

Gardening Creation: A Community Garden Toolkit

The Bishop's Committee on Creation Care (BCCC) has been working since July 2020 to help Anglicans, parishes, and the diocese as a whole to be better stewards of creation. Our world continues to grapple with the climate crisis, and the church is realizing the many ways that we have neglected our calling to live in peace with the diversity of plants, insects, animals, and people that God created in that first garden community or community garden.

Considering a Community Garden for your Church?

Here are some initial questions to ask as a community:



- How much land is available and how is it currently used?
- How much time does your community have available to tend the garden? (A vegetable garden will take more work than a pollinator garden consisting only of flowers, or a meditation garden).
- What strengths and skills does the group have?
- Who is the garden for? Do you want the community around your church to use this garden or is it primarily for the church community? How you answer this question leads into the next ones.
- Do you want a pollinator garden consisting primarily of flowers? If so, will some be intentionally planted for use in the church?
- Do you want to grow food? If so, who is the food for? What are the food needs of your neighbourhood?
- If you are growing food, what kind of food garden will it be?
- Will the community as a whole tend the garden and donate the food to a foodbank or other neighbourhood initiatives?
- Will you rent out garden beds to parishioners and members of the community who tend their own bed and harvest the food for their own consumption?
- Will you invite members of the community to assist with the garden and learn about growing food, allowing participants to harvest food as available and needed?
- Will it be a teaching garden, where you welcome the community to come and learn about growing food, or where you welcome the community to come and teach you about food from their countries of origin?
- Are there community groups that you could partner with, such as BIPOC, anti-poverty and Indigenous rights groups?
- Will the garden combine both pollinator plants and a food garden?
- Do you have space for some berry bushes and small fruit trees?
- What will be the mission statement of the garden?



Once you have an idea of what kind of garden your community is interested in, you are ready to take the next step and explore the documents and links below.

1. Create Your Colony

Assembling a Team

- Depending on the size of your lot, consider a minimum of 3 - 7 committed volunteers. They should expect to commit to watering, weeding, pruning and harvesting the garden on a weekly rotating basis.
- One person should be the garden coordinator.

2. Plot it all Out

Assessing what you have and what you need

- Identify the tools that your volunteers can donate/supply: shovels, clippers, trowels, watering cans, rakes, etc.
- Will you use raised beds or plant directly in the ground?



For a Pollinator Garden

- Create a list of existing plants that you have
- Create a list of pollinators that you'd like to plant. Considerations:
 - ◆ It's important to select a variety of plants that bloom throughout early-spring, summer, and early-fall so that pollinators have food all-season long. You also need to consider that some plants only cater to butterflies, whereas others cater to caterpillars or bees.
 - ◆ Plant selection should also be based on the garden's orientation to the sun and where the church is located
 - ◆ Make sure your local garden store has them in stock!

For a Vegetable Garden

- What vegetables will meet your needs and the needs of your community?
- Which vegetables should be planted from seed and which will you need seedlings for?

3. Sourcing the Nectar

Develop a Budget

- Determine the size of your property
- Determine the size of your budget (1000 sq. metres [approx. 1/4 acre] costs ~\$1,000)
- Determine the cost of the following:
 - ◆ Flowers
 - ◆ Seeds
 - ◆ Seedlings
 - ◆ Shrubs
 - ◆ Trees
 - ◆ Soil
 - ◆ Garden Beds

4. Pruning and Planting

Spring Clean-Up and Planting Tips

Spring Clean-Up

- Do not rake up leaves or cut back last year's plants until the day time temperature warms to a consistent 10°C, this allows insects to wake up and leave their winter shelters.
- Carefully rake dead leaves to a shady spot or by a tree to mimic woodland conditions. Some bugs nestle into leaf litter during the winter.
- Prune/Cut back perennials, woody or hollow stems to 15 inches rather than to ground level as some insects like bees may be burrowing in them during the winter. Keep these and spread them over the leaves in case they have yet to emerge.
- Avoid mulching until the soil dries and the weather becomes warmer as some pollinators overwinter in the soil.



Planting for Pollinators

- Offer a diversity of plants to attract a diversity of pollinators.
- Use plants of different heights – trees, shrubs, vines and plants – to effect a layered canopy, even in a small container garden.
- Use enough of a single plant (massing them, if possible) to minimize pollinator search time and allow them to collect pollen and/or nectar more efficiently.
- Provide a sequence of bright-coloured and fragrant blooms from spring to the end of fall.
- Do not use pesticides.
- Offer shelter and nesting sites to pollinators by allowing some parts of the garden to be a little “wild.”
- Provide fresh water in bird baths or other containers for pollinators of all types.

Planting Vegetables

- Plant vegetables that you and your community will want to eat.
- Use quality soil, your vegetables will taste better. Consider adding organic matter, such as straw, as a mulch to reduce the need for watering.
- Ensure that your vegetables have adequate sun exposure and consistent watering.

5. Organizing Your Colony

Creating a schedule and direction for the garden group

- Create an email list, Facebook group or WhatsApp group to organize team members.
- Have the Coordinator create a monthly calendar outlining everyone's responsibilities.



6. COVID Considerations

Protecting your Volunteers

- Ask volunteers to provide their own tools; if tools are shared, then gloves should be worn.
- Only allow a certain number of volunteers onto the property, so that they are able to socially distance.
- Masks should be worn if people from more than one household are working in the garden, as it is not always possible or practical to maintain a two metre distance.

7. Other Resources (Links)

Gardening Tips for Beginners

- [Gardening Tips for Beginners: David Suzuki Foundation](#)
- [Evergreen Community Garden Themes](#) : Contains suggestions for Vegetable and Herb, Wildlife Habitat, Container, Senior's, Children's and Rooftop gardens.

Plants that attract pollinators

- [Native Plants for Pollinators](#)
- [How to Create A Pollinator Friendly Garden: David Suzuki](#)
- [Greening Sacred Spaces Native Gardening Guide](#)

Food to Grow in the GTA

- [Get Growing Toronto](#)
- [Best Practices for Healthy Urban Gardens Fact Sheet](#)

How to start a community garden

- [A Rocha Resource](#)
- [TSGN Gardening Toolkit \(p. 20 – 48\)](#)
- [Community Gardens Themes & Ideas - Evergreen](#) (*Contains suggestions for Vegetable and Herb, Wildlife Habitat, Container, Senior's, Children's and Rooftop gardens.*)

Possible Partners and Funding Sources for Community Gardens

- [Pollinate TO Community Grants](#)
- [Eco-Roof Incentive Programme City of Toronto](#)
- [Diocese of Toronto Reach Grants](#)
- Your local horticultural society may have grants and resources for starting a community garden. In Toronto, check out [Parkdale Horticultural Society Funding](#)
- Hardware and home improvement stores will often donate garden supplies, tools or gift cards if you contact your local store manager.

If your parish would like information on people in the Diocese who are available for consultation on community gardens, please email creation.care@toronto.anglican.ca