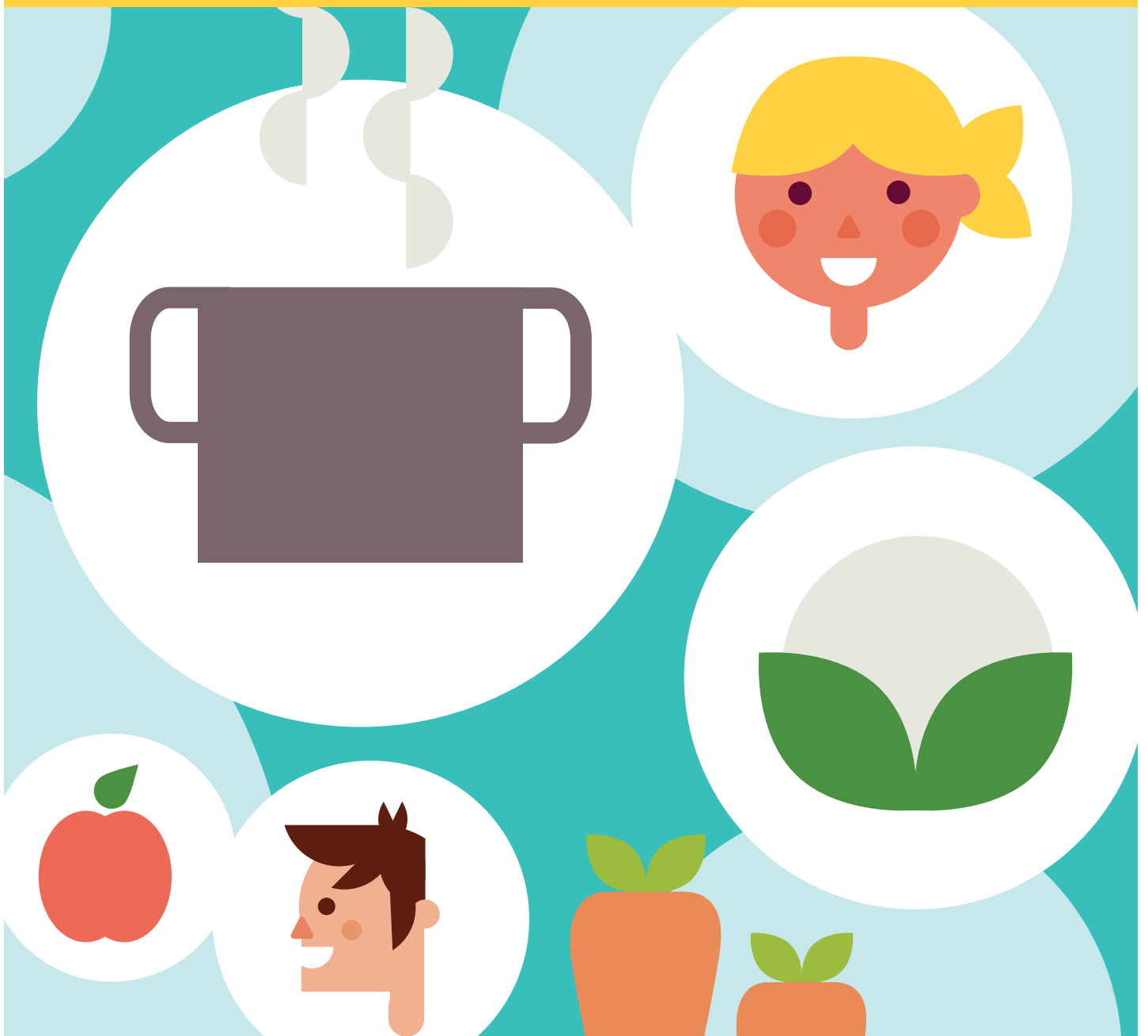


An Eden Project Field Guide to

# Community Food Projects



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## About the authors

### Maria Devereaux

Maria is passionate about good food. She has been an organic food grower for over 20 years and involved in community food projects for the last seven. The issue of sustainable food is close to her heart having been the Chief Exec of Slow Food UK and set up a successful local, not for profit veg bag scheme in SE London. A qualified social and therapeutic horticulturalist, she is currently working on the Growing Health project at Sustain. Maria is at her happiest in the garden or kitchen.

### Clare Horrell

Clare Horrell has been involved in growing, selling and sharing food for much of her life. She's been working with community food projects for the last seven years and before that co-owned and ran a restaurant and also helped set up a volunteer run fair trade cafe. She's covered most fruit known to man with crumble.

### 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. Sustain represents around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level.



**An Eden Project Field Guide to**

# **Community Food Projects**

**Maria Devereaux & Clare Horrell**

# Foreword

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Everyone is interested in food. It's a basic human requirement, but it's more than just fuel to us – it's a common need that can provide common ground between us. It also carries powerful personal and cultural associations for many of us. And yet people are getting increasingly disconnected from their dinners.

At Eden we take our food very seriously. We have welcomed over 15 million visitors to our site in Cornwall, home to the widest collection of food plants on display in any garden, botanic or otherwise – in the world. We work hard to support local supply chains and run campaigns such as the Big Lunch which actively encourage people to grow, cook and eat together.

Improving our understanding and having more control over where our food comes from can help to strengthen our communities and reduce our impact on the environment by giving us greater self-determination over the quality of what we eat and where we source it from. Getting involved in community food projects also has a myriad of other benefits that can reduce social isolation, improve health or just give people a good time.

We have chosen to work with Sustain to produce this book because of their wealth of experience in supporting community food projects. In it you will find a host of ideas to get you thinking, bite-sized explanations about how they might work and signposts to where you can follow them up in more detail.

So grab a biscuit, curl up on the sofa and have a read – who knows where it might lead?

The Eden Team



# Contents

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Community food projects	6
Deciding what to do	12
Growing Food	18
Be enterprising	40
Make something	62
Sharing and celebrating	76
Conclusion	88



# Community food projects

What are they and why get involved?

Food is a great way to bring people together in your community. Even if they don't buy or prepare their own food, everyone eats it! The different ways in which food is produced, moved, sold and consumed can provide ideas for possible projects in your area. You can get your local community growing, cooking and sharing food that is not only good for them, but also the environment.

There are many fantastic examples of community food projects across the country, which are often about more than just food. Many of them also aim to improve the community and the environment. Projects are often set up to create an alternative to the way most people shop, cook and eat or to learn new skills. Community food projects are all about allowing local people to take control of where their food comes from and connecting them with each other and where they live. A food project is a great way to get everyone involved, bring communities together, helping to create a sense of local pride.

**By working together, people can influence and improve every aspect of the way food is made, supplied and prepared in their community. This guide will provide you with some ideas and examples of what you could do locally and examples of what other communities have done.**

### **Growing Food**

This could include a community garden or orchard, growing food at home on a windowsill, working with local farmers to guarantee a market for their produce, planting food on roundabouts, or finding it for free in the local park. However you do it, tasty, locally grown fruit and veg are best.

### **Be enterprising**

Making food and sharing or selling it brings people together and can help create local jobs and businesses. As a group you could set up a co-op, buying in bulk to make food more affordable. You might consider setting up a farmers' market, local veg box scheme or maybe a community shop or cafe as a focal point for the neighbourhood.

### **Make something**

If you are buying locally produced ingredients or growing them yourself then you could process them to preserve them for longer. There is a long and proud tradition of making jams and chutneys in this country. Or you could turn a passion for making bread or cakes into a local business. Also think about what happens to waste food, which could be redistributed to charities, turned into other things like juices and jams or even composted communally.

### **Sharing and celebrating**

Food brings people together and can provide a real focal point for a variety of activities. From street parties to cooking clubs, food can be shared, enjoyed and celebrated.

# Community benefits

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**Setting up a community food project in your area can have widespread benefits for you, the community and the environment. Be creative: there are heaps of rewards in setting up and running a project in your area.**

How about

- using local green spaces or unloved areas to create projects that build the knowledge and skills to grow fresh, local, seasonal food
- developing local enterprises and jobs around the growing and processing of food
- creating opportunities for people to learn and to involve schools and young people
- linking local people making food (producers), selling food (retailers) and those who buy it (shoppers)
- promoting healthy living and improving general wellbeing
- ensuring money is spent and stays in the local economy
- sharing and celebrating food.

# Icons and ranking in this guide

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Throughout this guide we will look at how projects can help your community and we've ranked each scheme with the top icons that we think apply to it.



## People

How it helps individuals and the community, e.g. health and wellbeing, shared ownership and decision making, building a community that includes everyone.



## Environment

Benefits to your local area, the land, animals and wildlife plus connecting people with where they live, the land, and nature.



## Money

Spending money with local food projects helps support local jobs and your local economy, food could also be more affordable.



## Learning




Acquiring new skills, training others or giving people useful work experience.



## Taste

Better tasting, fresher food which can be more nutritious and better for you.

There is also an additional icon for each section letting you know whether the ideas that are easy, bit harder or need more experience to do. This will help with your planning and help identify the sort of people and skills you might need.

Difficulty			
People	Can be run by one person	Could do with more than one person	Needs a group of people to run it
Money	Simple spreadsheet of costs and income	Bit more complex accounting/basic knowledge of Excel would be useful. Some basic knowledge of how to account for costs	Requires some basic knowledge of accounting and managing costs/ use of Excel. Might need a database for monitoring orders and an online method for taking payment. May need some capital to get started
Equipment	Limited or no extra equipment needed	May need a few things that aren't always readily available	Will need some equipment which is sometimes specialised
Legal Stuff	Some regulations and permits may be needed. No legal structure required. Insurance	Some regulations and permits likely. May need to have a formal legal structure. Insurance	Regulations and permits needed. May need to have a formal legal structure. Insurance
Space	Can be run from your home	Needs some storage/premises	Needs warehouse/ shop/community space/market space to operate from
Transport	Customers come to you	You may need to deliver to a drop off point	Customers may collect direct from you or you may need to deliver to a market/drop off point/ individual customers





# Deciding what to do

As with any project you will need to look what's appropriate for your local area. Here are some of the things you should consider before starting on your voyage into food.

## **Create a group to get things started**

Involve other local people at the outset and use and develop their skills and knowledge. Find out who has an interest in food locally and any experience or skills in this area. Does your neighbour enjoy making jam? Are there allotments nearby? Where is your nearest farm? This might help trigger some great ideas and get people involved in helping to start something off.

## **Identify the need**

Review what local food is already available. Do you have a bakery? Where do people buy their veg from at the moment? Are there any gaps or opportunities? Use this info to help plan a potential project.

## **Look at other local food projects**

What's worked in other neighbourhoods like yours? Are there organisations that might be able to offer advice and information or even training? Make contact and ask questions, visit other projects. Learn from other people's successes and mistakes!

