

Toronto Community Housing (TCHC)

Community garden manual resources

Getting started

Included in this resource guide are websites that will help you figure out your first steps in getting a community garden started.

Growing

[Get Growing Toronto guide](#)

[You Grow Girl's Beginner Gardening Guide 101](#)

Starting a community garden manual

No single manual can answer every question! Here are some of the guides that we used if you want to see more ideas.

- [Housing Services Corporation Community Gardening Toolkit](#)
- FoodShare's [Community Garden 101 guide](#)
- [Growing Gardens Vancouver](#)

General gardening resources

[Toronto Urban Growers](#)

FoodShare's [guides gardening topics](#)

TUG and FoodShare have email-based groups where you can connect with other gardeners and hear about grants and events.

- Join the TUG group on the [Get Involved page](#)
- Join the FoodShare group by emailing communitygardentoronto@foodshare.net.

Seedy Saturdays are events across the city where you can attend gardening workshops, see demonstrations, buy or trade seeds and find

other gardening resources. [Seeds of Diversity Canada](#) lists events and has resources for seed saving.

Accessibility and enabling gardening

- [Gardens are for everyone](#) (English, Spanish)
- [Waterloo Guide to Barrier-Free Gardening](#)
- [Articles and links](#) on accessibility & gardening compiled by a gardener who uses a wheelchair.
- [Let's Grow: Gardening Activities to Promote Mental Health, Healthy Eating and Physical Activity](#)

Biodiversity - Pollinators, beneficial insects and native plants

- [Beneficial insects](#) for your garden.
- Friends of the Environment has a free downloadable guide to native plant gardening for pollinators by Dr. Sheila Colla and Lorraine Johnson - [A Flower Patch for the Rusty-Patched Bumblebee](#).
- [David Suzuki Foundation's Butterflyway Project](#)
- City of Toronto's [Pollinator Protection Strategy](#)
- [Natural Insect Control](#) has information about beneficial insects. They'll deliver live insects.
- [North American Native Plant Society](#) has information and plant sales
- A [northeastern US site](#) with tips for attracting birds, insects and toads as well as vermicomposting.

Community organizations

To find organizations in your neighbourhood that may be good partners or provide services to gardeners, check these listings.

- City of Toronto services <https://www.toronto.ca/home/311-toronto-at-your-service/> or call 311
- Community agencies <https://211central.ca/> or call 211

[Toronto Urban Growers](#) map of urban agriculture

Equity and inclusion

- [Inclusive Community Organizations: A toolkit, Part 1](#)
- [Racial Equity Community Garden Strategy](#)
- [Toronto's Black Food Sovereignty Plan](#)
- [Earth to Tables Legacies](#)
- [Toronto Urban Growers](#) has lists of resources for dismantling racism and becoming an ally to Indigenous people

Gardening techniques

- [Balcony growing](#) is explored in has two books by Lara Mrosovsky - An Illustrated Guide to Growing Food on Your Balcony and Growing without a Garden: 101 Plants for Containers.
- [Companion planting](#) describes what plants should be planted together and apart. Also important for controlling pests and disease.
- [Container gardening](#) guide from You Grow Girl.
- [Culturally specific plants](#) that can be grown locally.
- [Lasagna gardening method](#) of preparing beds to plant in.
- [Mulch guide](#) evaluates different kinds of mulch materials
- [Planting charts](#) tell you when to start your seeds, plant seedlings and harvest for dozens of vegetables
- [Safety tips](#) for community gardeners.
- [Succession planting](#) techniques to get more than one harvest per year.

Gardening with children

- **Evergreen** has [children's programs](#) and online activities on nature and food gardening
- **FoodShare** How-to guides include curriculum-related food and garden activities <https://foodshare.net/resources/printable/>

- **PACT** [Grow-to-Learn](#) school gardens and other resources on food and gardening.
- **Sayeh Sun Studio** [The Garden Fun Club](#) is a free PDF of Children's gardening activities.
- **Sustain Ontario** [The Food Initiatives Greenhouse](#) has online activities based on the Ontario curriculum
- **Toronto District School Board** [The Board has an extensive](#) site on urban farms and food gardens, with resources for starting a school garden.

Conflict resolution and group process

- Conflict Resolution - Toronto Urban Growers, FoodShare and Greenest City collaborated on a video series on this subject:
 - Segment 1: <https://youtu.be/lujq-9Q5Gvg>
 - Segment 2: <https://youtu.be/AhFWH8LW8Qk>
 - Segment 3: <https://youtu.be/Soa2ZPTWZIQ>
- [EFAO Community Agreements](#) lists some clear expectations for working together respectfully.
- [Reframing](#) is a technique for re-stating painful, negative comments in a more positive and constructive way.
- St. Stephen's offers a [Conflict Resolution Training and Community Mediation program](#)
- [The Community Garden Toolkit](#) from Housing Services Corporation has excellent material about garden committees and organization.

