GROWING IN CONFIDENCE
A Community Food Project

A How-To Guide
Compiled By Craig Sands, The Organic Centre, 2005
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Introduction


**Background, Aims and Objectives**

In 2004 the Health Promotion Department of the (then) North West Health Board (NWHB) in partnership with the Organic Centre* (Rossinver, Co. Leitrim) initiated a project to help people learn to grow, prepare and cook organic fruit and vegetables. This went on to become Growing in Confidence- A Community Food Project.

It is hoped that this guide will be a resource for groups wishing to run similar projects.

The aims and objectives of the project were as follows:

**Aim:** To increase knowledge, awareness and skills among target groups in relation to fruit and vegetable production, preparation and consumption and to promote positive health and well-being

**Objectives:**
- Improve participants' knowledge of and skills in vegetable and fruit growing
- Enhance participants' skills in preparing and cooking fruit and vegetables
- Increase participants' consumption of fruit and vegetables
- Increase participants' knowledge of the nutritional value of fruit and vegetables
- Develop more positive attitudes towards consumption of fruit and vegetables

Two further objectives were identified after an external evaluation in 2005:

- Provide opportunities for physical activity outdoors
- Provide opportunities for positive social interaction and development

*The Organic Centre was founded in 1995 as a non-profit making company limited by guarantee.

The Organic Centre aims to "work in harmony with nature to show how healthy organic food can be grown by everyone" (Organic Centre 2005).

Set on 19 acres in North Leitrim it is open to visitors and offers a wide range of training for groups and individuals.
Funding for the project was provided by cardiovascular strategy money (Building Healthier Hearts- see Appendix) through the Health Promotion and Public Health Department (NWHB). Two projects started in 2004: one at St Michael's Family Life Centre, Sligo Town, and the other at the Organic Centre, Rossinver Co. Leitrim. Suitable community gardening plots were available at these sites.

Participants for both projects were recruited through a variety of community and statutory contacts/groups. It was agreed early on that recruitment would be particularly focused towards people managing a tight budget.

The participants would learn through hands-on experience in the garden as well as relevant theory discussion and handouts with the support of a gardener/facilitator. They would also receive workshops on preparing and cooking the food produced during the project (for more information see Programme Outline). Food produced in the gardens would be harvested and taken home to be eaten by the participants.

**TIMESCALE:**
- March- October
- Sessions 2-3 hours once a week
- Finish with a harvest event/ celebration

At the end of 2004 an external evaluation (that gave the project its name) was carried out which found that...
"the project had moved successfully from theory, to design to implementation. It produced tangible, concrete results that could - literally - be consumed." (Share and Duignan, 2005)

Following the success of the first year both projects continued with new participants in 2005. This guide is based on the experience of the two years so far. We hope it will be a resource for groups wishing to try something similar, a starting place for many such programmes, a building block for Growing in Confidence.
Core Standards

So what is particular to a Growing in Confidence Community Food Project? The following is a list of the core values/standards that identify this project:

- It is first and foremost a not-for-profit education/training project.
- The focus of the project is on delivering a training programme to meet the aims given above.
- The gardening skills training element is based on the principles of Organic food production (see appendix).
- It is accessible to people who may be managing a tight budget.
- The bulk of the learning is hands-on, practical experience in the garden or kitchen.
- It is participatory: the management (Steering Group) should involve as many stakeholders as possible including participants, gardeners, administrators, funders etc.
- Participants get to harvest, take home, and use the produce that they help grow.
- The project runs over the growing year (March - October) and covers certain key learning points (see programme outline).
What Do You Need To Run The Project?

- The Garden
- Insurance
- Equipment
- Participants including: Info. Leaflet, Application Form, Example of Advertisement
- Gardener
- Administrator
- Steering Group
- Budget
- Funding
The Garden

The site

The amount of land required for the garden can be quite small. It will depend on the size of the group and other factors as will be mentioned below. In general no more than 100 square m is needed. The diagram below is just one example of a possible garden layout. In this design it would be important to allow for access for delivery of compost material to the compost area.

As the gardener and participants will only be working in the garden once a week it is necessary to make provision for watering/maintaining protected growing areas such as greenhouses, polytunnels and seed propagators if they are used.

It is also important that participants have easy access to the garden; that toilet and hand washing facilities are available nearby; and that shelter from inclement weather is also available.

Security may also need consideration particularly if the garden might be vulnerable to vandalism.

Growing in Confidence: St Michael’s Family Life Centre, Sligo Town

Growing in Confidence: The Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim
Starting the Vegetable Plot from Scratch
An experienced organic gardener can advise you on how best to do this. A design should be discussed and agreed upon by the relevant stakeholders. The following should be considered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>Wind (is protection from the prevailing wind needed?), shade, light (e.g. areas facing south get the most direct sunlight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slope</td>
<td>Is it practical for working? Water run-off, drainage etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>What do you want in the garden e.g. open vegetable plots, protected growing (polytunnel, greenhouse, cloches, other types of cover), fruit trees (soft and top fruit), compost area, tools shed, wind breaks etc (e.g. see above).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Macro (the general climate of a large area e.g. The North West of Ireland) and Micro (the climate of a small area e.g. by the south facing wall of a garden etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Where is the best place for the garden in terms of: availability of space, other activities, security, access by people and machinery, protection from wind, exposure to the sun (e.g. is it facing South where sunlight will be optimised, any structures that will shade the garden), access to water etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil</td>
<td>Drainage, types, structure, fertility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current and previous vegetation</td>
<td>Previous cropping history, weeds, fertility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOIL
A site with fertile, self-draining, weed-free soil with good structure is ideal but not always possible. The soil can be improved over time with regular weeding and addition of organic matter (e.g. well rotted compost) but you should avoid:

