

## **Maximizing Your Edible Gardening Program – Fact sheet**

Here are some suggestions to ensure a garden program runs as smoothly as possible, no matter how large or small your garden is.

Talk with the participants using the garden about what they want - it's their garden and if they feel some ownership they are more likely to want to participate. Don't feel you need to create a huge edible garden area – you may decide to begin with just a few pots. Consider if you need to include a raised garden bed for any participants who are not able to work in a garden that is at ground level. When planning the location of the vegetable garden, ensure full sun and access to water. Make sure the area is not slippery and is wheelchair accessible, has space for a few participants to work together and has a table where group activity can be done. Try to include sensory plants in the garden, for example herbs for smell and texture, rainbow chard for colour. . Where possible, try to use quality and hardy seeds / seedlings / plants. You will not only minimise disappointment if a crop fails but these plants will be more resistant to disease and pests.

Think about what you hope the group will gain from the program, this may include: meaningful group activity, fun, physical activity, meal preparation and enjoying fresh produce, knowledge of gardening and learning to plan. Allow plenty of time so not to rush the participants so it is viewed as a pleasurable experience for all. Consider asking for volunteer help if necessary.

You may be keen to be involved and share your knowledge but try not to take over the project. With guidance allow the participants to plant, water and pick the produce themselves. Try and be aware of toxic plants and also try to avoid the use of chemicals, using organic methods where possible. Fertilizers that come in pellet form allow you to easily measure how much has been used – much easier than in liquid form and a few pellets can be discreetly removed later if necessary. If some chemicals need to be used, store in a secure place.

It is also a good idea to keep a written and photographic diary of your garden – a handy activity when the weather prevents outdoor gardening. Also, consider installing a worm farm and composting bin by using scraps from the kitchen and garden. There are tools available that may make gardening easier – bright coloured handles for sight impaired, larger molded handles for easier handling, extendable handles for less bending etc. Most of these tools are available from the larger hardware stores or specialty garden stores.

Remember, edible gardening is all about working together, having fun and being healthy

If you find all this a bit daunting, chat to your local nursery, ask family members, neighbours or call the Horticultural Therapy Association of Victoria 03 9848 9710 for advice.



This fact sheet was developed by the Horticultural Therapy Association of Vic.