to the rest of the site. This could mean hours of work to hand cart many cubic metres of gravel to fill garden paths by some very disgruntled garden volunteers.

When devising your project plan, develop a calendar and insert dates for upcoming public holidays, school holidays, local events etc. Then start to plan how you can schedule your garden build around these times when volunteering at working bees will be low. Having a project plan like this will also help you to book trade contractors in advance of when you need them.



SAMPLE Community Garden Project Plan (condensed)

MONTH	FEB				MAR				APR				MAY				JUN				JUL			
WEEK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
EXTERNAL DATES																								
Easter																								
School Holidays																								
Local Holidays																								
TASK																								
Excavate																								
Shed site																								
Pergola site																								
Hot house site																								
Tank(s) site																								
Raised garden beds area																								
Conversation pit																								
Paths																								
Lay																								
Concrete slab for shed																								
Concrete slab for pergola																								
Sand base for tank																								
Build																								
Shed																								
Pergola																								
Hot house																								
Raised garden beds																								
Compost bays																								
Conversation pit																								
Install																								
Rainwater tanks																								
Orchard area																								
Berry patch																								
Paths																								
Irrigation																								
Plant																								
Fruit trees																								
Vines																								
Winter vegies																								

Community Garden Working Bees

Much of the work done in building community gardens, particularly if funding is limited, is undertaken by volunteers. This is a great way to get your community to engage in the garden and to feel part of the project. It is especially true of those people who dislike 'talk fests' and meetings but will happily come along to be part of the practical building works being undertaken at a working bee. It is also the time when other organisations such as Lions Clubs and Men's Shed may feel that they can best contribute.



Always finish a working bee with some food so that people can sit back, relax and enjoy a sense of achievement



To run a successful working bee and to ensure a good turn out, there are some basic rules you should follow.



- Only have a working bee when you need one. Whilst scheduling regular working bees may seem like a good idea, in reality people won't turn up if there is nothing or very little to do. This is especially true in the winter months.
- Schedule your working bees for a morning or an afternoon and try to make them no longer than two hour blocks. People are busy but can often squeeze two hours into their schedule.
- Advertise your working bee in such a way that people will actually want to come to it. No one will feel enticed to come along to 'spend a couple of hours weeding'. However if you ask people to come along to create 'a herb garden' or to prepare the raised garden beds for growing summer vegetables, you are likely to get a more positive response.
- Have a sign-in/sign-out sheet for people turning up at working bees so that you are aware of who is on site and the times they are there. Ask for an emergency contact number in case of an accident.
- Plan your working bee and break it down into manageable tasks. Determine whether each task needs one, two or more people to achieve the objective. Do not undertake tasks that need more than a moderate amount of manual effort to complete safely. Consider hiring a contractor for these tasks. Do not allocate tasks to unqualified individuals at working bees when you are legally obliged to engage a licensed contractor.
- Ensure that participants at working bees are wearing appropriate clothing e.g. footwear, hats, gloves etc and are provided with safety equipment appropriate to the tasks. Determine whether they have any physical limitations that you should be aware of e.g. a bad back, asthma, cuts etc.
- Explain the requirements of the required task(s) to the participants and ensure they are comfortable with their capacity to undertake it. If not, allocate them to another activity more suited to their ability. Children attending working bees should not be allocated tasks and should be under the supervision of their parents at all times.
- If any machinery or tools are being used during the course of the working bee ensure that only those qualified to operate them are doing so and that they are operating in a segregated area. Do not allow children or onlookers into this area. Cordon off with orange mesh safety tape if necessary.
- Always finish a working bee with some food so that people can sit back, relax and enjoy a sense of achievement from their couple of hours work. This could be a sausage sizzle or hot pot of soup, some sandwiches or pastries, some fruit and biscuits and of course some hot and cold drinks. Often people who are not physically able to participate in the working bee are happy to volunteer to look after catering and it could be done on a roster system. Remember that children often turn up to working bees and many people have food allergies so take this into account when deciding on the food you serve.

Community Garden Workshops

Even during the construction stage of the garden it will often be possible to turn a working bee into a learning opportunity or workshop.

In fact the ability to get hands-on experience in a gardening technique or through building a garden element is often far better than simple theory or demonstration. Consider activities such as selecting and pruning espaliered fruit trees, establishing wicking beds or building an outdoor pizza oven. These events

are unlikely to take place in your garden regularly so when they do happen, take the opportunity to build a workshop around them. This may potentially attract people to your garden who may shy away from working bees.

Community Garden Project Milestones

The construction phase of the garden can take many months or even years to complete. Often people get bogged down by the length of the project and disheartened by everything that has yet to be done. It is important to look up every now and again and allow yourself to recognise what the working group and the community have achieved together. To reinforce this you should organise community gatherings around significant moments in the project.