- Ground on or near areas of industrial activity that may have dangerous toxins in soil e.g. chemical wastes
- Areas that have been compacted by heavy machinery or have been used to dump building rubble
  (It may still be possible to use these areas if imported soil is built up on top of the ground in raised beds)
- Bog, wetlands or any existing area of environmental importance
- Peaty soil: this can be very acidic and may need special treatment
- As the table above suggests, there are many types of soil each with their own specific requirements. An experienced Organic gardener should be consulted.

There are many types of soils and it can be difficult to know what you are looking at e.g. soil type and structure, Ph level etc. Usually the soil condition and fertility can be improved through the generous addition of organic matter and small amounts of lime and/or calcified seaweed powder. An experienced organic gardener will be able to advise further.

CULTIVATING THE GROUND
The ground can be prepared by digging it over by hand or with machinery (be careful when using rotovators or ploughs on shallow soils as this can cause problems), seek advice if unsure. Organic matter (e.g. compost, well-rotted farmyard manure etc.) can be incorporated at this stage.

If the ground is covered in perennial weeds- e.g. ground elder, creeping buttercup, docks, dandelion, nettles, horsetail, couch grass, bind weed- then measures such as covering the weeds with black plastic, for as long as possible, to weaken them may be helpful. These weeds can be removed, roots and all, by digging or by planting crop vegetables through a mulching layer.
Insurance

The insurance that will be required depends on the activities of the project. Your organisation or the place where the garden is located may already have insurance such as public liability. It is worth talking to your existing insurers about the project to see if you are covered.

Any insurance cover should take into account the following:
- Trainees taking part on the course
- Gardener (as responsible for the group) and other staff
- Public liability
- Equipment

Insurance quotes are usually made on an individual case basis. Contact a reputable insurance company for further information.

A rough estimate looks something like:
- Employer’s liability (linked to wage of gardener) € 200
- Public Liability (for trainees; unpaid; taking part once a week; using only hand held-tools; no produce sold) € 600

Equipment

A list of gardening equipment that may be required is given in the Budget section. Some of these items may not be necessary for your project. For example it may be decided that no protected growing is necessary (this will restrict the variety of crops that can be grown in some climates) or that a wind-break is not needed.

It is important that there is somewhere to wash tools and a safe place to store them (a tool shed may be required).

It is essential that a suitably large supply of organic matter (e.g. compost, well-rotted farmyard manure from a nearby organic farm) should be secured for the garden.

A water supply (e.g. a tap, hose, water butt) is essential for watering plants, seeds, and for washing tools.
Participants

Who?
The first thing to decide is who your target group is (target criteria). This could depend on a number of factors including:

- The needs of people in your area
- The nature of your organisation e.g. you already work with a particular group of people, with particular needs
- Funding: you may be able to obtain particular funding for particular target groups e.g.
  - In the 2004 Growing in Confidence CFPs it was agreed that, in order to meet the criteria in Building Healthier Hearts, participation would particularly be sought from people ‘managing a tight budget’.

Recruitment
Recruitment can be carried out in a number of ways depending on the above e.g.

- Raising awareness and interest within your existing group
- Making connections with appropriate groups in the community for referrals e.g. clubs, statutory professionals and groups, community groups
- Publicity, including posters/flyers in appropriate venues, adverts in local paper, word of mouth etc. (this may require an interview process for applicants to ensure target group(s) are represented)
- An initial information session can be held to explain the project and ‘enrol’ participants. If the project is over-subscribed a decision will have to be made as to who will not be included. Target criteria could be used and/or a ‘first come first served’ policy.
**Important:**

- Each group of people will present its own benefits and challenges. It is important that the gardener is well aware of the specific needs of the participants in the group e.g. learning difficulties, physical limitations, language, other health issues. Special training/guidance may be necessary for the gardener in order for them to be able to work with these people.

- It should be made clear what sort of physical activity will be involved in the project and the application process should allow for participants to explain their physical condition so that plans can be made to accommodate individual needs and prevent the risk of accidents or injury.

- Health and safety: this is an important issue for any organisation and there should be in place policies/procedures for staff and trainees in how to deal with injuries, awareness of dangers etc.

- In general no more than 12 participants per project is recommended. In order to replace people who 'drop-out' you can start with 15 participants and/or have a back-up waiting list.

- Care provision and transport for individual cases should be made available (*and mentioned on promotional material) and budgeted for.

An example of an information leaflet is given below, also given is an example of an advertisement for recruiting participants and an application form.

