



GROWING COMMUNITY GARDENS

A garden leader's guide to community garden projects

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the following organisations:

- Al-Istiqamah Mosque
- Al-Mukminin Mosque
- Geylang East Home for the Aged
- Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist Association (Singapore)
- Woodlands Community Centre
- Yokogawa Engineering Asia Pte Ltd



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INTRODUCTION



Community Gardens

Community gardens are where people come together to nurture, develop and sustain a lively green space in their estate. They give communities a sense of ownership and belonging and can be found throughout the world.

Such gardens reflect the purpose they serve: engaging, educating, building and strengthening relationships among staff and volunteers in a significant way. They inculcate values such as cooperation, volunteerism, respect for diversity, and ecological awareness.

About This Guide

This guide aims to help staff and volunteers start and manage gardens that will bring out the best in their communities. Like a person, each garden is unique. While tips offered here will start you off on your gardening journey, each plot of land will grow to have its own personality. Hence, beyond getting the right mix of soil or using the right tool, the following points may be useful to consider:

- 1. Good projects are a reflection of our community and help to improve it.
- 2. Diversity adds strength; strive towards being an inclusive group.
- 3. A successful community garden is built by empowered individuals.
- 4. The most important word in "community garden" is community.
- 5. The best community gardens are always evolving.



Support From NParks

NParks supports Community Gardening through the Community in Bloom (CIB) programme. CIB aims to promote a gardening culture among Singapore residents by encouraging and facilitating gardening efforts by the community. It is a programme based on collaborative partnership between both public and private sector organisations and volunteer groups. As part of this island-wide community gardening initiative, NParks provides guidance and advice, such as:

- Choosing a suitable site for gardening.
- Working out the garden layout and design.
- Selecting the right plants.
- Improving gardening skills.

For organisations, NParks works with the gardening group, organising committee or management to provide support.

If you are interested in setting up a Community Garden, contact NParks early as it takes approximately three months for a community garden to be launched from its inception to completion.

Website: www.nparks.gov.sg/cib Email: CommunityinBloom@nparks.gov.sg

ABOUT COMMUNITY IN BLOOM



Community in Bloom (CIB) is a programme that was launched by the National Parks Board (NParks) in 2005.

It aims to nurture a gardening culture among Singaporeans by encouraging and facilitating community gardening efforts. It is also an opportunity to build community bonds and strengthen social resilience in our City in Nature.

Visit our website to find a community garden near you: www.nparks.gov.sg/cib



GET INSPIRED

Award-winning Community Gardens

A community that plants together grows together. As there are no set rules in gardening, the garden model may differ according to location and the community's needs.

The pictures below are a compilation of award-winning community gardens cultivated by organisations in their own properties and common green spaces.

Al-Istiqamah Mosque













Al-Mukminin Mosque



Geylang East Home for the Aged



Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist Association (Singapore)







Yokogawa Engineering Asia Pte Ltd











GETTING STARTED

Planning is the key to building a strong foundation when starting a community garden. Successful community gardens are often those where gardeners take the time to plan and design right from the start.



Meetings are held among gardeners to facilitate planning and maintenance of the garden.

Steps For Success

Starting a community garden is hard work and requires time, energy and commitment. To achieve a successful garden, learn to prioritise the following tasks:

- Develop a strong and committed gardening group that will share the responsibilities.
- Conduct adequate site research and visits to other community gardens to learn important tips.
- Work as a group to achieve your objectives.
- Plan and create a roadmap that is geared towards achieving a shared vision.
- Design the garden with the vision in mind.

Before starting, it is important to ask yourself the following questions:

- Are there enough interested and committed participants within the group to sustain the project in the long term?
- Is there support from management or the organising committee to carry out this initiative?
- Is there an appointed leader (or an coleader) to oversee the gardening project and activities?
- Are there staff and volunteers with 'green fingers' and those with specialised skills?
- Will the garden be funded by management or organising committee? If yes, how much should the initial start-up and maintenance cost?
- Has the group allocated adequate time to plan garden details?





STEP 1: GET PEOPLE



Before starting a community garden, it is important to make sure that there are staff and volunteers who share the same interest as you and are willing to support and sustain the garden.