During the Helen Macpherson Smith bushfire project, we held a number of milestone events at each of the gardens:

- A 'Turning of the Sod' ceremony was held when the garden design phase was finished and the building phase was about to commence. A special garden spade was purchased and a simple plaque put on the handle to commemorate the occasion. Local community members, supporters, local government councillors, board members from SGA as well as the trustees from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust were all invited to attend. These occasions were very well attended and gave people a chance to view the design and to ask questions about the community garden and how they could be involved.
- A 'Garden Launch' ceremony was held at the completion of the garden build and was similar in nature to the previous event. However this time it gave the garden community a chance to celebrate what had been achieved and to encourage others to become part of the garden membership.

If you feel that you need to get more support and involvement in the building of the garden consider other milestone events that you can run.

*Garden Launch
Ceremony*




Turning of the Sod ceremony

Dr Philip Moors AO,
Trustee Helen Macpherson Smith Trust



Much of the work done in building community gardens, particularly if funding is limited, is undertaken by volunteers. This is a great way to get your community to engage in the garden and to feel part of the project.



Even before you finish the building of the garden start developing the organisational structures that will secure the future management of the garden.

Community Based Gardening

PART 3 - MANAGING THE GARDEN

Looking to the future and beyond!

You've come a long way and hopefully your community garden project is now close to completion. You, the Community Garden Working Group and your hard working garden members are probably all tired but exhilarated that you have achieved so much. Again, remember to allow yourselves some time to celebrate your successes as you anticipate the final stages of your project.

As well as finishing the physical garden elements, your community garden working group will need to spend some time considering the future management of your garden. This is more than just the tending of the plants, nurturing the soil and holding working bees. You need to create a governance structure that will help you to manage the organisational side of your garden. Unfortunately many community gardens falter, or have significant disagreements, once the building stage is finished as they have neglected to put the necessary management structures in place. Without formal processes or agreements, management is ad hoc and there is confusion as to who decides what and how. Even before you finish the building of the garden

start developing the organisational structures that will secure the future management of the garden.

Realistically, the Working Group needs to initiate this process. In fact the Terms of Reference under which the working group has been operating should prompt you to transition to a more formal management structure at this point. Allow the last 3 months of the working group's tenure for developing the governance and organisational structures of the garden.

It has been our experience with the many communities involved in this project that putting a new governance structure in place needs to be carefully stepped through so that it is an open, transparent

and logical process. There are a lot of decisions to be made and your community should be given time to reflect on these decisions to ensure they are the right ones for the garden community. And remember that the individuals who have constituted the Working Group and have worked so hard to achieve its objectives, will be valuable members of the new governance structure and should be encouraged to democratically take up new roles as you move forward.

COMMUNITY GARDEN ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Sometimes in order to move forward, you need to look back to where you came from.

It seems like so long ago now but at the beginning of the garden project some dedicated volunteers put together a project proposal that was ratified by a community meeting. Your project working group took this project proposal and has worked to achieve the goals and objectives set out in that document. Some of these goals and objectives may have been short term but others will be ongoing as they reflect the values that inspired your community to build the garden in the first place. They may include such phrases as, 'growing healthy food locally and in season' or 'promoting organic soil management and sustainable gardening practices.'

Whatever these ongoing objectives are, you should now revisit them and try to encapsulate them into a vision and mission statement.

Vision and Mission Statement for your Community Garden

Organisations spend a lot of time (and money) developing vision and mission statements. Their purpose is to tell people what the organisation's dream is (their vision) and how that dream can be realised (their mission). So for example, a community garden vision and mission could be:

'A healthy and sustainable community' – the vision
'Growing food and togetherness' – the mission



Why do you need a community garden vision or mission statement?

Basically, so that you can articulate in just a few words what your community garden is about. Without these statements you may find yourself struggling to justify the very existence of your community garden, particularly in communities where everyone has ample sized backyards in which to grow their own food. But community gardens offer so much more to communities than simply the growing of plants. In many cases the gardening activities are simply the conduit that brings a community together. The garden is a safe and welcoming place where the lonely or elderly can connect with vibrant young families; where newly arrived tree-changers can cross paths with long time residents; where individuals and groups are welcome simply because they come willing to pitch in and to be part of something that embraces the values of community. By agreeing on a succinct vision and mission statement that reflects the values of your garden community, you have taken on an identity. This identity can be used to introduce your garden to the broader community; to promote your garden to new members; to make reference to when engaging with key stakeholders and to present to government and other funding agencies.

Play around with words for the vision and mission statements until you find some that best reflect your goals and objectives. Perhaps have a few alternatives and solicit opinions from within and outside the working group. Once you start to feel comfortable with the composition of your proposed vision and mission statements, ratify them at a working group meeting, minute your decision and record them in your organisational structure.

Community Garden Governance Structure.

