Greening and Growing Together: Community

We are all part of a community of living things, a complex symbiotic system that connects people, plants and places.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF BOTANICAL SCIENCE

The Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust

People

People in community are like plants in a garden, they bring diversity. Respecting and celebrating our differences creates a strong and resilient community.

Key words

Vision/mission statement, seasonal harvest, local knowledge, sharing, community engagement, building, communication, understanding.

Investigate

Use the **The Story of your Place** activity sheet to record an overview of the community you plan to work with and their experience and observations from the past and to the present.

Plan

When working with community it is important to consider how we communicate. Have a look at the resources on the next pages and have a chat with your community about some of the best ways to communicate, taking into account that when people are stressed their ability to communicate is sometimes compromised.

Take action

Mapping the Vision allows community members to develop the vision for their garden together.

Together, write a clear vision statement at the end of the process to help with ongoing decision-making processes.

Monitor

People bring a range of knowledge, experience and skills to a community. Sometimes our knowledge does not always match with others, but it's important to keep an open mind and always listen to local and Indigenous knowledge to understand the seasons and the soil.

Celebrate

As much as a garden needs regular nurturing, so does a community. As the garden takes shape, take photos of the site and collect stories from members.

Story of your Place

Together, people and place make a community

People connect with each other in places. We also connect with the natural world that exists all around us, including beneath our feet. Use this exercise to record the views of your community, including their observations from the past and to the present, of this place.

Materials:

- Print a copy of this sheet. Find a pencil/pen and a clipboard to lean on.

Task:

- Talk to locals who have lived in the area for a long time and can give you a picture of which birds, plants and animals live here. Find out which living things to encourage or discourage when trying to recreate natural landscapes or garden beds. Record responses in the boxes or in a note book if you need more room.

1. What is the Aboriginal name for the land your community site sits on? e.g. The Royal Botanic Gardens is on Cadigal Land.

2. Who are the people and organisations that share your site? e.g. local residents, community housing provider.

3. How is your site currently used by people? e.g. kids playing ball games, shared courtyard.

4. What living things are on the site? List some existing plants and animals e.g. pigeons, cockatoos, insects.

5. What existed here before it became your site? Was there a woodland, wetlands or something industrial or residential? e.g. a rainforest with a creek.

6. How does the community site make you feel? e.g. frustrated, excited, calm.

Community Engagement Skills

What can you do to help calm your emotions?
How can I ensure my own physical and emotional safety?

How can you help?

- ☐ breathe deep/slowly
- ☐ stop, walk away. don't react with your emotions
- ☐ Drink some water, have a cuppa
- ☐ find a place that is safe and sit quietly
- ☐ write, draw, play music
- ☐ talk to a friend/your safe person
- ☐ put your hands in/connect to the soil
- ☐ think of something you are good at or enjoy doing
- ☐ recognise this is a difficult time and it will pass
- ☐ validate feelings – how are you feeling, how are they feeling?
- ☐ engage your senses. Engage with nature, listen to the birds.
- ☐ spend some time with your pet

What are your emotional triggers

- ☐ smells/taste/touch
- ☐ I'm stressed:
- ☐ too much/lack of routine
- ☐ feeling overwhelmed, left out, anxious
- ☐ too many deadlines
- ☐ my physical health
- ☐ my mental health
- ☐ feeling unsafe
- ☐ my addictions
- ☐ feeling rejected
- ☐ not feeling validated
- ☐ I lack self belief
- ☐ other people's behaviour bothers me – lack of emotional intelligence, lack of respect

What's in your communication toolbox

What is good communication?
How do I communicate?
How can I communicate more effectively?

Be aware of assumptions

It's important to be aware of the assumptions we make about people. People from different cultures sometimes have different beliefs and values that may conflict with your own.

Do I make assumptions about...

- people's gender?
- people's age?
- people's cultures?
- people's values?
- people's disability?
- people's sexual orientation?
- people's beliefs and values?
- people's religion?

Listen actively

Active listeners...

- **look** at people when they're speaking
- **notice** your own body language
- **nod** your head
- **encourage** people to ask questions
- **learn** from other people's culture by allowing people tell their stories

Be comfortable

Find a way to communicate that you're comfortable with ...

