



IREJN

Interreligious Eco-Justice Network

Inspiring and equipping Connecticut's religious communities and their spiritual allies to protect our planet through education, engagement, and advocacy.



IREJN

Interreligious Eco-Justice Network

Supported by the following:



UConn

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE,
HEALTH AND NATURAL
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EXTENSION

GROWING

A



GROWING A COMMUNITY GARDEN

Sponsored by
the Interreligious
Eco-Justice
Network (IREJN)

and supported by
the UCONN Master
Gardeners Program

*Becoming a united community
while we grow food and flowers,
have fun, make friends, and
learn to love and care for for
the earth!*



AN INTRODUCTION

How to Start a Community Garden.

What we will not cover in this session is the actual gardening, i.e. soil preparation, planting, maintenance, composting, etc.



You will find an excellent presentation on these topics and more developed by Letty Naigles and Charmaine Craig at the IREJN.org website :

· <https://irejn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/garden-how-to-for-IREJN-2.18.pdf>



What is a Community Garden?

Place to grow together with family, friends, and neighbors.

- Community gardens can take several forms. It can be urban, suburban or rural. It can be one community plot or many individual plots or both. Who the garden serves may determine how it is organized.
- They often grows out of a need or desire of a community to have opportunity to produce food and to connect with the earth.



The Whys:

- Builds community and relationships that last beyond the growing season
- Provides an opportunity to work together and learn from one another.
- Celebrates Diversity
- Benefits health, both physical and emotional
- Provides fresh, nutritious, and diverse foods
- Connect us with the natural world; plants, birds, insects, soil



More Whys

- Offers learning opportunities;
 - growing seeds plants.
 - caring for soil and the essential life in it.
 - What is composting and why do we do it?
 - How to conserve water. And why.
 - Environmental stewardship and sustainable land use.
- Offers life skills: planning, organizing, teamwork, food preparation
- Creates a healthy and beautiful environment

What do YOU Get?

- Fun
- Sunshine
- Friends
- Exercise
- Food

And lots of tomatoes!



GARDENING IS
CHEAPER THAN
THERAPY AND YOU
GET TOMATOES



First things first

Determine if there is a need and desire in your community for a garden

Engage your community from the beginning



Who to Engage?

- Engage the House of Worship leadership, administration and governance committee from the beginning
- Engage the larger community where your house of worship and/or garden is located.
- Hold a meeting of the interested people and bring together an "Initiating Committee"



Leadership Team



- DEVELOP A WELL-ORGANIZED LEADERSHIP TEAM with a coordinator to organize tasks.
- Determine the following:
 - How will decisions be made
 - How will the work be shared?
 - How and who will communicate with and be responsive to the members of the community interested in the garden.



What is the Mission
of your Garden?

- **Determine who the garden will serve**
- **Create a mission statement**
- **Decide on goals and objectives**

Who will it serve and
How?

This will help you design a garden that works
best for your purposes.

Sample Mission Statement

- It is a community garden whose mission is to:
- **Grow fresh organic food to distribute free to local distribution centers that provide for those in need.**
- **Offer an opportunity to grow fresh organic food to members of the community.**
- **Provide educational opportunities to the greater community.**
- **Provide support to those who wish to grow food but are in need of assistance**

What Kind of Community Garden?



- Individual Plots?
- Co-operative Team growing for the Community?
- Youth? Seniors?
- Therapeutic:
 - Social, emotional, psychological and physical well being?
- Explore the benefits of organic gardening.

- While all these gardens serve as catalysts for bringing people together and improving community, some:

- grow food for the gardeners themselves.
- donate their produce to the hungry and food insecure.
- focus on education, nutrition, health, well being and exercise.
- sell produce for income.
-
- Some simply provide a venue for sharing the love of gardening.
-
- All community gardens provide opportunities for neighborhood renewal and beautification.



If the project is meant to benefit a particular group or neighborhood, it is essential that the group be involved in all phases



Name your GARDEN!

- Have a mailing address and central phone number

NOW

- Find a site





Finding a suitable site is essential to success!

- six hours of sunlight per day,
- Available clean water,
- healthy soil...TEST
- a location in which gardeners feel safe
- Easy access

Where to Look for a Site



- Land Trust/Preserve
- Municipality
- Parks and Rec
- Community Centers
- Farms? Agricultural Society
- Garden Clubs
- Partner with another House of Worship



NEXT:

- Identify the land owner to see if he or she is interested

- Obtain a list of previous uses of the land to evaluate potential contamination.
- Is there potential for run off from a parking lot or road.
- Do a soil test to identify the existing nutrient levels, pH, heavy metals
- When indicated, check for heavy metals and petro-chemicals or other persistent chemicals.
- Determine who is responsible for liability insurance.
- Determine if there are any municipal permits required.
- Enter into a lease agreement of at least 3 years.

