

## **5 Frequently Asked Community Garden Questions**

### **1) *What is a community garden?***

A community garden is any piece of land gardened by a group of people. The make-up may be one large community plot, or several smaller individual plots. Edible and/or non-edible plants are grown and the crops may be used by that community to eat or sell. Some community gardens benefit the people who tend the garden; others serve people in need of food in the broader community. Community gardens can be found in urban, suburban, or rural settings and may be located at schools, businesses, neighborhoods or parks.

### **2) *What are some benefits of a community garden?***

Community gardens can serve as a catalyst for neighborhood and community connections. Environmental benefits include beautifying the areas in which they are located and/or preserving green space. Financially, community gardens provide nutritious food and reduce family food budgets. Additionally, community gardens improve the quality of life for people who participate by providing opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy, and education.

### **3) *Who can participate in creating a community garden?***

Anyone with a desire to grow plants and be part of a community can participate in creating a community garden. A background in gardening, or experience working within groups toward a common goal is useful. The ability to volunteer and provide needed labor in working the garden is also helpful, as is having the skills to facilitate behind the scenes to oversee the operations of running a group-based organization. Perhaps there is interest in simply eating locally grown food. Community gardens also provide an opportunity for outdoor exercise. A citizen wishing to participate may also be retired and looking for a meaningful activity, or they may be young and wanting to learn the art of growing their own food.

### **4) *What can be grown in a community garden?***

Anything that you or your group wishes to grow, that can be grown in your region, can become a crop of your community garden. Experimental crops such as the easy-to-grow Japanese green called Shiso; indigenous heirloom varieties such as the North Carolina state vegetable, the sweet potato are potential examples. Groups may choose plants simply for ornamentation, or plants for harvesting and eating. Some plants will be annuals that will need to be replanted every year; others can be perennials that keep producing every year. In our region, with the right equipment, it's possible to grow and harvest food almost all year long with plants like kale thriving through the winter, snap peas in the spring, cucumbers in the summer, and beets in the fall. Some might argue that the one thing all community gardens grow is community itself.

### **5) *How do I start a community garden?***

The ways to build, create, and grow a community garden are as diverse as each garden is itself. Gathering a group of people who are interested and beginning to target your goals is a great start. Assessing your resources and dividing the tasks is a way to organize your process. For more detailed information see the Town of Cary's guide: 10 Steps to Starting a Community Garden.