These are only examples and do not include questions or information regarding the possibility of care provision or the suitability of the programme for people of varying ability.
NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS
By former Growing in Confidence participant Donal Conaty

What CFP has to offer participants:
Apart from the obvious benefits to dietary health and weekly budget resulting from growing your own vegetables, the course provides an easygoing learning environment and a good social outlet. Working outdoors in groups of two or three is good fun - weather permitting - and good for you. The hands-on approach to learning to grow your own organic produce is particularly good at building confidence in your ability to develop your own vegetable patches. Finally, the delicious taste of the produce you harvest makes the thought of returning to supermarkets for your grocery shopping distinctly unappealing.

Top tips:
- Try to keep a course diary, it will help you retain what you learn
- If you have land, plant a vegetable patch at home simultaneously with the course; this will also help you to retain what you have learned and enable you to ask the CFP gardeners questions about your own soil type etc.
- Ask questions
- Dress for the weather but make sure clothes are loose-fitting for working

Experience on Steering Group:
The experience of joining the Steering Group gives participants insight into what motivated the HSE and Organic Centre to set up Community Food Projects. As a result you learn a lot about what is going on in the world of modern food production and make good contacts should you wish to take your interest in organic growing further. The input of participants is also useful in that it helps the steering group to finesse the courses so that they continue to - meet the needs of participants.
Community Food Project -
Growing And Cooking Fresh Vegetables

Have you ever wanted to grow your own vegetables and fruit but didn’t know how?

A good diet is central to good health and well-being. Good health begins with including as much wholesome fresh produce as possible in our daily diet. Regularly eating fruit and vegetables can reduce the risk of many diseases.

This project will give you the opportunity to learn gardening and cooking skills.

By joining this project you will:
- Learn how to grow organic vegetables & fruit
- Learn how to store and preserve
- Be able to cut cost
- Grow what you (& your family) like to eat
- Get to know your food
- Get to know what is fresh at different times of the year.
- Learn about the health benefits of fruit and vegetables
- Learn how to prepare and cook fresh produce & make interesting and economical meals for family and friends.

Where will you be located?
(1) St Michael’s Resource Centre, Sligo OR
(2) The Organic Centre, Leitrim.
You can select one of these locations.

When will the project start?
The project will run for 10 months. It will start in the second week of March on a weekly basis at first and then fortnightly as the season progresses. Each session will last 2-3 hours.

Who will teach you?
An experienced gardener from The Organic Centre will guide and you in growing the food. A trained tutor for the cooking sessions will be available showing you exciting new ways to cook what you have grown.

What will it involve?
It will involve developing a garden from scratch, sharing a plot, helping it to grow and watching it develop throughout the seasons. Also included are sessions on the basic principles of organic gardening.

Who can apply?
People who are trying to cope on a tight budget are eligible to apply.

What does it cost?
€40 will be charged for the full 12-month course. This can be paid in instalments by arrangement.

Places are limited so book early to avoid disappointment. For further enquiries please talk to Hans at the Organic Centre 071 9854338 or visit the web site at www.theorganiccentre.ie

This project is developed by HSE - NWA in partnership with The Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co Leitrim
An Invitation To

Community Food Project – Growing and Cooking Fresh Vegetables

The North Western Health Board and The Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim invite you to join in an exciting new project: Learn how to grow and cook fresh vegetables.

The connection between health and the food we eat has come to the forefront in recent years and it is now widely accepted that good health begins with including as much wholesome fresh produce as possible in our daily diet.

Nutritionists recommend, that we eat at least four portions of fresh fruit and vegetables every day.

Increasing our intake of fruit and vegetables can significantly reduce the risk of many diseases, including heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

The benefits of organic food are that they are grown in good healthy soil without the use of artificial fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides. Joining the project, you will:
- Learn how to grow organic vegetables and fruit
- Get to know your food
- Get to know the seasonality of fresh produce
- Grow what you and your family like to eat
- Learn how to prepare and cook fresh produce and make interesting and economical meals for your family
- Learn how to store and preserve
- Learn about the nutritional benefits of fruit and vegetables
- Be able to cut cost

The project will run throughout the year and participants will meet on a regular basis (weekly at the beginning and then fortnightly) for 2-4 hours.

They will develop a garden from scratch and share a dedicated plot. There will also be classroom sessions to learn about the basic principles of organic gardening.

An experienced gardener from The Organic Centre will guide and help the participants in growing food, the NW HB will provide a trained tutor for the cooking sessions.

The project will be coordinated by The Organic Centre.

Participants will be asked for a small fee (£40 for the year).

To book a place please on this project please send your name, address and telephone number to:- Community Food Project, The Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim
Community Food Project

The Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim

Name: __________________________________________

Address: ________________________________________

Contact Telephone Number: ________________________

Date: ____________________________________________

Email address if you have one: _______________________

Please tick choice of venue
Sligo Town ☐ Organic Centre ☐ Either would suit ☐

Can you attend this project on week days?
Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes please state if you would like:-
Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ Evening ☐

Do you have transport to The Organic Centre?
Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes would you be willing to share with another course member?
__________________________________________________________________________

How did you hear about this project?
__________________________________________________________________________

To book a place please fill in the application form and return by Friday 27th February to:
COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECT,
THE ORGANIC CENTRE,
ROSSINVER,
CO LEITRIM

Please do not include any fee with the application - fees can be paid at the first meeting or arrangements can be made to pay fees in instalments.
The gardener is a key person for the project as they have the main contact with participants from week to week. Their main responsibilities are:

