



A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY GROWING



WELCOME!

We are pleased to present our Guide to Community Growing, a toolkit for people who'd like to develop community gardens, written and illustrated by people who've done just that.

WHO ARE WE?

We are Edible York, a lively local charity that aims to support people to become closer to the food they eat.

We manage a number of city-centre growing spaces, help schools to grow and cook, plant edible trees across York, support communities to develop their own edible gardens and provide a network for all growers.

We are a registered charity. Our official charitable objectives have been agreed by our members and ratified by the Charity Commission. You can find out more at our website (www.edibleyork.org.uk).



GROWING UP

Edible York began in March 2011 with a general meeting that took inspiration from Incredible Edible Todmorden. Pam Warhurst, the founder of that project, spoke about gathering people together and creating feasts of learning, laughter and growing in order to build stronger, healthier communities with a deep desire for, and an appreciation of, a wonderful world of local food. Since 2011 we have: developed a website; supported over 11 community gardens; planted 288 fruit trees through our York Orchard Project; worked with most York schools through York Edible Schools; become a registered charity (in 2014); shared surplus fruit and vegetables from across the city through our Abundance project.

This guide marks another stage in our development. It includes ideas, information and photos gathered from a whole host of Edible York enthusiasts. We hope it will be the seed for many further adventures to come.



Clifton Parish Church Garden



HOW CAN EDIBLE YORK HELP YOU?

We're keen to provide information, support and encouragement to new community growing groups and individual budding gardeners. This guide is just the start!

Amongst our trustees, volunteers and partner organisations we have the following areas of expertise that may be of benefit to you: fruit-tree planting and cultivation; grafting; the voluntary sector; horticulture; education and schools; risk assessment; strategies for community growing.

Our busy Facebook page and Twitter account provide an opportunity for new and existing community gardeners to engage with a wide audience.

And our website has lots more information about individual community gardens across the city and about how Edible York works. There are also links there to other expert centres and exciting resources that we hope will inspire you to get growing.

Of course we can't cover everything, but we aim to provide as full a picture as possible to illustrate the rewards, challenges and opportunities associated with growing and cooking your own food.

If you feel there's part of the picture that's missing, or you have a particular interest or specialism that you'd like to add, please get in touch!

Here are some ways you can get in touch with us or learn from what we are doing:

Become a member of Edible York.

You'll receive up-to-date information that will support your plants and your network to grow.

Attend one of our regular gardening sessions at an Edible York Public Bed.

Check our website for details of upcoming sessions. They usually take place on Saturday mornings at around 11am.

Attend one of our social events.

These include: Getting Growers Together; Open Edible Gardens; our Annual General Meeting; our St Crux Sale.

See the calendar on our website for event dates and further details.

Get those bees buzzing and busy by growing plants they like. Apple trees, lavender bushes and a basil plant left to flower will all go down very well!

Visit a Community Garden near you.

For contact details and a list of the gardens we're supporting, visit the Community Garden page on our website.

E: info@edibleyork.org.uk

W: www.edibleyork.org.uk

 www.facebook.com/EdibleYrk

 [@EdibleYork](https://twitter.com/EdibleYork)

GETTING STARTED

BE PREPARED

Source the materials for bed-building.

Raised beds require a little more watering but are easier to access, give roots a better chance, have better drainage and can be filled more easily with compost etc.

Plan around the availability of water.

If necessary, plan to collect water from elsewhere and/or buy a water butt.

Look on Freecycle for anyone offering tools, equipment, timber or soil.

Find a source of manure. Anybody who has a horse or donkey needs to become your new best friend!

Source your seeds. Options include Wilkinsons and pound shops, asking your friends and/or harvesting your own seeds from previous years' flowers.

Find a planting plan that looks tasty but easy to follow. There are some tried and tested examples on our website.

CULTIVATE

Tap into local businesses or other organisations and community groups to help you get started. They may offer you a range of resources including expertise, signage, containers for planting, a donation or some advertising space. Make sure you offer them something in return, such as publicity or a tasting menu from your garden!

Consider which other local groups could help you. For example, are there local organisations such as Brownies, Cubs, Scouts or Guides that could help maintain your garden as part of their regular meetings?

Funding is often available from Local Neighbourhood Forums. Contact your local councillor to find out more about this.

Keep a diary! This is a good way of monitoring what you're achieving and may come in handy if you need evidence for funding bids. Include a record of who attended what and when and statistics about what you grew including where, how many and how much they weighed.

REAP WHAT YOU SOW

You'll have developed a network of suppliers. Make sure you keep their details.

You'll have developed a network of helpers. Keep communicating with them, especially when there's something to celebrate and during periods when there's less to do in your garden.

You'll have developed a site. Make sure it has a great title! Use stories and photos of your successes and challenges to continue to inspire and motivate volunteers, old and new.

You'll have developed a new community group. You may wish to use your new-found expertise to help another gardening group get established. If that's the case, please get in touch with us!

Consider how to store surplus food.

You can pickle it, freeze it or bag it!

THE SMALL (BUT VERY IMPORTANT) PRINT

Check that you have the right to dig up and plant the land you've identified!

Find out who owns it and contact them to agree how it will be used. Contacting your local council is often a good starting point. This will lead to a Site Agreement and sometimes to a licence to use the site.

Be clear about your ideas and vision for the site and/or your group.

This means there needs to be an agreement amongst you about what you hope to achieve and why. Agree and share your aims with the members of your group.

Consider writing a constitution.

This makes your aims very clear and is an opportunity to talk to people about your project and what you hope to achieve. There's a sample start-up guide on our website.

You'll need to gather a committee or team to help you keep on top of things.