## **Use what's already available in your community**

What resources does your neighbourhood have already and what you need to make your project work? Think about space, time, expertise, money and equipment. Is there a derelict piece of local land you could use to grow veg? Does the church hall have a kitchen you could use to make food or use as a community shop? Are there local businesses you could work with? Walk around your local area and ask.

## **Ask the local community**

What would they like to do? What would benefit the local area most? Do they want to be able to buy local fruit, learn about beekeeping, cut their food bill or learn how to cook? Call a meeting, get people together, write a questionnaire, ask some simple questions with some ideas. This will help you set your aims and objectives and plan next steps.

## **Be realistic**

How much time do you have? If you want to do something quick and relatively simple to get people thinking about local food issues, then maybe think about encouraging people to compost their food waste. More ambitious ideas like a veg box scheme could take up to a year as it involves buying, packing, distribution, marketing and collecting money. Don't worry if it doesn't all go according to plan! There might be a few niggles along the way but hang in there as it will be worth it.

## **Keep the community informed**

How are you going to let people know about the food project? Plan a launch, hold an event, think about how you could advertise it, do you need a regular newsletter or Facebook page or just a one-off poster? Not everyone can use a computer so use a mix of ways to keep everyone up to date. Think about where people pick up info and read stuff. Maybe the local library, school or paper?



## **Enjoy local food**

Remember: good food should taste great, so use any excuse to share it with others. Do you have a mix of different cultures in your neighbourhood that could exchange ingredients or recipes? Is your area well known for some kind of food or could you make it famous for something? How about celebrating the launch of your project with a party using locally grown food? Organise celebrations around regular events like bonfire night for example. Share food, stimulate your taste buds and have fun.

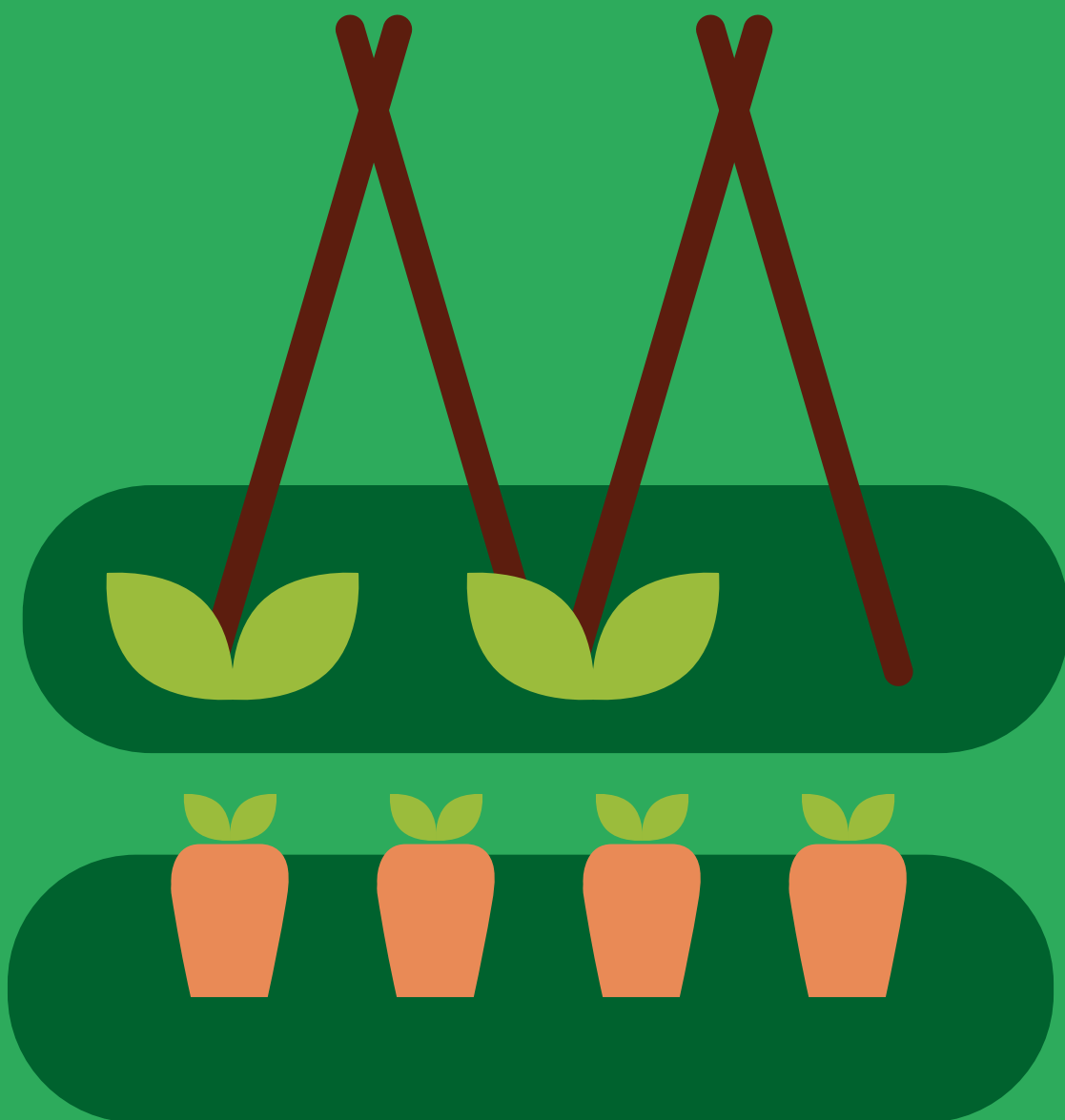
## **Expand your project**

Build on your achievements. Are there other areas of good food you could be addressing? If you launch a community cafe think what happens to any wasted food? Could a local charity use it? Could the local school use the cafe to learn about running a business? Think about the wider community benefits of your project and take a look at *The Sustain Guide to Good Food* to see what else you could be doing.

## **Plan for the future**

Think about the next stage. If you set up your food project with some initial funding try and make sure it can continue and you can cover the ongoing running costs, if there are any. A local food co-op could have community shares, think about local fundraising for a community garden and ask local businesses for support with equipment. If you have a one-off event, how about organising it annually so that people look forward to it?

**The next four chapters will look at the types of community food projects you could do, with some great examples of what others have done. Do try and share what you end up doing, by writing an article for a relevant publication or providing information on a website as it might help others in the future.**



# Growing food

Growing your own food can be very rewarding, and setting up a community garden is a popular way of getting people involved, even if you aren't an expert yourself. However, growing food could just mean encouraging people to grow something edible in their front garden, like the Food Up Front project, or involve working with a farm nearby to supply local veg like like the Chagfood project in Devon. This community market garden was an idea that came out of a public meeting where they wanted to shorten the distance between its producers and consumers. In this section are some examples of the sorts of projects you could get off the ground.

# Community food garden

Difficulty:



Benefits:



A community food garden is a piece of land gardened by a group of people. The land can be publicly or privately owned but is generally managed by local people. Community gardens come in all different shapes and sizes and can be located anywhere in the community. You could set one up on a vacant or derelict piece of land, in a park, school, housing estate, on an allotment or even a roof like Food From the Sky, which was situated on the roof of a supermarket. The veg, fruit and herbs they grew were sold below in the supermarket, only ten metres from soil to shelf. You can't get much more local than that! Why not organise a walk around your local area to identify land that you could use? The Community Land Advisory Service can provide advice.

## Getting started

Community gardens are set up for a variety of reasons. Some may be primarily used to grow food for the gardeners and/or the surrounding community, others to grow and sell food, to help pay for plants and seeds, while others might also be intended to enable people to learn or even improve their health. Sydenham Garden in south-east London was a community project set up initially in a GP's garden and then on a derelict nature reserve to help people with mental health problems to recover. Maybe you could work with your local hospital or health centre to develop a community garden?

You might also want to think about how the garden works and is designed. Some community gardens have



plots that are gardened collectively, others are split into individual plots but often with a common area.

There are all sorts of reasons for setting up a food growing garden. It might be a combination of things such as providing affordable, local, seasonal produce and helping improve the area, developing a sense of community or helping people understand where their food comes from. They are also excellent wildlife habitats.

What about helping people's physical health and wellbeing by not only having fresh food, but also by providing a place for exercise and to help reduce stress? These are just a few of the many benefits of community gardening. If you want some more info then take a look at a few of the Sustain publications such as *Growing Success*.

### Things you might need

**People** □ A group willing to get their hands dirty

**Space** □ A plot you can grow things on

**Legal** □ You may need some advice about getting permission to use the space

**Equipment** □ You will need some gardening tools, seeds and normally some compost to get you growing

### Further reading and resources

**Food From the Sky** □ [www.foodfromthesky.org.uk](http://www.foodfromthesky.org.uk)

**Sydenham Garden** □ [www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk](http://www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk)

**Sustain** □ [www.sustainweb.org/publications](http://www.sustainweb.org/publications)

**Incredible Edible Network** □ [www.incredibleediblenetwork.org.uk](http://www.incredibleediblenetwork.org.uk)

**Edible Estates** □ [www.edibleestates.co.uk](http://www.edibleestates.co.uk)

**Big Dig** □ [www.bigdig.org.uk](http://www.bigdig.org.uk)

**Capital Growth** □ [www.capitalgrowth.org](http://www.capitalgrowth.org)

**Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens** □ [www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)

**Community Land Advisory Service** □ [www.communitylandadvice.org.uk](http://www.communitylandadvice.org.uk)







## Cranbrook Community Garden

Cranbrook Community Garden started on a neglected play park which had become a rubbish dump, piled high with discarded furniture, old gates, and prams. With funding from the council and from Sustain's Capital Growth project, local residents have transformed the space into a growing area of over 2,000m<sup>2</sup> with 20 raised beds, a greenhouse and a patio area. Vegetables are grown all year round which reflect the ethnic diversity of the residents involved such as Bangladeshi pumpkins and *lal shak* (amaranth). Local people and a shopkeeper donate food waste to make fertiliser and the group hold garden open days to encourage residents of the estate to come and see the garden and to recruit new members.



# Allotments

Difficulty:



Benefits:



If you want to do things on a slightly larger scale, then consider developing a new allotment site. An allotment is an area of land, leased to an individual or family for growing fruit, veg and flowers, usually for private use. Sometimes the land is also used for keeping chickens, rabbits and bees. The individual gardeners are usually organised in an allotment association, which leases or is granted the land from an owner. In turn the gardeners have to pay a small membership fee to the association.