- be relaxed
- face the person you're talking to
- watch your body language, how you're standing or holding your arms
- tone of voice
- eye contact
- breathe
- give people time to listen
- watch your audience, are they bored, are they engaging, are they interested?

Be respectful

- respect the rights of others
- respectfully disagree without having an argument
- hear people's opinions
- learn from people's differences
- learn from people's diversity.

Celebrate diversity

Learning about other people's cultures helps us understand diversity. Diversity in a garden is a healthy garden. Different types of food can be grown, and delicious meals shared.

Mapping the Vision

When planning a community garden, it is important for community members to develop the vision together.

As a group, start a discussion around the shared vision for the garden. Use this planning sheet to discuss the garden's purpose, people-power, time-frame and key site/s.

Materials:

- Print a copy of this sheet. Find a pencil/pen and a clipboard to lean on.

Task:

- Use the questions below to gain a detailed overview of your site. Record responses in the boxes or in a note book if you need more room.

1. What do you want to see in your Community Garden?

e.g. A food producing, sensory garden with raised garden beds

Circle the words that best describe your goals and add some more!

Fruit trees	Wicking beds	Vegetables
Recycling/repurposing		Composting
Worm farms	Accessibility	Sensory planting
Excursions	Picnics	Mastery of skills
Training		

2. Why do you want to create a Community Garden?

What are your priorities? Will you grow and share local organic food, cycle nutrients through composts and worm farms? Will you prioritise meeting others and making new friendships, and/or providing habitat and food for other living creatures? Write your priorities here.

3. Where are you planning to create a Community Garden?

Do you need permission to create the garden? What is the climate it will be located in? Is it sunny enough to grow vegetables? Is there a water supply? Is it coastal, mountain, inland or other? Write a detailed description of the location here.

4. Who will be involved in the Community Garden?

Who will plan, plant and care for it? What time commitments can they make? Which partners (for funding etc.) will support the Community Garden? List the people and partners involved.

5. When would you like to make the Community Garden happen by?

It's important to establish a realistic time frame and set achievable goals. Remember to take small and sustainable steps to ensure your success. We suggest you start with soil building and composting and let the garden grow as the community grows. Write some steps and the time frame needed to undertake the project.

Plants

People depend on plants for our survival, providing people with oxygen, food, shelter, fibre and healing medicines.

Key words

Soil building, propagation, feast, community capacity, habitat, plant families, plant communities, biodiversity, climate zones, food forest.

Investigate

Much like babies and children, young plants need supportive conditions to grow strong and become productive. You'll first need to know the climatic zone and the local weather conditions.

View the list of **Indigenous Food Forest species** (activity sheet) to help you identify appropriate species for your site.

Plan

Plants are adapted for best growth in the places where they naturally occur. Research the **Common Australian Plant Families** (activity sheet) that grow in your climate zone and the ongoing care they will need for success. Are any of the plants used traditionally for food shelter, fibre and healing medicines?

Take action

Experiment with a range of plant families in your garden by starting a 'plant community' in pots. Planting a diverse range of plants increases biodiversity in your garden and creates an environment where plants can support each other in various ways, just like a community.

Monitor

As plants grow they create shade patterns, provide insect habitat and strengthen the soil network. Documenting the changes in the garden will help with ongoing planning and maintenence.

Celebrate

In your seasonal garden planning, include a harvest feast where everyone can celebrate in a time of abundance. Use the feast as an opportunity to swap seeds, plants and ideas! Find more **Harvest Feast** ideas in the activity sheet.

Indigenous Food Forest List

Plant habit	Name	Botanical name	Use
Large tree/canopy	Lemon aspen	Acronychia acidula, A. oblongifolia	Fruit
	Native Tamarind	Diploglottis campbellii, D. australis	Fruit
	Davidson Plum	Davidsonia pruriens	Fruit
	Macadamia	Macadamia integrifolia	Nuts
	Lilly Pilly	Syzygium paniculatum	Fruit
	Plum Pine	Podocarpus elatus	Blue fruit
Small tree/medium shrub	Wattle	Acacia spp.	Seed
	Rose Myrtle	Archirhodomyrtus becklari	Fresh berries
	Aniseed Myrtle	Backhousia anisata	Leaves
	Lemon Myrtle	Backhousia citriodora	Leaves
	Banksia	Banksia spp.	Flower - Nectar, drinks
	Finger Lime	Citrus australasica	Fruit
	Strawberry Gum	Eucalyptus olida	Leaves
	Native Guava/Bolwarra	Eupomatia laurina	Fruit
	Grevillia	Grevillea spp.	Flower -Nectar, drinks
	Native Rosella	Hibiscus heterophyllus subsp. heterophyllus	Flower buds
	Blue tongue	Melastoma affine	Blue fruit
	Geebung	Persoonia linearis	Fruit eaten from the ground
	Lilly Pilly	Syzygium australe.	Fruit
	Mountain Pepper	Tasmannia lanceolata	Spicy berries and leaves