- Plan and prepare the garden
- Manage and maintain garden with participants
- Purchase and record necessary garden/training resources
- Liaise with Administrator
- Prepare and keep a record of training sessions
- Participate on Steering group
- ‘Troubleshoot’ garden and participant issues/problems
- Facilitate Participants:
  - Learning
  - Group dynamics
  - Individual needs
  - Garden work

**Gardener's Wage:**
- €25 per hour (as at 2005)
- 3 hour per week x 28 weeks..................€2100
  (1 hour prep, 2 hour contact time)
- 3 hour per month meetings X 7 months.......€525
RECRUITING A GARDENER:
This should be undertaken in line with employment legislation (see Appendix- Useful Contacts)

The following is an example of an advert for a Gardener that could be placed in appropriate publications:

The Organic Centre Community Food Project requires an

ORGANIC GARDENER

To train adult participants in organic food growing in Rossinver on a part time basis.

Knowledge and experience of organic gardening and an interest in working with people are required

Please send CV to Hans Weiland or call 071 9854338 for more information email: organiccentre@eircom.net

Funding information
The following is an example of an interview score sheet that lists some appropriate criteria and questions for interview and selection purposes. Interviews should be carried out with at least two interviewers present who should score separately and add results together to find the most appropriate candidate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Essential/Desirable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Highest mark possible</th>
<th>Mark Given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>QUALIFICATION</strong></td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Interest and basic introduction to organic gardening</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>8 month or longer course in organic gardening</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPERIENCE</strong></td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>2-3 years gardening experience</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>Work with groups of young people, children, adults and/or adult training experience</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KNOWLEDGE</strong></td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Basic Organic principles, techniques and theory</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>Advanced knowledge</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPECIAL APTITUDE</strong></td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills, communication skills, motivation, commitment</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>Leadership, teaching skills, presentation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES</strong></td>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Clean licence and access to car, work during school hours</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS AS A GUIDELINE:**
- Explore CV in terms of qualifications and experience as it relates to the job
- What can you bring to the Community Food Project as a gardener?
- How would you start to prepare the garden for the coming season?
- How would you facilitate the participants’ learning?
- How would you deal with a participant who was disrupting the group by behaving inappropriately?
- Do you have any questions?
NOTES FOR GARDNERS

The following is an edited compilation of observations and ideas from Growing in Confidence Gardeners Aisling O’Connor, and Ingrid Foley as well as words of wisdom from elsewhere.

As a gardener working on a Growing in Confidence CFP you should be prepared for:
- A site which may have fertility challenges e.g. perennial weeds, no compost, manure
- Limited facilities e.g. propagation area
- Varying needs of the group e.g. work rates, amount of questions asked, various abilities, special needs
- Planning for the sessions- both the practical content and theoretical information
- Troubleshooting: thinking on your feet, answering questions, delegating jobs, flexibility
- Health and safety issues, policies and procedures
- Not taking on too much and being too busy: keep the garden to a manageable scale

People Skills:
- Make the work as enjoyable and fun as possible with a balance between authoritative decision-making and 'community ownership' of the garden particularly at harvest time
- Try to be inclusive and be sure to know the individuals in the group and their needs e.g. if someone has special needs make sure that you are equipped by the appropriate people to help manage their needs
- Be aware of group dynamics (e.g. people who need space from each other, any inappropriate behaviour, group tensions etc.) and try to quietly address these
- Be aware of policies and procedures for dealing with complaints, incidents etc.

Practical considerations:
- Keep the grass around the garden cut, it may need to be done outside of the contact sessions but by whom?
- Other maintenance outside of sessions e.g. watering (seeds, polytunnels etc.). Who takes charge of this? Perhaps a participant lives nearby or the garden is located in an area where someone working nearby can help.
- Security. Is the garden safe from vandalism etc? If not, what can be done?
- Keep records of what you do each session (e.g. a short diary) as well as any theoretical information you give.
Administrator

The Administrator manages the overall project. The job is part time and can be carried out by existing personnel in an organisation if possible/appropriate. If a new staff position is necessary then the above advert and interview schedule can be modified to fit the requirements of the job (see below). The Administrator is mainly accountable to the Steering Group although other staff procedures already in place may also apply.

**ADMINISTRATOR’S WAGE:**
The possible budget given below suggests €3000 for the administration of the project. This figure should cover wages as well as expenses such as stationary, travel, telephone, electricity, heating etc. This figure may be higher if a computer and accompanying equipment are not available.

**Wage:**
- €15 per hour (as at 2005)
- 3 hour per week x 40 weeks.........................€1800
- 3 hour per month meetings X 7 months.......€315

**Total.......................................................€2115**
The Steering Group is a committee set up to oversee the start of the project and subsequent development. The steering group should include in its membership: Participant representatives, Gardener(s), Administrator, Representatives of connected/partnering organisations, Appropriate funding representatives, Other interested and appropriate individuals.
The Steering group will usually meet once a month. A chairperson is selected who will be responsible for setting the agenda and directing the meetings. Minutes can be kept and distributed by the administrator.