## Getting started

Many existing allotments are owned by local councils but some are on private sites. Many parts of the country, especially in urban areas, now have long waiting lists – so this is often a good reason to set one up. Councils have a legal obligation to provide allotments and the National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners has a leaflet on their website describing basic allotment legislation. The campaign group, Allot More Allotments also provides some useful steps on getting land. It is often best to be proactive and identify pieces of land that could be turned into allotments. That way you can approach either the council or a private landowner who might rent you the land, such as farmers, waterways, railways, churches, schools and the National Trust. In Crewkerne, Somerset, an overgrown piece of land was cleared in 2011 and leased from a private landlord who wanted to see the land put to good use. Have a think about how you might split the land into manageable plots, maybe have different sizes to cater for people's needs – a large plot can sometimes be a bit daunting to start off with.

## Things you might need

**People** □ interested individuals and families who want their own plot and happy to form an association

**Space** □ a piece of land

**Legal** □ you may need some advice about getting permission to use or rent the land

## Further reading and resources

**The National Allotment Society** □ [www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk)

**Allot More Allotments** □ [www.allotmoreallotments.org.uk](http://www.allotmoreallotments.org.uk)

**How to start an Allotment** □ [www.channel4.com/programmes/river-cottage/articles/all/how-to-start-an-allotment](http://www.channel4.com/programmes/river-cottage/articles/all/how-to-start-an-allotment)



# Community orchards

Difficulty:



Benefits:



You might want to specialise and set up a community orchard. They are often open to the public and usually owned or leased for, or by, the community, parish council, local authority or voluntary body. Unlike a commercial or traditional orchard, the value of the fruit is not necessarily the main motive and many have been set up because of the loss of orchards across the UK. About two thirds of Britain's orchards have been lost since 1960. Fewer orchards has meant fewer local varieties of fruit and the loss of recipes, songs, customs, social gatherings and the sharing of skills of pruning, grafting and growing.





## Getting started

Get your local community to decide how and why they wish to manage an orchard. Maybe it's to grow and save local or unusual varieties of apples, pears, cherries or plums. In 1992, the charity Common Ground established the idea of community orchards and since then several hundred have been set up, so there are plenty of examples which can be found on the county gazetteer on their website. Common Ground also provides a range of useful information through its website and several publications.

Community orchards are also excellent places for people to get together, and like gardens, can be the focal point for community activities, events or festivals or just a green space in which to relax. Horfield Organic Community Orchard in Bristol was set up on overgrown allotment land in 1998 and now has over 100 apple, pear, plum and nut trees, plus soft fruit. It hosts schools visits and holds regular sales of produce.

### Things you might need

**People** □ members of the community willing to get involved

**Space** □ a piece of land, either with existing orchard on or a space big enough to plant some fruit and nut trees

**Legal** □ you may need some advice about getting permission to use or rent the land

**Equipment** □ garden equipment to maintain the trees

### Further reading and resources

**Common Ground** □ [www.commonground.org.uk](http://www.commonground.org.uk)

**Horfield Organic Community Orchard** □ [www.communityorchard.org.uk](http://www.communityorchard.org.uk)

**How to start a community orchard** □ [www.gov.uk/government/publications/communityorchards-how-to-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/communityorchards-how-to-guide)

**Urban Orchard Project** □ [www.theurbanorchardproject.org](http://www.theurbanorchardproject.org)

# Home growing and shared gardens

Difficulty:



Benefits:



## Getting started

A slightly different approach to food growing in the community is to encourage people to grow food in their own gardens or even windowsills by providing advice and maybe organising the swapping of seeds or gluts of veg.

Some people, however, don't like gardening or can't garden due to ill health or age, which provides another opportunity: shared gardens. This allows individuals to grow in someone else's garden either together or independently. It is great for older people, who are worried about maintaining the garden but can still share their knowledge. The Garden Partners programme in Wandsworth, London, is a great example of matching young people keen to grow with older garden owners in the borough. It was also a befriending scheme and helped tackle isolation for those less able to get out and helped reduce the risk of falls and accidents in the garden.

Landshare, set up by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, is a nationwide scheme. The important thing is that no money changes hands and there is normally an agreement about how the garden is used and the produce often divided. Take a look at Totnes's Gardenshare project where unloved plots grow salads, connections – even friends! They have a super step-by-step guide and lots of useful forms. What lovely people!



## Things you might need

**People** □ people in the community who want to grow food or are willing to share their space

## Further reading and resources

**Cardiff Hops** □ [www.facebook.com/groups/416366171788291](https://www.facebook.com/groups/416366171788291)

**Landshare** □ [www.landshare.net](http://www.landshare.net)

**Edinburgh Garden Partners** □ [www.edinburghgardenpartners.org.uk](http://www.edinburghgardenpartners.org.uk)

**Transition Town Totnes** □ [www.transitiontowntotnes.org/groups/foodgroup/gardenshare/howtostart](http://www.transitiontowntotnes.org/groups/foodgroup/gardenshare/howtostart)

**Food Up Front** □ [www.foodupfront.org](http://www.foodupfront.org)

**Garden Organic** □ [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)





### **Cardiff Hops**

Following the success of a similar project in Brixton, Cardiff Hops has brought home-brewing of a different kind to Wales by encouraging Cardiff to grow its own hops. Launched in 2013, the project is literally growing from strength to strength as the hops come up every year. Hop plants are growing in gardens, parks, pots and community areas across the city. Cardiff Hops advise people how to grow the hops and then organise collection the resulting beer is brewed by Pipes microbrewery. The 2013 crop resulted in 100 litres of 'Taff Temptress' green hop ale!





# Guerrilla gardening

Difficulty:



Benefits:

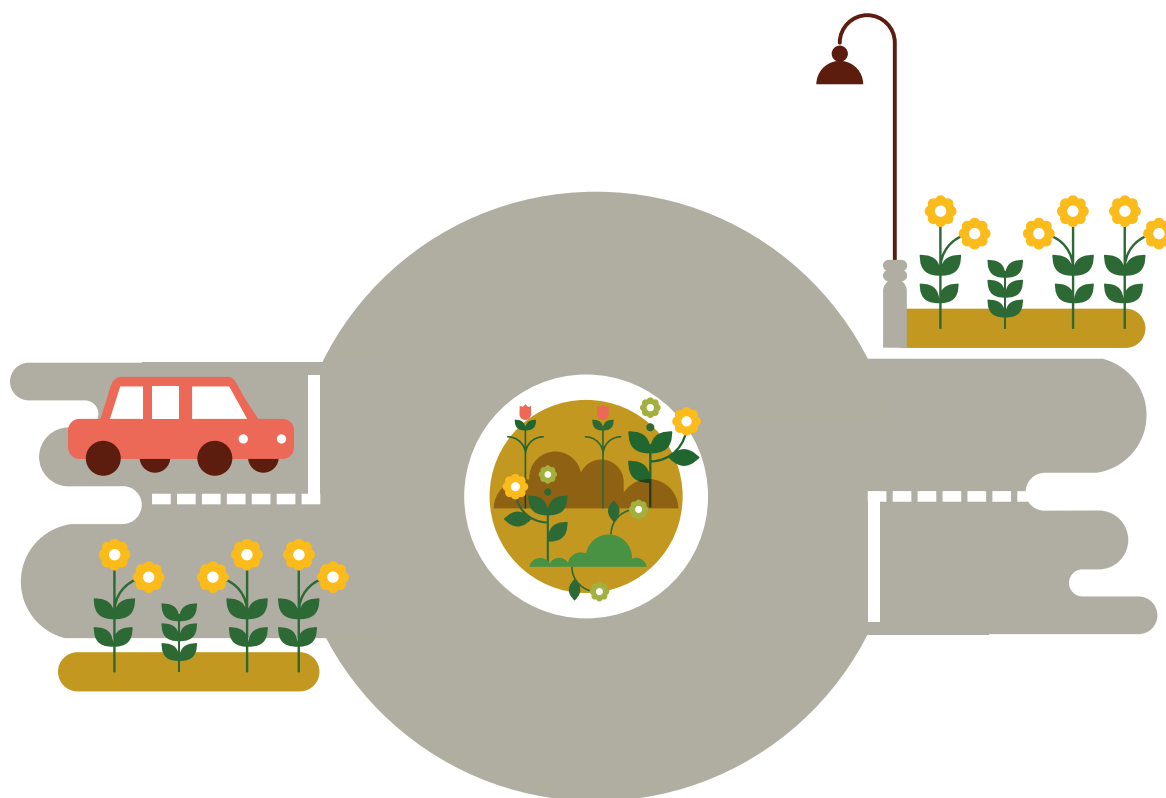


Guerrilla gardening is the act of gardening on neglected land that the gardeners do not have the legal right to use, such as an abandoned public site, or private property. Some people just want to grow flowers or food crops to make the area more attractive, whilst others use it as a form of protest and direct action against land rights and ownership.

## Getting started

As this is technically trespass we recommend you just identify a neglected public space you would like to improve, which could be an unloved planter, overgrown flowerbed or even a roundabout or underpass, and then ask your local council if you can cultivate it.

At the Elephant and Castle in south London locals have been pimping pavements, traffic islands and roadside verges since 2004. What about growing food at a bus stop? That's exactly what the Edible Bus Stop in Stockwell in south London have done! The project began as a response to a planning proposal to sell the sole green space in the neighbourhood to private developers. They now have a whole edible bus route with the aim of piggybacking on the transport network to create a network of edible community gardens. They are now supported by their local councils and the Mayor of London. You could look at similar schemes in your area. How about growing in an old phone box?



### Things you might need

**People/planning** □ members of the community willing to get involved and a way of communicating with them about days and times

**Space** □ identified areas of land

**Equipment** □ you will need some gardening tools, seeds or plants

### Further reading and resources

**Guerrilla Gardening** □ [www.guerrillagardening.org](http://www.guerrillagardening.org)

**The Edible Bus Stop** □ [www.theediblebusstop.org](http://www.theediblebusstop.org)

**Pot Hole Gardener** □ [www.thepotholegardener.com](http://www.thepotholegardener.com)

# Wild food and foraging

Difficulty:



Benefits:



Rather than grow your own, why not help yourself to what nature has to offer? Wild food is anything edible that is not cultivated or managed, and occurs in its natural state. This includes plants, (leaves, berries, nuts and sap), fungi or animals. Wild food was once necessary for human survival but most of this traditional knowledge has been lost. However there are people, books and websites that can help you identify this free food – foraging, the act of searching for wild food, is on the increase.

## Getting started

You could start by organising the community to harvest fruit off trees in the streets, or walks in the local woods to look for mushrooms – but you do need some knowledge to ensure what you are going to eat is safe and not poisonous. It is an ideal way to connect with the seasons and be aware of the natural environment. Make sure you don't over-harvest and only take what you can use.

