

## Workplace Gardens

Workplace gardens create many benefits for workplaces and their employees. A workplace garden is a common meeting place where employees can socialize while working together to grow herbs, vegetables, and fruit. A workplace garden can provide an environmentally friendly source of healthy local produce for your employees, your food service operations, and can even be donated to members of the community who experience food insecurity.

Gardeners often report eating more vegetables and fruit compared to non-gardeners.<sup>1</sup> Working in a garden has also been shown to decrease stress levels in individuals and also provides employees with an opportunity to be physically active at work.<sup>1,2</sup> Additionally, employees learn food skills related to growing produce.

## Definitions of Success

- ✓ Staff participate in workplace gardening
- ✓ Education is provided to employees regarding safe and sustainable gardening methods
- ✓ Employees express enjoyment in their workplace gardening experience
- ✓ Employees were able to consume (or donate) vegetables and fruit from the workplace garden



## 1.0 Needs Assessment

Ensure that employees are interested in creating a workplace garden by determining if there is interest. If so, get a group of gardening enthusiasts together and promote the garden concept and recruit volunteers.

## 2.0 Evaluation Indicators

After the first year, use participant feedback to start planning for the following year. Ask participants about their workplace garden experiences including: what worked, what needs improvement, budget concerns etc. Keep track of what was produced and how it was used.

## 3.0 Implementing a Workplace Garden

### Planning Process

- Winter is a good time to begin planning the garden
- If you do not have a gardening expert at your workplace, consider hiring someone from the community that can get your garden started
- Form a planning group and create a garden plan. A committee should be in place to organize the garden and to conduct meetings. Decide on the best way to communicate with one another
- Make a list of what your ideal garden will look like, who it will involve and what you will need to get started. The plan should include: budget, location of the garden, equipment and storage needs



### Tools: LOCAL INFORMATION ON STARTING A GARDEN

#### Community Garden Council meetings:

<http://www.together4health.ca/workgroups/community-gardens/upcoming-events>

#### Community Gardens of Waterloo Region website:

<http://www.together4health.ca/workgroups/waterloo-region-community-garden-council>

#### The Organic Backyard: A guide to applying organic farming practices to your home or community garden

[http://www.cogwaterloo.ca/documents/Organic%20Backyard\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.cogwaterloo.ca/documents/Organic%20Backyard_WEB.pdf)

#### Vegetable garden tips:

<http://www.together4health.ca/workgroups/community-gardens-waterloo-region/planting-and-caring-basic-vegetable-garden>

## Staff

- Staff time may be required to plan, develop and implement aspects of the workplace garden
- Remind staff working in the garden to use sun protection gear such as sunscreen and hats

## Facilities, Legal and Health and Safety Stakeholders

- Check to make sure your workplace insurance policy covers the land use for gardening
- Pick a garden site. Ensure the garden site has full or partial sun for 4-8 hours per day. Make sure road salt from snow removal will not contaminate the site. The space should be accessible for individuals of all abilities
- Determine if your proposed site is appropriate for a garden. Check the site for indications of illegal dumping or burning of garbage. Turn the soil and check for dark patches or odours (e.g., from chemicals or gasoline). Contact your municipality for information on the site history. Soil testing should be considered for sites that have a questionable history or that are next to a busy highway, rail corridor or gas station. Soil testing can be done through the University of Guelph. In some cases, container gardening, raised bed gardening or rooftop gardening may be more appropriate. The City of Toronto has created a resource to help make decisions about urban gardening based on land use history:  
[http://www.toronto.ca/health/hphe/pdf/urban\\_gardening\\_assessment.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/health/hphe/pdf/urban_gardening_assessment.pdf)
- Call before you dig! Check with representatives from hydro, phone, cable, gas, water and sewer to avoid cutting into lines
- Find a water source, water barrels are an eco-friendly way to provide water for your garden
- If possible, provide a nearby source of shade
- Gates and fencing, such as: wood, plastic, chain link, post and wire, or snow fence may be required
- 4x4 and 6x6 timbers or other material for constructing raised beds or containers for container gardening may be required
- Consider adding a composter for lawn cuttings, leaves and some kitchen leftovers to the workplace garden



## Materials

Once the site has been determined and a water source secured, you will need to obtain:

- Seeds, seedlings, bulbs, bedding plants, or cover crop seeds
- Topsoil, compost, manure, mulching materials such as shredded leaves, hay, shredded bark, wood chips
- Garden hose, spray nozzles, hose reel, rain barrel or water tank, watering cans
- Insecticidal soaps and hand-held sprayers. Involve the Health and Safety committee (e.g., for MSDS sheets)
- A wheelbarrow and garden cart, tool and storage shed, locks, benches and picnic tables
- Compost bins or materials to build your own composter

## Sustainability

- Book garden work days to dig the garden, lay out the plots and walk paths and prepare the soil
- Keep a schedule of tasks that need to be performed. Divide the work evenly. Involve gardeners in tasks like planting flowers around the garden site, clean up and harvest



### **Success Stories: ADDITIONAL WORKPLACE GARDEN EXAMPLES:**

#### **Workplace Gardens**

<http://www.farmandafryingpan.com/2010/07/workplace-gardens>

#### **Gardens at Work: 2010 Report**

<http://www.employergardens.com/haberman-garden/gardens-work-2010-report>

#### **Employee Gardens! (Great for keeping the workplace healthy and happy!)**

<http://jaticus.com/?p=37>

#### **Out of the Office**

<http://www.organicgardening.com/living/out-office>

#### **Grow in Your Job. 4 tips to help you start at community garden at work**

<http://www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/grow-your-job>

#### **Vegetable Patches at Work are a Nice Perk**

<http://www.treehugger.com/files/2010/07/more-companies-providing-vegetable-patches.php>

## Workplace Garden References

1. McCormack LA, Laska MN, Larson NI, Story M. Review of the nutritional implications of farmers' markets and community gardens: A call for evaluation and research efforts. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2010;110:399-408. doi:10.1016/j.jada.2009.11.023.

2. Van Den Berg AE, Custers MHG. Gardening promotes neuroendocrine and affective restoration from stress. *Journal of Health Psychology.* 2011;16:3-11.

