



Garden Leader Handbook

This Handbook is meant to guide community gardeners as they start and carry out a garden in Jackson County. Use the resources provided to help you with your projects. Please note: The resources listed in this handbook were compiled in 2011. We recognize that new resources may emerge and listed resources may disappear and cannot guarantee accuracy. We advise calling to confirm the resources.

The handbook is structured to take you through the steps of community gardening season by season. Use it as a guide for new ideas and resources. But remember, the best way to learn about community gardening is to get your hands dirty and be a part of one yourself.

Enjoy the Experience!

-The Jackson Community Garden Team

Jackson Community Gardens
Garden Leader Handbook

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Winter

Why start a Community Garden?

- Produces Healthy and Fresh Food
- Increases Community Stewardship
- Prevents Crime
- Supports Youth Development
- Improves Health
- Creates Green Space
- Gives Opportunity for Entrepreneurialism



Planning

Things to Think About

- Where will your garden be located?
- Who will be part of your garden?
- Can you get water at the site?
- Will it be one large garden? Will you have individual plots?
- Is a budget necessary? How will you acquire funds?
- Will you plant vegetables? Or only plants not intended to be eaten?
- What areas will you include in your garden?
(Possible ideas: tool shed and storage area, compost piles, or a community area)
- Will you meet as a group regularly?
- Do you have a name for your garden?

Community Organizing

- Take time to listen to the neighborhood: find out what matters to people.
- Remember that everyone learns and communicates in different ways.
- People must be able to see that they are having an effect. Meaningful participation will happen when there are well organized systems in place.
- Organizers should challenge everyone in their garden to tackle a new opportunity. Challenging is not pushing. It is possible that someone only needs the confidence that somebody believes in them, and that will inspire them to try something new.
- No one can actually empower another, leaders can provide support, but a person must determine for themselves that they can make meaningful contributions.
- Diversity brings strength to any team of individuals. Groups that include people of different ages, ethnicity, socio-economic status, skills, and backgrounds will bring new opportunities and approaches to your group.
- Education is key; learning opportunities give people the two most important aspects of a community garden: skills and the belief that they can accomplish the project.

Encouraging Membership

Be sure to get the word out!

Advertise in common public places

Tell family and friends

Word of mouth is the best way to encourage people to get involved

It is important to approach people with the realities of gardening. There is no instant gratification: time and patience are key to a good experience. Members should realize that dedication and responsibility are components to a successful garden.

Spring

To start a garden: two of the most important parts are the people and the location.



How to get Started

- Form a committed group of at least 3-5 people who will take active roles in the garden
- Pick a location. Consider the size, sun exposure, and water accessibility of the site. Having access to private land is ideal, but if you wish to use a city lot, contact the Community and Development department at City Hall. They have a program in place that can help you acquire the necessary land.
- Attend a Garden Committee Meeting. These meetings take place every second Monday of the month at 224 W. Wilkins, Make a Difference House at 10am. Attending a meeting can help answer your questions and give you valuable contacts.

Establishing the Garden

Yard Waste:

In the process of preparing your garden, you may be removing a lot of excess brush. If this is the case, Liberty Landfill accepts *level* pick-up loads of brush, leaves, and grass-clippings for \$5. However, if you decide to do your own composting, yard waste materials are very helpful.

Liberty Landfill
7900 South Meridian
Clark Lake, Michigan 49234
\$5 *level* pick-up load



Soil Testing

It is a good idea to test your soil to confirm it is safe to grow produce in. A soil test kit costs \$20 and are available from MSU Extension. The price includes the kit as well as the mailing supplies and postage. An email address is needed to receive the results of the test. If you do not have access to an email address, call the MSU Extension office and they can help provide access to the results.