Preventing pests and disease

- [Managing rats](#) in a city garden.
- [Pest Control Library](#) presents pictures of pests and diseases, description of symptoms and ways to control the problem.
- [Plant disease and pests](#) fact sheets from UMass Extension program.

- [Sunday Gardener](#) gives simple tips on using beneficial organisms to control pests.
- [Working with Nature](#) to Minimize Pest and Disease Problems gives overall plant health tips.

Seed saving and starting

- [Community Seed Network](#) connects and supports community seed initiatives by providing resources, information, and a platform for networking.
- FoodShare has resources on seed [starting](#) and [saving](#).
- [Seeds of Diversity](#) has an extensive platform with all aspects of seeds, from collecting to planting.
- [Seed Savers Exchange](#) provides crop-by-crop growing guides.
- [Toronto Seed Library](#) provides free vegetable, flower, and herb seeds, along with informational booklets on seed starting, growing and saving.

Soil and composting

- [The Canadian Organic Grower's](#) Organic Field Crop Handbook discusses the soil ecosystem.
- [Penn State Extension](#) has videos and articles on soil management.
- [Toronto and Region Conservation Authority](#), has a table of common soil problems in pollination gardens.
- [Toronto Public Health](#) has produced a Guide to Soil Testing in Urban Gardens.
- [Young Agrarians](#) give tips on easy ways to test soil type and nutrient content.
- [FoodShare](#) has information about mid-scale community composting and instructions for building a three-bin system
- Rodale's [Vermicomposting for Beginners](#) explains how to set up a worm composting system that can be used indoors.

Some places to buy soil:

- [East Garden Centre](#) (Queen St. E. near Greenwood)
- [Grow it All](#) (Geary Avenue east of Dufferin)
- [Pure Life Soil](#) sells a wide variety of soils, amendments and worm castings.
- [Villacci's Garden Depot](#) delivers topsoil, compost, triple mix, mulch and stones.

Funding sources

In this section, you will find a curated list of funding opportunities and in-kind supply programs to get you started on fundraising. There may be other funders who can support your project. Note that deadlines and funding programs will change, please check the funder websites for the most up-to-date information.

Most funding streams require applicants to be a registered charity or non-profit organization. Community gardens that do not hold charitable or non-profit status may consider partnering with a registered charity, non-profit, or other qualified donee to apply. For additional details, please refer to the *Grant trustees* section below.

Grants

TCHC's [Local Initiative Funding for Tenants \(LIFT\)](#) program

Every TCHC building receives a LIFT funding amount based on the number of bedrooms in the building. No building will receive less than \$1,000.

Tenant Circles decide how to allocate the money. Gardeners are encouraged to participate in Tenant Circle meetings to decide on community priorities and how to spend the funds.

City of Toronto

Grant programs at the City of Toronto can change occasionally, the [Community Grants page](#) is a good place to look up current information.

- [PollinateTO Community Grants](#): Offers up to \$5,000 for gardens that prioritize native pollinator plants.

- [Neighbourhood Climate Action Grants](#): Supports resident-led projects that help the city reach its "Net Zero" goals.
- [Local Leadership Grants](#): Part of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. It prioritizes funding for gardens in and "Emerging Neighbourhoods."
- [Community Crisis Response Fund](#): Supports residents to respond to specific crisis events. Includes a youth stream.
- [Women4Climate Toronto Mentorship Program](#): Empowers and supports climate leaders who identify as women, trans women or 2-Spirit. Winner \$15,000, three runners up \$5,000.

[Carrot Cache](#)

(Community groups, not-for-profit organizations)

Fund food projects that are facing systemic barriers and/or lacking funds from other resources. Fund projects that improve or create change within the local food system in Ontario.

Deadlines:

November 25- December 11, 2026: Expression of interest form open.

You must submit by December 11.

If invited to apply, full applications due January 21, 2027.

Amount: \$500 - \$5000

[Foundation for Black Communities](#)

(Non-profits, charities)

Supports Black-led, Black-serving, and Black-focused grassroots, nonprofit, and charitable organizations in Canada.

[Green City Foundation](#)

(Community gardens, businesses, service clubs, foundations, associations, community groups)

Deadline: Funding is project-based and awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis, subject to available funds. Early applications are encouraged.

Amount: up to 50 per cent of matching funds through cash, in-kind material, and/or labour donations to support selected projects.
Supports projects that restore and build green spaces.