What will your association or group look like? Up until now your Working Group will probably have operated either as an unincorporated group in its own right or as the subcommittee of another association or group. This will be your starting point as you decide how to proceed in setting up your future structure.

OPTION 1 Incorporated or Unincorporated Association

This is where it gets a little tricky as only you can determine whether you need to be an incorporated or unincorporated association.

Generally speaking, an unincorporated group or association is perfectly legal, costs nothing to establish and can be run effectively by a small number of people. However, assuming that your community garden will hope to attract a large membership base, you will probably prefer to be an incorporated association for a number of very valid reasons.



Difference between Incorporated and Unincorporated Associations in Victoria

Source: Consumer Affairs Victoria www.consumer.vic.gov.au

	Incorporated	Unincorporated
Must have a minimum number of members	Yes – min. 5	No
Must register as an association and pay a fee	Yes	No
Must adopt Rules of Association (a constitution)	Yes	No
Must appoint a Secretary (previously called a Public Officer)	Yes	No
Must lodge annual statements (accounts) and pay a fee	Yes	No
Must have an annual audit if less than \$250,000 turnover	No	No
Must have dispute resolution procedures in place	Yes	No
Can distribute income and assets to members	No	Yes
Is recognised as a legal entity	Yes	No
Can continue to exist on change of membership	Yes	No
Can sue and be sued as a legal entity	Yes	No
Protects member from personal liability for the association's debts	Yes	No
Can apply for government grants	Yes	Unlikely
Can buy, sell, own or rent property	Yes	No
Can enter into contracts and borrow money	Yes	No
Can accept gifts and bequests	Yes	No
Can open a bank account	Yes	Yes
Can take out public liability and other insurances	Yes	Unlikely

If you decide to establish your community garden as an incorporated association, you must familiarise yourself with the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*. Visit www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-not-for-profits/incorporated-associations/ for further information. For community gardens outside Victoria, please contact the appropriate authority in your state.

OPTION 2 Subcommittee of an Existing Incorporated Association

During the establishment of the five gardens upon which this manual is based, all of the community garden working groups were initially set up under the auspice of a local incorporated association.

At least a couple of members from the incorporated association were also members of the Working Group and attended all meetings. The minutes of Working Group meetings were provided to the lead association to ensure decisions taken complied the association's objectives, which included the building of the community garden. During the building phase of the gardens, the lead association included the community garden in their schedule of insurances.

As each of the five Working Groups came to the end of their tenure, each decided independently to continue to manage their community garden as a subcommittee of the incorporated association they had worked with from the beginning. Each of the lead associations agreed to this course of action. In setting out the agreement by which the subcommittee would be established, the individual garden working groups agreed:

- To abide by the rules of the incorporated association
- To abide by the policies and procedures of the incorporated association
- To develop any additional policies and procedures needed for the safe management of the garden e.g. OH&S, members' charter etc, in consultation with the association
- To include a representative from the main association's committee on the community garden subcommittee
- To provide a representative from the community garden subcommittee to attend meetings of the main committee
- To provide agendas and minutes of all community garden subcommittee meetings to the association's main committee
- To provide timely and accurate financial reports to the main committee
- To ensure that all garden members were financial members of the lead association, as well as being financial members of the community garden

If you decide to set up as a subcommittee of an incorporated association in order to manage your community garden, it is important that the main committee delegate some of its powers to the subcommittee.

This will enable the subcommittee to act directly and to make ongoing decisions regarding the garden. If these powers aren't delegated then all decisions of the subcommittee will need to be approved by the main committee which can be unwieldy for both committees. This needs to be worked out when you are negotiating your agreement with the incorporated association.

One of the major advantages in becoming a subcommittee of an existing incorporated association is that your community garden management group will not have to take on the burdens and costs of running an association, particularly the costs of insurance and ensuring you meet the obligations of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*.

The major disadvantage of becoming a subcommittee of an existing incorporated association is a loss of autonomy. However, in small communities, it is possible for community groups to work together to enhance the capacity of each. A neighbourhood house that has a community garden subcommittee could benefit from running some of its adult or children's programs in an interactive outdoor setting. A community garden subcommittee may benefit from having an indoor meeting area in the neighbourhood house.

As long as there is a clear written agreement between the main committee and the community garden subcommittee as to how the relationship will work, and the objectives of both are aligned, then this can be very beneficial for the community garden and the main association.

If you decide to establish your community garden as a subcommittee of an established incorporated association, you must familiarise yourself with the rules and policies of that association to ensure that your subcommittee is compliant under law.



COMMUNITY GARDEN MANAGEMENT

If you have elected to set up your own incorporated association to manage your community garden, then you need to refer to the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* for information on running an incorporated association, including setting up and running your Committee of Management. Visit www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-not-for-profits/incorporated-associations/ for further information. Community gardens based outside Victoria should contact the appropriate authority in your state.