Form A Gardening Group And Get Support

- Gather interested participants from among your staff and volunteers.
- Appoint a leader for your gardening group.
- Get support and approval from the management or organising committee for your gardening project.

Tips To Get People Interested

- **Share benefits:** inform interested participants of the health, environmental, educational and social benefits of community gardening.
- Word of mouth: promote the garden to staff and volunteers and ask them to spread the word.
- Partner with established organisations: talk to groups such as community centres, schools, clubs and businesses near your organisation about getting their members involved.
- **Promote internally:** with the approval of the management or organising committee, create simple posters that list contact information, meeting times, and upcoming activities and post them around the organisation premises to inform staff and volunteers.



A wall display is a simple way of informing visitors about past achievements.

A Simple Checklist

 1. Forming a gardening group Is there interest in the organisation for a garden? Do you know who will be using the garden? Are there at least four to five interested participants? Support from management/organising committee?
2. Roles and responsibilities
Are there staff/volunteers willing to take on the different roles?
Who is the appointed leader(s)?
 3. Identifying participants and their skills Gardening experience? Landscaping experience? Other types of beneficial skills and experience e.g. project management
4. Selecting the site
Is the site easily accessible to the participants?
Does the site have favourable sun, shade and wind conditions?
Are amenities such as a water source nearby?

Organise A Sharing Session For Participants

It is a good idea to hold a sharing session to discuss the potential community garden and to recruit participants if they have not already been identified. At this session, share who will be involved in the garden, who it will benefit, and what kind of garden it will be. Send personal invitations to staff and volunteers who may be keen on participating.

- Organise a sharing session for staff and volunteers for NParks staff to share ideas on setting up garden plots and tips on good gardening practices.
- Recruit more participants for the gardening project through the session.
- Visit established community gardens to learn and exchange tips.

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Sample Agenda For First Garden Meeting

Below is a sample agenda for your first meeting and a list of tasks to accomplish.

Welcome and introductions

- Welcome staff/volunteers as they arrive
- Conduct an icebreaker activity by asking the group to share their names and reasons for their interest in community gardening

Garden project overview and update

- Provide background information on the garden project, where it would be sited and explain how the idea originated
- Explain what has been done so far and the purpose of the meeting

Brainstorm and discuss the garden project

Some of the key questions to be discussed during this session include:

- What is the purpose of the garden and who is the garden for?
- Who will be in the garden committee?
- What is the budget set aside for the garden and how will it be maintained?
- What is the best way for the group to stay in touch?
- How will garden duties be split and allocated?
- What will be the name of the garden?

Next steps and wrap up

- Create a list of action items (planting, watering, propagation etc) and ask people to volunteer to take charge of these items
- Follow-up promptly after the meeting by distributing the meeting minutes and the list of actions required, as well as key contact information

Tips For Active Leadership – Resolving And Avoiding Conflicts In Your Community Garden

#1 Promote an open garden culture

Keep the garden accessible and let visitors explore the garden freely. Your community garden belongs to the community. Let people know they are welcome to be involved in the activities they are interested in.

#2 Shared leadership

All participants should have a sense of ownership towards the garden. Allow them to take the lead in an area of their interest. Everyone has something to offer; tap on their strengths. The garden's sustainability and success depends on a core group of leaders, not just one or two individuals.

#3 Turn the 'ME' into 'WE'

A community garden is a collaborative effort. Working towards consensus should be a core principle in how things get done. Have garden meetings where opinions are respected. It is important to understand what motivates each individual's participation.

#4 Be open and flexible

Listen and be open to the ideas each participant brings. Keep an open mind; some gardens had brilliant ideas contributed by young gardeners. Be responsive and act on all suggestions. Let participants try out their ideas and allow their creativity to grow.

#5 Acknowledge all contributions

A little appreciation goes a long way. Always say 'thank you'. Give credit when it is due and acknowledge all efforts, big or small.

#6 Setting guidelines

Garden guidelines are an excellent way to ensure that everyone understands how the garden will operate and what is expected of them.

#7 Community building events

Celebrate and enjoy the garden as a group. The more time people spend together, the better they get to know and understand each other. Encourage participants to bond and socialise by organising potlucks or other events that build understanding and community morale.

#8 Be inclusive

Be sensitive to cultural differences and respect each other's culture preferences. Encourage gardeners to grow different ethnic food. This can provide a learning opportunity for the whole group.