Landscape Ontario – Toronto Chapter Bursary Program

(Community gardens, organizations)

Deadline: Friday, March 13, 2026

Amount: \$1,500 grant (total of \$15k available)

Fund projects that uplift green spaces and community initiatives. Funds cover materials but not to pay industry professionals.

Meridian Credit Union – Good Neighbours Fund

(Incorporated non-profits, charities)

Deadline: April & September

Amount: varies

Supports local causes. Areas of Focus: housing affordability, financial access and confidence, diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging & reconciliation (DEIBR), climate resistance, community support

Nature's Path- Gardens For Good

(Non-profits)

Deadline: TBA

Amount: up to \$6,500

Supports community gardens across Canada and the United States.

Ontario Community Changemakers

(Community Leaders, Individuals)

Amount: \$5000

Provides micro-grants and mentorship for individuals with "bold ideas" to activate public spaces, which frequently includes urban agriculture and "pop-up" gardens.

Scotts Canada Gro for Good

(Municipalities, Non-profits, Schools)

Supports projects developing sustainable gardens and green spaces.

Deadline: February 28, 2026
Amount: \$4,500

The Pollination Project

(Unincorporated Organizations, Community Groups, Community Gardens)
Fund projects that support volunteer work.

Deadline: rolling
Amount: \$500 USD

Toronto Arts Council

(Individual artists, arts collectives or organizations)

Deadlines: March 16 and August 4, 2026

Creative community project grants can fund artists to do community arts projects in community gardens or to animate events.

Amount: up to \$8,000 (up to \$15,000 with conditions)

Environmental funders

The following funders give grants for environmental goals. You may need to show how your garden project will give people access to nature, increase biodiversity or provide environmental education.

A.P.E. Fund community grants

You must join the Roots & Shoots program to be eligible.

Deadline: TBA
Amount: up to \$1000

Green Communities Canada - Living Cities Canada Fund

(Community-based organizations, Indigenous governments, Municipalities, Schools, Stewardship groups)

Deadline: TBA (typically fall)
Amount: \$5,000 - \$30,000 depending on stream
Support green infrastructure projects

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation Grant

(Charities, Educational Institutes, Municipalities, Indigenous groups)

Deadline: Winter (January 15) , Summer (July 15)

Amount: No maximum (generally \$2000-\$8,000)

Support environmental initiatives. Can include schoolyard greening, park revitalization, community gardens, park programming and citizen science initiatives.

TD Park People Grants

Deadline: February 23, 2026

Amount: \$2000

Funds projects that support ongoing care and protection of green spaces and public access to parks. Includes funding for events in parks or green spaces, such as workshops, harvest festivals, and educational tours.

Toronto Foundation

The Free to Play supports projects that reconnect children with nature, which can include school or community garden programming.

Donations of seeds, plants and supplies

Foodshare

(Community gardens)

Deadline: (Late Winter, Spring)

Offers free seedlings to community gardens. They also share information about grants on an email listserv. Reach out to communitygardenstoronto@foodshare.net for more information.

LEAF

(TCHC Residents)

Deadline: March 29, 2026

Offers free trees and shrubs to TCH residents.

Toronto Seed Library and Riverdale Hub

(Anyone)

Offers free and traded seeds

For more information email torontoseedlibrary@gmail.com

Tree Mobile

(Schools, faith groups, community gardens, non-profits)

Deadline: Spring 2026 TBA

Donates plants to community gardens.

West Coast Seeds

(Educators, non-profits, community gardens, community groups, charities)

Deadline: Rolling (best time October to December)

Free seeds

Larger grants

The following funders tend to support projects larger than a single community garden. If you want to run additional programs and are partnering with an organization, these funders may support your work.

Catherine Donnelly Foundation

(Incorporated charities, qualified donee, non-profits)

Deadline: February and June

Amount: up to \$50,000

Supports initiatives of social and environmental justice, environment, housing, civic engagement

Community Foundations of Canada

(Non-profits, charities, other qualified donees)

Amount: Varies

Support initiatives that “help make our communities stronger, more resilient and sustainable.”

McConnell Foundation

(Charities, incorporated non-profits)

Deadline: Rolling/ongoing

Amount: No limit

Areas of Focus: Communities, reconciliation, climate

Ontario Trillium Foundation

(Charitable organizations, registered non-profit organizations)

Deadline:

Youth Opportunities Fund - February 11, 2026, varied amounts

Capital Grant - March 2, 2026 - \$10,000 - \$100,000 per year

Seed Grant - August 19, 2026, \$10,000 - \$100,000 per year

Peter Gilgan Foundation

(Charities)

Deadline: Rolling/Ongoing

Amount: \$10,000 - \$100,000 per year (usually supports up to 50% of project cost or up to 10% of organizations operating budget)

Supports projects building prosperity and sustainability. Focus Areas: Children, Youth & Families, Indigenous Youth, Climate Change, International Development

RBC

(Charities, non-profits, other qualified donees)

Deadline: Rolling/Ongoing

Amount: up to \$50,000 (typically no more than 20% of organizations operating budget)

Support projects that respond to community needs makes a meaningful difference in the communities we serve.