For the purposes of this manual, we will assume that you are operating as a subcommittee of an incorporated association and that the governance obligations of your association will be taken care of by the main committee or board. So the next sections refer to setting up the management side of running your community garden.

For clarity and to distinguish the management of the garden from the governance of the association, we will call the subcommittee The Community Garden Management Group.



Community Garden Management Group.



THE COMMUNITY GARDEN MANAGEMENT GROUP

This is the group of people, drawn from your community garden membership, who will be responsible for the practical running of the garden. They should be chosen from financial garden members, who are also financial members of the incorporated association.

As the community garden management group is a subcommittee of the incorporated association, its members can be elected or appointed from financial garden members at the Annual General Meeting or as otherwise allowed for in the rules of that association. Rules regarding absentee or proxy voting or participating through the use of technology will apply to the Community Garden Management Group as it does to the main association.

Management Group Meetings

The quorum* required for meetings of the garden management group needs to be equal to the quorum required for any other subcommittee meeting of the incorporated association, unless otherwise stated in the association's rules.

* A quorum is the minimum number of people required at a meeting to make it a valid meeting.

The frequency of meetings of the garden management group needs to be equal to the frequency required for any other subcommittee meeting of the incorporated association, unless otherwise stated in the rules.



Management Group Roles and Responsibilities

So as not to confuse yourselves with the main committee, it may be preferable to use plain language when deciding roles and responsibilities. Some suggested roles and responsibilities could be:

- **Community Garden Coordinator** – The person responsible for leading the Community Garden Management Group in running the organisational matters of the garden. This should be an elected position, held for a period of 12 months.
- **Community Garden Horticultural Planner** – The person responsible for planning garden schedules i.e. planting, pruning, pest control regimes and general garden maintenance. Also arranges garden working bees. Produces an annual or seasonal garden calendar in consultation with other community garden members. Ensures that the garden is managed for efficiency, productivity, seasonality and is aesthetically pleasing when major garden events are being held.
- **Community Garden Events & Promotions Planner** – The person responsible for including local, regional and national events into the garden calendar. Aims to support and not compete with other local activities e.g. Farmers' Markets, Food Swaps, Landcare events, World Environment Day etc. Promotes the community garden through various association and other communication channels.
- **Community Garden Coordinator of Finances and Fundraising** – The person responsible for the financial sustainability of the garden in association with the community garden management group. Provides an account of the garden finances (income and expenses) to the Community Garden Management Group at its regular meetings. Also provides financial reports to the main committee.
- **Community Garden Equipment Officer** – The person responsible for managing equipment belonging to the garden. Manages the garden shed and maintains an up-to-date equipment register. Ensures that tools are fit for their purpose, in good working order and are hygienic. Repairs and replaces equipment that is no longer safe to use. Oversees the garden's OH&S obligations and maintains the first aid kit. Provides participants at working bees with appropriate personal safety equipment. Inducts volunteers in the safe use of garden tools and equipment.
- **Community Garden Membership Officer** – The person responsible for maintaining a membership register, promoting garden membership and running membership drives. Provides information on the community garden (Code of Practice, Membership Charter etc) to new and prospective community garden members.



- **Community Garden Secretary**

– The person responsible for the recording and distribution of incoming and outgoing garden correspondence. Records minutes of Community Garden Management Group meetings and distributes them to the management group, the incorporated association's main committee and the garden membership. Calls for agenda items for upcoming meetings and prepares all meeting agendas. Ensures that agendas and minutes are distributed 7 days before meetings are held.

- **Community Garden Coordinator of Workshops**

– This person is responsible for organising the workshops scheduled in the garden calendar. Suggests suitable workshop topics and appropriate workshop dates. Organises qualified presenters, books venues and sources workshop materials. Takes bookings, receives payments and organises catering. Works closely with other Community Garden Management Group roles.

This list is by no means exhaustive and merely suggests some of the roles that could be useful on your Community Garden Management Group. There could be others e.g. Compost Controller, Weed Warrior or Pest Patroller, you are only limited by your imagination and members willing to take on specific roles for a period of time. At all times, try to ensure that the communal ethos of your garden is preserved by sharing roles fairly and responsibilities evenly. It is very tempting to allow one extraordinary individual to take on most roles but this does not foster community spirit or the benefits to be derived from reciprocity. You need to allow your members to give generously and to receive gladly in equal measure. It is far better for your garden community to get a little done well by a lot of people than a lot done stressfully by just one or two people.

At all times, try to ensure that the communal ethos of your garden is preserved by sharing roles fairly and responsibilities evenly.