### Things you might need

**People** – someone with some knowledge of wild foods and a group of people interested in foraging

**Space** – some local foraging-friendly spots

**Equipment** – a knife is often useful and a bag to put stuff in

### Further reading and resources

**Fergus the Forager** – [www.fergustheforager.co.uk](http://www.fergustheforager.co.uk)

**Robin Harford's Wild Food Guide to the Edible Plants of Britain** – [www.eatweeds.co.uk](http://www.eatweeds.co.uk)

*Nevermind the burdocks*, Emma Gunn – [www.nevermindtheburdocks.co.uk](http://www.nevermindtheburdocks.co.uk)





# Community-supported agriculture (CSA)

Difficulty: ● ● ● Benefits:    

Community-supported agriculture is a partnership between farmers and the local community providing mutual benefits and reconnecting people to the land where their food is grown. The network or association of individuals pledges to support one or more local farms, sharing the risks and benefits of producing the food. CSA members or subscribers pay at the beginning of the growing season for a share of the anticipated harvest; once harvesting begins, they receive weekly shares of whatever the farm produces. Farmers benefit by receiving a more stable and secure income and closer connection with their community, and consumers can benefit by eating fresh healthy food, feeling more connected to their food and learning new skills as volunteers.





## Getting started

You will need to identify local farms and approach the farmers to see if they would be interested in setting up a CSA. You could call a public meeting to get people round the table. The Soil Association's CSA action manual provides all the essential info.

Growing Well is a farm-based charity that promotes mental health recovery and well-being by encouraging the local community to get involved in organic growing. This grower-led CSA rents its six acres of land from Low Sizergh Farm, a National Trust tenant, with whom it has developed a strong and supportive relationship. Growing Well currently has 45 members who pay £7.50 a week for a share of vegetables, which they collect from the farm.

### Things you might need

**Planning/people** – interested farmers and local people willing to buy things.

**Legal** – you may need help and/or advice to set the agreement with the farmers.

**Finance** – for a small group you can monitor orders on a piece of paper, but if you decide to grow beyond this, you'll find it easier if you are able to use a spreadsheet.

### Further reading and resources

**Chagfood Community Market Garden** – [www.chagfood.org.uk](http://www.chagfood.org.uk)

**Growing Well** – [www.growingwell.co.uk](http://www.growingwell.co.uk)

**Tablehurst and Plawhatch farm** – [www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk](http://www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk)

**Soil Association** – [www.soilassociation.org/communitysupportedagriculture](http://www.soilassociation.org/communitysupportedagriculture)



# Livestock and bees

Difficulty:



Benefits:



Apart from growing veg or fruit in the community you might also think about keeping bees for honey, chickens or ducks for eggs. There are many other kinds of small livestock that you could keep, like quails or even a goat or pigs, but you need to check the regulations with Defra, the government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It would also be worth contacting people with experience of keeping animals for advice. Remember that most animals must have their food, water and shelter needs seen to every day, so having a team of people willing to take responsibility for them is important.

A scheme just outside Leamington Spa, Canalside Community Bees, is a co-operative supported by subscriptions, as well as the time and effort of its members. Members get involved in managing the bees, building hives, planting bee-friendly flowers, harvesting honey and making use of hive products. All members get one jar of honey and the chance to buy more honey at a discount.

## Things you might need

**People** □ members of the community willing to get involved

**Space** □ a piece of land the size of which will depend on what you are going to keep

**Legal** □ you may need some advice about keeping livestock. Check with Defra about whether you need a licence

**Equipment** □ you might need to build or buy a shelter

## Further reading and resources

**Defra** □ [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

**British Beekeepers association** □ [www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk)

**Canalside Community Bees** □ [canalsidecommunitybees.blogspot.co.uk](http://canalsidecommunitybees.blogspot.co.uk)



# Be enterprising

There are lots of different ways to be enterprising with food in your neighbourhood, and some involve selling it. From community shops and farmers' markets to box schemes and food co-ops, farmers and customers are getting together, becoming retailers themselves and changing the face of shopping for food. You can start small with a food co-op and then as your confidence grows branch out into one of the other common types of selling schemes we've outlined in this chapter.





**There are some basic skills and knowledge you might need depending on the kind of project you run.**

### **Marketing**

Most businesses require some marketing. You'll need to research the kind of people your customers are, what they want, and how many of them there might be. You'll then need to decide on the best way of letting those people know about you. That might be through social media, flyers or having a presence at a local event. You will need to budget for your marketing activities unless you are only using social media.

### **IT skills**

The skills you need will vary depending on the kind of project you run. Not every project requires IT skills but they can make a project easier to manage and promote.

### **People**

Unless you're a one-man band then you'll need people to help run your community food business; they could be paid staff or volunteers. A happy team is key to making your scheme a success. It's good to give people a specific task that they are responsible for. Give them training and make sure that the work is split fairly between everyone. Ask people what they like doing and try and match tasks to their particular interests and skills. Make sure that both the most fun and more tedious tasks are shared out between everyone. Giving staff and volunteers discounts is a good way of building loyalty and commitment.

# Food co-ops and buying groups

Difficulty:



Benefits:



Running a food co-op is a great way to dip your toe into selling food locally. Food co-ops and buying groups work by buying in bulk. Many take money in advance so they only buy in what they have already been paid for. Buying in bulk enables food co-ops to get better prices: the more people who take part, the better the price. Many co-ops are run by people from their own homes and often have only a few members – maybe just people who live in the same street, or a group of friends. Others are larger and run like a shop or a market stall. Often, larger food co-ops operate out of community centres, schools, church halls while others are set up in workplaces

## Getting started

You can start by just buying dry goods such as grains, pulses, dried fruit, flour and sugar from one big wholesaler like Suma, Essential or Traidcraft. True Food Community Co-op in Reading and Ipswich Ripple Food Co-op both started out like this with a group of people getting together for a better choice of wholefoods at a better price than the high street could offer. Many student food co-ops like Manchester Students' Food Co-op also started by focussing on wholefoods such as grains and cereals. Starting with dry goods means you have only one delivery and everything is in packets and jars so no mess all over your carpet! As your co-op grows you can include more items, buy from local growers and get goods from a range of different wholesalers. Both the Ipswich and Reading co-ops have done just that, and now operate as shops. Most student co-ops run as a stall so they keep stock of goods like a shop does. They start



out by focussing on the most common larger items like sugar, coffee, tea, grains and pulses. These items also keep well, so it means they can keep wastage down. Many small food co-ops have been started by organisations working to improve health in the community and only sell fruit and veg. These co-ops operate more like a box scheme (see below).

### Things you might need

#### **For a small co-op made up of you and a few friends you'll need:**

**People** □ a group willing to buy the same sort of things together

**Finance** □ a small group can monitor its orders on a piece of paper, but larger groups will probably need a spreadsheet.

#### **If you decide to move on to having a stall or increasing your co-op members then you'll need:**

**IT skills** □ you'll need to have a database to monitor your orders and you might want to take subscriptions online using a payment system.

**Pricing** □ you will need to cover all your costs e.g. things like staff, packing, delivery and subscriptions. You'll also need to set up a system to manage your stock so that you are always selling the items with the closest best before/sell by dates first.

**People** □ you will need staff or volunteers to help.

**Marketing** □ make sure people know about your project by using flyers, social media and the local press.

**Legal** □ as you grow you may need help and/or advice to set up a legal structure. You may also need to think about the kind of insurance cover you need.

**Permissions/regulations** □ check with your council and environmental health office to make sure you have all the permissions and meet all the regulations to operate legally.

### Further reading and resources

**Sustain food co-ops toolkit** □ [www.sustainweb.org/foodcoops](http://www.sustainweb.org/foodcoops)

**True Food Co-op in Reading** □ [www.truefood.coop](http://www.truefood.coop)

**Ipswich Ripple Food Co-op** □ [ipswichripplefoodcoop.yolasite.com](http://ipswichripplefoodcoop.yolasite.com)

**Manchester Students Food Co-op** □ [www.facebook.com/mansfcoop](http://www.facebook.com/mansfcoop)

**Ox Co-op** □ [www.oxcoop.com](http://www.oxcoop.com)

**A Healthy Profit** □ [www.sustainweb.org/publications/?id=202](http://www.sustainweb.org/publications/?id=202)

**Suma** □ [www.suma.coop](http://www.suma.coop)

**Essential** □ [www.essentialtrading.co.uk](http://www.essentialtrading.co.uk)

**Traidcraft** □ [www.traidcraft.co.uk](http://www.traidcraft.co.uk)

# Box schemes

Difficulty:



Benefits:



**Box schemes are set up for customers to buy a box of food on a regular basis, usually once a week. Most box schemes are for fruit and veg though some include or only offer meat and fish. Customers often buy direct from local farmers, which gives the farmers a regular order and cuts out the middleman. There are many successful models that generate enough income to cover the costs involved, but they need to be carefully planned.**

## Getting started

Box schemes usually deliver fresh fruit and vegetables or other products, often locally grown and organic, either directly to the customer or to a local collection point. They decide on the contents of the box (rather than the customer) which varies from week to week and according to season and what is available (sometimes you can exclude certain things). Most schemes require a subscription or money upfront and only buy in what they need to cover their orders.

Some community box schemes also grow some or all of their produce or work with a number of community gardens or farms that grow the produce that goes into the box. Others buy in some or all of the produce from local farmers, and may buy in items from wholesalers that can't be grown locally e.g. bananas, oranges.

You can start your scheme small but most farmers or wholesalers will only deliver a minimum quantity so you'll need enough customers committed to receiving a box so you don't waste food or money.

It's unlikely that you'll be able to make it work with less than 10-15 customers. When starting out it's best to get customers to collect from you so that you eliminate delivery costs. Otherwise you'll need to be sure that your prices take account of the cost of delivery.

Growing Communities, one of the largest and most established community box schemes, estimate that it costs about £5,000 to get a basic scheme up and running. They run a start-up programme helping new projects get off the ground so it's worth getting in touch with them if you want advice.

## Things you might need

### For a small scheme:

**Basic IT skills** □ if you are only buying in what you need to fill your orders, you won't need much more than a simple spreadsheet to monitor the money you get from your customers and the money you pay your farmers. If you want to take orders online you'll need more IT skills to find and use the right software to create a database that can monitor your orders. This doesn't need to be hugely complex as people don't have many choices with what they can order and you can take payment by standing order so you don't need an online payment system.

**Pricing** □ if you find you have to deliver to customers or to drop off points you'll need to know how to adjust your prices to cover the cost of transport or add it on to each customer's bill.

**Space** □ a small box scheme can be run from your own home providing you have a space like a shed or a garage that can be used for packing and storage.

### For a larger scheme:

**IT skills** □ you may need a more complex system to monitor your orders and you might want to take subscriptions online using a payment system. Software is available that will do this, so you may just need some advice to find the one that suits you best.

**Pricing** □ the price of your produce will need to cover all your costs, e.g. things like staff and volunteer time, packing, delivery and subscriptions.