Highlighting and observing gardeners' ethnic and cultural celebrations can help to foster a culture of openness among participants.



STEP 2: PLANNING YOUR GARDEN

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Keep in mind the space you have and the garden's purpose during the planning discussion.

It is important to have a garden plan and a site design before actual planting. Community gardens should be developed for communities to gather and grow together in the long term.

The needs of every gardening group is different. Thus the garden plan should be designed according to the group's needs. Through initial meetings and public outreach activities, the group should have an idea of the type(s) of garden that best meets their objectives.

Identify A Suitable Site For The Garden

Contact NParks to help you select a suitable location for the proposed community garden. The following points should be considered when selecting a gardening site.



Location of nearby residential blocks – Locate community gardens in places with high human traffic to generate interest and encourage participation through outreach activities.



Accessibility – The site should allow for comfortable mobility for participants, easy movement of soil, plants, tools, water and access to other common amenities (space for vehicle access, loading area, etc).





Water source – Water is key. Look around the plot area to ensure that there is a water source nearby. If there is none, have the management or organising committee install a water point to make it easier to water the plants.

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Amount of sunlight that the site gets -

It is important that the site gets adequate sunlight for a variety of plants to survive. Observe the site at different times of the day to determine whether it receives adequate sunlight and if there are any potential obstructions such as large trees or buildings.



Plot size & shape – Determine the size and shape of the plot. This will influence the number and size of plants you can grow. It will also influence the space for structures that your group will require, such as a storage shed, rest areas, compost area, etc. Remember to make allowance for the garden to grow.



Level or sloping ground – While levelled ground is preferred for a gardening site, it is also possible to create beautiful gardens on sloping ground. A terraced layout lined with wooden or stone frames can add a special touch to a garden. Avoid sites with inherent ground conditions e.g. waterlogging.



Air circulation – All plants need good air circulation to stay healthy and prevent pests and diseases. However, sites that get strong winds are not recommended.



Other safety considerations – Site should be away from the main road or heavy vehicular traffic. Check for electrical cables and gas pipelines that may be buried under the soil surface; existing lamp posts, electrical boxes or other markers on site are indicative of their presence.

Getting The Scale Right

Keep the garden plan simple and manageable for the first year. Once the garden is established, there will be plenty of opportunities to add new elements. For gardens that are medium and large in size, allocate groups to work on specific plots before moving to other areas. Below are some examples of different plot sizes.



Selecting A Garden Theme

Gardens can be designed to any style or theme, with each having its own beauty and character. Choosing a style can help you decide on the types of plants, patterns and garden features to have.

Themed gardens are designed around specific ideas, such as particular plant groups or purposes. They are characterised by an overall concept, and plants with similar growing requirements are grouped together to form unique collections or landscapes. Community gardens can include a combination of themes such as vegetable and herb gardens, butterfly and bird gardens, children and seniors gardens. Your garden will be as unique as the community tending it.



Herb and spice gardens focus on planting a variety of herbs and spices.



Fruit gardens are gardens that grow a variety of seasonal and tropical fruits.

Ornamental gardens are designed to increase the aesthetic value of an area.



Bird and butterfly gardens focus on planting specific biodiversity-attracting plants which provide food and shelter to sustain biodiversity growth.



Edible garden encourage the community to grow their own food. This includes vegetables and other edible varieties.



Kitchen garden is one that is designed for and by people who love to cook using fresh ingredients.





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Design Considerations for new Gardens

It is useful to speak to other garden leaders and obtain professional guidance from NParks when designing a community garden. Where possible, try to recruit a permaculture or landscape designer into your group. Bear in mind the following points when designing your garden.

Design for:

Low waste – Build a compost area for onsite management of organic waste generated by the garden.

Sustainability – Use recycled and local materials in construction. Where possible, install energy and water saving systems. For example, solar energy can be used to power the timers for sprinklers while rainwater harvesting can help to conserve water.

Water management – Maximise opportunities for rainwater harvesting and efficient irrigation. On sloped sites, use swales, terraces or beds that run along the contour of the slope to catch water.

Integrated pest management – Include a range of plants that provide shelters for small birds, frogs, lizards and predatory insects. Also include sources of water such as ponds and bird baths.