The Soil Test can be purchased online at the MSU Extension bookstore:

<http://bookstore.msue.msu.edu/>

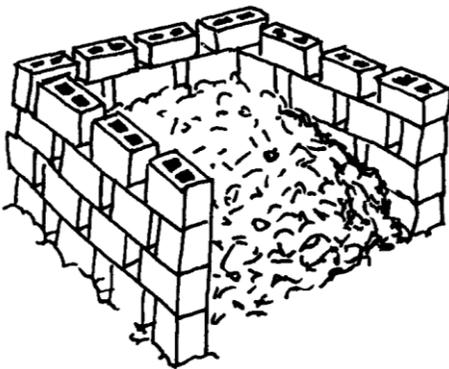
Or, you can visit the Extension office and purchase a kit:

MSU Extension office
1715 Lansing Avenue Suite 257
Jackson, Michigan: (517) 788-4292.



Compost

The city of Jackson offers free compost to community gardens within the city's limits and affiliated with a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. The compost is also available for purchase. If you have completed the process of obtaining land from the city for your garden, they will most likely give you compost as well; in any case, it is worth it to call. The city's compost program runs from mid-April through the end of June.



To obtain compost from the city, call Jackson's Department of Public Works at (517) 788-4170. You will need to provide paperwork outlining the use of the compost and your non-profit status. The city will deliver the compost to your site. If you wish to purchase compost, in 2011, the price was \$12 per cubic yard.

To calculate the amount of compost you need, multiply the length by the width of your garden. Next, determine the depth you want to spread your compost at. If it is on the ground, 1-3 inches is suitable, and it will obviously be more for raised beds. Your final calculation will be: length(ft) x width(ft) x depth(in) x .0031. This will give you the amount of cubic yards that your garden needs. Fill your raised beds with compost, or if you are planting from the ground, apply the compost and work it into the soil.

*If you are planting from the ground, you will need the ground to be tilled.
If you are planting vegetables, you should create raised beds.*

Rototilling

Rototilling can be a challenge to accomplish; however, it makes your garden much more manageable. As a reference, it takes around 40 minutes to till a 40' x 40' plot with a rear-tine tiller.



Taylor Rental Center
2415 Wildwood Ave
Jackson, MI
(517) 784-0574

Taylor Rental rents both front tine and rear tine rototillers for 2 hours, 4 hours, and a whole day. Rear tines are more expensive, but will get the job done better and be easier for you. Prices at Taylor range from \$30-\$80.

Raised Beds

There are many raised bed kits available on the internet, but they are typically costly. Two ways that you can create your own raised beds include using concrete and landscape timbers.

Concrete: Construct the concrete blocks to any shape you want. Place a piece of concrete reinforcing rod through every three or four block cavities and drive the rod into the soil. Then fill all the cavities with mortar, this will keep the concrete reinforced. When it is available, discounted concrete is available in Jackson from:

Consumers Concrete Corp.
Cash and carry service
Approx. 85 cents per block.
(517) 784-9108.

Willbee Transit Mix Company, Inc
Approx. 75 cents per block
(517) 782-9493



Landscape Timber: You can save time and money and design your beds using standard lumber dimensions. Construct the beds by overlapping the timbers and secure them by using 6 inch spiral nails. Many home improvement places will have landscape timbers including Menard's, Lowe's and The Home Depot. Waltons Saw Mill in Jackson also offers a raised garden bed promotion for community gardens.

Waltons Saw Mill
(517) 841-5241
2499 E Michigan Ave

4'x4', 18inch high Raised bed
+ 1 yard of soil: \$100.
Delivery of soil and installation: additional

Protecting against weeds

Woodchips: Woodchips are good to use on pathways, especially layered over cardboard to keep out weeds. They can also be used around plants.

Jackson County Road

Commission

517-788-4230
2400 N. Elm

No Charge
No Loading
No Delivery

Johnny's Tree Service

(517) 764-2444
1245 Falahee Rd.

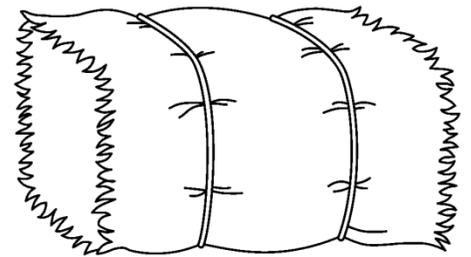
\$10 for a pick-up truck load
\$15 for a trailer
Call in advance for loading:
additional \$10

Daugherty Tree Service

517-783-2266
2609 West Morrell St

\$10 a yard
\$25 delivery fee (up to 5
yards at a time)
No charge for loading

Burlap Bags: Burlap bags are another good option for pathways to keep out weeds. The Jackson Coffee Company will typically donate their bags. Contact them at 517-990-6770.



