There are many ways to start a community garden. Whether you’re working with friends, neighbors, a school, or a local organization, there are many things you’ll want to consider. The American Community Garden Association’s website has great resources that can help. You’ll find checklists and in-depth information on each of the following steps at: www.communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php

1. **Gather Neighbors & Community Members**
   What kind of garden? Choose a well-organized coordinator. Form committees to accomplish tasks. Consider a sponsor. Choose a name. Decide on a budget and administration.

2. **Find a Garden Site**
   Identify the owner. Do you need a lease agreement? Do you need insurance? Site should be relatively flat and get at least 6 full hours of sun each day. Consider availability of water. Do a soil test for contaminants and fertility.

3. **Create & Build Your Garden**
   Clean the site. Develop your design. Gather your resources. Organize work crews. How large should plots be? How will plots be laid out? Mark plots with names. Plan for a storage and compost area. Will the garden be organic?

4. **Create the Gardening Community**
   Are there conditions for membership? Will there be dues? How will plots be assigned? Will some things be done cooperatively (e.g., composting)? If someone leaves, who will get their plot? How will you deal with vandalism? Will there be a children’s plot? Will there be regular meetings? Will gardeners share tools? Will there be written rules, and how will they be enforced?

5. **Insurance**
   Try working with an agent who deals with many different carriers (so you can get the best policy for your needs); is local and has already done this type of policy or one that works with social service agencies in the area. continued...

A community garden is an area used for growing plants or animals, which has been collaboratively created and is maintained by members of the public. A community garden can take place on public or private land and can involve a broad cross-section of the public, as in a neighborhood community garden. Or it can involve specific sectors of the population, such as school garden that involves students, teachers, parents, and other community members who support the garden for education. In the curriculum, the term community garden is generally used as a broad, catch-all term. Sometimes, more descriptive names are used, such as school garden or neighborhood garden.

~ Growing Communities Curriculum
The American Community Gardening Association, 1 (877) 275-2242
www.communitygarden.org

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**BENEFITS OF A COMMUNITY GARDEN...**
- Gardening gets your body moving, improving your fitness and reducing your risk of disease.
- Gardens provide individuals and families access to fresh, nutritious food.
- Community gardens can increase property values in low-income neighborhoods.
- Gardens get people outdoors where they can talk, get to know their neighbors, and keep track of what is going on in the neighborhood.
- Gardening is a mentally stimulating activity that may reduce depression.
- Gardens inspire other changes in a neighborhood, increasing community pride.
- Community gardens add beauty and heighten awareness and appreciation for living things.
- Gardens bring people back into contact with nature and the outdoors.

Physical Activity & Nutrition Program
1101 West College Ave., Spokane, WA 99201-2095
509.324.1555 | TDD 324.1464
6. Managing the Garden
What is your purpose? What are your short and long-term objectives? How are decisions to be made? Who chooses leaders and how? How will work be shared? Who does what? How will you raise money? Membership dues, fund raising, grants, sponsors? Are you open to change? Do you want to be incorporated, act as a club, or create a non-profit? Do you want formal bylaws? Go online to see sample guidelines and rules, as well as application forms, and more.

7. Troubleshooting to reduce vandalism:
- Make a sign for the garden; let people know who the garden belongs to.
- Consider different types of fences.
- Create a shady meeting area in the garden and spend time there.
- Invite everyone in the neighborhood to participate from the very beginning. Persons excluded from the garden are potential vandals.
- Involve the neighborhood children in learning gardens.
- Plant raspberries, roses or other thorny plants along the fence as a barrier.
- Make friends with neighbors whose windows overlook the garden. Trade them flowers and vegetables for a protective eye.
- Harvest all ripe fruit and vegetables on a daily basis. Red tomatoes falling from the vines invite trouble.
- Plant potatoes, other root crops or a less popular vegetable such as kohlrabi along the side walk or fence.
- Plant the purple varieties of cauliflower and beans or the white eggplant to confuse a vandal.
- Plant a “vandal’s garden” at the entrance. Mark it with a sign: “If you must take food, please take it from here.”

8. Funding:
Funding can come from many sources limited only by the creativity of those developing the garden. Local businesses, churches, community organizations and neighborhood councils close to the garden might help out with in-kind services, labor or money. Some large companies have charitable foundations that make grants for gardens especially if you are connected to a 501(c)3 organization. Check out the Foundation Center’s Foundation Directory at http://fconline.fdncenter.org/.