Plant habit	Name	Botanical name	Use
Small shrub	Old Man Salt bush	Atriplex nummalaria	Leaves
	Midgen berry	Austromyrtus dulcis	Berries
	Prickly Currant Bush	Coprosma quadrifida	Berries
	Muntries	Kunzea pomifera	Berries, raw or cooked
	Mint Bush	Prostanthera incisa	Leaves
Herb/strappy grass	Vanilla Lily	Arthropodium milleflorum	Roots raw or roasted
	Chocolate Lily	Arthropodium strictum	Roots raw or roasted
	Blue Flax Lily	Dianella longifolia & D. caerulea	Blue fruit
	Native Lemongrass	Cymbopogon ambiguus	Tea, flavouring, medicinal
	Native Flax	Linum marginale	Seeds
	Mat Rush	Lomandra longifolia	Stems and seeds
	River Mint	Mentha australis	Leaves
	Kangaroo Grass	Themeda triandra	Ground seeds
Vines/climbers	Sweet Apple Berry	Billiardieria scandens	Fruit
	Kangaroo Vine	Cissus antarctica	Fruit
	Wombat Berry	Eustrephus latifolius	Orange Fruit
	Scrambling Lily	Geitonoplesium cymosum	Shoots
	Running Postman	Kennedia prostrata	Flowers
	Giant Pepper Vine	Piper hederaceum var. hederaceum	Leaves, fruit
	Native Raspberry	Rubus parvifolius, R. moluccanus	Fruit
	Sarsaparilla	Smilax glyciphylla	Leaves, medicinal
Roots	Native Ginger	Alpinia caerulea	Berries and root
	Bulbine Lily	Bulbine bulbosa	Roots raw or roasted
	Yams	Dioscorea transversa	Tubers
	Native Geranium	Geranium homeanum	Root
	Yam daisy/Murnong	Microseris lanceolata	Root
	Wild parsnip	Trachymene incisa	Root
Groundcovers	Sea Celery	Apium prostratum var. prostratum	Leaves
	Pigface	Carpobrotus glaucescens	Fruit and leaves
	Creeping Myoporum	Myoporum parvifolium	Fruit
	Forest Starwort	Stellaria flaccida	Leaves
	Warrigal Greens	Tetragonia tetragonoides	Leaves
	Native violet	Viola hederacea	Flowers

Common Australian Plant Families

Common Australian plant families		Number of species in the world	Number of species in Australia	
Family	**Often called**	**Common features**	**Examples**	**Other uses**
Myrtaceae 5500 1700	Myrtle family	Leaves with oil dots. 5 petals and many stamens. Fruit mainly hard woody capsules, some have fleshy fruits	Eucalypts, Bottlebrushes, Tea Trees, Lilly Pillies	Food, nectar and shelter for birds, Flying foxes and other pollinators. Some have edible and medicinal fruits and leaves
Fabaceae 18000 1900	Pea family Legumes	Usually have compound leaves and seed pods. Nitrogen fixers	Wattles, Indigofera, Clover	Nectar, pollen, seeds and larvae for Parrots, small mammals and birds. Provides protection for small birds
Proteaceae 1780 1110	Protea family	Leathery leaves, lignotuber (swelling at the base that can reshoot)	Banksia, Grevillea, Waratah	Attract pollinators. Nectar and seed for Parrots and Honey eaters. Banksia cones used as torches and to set fires.
Asteraceae 24000 970	Daisy family	Inflorescence usually comprises disc and ray florets (2 different flower types) Seed usually a cypsela attached to a pappus (feathery tail)	Paper Daisies, Daisy Bush, Yam Daisy	Tubers from Yam Daisies eaten. Attract pollinators, butterflies, and birds
Poaceae 10,000 1400	Grass family	Florets are made up of spikelets, fruit and seed are fused (grain). Stems have nodes and are pithy or hollow.	Kangaroo Grass, Weeping Rice Grass	Food for birds, insects and native mammals, nesting material, refuge. Aboriginal uses – food, fibre and resins
Orchidaceae 2,5000 700+ species	Orchid family	Terrestrial and epiphytic (grow on trees and rocks) with fleshy roots, aerial roots or bulbs. Tiny seeds in capsules, specialised pollinators	Rock orchid, Greenhood orchid, Donkey Orchid	Bulbs and roots were eaten by some Aboriginal people.