Mulch: Mulch is one of the most preferred ways to protect your plants from the sun which will dry out your soil. Mulch also is also good for reducing weed build-up. When using mulch, it is best to use a natural type rather than one that uses dyes. Most any hardware store will carry mulch by the bag. For larger areas, it is more cost-effective to buy mulch by the cubic yard (approx. 1 pick-up load).

Mulch Wholesalers Inc.

517-784-5040
423 Barrett Avenue

Natural Mulch: \$19/yd

Straw: Straw can be used similarly to mulch for plant protection. A caution with straw mulch: there is a potential for weed seeds to be present in the straw. However, many gardeners have used straw as mulch successfully.

Howard's Feed Store

517-789-6081
206 W Louis Glick Hwy

\$3.99 a barrel

Resources in Jackson

Master Gardeners of Jackson

emlorenzi@aol.com

788-6485

Betty Lorenzi

The Master Gardener program offers education and resource assistance to community groups and not-for-profit organizations. They are able to collaborate on larger garden projects such as how to plan a garden. They meet monthly, and therefore should be contacted well before the date of your project.

Plant or Insect Problems

MSU Extension

1715 Lansing Avenue Suite 257

Jackson, Michigan

517-788-4292

Contact Extension to speak with a horticulturalist who can identify plant problems and diseases.

The Dahlem Center

7117 South Jackson Road

Jackson, MI 49201

517-782-3453

The Dahlem Center offers year round educational programs, workshops, and events about nature and ecology. They can be a good source of information and a positive resource for your group.

Summer

Gardening Guide

Use Seeds

Beans
Lettuce
Beets
Carrots
Spinach
Collard Greens
Radishes

Use Starts

Peppers
Tomatoes
Melons



Basic Tips

- Soil is one of the most important parts of successful gardening. Apply new compost every year and rotate crops around your garden to keep your soil healthy.
- Water the soil under the plants so that the water will reach the roots. It is best to water in the morning, and always soak the soil thoroughly when you water.
- Plants are priced by size. They are the cheapest bought in seed, and increase the later you buy them. However there are some plants that are best started from seed, and others that will be more successful if bought as a 'start'.
- It is a good idea to plant some flowers in your vegetable garden. They keep away destructive insects, while attracting pollinators. Fragrant marigolds and geraniums are both good for this use.
- In Jackson, the Growing Season is from May 10th to October 10th. Wait to plant until after May 10th, and have your garden harvested and ready for winter by October 10th.

Helpful Tools

1. Trowel
2. Hand fork/cultivator
3. Hoe
4. Secateurs/ hand pruners
5. Watering Can



6. Garden Fork
7. Shovel/spade
8. Wheelbarrow
9. Gloves
10. Hose

Work Parties

Work parties are a fun and effective way to bring your group together and improve your garden. If you can, schedule one once a week. At the least, organize a spring party to prepare the garden, one in the summer for upkeep, and another in the fall to winterize.

Recipe for a successful Work Party

- 2 cups of Clear Objectives
Identify specific tasks that need to be done and form a checklist.
- 4 generous spoonfuls of Communication
In order for people to be there, getting the word out is key. Use a post card, email notification, a phone call, or a combination.
- 1 large serving of Needed Materials
Be sure to have equipment and materials such as rakes, hoses, or wheelbarrows on hand for the work party.
- A dash of food and fun
Have someone bring food and beverage, it contributes to the focus on community and socializing.

