COMMUNITY GARDENS

Community gardens are found on land owned by local government, schools, churches and on state government social housing estates.

There are two types of community gardens:
- **shared gardens**, in which gardeners work in the whole garden, doing whatever is needed at the time and taking a share of what they grow
- **allotment gardens**, in which individuals or families have their own garden bed.

Many community gardens combine shared and allotment areas. Allotment holders are expected to help maintain the common areas of the community garden.

MANY BENEFITS

Community gardens are places where people come together to grow fresh food, to learn, relax and make new friends.

Community gardeners know that sharing land to grow food and other plants builds a sense of place and community.

The benefits of community gardening include:
- access to fresh, nutritious food
- a sense of achievement that comes through growing some of your own food
- making friends with people in the garden
- learning the skills of gardening, shared decision making and cooperation, all of which are necessary to successful community gardens
- healthy outdoor exercise
- participating in a constructive and productive recreational activity
- improving the local environment.

Research in 2005 by Dr Bruce Judd and Dr Rob Samuels of the AHURI UNSW-UWS Research Centre found that community food gardening, as part of a community development strategy, was effective in reducing the incidence of crime on housing estates.
WHAT HAPPENS IN COMMUNITY GARDENS?

GROWING FOOD
Growing vegetables, herbs and fruit is the main use of community gardens. Gardeners may grow a selection of the vegetables and herbs they usually eat or they might grow special crops, such as spices and flowers.

GROWING FLOWERS, ORNAMENTAL AND NATIVE PLANTS
Flowers are grown near vegetable gardens because they attract pollinating insects that help our vegetables to fruit and set seed. They also assist with our insect pest management. Ornamental and native plants are grown to attract birds and to bring shade into the community garden. Rare native plants can be grown to produce seeds to harvest and plant elsewhere.

EATING AND SHARING
Community gardeners often share the cooking and eating of the plants they grow. Sharing food is a proven way to make new friends.

SOCIALISING
Community gardens are places to meet your neighbours. A shelter such as a pergola is a useful addition to community gardens. As well as offering shelter from sun and rain, a table and chairs can be set up in the shelter for sharing food, meetings, relaxing and socialising.

COOKING IN THE COMMUNITY GARDEN
If a community garden has a simple barbecue or gas cooker, those with cooking skills can pass them on to help others prepare simple, nutritionally balanced meals using herbs and vegetables grown in the garden.

ARTS IN THE COMMUNITY GARDEN
Some gardens become a venue for performance such as music and readings. They offer arts workshops like mosaic making and sculpture made from discarded items. The finished works can decorate the garden.

CELEBRATION
Community gardeners hold celebrations to recognise special times of year such as the solstice and equinox, to celebrate the fruiting of particular plants (such as a chilli festival featuring lessons on how to cook and use chillies and celebrating the diversity of chillies) or to celebrate the annual arrival of migratory bird species, such as the annual Kingfisher Festival at CERES, Melbourne.

SOLITUDE
Design a secluded ‘quiet corner’ into the community garden where gardeners and visitors can relax, read or be by themselves.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION
Gardens sometimes offer courses and workshops to the public on skills such as gardening, cooking, conserving water, recycling and making compost. Gardeners find grants to install and demonstrate renewable technologies like solar-electric lighting, greywater systems, composting toilets and solar cookers.

GARDENING SPACE AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS
Local schools may make use of community gardens for educational purposes. Some offer educational services that link the community garden to the school curriculum.

FARMERS MARKETS
Both CERES and Northey Street City Farm have a weekly farmers’ market where farmers from the region sell directly to the public. CERES Urban Orchard project makes it possible for home gardeners with excess fruit from their trees and other produce to swap with each other.

BENEFITS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Local government may be able to arrange the use of community gardens to demonstrate and offer workshops in the practices they promote to the public, such as home composting, recycling and water conservation.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN HELP
Councils can assist community gardeners by providing land, small grants to buy tools, equipment and a lockable shed for tool storage, erection of a shelter, public liability insurance and by advising on site design and site safety.

COMMUNITY FOOD
Community gardens are part of the community food movement around Australia.

The gardens have demonstrated that they bring nutritional, social and environmental benefits and help create resilient neighbourhoods, towns and cities.