



NC RECREATION AND PARK WELLNESS INITIATIVE

Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle through North Carolina's Recreation and Park Agencies

Updated As of: 1/12/18

Community Gardens:

Teaching people about healthy eating is important, but they cannot put that knowledge into practice if they do not have access to healthy food outside of class. Community gardens are a fantastic way to promote healthy eating. They can help teach people where their food comes from, and give them a chance to connect with their neighbors. Gardens can be small or large, but even a small garden can have a large impact on the health of your community.



Community Gardens for physical activity:

Gardening not only produces great, healthy food; it provides a place for people to engage in physical activity. According to a [Harvard University study](#), 30 minutes of gardening can burn as many calories as a variety of other activities. Gardening can increase physical activity in children and has also been linked to greater physical activity and life satisfaction in seniors. Keep this in mind as you develop and use your gardens.

Creating a Community Garden:

Building a community garden takes some planning, but does not have to cost tens of thousands of dollars. Before you begin, there are two things that must be considered: is there enough neighborhood interest in supporting a garden, and what need will it address in your community. Once these parameters are established, a location should be selected.

Selecting the proper site is critical to a garden's success. The site should have proper light and drainage. Accessibility to the site and within the site is an important consideration- especially if you are target seniors and/or those with limited mobility. The garden should be centrally located so the gardeners will be able to get to the site easily. Also, consider using raised beds or container gardening to provide as inclusive of a gardening experience as possible. For more details of planning a community garden, check out the resources section.

Having a maintenance plan in place prior to the opening of the garden will help ensure its long-term success. Consider partnering with other organizations (such as nonprofits in the community) to aid in the maintenance of the garden.

Food Safety:

When a garden is used by many people, there is a greater risk of food contamination. However, this issue can be mitigated through proper site selection, safe water sources, proper compost and fertilizer application, and food handling procedures. The USDA has a great food safety tip sheet for school gardens that can also apply to community gardens. NC Cooperative Extension's community garden food safety guide includes diagrams for proper location of water stations, as well as tips for sanitizing tools and managing volunteers.

Resources:

[NCRPA Wellness Webinar: Community Gardens](#)

[NCRPA Wellness Webinar: Gardening and Nutrition Programs](#)

[NC State's community gardening website](#)

[North Carolina Community Garden Partners \(has resources and training events\)](#)

[Creating gardens that are accessible to people with disabilities](#)

[Denver Urban Gardening: Best Practices](#)

[City of Vancouver guide to starting a community garden](#)

[American Community Gardening Association resources](#)

[Local Government Commission guide to the benefits of community gardens](#)