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**
- Health and Safety guidelines and procedures such as accident reporting, first aid arrangements, emergency procedures, risk assessments etc. The publication 'The Essential Guide to Health & Safety for Horticulture' published by the HAS and Bord Glas is available from these organisations (see Appendix for contact details)
- Employment/Staff: Conditions of employment (e.g. sickness provision, holidays, wage payments etc.), Fair Employment guidelines, Discipline and Dismissal procedures, Dealing with Discrimination and Bullying, Grievance procedures (making complaints, recording etc.)
- See Appendix (Useful Contacts and Publications) for sources of further information on the above
POSSIBLE BUDGET FOR STARTING A COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECT

- The amounts given below are approximate based on a variety of quotes/experiences as at 2004/2005 (see appendix for contacts). The total is for a project starting from scratch, subsequent projects may not cost as much
- It may be possible to reduce the amount needed by finding alternative ways of providing the same quality of programme (e.g. donations of equipment, other voluntary contributions, using existing resources etc.). You may also find some of the items at a lower cost
- Items marked with an asterisk * are those which are either not necessary or essential or may vary in the amount needed

MANAGEMENT OF PROJECT

Ground preparation*:
- Wages €20 per hour x 40 hours......................€800
- Equipment hire ...........................................€275

Gardener’s Wage- €25 per hour
- 3 hour per week x 28 weeks.........................€2,100
- 3 hour per month meetings...........................€525

- Administration/co-ordination .......................€3,000
- Cooking Tuition .........................................€500
- Insurance ..................................................€800
- Monitoring/evaluation ................................€500
- Ads/publicity/recruitment ..............................€500
- Miscellaneous*: .........................................€3,000
  e.g. travel costs, harvest event, venues for tuition, care provision, tool replacement etc

Total ......................................................................€12,000
TOOLS/EQUIPMENT:
Some of the following items are optional or may not be needed. Where this is the case the item is marked with an asterisk *

Crop fleeces (to protect from wind, frost, pest etc.)
- Crop Fleeces .................................................. €20
- Pins for fleece ................................................. €20

Propagation
- Seed and potting compost ...................................... €100
- Seed trays/modules ............................................ €70
- Pots ...................................................................... €40
- Seeds .................................................................... €100
- Labels .................................................................... €10
- Watering cans for seedlings ...................................... €10

Other useful equipment:
- Secateurs ................................................................. €50
- Watering can ........................................................... €15
- Dustbins x 2 (for liquid feeds and rubbish) .............. €30
- Harvesting knives x 5 ............................................... €75
- Strimmer/lawnmower* .............................................. €150-250
- Garden shears .......................................................... €50
- Hoe €25-30 x 3 ........................................................ €75-90
- Digging fork €35 x 3 .................................................. €105
- Spade €40 x 3 ........................................................... €120
- Hand Trowels €25 x 3 ................................................ €75
- Row Marker ............................................................ €40
- Rake €40 x 3 ............................................................. €120
- Buckets x 2 ............................................................. €10
- Compost forks €40 x 3 ................................................. €120
- Wheelbarrow €50 x 2 .................................................. €100
- Tool Shed* ............................................................... €300-400
- Fertility (FYM, Compost) ........................................... €200
- Black Plastic for covering beds ................................. €50

Protected growing*
- Small Glasshouse .................................................... €500-600
- Small Hobby Polytunnel (3.6m x 6m) ......................... €600-700
- Erecting Polytunnel .................................................. €500
- Propagators (8 seed tray capacity) ............................. €150
- Other types as an alternative e.g. cloches ................... €200

Other watering (assuming access to water supply which is essential)*
- Watering hose ........................................................ €30
- Watering lance +attachments .................................... €70

Wind Breaks*
- Wind-break Green Net (1m x 50m) ................................ €50
- Fence Posts ............................................................. €50

Total ............................................................................. €4620

Total cost for starting project ...................................... €16,620
Funding

There are a number of ways to approach funding:

- Private contributions: this would involve a network of individuals and/or supportive businesses committing to provide a certain amount each to raise the total amount.
- Grant Aid funding: this involves applying to a grant awarding body for the total or a proportion of the costs

Both these approaches involve some organisation and effort and although they require slightly different approaches there are a few important considerations to keep in mind:

- Be clear on what you are going to do and who is going to do it (e.g. who is on the steering group and who will do what). Set goals (this guide may help).
- What legal identity will you have: You may wish to set the project up as a separate company limited by guarantee and/or as a charity or perhaps it will be part of an existing organisation. Further information can be found from the contacts given in the appendix (including Office of the Revenue Commissioners, Combat Poverty Agency, The Companies Registration Office)
- Set up the structures for accountability e.g. how will records be kept, who will see them, what bank accounts will be created?
- Where do you want to get funding? (see Appendix for useful contacts and publications)

Phone your local Health Promotion Office and ask for advice about funding. Similarly there are other local organisations that can help if you phone and explain what you are trying to do (see local phone directory) e.g. Local Development Companies, Local Partnerships.

