



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

Create or Expand a Community Garden



The Challenge



We've all been told "Eat your vegetables!" What if you lived in a place where it was simply impossible to follow this advice? Some neighborhoods lack access to fresh fruits and vegetables; they either aren't sold at all or the prices aren't affordable. Building or cultivating a community garden can help break down the barriers to access.

This toolkit will help you to address this community need by:

- Explaining associated terms
- Highlighting helpful resources
- Sharing effective planning steps
- Outlining project management tips
- Providing ideas for communicating your message
- Sharing tips for reflection and reporting

Prepare

Learn Associated Terms

Before you jump-start the planning phase of your project, be sure you know the terms associated with the work you are about to do.

- **Plots:** A portion of land dedicated to the cultivation of flowers, vegetables, herbs, or fruit
- **Broadcasting:** Sowing seeds by scattering them by the handful
- **Seed-starting mixture:** A particularly light and nutrient-rich potting soil, usually store-bought, that is used in small trays to grow plants from seed



Identify a Location

- For vegetables, find a sunny spot with easy access to running water.
- For large fruit trees, find a bigger space to ensure that shade doesn't overtake your crops.
- School yards, churches, community center, and parks are excellent choices for your garden. Be sure, however, to get permission with the owners or managers of the space and involve members of that organization in your efforts. You'll need to secure the site, either renting it from the owner or establishing a written agreement for its use.

After investigating, you may choose to join an existing garden instead. Use the [American Community Garden Association](http://acga.localharvest.org/) (ACGA) to find one near you.

Browse Helpful Resources

- [American Community Gardening Association](http://acga.localharvest.org/) (<http://acga.localharvest.org/>)
- [Starting a Community Garden](http://communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php) (<http://communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php>)
- [10 Steps to starting a community garden](http://communitygarden.org/docs/10stepsstart.pdf) (<http://communitygarden.org/docs/10stepsstart.pdf>)
- [NRPA Grow Your Park Initiative](http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Grants_and_Partners/Youth_Development_and_Play/Building-Community-Garden.pdf) (http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Grants_and_Partners/Youth_Development_and_Play/Building-Community-Garden.pdf)
- [Community Gardens, The Facts](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/toolkits/comm-gardens/index) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/toolkits/comm-gardens/index>)
- [Let's Move Community Garden Checklist](http://www.letsmove.gov/community-garden-checklist) (<http://www.letsmove.gov/community-garden-checklist>)
- [Serve.gov Community Garden Toolkit](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/toolkits/comm-gardens/index) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/toolkits/comm-gardens/index>)



Plan

A successful group effort requires a motivated team whose members agree upon clearly defined tasks, set reachable goals, and act with inspiration and purpose.

Build a Team

- Start off planning with folks you know, and ask them to tell others to join your efforts.
- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- As you work, talk about the parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s impact and your own.



*Set Goals***Build your planning team**

Whether you are a team of few or many, a planning team will help you execute all aspects of your project. Below are some roles your planning team can take on. If it's only you: reach out to volunteers past and present to fulfill these roles:

- Project Development
- Volunteer Recruitment and Management Team
- Communications Team
- VIP/Leadership Engagement Team
- Fundraising Team
- Event Team

- Set goals, such as number of people trained, items supplied, and folks pledging to pass along what they've learned to others.
- Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. Ensure you and your team choose goals you can all agree on.

