



A QUICK GUIDE TO FINDING GARDEN SPACE IN MINNEAPOLIS

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FINDING GARDEN SPACE

There is incredible demand for garden space in the Twin Cities – if you're unable to garden where you live, a community garden might be a good option for you.

There are over 250 community gardens in the Twin Cities, all with a unique gardening vision and way of operating. Gardening Matters can help get you in contact with a community garden in your neighborhood if the garden accepts referrals from us.

The best way to find a community garden is looking at the Garden Directory available at www.gardeningmatters.org/garden-directory Contact Gardening Matters if you have any questions or need coordinator contact info for a garden you find.

Unfortunately, community gardens tend to fill up quickly, and many gardens have long waiting lists even by early spring. If you're unable to get a space in an existing community garden, here are suggestions to help you find garden space:

1. Go to Yards to Gardens, www.y2g.org and look for an available yard or create a posting for yourself as a gardener. Yards to Gardens is a website that connects people who are looking for garden space with people who have space available for gardening. It is a great way to collaborate with a neighbor on creating a green space in your neighborhood.
2. Talk to neighbors with yards to see if they would consider sharing garden space.
3. Start a new garden in your neighborhood or join one of the many current start-up efforts. Gardening Matters offers free "How to Start a Community Garden" workshops for groups of 8 or more. www.gardeningmatters.org/resources/startup.html has more details and resources on starting a community garden.
4. Consider container gardening. This can be done on the porch or deck of your apartment or house, and can actually produce quite a bit of food! Search the UMN Extension website at <http://extension.umn.edu> for useful tip sheets.

If you're interested in larger pieces of land for farming, contact the Land Stewardship Project (LSP) www.landstewardshipproject.org or the Farmers Legal Action Group (FLAG) www.flaginc.org who might be able to connect you with land through their programs.

FINDING LAND FOR A COMMUNITY GARDEN

Finding land can also be a challenge for groups wanting to start a new community garden. In addition to the ideas above, here are a few suggestions specifically for garden start-up groups:

1. Spread the word, and walk the neighborhood. The more people you have looking for land in the neighborhood, the better luck you will have finding land! You never know who will have a good connection – get as many people as possible involved in the search.
2. To find out the landowner of a potential garden site in Minneapolis, go to the Hennepin County Tax Assessor website at www16.co.hennepin.mn.us/pins/ to do a search to find out the owner information, as well as the value of the property. You can do the same for Ramsey County and most other counties. It is illegal to use land without obtaining the owners permission.



3. Get creative! A garden can be anywhere with good sunlight, healthy soil, and reliable access to water. Places to look for land include churches/faith-based groups, businesses, neighborhood organizations, non-profit organizations, schools, vacant lots, right of ways, railroad-owned land, or airport-owned land.

ASSESSING A POTENTIAL GARDEN SITE

An ideal gardening site should:

- Get plenty of sun--at least six to eight hours each day.
- Be relatively flat (although slight slopes can be terraced).
- Be mostly free of large pieces of concrete left behind from demolition of structures. Any rubble or debris should be manageable --that is, volunteers clearing the lot with trash bags, wheelbarrows, and pick up trucks can remove it.
- Be within walking, or no more than a short drive from you and the neighbors who have expressed interest in participating.
- Have reliable water access, either from a neighboring house or commercial building, fire hydrant or otherwise. You should look into water access before you commit to gardening at a site.
- Not have been previously used as a site where potentially hazardous toxins were used. Find out more information about the history of the site by talking with the landowner, city or neighbors.
- Not already be being used by the community for a different purpose (children's play area, soccer field, hockey rink)—this could create unnecessary tension between you and your neighbors

If you suspect soil contamination, contact the MN Pollution Control agency to see what resources are available to you for free lead and arsenic testing. Otherwise, have the soil tested for nutrients and lead through the UMN's soil testing lab: 612-625-3101 at <http://soiltest.cfans.umn.edu/> (click on "how to submit"). A soil test costs between \$15-\$80 depending on what you request.

GARDENING AT YOUR SITE IN THE LONG-TERM

Try to find land that will be available for your garden for many years (if not permanently). Many lots are vacant because the owner is waiting to develop it. Find out if there are development plans for the site before you start gardening there.

Establishing a good relationship with the landowner is key to being able to garden at your site in the long-term. Be open to concerns the landowner may have and work with the landowner to find solutions. Feel free to contact Gardening Matters for help.

Establish terms for use of the site, and prepare and negotiate a lease with the landowner. Typically, groups lease garden sites from land owners for \$1 per year. You should attempt to negotiate a lease for at least three years (or longer if the property owner is agreeable).

QUESTIONS AND MORE RESOURCES

At www.gardeningmatters.org or contact Gardening Matters directly at 612-821-2359 or info@gardeningmatters.org