Contact details are given in the appendix for national organisations including The Department of Community, Rural, and Gaeltacht Affairs and Area Development Management Ltd. (ADM).
Programme Outline

**TIMESCALE:**
- March - October
- Sessions 2-3 hours once a week
- Finish with a harvest meal, celebration, certificate presentation

Although each programme may differ depending on the participants, the gardener, weather, the garden, equipment etc. the following table is a guide to the content of the training programme. Only three sessions a month are accounted for below as the project may not run every week (e.g. break for holidays, bad weather etc.). All the learning points can involve both theory and practical elements although the teaching should be mainly practical.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Week 1:</th>
<th>Week 2:</th>
<th>Week 3:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid March</td>
<td><strong>Initial information and recruitment meeting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Planning the garden / garden design</strong></td>
<td><strong>Seed and tuber sowing (direct)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ordering seeds</strong></td>
<td><strong>Maintaining indoor seeds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Preparing beds</strong></td>
<td><strong>Continue sowing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>('lazy', raised, digging, composting, lining out)**</td>
<td><strong>Preparing supports for peas, climbing beans etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td><strong>Bed Preparation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Principles of Organic Gardening</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Seed sowing (indoors)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Seed Sowing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td><strong>General garden maintenance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Planting out</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cooking session 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Herbs for the garden</strong></td>
<td><strong>Direct sowing</strong></td>
<td><strong>(see Eat-Well- Be-Well programme in Appendix)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td><strong>Weeding, hoeing</strong></td>
<td><strong>General Maintenance Review of vegetables so far</strong></td>
<td><strong>Soft Fruits and Top fruits</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Planting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Harvest?</strong></td>
<td><strong>(introduction)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td><strong>Harvesting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review/evaluation of programme so far</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cooking session 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Earthing-up</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(see Eat-Well- Be-Well programme in Appendix)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Maintenance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Herbs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td><strong>Planting late crops</strong></td>
<td><strong>Composting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disease and pest control</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Harvest and maintenance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fertility feeds</strong></td>
<td><strong>Winter crops</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(seaweed, comfrey etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td><strong>Planning for End of Season</strong></td>
<td><strong>Final Harvest</strong></td>
<td><strong>End of Season Harvest Event</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Harvest Celebration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prepare beds for winter</strong></td>
<td><strong>(see Appendix)</strong></td>
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</table>
Evaluating

Evaluating the project is important for a number of reasons:

- It can help you to see if the aims and objectives are being met. This will usually involve planning how to measure whether or not they have been achieved i.e. what are the indicators that show it? This information can be useful for future funding and may even be a requirement of the current funders. It is also encouraging to be reminded that what you are doing really is worthwhile.
- The Evaluation can help you monitor how the project is progressing and if any immediate changes are needed.
- A good evaluation can help you to improve the project for the next year e.g. added objectives, new ideas, making changes etc.

There are a number of ways of carrying out an evaluation:

- Self-evaluation: this is when the evaluation is carried out ‘internally’ i.e. you do it yourself. It is very important to be clear on how you will do this: what will the indicators be (see above) and how will you measure them (e.g. what questions will you ask and to whom will you ask them?); who will do the work of collecting the information and putting it together in a readable format? In this case it is useful to see how other such projects have been evaluated (see Appendix- Useful Contacts and Publications- for details of the evaluation carried out for the first Growing In Confidence projects)
- External evaluation: you could get someone else to do the work for you. This would involve either budgeting money for it (see Budget section above) or making contact with Universities/ Further Education Colleges to see if they will help for free.

You may wish to consider some different techniques for gathering 'evidence'. Some involve gathering facts and figures (quantitative) while others are based more on stories and experiences (qualitative):

- Filming the key elements of the project that demonstrate the objectives being achieved
- Photographic (still) evidence
- Questionnaires
- Recordings from group work evaluation sessions (flip charts, notes etc.)
- ‘Testimonies’ from participants (audio or text)
What Next?

What do you do when you have completed a Growing in Confidence Community Food Project?

If you think the project went well and the evaluation shows that it had a positive impact then why not do another one?

The costs will be less the second time around.

Often it may take a new project a while to 'settle in' i.e. lessons will have been learnt, the profile of the project will have hopefully increased, the garden will be in 'full swing' (e.g. fruit will be more productive, the soil will hopefully be improving etc.)

Those past participants that wish to return could do so to assist the gardener and support new participants.

Perhaps, for a variety of reasons, it is not appropriate to continue with a new project. There may be other ways that the newly created garden can continue, e.g.

- Community Garden- perhaps there are a group of committed gardeners in the area who would like to take responsibility for developing the garden along a similar ethos
- Allotments- perhaps a voluntary allotment committee could be set up to establish a number of smaller plots within the garden for individuals to use
Appendices

- What is Organic?
- Community Food and Gardening Projects
- Benefits of Community Gardening Projects
- Useful Contacts and Publications
- Community Food Project press release example and press articles
- Eat-Well-Be-Well programme outline and sample recipe
- Harvest Celebration programme outline and invitation
- Participant Certificate
Why Grow Organically

An extract from an essay produced by The Organic Centre (Rossinver), 2004

We are increasingly aware of the problems associated with intensive agriculture, horticulture and gardening practices. Problems of food quality, pesticide residues, animal health and disease, decline in wildlife, and pollution of the environment have led people to question the development of current systems of food production. From the farmers’ and producers’ perspective, profit margins are continually decreasing while policies and advice also seem to continually change. Organic production seeks to resolve many of these problems, whatever the scale.

