

Growing Gardens

Is Community Gardening for You?

A community garden is a place where people of many different backgrounds join together for the common goal of gardening. It is important to understand that gardening in a community garden is much different than gardening at home. A community garden is a shared space, where we need to be considerate of other people and their plants. You will need to make the time to come to the garden - it won't be as easy as stepping into your back yard. The following information may be useful to you if you are thinking about becoming a Community Gardener with Growing Gardens.

A Typical Growing Season

A garden plot requires time and constant effort at least 7 months out of the year in order to produce a healthy harvest. Here are some basic tasks that will be required of you:

- **Preparing Your Plot.** You need to clear your plot of weeds by May 1st of each year. Chemical fertilizers and pesticides are not allowed. Healthy soil leads to healthy plants. Loosening your soil and adding compost before you plant will make your plants healthier and more resistant to pests and disease.
- **Planting.** You must take care in planning your garden, placing plants in places where they will grow best, and planting them at the appropriate time of year. Refer to a local planting chart to know when to plant each type of vegetable. After Mother's Day is typically the time most gardeners plant their frost-sensitive plants without having to worry.
- **Providing Water.** Seedbeds must be hand-watered daily until sprouts appear above ground. Seedlings must be hand-watered daily for the first two weeks. During hot and dry periods, you may be required to water your seedlings more often. Drip irrigation is highly encouraged in our hot, arid climate. Simple drip systems can be purchased locally at McGuckin's, Sutherlands and Home Depot. Drip irrigation rebates are available for city of Boulder residents at www.bouldersaveswater.net
- **Weeding.** Time will be needed to keep weeds down in your plot and its surrounding pathways. By addressing weeds early in the spring, you will save on time and effort later in the season. Free mulching material is located at some of the gardens to help with this.
- **Harvesting.** As plants mature and begin to produce, you must be there to harvest the fruits of your labor – the best reward of gardening! Keeping ripe produce picked reduces garden pests and vandalism.
- **Preparing for Winter.** November 15th is the deadline to remove dead plant material from your plot. Your soil will require a boost after producing so much throughout the growing season. Reward your soil by loosening it and incorporating aged manure, compost or dried leaves.

Time

As with any other part of life, the more time you invest in gardening, the better your garden plot will be. Below you will find a general estimate of what having a garden plot will require:

GARDEN TASK	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL
Weeding/Plot Preparation	2 hours	2 hours	1 hour
Watering	1 hour	1 hour	.5 hour
Planting	1.5 hours	.5 hour	.5 hour
Harvesting	.5 hour	1 hour	1.5 hours
Total Hours per Week:	5 hours/week	4.5 hours/week	3.5 hours/week

Spring Orientation

Each gardener is required to attend a mandatory orientation held in March. Rules and regulations will be covered and gardening handouts will be available. Many of your questions will be answered at this one hour meeting.

Giving Back to Your Garden

Community Gardeners are required to contribute **4 hours of community service** during the season. Some examples of community service are helping with work days, assisting at the annual plant sale, maintaining tools, office work, mowing the perimeter of the gardens, harvesting in the Cultiva field, helping in the Greenhouse, etc.

Benefits and rewards

Despite the extra responsibilities, community gardening is very popular in Boulder! If you've never gardened in a community garden before, you can look forward to more than fresh veggies. Cultural exchanges sprout and new friendships grow among diverse groups of people. Community gardens are common ground for growing plants that feed, heal and give aesthetic pleasure. They are civic spaces where people work and recreate to nourish themselves, their families and friends; the gardeners' shared labor also builds a stronger sense of belonging to their physical environment and connection to other gardeners. Community gardens are the collective effort of people with the patience and determination to make things grow.