Starting a Community Garden in Putnam County

University of Florida, IFAS
Putnam County Extension Office
Putnam County Master Gardeners
Joe Sowards – UF, IFAS Multi-county Horticulture Agent
What is a Community Garden?

- A community garden is a piece of land gardened by a group of people.
- A community garden is a shared space in a neighborhood where residents who live in apartments or houses without suitable yards can have a place to grow vegetables.
- A greenspace in which participants share in both maintenance and rewards.
What is a Community Garden?

- A community garden is a piece of land gardened by a group of people.
- A community garden is a shared space in a neighborhood where residents who live in apartments or houses without suitable yards can have a place to grow vegetables.
- A greenspace in which participants share in both maintenance and rewards.
Why Get Involved?

- Increase self-esteem
- Create beauty
- Provide positive work experiences for at-risk youth
- Grow fresh produce
- Improve nutrition and fitness
- Share the wonders of gardening
More Reasons:

- Promote healthier communities
- Be neighborly
- Reduce stress
- Reduce crime
- Have fun
Who Gets Involved?

- HOA, Block groups
- Churches
- Schools
- Social agencies
- Health care facilities
- Correctional institutions
- Corporations
- Gardening clubs
Is there interest?

- Will it be a neighborhood garden?
- Will it be open to the general public?
- Do you have enough land?
- Is there a source of water?
- Is it a secure location?
If so – organize a meeting

- Get all interested people together
- Choose a leadership team
- Plan what needs to be done and in what order
- Get a mailing address and phone number
- Organize teams to get certain things done
Where will money come from?

- Typical expenses
  - Water hookup
  - Fence
  - Tools
  - Locks
  - Irrigation lines
  - Tiller / other equipment

- You will (probably) need
  - A bank account
  - A mailing address
  - Storage shed
YOU NEED TO CHARGE!!!!

- Tools break and disappear
- Locks will need to be replaced
- Tool / equipment rental
- Scholarships
- Hauling expenses (manure, trash etc.)
- Water bill?
- Other miscellaneous expenses
Perhaps a sponsor

Thanks to our Generous Sponsors!

- Local garden stores
- National retailers
- Granting agencies
- Local or county government???
- Private benefactor
Organize!!!!

- Set up new Organization (501-c-3?)
- Choose a Site
- Prepare and develop the Site
- Organize the garden
- Insurance
- Manage the garden
The site

- At least 6 hours of full sun in all areas of the garden
- SOIL TEST!!!!!!!
  - Nutrients and heavy metals
  - Talk to your County Extension Horticulture Agent
- Availability of water!
Site preparation

- Mowing?
- Spray existing vegetation with Roundup
- Plowing / rototilling
- Design the garden – how big will the plots be?
- How many?
- Space for a shed?
- 4 ft. rows (at least)
- Space for compost / organic matter etc.
Where soil is less-than-ideal

- Construct a raised bed garden
- Learn about garden soil (municipal compost is usually free)
- Learn alternative growing systems
  - Vertical gardens
  - Floating hydroponics

Orange County
Alternative Growing Systems

Floating Hydroponics
Alternative Growing Systems

- Vertical hydroponics
- Hanging gardens
- Trellis for vining crops
- Square foot gardens
Other ways to “skin the cat”

- More than one way to build a raised bed garden
- Learn about what to grow and when to grow it ("Florida Vegetable Garden Guide")
Handicap access???

- Raised beds
- “Square foot gardening”
- Wheel chair access???
  - Pathway material
  - Designated gardens
- Consider kids too
A Sustainable Garden

- Learn irrigation techniques to conserve water
- Low-volume irrigation is exempt from water restrictions
- Recycle plant waste to make compost (sustainable practice)
Maintaining Sustainability

- Develop an on-going education program
- Grow in pride and knowledge
- Eat the best tasting vegetables --- YOUR OWN

Winter Garden Community Garden
120 Raised Beds – 1.5 Acres
Orange County
Organic vs. Traditional

- Less liability with organic
- Plants don’t care!
- Organic matter can build better soils
- Mechanical weed control only
- Insects and diseases can be controlled with oils, soaps and bio-rationals
Organization is the key!

- Don’t rush it!
- Get your ducks in a row
- Why?
- Who?
- Where?
- How?
- What?
- When?
Many local municipalities support Community Gardens.

Successful Community Gardens don’t just happen (get out of the “build it and they will come”)

Assistance is available from many resources (American Community Garden Association)
Resources

- American Community Garden Association

- UF, IFAS Putnam County Extension
  111 Yelvington Rd. East Palatka, Fl. 32131
  386-329-0318
  [http://putnam.ifas.ufl.edu](http://putnam.ifas.ufl.edu)

- OR – your local UF, IFAS County Extension Office
  - [solutionsforyourlife.org](http://solutionsforyourlife.org)

- UF, IFAS EDIS
  - [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu)