



## Briefing: **Workplace growing**

### **The workplace growing concept**

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Workplace growing encompasses a wide range of gardening activity on sites where people work. This could be private businesses with spare pieces of land available for growing, public spaces such as universities, hospitals, schools, or prisons or could belong to organisations like churches or village halls. These are places where volunteers, staff, patients, prisoners, parishioners, customers and students can come together and create a vibrant space to grow.

Workplace growing is gardening activity supported by the workplace which allows a piece of land on their site to be used to for growing. In an RHS survey 73% of respondents said they considered gardening to be a good way of unwinding from the pressures of work and over half said if they had access to a workplace garden they would use it. Workplace growing often involves the staff who work on the site but then the local community is invited to use the land as well and actively participate in decisions about site design, what will be grown, when people will be on site and how they will all work together effectively.

Workplace growing spaces are experiencing a higher profile as the demand for community growing spaces has increased. This is particularly relevant in areas where few open spaces are available to people and where those people want to create a garden, orchard or wildlife area. People have started to look beyond their own gardens, allotments, parks or other open spaces to find additional alternative growing sites. Workplace gardens are starting to look at new ways of using land more effectively in the spaces they work in.

Growing Together have worked with a variety of workplace growing spaces. We found that most of the places that were most effective in offering land were large institutions such as hospitals, prisons, local authorities and universities. In the past nine months Growing Together has worked closely with six workplaces: two hospitals, a university, two prisons and a local authority. The sites varied and included vegetable growing, orchards, wildlife areas, and beekeeping.

## 10 Key workplace growing points

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1. Workplace sites can provide land for the community in places where there may not be a lot of spare land to grow on.
2. They can introduce experienced gardeners to those who have little or no experience of gardening.
3. Sites can attract new groups of people who want to get involved with community growing including staff, patients, students and prisoners.
4. The management of a successful site needs lots of prior planning so it is clear how volunteers, staff and the community can access the site and how they can work effectively on the site together in a planned and organised way. It is likely you will need quite a few planning meetings before starting up.
5. Providing space to grow can be a good way for organisations to meet their corporate social responsibilities and raise their profile within the community.
6. Workplace growing sites for the community are about creating relationships with long-term value – building relationships with the community. Not just a one off.
7. Growing a variety of trees, flowers and vegetables can increase the biodiversity of the site.
8. Workplace gardens create a focus for communities promoting inclusion, integration and acceptance
9. The Community Land Advisory Service (CLAS) can offer advice on leases and licencing of land. [www.communitylandadvice.org.uk](http://www.communitylandadvice.org.uk)
10. When approaching any workplace make sure you know who the decision makers on the site are. This can include people who are responsible for human resources, training and skills managers, community liason officers and site managers. Make sure you have their agreement to use the site before making further plans.

## Some things to think about before you start

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- What kind of garden can you create in the space?
- Who will work on it and manage it?
- Who are the decision makers on the site?
- What activities do you want to run?
- If it is a large site, could you team up with other community gardeners in the area to collectively work on the site?
- Do some of the people involved have experience of growing?
- Do you need funding for anything on the site or could you borrow or make what you need?
- Will you sell or give away produce and plants?
- What support do you need and where can you get additional information and support?

## Types of workplace growing

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There are a variety of workplaces which might be suited to workplace growing projects. Workplaces can offer a vast range of opportunities and the benefit that unused or under-used land can be brought into productive use. At the moment workplace growing spaces are still a relatively new idea and it is perhaps too early to decide how popular they will become. Their success is heavily dependent on the degree of trust established between the provider of land and the users of that land.

Work has been carried out in England to establish Landshare, an organisation which acts as a broker of land sharing arrangements. The work on this concept has also included consideration of the legal arrangements needed to protect both landowner and community interests.

Landshare connects people who have a passion for home-grown food with those who have land to share which could be used for cultivating food. Since its launch through River Cottage in 2009 it has grown into a thriving community of more than 55,000 growers, sharers and helpers. Landshare is for people who:

- Want to grow their own fruit and veg but don't have anywhere to do it
- Have a spare bit of land they're prepared to share
- Can help in some way – from sharing knowledge and lending tools to helping out on the plot itself
- Support the idea of freeing up more land for growing
- Are already growing and want to join in the community.

