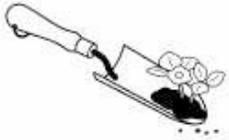




Ten Tools Every Community Gardener & Garden Needs

Courtesy of Toronto FoodShare

Gardeners may not agree on the best mulch or the perfect fertilizer, but there's one thing that every gardener agrees on: when it comes time to purchase tools, buy the best. Quality garden tools are an investment that yield dividends over time. Here are the top 10 gardening tools every community garden should own.



1. Trowel A well-made trowel is your most important tool. From container gardening to large beds, a trowel will help you get your plants into the soil. Essential for everyone.



2. Hand Fork or Claw or Cultivator A hand fork helps cultivate soil, chop up clumps, and work amendments into the soil. A hand fork is necessary for cultivating in closely planted beds.



3. Hoe A long-handled hoe is a gardener's best friend. Keeping weeds at bay is the purpose of this useful tool. Hoe heads come in all different shapes and sizes and every gardener swears by a different one.



4. Secateurs (aka Hand pruners) Invest in a pair of quality pruners, such as Felco, which is clearly a cut above. There are different types and sizes depending upon the type and size of the job. Secateurs are for cutting small diameters, up to the thickness of your little finger ;-). Anything larger and you need loppers.

5. Watering can A watering can creates a fine even stream of water that delivers with a gentleness that won't wash seedlings or sprouting seeds out of their soil.



6. Fork You can't dig and divide perennials without a heavy-duty fork (and some dividing methods even suggest you own two!).



7. Shovels & Spades

There are several different types and shapes of shovels and spades, each with their own purpose. There are also different types of hand holds for either—a “D” shape, a “T” shape, or none at all. They are a requisite tool for planting large perennials, shrubs, and trees, breaking ground, moving soil, leaves, just about anything. The sharper the blade, the better.



8. Wheelbarrow Wheelbarrows come in all different sizes (and prices). They are indispensable for hauling soil, compost, plants, mulch, hoses, tools...everything you'll need to garden.



9. Gloves Unless you want to wear your favorite hobby under your nails, use gloves. Leather gloves hold up best. If you have roses, get a pair that resist thorn pricks.



10. Hose. This is the fastest way to transport lots of water. Consider using drip irrigation hoses or tape.





10 STEPS TO STARTING A COMMUNITY GARDEN*

The following steps are adapted from the American Community Garden Association's guidelines for launching a successful community garden in your neighborhood.

1. ORGANIZE A MEETING OF INTERESTED PEOPLE

Determine whether a garden is really needed and wanted, what kind it should be (vegetable, flower, both, organic?), whom it will involve and who benefits. Invite neighbors, tenants, community organizations, gardening and horticultural societies, building superintendents (if it is at an apartment building)—in other words, anyone who is likely to be interested.

2. FORM A PLANNING COMMITTEE

This group can be comprised of people who feel committed to the creation of the garden and have the time to devote to it, at least at this initial stage. Choose well-organized persons as garden coordinators. Form committees to tackle specific tasks: funding and partnerships, youth activities, construction and communication.

3. IDENTIFY ALL YOUR RESOURCES

Do a community asset assessment. What skills and resources already exist in the community that can aid in the garden's creation? Contact local municipal planners about possible sites, as well as horticultural societies and other local sources of information and assistance. Look within your community for people with experience in landscaping and gardening. In Toronto contact the Toronto Community Garden Network.

4. APPROACH A SPONSOR

Some gardens "self-support" through membership dues, but for many, a sponsor is essential for donations of tools, seeds or money. Churches, schools, private businesses or parks and recreation departments are all possible supporters. One garden raised money by selling "square inches" at \$5 each to hundreds of sponsors.

5. CHOOSE A SITE

Consider the amount of daily sunshine (vegetables need at least six hours a day), availability of water, and soil testing for possible pollutants. Find out who owns the land. Can the gardeners get a lease agreement for at least three years? Will public liability insurance be necessary?

6. PREPARE AND DEVELOP THE SITE

In most cases, the land will need considerable preparation for planting. Organize volunteer work crews to clean it, gather materials and decide on the design and plot arrangement.

7. ORGANIZE THE GARDEN

Members must decide how many plots are available and how they will be assigned. Allow space for storing tools, making compost and don't forget the pathways between plots! Plant flowers or shrubs around the garden's edges to promote good will with non-gardening neighbors, passersby and municipal authorities.

8. PLAN FOR CHILDREN

Consider creating a special garden just for kids—including them is essential. Children are not as interested in the size of the harvest but rather in the process of gardening. A separate area set aside for them allows them to explore the garden at their own speed.

9. DETERMINE RULES AND PUT THEM IN WRITING

The gardeners themselves devise the best ground rules. We are more willing to comply with rules that we have had a hand in creating. Ground rules help gardeners to know what is expected of them. Think of it as a code of behavior. Some examples of issues that are best dealt with by agreed upon rules are: dues, how will the money be used? . How are plots assigned? Will gardeners share tools, meet regularly, handle basic maintenance?

10. HELP MEMBERS KEEP IN TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER

Good communication ensures a strong community garden with active participation by all. Some ways to do this are: form a telephone tree, create an email list; install a rainproof bulletin board in the garden; have regular celebrations. Community gardens are all about creating and strengthening communities.

* the most common advice sought from ACGA, also visit <http://www.communitygarden.org/starting.php>