**People** □ you will need staff or volunteers to help.

**Marketing** □ make sure people know about your project by using flyers, social media and the local press.

**Legal** □ as you grow you may need help and/or advice to set up a legal structure. You should also consider what insurance cover you need.

**Permissions/regulations** □ however small your group it's always worth checking with your council and environmental health office to make sure you are operating legally.

**Space** □ as you grow, you might need bigger premises for storage and packing. A school hall or community centre might be an option.

## Further reading and resources

**The Soil Association** □ [www.soilassociation.org/boxschemes](http://www.soilassociation.org/boxschemes)

**Growing Communities** □ [www.growingcommunities.org](http://www.growingcommunities.org)  
(and their start-ups e.g. Windmill veg box scheme in Margate □ [thanet.vegbox.org](http://thanet.vegbox.org) or Local Greens □ [www.localgreens.org.uk](http://www.localgreens.org.uk))

**The Community Fruit and Veg Project in Hastings** □ [www.fruitandveg.org](http://www.fruitandveg.org)

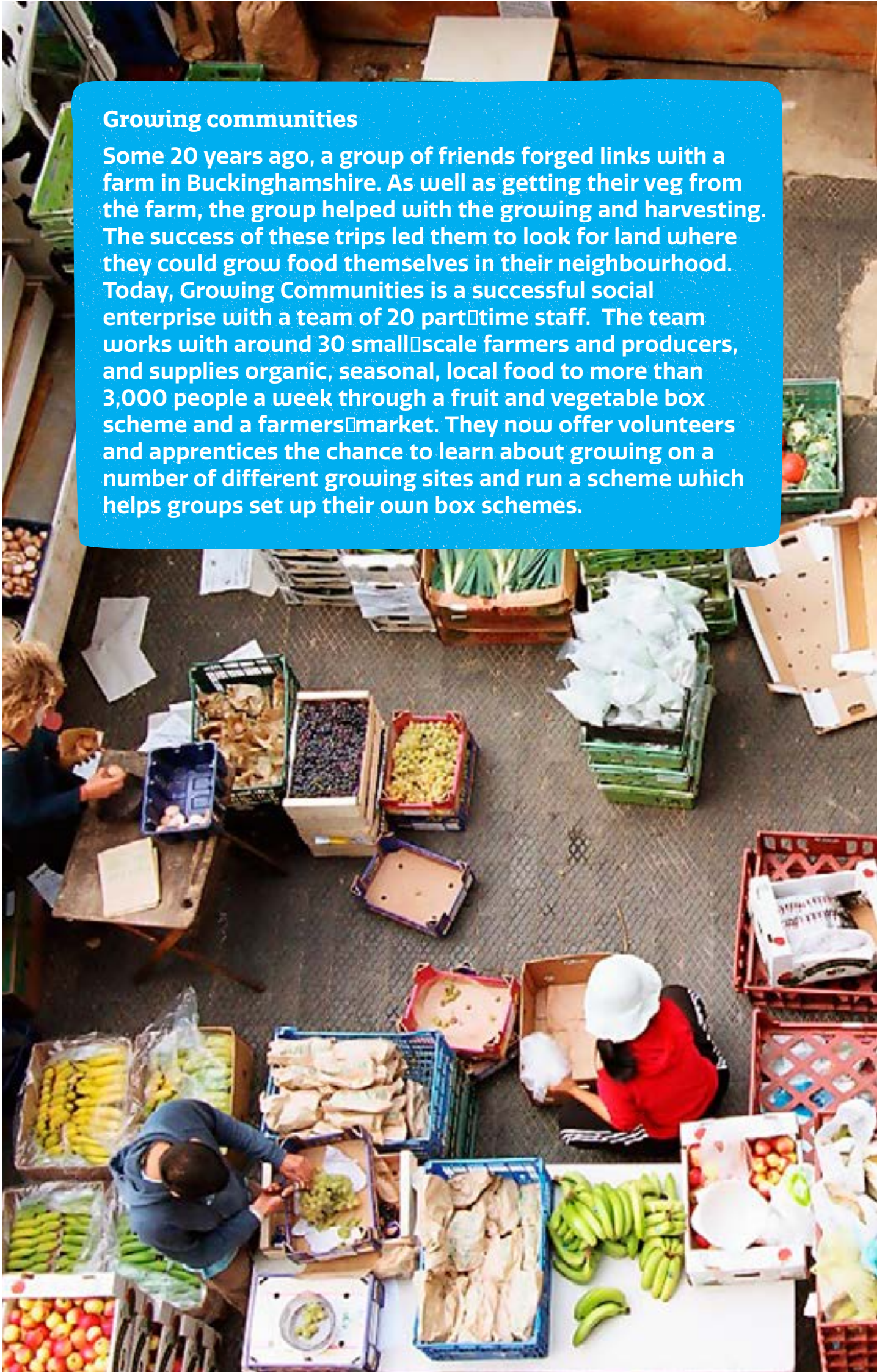
**Bucky Box** □ [www.buckybox.com](http://www.buckybox.com)

**Go Cardless** □ [www.gocardless.com](http://www.gocardless.com)



## Growing communities

Some 20 years ago, a group of friends forged links with a farm in Buckinghamshire. As well as getting their veg from the farm, the group helped with the growing and harvesting. The success of these trips led them to look for land where they could grow food themselves in their neighbourhood. Today, Growing Communities is a successful social enterprise with a team of 20 part-time staff. The team works with around 30 small-scale farmers and producers, and supplies organic, seasonal, local food to more than 3,000 people a week through a fruit and vegetable box scheme and a farmers' market. They now offer volunteers and apprentices the chance to learn about growing on a number of different growing sites and run a scheme which helps groups set up their own box schemes.









# Community shops

Difficulty:



Benefits:



There are over 300 community shops in the UK and they're mostly found in rural areas. They tend to be very responsive and listen to their customers' requests. Some have taken over commercial shops that have closed, others have started from scratch to address a local need.

## Getting started

Get a group of people with a range of different skills and experience together and hopefully you'll cover key areas like how to manage the money, and also the legal things like whether you need a proper legal structure and what terms you have in your lease. Community shops often rely heavily on volunteers to run them, so you'll need a pool of reliable people who are willing to help.

There's also support available to get you started through the Plunkett Foundation's community shops team. And you don't need an actual shop; there are community shops that have adapted a part of their village hall, such as Islip village shop in Oxfordshire.



## Things you might need

**Pricing** □ understanding how to price your goods to cover your costs.

**IT skills** □ basic skills to run a spreadsheet on which you can monitor your costs and income.

**People** □ you'll need to understand how to keep staff and volunteers happy and enthusiastic. It's good to give people a specific task that they are responsible for and as much as possible match tasks to people's skills and experience. Give them training and make sure that work is split fairly between everyone. Make sure that both the most fun and more tedious tasks are shared out between everyone. Giving staff and volunteers discounts is a good way of building loyalty and commitment. A happy team is key to making your shop a success.

**Marketing** □ every shop needs customers. Social media, flyers, posters or an article in the local paper or newsletter will all help to let people know your shop is open for business. Use social media to tell people about specials and opening hours and listen to the feedback they give.

**Legal** □ depending on whether your shop is in a separate building or is using an existing building like a village hall you may need experience or advice to help you set up the right legal structure/negotiate a lease. You should also consider the kind of insurance you might need and health and safety requirements.

**Permissions and regulations** □ check with your local council and local environmental health officer to make sure you have the right permissions for operating a food business. You'll need to set up a system to make sure you and your staff are handling food safely. You are not legally obliged to have a food hygiene certificate but you are legally responsible for ensuring that anyone who handles food has been properly trained to do so. Your local council will be able to provide advice on this and there is lots of help and advice on the Food Standards Agency website.

## Further reading and resources

**Blisland community shop** □ [www.facebook.com/pages/Blisland-Community-Store/436332279808372](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Blisland-Community-Store/436332279808372)

**Seavington village store** □ [www.theseavingtons.org/village-store](http://www.theseavingtons.org/village-store)

**Ashton Hayes village shop** □ [www.ourvillageshop.org.uk](http://www.ourvillageshop.org.uk)

**Islip Village shop** □ [www.islip.org.uk/index.php?menu=shop](http://www.islip.org.uk/index.php?menu=shop)



# Community cafe

Difficulty:



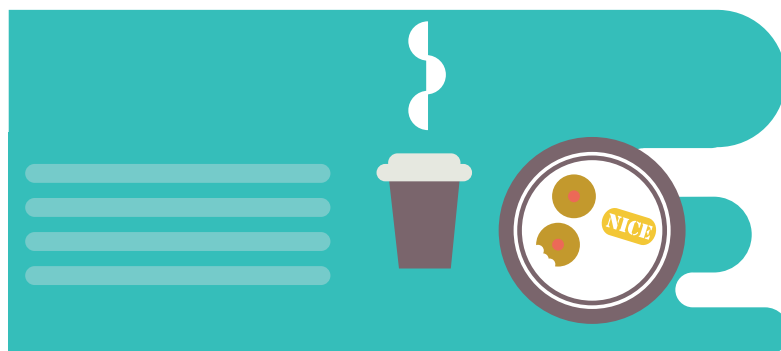
Benefits:



Many community cafes grow out of projects that are already working in one way or another with their local community. As a result they often have a larger organisation behind them that provides the money and often some of the skills to get things started. Often the cafe is used as a means to teach local people new skills and give them work experience. Community cafes make everything on site or buy in produce that is grown or made locally. A few even grow some of the produce themselves.

## Getting started

Much like a community shop, running a community cafe can be a complex business and require skills in dealing with money and people. But there is no reason why you can't start up small as a pop-up with just a few enthusiastic home cooks. Find an underused kitchen at a community centre, sports or social club that you might be able to use for free or for a small rent and start off selling items that you can cook in advance such as cakes, quiches, soups and sandwiches that only need minimal extra preparation before being served. As your confidence and number of customers grows you can increase the scope of your menu and even start cooking items to order on site. Remember however big or small your menu is to try to provide a good variety of items to cater for all tastes and appetites.



## Things you might need

**Pricing** □ understanding how to price your goods to cover your costs.

**IT skills** □ basic skills to run a spreadsheet on which you can monitor your costs and income.

**Equipment** □ if you are using an existing kitchen then you might be able to use their equipment, but you may also need to raise some money to buy in extra things you need.

**People** □ you will need to understand how to keep staff and volunteers happy and enthusiastic. It's good to give people a specific task that they are responsible for and as much as possible match tasks to people's skills and experience. Give them training and make sure that work is split fairly between everyone. Make sure that both the most fun and more tedious tasks are shared out between everyone. Giving staff and volunteers discounts is a good way of building loyalty and commitment. A happy team is key to making your scheme a success.