Management Group Code of Conduct

During the building phase of the garden your Working Group was governed by a Terms of Reference (ToR) establishing its purposes, its mandate and how it would be run. Now that the Working Group has achieved these goals, the ToR needs to be reviewed and replaced. Instead, you need a code of conduct for running your management group i.e. the subcommittee set up to run the organisational side of your garden. This code of conduct MUST be aligned to the rules, policies and

procedures of the main association. All members of the Community Garden Management Group should be given a copy of the code of conduct. New appointees or persons elected to the group should be given a copy of the code of conduct as part of their induction. If you neglect to pass on the code of conduct to members of your Community Garden Management Group, they are unlikely to comply with it and referring to the code will not assist you if there are disputes.

SAMPLE

Community Garden Management Group Code of Conduct

Participants at Community Garden Management Group meetings agree to support the ongoing vision and mission of the garden.

- All members of the Management Group have a right to be listened to in a respectful manner.
- All members of the Management Group have a right to be spoken to in a respectful manner.
- All Management Group meetings are minuted and minutes are available to all members.
- Agendas for Management Group meetings are issued 7 days before the meeting date together with the minutes of the previous meeting.
- Contributions to Agenda items must be submitted to the Management Group Secretary in a timely manner or be dealt with under 'Other Business'.
- Management Group Meetings start and finish on time in accordance with the Agenda.
- Meetings should have a Chairperson. This role can be associated with an existing position e.g. the Community Garden Facilitator or as otherwise decided by the management group.
- Decisions are made by group consensus. If consensus is not reached then a vote may be taken. A simple majority will determine the outcome.
- In the event of a tied vote, then the Chairperson will have the deciding vote.
- Unresolved matters that have not been voted upon may be deferred to a future meeting.
- Items requiring follow-on action after Community Garden Management Group meetings will be allocated to a specific person(s) and noted in the minutes.

All members of the Community Garden Management Group should be given a copy of the code of conduct.

Community Garden General Code of Conduct

In addition to having standards of conduct for your Community Garden Management Group, you should also develop a code of conduct for other garden participants. These will include financial and non-financial community garden members, attendees at garden workshops or working bees, local school groups,

special interest groups as well as local residents and other visitors to the garden. This code of conduct should be displayed prominently within the garden, perhaps as a laminated poster on the garden notice board or near the garden shed.

SAMPLE

Community Garden General Code of Conduct

This community garden is a shared community space, managed by the Community Garden Management Group. We welcome participation in the garden by all community members, groups and associations as well as visitors to the area. When participating in the garden activities, or if simply enjoying a visit to our garden, please abide by the Garden Code of Conduct setup out below.

- Participants in the garden are asked to be respectful of other gardeners and not act in a way that could spoil the enjoyment of this place for others.
- Any gardening activities undertaken in the community garden should done in consultation with the Community Garden Horticultural Planner (Mob: 04XX XXX XXX). This includes activities at garden workshops, garden working bees, garden events and other ad hoc activities.
- For safety reasons gardeners working alone should only undertake light gardening tasks appropriate to their abilities.
- All garden tools and equipment should be used only for the job they are designed and returned clean and in good condition at the end of the gardening activities.
- Pests and diseases in the garden are managed in line with Integrated Pest Management principles i.e. natural, environmental and biological controls are the preferred methods used.. The use of harmful chemicals in the garden is not approved by the Community Garden Management Group.
- Gardeners should not knowingly introduce weedy, prohibited or diseased plants to the garden. If in doubt, please consult with the Community Garden Horticultural Planner (Mob: 04XX XXX XXX).
- Visitors and non-gardening members of our community are welcome to spend time in the garden enjoying this public space.
- Organised public gatherings are permitted in the garden. Please contact the Community Garden Events & Promotions Coordinator (Mob: 04XX XXX XXX) beforehand to make a booking. This is to avoid disappointment should two or more groups intend to use the community garden at the same time for separate purposes.
- Local school groups are invited to utilise the garden as an outdoor classroom. A dedicated garden space can be made available for a period of time if required subject to abiding by this code of conduct. Please contact the Community Garden Horticultural Planner (Mob: 04XX XXX XXX) to make arrangements.
- All activities in the garden must be conducted in a safe manner and in daylight hours.
- Garden activities are structured to be accessible to persons of limited abilities. Pathways and access routes should be kept clear to ensure there are no physical barriers to participation.
- General rubbish bins are not provided and visitors and members are expected to remove their own non-organic refuse. Organic refuse can be included in the garden compost materials bay (no diary or meat).

Community Garden Decision Making Procedures

The Community Garden Management Group is representative of the community garden membership and is accountable to both its membership and to the main committee of the association. Community Garden Management Group meetings are the correct forum for decisions to be made relating to the garden but this is where it can sometimes go very wrong. The Community Garden Management Group needs to be clear about what decisions come under their mandate and what decisions require broader consultation.