A Garden Harvest Celebration!

Taking time to celebrate the progress made in your garden is a wonderful way to connect with community and enjoy the fruits (and vegetables) of your labour.

Sharing simple dishes that include food you've grown gives everyone an opportunity to celebrate how far you've come!

Celebrate your progress and success in the garden by taking photos of thriving plants (and people).

Be creative with your harvest! Try a harvest stew flavoured with native salt bush.

Prepare some simple dishes using produce you have grown. A simple salad or bouquet of flowers from the garden will get everyone smiling!

Prepare an area to share food together, perhaps somewhere with seating or ask people to bring folding chairs.

Use the harvest feast as an opportunity to share collected seeds, seedlings, cuttings, or produce in a swap!

Take photos of your harvest (however small) to share on social media.

When planning your harvest feast, consider an indoor space if you'll need to escape rain or the heat of a Summer's day.

Don't know what to cook with what you've got? How about some Warrigal greens pastry scrolls and a Sea Celery salad?

Don't forget the drinks! Sage leaf makes a simple tea.

Places

Every place has a story. Places are where lives are lived, relationships develop, ceremonies happen and memories are made.

Key words
Monitoring, site analysis, observation, documenting, soil building, nutrient cycling.

Investigate

Using the **Site Observation: Get to Know your Site** activity sheet, observe and document the various aspects of your site to support the development of knowledge and understanding about your place, including **Fire Risk.**

Plan

Once the site analysis is complete, it is important to also **Map the Garden**. Ensure adequate access pathways for a range of mobility needs e.g. wheelchairs, prams, wheelbarrows. Plan a shaded seating place for community members to gather.

Take action

Gardens take time to grow, as does community. The **Human Rights Learning Wheel** can help your community identify and navigate some of the stages in growing your community and supporting them to grow a garden. Remember, the community needs nurture and care, as much as their garden.

Monitor

For all living things, some places are harder to survive and thrive in, than others. Consider barriers and allow for mistakes that may become lessons.

On a regular basis observe the garden's condition. Complete the **Site Observation: Weekly Monitoring** sheet and allow this to become a reference over time.

Celebrate

Welcome people to the garden by planning a **Harvest Feast** celebration with other community members. Sharing the site with others can bring new friendships and helping hands.

How will you ensure your guests are safe? With your garden members, walk the site and complete a **Risk Assessment** activity sheet to identify any problems that could arise.

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Community Garden Risk Assessment

How will you ensure your community gardens is a safe place for everyone? With your garden members, walk the site and complete this risk assessment.

When completing the assessment, think about the needs of children, elderly people and people with disabilities. Use the empty columns to add extra considerations.

In case of emergencies, know and communicate to everyone the following information:

