



Frequently Asked Questions about Community Gardens and SFC Community Garden Support

Q: How many community gardens are there in Austin?

A: There are currently 54 community gardens in Austin. These are located on City, State, County, school, church, and private land.

Q: Is there a community garden in my neighborhood?

A: The best way to find out if there's a community garden near you is to take a look at [this map of community gardens in Austin](#). The map is accessible via the [Community Gardens page on SFC's website](#).

More information about each garden is available on [this database](#), which is available via the [Coalition of Austin Community Gardens website](#).

Q: How many gardens does SFC have?

A: SFC does not directly manage any gardens; rather, we provide support through training, consultation, and fiscal sponsorship. We serve as fiscal sponsor for 12 community gardens: Adelphi Acre, Alamo, Cherry Creek, Emerald Wood, Festival Beach, the Gardens at Gus Garcia, Homewood Heights, New Day, Patterson Park, Scenic Brook, South Austin, and St. David's Foundation Community Gardens.

Through our fiscal sponsorship, we offer the following services for community gardens: hold liability insurance, hold a City of Austin utilities account, accept tax-deductible donations, hold unrestricted funds, serve as an umbrella nonprofit for grant applications, and offer technical assistance.

Q: Who manages community gardens in Austin?

A: Some community gardens are affiliated with organizations, schools, or places of worship, and a few gardens have staff who assist with management responsibilities. Most community gardens in Austin, however, are entirely volunteer-managed.

Q: What kinds of support does SFC provide for community gardens?

A. SFC:

- Hosts **Community Garden Leadership Trainings**, in which we share information about how to start and sustain a community garden in Austin, including information about organizing your community, creating an organizational structure for your garden, finding resources for your garden, finding and gaining access to a site, budgeting for your garden, and more.
- Provides our [Community Garden Leadership Training Resource Guide](#), filled with useful information and sample documents about starting a community garden.
- Offers **consultation** about your community garden project. Reach out to set up a phone meeting with Grow Local program staff, or, if your garden team includes 4 or more people, to set up an in-person planning session with GL Program Director.
- Offers **fiscal sponsorship** for community gardens. This means SFC will provide insurance coverage; hold a utility account in the organization's name and pay water bills using funding collected from gardeners; offer nonprofit status for applying for grants and assistance managing grants; collect tax-deductible donations; and allow

gardens to hold unrestricted funds in SFC's bank account. We require that gardens apply for sponsorship so we can ensure they are well-organized before we get involved (though we're also available to help gardens get to that point!).

- Offers **Spread the Harvest gardening and food sharing program**. We provide free seeds, seedlings, and compost to low income gardeners, school gardens, and agencies working with disadvantaged populations, and in exchange ask that gardeners share extra produce with friends, family, neighbors, and food pantries. We also ask that participants track their harvest and how much food they are sharing, and we check in periodically with participants to gather this information in order to gauge our impact in the community.
- Offers administrative support for the [Coalition of Austin Community Gardens \(CACG\)](#), a support and advocacy network for community gardens. This group's purpose is to promote the stability and propagation of community gardens in Austin, and we meet the third Tuesday of each month from 6:30-7:30pm at SFC, located at 2921 E. 17th St., Building C, 78702.

Q: I would like to start a community garden in my neighborhood. Where should I start?

A: A great first step is to find out whether there is an existing community garden in your neighborhood (take a look at [this map of Austin community gardens](#) to find out). If there is a community garden near you, we encourage you to consider joining forces with the existing garden to help it thrive.

If there is not a community garden near you or if you are sure you'd like to start a new one, we recommend taking the following first steps:

- Read [10 Steps to Starting a Community Garden](#) from the American Community Gardening Association for an overview of the process.
- Work through this [Community Garden Planning Worksheet](#).
- Download and read [SFC's Community Garden Leadership Training Resource Guide](#), which is filled with useful information and sample documents to guide you.
- Sign up for SFC's next Community Garden Leadership Training. This training guides new and experienced gardeners through the process of planning, funding, starting, and sustaining a community garden project. Find the next training date on our [Classes & Events](#) page.
- If you are looking to start a community garden on City-owned land, you will also want to visit the [City of Austin's Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Community Garden program webpage](#) to learn about the process.
- Reach out to Sari Albornoz, Grow Local Program Director, if you would like to talk through your project or if you have questions.

Remember: the foundational elements of a successful community garden are a strong team and an invested community!

Q: What permitting process do I need to go through in order to start a community garden?

A: This depends on a couple of factors:

1. Who owns the land where you plan to create garden?
2. Does your site already have access to water, or will you need to tap into a City waterline?

If your site is owned by the City of Austin, AND/OR if you need to establish water access, you need to go through the City's Community Garden Endorsement process, which is described here:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/sustainable-urban-agriculture>. If your site is City-owned, you will also need to obtain a land use agreement called a "License Agreement" between a nonprofit sponsor (such as SFC) and the City. If you need water infrastructure, you will also need to obtain permits in order to tap into the City's water system. Meredith Gray with the City of Austin (meredith.gray@texas.gov) and Sari Albornoz, SFC's Grow Local Program Director, can help you work through these processes. If your site is not owned by the City of Austin AND you already have access to water, it is not necessary to go through any of these permitting processes.

Q: I am a developer and I would like to include a community garden at my new housing development. Can I contract with SFC to create our community garden?

A: SFC provides support for community garden start-up projects through training and consultation. We would be happy to share educational materials about how to organize and sustain a community garden, and we encourage you to sign up for our next Community Garden Leadership Training (see [SFC's Classes & Events](#) webpage). Our Grow Local Program Director is also available to talk through your project. Several edible landscaping companies exist locally who may be able to assist with garden construction.

Please note: You might consider delaying at least some of the development of the community garden until residents are present and able to organize around the project. The single most important factor contributing to the success of a community garden is the existence of a strong, well-organized team of invested community members who truly take ownership of the garden.