SOIL POLLUTION



- Check the history of usage
 - Crops grown? Tobacco, orchards?
 - Poultry farming? Run off?
 - Combustion or burn site?
 - Dump sites?
 - Businesses: petroleum products?
 - Buildings: lead paint? Oil tanks?

If the history is not known,
check your local Dept. of Public
health for history of
contamination

URBAN Gardens: Cover soil,
build raised bed, fill with new
garden soil

Community RESOURCES

- NRCS
 - offers soil screening for chemicals.
 - Cost sharing for raised beds, mulching, grow tunnels, etc

NEGEF

Grants for community gardens

USDA and CT Conservation Districts

resources and grants/cost sharing opportunities for local agriculture

What next?

- Money
 - Develop a budget;
 - Estimate cost
 - Make a “wish list” and publicize it: fencing, shed, composting system, garden tools, hoses, labor etc.
 - Determine how you will raise funds :grants/matches, fund raising, sponsors, membership dues/fees?





What else?

- Till or No-Till or combination?
- Organic?
- Agreement on rules and guidelines.
- Application for gardeners?
- Sign up for volunteers
- Usage/membership fees?



Sign up
volunteers



Engage local civic and youth organizations -
Lions Club, Scouts, 4-H , Master Gardeners,
local garden club, the CT AIP, etc.



COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS



Finding Gold in the Garden



Angry Neighbors and Negligent Gardeners

Often the two are related. Neighbors complain about messy, unkempt gardens or poor behavior. Therefore, choose bylaws carefully so you have procedures to follow when members fail to keep their plots clean and up to code. A well-organized garden with strong leadership and committed members can overcome almost any obstacle.

Sample Rules and Guidelines

- I will pay a fee of \$_____ to help cover garden expenses. I understand that ____ of this will be refunded to me when I clean up my plot at the end of the season.
- I will have something planted in the garden by (date) and keep it planted all summer long.
- If I must abandon my plot for any reason, I will notify the manager and accept responsibility to leave it as I found it.
- I will keep weeds down and maintain the areas immediately surrounding my plot.
- If my plot becomes unkempt, I understand I will be given 2 week's notice to clean it up. At that time, it will be reassigned or tilled in.
- I will keep trash and litter cleaned from the plot, as well as from adjacent pathways and fences.
- I will participate in the fall clean-up of the garden.
- I will plant tall crops where they will not shade neighboring plots.
- I will pick only my own crops unless given permission by the plot user.
- I will not use fertilizers, insecticides or weed repellents that will in any way affect other plots.

- I agree to volunteer ___ hours toward community gardening efforts. (include a list of volunteer tasks which your garden needs).
- I will not bring pets to the garden.
- I understand that neither the garden group nor owners of the land are responsible for my actions.
- I THEREFORE AGREE TO HOLD HARMLESS THE GARDEN GROUP AND OWNERS OF THE LAND FOR ANY LIABILITY , DAMAGE, LOSS OR CLAIM THAT OCCURS IN CONNECTION WITH USE OF THE GARDEN BY ME OR ANY OF MY GUESTS.

Signed _____

Date _____

Plot # _____

Grandma and the Garden





Garden Events

- Workshops
- Celebrations
- Worship
- A Place to Meet!





Pot Luck gatherings



Music and celebrations
in the garden

Other Garden Events

Worship

Workdays

Open Garden
Days

Create a shady
meeting area in
the garden and
spend time there!





Charles and the Giant Squash

With Great Appreciation to

- Letty Naigles, Charmaine Craig, Jameelah Muhammad, and Virginia Army who have dug in to create and to teach us all about Community Gardening.

- And to all those out there guiding and teaching us how to be a Community in the Garden

- For specifics on How to Garden from planting seeds to harvesting go to:
<https://irejn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/garden-how-to-for-IREJN-2.18.pdf>

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TO NURTURE A
**GARDEN IS TO
FEED
NOT JUST
THE BODY,
BUT THE
SOUL.—ALFRED AUSTIN**

Seed NEWS!



Common Commission

Let us now go forth into the
Garden in Peace;

Being of good spirit,

Holding fast to hoe and spade,

Bringing new life from the soil,

Strengthening our bodies,

While supporting our
Communities,

Helping the hungry,

Honoring all People, Plants and
Creatures,

Loving and serving our God,

And rejoicing in the miracle of
Life on this Planet Earth.



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