Exact address: _____

Closest side street: _____

Emergency gathering point: _____

Hazard	Risk	Control	Tick
Poor lighting	Trips, bumps	• Make sure all lights are working • Find some extra lights for low visibility areas	
Sticks and uneven ground	Slips or trips	• Clear rocks or sticks on pathways	
Steps	Falling, tripping Inaccessible for people using walkers, prams or wheelchairs	• Mark edges with white or yellow tape or paint • Ramps or alternate access points	
Used syringes	Disease, contamination	• Report to the local council or property owner • Use gloves and tongs to dispose correctly in biohazard containers	
Rubbish	Contamination, vermin	• Report to the local council or property owner to remove • Tape off areas with large piles of rubbish or dumped goods	
Plants	Allergies, thorns, irritation, corrosive sap	• Identify potentially harmful plants • Label plants and alert people	
Insects and animals	Bites, stings, allergies	• Provide insect repellent • First aid kit • Dogs will be leashed	
Chemicals	Poisoning, burns, fire, inappropriate use, plant, soil and insect damage	• Chemicals locked away and in original containers • Follow label instructions and wear PPE (a minimum of gloves, safety glasses and mask) • Research and choose chemicals carefully - not all off the shelf chemicals are safe. Train people in safe chemical use	
Electrical appliances, lights, fire pits, BBQs	Burns, electrocution, explosions	• Keep away from the public, only allow nominated, trained people to use the items	
Power sources and cables	Electrocution, trips, burns	• Cover or isolate any unsafe switches • Tape or cover cables running along the ground	
Furniture	Unstable, fragile, splinters	• Check that chair and table legs are undamaged • Sand down anything with splinters	
Marquees, shade sails or tents	Collapse, trips on ropes and pegs	• Secure and tie down well, flag pegs or use barriers so they are visible. Do not use in windy weather!	

Hazard	Risk	Control	Tick
Lifting and moving	Pain, serious injury	• Use trolleys, wheelbarrows, 2 people to lift heavy items • Bend at knees and don't overextend when lifting	
Poor weather	Lightning, strong winds, rain, slippery conditions	• Have a covered area • Check weather reports and have a communication plan to cancel event if needed	
Ponds and water features	Falling in, accidental drowning	• Isolate with tape or other objects	
Food preparation	Food poisoning	• Follow strict food handling procedures (hand washing, masks, hairnets)	
Food preparation	Food allergies	• Ask guests to identify any allergies or intolerances beforehand. • List ingredients on each dish	
COVID-19 or other contagious diseases	Serious illness	• Ask people to stay home if unwell, follow COVID safe measures (masks, vaccinations, hand washing/sanitising) • Check-in QR code and/or sign in sheet	
People displaying anti-social behaviour	Abuse, inappropriate behaviour	• Move the group away, reschedule the event • Nominate a team who can calm or ask the person to leave • If there is a risk of harm call police or ambulance	

Site Observation:
Getting to know your site

Learning and understanding your place relies on observation.

Observing and documenting nature's interactions can make us better gardeners, citizen scientists and local knowledge holders. Talking to locals who have lived in the area for a long time can give us a picture of which birds, plants and animals live there. From them, we can learn what to encourage or discourage when recreating natural landscapes or establishing garden beds.

Materials:

- Print a copy of this sheet. Find a pencil/pen and a clipboard to lean on.

Task:

- Conduct a detailed site analysis by researching and finding answers to the questions below, they will help inform your design and planting choices as you plan the garden. Circle the most relevant words or write a response

1. What is the original plant community of the site?

Rainforest, woodland, rainforest, coastal plain, grasslands, unknown

2. Are there any culturally significant plants?

e.g. Aboriginal heritage, original vegetation, historically significant

3. What buildings are on the site currently?

Houses, shed, multi-storey buildings, classrooms, other

4. What type of plants are growing on the site currently?

Trees, shrubs, grass, moss, nothing

5. How is the site intended to be used?

e.g. Community garden, local edible, Indigenous garden, natural area restoration

6. Are there any groundcovers?

Plants - are they lush or dry? Are they considered a weed or have they been deliberately planted?

Surfaces - Concrete, gravel, bare earth, other

7. Are there any signs of any fauna on site?

Scats/droppings, nibbled fruit, feathers, fur, burrows, nests, other

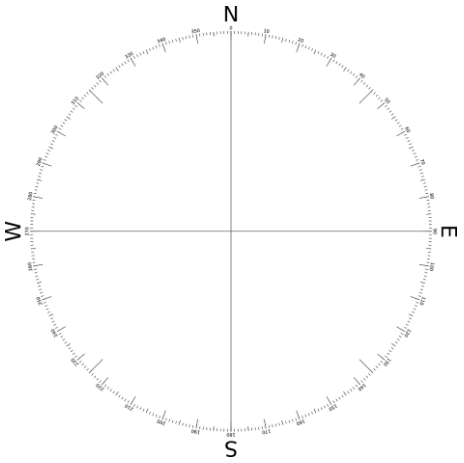
8. What is the soil type?