Plan Your Project

There are a number of ways that you can plan for building or growing a garden in your community. Here are a few ideas for planning tasks to complete:

- Decide what kind of garden you would like, including overall size, size of individual plots (if there will be any), restrictions for membership (if any), fees (if any), and rules about sharing tools or only using your own.
- Research the needs of the crops you intend to plant. How much sunlight and water do they require? What's their growing cycle? How large can they get, and how much space do the roots require? This is an excellent task for your younger volunteers to do and report back to the larger group.
- Think for the future. A garden requires continuous care and also provides continuous bounty. Who will turn the soil in spring? Clear the weeds? Harvest the vegetables? Deal with vandalism?
- **Incorporate learning into any service you do** ([node/292](#)) by sharing information about the issues your project addresses and about Dr. King's work and teachings as it relates to the issue.
(<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/>)

*Raise Resources for Equipment/Supplies***Involving and engaging kids**

Whether kids show up to volunteer or they unexpectedly arrive with parents who can benefit from your service, have activities that they can do such as:

- Carry light objects
- Decorate cards, lunch bags, or placemats
- Serve refreshments to the adults hard at work
- Organize or tidy the project spaces
- Watch a film about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

See [Engaging Kids in Service \(node/296\)](#) for more on kid-friendly service projects.

What supplies will you need to get a garden started in your community?

- Seek financial and in-kind donations from businesses for the supplies you'll need to run your project
- Solicit funds from team members and/or others to purchase items you need for successful MLK Day
- Purchase the necessary supplies prior to the service day so they're ready to go on MLK Day.

Manage Your Project

The following tips will assist you with managing a successful service project.

- Utilize to do lists for the days leading up to, day of and post event day.
- Make sure team leaders or coordinators are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet volunteers or community members as they arrive.
- Even if volunteers will be separated into different groups to complete tasks, it is important that the group start off the day together and review what you are trying to accomplish.
- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event: building or growing a community garden in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Organize volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greeting participants, handing out refreshments, responding to questions, or distributing materials.
- Build moments of reflection into your planned activities. Share stories and words from Dr. King and about any insights you've gained so far [about the connection between your service and Dr. King's teachings \(node/292\)](#).
- Document the day with photos and videos and be sure to have participants sign a photo release form.
- Conduct your event, offering continuous encouragement to participants.



Communicate Your Message

Communication is a key part of any service project. You will need to communicate about:

- Getting volunteers to help you plan or implement your service activity
- Building Partnerships with potential collaborators or sponsors
- Raising funds or in-kind donations for your project
- Informing potential participants who might benefit from your service



Publicize your event using a combination of low-tech outreach, traditional, and social media.

Low-tech Outreach

- Post flyers in public places
- Use community bulletin boards
- Ask area businesses to spread the word (e.g. flyers at registers or posters in store windows)
- Make announcements at schools, churches, or civic groups

Traditional Media

- Invite the news media (print and broadcast) to report about your upcoming event or to attend and share information about accomplishments. Use a [press release \(node/252\)](#) or a [media advisory \(node/252\)](#).
- Make follow-up phone calls to the news media
- Place free ads in the community affairs section of your local papers

Digital and Social Media

- Submit your event to local online calendars and LISTSERVs
- Promote your project, and document the day, through Facebook, Tweets, and pictures
- Reach out to a local blogger and ask if he/she might cover the event



Assess and Reflect

Host an official debriefing meeting for team members after the service day. Ask the team to reflect on the following questions:

- Examine the goals you set for yourselves. Which ones did you meet? Which exceeded your expectations? And which goals did you not quite reach?
- What did you accomplish?
- Who did your work impact in your community?



- What went well and what could be improved for next time?
- What community garden resources or outreach methods would you use again in the future? Which ones would you forego?
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Go back to your initial investigation into the local problems you elected to help tackle and ask more questions. For example: If you began work on a community garden, what steps will you take beyond the day of service to ensure the community garden is continually cared for? How might you use the garden for mentoring or educational purposes in your community once it has a chance to grow?

Share Your Story

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize a community garden event once they hear what you accomplished. Share your service accomplishments with:

- Volunteers, financial and in-kind supporters and constituents groups; the accomplishments could accompany a thank you letter
- The media; thank all media who reported on your planned activities or covered you service project along with sharing accomplishments from the project and any plans for the future
- The Corporation for National and Community Service; learn about multiple ways to [share your story](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share>)

28 reads

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