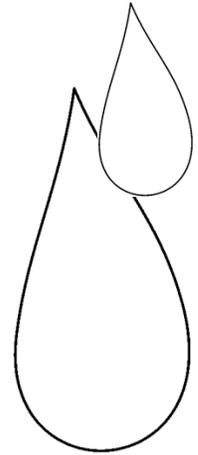
Communication



The key to a successful community garden is communication. You should have a primary form of communication established, but consider using several modes to keep people connected. A newsletter featuring a different gardener every month of the summer could give people incentive to be active members. A phone tree is a valuable resource for people with limited internet connections. It is important to know what works for each of your members. You will most likely need to use different forms of communication in combination. Communicate to your members about events, and pass along information to help them improve their plot.

Water Conservation

In today's world, water is becoming a very highly valued resource. A good water source is often a challenge at community gardens. You may have to start by hauling milk jugs of water from home. Consider a rain barrel system that you can place under a gutter system to store water. There may be neighbors in the area that would be willing to help provide a source of water as well.



Methods for conservation:

- Water in the morning or late afternoon. Water will evaporate the most quickly mid-day when it is the hottest.
- It is better to give your plants one good watering every week rather than 3-4 light waterings at the surface.
- Water slowly, and at the roots. Water that finds itself on the leaves will only evaporate. Certain plants do not like wet leaves, such as the tomato plant.
- Mulch bare soil. Mulch will prevent water evaporation.
- Include water collection devices, such as rain barrels in your garden
- Create unique irrigation systems, for instance: pop bottle irrigation.
- Be a knowledgeable gardener. If your leaves turn yellow and drop, you are overwatering. Also be sure to remove weeds which steal water from plants.

Weeds

- Pull out weeds every two weeks. Weeds will take away nutrients and water away from your plants, so it is important to maintain them. When pulling roots out, make sure that you get the entire plant, including the roots.

If you have a major weed problem, you can use **black plastic** to resolve the issue.

- Mow the weeds down to an inch, and water so that the ground is damp
- Stretch the black plastic over the area, be sure the plastic is larger in size and covers the edges by a few inches.
- Use bricks and rocks to hold the plastic in place, and cover the edges of plastic with soil
- Keep in place from 4-6 to kill all the weeds. A length of one year may be necessary with greater weed problems.



A great way to keep your paths weed-free and looking nice: cover them with cardboard followed by mulch or woodchips.

Managing Conflict

At times it will be necessary to deal with conflict that arises in the garden. In these situations, respect is the most important thing. Often times listening and common sense will be your best tools for resolving conflict. Conflict is unavoidable, but there is a lot you can do to ensure that members of your garden feel respected and included as part of the community.

Dealing with Theft

Theft is an issue that community gardens commonly deal with. There are steps that you and garden members can take to limit these types of activities.

- Harvest often: People who take food from gardens will rationalize that this food will otherwise go to waste.
- Plant creatively: Disguise more desirable plants in your design by planting them in less visible locations. Consider planting melons and squash under perennial cover. You can also plant thorny plants such as raspberry bushes or roses on garden edges
- Plant vegetables such as potatoes and carrots that have their value in their roots.
- Use signage: Sometimes people don't understand the meaning of 'community garden' and assume the food is for the taking. A possible sign could read: "If you are hungry, take some food, but please do some weeding before you leave". Some people have even posted "poisonous" signs to deter people. Just be sure to not get confused yourself!
- Plant a "vandal's garden" near the entrance of your garden. Keep a sign that says: "If you must take food, take it from here"

Autumn

Harvesting

There are no specific guidelines as to when to harvest your vegetables. Often, a taste test will tell you the most, but it is important to watch your plants and attend to your garden as it nears harvest time. It is best to use your judgment, but there are some tips to help you.



Beans: Pick before the seeds start bulging.

Broccoli: The edible part of broccoli is the unopened flower buds; as the weather warms up, make sure to pick the broccoli before it begins to flower.

Carrots: Pulling a carrot is the only sure way to judge one, but a light frost can sweeten the carrot flavor. Expect to harvest in late fall.

Cucumber: Harvest when the fruit is firm and smooth, but earlier is better. Overripe cucumbers can turn bitter

Peas: Pea pods should look and feel full.