Windbreaks – Planting native trees and shrubs on the perimeters will shelter the garden from strong winds and reduce evaporation of valuable moisture in the soil.

Biodiversity – When carefully designed, community gardens can be part of a citywide network of native bird and animal habitats.

The senses – A garden designed to engage the senses will be a place where people want to be. It will also enable your garden to 'speak' to a wider cross-section of the community, including children and the disabled. Try to include scented plants, colour, public art and auditory elements such as wind chimes.

Learning – Think about how groups will be accommodated; design for outdoor learning areas and paths with nodes that allow a group to pause for discussion. Create opportunities for experiential learning, demonstrations and practical small-group activities.

Accessibility – Narrow pathways will make it difficult for participants to move equipment around. Trellises should be easy for gardeners to maintain and harvest fruits from.

Cultural diversity – Include plants and cultural traditions of various cultural groups who make up your organisation. Invite participants of various cultural groups to participate in the design.

Plant Selection

Place plants with similar growth requirements (e.g. watering and light requirements) in the same planting bed or area. This makes it easier to water and maintain. Consider companion planting (a form of polyculture) for pest control, pollination and space maximisation. The following are some recommended plants that you can begin planting with.

Plant Care Requirements



Prefers full sun



Prefers little water











Prefers full shade



Vegetables/Leafy Greens

Vegetables need lots of sunlight, water and fertiliser. Most are non-woody plants.

Chinese Spinach Amaranthus tricolor



Cekur Manis

Sauropus androgynus



Long Beans

Vigna unguiculata subsp. sesquipedalis







Eggplant (Brinjal) Solanum melongena



Kang Kong Ipomoea aquatica















Radish

Turnip Brassica rapa var. rapa









Herbs and spices

Chilli

Spices and herbs are aromatic plants used for flavoring food. Some have medicinal properties. Most are small, non-woody (herbaceous) plants that need full sun and regular fertilising.

Curry Leaf Tree Capsicum annuum Murraya koenigii Chinese Parsley Basil Ocimum basilicum Coriandrum sativum **Fragrant Pandan** Sawtooth Coriander Pandanus amaryllifolius Eryngium foetidum L.

Vibrant Flowers

These are plants grown for their brightly-coloured flowers. Most of these need full sun, lots of watering and frequent fertilising.





Flaming Beauty Carphalea kirondron



Heliconia Heliconia cultivars









Hibiscus Hibiscus rosa-sinensis cultivars



Star Cluster Pentas lanceolata



Periwinkle Catharanthus roseus (L.) G.Don







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Biodiversity-attracting Plants

Having these plants in your garden will attract birds, bees and butterflies.









Orange Jasmine Murraya paniculata







Ground Cover

These plants occupy little ground space and are ideal for screening unsightly features and brightening up hardscape elements such as fences, trellises, arches and bare walls.

False Heather Cuphea hyssopifolia









Japanese Rose Portulaca grandiflora cultivars









Climbers

These plants take up little ground space and are excellent for brightening up bare walls, fences, trellises and arches, and for screening unsightly features.

Golden Trumpet Allamanda cathartica



Kock's Bauhinia Bauhinia kockiana Korth







Pale Blue Flower Clitoria ternatea 10









Drawing Your Garden Design

Drawing out your design can help you plan your garden better.



1. Make a scale drawing

Include measurements, physical conditions, boundaries, existing plants and built-up structures.



2. Create a few designs

Make a few copies of your scale map and try different designs. Use different shapes to represent plant beds or areas occupied by trees or large shrubs.



3. Evaluate and finalise the design

Incorporate the best features into the final design.



4. Fill in the details

List the selection of plants, materials to be used, and types of garden decorations.

Examples Of Garden Design Layouts





Example 2 - An ornamental garden layout





STEP 3: PLANT YOUR GARDEN

STEP 3: PLANT YOUR GARDEN

Preparing The Groundwork

Once the management or organising committee has endorsed the garden plan, the gardening committee can start by preparing the groundwork with the committee members or by engaging a suitable contractor.

There are four key stages to constructing the garden, which can occur at the same time or separately depending on the time and resources available. It is important to be organised and to work collaboratively with members during these stages:



Stage 1: Prepare the site.



Stage 2: Build and install garden infrastructure.



Stage 3: Plant the garden.



