



## **The St. Benedict Project**

# **How to Start a Faith-Based Community Garden**

**It takes a strong commitment from at least six to eight passionate members to create and manage a successful Church garden.**

**The keys to a successful church community garden?**

- 1. Prayer first.**
- 2. Select a motivated, passionate and organized garden coordinator who has the skill set to put into place a simple transparent system for management of six to eight core garden members. All core members should be passionate and motivated!**
- 3. Basic needs—Community gardens have these basic needs: Land and safe soil, tools. seeds, water, And, mainly a passionate group of people!**



## **Tips for starting a Faith-Based Community Garden?**

- 1. Begin by identifying who in your Parish is interested in gardening, as well as the community that your Parish resides in. There is strength in Unity.**
- 2. Form a planning committee and make preliminary decisions. Include those who will be gardening and as well as leaders within the church community to an organizational meeting. Develop a well-organized leadership core of six to eight people grouped into with committees assigned to specific tasks--recruitment, garden construction, special events, fundraising, master gardeners, etc.**

**With this new leadership team, develop a Mission Statement that clarify the mission and goals of your church garden. For example-**

**“Our Goal: To help unify our local community since food is our neighborhood commonality. We will accomplish this by improving our local food sources**

## **Tips continued...**

**and by empowering people to feed themselves with self-grown, nutritious and affordable food.”**

- 3. Elect a Garden Coordinator! It is essential that this person is organized, motivated and most important—passionate about helping to start a community garden within the church.**
  
- 4. Prayer before all activities will help make miraculous things happen, and expect things to happen “God’s time”.**
- 5. Decide on the scope of garden including the size and the components of the garden--fruit trees, berries, what types of vegetables to grow, a shared community plot for large crops, etc.  
Decide on what type of garden maintenance you will need on an ongoing basis--weeds, irrigation, tools, and compost piles. Demonstrate good stewardship as well—agree to limit the use of pesticides and fertilizers!**
- 6. Create a prioritized budget and a wish list of desired donations, and brainstorm ideas for fundraisers. membership dues, fund raising, grants, sponsors and donors are all good sources to meet your funding needs. Also, seek out donations of labor, soil amendements, tools, seeds, plants, fencing, and supplies from your congregation’s members. It’s amazing what people have on hand that they are not using and would be happy to donate like benches, statues and plants! Allow various families or church groups to purchase an item for the**

## **Tips continued...**

**7. Prayer garden such as a bench or garden and then maybe engrave their name on it.**

**9. Choose a site on Church Grounds that has access to Clean water, healthy soil, six hours of sunlight per day, and a location in which gardeners feel safe. There should be easily accessible, clean, and affordable irrigation water available. Rain barrels and ponds are potential sources as well. Do a soil test to identify the existing nutrient level and ensure the absence of heavy metals.**

**11. Build a shed through the help of your construction committee or receive one as a donation. Sheds are relatively small and “building leftovers” laying around from parishioners finished projects are a good donation source!**

**12. Decide how often the gardeners will be expected to participate in group workdays. Schedule group projects, workdays, and garden pot lucks. social events enhance the success of the garden. Garden prayers services are an essential component for a successful garden. The good Lord does better work that we do—keep the faith!**

**13. Keep governance simple and responsive. In the beginning (and even later for small gardens), an informal structure may be all you need. As the number of people and the workload expands, a more formal structure may enable each gardener to participate fully and the group to perform effectively.**

**14. Adding new members--Some potential recruiting strategies include advertising in the church bulletin and**

## **Tips continued...**

**posting flyers, press releases to local media, and also connecting with area residents who can help spread the news.**

**15. Managing the “allotment section” of the garden-- Have a “Memorandum of Understanding” signed by each gardener that receives their own plot of land. This is important as it clearly identifies all of the requirements, timelines, and guidelines for the Garden. Clarity and “ease of garden management” go hand in hand.**

**16. Garden Growth--Create a garden plan with plot size(s) and location. Reserve space in the plan for all of the components you hope to eventually add in the garden, even if you do not currently have the resources to install them. Consider including storage sheds, compost bins, picnic tables and gathering space, a rainproof bulletin board/communication board, a children’s plot, ornamental prayers gardens, irrigation system, etc.**

**17. Plan Church community workdays to complete large projects, such as the actual construction of the garden, irrigation system, or even a shed. Enlist the additional groups from the church, such as youth groups, boy scouts, social ministry, ladies guilds, etc.**

**18. Install a “communication board” for ease of communication, that’s in “real time”. List contact information, the garden’s mission statement, etc on a cork bulletin board. Post educational information, meeting notices as well. Use a dry erase board to list tasks to be performed or to communicate tasks that have been performed by garden members.**

**19. Last tip--Have fun! Remember, a church community garden is a great “unity project” as well as a project that provides your church community with an abundance of healthy and affordable fresh food.**

**Food is our neighborhood commonality...**

# Celebrating God's Creation



**Start a faith-based garden today,  
And help unify your community!!**

**“It is in this divided world that the church is sent forth today to promote harmony and peace. In charity and truth she goes forth: in that charity which sees every person as a child of God, as a brother or sister of equal dignity- regardless of his or her social status, regardless of his or her race or religion” Pope John Paul II**



**Homily, February 6, 1986**