For more information go to: [www.landshare.net/index](http://www.landshare.net/index)

Growing Together has worked with and given help and support to a variety of workplace growing spaces over the past nine months. They fall into the following categories:

### Privately owned sites

These are sites owned by privately owned businesses that may have spare land for growing. Usually they offer the land initially to their staff but there may be opportunities for other groups or members of the community to access this land as well. However due to the private workplace's lack of experience of engaging this way with their community, this is the least likely kind of workplace to offer land for growing. Getting this type of workplace growing off the ground will take more planning and negotiation if the space is to be made available to the community as well as staff.

#### *Case study: The Book People in Surrey*

Now in its fifth year, this scheme was initiated by the owners of the Book People. The existing gardeners prepared the site and erected fences to keep out pests. The owners of the business supply tools, a shed and manure.

Take up tends to fluctuate as staff change. There are presently 31 staff with gardens and there are spare gardens on one of the sites. The scheme has been running for

four years. Gardens are free to staff to use. They are overseen by one member of staff but generate very little administration. There are no agreements to sign and no pressure about how they are managed.

For more information go to: [www.communitylandadvice.org.uk/workplace-allotments](http://www.communitylandadvice.org.uk/workplace-allotments)

### **Case study: Manchester Airport**

More than 100 employees have allotments on a site located within a few hundred yards of the main runway. The field was ploughed professionally by the airport and facilities provided for the workers. Courses are provided to help get people started and they hope the project will promote sustainability, healthy living and wellbeing. Staff members are responsible for keeping their own land in order.

[www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/airport-allotment-where-they-plot-how-to-keep-89128](http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/airport-allotment-where-they-plot-how-to-keep-89128)

## **University sites**

Universities are often in urban areas with quite a lot of unused land which can be a perfect combination for creating workplace growing areas. A site could be used collectively by staff, students and the community.

An increasing number of universities (including University of Bradford, Leeds University, University of Gloucestershire, University of Bristol and University of Kent) are setting aside land to enable students to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

### **Case study: Growing Futures at Plymouth University (also known as the Secret Garden)**

This project aims to develop the campus to become a haven for free food and wildlife and is a partnership between Plymouth University and the Institute for Sustainability Solutions Research, Centre for Sustainable Futures and Student Partnership. The garden is open to students, staff and Plymouth residents.

The project welcomes everyone to weekly gardening sessions Tuesdays, 12.30-2.00pm in the Physic Garden, where they can learn new skills, get free food and plants and meet friends.

This initiative builds on the Centre for Sustainable Futures' fellowship work to develop the Physic Garden lead by the Schools of Nursing and Midwifery and Biomedical and Biological Sciences, with students and staff involved from across campus including art, design, architecture and education.

The project has been made possible through funding from the University's Student Partnership scheme. As well as volunteers, support comes from community organisations, including Plymouth Tree Partnership and Plymouth Food Charter.

The project has far reaching consequences, such as informal interdisciplinary communication on sustainability, links with the campus space strategy, the proposed student wellbeing centre, learning and research.

Further online info: <https://www.facebook.com/GrowingFuturesPlymouthUniversitysSecretGarden>

## Hospital sites

Like universities, hospitals are also often in urban areas and have many areas around their sites for incorporating growing spaces within their grounds. The focus of growing sites within a hospital can, in particular, be to promote exercise, healthy eating and living.

### *Case study: The Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham*

This is a new, very large hospital in Edgbaston area of Birmingham. The hospital employs 6,900 staff and provides services to more than half a million patients every year. It has the largest organ transplant programme in Europe and provides medical support to military personnel.

QE Hospital have identified 12 areas for community gardens on the hospital site and want to work closely with the community sector as well as staff, patients and residents. Growing Together helped the hospital identify a number of community groups who can take over the running and growing in different areas of land around the hospital. The local authority have donated fruit trees and staff to plant outside the main reception area. There are challenges of working with staff who are responsible for the grounds as the hospital have a PFI contract for the next 25 years but the staff are willing to work towards the vision of the hospital to have 12 individual garden sites. These will be rolled out over a number of years with a 3 or 4 new sites started each year.