Stage 4: Maintain the garden.

Purchasing Gardening Materials and Tools

Always plan before you purchase. Ask what you will need to start and run a garden. Figure out what you already have and make a list of the skills and resources available from your own community.

Here is a list of some basic gardening tools for any gardener:



Trowel – to dig in transplants and remove small weeds.



Gloves – essential to prevent blisters and protect you from thorny plants.



Shovel – comes in many types and used for breaking ground, moving soil and more.



Rake – useful for gathering leaves to use as mulch.



Watering Can/Hose – for ease of watering plants.



Secateur - used for pruning and clipping.


Wheelbarrow – used to move heavy objects such as soil and large plants.



Shears/Loppers – are a larger, two-handed, long-handled version for branches thicker than secateurs can cut.



Digging Fork – good for loosening hardened soil and dividing perennials.



Changkol – available in different sizes for moving small amounts of soil, weed control and digging.

The infrastructure that is installed will depend on the garden design and needs of both the gardening group and the organisation. Keep in mind that not everything needs to be completed in the first phase, and projects can be added as the garden develops. Some of the items you can consider installing include:

- Raised beds
- Pathways and ramps
- Composting bins
- Garden shed
- Fences and gates

- Trellises
- Irrigation systems
- Rest areas
- Play areas
- Art and feature areas

In the first few years of gardening, it is important that gardeners have successful yields and enjoy eating what they grow in order to build confidence and enthusiasm. Consider planting a mix of both ornamental plants and vegetables to allow participants to have a choice of activities.

Depending on experience and timing of planting, the group may choose to plant the garden from seeds, seedlings or young plants that are transplanted into the garden, or a combination of both. Start gardening immediately to avoid hardening or erosion of the soil.

Checklist For Community Garden Projects

The checklist below is a useful guide for garden leaders to determine their aims and objectives before starting on a community garden.

 1. What type of community garden? A shared garden where participants share the gardening and the harvest An allotment garden where participants garden their own plot and share the maintenance of common areas A garden with both allotments and shared gardening space What is the size of the shared and allotments spaces? 				
How long can allotments be held when they are not being used?				
2. What will be the purpose of the community garden?				
A place for people to garden together and get to know each other				
A place for people to relax and get close to nature				
A place that provides access to fresh, nutritious food				
Others:				
Will the garden be open for use and/or visitation by surrounding community groups and schools? Yes 🗌 No 🗌				
3. How will we garden?				
Organic gardening? Yes No				
Container gardening? Yes No				
Raised bed gardening? Yes No				
In ground gardening? Yes No				
Other methods:				
Reasons:				
5. What structures should we include?				
Lockable shed for storage				
Compost area				
Nursery for plant propagation				
Educational signs				
Others:				

 6. What training do we need? Gardening skills Design skills Basic construction skills Education on plants Others: Are any of these skills available within the group? Yes No
 7. How will we manage waste? Create own compost Mulching Recycle materials Others:
 8. How will we conserve water? Mulching Hydro-zoning Irrigation systems e.g. Drip irrigation, Soaker hose Grow low-water-use plants Others:
 9. How will we fund the garden? Sponsorships and donations Membership fees Allocated budget from the organisation Others:



MANAGEMENT TIPS

Administrative Matters – Keeping Records And Handling Funds

If your group is seeking to raise funds or solicit donations, you will need a secure place to keep and monitor the funds. Check with your management or organising committee on how to manage this process.

As your group grows, it will be helpful to keep records of achievements, expenses, maps of the designs of the garden and individual plots and projects, and frequently update the list of participants and their respective roles and contact information. Take regular photographs of the project's progress and significant events which can be used in promotional materials.





Use notice boards in the premises to inform staff and volunteers on previous projects and upcoming activities.

A simple notebook or a spreadsheet is useful for recording contact information. Below is a sample of an application form used to collect basic information of participants.