Generally speaking decisions made about, say, the collection of association garden membership fees, the location of the compost bays, or the purchase of equipment for the garden would all clearly be within the scope of a management group. However, decisions that could change the ethos of the garden or that

will mark a clear shift in direction for the garden will need to be canvassed and discussed broadly with the garden membership as well as the main association. This could pertain to matters such as whether to allow the use of chemicals in the garden or to preserve its organic management practices. It may even be about the distribution of garden produce i.e. whether it is to be shared equally amongst the garden members; to be distributed to (say) the local food bank or a combination of both. These are important decisions for your garden community and ones that should be made in consultation with those outside the Community Garden Management Group.

The Community Garden Management Group needs to be clear about what decisions come under their mandate and what decisions require broader consultation.



COMMUNITY GARDEN MEMBERSHIP

We have mentioned garden membership a number of times in this section without defining exactly what we mean by the term garden membership. All of the gardens in this project recognised that developing a community garden membership model was critical to the long term success of each garden. Developing a suitable membership model for your garden will take a little time and a lot of discussion. Membership is by its very nature based on respect and reciprocity so you will first need to determine what the expectations are of any prospective garden members and what the expectations are of the existing garden community?

As the Community Garden Management Group is a subcommittee of an association, all community garden members must also be members of the main association. As such they will be subject to the rights and obligations of association membership and must be made aware of this when inquiring about membership.

As your Community Garden Management Group works to define the parameters of its garden membership, make sure that you are consistent with the expectations of association membership as well. Ask yourself some important questions:

Who are likely to be our garden members? This could be individuals, groups, families, elderly, young people, retirees etc.

What is the purpose of garden membership? This could be to:

- Maximise the opportunity for everyone in the community to be connected to the garden
- Strengthen and promote the garden ideals and the concepts of sustainable living
- Secure the future of the garden through the participation of a multitude of garden members
- Benefit from the knowledge, skills and experiences of existing gardeners in the community
- Harness the enthusiasm and fresh ideas of newcomers
- Enjoy the financial support derived from membership subscriptions.

What will garden membership offer to prospective members?

This could be to:

- Experience a sense of belonging
- Connect more fully with others in the community
- Participate in positive and healthy activities
- Enjoy the friendship of like-minded people
- Gather knowledge and share ideas on sustainable garden practices
- Enjoy the benefits of fresh, seasonal, locally grown produce and other garden outputs.

Should garden members make a financial contribution to the garden? Assuming the community garden is being run as a subcommittee of the main association, people who belong to the community garden will need to pay the membership fee of the main association. It is not unreasonable that they should also pay an additional fee to be part of the community garden. This is consistent with people attending craft or painting classes who expect to pay fees on top of their existing association membership fee. When deciding what this additional garden membership fee should be, make sure that it:

- Is not an amount that would be a barrier to anyone participating in the garden
- Offers different rates for individuals, groups, families etc
- Offers some discretion for special circumstances or other valid exceptions.

The additional garden membership fee validates the relationship that will exist between the garden and its membership. It will help to promote loyalty, participation and belonging in an equitable manner. The fee can become a significant source of revenue for the garden. In the gardens involved in this project the garden membership fee was set between \$10 - \$20 for a 12 month period (2013).

How often will garden membership be renewed?

Typically membership periods are for 12 months but this will need to be aligned with the collection of the main association membership fee.

Membership is by its very nature based on respect and reciprocity

Community Garden Membership Charter

Once you have decided what garden membership will look like, you will need to develop a membership charter. A membership charter sets out the rights and responsibilities of garden members in a way that can be clearly and consistently explained to your community. The language you use to express these rights and responsibilities should be positive and affirming rather than proscriptive and intimidating. You want to welcome and encourage people to join your garden community effectively putting the 'community' into the community garden.

SAMPLE

Community Garden Membership Charter

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
As a Garden Member you have the right to:	As a Garden Member you are asked to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be kept informed about all activities and events organised for the garden community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay your membership fee in a timely manner as it falls due
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have your personal details kept private by the Community Garden Management Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abide by the Community Garden Code of Conduct (see page 77)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate on the Community Garden Management Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in implementing the Code of Conduct by reminding others of its contents, if necessary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to decision making processes about the garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide your personal details to the Community Garden Membership Officer as requested on your membership application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel safe within the garden and be treated with respect by all garden community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read garden notices and any communications to members so as to be aware of garden activities and events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be allocated tasks within the garden appropriate to your ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act in a spirit of co-operation and sharing with others in the garden, both members and non-members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive appropriate instructions on safe manual handling techniques and be provided with appropriate personal safety equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be reasonable and respectful in manner towards others in the garden
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate with other garden members in the equitable distribution of the garden produce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act in a manner that ensures your safety and the safety of others in the garden.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have access to open garden events before bookings are available to non-members (e.g. for garden workshops). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply to the Community Garden Management Group to have grievances resolved in accordance with the garden's and the association's Dispute Resolution policies.