**Marketing** □ every cafe needs customers. Social media, flyers, posters or an article in the local paper or newsletter will all help to let people know your shop is open for business. Use social media to tell people about specials and opening hours and listen to the feedback they give you.

**Legal** □ depending on the location of your cafe you may need experience or advice to help you set up the right legal structure/negotiate a lease. You might also need to consider what insurance you will need and health and safety requirements.

**Permissions and regulations** □ check with your local council and local environmental health officer to make sure you have the right permissions and comply with the regulations for operating a food business. There is also lots of help and advice on the Food Standards Agency website.

## Further reading and resources

**Sustain** □ factsheets about some of the key things you need to think about when running a community cafe □ [www.sustainweb.org/ethicaleats/community\\_cafes](http://www.sustainweb.org/ethicaleats/community_cafes)

**The Kitchen in Bolton** □ [thekitchen.coop](http://thekitchen.coop)

**Pie in the Sky, London** □ [foodcycle.org.uk/location/pie-in-the-sky](http://foodcycle.org.uk/location/pie-in-the-sky)

**Paper and Cup** □ [www.paperandcup.co.uk](http://www.paperandcup.co.uk)

**Nana** □ [www.wearenana.com](http://www.wearenana.com)

# Pop-ups

Difficulty:



Benefits:



An easy way to have a go at selling is to start as a pop-up. A food pop-up, as its name implies, is a temporary shop, cafe or stall that can be put up and taken down quickly. It's a great way to try out new ideas. Some pop-ups use buildings that are vacant between tenancies and only last until a new tenant takes on the lease. Other pop-ups operate on a regular basis e.g. a market stall, or a pop-up cafe in a community space that serves refreshments to people attending an event or activity and held on specific days and at specific times during the week. Because the pop-up will only operate for a short time you'll only require the basics to get started. It's a great way to see if there is demand for what you're offering.



## Getting started

You will need to have a clear idea of what sort of pop-up you want, e.g. a shop, cafe or stall, and then look for suitable locations, talk to landlords and negotiate the terms of any lease or permissions that you need to have. Landlords are often more flexible with leases and permissions for pop-ups because they know they will only be there for a short time and they may be prepared to offer you a rebate on the business rate. Alternatively, you may be able to use a community space for free or at a discounted rate.

### Things you might need

**Pricing** □ understanding how to price your goods to cover your costs.

**IT skills** □ basic skills to run a spreadsheet on which you can monitor your costs and income.

**Equipment** □ you might need to find some money to buy some equipment.

**People** □ you will need to know how to keep staff and volunteers happy and enthusiastic. It's good to give people a specific task that they are responsible for and as much as possible match tasks to people's skills and experience. Give them training and make sure that work is split fairly between everyone. Make sure that both the most fun and more tedious tasks are shared out between everyone. Giving staff and volunteers discounts is a good way of building loyalty and commitment. A happy team is key to making your scheme a success.

**Marketing** □ make sure people know about your project by using flyers, social media and the local press.

**Legal** □ depending on the location of your pop-up you may need experience or advice to help you set up the right legal structure/negotiate a lease or get the right permissions. You might also need to consider what insurance you will need and any health and safety requirements.

**Permissions and regulations** □ check with your local council and local environmental health officer to make sure you have the right permissions and comply with the regulations for operating a food business. There is also lots of help and advice on the Food Standards Agency website.

### Further reading and resources

**Meanwhile** □ [www.meanwhile.com](http://www.meanwhile.com)







### **Nana Cafe, Hackney**

Staffed entirely by pensioners, or rather lovely older ladies from the local area—Nana describes itself as a comfort—food cafe. Begun as a pop—up cafe in a pub, offering food, creative sessions and child—care, it's now a permanent fixture, thanks to a successful Kickstarter campaign. The campaign exceeded its target and Nana is now resident in the Convenience, a cafe run in former public toilet! True to its origins as a pop—up, the cafe hosts pop—up restaurants for people who want to have a go at running their own restaurants.





# Food hubs

Difficulty:



Benefits:



A food hub is often defined as a space that acts as a central point where farmers and producers bring their produce and from which customers buy that food. In a sense it is just like a market, though the aim of the hub is to offer customers more choice than a typical market can. The running costs of a bricks and mortar food hub are significant and without access to cheap or free warehousing it can be difficult to price the food so that it covers the costs of running a hub. To try to overcome this a number of virtual web-based hubs have sprung up over the last few years.

## Virtual web-based hubs

Virtual hubs do not hold stock themselves but just act as a broker passing on orders from customers to the producer and then arranging for the food to be delivered either to the customer, or at drop off points. They differ from a box scheme in that customers have more choice in terms of what they order, though there may be a minimum spend required. Covering the costs of delivery however is a thorny problem which few have successfully cracked.

## Getting started

A virtual hub needs a computer and some IT know-how to create and manage the database of products and customers. There are a number of groups that have developed IT systems to manage orders. Some like StroudCo£ are open source which means you can use them for free whilst others such as BuckyBox take a fee for every customer that orders through the hub.

## Physical hubs: an alternative idea

There is another sort of physical food hub which is more than just a place that brings producers and customers together. This sort of food hub is usually run by a well-established community food group and it involves a 'hub' of activities around growing, cooking and eating food. One of the best examples of this sort of hub is Organiclea, a worker's co-operative that started as a community allotment project and now includes a cafe, a box scheme and market stall, workshops on cooking food and training and educational activities. What Organiclea shows is that from a small beginning a whole range of food activities can grow.

### Things you might need

**IT skills** – to create a database or you'll need help finding the right software package to manage your orders and set up an online payment system.

**Marketing** – make sure people know about your project by using flyers, social media and the local press.

**Pricing** – one of your biggest challenges will be to set up a scheme which covers the costs of delivery in a way that doesn't make your goods too expensive for people to want to buy.

**Permissions and regulations** – it's worth checking with your council and environmental health office to make sure that you have the right permissions and meet the necessary regulations for operating a food business.

**Legal** – you may need advice and help to set up a legal structure. You might also need to consider what insurance you will need.

### Further reading and resources

**StroudCo** – [www.stroudco.org.uk](http://www.stroudco.org.uk)

**Tamar Valley Food Hub** – [www.tamarvalleyfoodhubs.org.uk/about.html](http://www.tamarvalleyfoodhubs.org.uk/about.html)

**Farm Direct** – [www.farmdirect.com](http://www.farmdirect.com)

**Organiclea** – [www.organiclea.org.uk](http://www.organiclea.org.uk)

**Bucky Box** – [www.buckybox.com](http://www.buckybox.com)

# Farmers' markets

Difficulty:



Benefits:



Farmers' markets are a way for farmers and producers to sell direct to their customers. A market brings lots of customers and producers together. Many farmers' markets are certified by FARMA, a co-operative of farmers and producers. FARMA certification sets rules on who can sell produce at a market and the distance that the farm can be from the market. Only people who have grown or made the food can man the stalls.

This means that the customer can talk to someone who has been very much involved in the production of that food.

So they can ask them all those questions they have about how the food is grown or made.



## Getting started

Any group of people can set up a farmers' market but you need to do a bit of research first. As with all other community food selling you need to be sure you will have enough customers. Look to see what the competition is e.g. local food sold in shops, box schemes and food co-ops, other markets. The other key thing is to make sure you have enough producers to create a vibrant market. You need a minimum of 12 stalls covering the basics – veg, fruit, meat, bread, eggs, cheese. You also need to scope a good location, either one that already has high footfall or has the potential to be turned into a destination people will go out of their way to visit. You'll need insurance, equipment, and you may need electricity and water. And you'll need to check that the stallholders are insured and meet food hygiene requirements.

### Things you might need

**People** – you'll need to find enough producers/farmers with a good enough variety of produce to create an attractive market. And you'll need to train someone up to manage the market and be responsible for it when it's up and running.

**Legal** – you'll need to liaise with your council and local environmental health officer to make sure the market and the individual stallholders comply with the rules on health and safety. You'll also need to make sure you have all the right permissions to use the site for your market. You also need to consider what insurance you will need.

### Further reading and resources

**Kent Farmers' Market Association: Managing a Market** – [www.kfma.org.uk/ManagingaMarket](http://www.kfma.org.uk/ManagingaMarket)

**Guides to running successful farmers' markets** – [www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/practical\\_guides\\_toolkits.cfm](http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/practical_guides_toolkits.cfm)

**FARMA** – [www.farma.org.uk](http://www.farma.org.uk)

**Thames Valley Farmers Market Co-operative** – [www.tvfm.org.uk](http://www.tvfm.org.uk)

**London Farmers Markets** – [www.lfm.org.uk](http://www.lfm.org.uk)



# Make something

The best way to know what's in your food is to make it yourself. Whether you grow fruit and vegetables yourself, or whether you're just an enthusiastic home baker, brewer or jam or chutney maker, making food is a great way of sharing your love of food with others. Lots of individuals and community groups are doing just that. We've used examples of things that others are doing to give you ideas about some top ways to get making.



# Using up food that's being wasted

Difficulty:



Benefits:



The UK's food system is very wasteful at every stage of the process. From crops being left in the field to rot because they do not meet supermarket specifications on size, shape and colour, to multi-buy offers that encourage shoppers to buy more than they need, food that could be eaten is being wasted. And as every home grower knows, gluts of fruit and vegetables happen every year when growing conditions make a perfect harvest for a particular crop. Preventing food from being wasted reduces its carbon footprint, saves money and reduces the environmental impact of dealing with the waste. It can also be used to create meals for the community to share.

## Collect and use unwanted gluts of fruit

### Getting started

The chances are that there are fruit trees and bushes in your neighbourhood with fruit that isn't being used. Map out what fruit and nut trees or berry bushes there are in your neighbourhood. They could be growing wild or in people's gardens. Then get a harvesting group together and go picking. If the fruit is in people's gardens you'll need their permission to pick it and it's a good idea to let them keep any fruit that they want for themselves. That's also true for any land that is owned by someone else, e.g. council land or National Trust land. As far as picking from common land is concerned it's legal to pick it providing you are not using the pickings to make money. There can be local by-laws which prohibit picking on common land, but if this is the case there should be a sign up on the land that says this. You'll need some equipment like apple pickers and containers for collection and you'll need to think about what to do with what you harvest.

You could just distribute it to local schools, care homes, community centres, or if you are a bit more ambitious you could find a way to process the produce yourself turning it into juice, jams or chutneys. For that you'll need access to a kitchen and you may need extra ingredients and packaging.

### The Abundance project

The Abundance project was created by the urban food network Grow Sheffield in 2007, and has since been replicated in other areas. Abundance is made up of teams of volunteers who scour the city collecting seasonal gluts of fruit and redistributing it to the local community. They harvest fruit from trees in public places and from private homes.. Some also process the fruit they collect into juices, jams and chutneys. See if there's an Abundance group in your area. If there isn't then start your own! They have recipes and resources on their website.