Consider whether it would be useful to have 'members' and assign roles according to what people want to do.

Possible roles include: secretary, treasurer, social secretary, leader, communications officer.

You might need to open a bank account – especially if you're going to apply for funding.

You need to do some risk assessments in order to work safely. There are some examples of these on our website. Don't worry – they aren't as hard as you might think! However, you do need to make sure people follow any guidelines you set out, so these will need to be communicated and explained effectively.

You usually need insurance to use public land and to receive funding.

Insurance is also a protection for the group organisers. Contact us about this as we have considerable experience in this area.

If children will be visiting your site you'll need a safeguarding procedure and related document. There are also a few procedures for working with volunteers that you should be aware of. Contact us, and we will take you through these processes.



Brailsford Crescent



TOP TIPS FOR BUMPER CROPS

BE PREPARED

Assess the site so that you get the best out of it. Things to consider include: safety; soil quality; access; some shade and shelter. Vegetables need a sunny site, preferably with sun throughout the day. Easy access to water is very important!

Remember to prepare the land carefully. Check the type of soil you have using a Soil Test Kit. (These are available in garden centres and will tell you what to do – and why.) Dig and turn the soil really well. If you do that at the start, you won't need to do it very often afterwards!

Remove turf from the area you wish to plant in. Stack it in a corner. You can then use it later: for the bottom of a deep bed; as topsoil (if you cover it in black cloth or a carpet for 6 months); as a wildlife resource.

Designate an area for composting. Make plans to top dress beds with compost or leaf mould in spring.

Remove perennial weeds without a rotavator. Dry them down and then compost them. Annual weeds can go straight onto the compost if they haven't yet flowered.

CULTIVATE

Create a robust watering plan. Put somebody in charge of this to make sure that your tasty food doesn't get too thirsty!

Talk to people in your community group to find out what they want to grow and what skills they have or would like to develop. Ask them what they enjoy cooking and eating too.

Consider what kind of crops you want. Fruit? Vegetables? Flowers? Root? Bush? The following plants, for example, produce regular crops: beans, peas, courgettes, lettuce, rocket, herbs. You can sow them directly from seed or get small plants for instant impact. You need to water them well for 2 days a week, rather than watering lightly every day.

Organise a rota that enables and promotes lots of light weeding with a hand fork or hoe. This will prevent 'crisis' weekends of weeding!

Keep a visual diary of your garden. Fill it with quotes, pictures and drawings of your community garden journey. This will inspire you the following year!

REAP WHAT YOU SOW

Make sure you record in your diary what has grown well and what has struggled.

Make sure you develop a good signage system so that people know when to harvest. It's not always obvious to everyone when crops are ready to be picked.

Be creative about how you get together. As an accompaniment to regular gardening sessions you could: cook and / or picnic together; do pop-up cook shops in your community; celebrate bumper harvest times with bunting and a tea party.

Make sure that none of your food is wasted. Consider giving surplus away to a Food Bank or share it with other local residents who might then be inspired to join in.

Find out how to prune effectively. Invest in good tools and learn from the experts!

NOTICING SIGNS

Creating a title sign for your garden is often a good activity for your starter event. It's important that people who walk past your garden notice its community element. That way, they might want to join in!

Label your plants carefully! This will help new gardeners to learn about plants and will – along with your diary – keep you organised.

You'll need a system or sign so that visitors to the garden know when food is ready to be harvested. Advice about watering is useful too, as are helpful reminders about weeding.

If you're having an event, your posters and signs should be very clear about start time, location and what will happen. If possible provide a link to further information. Adverts for events need to go up in plenty of time – preferably at least a month in advance.

If you have regular gardening sessions, put up several prominent posters around your neighbourhood to encourage new and existing gardeners.

Your garden signs need to be robust. Laminate paper posters if possible or put them in upside-down plastic pockets.

Use outdoor paint and secure notices firmly. If you're using fabric, use fabric paints or permanent markers.

Spray cans over stencils also work well, as do woodburning pens. (We have some you can borrow.)



AND FINALLY ... FROM PLOT TO PLATE!

Organise a party!

Winter Warmers around a fire pit?

Summer Salad Suppers?

A Toast and Taste full of fruity cocktails?

Organise some pop-up cooking sessions that demonstrate how to cook simple, healthy recipes using easy-to-grow fruit and vegetables. A good toolkit for this is just: a camping stove, a wok and a fancy apron! If you can, print and hand out recipes to accompany your demonstrations.

Give away small mixed bags of food to local residents as they pass your garden during your regular gardening sessions. Pop a note inside the bag to explain what you're doing and how you can be contacted.



E: info@edibleyork.org.uk

W: www.edibleyork.org.uk

 www.facebook.com/EdibleYrk

 [@EdibleYork](https://twitter.com/EdibleYork)

CHEEKY CUCUMBER RELISH

Preserving fruit and vegetables can be a fun group activity. If you sell the resulting jams, jellies, chutneys and relishes, it might even earn you some money! Here's a sample recipe.

INGREDIENTS

1 kg onions	1 tsp salt and mustard powder
1 kg cucumbers	¼ – 1 tsp turmeric, allspice, black pepper
1 large cooking apple	3 pinches of dried chilli flakes or 3 chillies
600ml cider vinegar	
500g sugar	

METHOD

1. Chop up the onions, cucumbers and apple.
2. Add the cider vinegar and cook on a low heat for 30 minutes.
3. Add the sugar and let it dissolve. Then add the salt and spices to taste.
4. Continue to cook on a low heat for 45 minutes until the mixture thickens.
5. Pour into your prepared jars and seal straight away.