

Grow, Cook and Eat Lawrence Weston

Community Food Growing Toolkit

A guide to starting a community garden



Introduction

People have many reasons to be interested in community gardening for food production, and Lawrence Weston has an abundance of land suitable for growing food.

The benefits are many, including:

1. Saving money on food bills.
2. Increased freshness, variety, flavour of home-grown produce
3. community cohesion, neighbours meeting each other for the first time and working together to improve their street
4. Gentle exercise suitable for most (if adapted to accommodate health issues)
5. A step toward a horticultural qualification Experience and skills toward employment
6. A sense of accomplishment and enjoyment Improved mental and physical health from outdoor exercise Low food miles/carbon footprint
7. Better understanding of where food comes from (especially for children)
8. Likely higher intake of fruit and vegetables and decreased food waste
9. Increased community cohesion and integration Improved air quality

Community growing can take many forms, including:

1. Community gardens - the focus for this toolkit, though some of the tools will be useful for other projects Community farms (includes livestock)
2. Allotments
3. Community orchards
4. Community harvesting (sharing gluts from private land or allotments)
5. "Meanwhile" or "guardian" gardening – temporarily looking after land
6. Community Supported Agriculture
7. Forest gardening
8. Garden sharing
9. Public planting in streets and communal areas
10. Guerrilla gardening

There are a lot of things to consider when planning, starting or running a community garden. As always, many hands make light work. This toolkit will help you and your group to think about the decisions which need to be made and practical tips to get you growing.

Step by step to your community garden

- We started by finding a member of the community who wants to lead on creating a community growing space in their street. We spent the first few months running events and volunteer sessions at the allotment and community hub to identify who's keen.



- We then helped them to door knock and leaflet to gain support from neighbours and set up a community meeting on their green space.
- We also set up a WhatsApp group which was a key way to communicate with the community groups and keep them linked together .
- At the meeting we would have pictures of different planter ideas, veg we could grow, different fruit trees and wildlife habitat such as wildflower meadows and hedgerows. We also have a flip chart paper and pens to draw out or plans for the space.
- We recorded all comments, which would come in useful when gaining permissions from council and addressing any concerns.

- We also had conversations about how people already use the green to make sure we keep everyone happy and don't put anything in the wrong location. We also ensured that all planning elements have sufficient space around them so that mowers can still mow and maintain the space.
- We then digitised the maps and embed within a consultation document that stipulates what the residents have asked for, and how this has been implemented in the plan. This was then posted to all the houses in the area with our contact details on to allow people to feedback on the plans





- After consulting the community we got permission from the council parks and housing teams. Housing, who own the land, wanted to know there was community consensus, that a proper consultation had been done, and that everyone was happy for the plan to go ahead. Parks wanted to know that any action taken wouldn't negatively impact the sustainable management of the space.
- Once we had permission we could get out there and do the work! Creating the meadows, planting the trees, creating the planters and planting the vegetables and herbs.

- We would set the date, flyer the houses around the green, and all meet on site to do the work. Tools were brought from Ambition Lawrence Weston/Avon Wildlife Trust, we ordered compost in, rented machinery (turf cutter) and it was super helpful to team up with men in sheds who helped create raised beds to go out into the community.
- Finally we would ensure that the groups are provided with a simple management plan stating what needed to be done, when, and by who.
- It's been really encouraging to see the residents take ownership of their spaces by planting up and maintaining them - working together to improve their street.



With thanks to all the residents/pupils of:

Lawrence Weston Road

Meere Bank Road

Century Park

St Peters Church

Hope Cafe and Church

St Bedes School

North Star School