- Soil Colour e.g. light, dark, yellow, red, brown
- Soil Texture e.g. dry, moist, sticky, boggy, gritty, does it smell?
- Does water drain well or does the water pool on top?
- What is the pH of the soil?
- Is there evidence of soil life? e.g. worms, beetles, fungi, ants etc.
- Is there evidence of soil erosion?

9. What is the rainfall?

- Average_____ Annual ___Monthly
- Distribution – where is the wettest area? _____
- Does the site have frost? _____Intensity
- Are there any slopes on the site? _____

10. What is the temperature in this season?



Today Max_____ Min _____

Average Max_____ Min _____

11. How does wind effect the site?

Which direction/s does the wind coming typically come from? Mark it on the compass.

- Are they cool breezes, strong winds, hot, dry winds?

- Are there any wind breaks? e.g. tree lines, building?

12. When does the site get the most sun?

- Morning/Afternoon?

- Where is the shade at different parts of the day?

- Where is it sunniest at midday?

- Are any of the seasons particularly intense? Describe the seasonal conditions.

Site Observation: Fire Factors

How might fire effect the site of your Community Garden?

1. What is the Fire risk? Please tick.

LOW ____HIGH ____

2. Which direction would the fire most likely come from?

3. What fire hazards are on this site? e.g. electrical

4. What might the intensity of the fire be?

5. What fire hazard reductions are there in place on the site?

6. What will be in the path of any approaching fire? Circle or add to the list below:

obvious drainage lines **valleys** **ridges**

flat areas **gullies**

wind traps **shelters** **buildings** **large trees**

dry ground cover

People

Human Rights Wheel

ACT
Act to improove human rights. Practising what one might know or feel to be right empowers the community.

INSPIRE
Inspire each other to learn and grow as human rights leaders, educators and activists.

KNOW
Educators and human rights educators must know their human rights and responsibilities.

CELEBRATE
Recognise time, commitment and dedication.

HEAL
Every person and every community has suffered loss and pain. Heal through storytelling.

CONNECT
Human beings need to connect with themselves and others. This helps the community to grow to their full potential.

VALUE
Individuals and communities must value human rights, respect the dignity of themselves and others, a safe place where developing and sharing is created.

REFLECT
Reflect on other aspects of the learning wheel, what have you learned?

Thinking about human rights

Reclaiming our human rights enables us to share common vision, to speak the same language and practice responsible actions towards one another.

In the empty spaces provide some examples of how you could use this in your community ie. heal - planting a healing and sensory garden, planting nutrient dense food.

Site Observation: Mapping

Draw a site map in the box below, using your own symbols or words to represent the following list of site functions:

Pathways

- Vehicular paths
- Pedestrian paths

Structures

- Water storage tank
- Taps
- Fences
- Walls

Services

- Water
- Gas
- Phone/internet
- Contaminated areas
- Buildings
- Slope – indicate with an arrow

Site Observation: Weekly Monitoring

All gardeners know the key to good gardening happens when we connect with our gardens regularly.

Gardeners take the time to look at changes over time and they adapt garden practices accordingly. For example, a growth in annual aphid populations lets a gardener know to plant for ladybeetles. The ladybeetle larvae will solve the aphid problem!

What's happening in the Garden? A weekly checklist

Date/ Season Temperature and Conditions	Which edible annuals are in season now?	What edible perennials are in season now?	Have you done any soil-building or maintenance of fertility systems?	Which pollinators and insects did you see today? Is there evidence of other animals?
3/9/2020 Dry, windy, 23° C	Lettuce, spinach	Midgen berries	Fed & watered the worm tower, turned & watered the compost	At least 20 bees, some orange butterflies. Large blue tongue lizard

Were there any pests and diseases present? Which IPM tool did you use?	How moist was the soil? Did you water recently, or has it rained lately?	Did you harvest or plant today? How successful was the crop?	Did you need to do any garden maintenance?	How could we enhance the space further?
Black bird pulling out young seedlings - netted area	Moist, it rained two days ago, no need to water	Planted celery. Harvested lettuce - looking excellent!	Pruned water shoots from lemon tree	I think we should add a bench seat under the gum tree