#### Things you might need

**People** □ you'll need a group of people (3 or 4 is enough to get started) to help with the harvesting and you'll need to understand how to keep them happy and enthusiastic. Give each person a specific responsibility and try as much as possible to match up tasks to people's interests and skills. And make sure they get some of the harvest to take home.

**Money** □ you may need to raise some money to cover the costs of harvesting tools, baskets and processing equipment like juice presses.

**Planning** □ you'll need to have researched and made a plan for what you will do with the fruit before you start picking.

**Pricing** □ if you are going to process the produce e.g. make jams, chutneys, or juice you'll need to know how to price up your goods to cover your costs. It's worth getting some legal advice before selling any produce made from pickings to make sure you are within the law.

**Insurance** □ think about what insurance you might need and any health and safety requirements.

#### Further reading and resources

**Abundance network** □ [www.abundancenetwork.org.uk](http://www.abundancenetwork.org.uk)



## Make use of waste food

It's estimated that there's at least 400,000 tonnes of supermarket food waste that is fit for human consumption so you could start by exploring whether it's possible to redistribute food from shops and supermarkets in your area. Ask local charities or community groups that provide meals for people about whether they receive food donations from retailers. If they don't, then you could contact local shops and see if they can link up. Often these sorts of links don't happen because both the shops and the charities are too busy to make the connection. It needs people from outside to help make those relationships happen. Alternatively, you could help your community make use of that food by cooking and serving it to people who need it. There are some great projects out there that you could emulate or join like Food Cycle and Disco Soup.

### FoodCycle

FoodCycle is a charity which makes use of surplus food donated by local supermarkets. They use a triple donation model: supermarkets donate food that is fit to eat but past its best before date, people donate their time and businesses donate the catering facilities. They have created eighteen hubs so far and have a network of 1,000 volunteers who create wholesome meals for people in need or who are socially isolated. They're mainly based in urban areas in England but are interested in hearing from anyone who would like to be involved in a hub in their area.

#### Things you might need

**People** – volunteering at a FoodCycle hub or finding out if you can make links between charities and shops in your local area requires nothing more than enthusiasm and a friendly attitude.

#### Further reading and resources

**FoodCycle** – [www.foodcycle.org.uk](http://www.foodcycle.org.uk)

**Disco Soup** – [www.abundanceoxford.wordpress.com/discosoup](http://www.abundanceoxford.wordpress.com/discosoup)

**Disco Soupe** – [www.discosoupe.org](http://www.discosoupe.org)

# Making and selling your own produce

Difficulty:



Benefits:



If you are home grower with gluts of produce or a keen home baker, then making your own bread, cakes, jams, chutneys or pickles is a great way of sharing your talents. You won't need anything more than your own kitchen, time, skill and enthusiasm. Get a group of home growers or makers together in your neighbourhood and you can share the making and sell what you make together.

## Getting started

First find out if there is any demand for your produce, try it out on friends, family and work colleagues to see what they think. For a really honest opinion try a food swap to see if people you don't know like your samples enough to swap their produce for it. Do some market research at a local farmers' market and take samples to local shop owners (especially if you have a community shop in your neighbourhood) to see if they'll stock your products. Don't overpromise the quantity you can supply until you've made several batches. If you live in England or Wales, then Country Markets could be an easy way to get started. Even if you decide not to join, their website has lots of relevant information for people starting up a food production business.

## Country Markets

Country Markets offer a great way to sell your homemade products. It is a co-operative social enterprise that runs markets around the country which sell any produce that is made or grown in a domestic kitchen or garden. All producers selling at the markets must become members and membership is open to anyone over the age of 16 and costs only five pence. Everything



is sold co-operatively at the market with producers receiving a payment at the end of each month for their sales minus a small commission to cover running costs and insurance.

### Things you might need

**Pricing** □ understanding how to price your goods to cover your costs.

**IT skills** □ basic skills to run a spreadsheet on which you can monitor your costs and income.

**Food hygiene** □ anyone selling cooked food at a Country Market needs to have a food hygiene certificate (the current requirement is for a Level 2 in food safety in catering). Your kitchen may need to be inspected by your local environmental health officer. The local Country Markets manager will be able to advise you of local courses on food hygiene and help you get all the permissions and training you need. If you are thinking of selling at another market or at your community centre get some advice from your local council and environmental health officer about any permissions and regulations you need to follow.

**Insurance** □ your insurance will be covered at a Country Market but if you are selling food at a different market or outlet make sure you get some advice on what insurance you may need.

### Further reading and resources

**Country Markets** □ [www.countrymarkets.co.uk](http://www.countrymarkets.co.uk)



# Sharing your skills

Difficulty:



Benefits:



**Cooking with others is a great way of sharing skills and learning new ones. If there is something that you are particularly keen on cooking or making, consider running a session to share your skills with others. You can do it in your own kitchen!**

## Getting started

You will need to be a confident home baker, brewer, jam or chutney maker as the quality and taste of your product is key to enthusing people. Practice making your dish or product. Make sure you have enough equipment so everyone gets a chance to do something hands on. Plan the session so people don't all have to use the same equipment at the same time and can leave with a finished item. And keep your group small so that you can give them all some help and attention.

### Things you might need

**Regulations** □ Ask the council if you need to register as a food business and check food hygiene requirements with the local environmental health officer. You might also need insurance.

**Pricing** □ You may need to charge people for ingredients and any costs for hiring space and equipment if you're not using your own.

**IT skills** □ basic skills to run a spreadsheet on which you can monitor your costs and income.

### Further reading and resources

**Made in Hackney** □ [www.madeinhackney.org](http://www.madeinhackney.org)

**Loaf: community bakery and cookery school** □ [www.loafonline.co.uk](http://www.loafonline.co.uk)











### Disco Soup

Inspired by Slow Food Deutschland's Schnippel Disko, Disco Soup makes good use of food that would otherwise go to waste by hosting events that bring soup and music together to raise awareness of food waste. The produce comes from wholesalers, local food producers, and food banks, the only requirement is that it must be good enough to eat and would otherwise go to waste. Disco Soups have been made across the world, in Paris, London and New York. In Oxford, 800 people turned up to their third event and it doesn't even have to involve soup, in France they've had a Disco Salade instead.



# Community composting

Difficulty:



Benefits:



Setting up a community composting scheme is a great way of giving everyone a chance to ‘do their bit’ for the environment. Making compost reduces your carbon footprint by recycling your garden and kitchen waste as well as providing a way of enriching your garden without using peat. Not every back garden and kitchen will have enough of the right balance of soft to woody material to make a successful compost heap or indeed the space in which to put it, but by pooling your waste together with your neighbours you can create enough good compost for everyone’s garden. Most community composting schemes are small and set up by a group of people who share an interest in making and using compost. Projects range in scale from small groups working on allotment sites, such as Bisley Community Composting Scheme, or those that collect up waste from a group of residents, such as the Trunch Community Composting Scheme, to community-run social enterprises that have contracts with local authorities to provide kerbside collection services, such as South Molton Recycle in Devon.

## Getting started

Running a composting scheme requires both skills and equipment. Composting bins can be made from a variety of materials, but the cheapest way to make one is using shipping pallets which you may be able to get for free. In addition, you’ll need some bags and a plastic tarpaulin to keep your compost moist. Scales of some sort are useful so you can measure how much waste you collect and how much compost you produce. Depending on the sort of waste you collect you might also need a shredder or wood chipper to deal with woodier items. If you’ve not done anything like this before, then it’s worth thinking

about going on one of the courses that the Community Composting Network run. It's also worth checking to see if your council supports any sort of Street Champions or Recycling Champions group in your area. These schemes are a way of getting members of the public involved in improving their local area on a voluntary basis. They may be able to offer you some help or at least provide some extra volunteers to help run your scheme.

### Things you might need

**Equipment** □ you may need to raise some money to buy equipment.

**Legal** □ you may need experience or advice to help you set up the right legal structure and get all the necessary registrations and permissions from your council and the Environment Agency to set up your site.

**People** □ you'll need to understand how to keep volunteers happy and motivated. It's good to give people a specific task that they are responsible for. Give them training and make sure that the work is split fairly between everyone. Ask people what they like doing and as much as possible match tasks to their particular interests and skills. A happy team is key to making your scheme a success.

### Further reading and resources

**Community Composting Network** □ [www.communitycompost.org](http://www.communitycompost.org)

**Bisley community composting scheme** □ [www.bisleycommunitycompostscheme.org.uk](http://www.bisleycommunitycompostscheme.org.uk)

**Trunch Village community composting scheme** □ [www.trunch.orfolk.co.uk/villagecommunitycomposting/home/](http://www.trunch.orfolk.co.uk/villagecommunitycomposting/home/)

**South Molton Recycle** □ [www.southmoltonrecycle.co.uk/index.html](http://www.southmoltonrecycle.co.uk/index.html)

**Street Champions** □ [www2.keepbritaintidy.org/Expertise/StreetChampionFramework/Default.aspx](http://www2.keepbritaintidy.org/Expertise/StreetChampionFramework/Default.aspx)

**Birmingham Street Champions** □ [www.birminghamstreetchampions.co.uk](http://www.birminghamstreetchampions.co.uk)

**Cambridge Community Recycling Champions** □ [www.cambridge.gov.uk/communityrecyclingchampions](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/communityrecyclingchampions)



# Sharing and celebrating

Events that encourage the sharing or swapping of food are a great way of bringing people together to share their knowledge of food and taste new things.

In this section you'll find some ideas about how you can act as a catalyst to get people together around food.

## Big Lunch

Big Lunches of all sizes have happened in all kinds of communities; in streets, back gardens, parks, and local community venues. Since starting in 2009, millions of people have taken part in the Big Lunch with a whopping 4.83 million sitting down to share food with their neighbours in 2013.