What is organic gardening

The following practices apply to Organic gardening, growing and farming

- Treating the soil and growing environment as a resource to be preserved and improved for future generations.
- Providing plants with a balanced food supply by feeding the soil.
- Avoiding pollution of the environment by recycling garden and farm wastes and choosing renewable and local resources, ideally trying to work within a closed system where enough manure and compost is produced on site to maintain the fertility of the gardens.
- Combating pests and diseases without using pesticides that may prove harmful to people and the environment.
- Encouraging and protecting wildlife by creating suitable habitats and by minimising the use of pesticides.
- Using good agricultural and horticultural practices and taking new scientific knowledge into account as well as proven traditional knowledge.
- Recognising the importance of genetic diversity and preserving threatened plant varieties.
- Treating livestock with respect and providing them with conditions of life that conform to their physiological needs.
- Making it possible for producers to earn a living through their work.

"The Health of man, beast, plant and soil is one indivisible whole"
Lady Eve Balfour
Community food and gardening projects

(Extracts from Growing in Confidence An evaluation of the Organic Centre/NWHO Community Food Project 2004 by Perry Share and Geraldine Duignan, Institute of Technology, Sligo, 2005)

“the products of the vegetable patch or the orchard are so much more than the produce itself. Health, good diet, exercise, food knowledge, biodiversity, that ‘look I made it myself!’ feeling, too often lost from our adult lives”

(Scottish Community Diet Project, nd- Growing Interest: A flavour of community growing in Scotland)

The history of community gardens in Europe can be traced back to the allotments provided for working class families in Britain and Germany in the early nineteenth century...

The 1960s saw a rebirth of interest in community gardening, partly stimulated by the development of counter-cultural movements. Community gardens are now a world-wide phenomenon found, for example, in China, Japan, Russia, Brazil, North America, Canada, Australia and in many parts of Europe...

In Scotland it has been argued that community food projects can address issues related to health and to community, in particular by re-empowering people in relation to the choices they can make about food:

“[through community gardening] communities can take back some control over food and what they eat and through this take away some of the power of the food industry to tell us what we want to eat. However it is not simply about food, it is about supporting and building stronger communities through successful and fun action at local level”

(Ibid)

It is also important to note that community growing projects are only part of the solution to the development of healthier eating patterns...However a large number of positive benefits have been identified...
Benefits of Community Growing Projects (SCDP, nd: 9)

In looking at proposals for the development of urban agriculture in London, Sustain identified a number of benefits to the City and Community. These covered:

Environmental
- Greater biological diversity of plants and animals
- Less waste, resulting from more composting activity and less food packaging
- Reduced food transportation through greater availability of local produce
- Less pollution and lower pollution related costs from the greater environmental awareness generated by urban agriculture.

Economic
- Some commercially viable jobs in food growing, processing and marketing, and in composting and related industries
- A boost to the leisure industry through increased sales of gardening inputs
- A stronger sustainable food and agriculture industry (urban and rural).
- Business benefits through greener, more attractive local environments, a better public image and more skilled and motivated workers
- Contributions to the alternative economy through LETS and social enterprises.

Health
- Health and social benefits, so reducing the burden on statutory services
- Increased consumption of fruit and vegetables through greater availability of affordable fresh produce
- Opportunities for physical activity stress relief for everyone and mental health gains for those with specific difficulties.

Community development
- More active participation in community life and a practical focus for working with others across a variety of social divisions
- Opportunities for delivering many of Government's area based regeneration objectives.

Educational
- Opportunities for school curriculum teaching, vocational training and for lifelong learning, training and employment
- Opportunities particularly for disadvantaged people."
Useful Contacts and Publications

- **The Organic Centre**
  Rossinver
  Co. Leitrim
  Tel: 071 9854338
  email: organiccentre@eircom.net
  web: www.theorganiccentre.ie

- **Health Promotion Department, HSE - North Western Area**
  Saimer Court, Ballyshannon, Co Donegal
  Tel: 071-9852000
  Email: emma.ball@mailb.hse.ie
  *Or contact your local health promotion office*


- **Tools and equipment:**
  - Fruit Hill Farm: Tel. 027 50710 email fhf@eircom.net Fax. 027 51894
  - Organic & Green Guide to Ireland, Edited by Siobhan Morris (2005), Organic Centre Publications

- **Health and Safety Procedures and Policy:**
  - The Essential Health & Safety Guide for Horticulture (2004), HAS and Bord Glas
  - HSA (Health and Safety Authority) 10 Hogan Pl, Dublin, Tel: 1890289389, 01-6147000, www.hsa.ie
  - Bord Glas, Commercial House, West End Commercial Village, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, Tel: 01 8030398, www.bordglas.ie

- **Employment Procedures and Policies**
  - Iris Congress of Trade Unions 31/32 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, Tel: 018897777, email congress@ictu.ie web www.ictu.ie