Gardener Application

Name:			Paste photo
Address:		Postal code:	- here
Home phone:	Mobile:		nore
Email:			

Other household members:

Relationship to member	Name	Age	Gender

Please sign up for at least one of the garden jobs/roles listed below:

□ Garden coordinator

□ Administrator

□ Grounds

□ Maintenance

□ Composting

Events

Treasurer

□ Communications

□ Outreach and community relations

 $\hfill\square$ Horticulture advisors

Safety

□ Garden committee □ Others:

If you are a new gardener, would like an experienced gardener to help you? Yes ____ No ____

If you are an experienced gardener, would you like to help a new gardener? Yes ____ No ____

Photo permission: From time to time, gardeners, garden leaders and the media will take photos of the garden. □ Please check here if you are not agreeable to having your photo taken. If you encounter photographers in your garden, please let them know you are not agreeable to being photographed.

Phone and email: All gardeners are required to share their phone number and email address with garden leaders. In addition, a gardener phone and email list is shared with all gardeners.

By signing below, I agree that I have read and understand the Gardener Guidelines and plan to abide by all of the garden rules. 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 my guests.

Signature:	Date:

Responsible Gardening – Health And Safety

Health and safety

A responsible gardener practises personal safety and considers the safety of others. By anticipating problems before they occur and implementing systems to avoid or minimise them, you can protect the community from injury and your project from costly and potentially damaging allegations of negligence.

Conduct a simple risk assessment that considers the following, with particular reference to the safety of children and the elderly:

- Poisonous or potentially allergenic plants
- Trip hazards
- Sharp or dangerous edges
- Manual handling of heavy loads, including the use of wheelbarrows
- Use of sharp or dangerous tools
- Use of soils and manures
- Poisons and pesticides



Always use gloves when handling soil, sharp tools and garden chemicals.







Keep unused containers upturned to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.

Be careful not to collect water and breed mosquitoes in your garden:

- Keep unused containers upturned and stored away.
- Keep drains and gutters clear of leaves.
- Always have fish in ponds and water features.
- Check pots and plant dishes for stagnant water.
- Clean and scrub the inner sides of plant dishes thoroughly to remove mosquito eggs.



SUSTAINING INTEREST

SUSTAINING INTEREST

Activities

Maintain the long-term interest of your participants by creating activities and learning opportunities.

Attract new participants

- Engage staff and volunteers by running short practical workshops.
- Hold open days, events and celebrations.
- Make your garden interesting and inviting by including musical and artistic elements; art in the garden can be a source of fun and amusement.
- Create a simple brochure to promote your garden during community events.
- Design and install attractive graphical signs to reach out to children as well as those who might not be fluent in English.

Orientate and retain new participants

- Conduct a simple induction and introduce new participants to the group. Match participants' tasks with their skills to engage them.
- Ensure new participants are familiar with the garden and its rules.
- Consider setting up a mentoring system. Mentor and share gardening knowledge with new students by pairing them up with skilled gardeners.

Commission special projects

- Create sculptures from recycled materials to stand out and make a bold statement.
- Challenge your participants with new creative projects to sustain their interest. For example, research and install an

efficient irrigation system or create a vertical garden feature as a team.

Create opportunities for learning

- Organise or facilitate educational gardening activities for all ages.
- Arrange gardening workshops, talks or sharing sessions by skilled gardeners, or bring in an expert to build capability within the group on a range of related topics.
- Co-ordinate visits to other gardens to exchange ideas; invite other community gardeners for networking and information-sharing sessions.

Community building

- Organise and celebrate the harvest party as a community event by inviting staff and volunteers. Harvest parties can be organised as educational events where gardeners participate in a workshop on harvesting techniques for crops that have been planted in the garden.
- Fruits and vegetables harvested can be shared among the staff and volunteers.
- Host simple social events such as potlucks and breakfast meets, to encourage social interaction.
- Promote the garden through public announcements over local radio, television, newspapers, free local publications, as well as via websites, blogs, and social media platforms.

Garden Rules

Everyone involved in the community garden should be aware of the rules and policies that underpin the project. Doing so would ensure participants understand their responsibilities and rights. It is also important to consider every individual's inputs when drafting these rules and policies.

The following are some guidelines on garden rules and policies:

#1 Garden organically

Gardens are part of a diverse ecosystem and we should use organic and natural methods to encourage plant diversity, attract beneficial insects, and create conditions for healthy plant growth. Chemical fertilisers and pesticides are not recommended. Observation and good soil fertility are the best defences against pests and diseases.

#2 Ensure regular attendance

The garden survives only through the dedicated efforts of its participants. Remember: many hands make light work.