Key principles of the project and upcoming work include:

- All parties will work in partnership to enable the local community to become involved
- Phase 1 will be agreed by the steering group, but all other phases will be jointly agreed with local people.
- The hospital will consider broader principles, such as employment and education, when engaging with the community to 'add value' to the work we do.
- Formal fruit trees planted in the reception area of the hospital. This will include bees.
- The Mental Health Trust on the site will introduce therapeutic gardening.
- That partners work for voluntary organisations whose time is precious and it will not be assumed that they will always be able to attend or contribute without consideration and recompense.
- Dialogue with the Wildlife Trust regarding conservation work parties
- An open meeting will be held one evening to encourage involvement from community groups and individuals. Hosted by the hospital.
- Communications to be handled by the hospital.

## Prisons

Prisons are looking for ways that they can work more effectively in their community. Currently Growing Together is working with Gartree Prison in Market Harborough in Leicestershire and Ryehill prison in Coventry.

### ***Case study: Gartree Prison***

This is a category B, high security prison, on the outskirts of Market Harborough. The learning and skills officer approached the community because they have large amounts of unused land, a yard with about 20 chickens and a 150 foot greenhouse which are all not being used. There are around 700 prisoners on this site who are all in for long sentences (typically 15 years) and there are about 50 older prisoners who have recently been re-housed in an alternative cells on the site to accommodate their specific needs. Volunteers from the community will be going into the prison and working with prisoners on their gardens inside the prison on a regular basis. Vegetables grown on the site will be used at the prison as well as the community.

One of the main issues for Growing Together was the need for more time to work out creating an inviting and positive experience for the volunteers to ensure they felt safe and well informed. We created an induction programme that gave as much information as possible to new volunteers so they knew what they were signing up to. The induction programme included the following steps:

1. Attending an Open Forum Meeting and issuing a handbook. Chance for people to hear from prison staff and ask questions.
2. Visit 1 to Gartree (Supervised) – for a general walk around.
3. Visit 2 to Gartree (supervised) to take part in gardening session and see what is involved.
4. Complete the vetting process.
5. Induction talk to be undertaken
6. Optional Q&A session
7. Start taking part in the gardening project

The whole process will probably take about 8-12 weeks but ensures that volunteers get to know each other as well as staff and prisoners before they commit to working regularly on the site. The project will launch in the spring of 2014.

### **School sites**

Some schools with larger grounds are starting to look at not only creating gardens for their pupils but also to use the land for the community's benefit. There are some issues to be aware of such as access when the school is closed and ensuring that pupils and community sector have restricted access that allows both groups to work with each other safely.

#### ***Case study: Mundy Junior School, Derbyshire***

This school is situated on a site that totals nearly 5 acres. The staff and governors recognised that they had an enormous potential to provide their pupils with a broader more balanced curriculum.

The school has already begun to implement aspects of a creative curriculum based on a more applied method of learning using the school grounds within core subjects. The creation of the community gardens are now enabling them to enhance this opportunity for all their children, enabling us to cater for all abilities through integrating a more applied learning method, increasing the school's ability to deliver an educational service increasing 'access to learning'. The children grow produce with an aim to provide seasonal fruit and vegetables to the school kitchens and will apply business models and embark on enterprise schemes.

In addition Mundy School involve their community in the form of local agencies and groups. This helps with the creation of the gardens and harnesses the skills that

their community members possess, providing opportunities for dissemination to children and staff. Their further aim is to create greater ownership and pride in their town as a whole through community engagement.

The community gardens on the site are located so that separate external access for weekend use is available via a palisade gate situated on the school's boundary fence adjacent to the public footpath. The pedestrian gate is serviced into the site by a hardcore path to the shed and polytunnel and enables wheelchair and restricted mobility access. There is vehicle access through existing gates from the playground to the field and then into the site through an internal fence. They also have a polytunnel and a shed on site.

The pupils of Mundy Junior School have restricted gated access through the school. The community gardens are made up of six garden plots that have raised beds built so the structure of the land is not disturbed. These gardens incorporate a number of beds specifically for disabled access.

They recorded a video that can be viewed at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SbDF-BGN3Yo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SbDF-BGN3Yo)

## Legal issues, policies and other organisational considerations

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The main legal issue will be deciding on land agreements or a lease. There is wide variation in the format and structures of community gardening groups and in the legal agreements relating to their use of land. This, and the lack of any formal protection similar to that of allotments, places greater importance on having strong and explicit agreements, especially for temporary spaces.