Potatoes: When the plant starts to flower, potatoes can be harvested. You can also wait until the plant begins to die back for larger potatoes.

Tomatoes: Pick by giving a slight twist and a good pull when the fruit has full color and soft to touch.

Preparing for Winter

-Record the plant locations in your garden. You will want to rotate the crops the following season to keep the soil and your plants healthy.

-Remove old plant growth.

-Plant cover crops to help soil fertility. A good cover crop family is legumes: beans lentils and alfalfa

-If you are not using a cover crop, it is good to turn the soil to aerate it for the winter.

Giving Garden/ Food Bank

Allocating part of your garden to grow food to be given to local food banks is great community outreach and a great use for excess food that is grown. This also helps reduce possible theft in the garden and cuts down on waste.

This is a list of Jackson Food Banks that will accept fresh produce.

If you are interested in forming a connection with one of the local food banks, these pantries have both the resources and the need for fresh vegetables and produce:

East Jackson Church of the Nazarene
Food Pantry
5549 Ann Arbor Rd, Jackson, MI
517-748-9201

New Life Worship Center Church Food
Pantry
4532 Brooklyn Road, Jackson, MI
517-764-1307

Cornerstone Christian Church Food
Pantry
2395 W. High St. Jackson, MI
517-782-1774

Saint John United Church of Christ Food
Pantry
801 S. Mechanic St, Jackson, MI
517-784-7580

Salvation Army Food Pantry
806 E. Pearl St. Jackson, MI
517- 782-7185

Society of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Mary's
Conference
120 E. Wesley Street, Jackson, MI
517-788-3424

Immanuel Lutheran Church Food Pantry
1505 W. Michigan Ave, Jackson, MI
517-782-6081

Trinity Wesleyan Church Food Pantry
620 Robinson Road, Jackson, MI
517-750-2654

Jackson Interfaith Shelter
414 S. Blackstone St, Jackson, MI
517-789-8735

First Church of the Nazarene
3905 Clinton Rd., Jackson, MI
517-782-7084

Ideas for Next Year

Events and Activities

- Garden Potluck or Barbecue: In the fall invite everyone to bring a dish that incorporates part of their harvest.
- Desserts near Dusk: Have a dessert themed potluck in the evening, this is great in the summer when it is too hot to meet in the afternoon.
- Art in the Garden: Display local art or have musicians share their talents.
- Plant Sale Day: Advertise a day when city members can come and purchase either plants or vegetables that were grown in your garden.
- Garden Fair: Similar to a mini- County Fair. Have a biggest produce contest, pie-eating contest, or best salsa made from garden ingredients-contest.
- Yoga Classes: This form of exercise can be relaxing and meditative in the garden.
- Chef in the garden: Host a chef to do cooking demonstrations and tastings.

Youth Garden/ Children's Plots

Involve children in your garden. Allocate a plot or two specifically for children to use. This can be a great learning opportunity for them on how to grow their own food. It also gives them a positive role in the community.



Volunteer Involvement

- When large projects need to be done, it can be great to get volunteer groups involved. This exposes a larger group to community gardening and urban agriculture. Some may have such a good experience; they may want to get involved themselves.
- Some good places to look for community groups include the United Way, school service learning programs, scout troops, corporation community service days, faith organizations, and garden clubs.
- When a group does volunteer, it is advised that you offer them cool drinks, perhaps lunch, tools, gloves, and a first-aid kit. A thank-you note would be a great follow-up.

Additional Resources

There are many resources available to assist you in your efforts. Online and at the library you can find resources about how to grow healthier plants, how to organize a children's school garden, and successful examples of urban agriculture projects. Here are a few places to get you started:

The American Community Garden Association

www.communitygarden.org

Rebel Tomato

www.communitygarden.org/rebeltomato

MSU Extension

www.msue.msu.edu

Civil Eats

www.civeileats.com

This manual covers a lot of information, but you should remember that there are endless possibilities with community gardens. Focus on growing community, and everything will flow from there. Use your garden to educate, produce food, and bring people together. Ultimately, have a good time and enjoy the outdoors. Good luck on all of your gardening endeavors!