The Canada Post Community Foundation

(Unincorporated organizations, non-profit, charity, Indigenous communities)

Deadline: February 27, 2026

Amounts:

Small projects: up to \$5,000

Community-based project grants \$25,000

Signature Grant \$50,000

Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation Signature Grant \$50,000

Funds projects “that make a difference in the lives of children and youth (up to age 21).”

Focus areas: Community, education, and health

Grant trustees

Funders will have different policies about community groups applying for grants through a charitable organization that acts as a trustee for the funds. A charitable trustee takes responsibility for ensuring the funds are spent appropriately. Some funders are open to this arrangement, others will not allow it.

You can approach any charitable organization to act as a trustee, as long as your project fits with their mandate. There are also organizations that act as trustees intentionally as part of their work. Two examples are:

[The Neighbourhood Group](#)

[FoodShare’s Supportive Partnerships Platform](#)

The City of Toronto also provides [information about working with a trustee](#).

Tips on writing letters for support

A well-written letter of support or request is essential when seeking donations of supplies or financial contributions for a community garden.

The letter should be clear, professional, and demonstrate the impact of the garden on the community.

1. Use professional formatting

- Include your organization’s or group's name, logo (if applicable), address, phone number, and email.
- Add the date and the recipient’s name, title, organization, and address.

- Use a formal greeting (e.g., *Dear [Name]*).
- Keep the letter to one page whenever possible.

2. Introduce your group

Briefly describe:

- Who you are (community group, non-profit, charity, or partnership).
- Your mission and mandate.
- The population you serve (e.g., youth, seniors, newcomers, low-income families).

3. Describe the community garden project

Clearly outline:

- The purpose and goals of the garden.
- How long the garden has been operating (or if it is just about to launch)
- The location and number of participants involved.
- Key activities (food production, workshops, youth programming, cultural food growing, etc.).
- The community needs the garden and what it addresses (food insecurity, community connection, education, wellness).
- Use data where possible (e.g., number of families served, pounds of food grown, workshops delivered).

4. Clearly state your request

Be specific about what you are requesting. If you are requesting supplies, give a list of items needed, how many and when you need them.

If requesting financial support, state the requested amount and explain how the funds will be used. Clarify whether you are a registered charity and can issue tax receipts (if applicable).

5. Explain the impact

Demonstrate how the support will make a difference. The more specific you can be, the better. How many people will have more access to healthy food? What types of skills will participants develop? What environmental goals will you achieve? See the *Why are community gardens valuable?* section for ideas.

Emphasize both short-term and long-term outcomes.

6. Offer recognition

Outline how you will acknowledge the donor:

- Logo placement on promotional materials
- Social media recognition
- Inclusion in newsletters
- Invitation to events or harvest celebrations
- A poster on the garden billboard

7. Close professionally

Express appreciation for their consideration, invite further discussion or a meeting and provide contact information.

Additional tips

- Research the organization before writing and tailor the letter to align with their priorities.
- Keep the tone respectful, confident, and appreciative.
- Proofread carefully before sending.
- The recipient may get many request letters. Think about what makes your request stand out. Are you doing a unique project or reaching a group that is underserved in the neighbourhood? Is your garden close to their location? Do your garden members do business with them?

Example letter

[Your Organization/Group Name]

[Address]

[City, Province, Postal Code]

[Email Address]

[Phone Number]

[Date]

[Recipient Name]

[Title]

[Organization Name]

[Address]

Dear [Recipient Name],

I am writing on behalf of [Your Organization/Group Name] to request your support for our community garden initiative located in [neighbourhood/location]. Our garden serves local families, seniors, and youth by providing access to fresh produce, hands-on learning opportunities, and a welcoming space for community connection.

This season, we are seeking support in the form of [specific supplies such as soil, lumber, tools, seedlings] or a financial contribution of [\$ amount] to help us expand garden beds and provide programming for participants. Your support will directly contribute to increasing food access and strengthening community engagement in our neighbourhood.

With your contribution, we will be able to support approximately [number] community members and grow fresh produce that will be shared among participating families and local food initiatives.

We would be pleased to recognize your support through social media acknowledgment, signage at the garden site, and inclusion in our community newsletter.

Thank you for considering our request. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further at your convenience. Please feel free to contact me at [phone/email].

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Organization Name]