The Community Land Advisory Service (CLAS) is an impartial, collaborative service aiming to increase community access to land across the UK. CLAS helps communities and land managers gain satisfactory agreements on access to land by providing guidance on technical lease agreements and related issues. CLAS has been developed to help combat the lack of available land for community gardening and associated green space activities. They can offer both hands-on help and online information resources to both landowners and community organisations. For more information go to: [www.communitylandadvice.org.uk](http://www.communitylandadvice.org.uk)

Various policies may be required to help ensure that the volunteers and staff working on the site understand clearly the principles that guide the decisions that are made on the site and are useful in helping to realise the positive benefits of a community garden on a workplace site.

Some guiding principles to consider creating are:

- The induction programme - explain the induction process for volunteers.
- Supervision of the project - who is in charge, who do you go to with questions or problems etc.
- Information about the location - where are volunteers going to be working and access information.
- Communication - what methods are available for volunteers to stay in touch (email, newsletter, phone, regular meetings etc).
- Training - detail the training you will provide/ how long it will take/opportunities for development of what kinds of skills the volunteers will receive.



- Practical health and safety information including insurance - should be a separate handbook for this.
- Confidentiality - what happens if volunteers are given confidential information?
- Equality and diversity policy.
- Useful contact details.

For further information go to: [www.farmgarden.org.uk/publications/128-community-garden-starter-pack](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/publications/128-community-garden-starter-pack)

## Further Information

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### Growing Together partners

[www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG) is a registered charity which supports, represents and promotes community-managed farms, gardens, allotments and other green spaces, creating opportunities for local communities to grow.

[www.communitylandadvice.org.uk](http://www.communitylandadvice.org.uk)

The Community Land Advice Service (CLAS) aims to help community groups, landowners and other interested people to find information on making more land available for community use.

[www.uk.coop/ourwork/co-operatives-uk-legal-team](http://www.uk.coop/ourwork/co-operatives-uk-legal-team)

Alongside a national network of specialist advisers, Co-operatives UK aims to grow the co-operative economy and develop stronger co-operative enterprises by offering high quality professional legal and governance advice and guidance to new start and established co-operatives.

[www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)

Garden Organic believe that organic growing is the best option to protect our food supplies, environment, health and wellbeing. Through research, community work, campaigning and advice it strives to get as many people growing organically as possible.

[www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)

The UK's leading membership charity campaigning for healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use.

[www.groundwork.org.uk](http://www.groundwork.org.uk)

Big global issues – the economy, the environment – have a big local impact. Groundwork works across the UK helping communities find practical solutions to the challenges they face.

[www.permaculture.org.uk](http://www.permaculture.org.uk)

Permaculture principles and design techniques are used to inform the development of new projects.



[www.plunkett.co.uk](http://www.plunkett.co.uk)

The Plunkett Foundation has been helping rural communities through co-operatives and community-ownership to take control of the issues affecting them

[www.acre.org.uk](http://www.acre.org.uk)

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) is the national umbrella body for the 38 Rural Community Councils who work at a local level in support of rural communities across the country.

[www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. They represent around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level.

[www.communitycompost.org](http://www.communitycompost.org)

The Community Composting Network is the UK-wide organisation that supports and promotes community groups, social enterprises and individuals which are involved in producing compost from green/food waste and using it in their local communities.

<http://incredibleediblenetwork.org.uk>

Incredible Edible grow and campaign for local food.

## Useful links

[www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/about/collaborativecommunities.cfm](http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/about/collaborativecommunities.cfm)

Collaborative Communities - a series of reports which focus on the key aspects of collaborating for community food enterprises, drawing on information collected from individual members of community food enterprises, group sessions and project officers throughout the duration of the project. The aim of the series of documents is to inspire other community food enterprises to explore collaboration by showcasing successful examples of local food systems – groups of organisations that are united in ethical and sustainable principles, working together to improve access to local food for a wider portion of the community.

<http://locality.org.uk/movement>

A nationwide network of over 700 community-led organisations forming a powerful movement for social change.

[www.communitylandadvice.org.uk/workplace-allotments](http://www.communitylandadvice.org.uk/workplace-allotments)

More examples and case studies.