- **Funding (and project identity/structure)**
  - Café Publications/Clann Credo Irish Fundraising Handbook 5th Edition 2003-2004- I Publications, 10/11 Earl Street South, Dublin 8, Tel:01 4736600, email j@connect.ie
  - Combat Poverty Agency
    Bridgwater Centre, Conyngham Rd, Islandbridge, Dublin 8, Tel: 01 6706746 www.cpa.ie
  - Office of the Revenue Commissioners (tax and project identity)
    Charities Section, Government Offices, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, Tel 1890 254565
  - The Companies Registration Office
    Parnell House, 14 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, Tel 01 804 5222 www.cro.ie
- The Department of Community, Rural, and Gaeltacht Affairs [www.pobail.ie, www.dormantaccounts.ie]
- Area Development Management Ltd. (ADM) [www.adm.ie]

- **Evaluation:**
  - Growing in Confidence An evaluation of the Organic Centre/NWHR Community Food Project 2004 by Perry Share and Geraldine Duignan, Institute of Technology, Sligo, 2005 (copies available from The Organic Centre, address above)

- **Organic Growing:**
  - Grow your Own vegetables, Joy Larkcom (2002), Frances Lincoln Limited

- **Recipe Books:**
  - River Café Cookbook: Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers (2000), Green Erbury Press
  - The River Cottage Cookbook: Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall (2001), Harpers Collins
  - The Boxing Clever Cookbook: Jacqui Jones and Joan Wilmot (2002), J&J Publishing
  - Nigel Slater the kitchen diaries: Nigel Slater (2005), Forth Estate
Press Release Example

Community Food Project - Growing and Cooking Fresh Vegetables
The Health Service Executive North West and The Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim have embarked on an exciting new project: Learn how to grow and cook fresh vegetables.

Now in its second year the aim is to help people on a tight budget to produce and use organic vegetables. Under the guidance of two gardeners from the Organic Centre two enthusiastic groups recently began to grow vegetables and herbs in Sligo and in Rossinver. The HSE will provide a tutor for "Eat well - Be well" sessions, when participants will cook what they have grown.

The connection between health and the food we eat has come to the forefront in recent years and it is now widely accepted that good health begins with including as much wholesome fresh produce as possible in our daily diet. Nutritionists recommend that we eat at least four portions of fresh fruit and vegetables every day. Increasing our intake of fruit and vegetables can significantly reduce the risk of many diseases, including heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

This initiative is part of the national cardiovascular strategy building healthier hearts. As well as direct health benefits, eating fruit and vegetables can help to achieve other dietary goals including fibre intake, reducing fat intake, aiding weight management and substituting for high sugar foods.

The benefits of organic food are that they are grown in good healthy soil without the use of artificial fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides.

Participants of the project will
- Learn how to grow organic vegetables and fruit
- Get to know their food
- Get to know the seasonality of fresh produce
- Grow what they and their family like to eat
- Learn how to prepare and cook fresh produce and make interesting and economical meals for their families
- Learn how to store and preserve
- Learn about the nutritional benefits of fruit and vegetables
- Be able to cut cost

The project will run throughout the year and participants at present meet in the gardens of St. Michaels Family Centre in Sligo Town and The Organic Centre in Rossinver once a week for a few hours to garden together.

For more information call Hans Wieland at 071-9854338
Eat Well Be Well Programme

(Adapted from information and text supplied by Emma Ball, Community Dietitian Manager, HSE-NWA)

Eat Well Be Well is a community-based, nutrition intervention project which has been running in the North Western Health Board region since 1999. The course is delivered by trained "lay-health" tutors, (i.e. non-health professionals) and is based on a community development approach.

The aim of the course is to promote nutritious, affordable meals by practical "hands-on" application.

OBJECTIVES:
- To introduce the Food Pyramid and how it works in the real world.
- To discuss ways of providing nutritious food at an affordable price.
- To explore food labelling and it's meaning
- To learn ways of reducing fat intake
- To cook and taste nutritious meals.

Each course usually incorporates six sessions with each session 1.5-2hrs in duration, but it can be longer or shorter and it's content tailored to suit the needs of each group.

For the Community Food Project, while the Eat Well Be Well tutors are used, the content is modified. The focus is on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption within the parameters of healthy eating guidelines.

There are 2 sessions provided to the participants instead of the normal 6 week course and it is more practical than theoretical. The aim is to provide the participants with recipes and suggestions for cooking the products that they grow and to incorporate them into healthy nutritious meals. The tutors use the produce from the garden as much as possible with the participants involved in the preparation of the meals.

While the Eat Well Be Well programme is specific to the North West Area, in other parts of the country, tutors could be sourced from similar type programmes such as 'Healthy Food Made Easy' or 'Cook It'.
Harvest Celebration Programme 2005

For Participants:
11:00-11:30  Tea and Scones, introduction

11:30-11:45  Slide Show/review of the Year

11:45-1:15   Facilitated evaluation session

For Participants and Invited Guests
1:15-1:30    Arrival of guests, welcome address

1:35-2:30    Lunch

2:45-3:15    Presentation of Certificates

3:15         Garden Tour
Acknowledgements

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- Sarah Marriott and the Irish Times for permission to include the reduced copy of the article "Enjoying the organic experience"

Photographs: All photographs (not including copies of Press Articles) were taken by Aisling O’Connor and Hans Wieland. Front cover photos by Hans Wieland (top) and Aisling O’Connor (bottom)

There are others not named here who have helped in the production of this guide and I offer them my thanks also.

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