Community Garden Membership Application Form

Don't overlook the paperwork – you will need to create a Community Garden Membership Form for people wishing to sign-up as members. This can be a hard copy paper form or an e-form where members sign up online. A useful and free online website for creating online forms can be found at www.jotform.com

SAMPLE

Community Garden Membership Application Form

Name:

Address: Postcode:

Mobile:

Email address:

Preferred contact method: TEXT EMAIL GARDEN NOTICEBOARD NO PREFERENCE

Garden Membership Fees (per annum) This fee is to enable the Community Garden Management Group to cover some of the costs of running the community garden

\$15 Single Membership \$20 Family membership \$30 School Group

\$12 Single Concession \$15 Family Concession

Membership Period

Start Date:/...../..... Finish Date:/...../.....

PLEASE TICK

I hereby apply to become a member of the Community Garden.

I have read and understood the following:

Community Garden Code of Conduct

Community Garden Membership Charter

I understand that membership of the community garden also requires me to be a member of the Association Inc and that I will also be bound by the rules of that association.

I am attaching the appropriate membership fee of \$_____ as indicated above.

I am willing to take an active role on the Community Garden Management Group if a position becomes available or at the next AGM of the association.

Signature Date

Please send this completed form and garden membership fee to the Community Garden Membership Officer

at
(insert appropriate address detail)



Community Garden Record of Members

The secretary of the main association will keep a register of association members, including garden members, in compliance with the *Association Incorporation Reform Act 2012*.

The community garden membership officer should maintain a record of garden members that includes:

- Name and address
- Membership type
- Date the person became a member
- Preferred contact details

If a person ceases to be a garden member, all information relating to them (other than their name and the date they ceased to be a member) must be removed from the garden record of members.

The information collected in the garden record of members is private and should not be made available to any other garden member. Any information to be distributed to the garden members should be done by the community garden secretary.

A record of members can be created using an MS Access database or an MS Excel spreadsheet. This allows the membership officer and secretary to sort information for different purposes i.e. to flag dates for membership renewals or to create mailing lists for distribution of garden information.

...as the garden grows and flourishes, you will find that membership numbers will pick up...

Community Garden Membership Promotion

It is vital for the success of your fledgling garden community that members are not only welcome to join but actively encouraged. It is tempting to see your membership as those people who have worked so hard to create the garden over a long period of time. But the intent of the garden has always been for it to be a community garden. There will be many people in your community who were unable to participate in the early stages of the garden's development but who now have the time and the motivation to do so. In the spirit of inclusion in which you conceived the garden, you need to reach out to these people and broaden your membership base. You have already taken steps to put the correct structures in place and now have:

- A Community Garden Management Group with clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- A Community Garden Membership Officer
- A Community Garden Management Group Code of Conduct
- A Community Garden General Code of Conduct
- A Community Garden Membership Charter.

Having established these organisational roles and procedures will assist you in attracting members who will welcome the legitimacy of the community garden structure. People are generally reluctant to sign up to anything that seems ad hoc in nature or does not provide confidence in its ability to self-manage. In the first few months of the new management group's incumbency, make it a priority to promote garden membership to your broader community. Consider:

- Having a community garden open day where your community can visit and enjoy events in the garden
- Asking existing member to actively recruit a number of additional members



- Running an information stand at the local farmers' market or food swap where you can distribute information as well as membership application forms to interested parties
- Submitting an article about the community garden to the local community newsletter, highlighting the attractions of the garden and the benefits of being a garden member. Include a hi-res photo of the garden.
- Offering a series of sustainable gardening workshops at the garden, and allowing discounts on workshop fees or preferential booking periods, to garden members
- Contacting local groups and associations e.g. playgroups, artists' groups, the community health service etc and asking if you can visit them to speak about your community garden
- Contacting your local council or shire's community development officers, aged care officers, youth and families officers and food security officers and letting them know that the community garden is actively seeking members.

You may be able to identify other opportunities to promote membership that will be just as successful. Don't be despondent if membership numbers are slow to get off the ground initially. At the end of the day, the community garden itself is your strongest advertisement for membership. So, as the garden grows and flourishes, you will find that membership numbers will pick up, and that you will be looking at a long and committed membership list.

Community Garden Dispute Resolution Procedures

The best way to manage disputes is to prevent them from occurring in the first place. This is where the work you have put into developing your various codes of conduct and your membership charter will assist you. If the dispute relates to a breach of any of these then it should be easy to determine where the problem arose and take steps to remedy the transgression, quickly and easily.

Unfortunately, even in the best of relationships disputes occur that may be harder to resolve and your community garden management group needs to be prepared for this. Under the *Incorporation Association Reform Act 2012*, your main association must have a dispute resolution policy in place. From the start of your Community Garden Management Group's tenure, you need to get a copy of this dispute resolution policy and to be familiar with its contents. As a subcommittee of the main association, you will be bound by this dispute resolution policy and must be prepared to implement it.