#3 Carry out regular garden maintenance

Keep the garden weeded and trimmed. Paths should be kept level and clear to allow visitor to access. A well-tended area where vandalism is immediately reported has been observed to be a big deterrent to further destruction.

#4 Care for common tools

Treat the shared tools and equipment with care. Clean the dirt off tools and wind hoses before storing them. Keep sheds and storage boxes locked except when removing or replacing tools, and never leave personal valuables unattended. Double-check before you leave the site to ensure that all tools have been locked away.

#5 Do not smoke in or around the garden

The garden is a place where staff and volunteers can enjoy nature and be committed to a healthy way of living. Keep the air fresh for fellow gardeners.

#6 Have a zero-tolerance policy for inappropriate behaviour

The garden is a place where everyone should act in a respectful manner. Disrespectful and abusive language, destruction or any behaviour deemed inappropriate will not be tolerated within the garden grounds.

Growing An Inclusive Community

Make your garden elderly friendly:

- Incorporate raised beds where possible.
- Pathways should be made wide enough for wheelchairs to pass.
- Plots should be made narrow enough to reach the centre without straining.



Waist-high raised beds enable the elderly and physically disabled to plant without having to bend over.

Include staff and volunteers from different races and cultures:

• Assign shared lots to people of different cultures and races. This will encourage them to share their skills and knowledge on gardening, cooking, nutrition and health. This will also allow them to learn about different traditions and practices.



The Geylang East Home for the Aged conducts weekly herb appreciation classes for its elderly residents to share on the nutritional and health benefits of different types of medicinal plants and herbs.

Learning opportunities for youths:

• Community gardens provide youth with a place to explore and get close to nature. Residents can bring their children to the gardens during opening hours, as well as open the area for tours to students from neighbouring schools.

FEATURE GARDEN 1 Al-Istigamah Mosque

Location: 2 Serangoon North Avenue 2 Theme: Garden-based learning; container gardening

Curious onlookers and residents would observe Mr Sharif gardening in the mosque and approach him for gardening tips and advice. As a result, he started giving short workshops on gardening to encourage nearby residents to grow plants along their corridors and balconies. He also conducts weekly workshops for students and monthly workshops for both the public and the women's wing of the mosque. By welcoming visitors to view the garden at the mosque, he also promotes inter-religious understanding.

He teaches a variety of basic gardening skills such as the types of soil, how to set up the pots and how to fertilise. He also teaches slightly more difficult topics such as selecting the right type of plants based on different growing conditions. Every month, he organises breakfast potluck in the garden to encourage the community to come together.Mr Sharif's generousity in sharing gardening knowledge and active engagement with the community through educational outreach activities has helped to spread the *gotong royong* spirit.

A hard and fast rule that Mr. Sharif enforces in his garden is for members to first inform him on what they would like to plant before they begin. He will then tell them where to plant it. His meticulous planning and leadership are crucial in ensuring that the garden concept is carried through and ensures an unblocked view of the whole garden.

For balcony gardens, Mr. Sharif visits the nearby homes personally to advise on which species to plant according to the amount of sunlight in each home. He also gives advice on fertilisation and plant-specific tips.



The garden grounds are maintained by both volunteers and students.



Container gardening is the practice of growing plants exclusively in containers instead of planting them in the ground. The flexibility in design is the main reason why this method is popular with gardeners.

Tips From The Gardeners

- Avoid planting big trees with invasive root systems as this may be destructive to surface features such as concrete pavements.
- Where possible, request for a power supply inside your garden to enable your participants to use wired electrical tools.
- Plant selection requires careful consideration; choosing plants based on site conditions will ensure a bountiful harvest and bloom.
- Always keep fish in your ponds to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.



The garden provides the young with a place for hands-on learning experience.

The design process is important for setting up a garden... they can range from simple to complex design themes...themes can be as simple as a mix of colours or plants with a distinct character. Garden Leader – Mr Sharif Ahmad Jusof

FEATURE GARDEN 2

Nicheren Shoshu Buddhist Association (Singapore)

Location: 177 Sims Avenue Theme: Serenity garden

This community garden was once a piece of vacant land filled with grass. The Association and its volunteers took it upon themselves to raise funds through donations and contributions to transform it into a neat and beautiful Japanese-inspired theme garden.