# Sharing food in your community

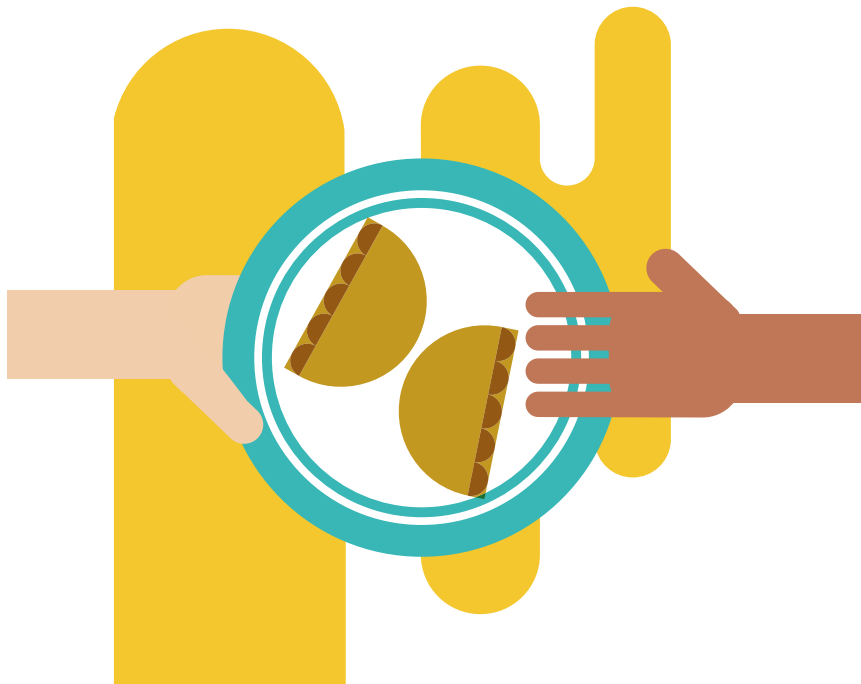
Difficulty:



Benefits:



Wherever a group of people get together there is an opportunity to share food. A meal is a great way for a group to celebrate what they do, introduce new people to their group or promote or share their food culture. You don't need an indoor space for a meal. In fact some of the most popular community meals are held outdoors, such as The Big Lunch, the country's best-known community street party. Everyone loves a picnic or a barbecue so if you have access to an outdoor space why not use it?



## Getting started

The most important thing to work out is who is going to cook and eat the food. Once you've got enough cooks and eaters then work out what cooking facilities you can access. Many kitchens, like those in community centres, schools or sports clubs, are unused some of the time and you may be able to get them cheaply or for free. If you are doing a one-off event you probably won't need to worry about permissions and health and safety regulations, though it is always worth checking with your council and environmental health office. You could also look and see whether there are any local organisations in your area already making meals for the community. Drop-in projects often cook a hot meal for the people that use their services and need volunteers to help make and serve the meals.

### Things you might need

**People** – you'll need a group of people to make the food.

**Regulations** – you'll need to contact your council and check whether there are any registrations and regulations you will need to comply with. You should also consider what insurance you might need.

**Pricing** – you may be able to get food donated and you may get access to a kitchen and gas/electricity for free at a local community space. However, there may be preparation costs that you will need to cover and you'll need to work out how you will pay for these.

**IT skills** – basic skills to run a spreadsheet on which you can monitor your costs and income.

### Further reading and resources

**The Big Lunch** – [www.thebiglunch.com](http://www.thebiglunch.com)

# Supper clubs

Difficulty:



Benefits:



Dining or supper clubs are like a family meal or dinner party where some or all of the guests are strangers. Many of them take place in the host's home though larger ones have branched out and are held in unusual or quirky venues, some of which might not usually be accessible to the public. Guests are normally expected to pay upfront to ensure that the host covers the costs. Diners sit together at a communal table, so socializing with whoever is sitting next to you is very much expected. There is a fixed menu that is published in advance so that guests know what they will be eating. Some suppers include drinks whilst others provide an aperitif and/or ask guests to bring their own drinks. Some supper clubs are run by enthusiastic individual cooks but many are run by family groups, friends or couples. If you've not had experience of catering then there is a lot to be said for running your supper club with a group of friends. You can then all share the shopping, cooking, serving and washing up and you can all bring along your favourite recipes to try out on your guests.

## Getting started

Many supper clubs have a particular theme, be that a particular regional cuisine or particular ingredients. For example August Indian Supper Club offers food from the Indian state of Bihar; Soul Food Sisters which serves African/Caribbean-inspired dishes. But you can cook pretty much whatever you fancy providing there are folk out there who want to eat it! It's up to you how many courses you provide and how many people you decide to feed. Social media is great for promoting your event, or you can join a site like Grub Club which allows you to promote your event. They will also take the payment upfront for you and pay you after your event.



## Things you might need

**Regulations** □ you'll need to contact your council and check whether you need to register as a food business. You'll also need to check out any food hygiene requirements with your local environmental health officer. If you are serving alcohol you'll need an alcohol licence. If guests bring a bottle you don't need a licence. You should also consider what insurance you might need.

**IT skills** □ basic skills to run a spreadsheet on which you can monitor your costs and income. You'll need to take payment upfront so think about how this would work best for you, you could use standing orders, set up a separate bank account, or use an online payment system. You'll need a Facebook page, Twitter account or website. You could also join a group site that can help you promote your event.

**Pricing** □ you'll need to work out the cost per portion of your menu, taking into account not only ingredient costs but also costs such as electricity, gas, water. In theory there should also be a cost for the venue and for your time in preparing the food but you may decide to waive these if you are holding the club in your own home and your aim is to have fun rather than run a business!

**Planning/people** □ choose dishes that you are very comfortable cooking and work out how many people you can cook for and seat given the size of your space and the equipment and manpower you have. Think about providing at least one course that you can make in advance so that you reduce the stress on the night and can enjoy the event too.

## Further reading and resources

**August Indian** □

[www.edibleexperiences.com/p/289822068/AugustIndianSupperClub](http://www.edibleexperiences.com/p/289822068/AugustIndianSupperClub)

**Joginders supper club** □ [www.jogindersupperclub.com](http://www.jogindersupperclub.com)

**Soul Food Sisters** □ [soulfoodsistersupperclub.blogspot.co.uk](http://soulfoodsistersupperclub.blogspot.co.uk)

**London Supper clubs** □ [www.londonpops.com/p/londonSupperClubs.html](http://www.londonpops.com/p/londonSupperClubs.html)



# Food Swaps

Difficulty:



Benefits:



Got too much of something? Try a food swap! It's a great way of encouraging people to try new things, and also a way of linking different home growers and producers together. You can do it with seeds, too.

## Getting started

Talk to your friends and neighbours and find out if they have a glut of something they make or grow, and whether they'll be interested in swapping it for something else. You'll need around 10-20 producers to make the swap viable and ideally a bit of variety in what they have to offer – so try and mix homemade food producers with growers

You don't need much space or equipment to run a food swap. Ask a pub, cafe or community centre if they have somewhere you could set up a few tables indoors or outdoors. You'll also need some index cards (or old greetings cards) and some pens.

Most swaps take a couple of hours at most. First, everyone sets up and displays their produce with a swap card for each product, e.g. a box of eggs, or a jar of jam. Then everyone goes around and tastes each other's produce and if they like it, they can write an offer on the swap card. The final half hour can be quite intense as people decide which offers to accept or decline. There's no obligation to swap, so there's no danger of ending up with something you don't like, the only challenge is having to decide on what to accept.

## Things you might need

**Planning/people** □ you'll need to manage the food swap and take overall responsibility for who takes part, what they bring to swap and how the swap will actually work.

**Insurance** □ think about how you will cover insurance issues, either by taking out some insurance or making sure all swappers complete a disclaimer against you and each other.

**Marketing** □ letting people know about the event is critical. Social media can really help publicise events, so set up a Facebook page and a Twitter feed, but you may also need to use flyers or contact local organisations such as allotment associations. Time your event so there's likely to be plenty of produce around.

## Further reading and resources

**Apples for Eggs** □ a network of food swaps □ [www.applesforeggs.com](http://www.applesforeggs.com)

**Sheffield Food Swap** □ [www.sheffieldfoodswap.org.uk](http://www.sheffieldfoodswap.org.uk)

### Seed Swaps:

**Organiclea (arrange seed swaps on their own sites and with others)** □ [www.organiclea.org.uk](http://www.organiclea.org.uk)

**Growing Communities (hold an annual seed and plant swap)** □ [www.growingcommunities.org](http://www.growingcommunities.org)

**Grow Sheffield (hold an annual seed swap at Heeley City Farm)** □ [www.growsheffield.com/sheffieldseedswapplan/february/](http://www.growsheffield.com/sheffieldseedswapplan/february/)

**Transition Town Manchester** □ [www.transitiontownmanchester.org](http://www.transitiontownmanchester.org)

**Transition Town Totnes** □ [www.transitiontowntotnes.org/groups/foodgroup/seedybisters](http://www.transitiontowntotnes.org/groups/foodgroup/seedybisters)

**Seedy Sunday Brighton** □ [www.seedysunday.org.uk](http://www.seedysunday.org.uk)



## Apples for Eggs

Apples for Eggs was set up by Vicky Swift and Sue Jewitt in 2011. Initially it was run using a Facebook page for people to post and swap their excess home produce individually. They then started arranging Food Swap events where people could exchange produce and there are now swaps in seven locations in the UK and new groups joining all the time. Apples for Eggs is a social enterprise which uses any income it generates to cover costs and help grow the network.











# Conclusion

# So, now it's your turn!

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**We've been growing, making and sharing food since prehistoric times. It's a critical part of who we are as a species. The less we know about our food and where it comes from the more difficult it is for us to make good decisions about healthy eating and choose foods that preserve rather than harm the environment. Some companies have turned food into big business and some children are so distanced from the natural origins of their food they aren't even aware that chips are made of potatoes. So let's reconnect with our food and let's also reconnect with each other by sharing food which can be one of life's great pleasures.**

Throughout this guide we've shown you that there are lots of people just like you who are changing things by working together to grow, sell, make and share food in their community. And what they are doing is affecting the way that thousands of people eat. In the UK there are at least 3,000 community gardens, around 400 farmers' markets and over 300 community shops. We've also shown you that there are lots of ways that you can start changing the way you and your community eat in a small way, like getting together and growing some food on an abandoned patch of land, setting up a food co-op or making things to sell at a local market. Many of the flagship community food projects that we've described like OrganicLea and Growing Communities started off small with just one or two people.

So, whether you want to improve your diet, help to preserve the environment or just want to get to know your neighbours better, then food is a great way to do it.

**This guide was designed to give you food for thought and demonstrate ways that you could get your community together through food. Armed with this knowledge, talk to your friends and neighbours and see what interests and inspires them, meet together and discuss your ideas. Use this guide to help you get things started. We've put together a few key questions you might like to use to help get a conversation going. Good luck!**

### **Growing**

- Is there a patch of unloved ground in your community that could do with some TLC?

### **Selling**

- Have you got farmers in your area? What do they grow/make?
- What would you like to buy locally that you can't?

### **Making**

- What's your favourite jam/chutney/cake that you make?
- Is there food that can be foraged/reused/composted locally?

### **Sharing**

- Would you like to share your favourite dish with others by either cooking it for them or teaching them how to do it?

Food is a basic human need. Local food can help to strengthen our communities and reduce our impact on the environment.

Inside are a host of ideas to get you thinking, bite-sized explanations and signposts where you can follow them up in more detail.