Note: if the main association does not have a policy for resolving disputes, you are bound by the grievance procedures set out in model rules for incorporated associations under the *Incorporation Association Reform Act 2012*. A copy of the model rules can be downloaded at www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-not-for-profits/incorporated-associations/running-an-incorporated-association/resolving-disputes

Community Garden Access and Equity Policy

There are many state and federal laws that enshrine the Aussie concept of giving everyone a 'fair go' and the main association should have an appropriate access and equity policy in place to support this. Your Community Garden Management Group should familiarise itself with this policy and comply with it when making decisions or developing activities in the garden.

Simply put:

- Access means that you do not discriminate on the basis of a person's country of birth, language, culture, race or religion and
- Equity means that you provide fair treatment to everyone

COMMUNITY GARDEN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

If, as has been suggested, you have set up your Community Garden Management Group as a subcommittee of the main association, you may find that it is easier for the main association to manage your finances. However you should be keenly involved in the management of the garden finances, including the setting of the garden's annual budget and the monitoring of garden income and expenses against that budget. Some things to consider:

- If the main association has a bookkeeper or treasurer, that person may take on the recording of the garden's financial activities, including recording all of the garden's income and expenditure.
- Most electronic accounting packages will allow for the financial records of the garden to be maintained in a separate ledger file to the finances of the main association. This will enable the bookkeeper to provide garden specific financial reports for Community Garden Management Group meetings.
- If the main association is registered for GST then you may be eligible to reclaim the GST you pay on purchases from suppliers. However to do so, you will need to provide the bookkeeper with a valid tax invoice from your supplier.
- If you are subject to GST, you will have to remit GST on all of your income e.g. fees, garden sales, grants etc. You must add this GST on to your fees or selling price so that you are not out-of-pocket for this GST amount. Your overall GST obligations should be handled by the main association.
- Voluntary donations given to the garden without any expectation of material benefit by the donor do not have to remit GST. Sponsorship is not considered to be a donation.
- You need to decide whether your Community Garden Management Group needs to have its own bank account or will share the bank account of the main association. Having a separate bank account will assist you to manage your cashflow better as you will always know exactly how much money the garden has access to. If you do opt for a separate bank account you will need to develop appropriate protocols for running it e.g. signatories, electronic banking etc.



COMMUNITY GARDEN PROMOTION

Outside of your desire to recruit members to the community garden you should also consider opportunities to promote your garden and to raise its profile, both within your community and beyond. Current interest in community gardening shows no signs of diminishing and the potential for your community garden to derive benefits from targeted self promotion are substantial. Promoting your garden will offer you future opportunities such as:

- Becoming a social hub within your town or district for community celebrations, festivals, art and sculpture displays etc.
- Creating partnerships with other like-minded community organisations to jointly apply for grants or to acquire program funding
- Increasing tourism to your area through visitors interested in emulating your community garden success story
- Forming connections with schools and other educational institutions to develop skills training programs
- Attracting businesses who enjoy supporting well run and credible community activities
- Allowing for small community enterprises to be developed such as a community market or a jam-making cooperative that are associated with the garden.

The potential for your community garden to become the heart of your community, an icon of sustainability, a destination for eco-tourists, a training ground for skills and knowledge exchange and the nucleus for micro-economic community enterprises is very real. You and your Community Garden Management Group have simply a lifetime of opportunities to explore.



The end of the beginning...

If you have reached this stage, you will hopefully have achieved your goals and built a wonderful garden for your community. Importantly, you will also have set up the governance structure and organisational framework that will take this garden into the future. Happily this means that you have reached the end of the Working Group's tenure and that the newly constituted Community Garden Management Group is poised and ready to take over the reins. You and the Working Group should be very proud of what you have achieved and hopefully your community will mark this momentous point in the evolution of your garden with a celebration worthy of your accomplishment.

Building a community garden is among the most Utopian of all community projects. It is initiated by the dreamers, built by the visionaries and embraced by the communal. The community garden itself is a microcosm of the very community within which you have chosen to live. It gives you and the other garden members a very real sense of belonging and purpose. But it may also, at times, cause you angst and not a little frustration when conflict does occur. How you deal with this conflict will reflect the strength of the organisational structures that you have put in place and the commitment and maturity of your garden community. All problems have a solution; they just need people willing to seek them out. Patience and perseverance, the very traits that helped you through the lengthy processes that you have just completed, are the same attributes that will ensure the success of your community garden, well into the future.

YOU had a dream, and you built it.





*In the shadow of the fire,
In the scar that remains,
In the wake of the aftermath,*

I reflect.

Catheryn Thompson, Yinnar