In traditional Japanese gardens, nature and art are brought together in a simple fashion that promotes peacefulness and relaxation. The garden theme, design and selection of plants were undertaken by the Association's Chief Priest, Reverend Shindo Nomura, who drew his inspiration from the gardens in the head temple Taisekiji, in Fujinomiya, a city in Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan.

When deciding on the theme, Reverend Nomura shared that his key consideration was for the garden to reflect the serenity and calmness that Buddhism promotes. The garden is an oasis for all to relax in, granting them a peaceful retreat where they can take some time to simply breathe and enjoy life.

The garden is maintained by a group of volunteers who trim and weed the garden on a regular basis. New volunteers are mentored by senior gardeners who teach them how to care for the plants.

The Association's gardening committee also chose to retain the open concept instead of erecting a fence to allow volunteers and the public to visit the garden at any time. They believe that this decision has translated into a community effort to deter vandalism and theft, as there are always people in the garden.



The design of the garden symbolises one's life journey with the stepping stones representing the steps we take in life.



The Shikimi plants (in black pots) that line the garden were specially imported from Japan.

Tips From The Gardeners

- For gardens with a single water source, place it in the middle of the garden to facilitate watering.
- Japanese theme gardens generally have a Zen minimalist influence. Therefore, you might not want to have the ground entirely occupied with plants but rather, have some spaces uncovered.
- Choose simple, natural paving materials for a Japanese theme garden such as gravel, natural stone and exposed-aggregate concrete.
- Create a welcoming entrance to the garden with arbours or potted bonsai trees.



Reverend Shindo Nomura demonstrating the act of raking the gravel into a pattern of rippling water.



Since the early days of Buddhism in Japan, the Shikimi plant is considered a sacred plant. Its leaves are dried and crushed into powder form to be used as incense powder.

Design is a manifestation of our values and beliefs, we want to use the garden to promote the Association by providing a peaceful retreat for the community.

Garden Leader – Reverend Shindo Nomura

FEATURE GARDEN 3

Yokogawa Engineering Asia Pte Ltd

Location: 5 Bedok South Road Theme: A mixture of six garden themes

Yokogawa Gardening Club (YGC) was formed in 2007. The Club comprises staff from different departments in the organisation who meet regularly to maintain the garden plots within the organisation's compound.

Back then, their rooftop garden was one of the first few located in an industrial building. The greenery changed the culture for the staff and management and led to the expansion of various themed gardens around the company in the following years. The beautiful rooftop garden at its Bedok office has flourished over the years and is still the ideal venue to host visitors and interact with customers. It even has its own Cactus Paradise – a rock garden with giant cactus.

Under the watchful eye of the Yokogawa Gardening Club members, the six themed gardens are blossoming. For example, the Staff Garden – an award winning NParks' Community in Bloom garden has flourished with vegetables, fruit trees, herbs, spices, shrubs and ornamental plants. It was designed with the aim of building bonds among employees. There is also a Garden of Joy at the main entrance – a warm greeting to all employees and visitors.

Other themed gardens surrounding this vast compound such as the beautifully sculpted Japanese Garden were designed for tranquility and aesthetic pleasure.

In addition to the numerous awards, the Club also participated in various events such as The Singapore Garden Festival 2008, 2010 and 2012, GardenTech 2009, World Orchid Show 2011 and other gardening events.



YGC won the Interactive Display Award at the 2012 Gardeners' Cup.



Employees celebrating a staff function at the rooftop garden of the Bedok office.



A rooftop garden acts as a natural insulation by reflecting light and heat resulting in lower Urban Heat Island Effect.

Tips From The Gardeners

- Choose plants that have the ability to withstand harsh conditions to cut down on maintenance.
- Plan for watering schedules or hire a contract gardener to help with the watering during weekends.
- Include a focal point in your garden design it will act as a place for visitors and staff to gather and socialise.
- Accessibility and roof safety should be important considerations when designing your rooftop garden.



YGC members planting at the Staff Garden (left) which was designed to foster bonding among Yokogawa's employees.



Garden of Joy – A beautiful landscape garden at the entrance gate greets employees and visitors as they enter the premises.

The gardening activities provide another form of recreational activity in the workplace and help foster a sense of belonging among employees.

Garden Leader – Mr Albert Quek